

POSTMODERN RESPONSES TO THE SEPTEMBER 12TH 1980 MILITARY COUP D'ÉTAT IN TURKISH LITERATURE

TÜRK EDEBİYATINDA 12 EYLÜL 1980
ASKERİ DARBESİ'NE POSTMODERN YANIT

Ahmet ALVER*

ÖZET

12 Eylül 1980, yakın dönem Türk siyasi tarihinin en etkili ve ses getiren üçüncü askeri darbesidir. Darbenin ardından gelen uygulamalar, eğilimler ve baskı politikası Türkiye'nin toplumsal yaşamında onarılması zor yaralara ve değişikliklere sebebiyet vermiştir. Edebiyat sanatı da bu büyük toplumsal olaydan fazlasıyla etkilenecek, dönemin gerçeklerini kimi zaman doğrudan kimi zaman da dolaylı olmak üzere okurlarına ve bir sonraki kuşağa taşımayı başarmıştır. Bu çalışma, 12 Eylül darbesi sonrasında kaleme alınan, darbeyi ve onun etkilerini konu alan edebiyatı incelemektedir. Bununla birlikte bu makalede Adalet Ağaoğlu'nun *Hayır* (1987) ile Latife Tekin'in *Gece Dersleri* (1986) adlı romanları analiz edilmek suretiyle 12 Eylül darbesinin izleri sürülerek, söz konusu askeri darbenin edebiyatı biçim ve içerik açısından nasıl etkilediğini, yazarların bu durumu nasıl deneyimlediklerini ele alacak, darbenin edebiyatta nasıl temsil edildiğini inceleyecektir. Bahsi geçen her iki eser de yazıldıkları dönem itibarıyla siyasi roman olarak kabul edilebilir; fakat bu iki eser, yazıldıkları dönemi, siyasi ve tarihsel anlamda biçim, içerik ve dil özellikleri açısından ancak dolaylı bir şekilde ele alabilmiştir. Bu nedenle adı geçen bu eserler aynı zamanda Postmodern roman olma özelliğini taşımaktadır. Çalışmada ayrıca, Türk siyasi tarihinde 1960'lı yıllarda başlayıp 1970'li yıllarda etkisini artıran sosyo-politik olaylar kısaca özetlenecek, 12 Eylül 1980 askeri darbesi sonrasında yaşanan baskı ve şiddet olaylarının genel anatomisi istatistiksel verilerle açıklanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet Ağaoğlu, Latife Tekin, askeri darbe, 12 Eylül, ayrışma, postmodern roman, baskı

ABSTRACT

The coup d'état on 12th September 1980 was the third successful and most influential military coup in the political history of Turkey. It is accepted as a turning point in Turkey's history in terms of its long term effects on Turkish society and democracy. The literature in the 1980s was also hugely affected by the coup and succeeded to display the facts of the period to

its readers either directly or indirectly and move it to the next generation. This study aims to investigate the literature just after the September 12 coup d'état; how the coup was experienced by the authors; how the coup is represented within the novels in 1980s and how it affected the novels in both its form and content. This article will examine two novels - *Hayır* (No) by Adalet Ağaoğlu and *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) by Latife Tekin – written during the 1980s following the overthrow of the government by the military. Both novels are postmodern texts that resist the direct political and historical analysis through their refusal to submit to narrative norms of plot, structure, and language. This article will analyse their dislocations of history and how both respond to the political atmosphere in Turkey during the 1980s. The article also highlights the Turkish political history beginning from the 1960s, the political environment of the 1970s which led the 12th September 1980 military coup and its cultural environment.

Keywords: Adalet Ağaoğlu, Latife Tekin, military coup d'état, 12 September, dislocation, postmodern novel, oppression

INTRODUCTION

Both of the novels examined in this article share an emphasis on individual psychology; they take as their inspiration the individual experiencing a psychological crisis and juxtapose this with the broader social crisis. As Eagleton asserts, individual psychology is the product of society and because of this we are able to see a portrayal of the whole period in the representation of single lives.¹ Undoubtedly, the oppressive and dark tone which forms the background for both of these texts is directly related to the atmosphere of the period in which they were written. In terms of analysis, however, it is more important to examine how these texts make the historical and political atmosphere part of the structural problems of the text itself, both in terms of literature and language. This article examines Ağaoğlu and Tekin because they represent the 'high' literary response to the coup: they are dissenting voices, opposed to the coup and political oppression. However, at the same time, they are from within the establishment, regarded as literary figures with demarcated roles within society. This contrasts with those writers who wrote from within the prisons who were both against the coup and outside society because of their status as prisoners. This article will analyse the similarities and differences in their approaches based on their political and social positioning in relation to September 12th prison literature as a whole.

* Dr., Londra Yunus Emre Türk Kültür Merkezi

¹ Terry Eagleton, *Edebiyat Eleştirisi Üzerine*, Eleştiri Yayınevi, İstanbul 1970, p. 16-17

I. The Political Atmosphere of the 70s and 80s

Before examining the texts, it is important to examine the political atmosphere of Turkey in the 70s and 80s, to put forward the competing issues that cause the coup d'état and understand the atmosphere in which these texts were written. Broadly, the cause of the coup can be put down to several factors: domestic politics, the stalemate of the party system, increasing violence, the collapse of governmental authority, and the high rate of inflation. In order to understand the development of these factors it is necessary to have a look at the general characteristics of politics in Turkey throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.

Turkish politics in the 1970s is characterised by the extreme fragmentation and polarization of the political system. Throughout the decade, as ideological polarization became more and more fragmented and entrenched, the party system was also splintered which left no single party with the ability to establish a majority government. Subsequently, Turkey witnessed successive minority and coalition governments.² The root of this fragmentation dates back to the 1961 Constitution which, according to Heper and Keyman, besides re-institutionalizing the state and expanding the scope of basic rights and liberties, also made possible the free expression of ideologies on the left and the right, thus engendering the gradual crystallization of class conflict.³ By the end of the 1960s, politics moved towards an ideological split between ultra-capitalists and Marxists. This coincided with the industrialisation of the country,⁴ which has had the effect of causing deep ideological division in many countries.⁵

Whilst the industrialisation of Turkey does explain the deep divisions in Turkish politics to an extent, Ergüder argues that other factors also caused the multi-dimensionality of Turkish politics through the late 1960s and the 1970s.⁶

² After the 1973 elections, despite its electoral success (%33 of votes) the RPP failed to gain an overall majority in the assembly, and Ecevit formed a coalition government with Erbakan's Islamist National Salvation Party. After Ecevit's resignation in September 1974, in March 1975 four of the right wing parties formed a coalition under the leadership of Demirel, known as the first Nationalist Front government. In the 1977 elections the RPP won % 41 of the votes but its 213 seats were still insufficient to form a single-party government. After Ecevit's minority government failed to get the vote of confidence, Demirel founded the second National Front government with the NSP and the NAP. The second National Front government ended in December 1977 to be followed by Ecevit's minority government. After losing the ground for JP in the by-elections, Ecevit resigned in October 1979, and Demirel founded a minority government in November.

³ Metin Heper and E Fuat Keyman "Double-Faced State: Political Patronage and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies* 3, no.34 (October 1998), p. 264.

⁴ Two incidents are specifically referred to for illustrating the development of working class politics. The first is a massive march—known as the 15-16 June incidents in 1970, where industrial workers in the Istanbul-Izmit area joined to protest a new law regulating union organization and collective bargaining. The march, involving over 100,000 demonstrators, was the largest and most violent workers' protest in Turkish history. The second is the celebrations of May Day in 1976, to be publicly celebrated for the first time since 1924, which was organized by the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers (DISK) with participation of more than one 100,000 people (See Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, Routledge, New York 1993, p. 168.

⁵ Meliha Benli Altunisk and Özlem Tür, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change*, Routledge, New York 2004, p. 25.

⁶ Üstün Ergüder, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Behaviour in Turkey", *Readings in Turkish Politics* ed. by Metin Heper, Boğaziçi University Press, Istanbul 1980, p. 693.

These other factors include the developments in socio-economic structure, urbanisation, rising of new social groups such as the working class and the entrepreneurs, increasing communications between the urban areas and the countryside, the rising importance of religion and ethnicity in social and political status, the use of violence as a form of political expression, and intensified ideological expression in print and broadcasting. Sayarı argues that the trend towards greater ideological polarization after the 1973 election manifested itself at several different levels: the level of the elites, the mass electorate level, and the level of government-opposition splits and patterns of coalition building.⁷ The ideological splits within the mass electorate level were partly a consequence of the propaganda employed by the extreme left and right wing groups and partly because of the antagonistic ideological exchange between party elites as displayed by the mass media. The increase of the ideological distance between parties aggravated long-standing social divides based on religious and regional sympathies. This gave rise to two unstable coalitions of competing ideologies: pro-left/pro-laicist/pro-alevi versus anti-communist/pro-islam/pro-sunni. The progression of the electoral system from a simple plurality system to proportional representation provided the minority parties with the opportunity to be represented in the parliament and also led to these factions having a voice in the party system with emerging minority parties such as the Turkish Labour Party (TLP) in the 1960s and the National Salvation Party (NSP) and the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) in the late 60s and 70s.

There is some disagreement about the causes and consequences of the shifting electoral patterns of the period. Özbudun argues that a "detailed analysis of the changing electoral fortunes of the JP and the RPP suggests that such changes were not merely the result of the movements of the floating vote at the centre, but were associated with a major realignment in the mass coalitional bases of the major parties, a phenomenon most clearly visible in the big cities".⁸ He concludes that socio-economic modernisation tends to increase class-based political participation and decrease communal based politics and renders the concepts of the 'centre' and 'extreme' meaningless, so that new divisions emerge within both the centre and within the periphery.⁹ Kalaycıoğlu, however, rejects Özbudun's claim, arguing instead that within Turkey political behaviour tends to be shaped by the emerging realignment patterns that are in congruity with the patterns observed in the development of industrial capitalism in western countries. He argues that it would be unrealistic to expect the functionalist divisions to replace immediately the traditional

⁷ Sabri Sayarı, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Behaviour in Turkey", *Readings in Turkish Politics* ed. by Metin Heper, Boğaziçi University Press, Istanbul 1980, p. 628-29.

⁸ Ergun Özbudun, "Voting Behaviour in Turkey" *Electoral Politics in the Middle East: Issues, Voters, and Elites* ed. by Jacob M. Landau (et. al.) Hoover Institution Press, London 1980, p. 108.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124 and 135.

alignment patterns, such as kinship, in a society still defined by a large rural population and a middle class still dependent on state intervention in the economy. He defines Turkey's political scene in the 1970s as having a neo-patriarchal socio-political structure.¹⁰

Kemal Karpat sees urbanisation as the key factor in political polarisation as the people who migrated from villages to the city struggled to adapt to city life because of low income and educational insufficiency and, as a result, were unable to achieve upward mobility.¹¹ Whilst economic development and the unequal distribution of income altered the traditional structures and old systems of values and beliefs, these factors also gave rise to extreme feelings of insecurity among the public body. This insecurity is reflected in the extreme adoption of political positions based on traditional religious and nationalist identities, which in turn led to the rise of rightist sentiments. On the other hand, disputes over unequal distribution of income urged the mobilization of the leftist movement, specifically Marxist ideologies.

Within the context of these competing forces of social conflict, Tachau and Heper attribute the military takeover in 1980 to several factors. Most importantly, they draw attention to the fragmentation of Turkish politics in the 1970s throughout key social sectors including the labour unions, the teaching community, and the civil bureaucracy. This in turn led to an escalation of the violence between extreme militant groups and the emergence of conflict between ethnic and sectarian groups. Finally, they point to the economic climate, where rampant inflation was accompanied serial industrial slowdown, causing wages to collapse and widespread shortages. It was the combination of these factors that caused the military to see a system which was failing and one in which there had been a complete erosion of governmental authority.¹²

Özbudun accepts that there were multiple factors that led to the military takeover. However, he is most insistent that the political violence and terrorism that directly preceded the coup was what caused military action.¹³ Specifically, he argues that the incidence of political violence reflected a growing ideological polarization between the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) on the right, and the combination of many small radical groups on the left.¹⁴ In arguing that the 1973 election campaign and its aftermath caused an "increasing

¹⁰ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "1960 Sonrası Türk Politik Hayatına bir Bakış: Demokrasi-Neo-Patrimonyalizm ve İstikrar" *Türkiye'de Politik Değişim ve Modernleşme*, ed. by. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, Alfa Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, p. 393-397.

¹¹ Kemal Karpat, "Turkish Democracy at Impasse: Ideology, Party Politics and the Third Military Intervention" *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2, no.1 (Spring/Summer, 1981), p.18.

¹² Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey" *Comparative Politics* 16, no.1 (October 1983), p.25.

¹³ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 170-173 and Mehmet Ali Birand, *12 Eylül : Türkiye'nin Miladı*, Doğan Kitap, İstanbul 1999, p. 132-133.

¹⁴ Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder 2000, p. 35-36.

ideological polarization between the major parties" with the ideological distances between them becoming "exceptionally large by normal standards", Özbudun shows that the major third party revolts preceding the elections (especially that of the NSP) revealed the incapacity of the creaking political system to deal with emergent political demands.¹⁵

Whereas Özbudun sees violence as being reflective of ideological polarization, others point to the direct involvement, particularly by the NAP, in the occurrence of violence. Feroz Ahmad, for instance, demonstrates that during the rule of the Nationalist Front government, the state was divided out between the parties which used the ministries assigned to their members to provide patronage for their support. The strong presence of the Nationalist Action Party in the cabinet, therefore, helped legitimize the neo-fascist philosophy throughout the government. Accordingly, NAP's young militants, the Grey Wolves, saw themselves as part of the state and operated with greater confidence in creating a climate of terror, designed to intimidate their opponents.¹⁶ Ahmad argues that because of the state's 'approval' of the Grey Wolves as a militant group, the left wing groups such as Dev-Sol and Dev-Yol, changed their focus. In the early 1970s, the left hoped to ferment revolution by inspiring the workers to rise with anti-western and anti-capitalist forces and participated in highly political terrorism such as the kidnapping of American soldiers. Once the Grey Wolves became a state-approved force, however, they used attacks on leftist groups to cause chaos and demoralization and inflame a climate in which a regime promising law and order would be welcomed by the masses.¹⁷

The formation of the Neo-Marxist Kurdish Workers Party (known as *PKK* from its Kurdish initials) by Ankara University student Abdullah Öcalan in 1978, was a huge influence in convincing the bourgeoisie and Turkish nationalists of the threat that left wing groups posed. The aim of the *PKK* was to establish a socialist Kurdish state across the south east of Turkey. Whole neighbourhoods, particularly in poorer areas of Eastern Turkey, came under the control of the *PKK* which declared them 'liberated areas'. Most famously, the group took over the small Black Sea town of Fatsa and their leftist mayor renounced the rule of the Turkish government and declared themselves an independent Soviet Republic. These 'liberated' areas caused widespread outrage and so it was widely popular when troops were sent in to reclaim the areas.

To add to this anti-leftist general mood, during the year leading up to the coup, political violence took a new direction. There had been killings between rival leftist and rightist groups, for a number of years, but directly prior to the

¹⁵ Özbudun: "Voting Behaviour in Turkey", p. 108.

¹⁶ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 165-166.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163-164.

coup, there were a number of assassinations of high-profile figures. In May 1980, the deputy chairman of the NAP was assassinated, as were former Prime Minister Nihat Erim and Kemal Turkler, former president of DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions) the following July. Because it seemed that the political body was unable to control these killings, there was more public sympathy for a military takeover.

It is virtually impossible to say with any accuracy the number of deaths caused by political violence between 1970 and 1980, but it is widely assumed to extend beyond 5000. According to Ergun Özbudun, casualties between 1975 and 1980 are the “equivalent of Turkish losses in the War of Independence.” Özbudun argues that more than 5,000 were killed and three times as many were wounded in this five-year period.¹⁸ Justus Leicht, meanwhile, points to an article that appeared in the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on August 5th 1981 which argues that around 5000 people were killed from 1975 to 1980, more than two-thirds of whom were victims of right-wing terror.¹⁹ In 1981, Turkish authorities accused the grey wolves of carrying out 694 murders in the six-year period between 1974 and 1980.²⁰ All of these accusations finally became the excuse for another devastating coup d'état, this time a direct military rule with tanks lining the streets of Ankara on September 12, 1980.²¹

The coup d'état on 12th September 1980 was the third and arguably the most influential military intervention into Turkish politics. The effects of the coup – the totally suppression of leftist groups and intellectuals, and the strengthening of the position of the National Security Council as a body for dealing with dissent – entirely reshaped the conduct and discourse of Turkish politics.

In terms of the impact of the coup, it is still problematic as a matter of public discourse. The process of democratization following the gradual withdrawal of military rule did not involve a period of questioning and the administration of justice as they did in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Greece. For this reason, the gross human rights violations that occurred during the period have not been openly discussed, and the anti-democratic imprisonment and suppression of dissenters has not been exposed. To understand the long term effects of the 1980 coup requires detailed research which does not fall within the remit of this article. However, a brief examination of some statistics should provide a brief idea of the devastating consequences of the coup. In the six weeks after the coup, 11,500 people were arrested by the state. This grew to 30,000 by the end of 1980, and 122,600 after one year of rule

¹⁸ Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation*, 35.

¹⁹ Justus Leicht, "Twenty Years since the Military Coup in Turkey," *World Socialist Web Site*, 27 September 2000.

²⁰ Albert Jongman & Alex Peter Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories & Literature*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey 2005, p. 674.

²¹ Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, St. Martin's Press, London 1998, p. 292.

by the junta.²² Across the entire period of military rule, 650,000 citizens were detained and police files opened on over one and a half million people. Of the 210,000 political trials conducted during the military rule, 7000 were tried on death penalty charges. Of the 517 death sentences passed, 50 were executed, whilst 299 people died in prison. Outside of the prison system, 30,000 people were fired from the civil service, 14,000 people were stripped of their Turkish citizenship, 39 tonnes of books, magazines, and papers were destroyed, and 23,677 civil associations were closed down and banned.²³

With the military intervention, the competing factions viciously and passionately vying for political and social control were ruthlessly ran by the military junta. However, this did not solve any problem; simply repress the competing ideologies with a hegemonic state authority. It is from within this state of flux that the 12th September novels analysed in this article are written.

II. The Dislocation of the Intellectuals

As with any great social crisis, there is a great number and great variety of responses and reactions to the September 12th coup. In the years following the coup, Turkish intellectuals formed a distinct group with a shared response to the events of Sept 12th. In 1984, about 1,300 writers, journalists, artists, directors, and academicians filed a petition called “Intellectuals Petition” (Aydınlar Dilekçesi) objecting to the coup and the government’s new oppressive, conservative, restrictive, and violent policies. Adalet Ağaoglu was a prominent member of this group, and her novel *Hayır*, ‘No’ can be read as the literary summary of their critique. In dealing with the September 12 coup, it includes reference to its effects on society, the daily life, daily politics, lifestyles, but focuses most forcefully on the effects it had on academics and university autonomy.

It should be noted that the author herself rejects the description of *Hayır* as a September 12 novel.²⁴ However, when we examine the *Dar Zamanlar* (Hard Times) trilogy - *Ölmeye Yatmak* (Lying Down To Die), *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (Wedding Night); and lastly *Hayır* – it is impossible to ignore the fact that the novels address time periods that directly correlate to the three military takeovers of 1960, 1971, and 1980. Moreover, *Hayır*’s temporal setting coincides with the days immediately following the September 12th coup, describing one day under the influence of the new military regime. That said, it is significant that the author refuses to call the text a ‘September 12th novel’. Possibly this is because in its focus on the character of Aysel means that Ağaoglu’s writing process involved concentration on her protagonist’s internal psychology, not on external political events. However, within Aysel’s character

²² Ibid., p. 407.

²³ Ayhan Ergene, “Son Klasik Darbeyle Yüzleşmek” in *bianet* (Bağımsız İletişim Ağı) website, <http://www.bianet.org/php/yazdir.php?DosyaX=../2005/09/12/67050.htm> [25.07.2006]

²⁴ Adalet Ağaoglu, *Başka Karşılaşmalar*, YKY, İstanbul 2001, p. 173.

there is a resistance to the new order after September coup. In this way, we can analyse the novel in terms of its political and social impact through the agency of an individual.

Aysel is the central character in the *Dar Zamanlar* (Hard Times) trilogy, though she is conspicuous by her absence in the second novel. Aysel is a first generation Turkish Republican and a university professor. Throughout all the novels, Aysel struggles with her status as an intellectual and the concomitant implications of that social role. She questions her duties in affecting social change and throughout the trilogy and especially in *Hayır*, as she becomes more disillusioned, the very nature of being considered an ‘intellectual’ and considering oneself in the same way is questioned.

In addressing the historical and social importance of the September 12th coup the novels is not fixated on torture or the lives of revolutionaries. In my analysis, the novel is far more concerned with the distribution of politics: in the book we find representations of both the dominant ideology of the period and the oppositional ideologies, so that the narrative space includes conflicting viewpoints and shows the process by which the hegemonic philosophy comes to dominate all others. The narrative style is a product of this conflicting space. Within its ambivalence and fragmented structure, the novel does not describe torture or contain images of revolutionaries. Nor does it glorify the past. Across the trilogy, the ‘past’ as a construct is always part of the present and the future. What is referred to by “dar” here is a signifier of three “dar” times of Turkey, politically and socially; that is to say, three coups. The “present” in *Hayır* is the moment that attaches the past to the future; *Hayır*’s structure is very much related to this temporality. The novel’s totality covers just one day, like the previous novels in the trilogy, but moves in non-linear fashion between morning, evening, night, and sunrise.

The concept of ‘time’, then, is one of the most important themes in Aġaoġlu’s writing. In addressing the novel, it is first important to analyse *Hayır*’s temporal reference to September 12th which constantly problematises and intrudes upon the present tense of the novel. September 12th is not simply a historical setting for the novel, as the events of the novel and the narrative structure are shaped by the coup. Aysel’s inner conflicts, her daily life, and the people she meets in the streets are all formed by their historical relation to September 12th. The narrative style, with its use of inner monologue and stream-of-consciousness, allows the reader to see precisely how the protagonist’s life is captured in the historical moment and how this moment influences her thoughts and ideas.

Hayır is a novel in the postmodern style which became an established literary form in post-coup Turkey. The specific period of time documented in the novel are governed by the 1982 Constitution, a militaristic and authoritarian

rule to which the intellectuals were firmly opposed. Aysel’s anger and opposition to the Constitution is displayed by the very title of the book: “No”. The title says ‘no’ on a national level to the new constitution, but also on a personal level to the university’s new system shaped by YÖK and the changes in social morals as perceived by the individual. Aysel’s character is defined by her internal non-acceptance of the new order twinned with her pessimism that the system will not change. This is reflected both in her inner monologue, but also in her creation of new texts within the – letters and articles etc. – which reflect her outward political action. For instance, in her article written when constitutional change was on the agenda which caused her dismissal from university, she opposes not only constitutional change but also martial law and the practices of the new governmental order:

Today you assume things that the former constitution did not count as crime, as crimes according to the laws that you have manipulated. You declare crimes and punishments relying on a non-existent law.

Fake ministers, prime minister and members of the parliament of a fake law!
Down with all of you, down with all of you!

I invite all of you to say “No!” to the demands of this fake government until there remains no one who hasn’t been subjected to injustice by the martial law. Let us say “No!” to all these practices conducted by those who’ve stepped on us by force, if we don’t really want to be guilty at the face of history. Let us pull away our shoulders they have sat upon.²⁵

In the rest of the article, she also details exactly what the September 12th coup changed in her view, which can also be seen to stand for the viewpoint of the intellectual movement. In Aysel’s opinion, history becomes a meaningless concept after a military intervention such as the September 12th; therefore, the period in which the novel takes place is like a dreamscape, where actors are unaware of the events that have occurred and their connection to unfolding future events. This is historically linked to the seizure and destruction of the documents of all political parties under the government’s martial law following the coup. This can be seen as an attempt by the authoritarian government to destroy and break off from history. In refusing to countenance this system – by saying ‘No’ to the constitution – Aysel also objects to martial law and its applications, and makes plain her intention to preserve the historical actuality of people thrown into prisons, people who have been oppressed, and the bodies subjected to torture.

In a moment of intertextuality, the article takes as its theme and titles the same as the novel itself, ‘No’. She summarises her perspective in the following lines:

²⁵ Adalet Aġaoġlu, *Hayır*, YKY, İstanbul 2005, p. 48.

“ROTECTING OUR FREE IDENTITY IN ANY CONTEXT RELIES ON THESE THREE WORDS WHICH CAN ONLY BE EXPRESSED IN ACTION: NO TO INNOVATION...NO TO UNIFORMITY. NO TO UNIFORM. NO TO REPETITION...”²⁶

In rejecting uniformity, Aysel refuses the perspective of those who implemented the coup of September 12th who sought to suppress alternative ideologies, annihilate the individual, and silence curiosity and questioning voices. However, in her inner monologue we see that Aysel is affected by repetition and the blur of future: after she finishes writing this article, she prepares to attend a ceremony but whether she will attend the ceremony is masked in incomplete expressions. Aysel sees it as an “impossibility” to perceive an optimistic future or imagine future events taking place. Daily life is stagnant and uniform as different voices are silenced. To Aysel, people on the streets become “soldiers” of the new order as they are unable to remember their former lives when they were not oppressed by the martial law.

In an important scene, Aysel is at the airport observing the police and soldiers breaking into the daily lives of people. She questions for whom and for what these ‘precautions’ are being taken. In this sense, the meaning and aim of actions becomes vague and performative: intrusion by the state in the life of the individual is an end in itself. Stopped cars and check-point controls are assumed to be parts of an authoritarian performance by the people on the streets, and similarly they take the role of compulsive spectators. As illustrated below, Aysel does not want to be part of this performance, objecting to controls: “We will not go back! We want to continue!”²⁷ However, the crowds in the street do not resist as she does. “What does this woman want to do, for God’s sake? Is she an anarchist? There is a commandment so what can those men do? Why does she speak on behalf of us? Why does she include us?”²⁸ Within this voice there is a distinction made in the pronouns: ‘us’ is the people on the streets, whilst ‘she’ is an isolated figure described in the terms of the authoritarian government: “anarchist”. Thus, the hegemonic social norm crushes and displaces other dissenting voices.

III. Suicide and the Dislocation of Defiance

Suicide is another major theme in *Hayır*. Not only is Aysel’s article about the figurative and literal suicide of Turkey’s intellectuals, but also the metatextual fictive importance of suicide as a theme in the trilogy. The first book of the trilogy *Ölmeye Yatmak* takes place on a day as Aysel waits for death in a hotel room. The novel’s action concerns her dilemma over wanting to die, whether it is the proper response of the intellectual. *Bir Düşün Gecesi*, the second book of the trilogy, opens with Tezel, Aysel’s sister declaring: “If we’re not going to commit suicide, we might as well get drunk.” Within the trilogy,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁸ Ibid.

this issue is both a signifier of hopelessness and the most devastating means of asserting individualism in the face of authoritarian control.

Ağaoğlu renders as sublime the moment when suicidal thoughts are most dominant because that moment of crisis is the last negotiation at the threshold between life and death. The temporal scheme of each novel reflects this sublimity as the action of all three books negotiates the compression of the suicidal mind.²⁹ As the footnoted quotation indicates, Jale Parla interprets “dar zamanlar” as the ‘moments of crises. It is the last option available to those wishing to resist the restrictions and oppressions caused by martial law, the new constitution, and the authoritarian state. Ağaoğlu herself discusses the semantic negotiation of suicide in a magazine article: “Doesn’t qualifying suicide as an ‘escape’ perhaps mean to keep the possibility of an escape hole always accessible?”³⁰ In her view, then, suicide is represented as the last resort when resistance and suppression can no longer be expressed within the possibilities of language. This is particularly true for the intellectuals who prized their words above all else and who, following the coup, were turned both by the government and by propagandists into jokes and figures of ridicule.

The pessimistic tone of the narrative is not only because Aysel is old and disheartened by the experience of many years of the culture changing for the worse in her view. Aysel’s bleakness also stems for a sense of lost security, in her rejection from her peers at the university. Ağaoğlu uses the changes which take place at the university under the rule of *YÖK* as a microcosm for the imposition of governmental control over the Turkish state. *YÖK* was established by qualified martial law and the autocratic government. Its initial action was to dismiss and discredit a great number of professors with the justification of 1402, an edict which designated their work and thinking to be destabilising and treacherous. The mindset in the universities following the *YÖK* takeover can best be seen in the “Özerk Milli Kültür Kurumu Bilim Hizmet Dalı Değerlendirme Seçici Kurulu” (Autonomous National Culture Institution Jury of Evaluation for Scientific Branch of Service), which, in the novel, arranges the ceremony for Aysel. Because Aysel is opposed to this foundation, the idea of accepting an award from them is an anathema to her, which is why the future is unclear in the novel. Throughout the novel, Aysel rehearses and revises extracts from the speech she intends to give at this ceremony. However, whether this speech will ever be made – or whether it will be allowed – is never revealed, so its efficacy is constantly doubted. This summarises the state of the intellectuals

²⁹ Jale Parla, *Don Kişot’tan Bugüne Roman*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2003, p. 305. İntihar düşüncesinin egemen olduğu an, açıkça kriz anıdır; yaşama ölüm arasındaki eşikte son bir hesaplaşma olarak değerlendirir bu kriz anını Ağaoğlu. Üç romanın da zaman şemasını bu hesaplaşmanın gerektirdiği biçimde tasarlar; kurgulamayı bu şemaya yaslar.

³⁰ Ağaoğlu, *Karşılaşmalar*, p. 243 “İntiharı bir ‘kaçış’ olarak nitelemek, acaba bir kaçış deliği imkânını her zaman açık tutmak anlamına gelmez mi?”

in Turkey following the coup: they are disillusioned, unsure of the future, and unsure if even their dissent is even valid.

Hayır (Non) was written with a leftist and adversary world view from the perspective of an intellectual who feels herself responsible for society as a whole. As Jale Parla indicates, it is a crisis novel. The final section of the novel takes the style of a ‘preview’ of the 1980s where ambiguity and doubt dominate the narrative structure. This is a reflection of real world temporality. It is never known whether Aysel attends the ceremony or not. The ambiguity is increased by the narration of an unnamed author who is a “friend of Aysel” of various outcomes which occur for Aysel. These sections describe various scenarios for Aysel’s suicide following the ceremony. This implies on the one hand that Aysel has committed suicide; however, the multiplicity of outcomes makes this extremely ambiguous: what is clear is that to survive as an intellectual, it is necessary for Aysel to abandon the world as she perceives it. As Ağaoğlu indicated in an interview, “Moving to a new place is sometimes committing suicide when still you are alive.”³¹

For my concluding thoughts on *Hayır* I will briefly examine the character Yenins, who is a close friend of Aysel. He is the only character in the novel who unambiguously represents hope and an escape which does not require suicide. The character’s status as a symbol for hope is embedded within his name: Yenins means ‘new man’, composed of two Turkish words “yeni” (new) and “insan” (man). Towards the end of the novel, Yenins argues that people can only exist with knowledge of the past and that it is only possible to imagine a hopeful future if you have this. This encapsulates Ağaoğlu’s intentions in creating the trilogy of novels, to create texts that capture a historical moment in order that readers can have knowledge of the past.

It is through the character of Yenins that the reader is told that Aysel has crossed the “border” and escaped from “repetition.”³² He also stresses that Aysel’s progression, whether interpreted literally or figuratively, is not an escape, but a refusal. This is expressed through an important metaphor, where life becomes a journey through a misty sea:

A boat in the sea, similar to a ghost ship, sails away from the coast gently ripping through the fog. It’s a boat in which no one can make out. Still, it slides through the fog as if it knows the way, having drawn its route, not being dragged. As if it’s leaving behind a child’s happy laughter. Subtle lines of that laughter on the waves that hit the coast.³³

³¹ Ibid., p. 244.

³² Ağaoğlu, *Hayır*, p. 268.

³³ Ibid., p. 267. Denizde bir sandal, bir hayal gemisi benzeri, sisi yararak usul usul uzaklaşıyor kıyıdan. İçinde hiç kimsenin seçilemediği bir sandal bu. Yine de sürüklenerek değil, yolunu çizmiş, o yolu bilircesine kayıyor sisin içinde. Geride, bir çocuğun neşeli gülüşlerini bırakıyor sanki. Kıyıya vuran dalgalarda o gülüşün ince izleri.

This indistinctness is crucial to understanding the novel: in the ‘dream time’ following the coup where life as it was has been suspended and the future is indistinct, Aysel’s character forcefully demonstrates that there is no answer to the question of how to respond to authoritarian control. Rather, it is the very ability to ask questions which must be preserved. Ağaoğlu presents the September 12th coup d’etat as an intersection between an individual crisis – a character on the brink of annihilation – with a social crisis brought about by the intrusion of state into the lives of individuals. It is this which causes the indistinctness as it is impossible for the individual to hold onto an idea dislocated from history and sense of self: “The moment that turns into another thing at the moment it is caught, for that same reason, is charged with infinite solutions as much as chances of integration.”³⁴

IV. Distortions of Time and Language

This article will now move on to discuss *Gece Dersleri* by Latife Tekin and the distortions of time and language that occur within the text. Similar to Ağaoğlu, Tekin is concerned with the way an individual is affected by the machinations of the authoritarian government and how this contributes to a loss of wholeness.

You don’t want to understand, I know you can endure the pain you suffer only by drawing your own borders. But: your history is lost. But: your memory is torn to pieces. (...) Don’t tell me people do not deserve their dreams.³⁵

Latife Tekin’s third book, *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) has provoked a variety of critical responses since its publication in 1986. Though it is a determinedly postmodernist text and not overtly political in its themes, it is possible to analyse its fragmentations and distortions through the lens of the historical and political turmoil which existed in Turkey when it was written.

Because of the novel’s fragmented structure, I will first begin by presenting a chronological summary. As a novel, it is fiercely resistant to classical structures in terms of place, time, and plot, and is one of the defining examples of Turkish postmodernism which arose during the 1980s. However, as I will argue, it is no coincidence that this significant shift in novelistic style and language occurred during a period of political upheaval and military rule.

At the start of novel, we are informed that the text tells the memoirs of Gülfidan and that we will be presented with “a young militant’s pale memoirs and breathtaking confessions.” The novel then sets out its stall as a critique of the opposition organizations and their structure, explaining how the protagonist experiences alienation and fragmentation in her body and identity, because of

³⁴ Ibid., p. 271. “Yakalandığı an’da başka bir şeye dönüşen an, aynı nedenle sonsuz çözüme, bir o kadar da birleştirme olanaklarıyla yüklüdür.”

³⁵ Latife Tekin, *Gece Dersleri*, Everest Yayınları, İstanbul 2004, p. 99. “Anlamak istemiyorsun, duyduğum acıya ancak kendi sınırlarını çizerek dayanabileceğini biliyorum. Ama: Tarihin kayıp; ama belleğin paramparça. Sınırlarını çizerken, umudun hala içinde oturduğu eski yapıyı ince bir sesle – mezardan bile geliyor olsa- alay alman doğru değil. Bana insanların düşlerine layık olmadıklarını söyleme.”

both the coup itself and her use by these structures. Gülfidan is forced to inhabit an identity which is not hers because she is commanded by the organization to change her name and appearance following the coup. However, at this moment she realises she is already metaphorically disguised because she has been suppressing her true identity. Being an individual within the opposition group is as impossible for her as it is for Aysel living under the authoritarian state in the previous novel.

The plot of the novel, such as it is, hangs on this realisation and the subsequent confessions of Gülfidan as she embodies her role as *Sekreter Rüzgar* (Secretary of the Wind), a formless and changeable entity which destroys her real self. Through the novel, the chain of admissions is all related to the suppression of her identity which allows her to be accepted by the opposition group. The purpose of relating the confessions, it becomes clear, is a vain attempt at purification, the exposure of all her fake identities and inner conflicts to reveal the ‘truth’. This is, then, an allegorical depiction of Turkish society as it struggles to purge its ‘fake’ identities so it can move into the future. However, it is also demonstrated that such a process is futile due to the inherent subjectivity of notions of self and language.

Gülfidan’s identity, in terms of her demarcated roles as a ‘rebel’ and a ‘woman’ are created in the image of the organisation, rather than through her self-knowledge. This has the effect of separating the protagonist’s mind from her body. Gülfidan’s femininity becomes a construct of masculine discourse, so that she exists only as a “faint image”:

A young woman who slowly swept ashes with her red wings, with her checked skirt, her heelless shoes, her eyebrows never trimmed, her hair short like a boy, was singing a march, mumbling.

(...) She was my looking-glass and look-alike.³⁶

Throughout the book, Gülfidan’s relationship with her own body exists in a state of detachment, perceiving herself in the third person as if looking at a reflection. This facilitates her constantly shifting image: when it is necessary for her to disguise her identity, she can easily create a fake world because she has no actual world, no actual body, and no actual language:

I was be-sorrowed in the basement of a colossal complex at a young age with the codename Secretary Wind. The rolling image of my life abandoned my memory of our people. I haven’t yet survived the shock. I am no different than a sufferer who after so many years, is looking for herself in the house in which she was born. I find it hard to remind myself of my name and who I am, and am urged an intact sleep.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., p. 16-17. “Kızıl kanatlarıyla ağır ağır kül süpüren, ekose etekli, topuksuz ayakkabılı, kaşları hiç alınmamış, saçları erkek saçı gibi kısa genç bir kadın mırıldanarak marş söylüyordu.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 9 “Sekreter Rüzgar kod adıyla koskocaman bir sitenin zemin katında genç yaşta mahzun kaldım. Yuvarlanıp giden hayatımın hayali, halkımızın bendeki hatırasına yüz çevirdi. Henüz şoku atlatamadım. Yıllar ve yıllar sonra

Nurdan Gürbilek cogently argues that the organisation in the novel is representative of the masculine discourse of the period, in both the authoritarian state and the opposition groups. Under these conditions, a woman has no right to speak; her body does not belong to her; the organisation possesses even her personality and individuality which is can alter for its own causes. It even decides on whether the protagonist can have children and when this should occur. This is a stark metaphor for the loss of the means for renewal in Turkish society: nothing new can be attempted or brought about because both the state power and the opposition seek to establish fake identities rather than face reality.

İskender Savaşır analyses the relationship between the leftist movement and *Gece Dersleri* in terms of the “rupture[ing]” of individuals: “the revolutionary theory that cannot construe its own practice. It always needs a meddah. Their adventure that began as a detachment continues as a disintegration.”³⁸ The representation of politics in *Night Lessons* can be found, therefore, in examining the relationship between Gülfidan as an individual and the organisation that seeks to control her. Her experience as related becomes a concrete demonstration that the theories of the opposition cannot be reconciled with their practices and thus, it establishes itself outside of time and history.³⁹ Like the authoritarian state in *Hayır* which seeks to remove itself from historical context and disavowal, the opposition organisation in *Gece Dersleri* does not have any real connection with real history, and exists in a dream world of its own creation.

The principle demand upon Gülfidan, then, is that she also excludes herself from history. This split from real historical time in her character is reflected by the novel’s fragmented structure. Each moment is split up into ‘past’ and ‘future’, and both constructs can be quickly and brutally determined by the present in whatever way the organisation demands.⁴⁰ We can see the way this operates in the dialogues between Gülfidan and the head of the organization. When she does as the organisation requires she is described in positive terms of belonging such as “sister”. However, when Gülfidan criticizes the despotic structure of the organization, the head of the organization accuses her of being disloyal and uses forceful language to categorise her as an enemy:

O the platoon of red-winged pioneer women [...]

You have impressed our leader with words full of feeling, whispers and wails that trembled with faith until morning and have persuaded him to organize the children. You

doğduğu evde kendini arayan bir ıstıraplıdan farksızım. Adımı ve kim olduğumu aklıma getirmekte güçlük çekmekteyim ve deliksiz bir uykuya zorlanmaktayım.”

³⁸ İskender Savaşır, “Latife Tekin’in Gece Dersleri: Bir Unutuşun Öyküsü”, *Yeni Gündem* 2, no.2, 17-23 March 1986, p. 59.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

have caused us countless trouble. Now you regard working as a worker in a thread factory for the sake of continuing our cause, fighting like a militia as a minuscule mission.⁴¹

Through this dialogue, Gülfidan feels like a “dumb worker” whilst at the same time she labels the administrative staff as “saints”. The change in descriptive language used to describe her also then changes her perspective on others, demonstrating how the manipulation of reality from within the organisation causes an alteration in the internal reality of the protagonist’s consciousness.⁴²

Through this process of constantly shifting language and perception of self, the opposition activists lose their agenda and forget their initial purpose which was to carry out a revolution after the September 12th coup. In place of this agenda, there is void which becomes filled by hopelessness and fear. The response to this fear is the retreat of the revolutionaries from the repressive atmosphere of the military takeover into the shelter of their homes. Hence, ‘returning home’ becomes a common trope in the literature of period representing the failure and defeat of the opposition movement. Tekin demonstrates in the novel that the revolutionary environment disappeared after the military intervention because within the home was the only place people could feel connected and within historical reality, unlike in the wider society which was dislocated from history.⁴³ Even then, however, there remains uncertainty: “It is not certain whether we might find a place under a roof tomorrow or in the following days or not.”⁴⁴

Ece Ertem bases her analysis of *Night Lessons* on a biographical critique of Tekin’s life during the 1980s and the parallels found in the descriptions of Gülfidan’s life with the opposition organisation. Ertem quotes Pelin Özer’s study on Tekin in order to emphasise that “in this process the author sees that there is an ‘unbelievable’ gap between the thoughts an activist organization dreamt of, tried to talk of and the people that were attempted at for recruitment.” Tekin admits that she was disillusioned by this process and lost confidence in the notion of opposition.⁴⁵ Through this process, the author decided that taking orders from the opposition groups was just as crushing for the individual as obeying the state, because it leaves one unable to form one’s own ideas and thoughts independently.⁴⁶ There is a similar criticism of leftist organizations in

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 11. “İllegalitenin masal yazarı Gülfidan,(...)Başkanımızı sabaha kadar duygulu sözler, fısıltılar ve inançla titreyen haykırımlarıyla etkiledin ve onu çocukları örgütlemeye ikna ettin. Sayısız bela açtın başımıza. Şimdi davamızın devamı için bir iplik fabrikasında işçi olarak çalışmayı, bir nefer gibi savaşmayı küçük bir görev sayıyorsun.”

⁴² Ibid., p. 85.

⁴³ Ece Ertem, “Romanlarda 12 Eylül Askeri Müdahalesi”, Yıldız Technical University, Unpublished MA Thesis, 2006, p. 106.

⁴⁴ Tekin, p. 39. “Yarın ya da gelecek öteki günlerde bir dam altı bulup bulamayacağımız belli değil.”

⁴⁵ Ertem, p. 91. “Bu süreçte yazar, örgütün düşleyip, anlatmaya çalıştığı düşüncelerle, örgütlemeye çalışılan insanların yaşamı arasında “inanılmaz” bir mesafe olduğunu görür.”

⁴⁶ Ertem, p. 87.

Kaan Arslanoğlu’s *Devrimciler* (‘Revolutionaries’), a novel that illustrates the relationships between the revolutionaries within the despotic structures.

Both Tekin and Arslanoğlu depict organisations that are in opposition to the hegemonic ideology and both criticise them in terms of their power structures. However, it is a misreading to suggest that the books are fundamentally against the principles of the leftist movement. What the books criticise is despotism, and they are certainly not in favour of the state authority. Such a misreading is in itself a product of the hegemonic ideology. It is a misreading Yalçın Küçük makes in his book, *Küfür Romanları* where his sharp criticism of Küçük comes from a shallow and indistinct interpretation. Although I agree with his view of Altan’s *Sudaki İz* (Traces On the Water), when he says the main characters of the book are “hollow, rootless, and hesitant” rather than being based in historical accuracy, I disagree with *Night Lessons* being described in similar terms. Tekin’s novel allows an interpretation of the reasons for the defeat of the leftist ideology. Whilst Altan depicts a schematic and caricatured view of oppositional groups, Tekin offers fundamental criticism of the leftist organisations in *Night Lessons* through a powerful analysis of the effect of such groups on the individual consciousness. For this reason, when Küçük criticises the text’s emphasis on spirituality, accusing the author of submitting to the imposition of the hegemonic ideology, he is mistaken.⁴⁷ The spiritual atmosphere of the book is a crucial characteristic of the protagonist’s confused and splintered psychology; the shifts in belief which move from one dogma to another reflects both the fragmented and distorted time and the protagonist’s perception of that period.

The critic Gürbilek draws attention to the obsession in *Küfür Romanları* on the notion of ‘unhealthy art’. Gürbilek argues that Küçük, like Jdanov describe Latife Tekin, Oğuz Atay and Robbe-Grillet as “unhealthy” and accuses them of being supportive of “monopolist capitalism,” and even schizophrenia and delirium. This is a pathological discourse – popular in the 1980s – which establishes an objective difference between ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ art.⁴⁸ With reference to the work of Ayhan Songar, Küçük accuses *Night Lessons* of “reproducing the fear” of authoritarian government and claims that this is the reason for the book’s popularity. He calls *Night Lessons* “Schizophrenia Lessons” and describes the author as a “fickle, insane, sarcastic, fabricator”:

Latife Tekin presents the leftist leaders as demons.

Latife Tekin introduces the leftists as people causing countless troubles.

I feel ashamed for continuing to analyze *The Night Lesson*⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Yalçın Küçük, *Küfür Romanları*, Tekin Yayınları, İstanbul 1988, p. 93.

⁴⁸ Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul 2007, p. 82-83.

⁴⁹ Yalçın Küçük, *Küfür Romanları*, p.93.

I must agree with Gürbilek's assessment of Küçük's analysis as 'shallow prescriptivism',⁵⁰ as if health or political didacticism were useful criteria for measuring the achievement of a novel. Küçük seems to expect the novel to provide a path for the renewal and repair of the leftist ideal, and is infuriated when the novel resists this demand:

The *Night Lessons* is not a novel of reparation anyway. It is more like a diary of disintegration. If what we understand from reparation is diagnosis and treatment, question and answer, wrong and right, history and a lesson drawn, *The Night Lessons* is a poem which has strived not to represent these and pay the price for this striving with the broken pictures it had the words illustrate.⁵¹

Rather than attempting "diagnosis and treatment", the "broken pictures" of the text accurately reflect the anger of those who sympathised with the leftist ideals but felt lack down by the organisations representing those ideals.⁵² The purpose of the novel is to listen to its own voice and to make this voice distinct outside the competing voices and discourses which attempt to silence it.⁵³

It is both in the fragmentation of the structure and language that the power of the text lies. Jale Parla's analysis of the text, demonstrates how language, time and space are also distorted.⁵⁴ It is in the abuse, both physical and mental, by the government and by opposition groups, of individuals that this fragmented language is formed. Because it grows from this abuse, by necessity the language used to describe this time of torment is fragmented and at times incoherent. As Sibel Irzik's states:

The few compelling examples of September 12th literature that are not blind to their own roots in this simultaneous silencing and incitement to speech, defeat and liberation, incorporate that knowledge into their texts in the form of a love and hate relationship with their own literariness. In Latife Tekin's *Night Classes*, the young militant Gülfidan's affair with the political slogans that pollute her body is just a relationship of love and hate. On the one hand she associates both political and literary language with a loss of authenticity and an exercise of power, and longs for a language of the body that would never betray experience and fall into irrelevance. At a critical point in the novel, during her transition from militancy to authorship, the performance of a "torture dance," accompanied by "the unforgettable music of the tongue that could move only in inarticulate screams" becomes the model for such a language.⁵⁵

According to Irzik, the literature of the period moves towards postmodernism because there is a huge amount of guilt and darkness born from

⁵⁰ Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, p. 83.

⁵¹ Parla, p.356. "Bir onarımın romanı da değildir zaten Gece Dersleri. Daha çok parçalanmanın güncesidir. Onarımdan anlaşılan teşhis ve tedavi, soru ve yanıt, yanlış ve doğru, tarih ve dersse eğer, Gece Dersleri bunları temsil etmemeye azmetmiş ve bu azmin bedelini sözcüklere resmettiği kırık resimlerle ödemiş bir şiirdir."

⁵² Nurdan Gürbilek, *Ev Ödevi*, İstanbul, Metis Yayınları, 2005, p. 46.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁴ Parla, p. 354.

⁵⁵ Sibel Irzik, "Military Coup Narratives and the (Dis)articulations of the Political in the Contemporary Turkish Novel", unpublished article, p. 14-15.

the suppression of certain language and modes of thinking. To criticise the power of the state authority in its own terms is to submit oneself to their rule: because they control the language, they are able to distort and change meaning to support their purposes. Therefore, In this poetry of horror written on the human flesh, she [Tekin] hopes to find a referential force beyond the reach of the political and literary manipulations of language. On the other hand, *Night Classes*, the book that she gives birth to at the end of the painful convulsions of her body and consciousness, is a narcissistic, even playful multiplication of words, narratives, and selves with its intermingling of realistic and fantastic elements, the incantational rhythms of its language, its repetitions, conflation of tenses, disintegration of identities. The lesson learned at the "night classes" seems to be the guilt of the literary, both in its inadequacy and its excess."⁵⁶

The search for a new language and a new means of expression is the attempt to purify violence, as it is only possible to overcome the inarticulacy of violence with language.⁵⁷ Therefore, it is within the language structures of the book, the claim of language both for the individual and author, that renewal can be found and history can be created:

His body, shuddering as if he was being electrocuted, with his gaze that violence had blurred, was like a herald of a whole new language. Words, when petrified still, the first messenger of a totally different path where I could carry myself to.⁵⁸

Night Lessons is a book of fear and delirium, of an individual experiencing a total loss of language, space and history as a result of trauma. Political organizations, their masculine structure and discourse, and the shock of the coup are all represented within the text through the very structure and language of the novel: the distortions in language, time, history and space make it possible to understand the fragmentations and distortions of the period. Through the trauma of the individual, we are able to see the trauma of the whole society.

Conclusion

Both authors examined in this paper were opposed to the military intervention and the junta which seized power. Ağaolu was an activist and actively protested the imprisonment of activists and the Junta's use of capital punishment. She was a leading part of the intellectual movement and one of its most prominent spokespeople. Latife Tekin meanwhile was a revolutionary activist before the military intervention knew about the leftist organisations and revolutionaries from firsthand experience. Though they both depict the atmosphere of defeat and betrayal experienced by leftists, their novels approach September 12th from different perspectives. No describes the September 12th as experienced by the intellectuals in the universities and the experience of

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.15.

⁵⁷ Gürbilek, *Ev Ödevi*, p. 58.

⁵⁸ Tekin, "Latife Tekin'in Gece Dersleri: Bir Unutuşun Öyküsü", p. 57.

intellectuals in society; *Night Lessons* critiques the leftist organisations from the bottom up. Aysel attempts to come to terms with the new order, but can only escape it through either literal or figurative suicide; the experienced and disenchanted revolutionary Gülfidan is imprisoned both in her house and within her mind as she cannot escape the various identities she has created for herself. The protagonist's in both novels are trying to recreate themselves but, in doing so, loses their political agenda which was their most defining characteristic. Gülfidan in particular can only find shelter in the fictions she creates for herself; and this, in a sense, is a cogent metaphorical representation of the experience of all prisoners after September 12th. These postmodern texts function as confessional booths and spaces where revolutionaries can discover their lost selves. However, in creating this space it is first necessary to make it distinct from the space occupied by the state authority. In doing so, it loses its capacity to be a tool of resistance. This, in microcosm, is what happened to the left wing thinkers, intellectuals, and revolutionaries following the September 12th coup d'état.

REFERENCES

- AĞAOĞLU, Adalet, *Başka Karşılaşmalar*, YKY, İstanbul 2001.
- AĞAOĞLU, Adalet, *Hayır*, YKY, İstanbul 2005.
- AHMAD, Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, Routledge, London 1993.
- ALTUNIŞIK, Meliha Benli and TÜR, Özlem, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change*, Routledge, New York 2004.
- BİRAND, Mehmet Ali, *12 Eylül: Türkiye'nin Miladı*, Doğan Kitap, İstanbul 1999.
- EAGLETON, Terry, *Edebiyat Eleştirisi Üzerine*, Eleştiri Yayınevi, İstanbul 1970.
- ERGENE, Ayhan, "Son Klasik Darbeyle Yüzleşmek" available at: <http://www.bianet.org>, 2005.
- ERGÜDER, Üstün, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Behaviour in Turkey", *Readings in Turkish Politics* ed. by Metin Heper, Boğaziçi University Press, İstanbul 1980.
- ERTEM, Ece Cihan, "Romanlarda 12 Eylül Askeri Müdahalesi", Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İstanbul 2006.
- GÜRBİLEK, Nurdan, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul 2007.
- GÜRBİLEK, Nurdan, *Ev Ödevi*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul 2005.
- HEPER, Metin and KEYMAN, E Fuat, "Double-Faced State: Political Patronage and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies* 3, no.34, 1998, p. 264.
- IRZİK, Sibel, "Military Coup Narratives and the (Dis)articulations of the Political in the Contemporary Turkish Novel", unpublished article, p.14-15.
- JONGMAN, Albert and SCHMID Alex Peter, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Concepts, Data, Bases, Theories & Literature*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey 2005.
- KALAYCIOĞLU, Ersin, "1960 Sonrası Türk Politik Hayatına bir Bakış: Demokrasi-Neo-Patrimonyalizm ve İstikrar" *Türkiye'de Politik Değişim ve Modernleşme*, ed. by. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Ali Yaşar Sarıbay Alfa, İstanbul 2000.

- KARPAT, Kemal, "Turkish Democracy at Impasse: Ideology, Party Politics and the Third Military Intervention" *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2, no.1, Spring/Summer 1981, p.18.
- KÜÇÜK, Yalçın, *Küfür Romanları*, Tekin Yayınları, İstanbul 1988.
- LICHT, Justus, "Twenty Years Since the Military Coup in Turkey", *World Socialist Web Site*. 27 September 2000.
- ÖZBUDUN, Ergun, "Voting Behaviour in Turkey" *Electoral Politics in the Middle East: Issues, Voters, and Elites* ed. by Jacob M. Landau, Hoover Institution Press, London 1980.
- ÖZBUDUN, Ergun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder 2000.
- PARLA, Jale, *Don Kişot'tan Bugüne Roman*, İletişim, İstanbul 2003.
- SAVAŞIR, İskender, "Latife Tekin'in Gece Dersleri: Bir Unutuşun Öyküsü", *Yeni Gündem* 2, no.2, March 1986, p. 59.
- SAYARI, Sabri, "Turkish Party System in Transition" *Readings in Turkish Politics*, ed. by Metin Heper, Boğaziçi University Press, İstanbul, 1980.
- TACHAU, Frank and HEPER, Metin, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey", *Comparative Politics* 16, no.1, October 1983, p. 25.
- TEKİN, Latife, *Gece Dersleri*, Everest Yayınları, İstanbul 2004.
- ZÜRCHER, Erik J., *Turkey: A Modern History*, St. Martin's Press, London 1998.