



12 MART ROMANLARINDA KADIN TANIMLAMALARI

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ÖZET

Türkiye’de, 1970 ve 1980 yılları arasında, siyasi sebeplerle meydana gelen şiddet olaylarında değişik kaynaklara göre sağ ve sol görüşlü 5.000 dolayında vatan evladının hayatını kaybettiği tahmin edilmektedir. 12 Mart 1971 askeri 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 edebi 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 yazarlarının kalemlerinden çıkan romanlarda ele aldıkları kadın tiplerini konu edinmiştir. Devrimci harekette yeralan kadınlara toplumun genel anlamda bakışını ve bu kadınların devrimci olmanın bedelini nasıl ödediklerini incelemiştir. Çalışmamızda devrimci kadınların yanısıra, maddi refahı ve zenginliği elde etme karşılığında toplumun ataerkil ve baskıcı yapısına boyun eğmeye razı olmuş ve mükemmel tüketiciler olarak tanımlanabilecek burjuva kadınları ile kendilerini sadece üreme malzemesi olarak kabul eden, vücutlarını erkekleri tatmin etmede araç olarak gören cahil kırsal kesim kadınları da incelenmiştir.

Bu çalışmada Fûruzan’ın *47’liler*, Sevgi Soysal’ın *Şafak*, Adalet Ağaoğlu’nun *Bir Düşün Gecesi* ile Pınar Kür’ün *Yarın Yarın* romanları incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 12 Mart Askeri Müdahalesi, 12 Mart Romanları, Devrimci Kadın, Burjuva, Devlet

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF WOMEN IN THE MARCH TWELFTH NOVELS

ABSTRACT

It is estimated that between 1970 and 1980 more than 5,000 people died in politically motivated violence in Turkey. The ‘March 12th 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

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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 examines the characterization of women in 1970s Turkey through number of March 12 novels written by particularly female novelists. It studies the characterization of revolutionary women; their treatment by wider society, and the price they paid for being revolutionary. Along with revolutionary women, the article also focuses other examples of female figures such as bourgeois women who are presented as perfect consumers willing to accept subjugation to the patriarchy in exchange for material wealth, whilst, on the other hand, rural women are presented as ignorant and almost bestial creatures who view the female body as nothing more than a vehicle for reproduction and the satisfaction of men.

This article in particular has focused upon works such as *47^{nci} Yıllar* (The Generation of '47) written by Füzûzan, *Şafak* (The Dawn) by Sevgi Soysal, *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (A Wedding Night) by Adalet Ağaoglu and *Yarın Yarın* (Tomorrow Tomorrow) by Pınar Kür.

Key Words: 12th March Military Intervention, 12th March Novels, Revolutionary Woman, Bourgeoisie, State

Introduction

On March 12th 1971, after more than a year of social unrest and bloody battles fought between the political right and left, senior officers of the Turkish army issued a memorandum to Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, demanding his resignation. This act was to become known as the 'March 12th intervention' and was the second of three coups to take place in Turkey in the space of just twenty years. Contrary to first appearances, the principal target of this seizure of power was not the government, however, but the leftist opposition party (Karpas, 1981: 14): in spite of increased political participation on all sides since the first 1960 coup, there developed an increasingly toxic political atmosphere, rife with politically motivated killings and abductions, and infused with the US-driven anti-Communist sentiment of the era. Nationalistic, right wing elements in the army wanted to pre-empt a leftist coup led by the opposition and in doing so took control from Demirel's centre-right Justice Party and installed a technocratic government. The real power, however, lay in the hands of the military High Command.

The military-run government led a vicious campaign of persecution, not only against the extremist left-wing groups who were their original target, but also against leftist intellectuals, academics, writers and journalists, imprisoning, torturing and murdering hundreds of individuals. It is estimated that between 1970 and 1980 more than 5,000 people died in politically motivated violence. 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.

The most of the novels dealing with the period after the 12th March 1971 military intervention were immediate reactions, written by the author who witnessed the intervention first-hand and who were traumatised by the retraction of civil rights and political freedom (Kekeç, 2002: 65-67). The state, meant to serve the people, became instead a means of accumulating power for

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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 (Türkeş, 2000: 80-85).

These novels are notable for their specific focus on the complicated, or indeed confused, status of women during the period. Many of the most famous March Twelfth novelists are female such as Füzûzan, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Sevgi Soysal, Pınar Kür and Ayla Kutlu and many of the lead protagonists in their novels are intellectual revolutionary women. For these authors, each of them to some extent intellectual revolutionary women themselves, the place of women in Turkish society and as members of the intellectual left wing movement was of critical importance in the period following the intervention. All of the March Twelfth novels examined in this article provide, in their own way, definitions of the revolutionary woman: her characteristics, her treatment by wider society, and the price she has paid for being 'revolutionary.' In order to do this, the novels also provide other examples of female figures in the period: bourgeoisie women are presented as perfect consumers, willing to accept subjugation to the patriarchy in exchange for material wealth, whilst rural women are presented as ignorant, almost bestial creatures who view the female body as nothing more than a vehicle for reproduction and satisfying men. These exaggerated but undeniably potent depictions of non-revolutionary women are used to reaffirm the traditional patriarchy revolutionary women react against: because of this, the authoritarian state is able to punish revolutionary women along with gender lines, denying their feminine autonomy by either condemning them as 'mannish' or treating them as prostitutes.

Before discussing the treatment of revolutionary women in the March Twelfth novels, it is worth briefly examining the use of women as revolutionary tools from the beginnings of the Turkish state up to 1971 in order to show that, whilst women had gained notional political power alongside the growth of the Turkish nation state, they had done so along strict patriarchal lines. As Deniz Kandiyoti shows, post-Tanzimat reformists emphasised the emancipation of women in "moralistic, sentimental, and civilisational" terms, but did so in an effort to attack the decaying conservative Ottoman institutions rather than out of a desire to promote autonomous female political actors. (Kandiyoti, 1991: 26) Likewise, with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, women were granted equal rights and citizenship as part of the Kemalists attempt to limit public religious institutions and create a fully secular society: the issue of women's rights was one of the "pawns in the Kemalist struggle to liquidate the theocratic remnants of the Ottoman state" (Kandiyoti, 1991: 38). Crucially, and as Ali Murat Akser makes clear, unlike their Western and European counterparts who earned political rights at around the same time, Turkish women "lacked the economic power" to achieve any real independent action against the patriarchal system. (Akser, 1999: 106) The role of educated 'liberated' women within the new Turkish state, then, was to legitimise the Republic by spreading the message of Kemalism to the 'ignorant' rural populace. This function was essentially daughterly subservience to the power of the patriarchy: as Yeşim Arat argues, the women liberated in the first generation of Kemalism were compelled to "repress" their sexuality in order to sustain the male-dominated society rather than to demand autonomy. (Arat, 1997: 101)

By the 1960s, following the substantial growth of the Turkish middle class and the 1961 Constitution, which seemed to promise proper freedom to all the people of Turkey some Turkish women were beginning to claim equal economic and political power with men. (Landau, 1984: 53-54) In particular, the daughters of the upwardly mobile middle classes who had benefitted most from Kemalist reforms were faced with a choice between continuing with their parents' bourgeoisie lifestyles or rejecting them: for this reason, in the 1960s there is an increased presence of influential female figures, including some of the novelists discussed in this article, amongst intellectual and revolutionary circles. It seemed that it was the time for women take action

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themselves to achieve self-fulfilment, and to realise their full potential, both as individuals and as a group. However, the question of female empowerment was largely ignored by the left wing during the period. This is because, as Akser demonstrates, leftist figures at the time argued that the need for autonomous female political activity was unnecessary: once the socialist revolution had been achieved, gender equality issues would be discarded as a class-related problem. (Akser, 1999: 93) At the same time, in line with other leftist groups in Europe and South America, there was a view that any separate action by specific groups would weaken the pursuit of the overall mission. (Berktaş, 1993: 289-292) In essence, the world of the revolutionary left was also distinctly patriarchal: for women to be included in the movement they had to act like men, shunning feminine clothing and make-up and keeping their perceived natural tendency towards the bourgeoisie lifestyle under control. (Berktaş, 1993: 290) Thus, the revolutionary intellectual women trying to have control over their actions and their bodies were controlled by the male patriarchy even within their own revolutionary circles. It is this paradox which plays itself out time and again within the March Twelfth novels: between the socially acceptable female roles of submissive domesticity, as represented by the rural women, and as perfect consumers, characterised by the bourgeoisie middle class women, the revolutionary woman still defines her 'independent' actions in relation to the patriarchy. In turn, such actions, because they violate the patriarchal system, are punished by the state and society.

The Characterisation of Women in the March 12 Novels

The intellectual revolutionary woman is punished in the March Twelfth novels for acting autonomously and thus defying the patriarchy of the state. The most common word used by state forces to describe revolutionary women is 'orospu', or prostitute. (Akser, 1999: 109) The fact that traditional representatives of society such as police chiefs, businessmen, and rural commentators characterise female autonomy in base sexual terms is revealing, if entirely predictable. One of the common misconceptions about revolutionary women held by bourgeoisie and rural figures is that they are profligate and share their partners sexually. For instance, in *Şafak*, Menekşe asks Oya whether she is the lover of the political activist Deniz Gezmiş:

Oya: Where did this come from?

Menekşe: Because you are a political prisoner.

Oya: What if I am a political prisoner?

Menekşe: Because Deniz Gezmiş is a political activist, you must be his lover.

Oya: Does a woman become his lover if she is an activist?

Menekşe: Yes, ma'am. Because Deniz Gezmiş is the leader of the political activists, all women activists are his lovers. (Soysal, 1980: 89)

Rural women find it impossible to define revolutionary women without reference to men: just as she is subordinate to her father, brother, and husband, Menekşe believes Oya should be subservient to a male revolutionary, in deference to his status as leader. The state encouraged the dissemination of such myths in the newspapers and so on because they caused alarm amongst members of the bourgeoisie and labouring classes who were traditionally committed to the idea of *namus*, 'chastity', damaging the political reputation of revolutionary figures. For instance, in *47'liler*, Emine's mother Nüveyre reacts with upset and shame when she reads in a newspaper report that Emine and her revolutionary friends are not virgins and live as mistresses to the revolutionary men. (Füruzan, 1974: 247)

In such a way, the state can get the families of revolutionary women to discredit their left wing actions without state intervention: Nüveyre, for instance, considers herself a child of the Kemalist revolution who saw that a woman's highest goal was to "act as men's equal". (Füruzan,

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1974: 38) She cannot understand the behaviour of her daughters who act autonomously to carry out relationships based on love and desire, in the case of Seçil, and non-government approved political activity, in the case of Emine. In response to her daughters, Nüveyre proudly recalls being a young school teacher, modernising the peasants of Anatolia:

We were little girls cleaning the desks with wet cloth, putting the chalk in a line in the pitch dark of dawn without men on our minds [...] We were being raised with the invincible dignity of being Turks. (Füruzan, 1974: 40)

As a woman working for the Kemalist regime in spreading secular enlightenment, Nüveyre is forced to repress her sexuality and so is unable to understand her daughters' sexual behaviour. Her worries, however, are exposed as baseless and self-serving: neither Emine nor Seçil are profligate or adulterous. Nuveyre's problem is that they make their choices for sexual partners autonomously and are not as discreet about them as bourgeoisie women are. A similar case can be seen in *Bir Düğün Gecesi* where Tezel, a revolutionary woman, is criticised and shunned by her family because she refuses to be controlled by men. Once again, her lifestyle is equated with prostitution and Müjgan, wife of Tezel's brother İlhan, comments:

I can tolerate the relationship between my husband and that advertising woman, İnci. Semih [İnci's husband] can also joyfully tolerate this relationship between İnci and İlhan, because in the very foundations of this relationship lies the bright star of interest. But how about Tezel's ways? Tezel's way totally disregards family values. She is a disgrace to both İlhan and me. (Ağaoğlu, 1984: 104)

In this searing indictment of bourgeoisie hypocrisy, we see that husbands and wives may commit adultery as long as it is kept, at least nominally, a secret; however, if a woman like Tezel displays her relationships, or even her opinions, in the open she is labelled as unethical.

Throughout the March Twelfth novels, the lifestyle of the revolutionary woman is misinterpreted by those who have an interest in disparaging leftist groups. We have seen above that this misinterpretation begins with the family; but it also moves up through social ranks to state officials. An example of this process is seen in *Şafak*, where Oya, in exile by decree of the military court, eats dinner at the same table as men and is thus seen as a prostitute by Ekrem, one of the guests:

Ekrem sees Oya's anxiety, as he always does, as a result of something else. He has been looking at Oya filthily since she entered the room. With dirty macho looks, he thinks that Oya is a little chance in his life. A woman at a drinking bout: she must be asking for it! This chance mustn't be missed (Soysal, 1980: 42).

To Ekrem, a woman eating dinner and drinking alcohol can only be looking for a sexual affair. As despicable as this reaction is, it is made all the more significant by its juxtaposition with Oya's interrogation by the police commander Zekai who, by the same logic, accuses Oya of being a prostitute:

Zekai: My dear lady, could you please explain to me, why a married woman, and a woman with a child at that, would be drinking with strangers? [...] What were you doing with those men?

Oya: Are you the police of public decency?

Zekai: You were soliciting, of course? [...]

Oya: Am I being accused of prostitution?

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Zekai: I ask the questions here, understand? Your bitching means nothing to me!
Thank God Turkish girls aren't like you. We won't surrender their chastity to your hands. We are going to sweep up your pimps. (Soysal, 1980: 76-79)

Through his interrogation, Zekai reveals the pernicious methods used by the state to discredit revolutionary women: the police chief does not attack Oya for her political views because that, in itself, would elevate them to equality with male views. Not only does he accuse her of being a prostitute for spending time in male company, he also degrades the female position even further by suggesting that her comrades are "pimps", thus maintaining patriarchal control over the female even in her capacity as degraded prostitute. Because the authorities used such tactics to suppress revolutionary women, using nationalist and moralistic arguments to show that the 'chastity of the nation' was threatened by them, the public patriarchy, including family members, reacted more strongly against revolutionary women than revolutionary men.

The view of revolutionary women as sexualised degenerates is an extension of the attitude to women generally within the emerging Turkish capitalist society as presented by the March Twelfth novels. Bourgeoisie women are seen as the perfect representations of capitalism, proud of what they wear, what they possess, and what they consume. However, as women consume luxury goods, so they are consumed. In *47'liler*, Emine's sister Seçil is married to a rich businessman who funds her luxurious lifestyle which eventually leads to her depression and suicide. Likewise, in *Yarın Yarın*, Aysel, a high-society whore, is part of a consumption cycle in which honourable women are consumed symbolically through marriages they make to rich husbands, who thus pay to consume women's bodies. The female body, then, becomes a capitalist item to be consumed.

In *47'liler*, Emine is disgusted to see the way in which her brother-in-law interacts with Seçil and how he generates his sexual desire for her through luxurious presents: When her brother-in-law's vigilant eyes, which had been looking around passively, fixed on her sister, a sinister darkness obscured them. His desirous stare was burning the pink colour on her flesh caused by the glistening reflections of the jewellery on her neck and ears [...] It was then she first saw the cruel and insatiable man who decorated her sister [...] with precious stones, gold pieces, and antiques. (Füruzan, 1974: 103)

The revolutionary woman, Emine, sees her brother-in-law consume her sister as a luxury item: his desirous state is not sexual attraction; it is the lust for material wealth and expensive consumable goods. For her own part, Seçil initially ignores the ignominy of being a consumer item because she recognises she has a "privileged life;" (Füruzan, 1974: 111) soon, however, she acknowledges the hollowness of bourgeoisie consumption and the mental strain of "living under the protection of a dominant man." (Füruzan, 1974: 117) Women like Seçil who are trapped by such a lifestyle, in the March Twelfth novels, end up having nervous breakdowns or even committing suicide: they hate their own lives but are unable to act differently because they are economically dependent on their husbands and thus form their identities only in relation to their husbands' lifestyles.

It is against such societal abuse of woman that the revolutionary women react: the revolutionary woman is able to form an identity independent to the male patriarchy which is why she is so threatening. Because of this, they suffer at the hands of the patriarchal institutions for acting autonomously. Aysel, in *Bir Düğün Gecesi*, choose to act on her impulse and have an extramarital love affair, but loses her job in return. Oya acts free from male dominance but is feared and isolated even in her own country. It is interesting to note that the female March Twelfth novelists attack most vehemently women as bourgeoisie consumers: it does seem to support a patriarchal notion that women are more susceptible to consumerism than men. Whilst Çimen-

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Günay rightly notes that this is “deliberate exaggeration” (Günay, 2009: 212) on the part of the novelists in order to highlight the contrast between bourgeoisie women and revolutionary women, it is also important to note that many of the women who are initially bourgeoisie consumers become exhausted with its trappings and reject it, either by divorce or, like Seçil, by suicide. In such a way, the March Twelfth novelists seem to suggest that male bourgeoisie characters like to spend their money on their wives and girlfriends in order to turn them into consumable items: whilst women can be initially proud of this status as adored (indeed, adorned) object, they quickly tire of it and recognise its hollowness.

Just as revolutionary women are compared to bourgeoisie women, they are also compared to rural women to highlight the divide between the illiterate, backward, and conservative nature of rural women and their progressive, urban counterparts. This discourse is slightly problematic as the March Twelfth authors, along with their characters, inherit it from the Kemalist definition of women as markers of modernity: rural women in the March Twelfth novels are seen as being hugely ignorant of the way in which they are controlled by the patriarchy, enjoying physical violence towards them and viewing themselves as animalistic reproductive entities. On the one hand, this seems to justify them revolutionary intellectual female movement: these women need educating to save them from abuse. However, such a patronising view is undoubtedly what alienated rural peasants from the intellectual leftist movement, which ultimately caused the downfall of the left.

In *47'liler*, the urbanity of Emine is contrasted with the orphan Kiraz who attends the Village Institute which Emine's parents work at. Kiraz discusses the meaning of being a woman with Emine in her own terms: We should ask Grandma the night she comes. She will teach us whether womanhood comes with marrying a man, falling in love, or getting pregnant and bearing a child [...] Kiraz knew about sex, and pregnancy, and men, but she didn't know very well about being a woman, or rather, being made a woman. (Füruzan, 1974: 72)

This is a clear example of the difference, as seen in the March Twelfth novels, between urban and rural women. Emine seeks a definition of love and womanhood within the context of relations between men and women, but Kiraz only knows and understands the physical, animal qualities of being a female. This is most starkly revealed in *Şafak*, where the sympathetic character of Oya is exposed, with horror, to the rural women's delight in serving men. Whilst at the dinner table, Gülşah, Ali's wife, experiences physical satisfaction bordering on sexual hysteria from “watching the men chew their food.” (Soysal: 25) Only the physical and animal-like behaviour of men satisfies rural women: even domestic violence can arouse sexual desire. Ziyinet, for instances, ignores her sister's warnings about her husband Zekeriya's violence towards her:

Ziyinet ignored this warning. Zekeriya was in love with her. What would an old, greying woman like Gülşah know about love and the sweet taste of a male beating? (Soysal: 46)

This shows a sharp contrast between rural women and the intellectual revolutionary: whilst the urban woman is in control of her body and actions, the rural woman is beaten by her husband and actually enjoys it. Again, this is deliberate exaggeration, but it shows the contrast extremely effectively.

The attitude of rural women to male violence and control is extrapolated in the March Twelfth novels from family politics to the politics of the nation at large, as urban and rural women come into contact with state representatives. In *Şafak*, the police club is used as a weapon of male authority against female sexuality during interrogations. Intellectual revolutionary women feel disgust and nausea towards the object. For Oya, for instance, the nightstick began to take the form

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of the most vulgar, sickening shape in front of her eyes. This tool, the weapon of evil, in her sick mind took the form of the most disgusting male organ. The penis, at its ugliest. Their club. (Soysal, 1980: 85)

The nightstick on the desk becomes linked in Oya's isolated, 'sick' mind to an event in her past that took place in prison: her fellow inmate Sema goes on to describe her brutal anal rape with a nightstick by one of the prison guards. For Soysal, rape is not in itself a political act; that would lessen its impact as a crime committed against a woman by a man. However, the fact that Sema is anally raped with a nightstick can be viewed as a political statement: the rape is not simply a brutal violation, as the guard does not attack Sema's sexual reproductive organs and he does not use his penis. Though there is clearly never a justifiable purpose for rape, the violation of a woman's vagina with a man's penis can still be viewed as a terrible extension of biological function. This act is necessarily pointless, except as a means to demonstrate, with the symbolic nightstick, the power of the state to brutalise anyone it chooses. In prison, however, Oya also witnesses a village woman, Menekşe, praising the same tool:

Menekşe: Güllik, I'm dying for your nightstick, come to me baby!

Oya: It seems you haven't had one. Do you know what they do with that?

Menekşe: You bet! No one knows it better than I do! (Soysal, 1980: 88)

Oya, stunned by Menekşe's fondness for the nightstick and her apparent willingness to use it sexually, found this as disgusting as her imagined substitution of the nightstick for the penis. She scolded Menekşe. It is clear to Oya that the rape and sexual abuse of women prisoners by the male guards is abhorrent, but she is even more alarmed that the rural women seem to masochistically enjoy such abuse and desire it as their treatment by "real men." (Soysal, 1980: 109) The contrast between urban revolutionary women and their rural counterparts is drawn in terms of nature versus nurture: rural women are depicted in bestial terms, enjoying physical violence and sexual perversion as basic forms of survival; the urban woman is conscious of male dominance and guards against it, however, is appalled at the attitude of rural women, thus is unable to communicate to them.

This failure to reach out to the rural women is most clearly seen in *Yarın Yarın* (Kür, 1985) where Mehmet, a revolutionary, acts as the enlightening husband to his rural wife Kadriye. Whilst Mehmet is acting out of kindness in trying to make his wife conscious of her political and sexual repression, because she is used to a certain way of life, Kadriye is often ashamed of her 'backward' ways and her behaviour:

Even after having fed, washed and put her children to bed, Kadriye couldn't go near the guests for a while. Mehmet was right, but not totally. Besides having a dislike for drink, she couldn't get used to sitting at a table with male strangers. "Why is it that the men sit and you serve them? You're acting like a maid in your own house! [...] We share our life, everything, why not share the table as well? [...] These are our guests, not just mine!" (Kür, 1985: 119)

Mehmet wants his wife to participate in the intellectual and revolutionary discussions around the table so she can improve herself: Kür brilliantly shows the dilemma of the intellectual through gender politics as Mehmet tries to free his wife from oppression by forcing her to act in a way which makes her uncomfortable and instructing her.

Conclusion

The patriarchy is made up of a combination of male forces and strategies used to dominate and control the actions of women. Even the intellectual revolutionary woman is defined

as belonging to a branch of the patriarchal circle: she is the daughter of a father, the mistress of a man, the wife of a husband, or the mother of a son. At the same time, she also views herself as a free and autonomous revolutionary woman. In this light, when she acts in society's eyes as a man would act, she is punished and derided as being mannish. Once her actions come into conflict with the state, it denies her autonomous power by dismissing her as a prostitute and debasing her through rape and abuse. In the March Twelfth novels, this punishment is held in contrast to the other punishments suffered by different groups of women: the bourgeoisie women become consumable items under their husbands' power, whilst the rural women are ignorant of their own repression and passively suffer in order to maintain themselves in a patriarchal world. Whereas in the literature of the 1950s and 1960s intellectuals tried to teach the ignorant rural masses and ended up learning from the experience themselves, in the March Twelfth novels, there is only bitterness in the revolutionary women towards their male oppressors – their brothers and fathers along with the police chiefs and soldiers – and the groups of women who do not protest against, therefore become complicit in, the patriarchy.

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