

## The State and Individuals in the 12<sup>th</sup> March Novels *Şafak* and *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*

Ahmet ALVER\*

### ABSTRACT

It is estimated that between 1970 and 1980 more than 5,000 people died in politically motivated violence in Turkey. The 'March 12<sup>th</sup> novels' is a retroactive umbrella term used to describe the works of fiction written this period. Their inspiration is the events surrounding the March 12th military intervention; the military takeover, the battle between revolutionary left wing activists and nationalists, and the political and social fallout of the intervention. It is during this period of persecution and oppression that the March 12th novels were written and they provide an invaluable source for anyone wanting to understand the effects of the persecution and atrocities committed by the state on its people.

This article in particular has focused upon two works by Sevgi Soysal, *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* (The Women's Cellblock of Yıldırım) and *Şafak* (Dawn) that are set either largely or wholly in prisons and explore the theme of direct relationship between repressive state and the individuals.

**Key Words:** 12th March military intervention, 12th March novels, revolutionary woman, violence, oppressive state

### 12 Mart Romanları *Şafak* ve *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*'nda Devlet ve Birey İlişkisi

### ÖZET

Türkiye'de, 1970 ve 1980 yılları arasında, siyasî sebeplerle meydana gelen şiddet olaylarında değişik kaynaklara göre sağ ve sol görüşlü 5.000 dolayında vatan evladının hayatını kaybettiği tahmin edilmektedir. 12 Mart 1971 askerî müdahalesinin öncesi ve sonrasında yaşananları ele alarak, 1980'e kadar olan zaman diliminde, aşırı sağ ve sol görüşlü aktivistlerin birbirleriyle ve devletin güvenlik güçleriyle olan kavgalarını ele alan, 1970'ler Türkiye'sinin bilinmeyen yanlarına edebî bir perspektiften bakıp kültürel hafızasını tutan, bu döneme etkili bir dille ayna tutmaya çalışan eserlere genel bir ifadeyle '12 Mart Romanları' denmektedir. Kaos ve kargaşanın, aşırı şiddetin, devlet tarafından kendi halkına uygulanan baskının had safhada olduğu bir döneme ışık tutması sebebiyle bu romanlar, paha biçilmez değere sahip yazılı kaynaklardır.

Bu çalışma, özellikle, 12 Mart dönemi kadın yazarlarından Sevgi Soysal'ın kaleminden çıkan *Şafak* ve *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* adlı romanlara yoğunlaşmış; bu romanlardaki baskıcı devlet ve bireyler arasındaki dengesiz ilişkiyi konu edinmiştir.

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\* Yrd. Doç. Dr., Murat Hüdavendigâr Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, alverahmet@gmail.com;  
Asst. Prof., Murat Hüdavendigâr University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Turkish Language and Literature, alverahmet@gmail.com

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** 12 Mart askeri müdahalesi, 12 Mart romanları, devrimci kadın, şiddet, baskıcı devlet

### Introduction

The first novel in Turkish literature was *Akabi Hikâyesi*<sup>1</sup> (The Story of Akabi), written by an Armenian-Ottoman author, Hovsep Vartanyan in 1851 in the Tanzimat period. Even though it was written in Turkish, this work was printed in the Armenian alphabet.<sup>2</sup> In this novel, he narrates a story of an impossible love affair between two young people originating from different communities. However, what is the first Turkish novel in the Ottoman script is Şemsettin Sami's *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (The Romance of Talat and Fitnat) written in 1872.<sup>3</sup> Sami and the other early novelists were products of a mobile and educated urban class. Proficient in Western languages and familiar with European culture and political thought, they felt it necessary to adopt Western ideas in order to reform the crumbling Ottoman Empire. For these writers, the novel seemed the obvious literary medium through which to analyse and criticise the state of Ottoman society and to broadcast their ideas for reform.<sup>4</sup> Ever since then, the development of Turkish novel has been profoundly influenced by the relationship between this educated urban elite and the presiding political authorities. Before the outbreak of the First World War, the key events which shaped the Turkish novel were also the key political events which shaped the rise of Turkey as a nation: the political reform movement of the 1870s; the subsequent rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II which began in 1876; the Young Turk movement of the early twentieth-century which overthrew the Sultan in 1908; and, more generally, the rapidly escalating power of Turkish nationalism as the primary intellectual focus. Each of these political changes informed not only the subject matter, but also the realist techniques of the early novelists, who in many cases were both active against as well as victims of the increasingly oppressive rule of the fading Ottoman Empire.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Turkish nationalist movement in the wake of WWI and many writers became part of the new Republican elite, a coalition of army officers, intellectuals, professionals, and government officials who joined forces to drive for a secular republic. One of the biggest challenges facing this movement was replacing the traditional Islamic consciousness with a wide-ranging secular, nationalist, and republican mindset and novelists soon became a crucial part of this process, spreading the new ideology to the furthest reaches of the nation. The only legal organ for political mobilisation was the Republican People's Party (RPP; *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*),<sup>5</sup> the single vehicle responsible for enacting the new ruling elite's programme for political and social reform. As the novels, short stories and poetry of the time demonstrates, however, it was

<sup>1</sup> Vartan Paşa, *Akabi Hikâyesi İlk Türkçe Roman*, Eren Yayınları, İstanbul, 1851.

<sup>2</sup> Laurent mignon, "Tanzimat Dönemi Romanına Bir Önsöz: vartan Paşa'nın Akabi Hikâyesi", in *Elifbâlar Sıvası*, Hece Yayınları, Ankara, 2003, pp. 67-77.

<sup>3</sup> Robert P. Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel 1872-1900*, Isis Press, İstanbul, 1984, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>5</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi Sürecinde Türkiye 1945-1980*, Hil Yayınları, İstanbul, 1994, p. 15.

the intellectual movement who had to reach out to the mass populace, speaking with and for the peasant population in rural Anatolia and, ultimately, making the forging of a new secular republic from the ashes of the six hundred-year old Ottoman Empire possible.

As early as the 1920s, disenchantment with one-party rule under the RPP, and especially its heavy-handed repression of dissent, led to the rise of an intellectual counter-elite, a group of writers and activists who voiced stringently socialist criticism of contemporary society through books, periodicals, demonstrations, committees, and, eventually, through political parties. The one-party state clearly tolerated very little dissent either inside or outside the RPP<sup>6</sup> and the government sought to suppress any movement based on worker-peasant class solidarity for fear it would compete with the primacy of Turkish national identity: at the time, in fact, 'Turkish' was the only officially sanctioned ethnic identity for Kurds, Arabs, and other traditionally Muslim non-Turkish sections of society. The counter-elite stressed worker-peasant class union, however, bringing into their works the problems both of the rural Anatolian peasantry and the growing numbers of urban poor who had migrated to the cities from the countryside. Because of this, the intellectual left endured increasingly brutal government repression, particularly post-WWII, as the Turkish leaders sought to align themselves with the United States. Though one-party rule ended, the oppression of the left continued with the victory of Adnan Menderes's Democrat Party (DP; *Demokrat Parti*) in 1950 as Turkey became increasingly Westernised, sending troops to the Korean War, joining NATO, and becoming a founding member of CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation).<sup>7</sup>

Menderes' DP won three national elections in the 1950s, whilst the RPP became the principal party of opposition. Menderes presented himself as both a populist and a traditionalist, building his support base from small business men and the rural population, two groups that felt bypassed by the RPP. Menderes constantly antagonised the Republican elite by rolling back institutions and programmes of secular reform, whilst weakening the position of the civil service and the military, along with any other factions closely aligned to the RPP and its objectives.<sup>8</sup> Despite his victories in the polls, Menderes in paranoiac fashion, resented criticism by his political opponents. In a fateful move, he attempted to stifle all dissent by setting up a parliamentary commission to investigate and shut down the RPP. As a result of this, on 27 May 1960, the military, supported by the old Republican elite, overthrew the Menderes government.<sup>9</sup>

The modernisation of Turkey and the emergence of the Turkish novel have, since the new social direction of the late Ottoman era and throughout the Republican period, been firmly driven by European ideals. This was hugely problematic as the newly formed nation struggled to maintain the differences between itself and the West. Most

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<sup>6</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, I.B. Tauris, London and New York, 1993, pp. 184-86.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245-48.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad, p. 106.

<sup>9</sup> Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey: Crises, Interruptions and Re-Equilibrations", eds. Lary Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, Lynne Rienner, London, 1989, p. 201.

significantly, Turkey's acceptance of democracy was far more fraught than in other Western states. After adopting a truly democratic regime in 1950, within a very short space of time, the Turkish political system was overthrown four times by the military in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997.

Of the four, the March Twelfth intervention in 1971 stands out in terms of its political, social, and literary impact, as well as its complexity and its role as the tipping point between the coups of 27 May 1960 and 12 September 1980. Unlike the coups of 1960 and 1980, and, in fact, unlike most coups, the March Twelfth overthrow was not directed at the government. It did not cause the parliament to be dissolved, nor outlaw the governing party. Politicians were not banned from politics, nor did they face criminal charges. The real objective of the coup was to act against the left-wing opposition and the words of one of the architects of the coup, General Faruk Gürler, to the prime minister, "Mr Demirel, we did not do this against you,"<sup>10</sup> were not as hollow as they may seem. Because of this uniqueness, the March Twelfth coup has ever since been the subject of much study by writers, historians, and jurists.

The March Twelfth coup had an enormous impact on writers and their works and introduced a completely new politically charged discourse in literature which attempted to dissect the main powers behind the coup d'état. The 'March Twelfth Novel' became the overarching term to describe the works of left-wing writers which responded to the aftermath of the coup. The overthrow changed the Turkish left's perception of Turkey and of itself, significantly ending the sixty-year period in the novel's development, a period marked chiefly by a tendency towards socialist realism. A hallmark of post-coup writing was the widening of the geographical scope of the novel, moving from the confines of heavily Westernised upper-middle class Istanbul families to include rural Anatolian society, as well as migrant labour in urban centres. At the same time, however, the novel narrowed its social focus to the small sector of the university-educated political left. This focus was not so much on the lifestyle of this group as on its plight under what it considered to be state oppression, using testimonial accounts to highlight the human element of the political upheaval.

The majority of the novels dealing with the period were knee-jerk reactions, written by people who witnessed the intervention first-hand and who were traumatised by the retraction of civil rights and political freedom.<sup>11</sup> The state, meant to serve the people, became instead a means of accumulating power for the influential. The well-known novelists of the time were greatly influenced by the 1968 left-wing student movements in Europe and were sympathetic to the socialist idealists and organisations which were struggling to recover from damage done by the military coup.<sup>12</sup> Writers such as Füzûzan, Adalet Ağaoglu, Sevgi Soysal, Ayla Kutlu, Çetin Altan, Erdal Öz, Pınar Kür, Samim Kocagöz, Oğuz Atay, Atilla İlhan and Vedat Türkali whose books are still widely read and

<sup>10</sup> Reported by a senator to a journalist. See *Cumhuriyet Newspaper*, 19 March 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmet Kekeç, "Darbeler ve Romanlar", *Hece: Türk Romanı Özel Sayısı*, 6, 2002, pp. 65-67.

<sup>12</sup> A. Ömer Türkeş, "Romanda 12 Mart Suretleri ve 68 Kuşağı", *Birikim*, 132, 2000, pp. 80-85.

reprinted in great numbers. They described in various fashions the political polarisation of Turkish society, the socio-political alteration of the 1970s, and the repressive measures of the military regime. Their fiction, taken together, vividly traces the physical and mental demolition of the left-wing identity after the youth movement failed to succeed against the military coup.

Prisons provide a potent thematic environment for works which examine the problems of post-1970 coup Turkey whilst concentrating on the internal world of their characters: the intensity of human interaction and the inevitable opportunities for self-confrontation are heightened by the enclosed surroundings of the prison walls. Moreover, being imprisoned was no mere literary contrivance for the March Twelfth novelists. Just as diseases such as tuberculosis pervaded nineteenth-century literature, incarceration was, for left-wing writers in particular, an all-too-present and cruel reality of the era.<sup>13</sup> The March Twelfth writers were ultimately concerned with the violence that the state directed at the individual. For their concern, many faced imprisonment and so 'prisons' came to provide both a literal and metaphorical symbol for writers analysing the condition of the intellectual left.

The dominant theme of the March Twelfth novels is the ordeal of young left-wing activists in prison and the torture they suffered. Ahmet Kekeç argues that a lack of support among the general population was the reason for the young revolutionaries' failure to prevent the military intervention. He asserts that, rather than questioning the motives of the young rebels, post-coup novels focus on their defiant attitude once they have been captured.<sup>14</sup> For Kekeç, the March Twelfth novels are far more concerned with defiance in defeat than with youthful ideals. Murat Belge, on the other hand, bases his analysis on a novel-novelist-public triangle and regards the March Twelfth novels as depictions of imprisonment, torture and provocation, which create an unavoidable metaphorical distinction between "inside" and "outside". Belge argues that if this opposition consists of imprisoned revolutionaries "inside" and the general public "outside" then these works constitute a means of creating awareness among the public about the plight of the prisoners. He does not automatically presume that the rebels are innocent but at the same time asks if the fault lay with the law or if those who are in charge of the administration of justice acted unfairly towards them.<sup>15</sup> Belge warns that "defending the offence" could potentially lead to far graver accusations and claims that, regardless of its effectiveness in illustrating genuine abuses of power, basing a novel primarily on the brutal methods of repression used after the March Twelfth intervention will inevitably distort the author's sense of objectivity. He comes to the conclusion that artistic experience will simply not suffice in the quest to complete theoretical knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmet Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel*, Biblioetheca Islamica, Minneapolis, 1983, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup> Kekeç, 2002, pp. 65-67.

<sup>15</sup> Murat Belge, *Edebiyat Üstüne Yazılar*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998, pp. 127-134.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Fethi Naci meanwhile takes a far more political approach to the March Twelfth novels, addressing the difficulty of depicting their real life traumatic experiences in a realistic manner.<sup>17</sup> He accentuates the honesty and genuine nature of these novels, and shows that, instead of discussing them verbally, the novelists of this period insert their political beliefs straight into their novels.<sup>18</sup> Naci regards the March Twelfth novels as the necessary starting point for every novelist who has come after and is a keen proponent of expanding the genre to encompass wider experiences, new challenges and more diverse characters, thus pushing the novel form to modernise and achieve higher levels of sophistication. Naci insists that any novelist since the military in 1971 intervention who wishes to write with a social focus must learn valuable lessons from the March Twelfth novelists and carry out extremely in-depth research into Turkish history, the socioeconomic climate, socialism and youth culture.<sup>19</sup>

We also find an emphatically political approach in the criticism of Ahmet Oktay, who highlights the intolerance and aggression shown by left-wing authors towards anyone whose opinions and ideals differed from their own and asserts that this deliberate provocation is directly responsible for the popularity of the novels.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Ahmet Türkeş examines the March Twelfth novels from a broader perspective and detaches their leftist ideology from conventional socialist works of fiction in order to explore the influence of the March Twelfth novels beyond the 1980 coup.<sup>21</sup> Berna Moran takes a social approach to the novels and looks in depth at the working classes and the constant migration to the big cities. This large-scale internal movement of people not only threw up clashes of culture but also revived the importance of the working classes in Turkish literature, with writers often concentrating on the perpetual struggle between the workers and the bourgeoisie.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, it is worth taking into account Çimen Günay's enthusiastic call to abandon the derogatory and often hostile attitude of critics towards the March Twelfth novels. She argues that close examination of gender roles within the novels can illuminate the complexity of interpersonal relations within a patriarchal power structure and by extension shine a light on the most recent period of Turkish national history.<sup>23</sup>

### **Critical Analysis of *Şafak* and *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu***

In this article we shall examine two works by Sevgi Soysal, *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*<sup>24</sup> (The Women's Cellblock of Yıldırım) and *Şafak*<sup>25</sup> (Dawn). These novels are set either

<sup>17</sup> Fethi Naci, *Türkiye'de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme*, Gerçek Yayınları, İstanbul, 1981, p. 416.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 364-6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 417.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Oktay, *Türkiye'de Popüler Kültür*, Everest Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p. 242.

<sup>21</sup> A. Ömer Türkeş, "Romanda 12 Mart Suretleri ve 68 Kuşağı", *Birikim*. 132, 2000, pp. 80-85.

<sup>22</sup> Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış 3*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Çimen Günay, *Cold War Masculinities in Turkish Literature: A Survey of March 12<sup>th</sup> Novels*, Leiden University Press, Leiden, 2009, p.16.

<sup>24</sup> Sevgi Soysal, *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*, Bilgi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1979.

largely or wholly in prisons and explore the theme of direct violence by the state against the individual. This writer of the intellectual left were without the constitutional safeguards which she had relied upon for the previous decade and were now, in every sense, at the mercy of the state.

Our analysis centres on the examination of the relationship between the attitude of the narrator to the narratee in bridging the divide between literary interior and historical exterior.<sup>26</sup> The terms *narrator* and *author* are not interchangeable. Likewise, the *narratee* and the *reader* are two different entities, functioning entirely separately with regards to the texts.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the *narrator* and *narratee* are textual constraints inscribed in the text and must be differentiated from the real author and real reader or receiver of the work.<sup>28</sup> In several cases, the textual narrator and narratee share the same purpose, the same pathos, and identical knowledge. Under these textual conditions then, the real author demands a high level of assumed information from his or her reader in order for them to participate in the narrative. Joseph Prince argues that assessing the level of assumed knowledge within a text is key to determining the narrative stance of the narrator and, in these works, with their common thematic presentation of state violence against the individual, the unarguably high level of assumed knowledge is as obvious to the reader as it is to the textual narratee.<sup>29</sup>

Sevgi Soysal's *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*, published in 1976, is not a fictional work but nonetheless holds an important place amongst the prison narratives of major Turkish writers imprisoned during the 'sledgehammer operation'. The work documents the writer's two terms of imprisonment in Yıldırım following the intervention and provides an insight into the intellectual left's formation of their post-March Twelfth narrative.

The military authorities arrested Soysal shortly after they imprisoned her husband, Mümtaz Soysal, a prominent law professor and political scientist. She was detained on the street and charged with not carrying her citizen identity card, despite the fact she has two such cards on her person. She was placed in Yıldırım Prison with an assortment of other left wing sympathisers ranging from Behice Boran to a school headmistress and various student activists. The cellblock resembled, to Soysal, a dormitory of rowdy twenty-two years olds, hopping from bunk to bunk, stealing food and having pillow fights. Once the prisoners fell into a routine, they retained their political allegiances from outside prison: the Devrimci Gençler (Dev-Genç: Revolutionary Youth) and *Şafak* factions quickly forming cliques. The Şafakists greeted each other with raised fists, exercising together and

<sup>25</sup> Sevgi Soysal, *Şafak*, Bilgi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1980.

<sup>26</sup> Herman Vidal, *Sentido Y. Practica De La Critica Literaria Socio Historica: Panfleto Para La Proposición De Una Arqueología Acotada*, Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, Minneapolis, 1984, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> Gerald Joseph Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 1987, pp. 57, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Gerald Joseph Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Foundation of Narrative*, Mouton, Berlin, 1983.

sharing clothes, whilst the younger prisoners bait the older, more pragmatic Boran. Above all, the prisoners competed to show off their political awareness to the authorities and each other. This period in jail, which ended with Soysal's release, stood in pointed contrast to her second term of incarceration.

Soon after Soysal's initial release, the military once again arrested her and sent her to Yıldırım Prison, this time on the grounds of slandering the armed forces. This time, the tensions were much greater within the jail, as both the factionalism between the prisoners and the brutality of the authorities increased. The bitter atmosphere within the prison was closely linked to the events of the outside world, where the crackdown on the left had intensified following the capture and trial of the Çayanist and Gezmiş factions. Soysal became an unofficial spokeswoman for many of the prisoners, in particular those who had suffered torture. When she was eventually tried, Soysal was found guilty and received one year of imprisonment and four months of internal exile. Her narrative ends on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1972 when she leaves Yıldırım Prison and is transported to Merkez.

*Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* is as much a prose narrative as any novel and Soysal is equally challenged by the problem of narration.<sup>30</sup> Julius Caesar chose an unnamed third-person narrator to describe his memoirs of the Gallic Wars, seeking to impress upon his reader the veracity of his purported military prowess by using a seemingly unbiased third party.<sup>31</sup> Soysal's goal is completely different, however. In her work, she tries to analyse the result of the March Twelfth coup, rather than stating what she actually did. By choosing her own voice as the voice of the textual narrator, she makes no pretence of writing anything other than personal impressions. Similar to the protagonists in the works of Altan and Öz, the narrator-protagonist Soysal reveals very little of her own life prior to the 'sledgehammer-operation'.

Soysal, as a figure of society, was well-known to the readers of her books. She had won the *Türk Radyo ve Televizyonu Sanat Ödülü* (Turkish Radio and Television Art Award) in 1970 for *Yürümek*<sup>32</sup> (To Walk), a novel for which she was later arrested on obscenity charges, and had also won the 1974 Orhan Kemal Novel Award for *Yenişehir'de Bir Öğle Vakti*<sup>33</sup> (It Was Noon Time in Yenişehir).

In the aftermath of the March 12<sup>th</sup>, instead of using digging tools the authorities began to burn people. They didn't care how many people got burned in the process. There were all sorts of ways to burn people. One of the most popular methods was to blast out the lists of those who'd been arrested on the radio and the television. These lists were always surprising and were continuously broadcast as if the people who had been arrested had just escaped. That way, those people close to the prisoners would be even more worried, saying "So, he's escaped only

<sup>30</sup> Aleksandr Segeevich Pushking, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, Dutton, New York, 1963; Vikram Seth, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse*, Random House, New York, 1986.

<sup>31</sup> Julius C. Caesar, *Caesar's Gallic War*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1911.

<sup>32</sup> Sevgi Soysal, *Yürümek*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Sevgi Soysal, *Yenişehirde Bir Öğle Vakti*, Bilgi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1973.



to be shot!” There were even secret operation lists. These lists were held at MİT<sup>34</sup>, the central headquarters in the counter-guerrilla organisation, and were designed to be released in certain environments. Even martial law could be extended: as soon as the operative order went out, certain names on certain lists could be quickly yoked together. Thus, a martial law notice appropriate to that operation could be dashed off in minutes.

As for the methods of hunting people down, militants were eliminated with a furious savageness that made the detainment operations pale into insignificance. It was a deadly hunt. Until all of the hunted had been captured, any living people the hunters came across were sent to be tortured. They behaved towards their prey, and anyone close to the victims or anyone who hid them, with a ruthlessness that ensured any hiding places were quickly discovered. Until the final objective of the operations – “the destruction of the nest” – had been accomplished, these man-hunters would be caught up in a complete drunkenness of blood. There were surely men amongst them who wanted to line the walls of their homes with the heads of the militants whom they’d killed, as if they were hunted animals. If only this had been possible! Ah, if only the Constitution, the laws, the United Nations, the weight of world opinion, and all other such nuisances, had not interfered with the pleasures of the hunting parties.<sup>35</sup>

Soysal’s narrative exists for a narratee well acquainted its context: March Twelfth is a date that doesn’t need a year. She doesn’t describe the aftermath of the coup in terms of political terminology but through a metaphorical presentation of her perception of events, the metaphors serving as a constant reminder of the narrator’s presence.<sup>36</sup> People are not simply arrested; they are “to be burned.”<sup>37</sup> Those who conduct the round up are “hunters”<sup>38</sup> caught up in “a complete drunkenness of blood” and the broadcasting of lists is “blasted”.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Soysal divides her work into forty chapters with such evocative headings as “Girls with Big Boobs”, “Busy Melahat”, and “Woman Shmoman”. At the end of the above passage, the narrator makes her presence felt by sarcastically commenting on the disappointment of the ‘hunters’, restrained by recognised Turkish and international legal norms.

Soysal’s references to the Turkish Constitution, considered by the left to be one of the crowning achievements of the 1961 coup, are indicative of the opinions of her intended readership: even her husband, Mümtaz Soysal, had written two works on the 1961 Constitution.<sup>40</sup> The intellectual left clung to the Constitution as the basis of its freedom and its hope, despite the fact that it had not been ratified by a majority of the

<sup>34</sup> MİT (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı): National Intelligence Service.

<sup>35</sup> Soysal, 1979, pp. 7-8.

<sup>36</sup> Prince, 1987, pp. 8-10.

<sup>37</sup> Soysal, 1979, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Mümtaz Soysal, *Yüz Soruda Anayasanın Anlamı*, Gerçek Yayınları, İstanbul, 1986.

Turkish electorate. Soysal's narration is aimed at the leftist counter-elite that identified itself with the 1961 Constitution and had been subsequently crushed.

Though Soysal refers to the Constitution, her allusion to it is contextualised by the specific conditions of the prison. At one point, the prisoners organise a protest, refusing to take part in a roll call:

The door opened. At the head of the roll call crew, the non-com was completely bewildered by the scene in the cellblock.

Before he had a chance to speak, I said, "We will not stand for roll call to protest against the torture of our friends in the opposite cellblock."

The non-com left without replying. A little later, the cellblock door opened.

The major entered with a small group of soldiers behind him. My friends did not stir from their bunks.

The major was nervous. If there wasn't a roll call in the cellblock it was like the end of the world, or worse, the end of his military career.

He must have jammed the soldiers into the cellblock to intimidate us, implying that we would be beaten if we did not get up for roll call. There was not a sound in the cellblock as I repeated to the major what I had told the non-com.

The major said that he had no influence on any of problems in the prison, that they were the responsibility of his superiors.

We said that this wasn't good enough, that we were protesting against the entirety of an administration that had allowed the Constitution to be trampled under foot. People were being tortured; we had no other options.<sup>41</sup>

Soysal protests against the torture inflicted on the prison authorities in a scene of strong narrative thrust, using concrete specific events.<sup>42</sup> Both as protagonist and narrator, Soysal's primary concern is for the events themselves. When she narrates the tension-filled showdown above, the phrase that comes at the end, "an administration that had allowed the Constitution to be trampled under foot", has no meaning unless it is followed by, "People were being tortured". Her theorising of the major's thoughts and her protest against the attack on the Constitution are a response to the concrete conditions of her immediate environment. Thus, she prioritises the narration of events that take place in the environment of the protagonist, and the narration of her perception of these events, rather than their interpretation beyond the immediate scope of the imprisoned protagonist. Soysal opts to restrict the protagonist's scope, that is to say her own scope, at each moment in the course of the narration, not going beyond her own immediate knowledge as textual narrator and protagonist.

Soysal's novel *Şafak*, first published in 1974, bridges the gap between the first three works and a second group that examine the position of the urban intelligentsia

<sup>41</sup> Soysal, 1979, pp. 236-7.

<sup>42</sup> Prince, 1987.

outside the direct repression of the prison environment. *Şafak*'s plot concerns a police raid and a night in prison and examines the state of Oya, an urban intellectual in internal exile in Adana, whose plight is contextualised by the people she meets over the course of an evening. The narrative is not confined to the time and space of immediate events, embracing the narration of the characters' lives prior to the night in question.

The basic plot is simple and divided into three chapters, "Raid" (Baskın), "Interrogation" (Sorgu), and "Dawn" (Şafak). The novel begins with a small group of people who have never met before eating dinner at the home of Maraşlı Ali Gülşan in İstiklal Mahallesi, a poverty-stricken working class neighbourhood in Adana. The police, led by Abdullah, burst in and take away Maraşlı Ali, as well as Hüseyin, a local attorney; Mustafa, a maths teacher recently released from Selimiye prison where he was held for political reasons; Oya, who was invited by Hüseyin, and is now nearing the end of a period of internal exile in Adana; Ekrem, a right wing entrepreneur who has been running a small import-export business between Turkey and West Germany; and Zekeriya, Gülşah's brother-in-law and a nominal member of the Bozkurtlar (the Grey Wolves) (Landau 1974). The police only leave behind the two sisters Gülşah and Ziynet. Abdullah acts on a tip off that the dinner is a meeting of a leftist cell, calling through to inform his headquarters "a den of anarchists was raised in İstiklal Mahallesi. Six anarchists were apprehended."<sup>43</sup>

When Abdullah arrives at the police headquarters, he calls Zekai Bey, the chief of security in Adana. Zekai Bey is playing bridge with İsmet Bey, the manager of the Adana branch of Uluslararası Endüstri ve Ticaret Bankası (the International Industry and Trade Bank). Also playing are Necmettin Bey, a heart specialist, and Muzaffer Bey, a retired colonel who is now the factory director of *Akdeniz Sanayi*. Zekai is angry at being interrupted, once Abdullah explains that the colonel of the martial law authority is waiting for him, he wisely decides to go to police headquarters and supervise the situation. On the way, he picks up two smuggled cartons of Kent cigarettes left for him at the Koza Oteli (Koza Hotel). Upon arriving at the headquarters, he discovers that the colonel has left, but Zekai is convinced that the group is a left-wing cell and that he can force them to confess. He interrogates Oya and Mustafa with what Zekai describes as "reasoning", that actually consists of raving and hitting the prisoners. By dawn, he realises the tip off was wrong and has to release the prisoners. Maraşlı Ali, the poor worker, suffers the largest injustice of the night: when he arrives at work late, with his eyes closed from the beatings he has suffered, he is sent home and docked three days' pay.

The third person-narrator intrudes upon and is ever present in the narrative. In the very first paragraph, her description of Adana forcefully highlights the inequalities of the city.

The Adana sun, not knowing how to, refuses to cool off in the slightest degree. The warm autumn night is suffocating. The fields are filled with nervous anticipation, as they perceive the closeness of the rain. The only things that the

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<sup>43</sup> Soysal, 1980, p. 76

city centre, with its ornate villas, its paradise-gardens, and luxurious, comfortable apartments' shares with the *gecekondu*s (slums)<sup>44</sup> in Otgece are the shining sun and the seasonal rains. There are no blessings in the slums on the outskirts of the city. There are no orange trees or palm leaves, no dear flowers of the south, no blossoming, leafy, ornamental plants. There is only an abundance of suffocating air, pervading İstiklal Mahallesi's narrow, scorched streets and entering into the shoddy gecekondu homes. The rain is near.<sup>45</sup>

In the first sentence of the fourth paragraph, the violence of the outside world enters, with the reader, into the home of Maraşlı Ali and Gülşah: "The door of the gecekondu house burst open with a rough kick from the outside."<sup>46</sup> Across the fifty-eight pages of the first chapter, only minutes elapse between the police entering the building and Abdullah escorting Maraşlı Ali, Oya, and the other male guests from the premises. The events preceding the raid and the recounting of each characters' past is narrated in stanzas. Similarly, the narrative presentation of the immediate events of the police raid serves as a refrain which appears six times throughout the chapter and becomes the last stanza as Abdullah puts the prisoners in his van. The narration for the remaining two chapters also takes this temporal form.

The narrative shifts from the perspective of the omniscient narrator to that of specific characters, relating past events in flashbacks motivated by associations a single character makes between a past and present event. Even if a flashback is motivated by a character's thought association, however, the narration of the flashback is still that of the narrator, and not the character. Some of the narrated past events, in fact, exist entirely independently from any character's consciousness.

Whilst questioning Oya, Abdullah takes out a pad and a pen for her to write her statement, then leaves the room. Oya notices that he has left his nightstick on the desk and wonders whether this is an intentional act of intimidation:

She noticed that her eyes were fixed on the nightstick on the table. An activist's behaviour is different from that of the spectator. If she had been an activist, how would she have acted? The same? No, she would have been another 'I': an activist and a spectator are completely different people. Both would certainly have behaved differently towards me. The conditions would have been different, as would the function of the club. I would not have shuddered at the sight of the nightstick. I would have accepted it as naturally as anything else. Being faced by a true weapon, to have a weapon drawn against you: that would be an entirely different position. But this nightstick? It is a common, ordinary tool. A bad tool,

<sup>44</sup> The Turkish word 'gecekondu' (literally; he, she, it put up, constructed, etc. at night), which I tried have to translated as "slum" has no true equivalent in English. Whereas the words "slum" and "ghetto" refer to poverty stricken neighbourhoods inside a city, the gecekondu refers to shanty towns erected by impoverished rural immigrants on the outskirts of cities. In this manner, the gecekondu is somewhat similar to the Brazilian favela.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

admittedly, but one which has nothing in common with sharpness, chivalry, or heroism. For someone with a noble cause, being shot could be beautiful, but not being beaten with a club. This must be as degrading for an activist as anyone else.

The nightstick began to take the shape of the most vulgar, sickening shape in front of her eyes. This tool, the weapon of evil, sick mind took the form of the most disgusting male organ. The penis, in its most ugly and common form. Their club.

Sema, who had woken up crying at midnight, was now beside her again. They were back in the jail. Soya was drowning in her sobs as Oya brought her a glass of water.

“You know he debased me. I can’t forget how he made me suffer with that thing.”

“Drop it, Sema. You have to forget it.”

“I can’t forget it; I shouldn’t forget it!”

“Let it out Sema, tell me. Let it empty itself.”

Swallowing her pain, Sema described the abuse of the nightstick.<sup>47</sup>

From the single word “nightstick-club”, the narrator leaps to the narration of an incident from Oya’s days in prison, a conversation with Sema who has been anally raped with a nightstick. It is clear from the narration of Oya’s thought process that the character also makes the link between the present nightstick and her earlier experience in prison. However, the narration is still from the narrator’s perspective. In fact, Oya’s thoughts are blended with the narrator’s to such an extent, that it is impossible to clearly separate them. The punctuation, dotted with exclamations and question marks, reflects the animated response of both the character and the narrator, as Soysal the narrator identifies herself with Oya and shares her dynamic style of speech. The two actually share further characteristics, namely that Soysal herself had been imprisoned and spent time as an internal exile in Adana. Her narrative presence is further emphasised with her self-projection onto Oya: Soysal’s experiences in prison are almost identical to the fictional Oya. Attila Özkırımlı, who otherwise views the book positively, actually criticises the writer for drawing too heavily on her own memoirs.<sup>48</sup> There is even a prison guard in *Şafak* taken directly from one of her earlier novels *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*.

In *Şafak*:

The door of the room was opening. But what opened was not the door to the room, rather the iron gate of a military detention centre that used to be a stable. Officer Zafer was coming in. One hand was behind on the gun, the other on the nightstick.

With her grey-green uniform and severe black stockings, she was the only woman who was suited to this place. The other women, those who did not fit in, were waiting lined up in front of the bunks. At the end was Çiğdem. Her right

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>48</sup> Asım Bezirci, *Seçme Romanlar: Yazıları Özetler, Eleştiriler, Kaynaklar*, Evrensel Basım Yayınları, İstanbul.

arm was in the air in bright white bandages and a cast. Oya's eyes flickered back and forth between Çiğdem's whiteness and Zafer's black stockings. This was like a horror movie. After being tortured, half-unconsciously, Çiğdem had thrown herself out of a window. She still did not seem well. Her face was as white as the bandages on her arm as she stood with her blank hollow eyes. Everything that came out of Zafer's larynx, every command of "attention" and "at ease", Oya obeyed, astonished at how they could come out of the mouth of a woman. This shouting became a vocal club, pummelling Sema and the others, kicking, beating.<sup>49</sup>

And in *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*:

We got into line, ready for our outdoors time. We were waiting. Opening the cellblock door, we heard Officer Zafer spouting in her usual know-it-all way.

"How many days have you been exercising, I wonder? This isn't training. From now on I'll drill you every day."

Sweat was flowing down our backs like ice. The thought of drilling to officer Zafer's commands was unbearable. Our faces were hung low as we went outside. My eyes locked on Zafer's black stockings, the enduring symbol of fascism.

"Fall in. Arms out. Look right. Look down."

Zafer was leading the drill with her voice, cutting through the morning air like a knife.<sup>50</sup>

The officer Zafer in *Şafak* is not only a character from Soysal's past: Oya's impression of him exactly matches Soysal's opinion of Officer Zafer in *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*. The similarity between Oya and the narrator provides a profound insight into the narrator's perception of herself and also the environment of the narrative in post-March Twelfth Turkey. Oya, nearing the end of her period of internal exile, is acutely aware of her vulnerability and is reduced to a being primarily focused on survival. The narrator likens her condition to that of a person trying to avoid sickness, whose only mission is to avoid contact with microbes.<sup>51</sup> The authorities manage to contain Oya's contagiousness which leads to an awareness, shared by protagonist and narrator alike, of Oya's isolation: she has become a stranger in her own country. Though she has spent much time in Adana, she goes days on end with no more than the most superficial amount of human contact. Hüseyin and Mustafa are her first and only real contacts and Adana remains, for Oya, a decidedly foreign city.<sup>52</sup>

This sense of isolation, of being a foreigner in her own country, is compounded for Oya when she enters the home of Maraşlı Ali and Gülşah. Theirs is an Alevi working-class

<sup>49</sup> Soysal, 1980, pp. 103-4.

<sup>50</sup> Soysal, 1979, p. 205

<sup>51</sup> Soysal, 1980, pp. 28-9

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

home, governed by the traditional rules that preclude social interaction between men and women. Gülşah and Ziyet do not sit at the table with the men, and consequently, Oya realises she is the only woman present. In the eyes of the traditional women, Oya is such a different human entity that she is neither a woman nor a man, rather a strange extension of male behaviour.<sup>53</sup> (28) This leads Oya to question her own identity, eventually considering herself to be a creature that is half-man, half-woman. She refrains from drinking rakı and, for that matter, speaking, unable even to communicate with the other women. Even though Oya came as the guest of Hüseyin and Mustafa, the men revert to their traditional roles, not even attempting to integrate her into their conversation.

The narrative stance is a key feature in the descriptions of the characters who are 'different' from Oya. This category includes workers, peasants, the authorities, and the bourgeoisie, though the extremist offspring of the last two groups are excluded. Mustafa is similar character to Oya, and thus becomes an extension of the narrator's psyche to the extent that his personal experience becomes part of the narrative. In prison, Mustafa witnessed the following encounter between Doğan, the son of an Istanbul factory owner, and Sivashlı Nuri, a common criminal.

"You're a dilettante. We don't play at being poor. We've known pain, hardship, and hunger since our infancy. We didn't come here for an education. We're not thrilled that we wound up here. The less time we scrape together, the better. Understand?"

Perhaps Nuri was wrong: at least Doğan had tried to overcome his bourgeois habits. But Nuri was right too: Doğan would never aspire to making a show of learning, or become used to malnourishment and to adjust to such impoverished conditions. As for Nuri, Doğan said he "lacked consciousness". This made him livid.

"Hey man, do you know where we are from? Two words from the neighbourhood grocer are enough for us to end up in jail. We don't need to read however many volumes of Marx and Lenin to end up in here. Step on someone's toes, step out of line - that's enough."

"They had you all wrong," Doğan joked, "I really can't imagine why you ended up in jail." Nuri jumped down from his bunk and laid into him:

"Hey man, have you ever been to a real provincial prison, not a political cellblock like this? Everyone who's in there ended up there because they got them all wrong, okay? I want to get out. And when I get out, I'm going to Sivas. I'll have five people depending on me. I'm not going to play at being hungry to cause grief, or make trouble and extend my sentence. If we can buy milk from what's left of our shared money, if we can buy tomatoes, that's good enough, that's what's necessary. All the other crap, we can forget about."

"Very good," said Doğan, "but the movement? If we have money left over, we must send it outside to the movement."

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

“Listen man, have you ever heard of a movement that runs on the money of the world’s jailers? Don’t you want to smash the world with the money from your father’s bosses? If they’re idiots, tell them directly. Don’t beat round the bush. Let them aid the movement directly.”

After that, he didn’t listen to what Doğan had to say. He turned his back on the factory owner’s son as he was trying to explain himself.<sup>54</sup>

Mustafa is sympathetic to both men, just as Oya and the narrator would be. The narrator, in fact, through the voice of Mustafa, develops this conclusion, arguing that the respective fears of Doğan and Sivaslı Nuri are well founded. Mustafa too is afraid of being poor, unemployed, and unable to take care of his family.

Maraşlı Ali, the character for whom the narrator and Oya have the greatest sympathy and admiration, parallels Mustafa’s condition. Ali is a tall, alert man, who combines various personality traits: he is both youthful and wise; he has the body of a worker, but the face of an intellectual. Oya takes a liking to Maraşlı the moment she sees him. He reads the newspaper, conversant on the political questions of the day, and a picture of Yılmaz Güney, the left wing writer, director, and actor, hangs on the wall of his house. Oya’s sympathy for Ali extends to the conclusion that his plight is more important and more profound than her own. The reader is presented with this notion as the narrator describes Maraşlı Ali’s thoughts, as he lies handcuffed on the floor after being beaten at the police station:

These thoughts are more pressing fears than any passing ache: to be unemployed, to be thrown out of work, to have one’s retirement benefits destroyed, to be unable to turn the mill which makes life’s water flow. Compared to this, swollen left eye closed by a swinging fist were unimportant.<sup>55</sup>

In stark juxtaposition with Oya and Maraşlı Ali, the author places Zekai Bey and Muzaffer Bey, representations of state oppression. Zekai, as head of Adana security, carries out a raft of individual acts of brutality, using Muzaffer’s delineation of the need to maintain the existing social order as his justification. Muzaffer, himself is a retired colonel and now the factory director of Akdeniz Sanayi, represents the stout alliance between the military and the capital class. The narrator blends her own description of his thoughts, with his own professed opinions on how the country should be run:

That Muzaffer Bey became the director of the Akdeniz Sanayi factory was not coincidence. Put a soldier in charge of everything in the country and look how well it runs! Everyone knows his duty, his place, his rank: his boundaries. The subordinate has no objection to his superior: such things in the military are quite impossible. The relationship between subordinate and superior works without any trouble; it is the key to society. So Muzaffer Bey tried to create a subordinate-superior system in his factory. Everyone was bound to obey the

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 154-5.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 183-4.



person above him, the worker to the foreman, the foreman to the engineer, and so on. But things did not work if the workers did not know they were the lowest rank. What does a strike mean? Are there strikes in the military? No, not for working hours, not for this, not for that. In the military we did our duty, completed any task we were given. Did we object? We considered it our patriotic duty and did it unquestioningly. The whole problem is that no sense of fatherland, of nation, or of togetherness has been instilled into these workers.<sup>56</sup>

The security of Muzaffer Bey's position in society is directly linked to the maximisation of the profitability of the Akdeniz Sanayi factory. He strongly associates military rule with efficiency, a form of governance traditionally outside the experience of civilian law: *inter arma leges silent*; amongst arms, the law is silent. Muzaffer imposes his military vision on society in order to protect his newly acquired stake in the well being of big business. It is worth noting that he keeps a smuggled chandelier in his living room, demonstrating his contempt for any civilian law that interferes with his own ambition.

The narrator adds a further layer to this hierarchy of oppression through the characters Turgut Sabuncu, the owner of the Akdeniz Sanayi factory. That he hired a retired colonel to run his venture indicates his assumption that the state primarily functions to serve him. Soysal, through Sabuncu, enunciates the widespread discontentment amongst the moneyed classes with Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel who felt threatened by DİSK and the left in general. Sabuncu recognises one law alone: "There is only one law; there is the law we know; this is the law of social order."<sup>57</sup> He berates Zekai Bey, "Learn the law well and then come here. Every year I'm paying taxes hand over fist to this state. If the law of this state won't protect my factory, then whom will it protect? The looters?"<sup>58</sup>

Given this obvious divide between the poor characters on the left and the rich characters of oppression, the confrontation between Maraşlı Ali and Muzaffer Bey is especially poignant and laden with significance. Ali reports the factory, knowing that the consequences his late arrival will be far worse than the unjustified beatings he received the night before:

Muzaffer Bey fixed his eyes on Ali, with a look that could pierce clothes, flesh, skin, bones and internal organs, to the very core of the person opposite him. He could see an opponent of his beloved order. This was not a worker who had gotten into trouble. He was an instigator of disorder. Ali felt oppressed.

"Who did you invite to your house?"

"My relatives from Maraş."

"You're from Maraş, hmm?"

Muzaffer Bey's question, though simple, was profoundly accusatory: why are you from Maraş? If you're from Maraş, why are you in the factory? Why do

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

you have relatives from Maraş? Why did your relatives come to your home? And so on.

Thus it was as if Ali's response - "Yes, I am from Maraş!" - was an open revolt.

"You're from Maraş. Did you come here from Maraş to stir up trouble in Adana?"

"I've been working in Adana for twenty years."

Was Ali trying to imply that Muzaffer Bey did not belong to an old Adana family? Did it mean: "I've worked longer in this factory than you"?

"It means that you have hidden for twenty years. But nothing escapes my eyes. You can't hide in my factory."

The exchange was hopeless. Ali wished that whatever was going to happen would happen fast. If this crazy director was going to fire him, let him do it. He should go right home. He needed to lie down on the couch. He would have Gülşah boil a large lemon. It was as if the rest of his life was not important at all. His head was pounding unbearably again. He tightly shut his remaining open eye.

"Don't turn your eyes away... Look at my face. You can't make a fool out of me."<sup>59</sup>

The narrative ends by ostensibly returning the focus to Oya, but this return goes well beyond her individual state to the state of the whole nation. Just as Yılmaz Güney makes explicit in his film adaptation 'Yol' (The Road), the country has become a prison. The same is true for the author: for Soysal, freedom is not simply an absence of bars and walls and neither is it a relative concept. At the same time she admits, however, that each perspective is necessarily deceptive and that freedom cannot possibly exist whilst it is denied to others.

### Conclusion

Sevgi Soysal examines the position of the individuals, in direct confrontation with the oppressive violence of the state. In each of the two works discussed above, the individuals are just that: alone, without any means, legal or otherwise, of protecting themselves. This isolation leads to an immediacy of the characters' situations that takes precedence over the specific political troubles of the age. Though there are exceptional examples amongst younger prisoners, most acts of resistance are primal responses to immediate conditions in jail. Ultimately, there is a consensus amongst the intellectuals, reflected by the common forms of narration in each author, that the left is defeated and that further political action is futile.

These works are firmly rooted in the present, with little to no consideration of the future or of the immediate past, the political developments of the late sixties. In *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* and particularly in *Şafak*, the past is used only as a device by which

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 218-20.

the characters comment on the present. Large portions of past-narrative in *Şafak* are actually intended to intensify the focus on the individual in the present.

This concern with the immediacy of the present undoubtedly explains the common use of the first-person narrator. These narratives convey the experience of an individual protagonist: the first-person narrator in each instance focuses not so much on what happened, but on the protagonist's perception and interpretation of the events.

Though *Şafak* differs from the *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu*, primarily in its use of an omniscient third-person narrator, it still maintains a focus on the immediate experience of the individual suffering under the brutality of the state. *Şafak*'s narrative expands beyond the individual knowledge of its characters, attempting to examine their position in society beyond the immediacy of one night in jail. Clearly, Maraşlı Ali's trials are not limited to a night of being beaten. The text opens and closes with narrative comment on the environment of the characters, on the socio-economic division in Adana, and the deceptive appearance of freedom in an oppressed society. *Şafak*, through Oya, takes a conscious step towards the fictional examination of the urban intellectual under the new oppressive regime.

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