

Copyright

by

Salih Can Aciksoz

2011

**The Dissertation Committee for Salih Can Aciksoz certifies that this is the approved
version of the following dissertation:**

**Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty:
Disabled Veterans, Masculinity, and Nationalist Politics in Turkey**

Committee:

Kamran Asdar Ali, Supervisor

Kathleen Stewart

Pauline Turner Strong

John Hartigan

Ann Cvetkovich

**Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty:
Disabled Veterans, Masculinity, and Nationalist Politics in Turkey**

by

Salih Can Aciksoz, B.A., M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2011

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the institutions that have supported this research. The fieldwork for this project was funded by a Wenner-Gren Foundation Dissertation Fieldwork Grant. The writing was supported by a Mike-Hogg Endowed Fellowship from the University of Texas at Austin.

Many people have contributed to this dissertation in numerous ways. I am grateful to my supervisor Kamran Asdar Ali for his invaluable mentoring and support. I am deeply thankful to my committee members Kathleen Stewart, Pauline Turner Strong, John Hartigan, and Ann Cvetkovich for their intellectual guidance and encouragement. I would especially like to thank Kathleen Stewart and Ann Cvetkovich for their insightful comments.

I was lucky to have met many dear friends in Austin. Hişyar Özsoy and Serap Ruken Şengül have been unfailing sources of solidarity and comradeship. My precious friends Nafiz Akşehirli, Halide Velioglu, and Özlem Okur turned a foreign place into a second home for me. Unfortunately, however, Özlem Okur left us too early. I would also like to thank Noman Baig, Claudia Campeanu, Jenny Carlson, Abdul Haq Chang, Claudia Chavez, Nick Copeland, Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, Maryam Kashani, Mathangi Krishnamurthy, Hafeez Ahmed Jamali, Calvin Johns, Christine Labuski, Emily Lynch, Kenneth MacLeish, Saikat Maitra, Azfar Moin, Mariana Mora Bayo, Ömer Özcan, Mubasshir el-Rizvi, Ufuk Soyöz, Raja Swamy, Virginia Raymond, Ali Şengül, Jodi Skipper, Fernanda Soto Joya, Heather Teague, Elizabeth Velasquez, and Mark

Westmoreland for their friendship and academic camaraderie. Special thanks to Calvin Johns for his meticulous editing of this dissertation. I am also thankful to my friends in Istanbul, especially to Berk Balçık, Oyman Başaran, Ayşecan Terzioğlu, and Yeşim Yasin for their intellectual and emotional support. Thanks to Güneş Yerli for her help with data processing. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the members of the Reproductive Health Working Group (RHWG) and especially to Belgin Tekçe, who has been a great mentor for over a decade. Thanks to Matthew Guttman, Mark Luborsky, Martina Reeker, Nükhet Sirman, and Derek Summerfield for their comments on parts of this work.

I thank my parents, Ayla Barış Ant and Selim Ant, for believing in and supporting me. I am especially grateful to my mother for her unflagging care and love. I would like to thank my partner Zeynep Kurtuluş Korkman for everything she is. Every step of this work owes a lot to her love, wisdom, and intellect.

Finally, I want to thank my informants, who welcomed me into their worlds and shared their stories with me. I hope I could do justice to your pain.

**Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty:
Disabled Veterans, Masculinity, and Nationalist Politics in Turkey**

Publication No. _____

Salih Can Aciksoz, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Kamran Asdar Ali

This dissertation concerns the disabled veterans of the Turkish army who fought against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerillas as conscripted soldiers. While being valorized as sacrificial heroes, "ghazis," in the realm of nationalist politics, these disabled veterans also face socio-economic marginalization and demasculinization anxieties in Turkey, where discrimination against the disabled is rampant. In such a context, disabled veterans emerged as important ultranationalist actors in the 2000s, championing a conservative agenda around the issues of state sovereignty, democratization, and Turkey's pending European Union (EU) membership.

In this dissertation, I locate the disabled veteran body at the intersection of medical and welfare institutions, nationalist discourses, and cultural formations of gendered normativity to trace the embodied socio-cultural and political processes that

constitute disabled veterans as ultranationalist political subjects. I approach the politicization of disabled veterans through the analytical lens of the body in order to understand how veterans' gendered and classed experiences of warfare, injury, and disability are hardened into an ultranationalist political identity. Exploring the tensions between the nationalist construction of the disabled veteran body and veterans' embodied experiences as lower-class disabled men, I show how the dialectic between political rites of consecration and everyday rites of desecration translates disability into a political force. By unraveling the ways in which disability caused by violence generates new forms of masculinity, embodiment, and political identity, I illustrate how the disabled veterans' suffering is brokered into militarization and ultranationalist protest in contemporary Turkey.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Fieldwork in a "Gray Zone"	10
Outline of the Chapters	18
Chapter 1: Being-on-the-Mountains	22
Spatial Formations	22
Corporeal Formations	33
Sensorial Formations	41
Formations of Mimesis and Alterity	44
Gender Formations.....	49
Formations of Premonition	58
Formations of Visceral Memory	63
Conclusion	70
Chapter 2: Communities of Loss	71
The Official Assosication	71
Foundation Myths and Historical Foundations.....	80
The Popular Association	92
Disabled Veteran Cliques	98
Communal Intensities	102
Communal Tensions	112
A Day at the Edirnekapi Martyr's Cemetery.....	114

Chapter 3: Two Registers of Sovereignty	120
State Sovereignty and Masculine Sovereignty	120
Failure of a Gendered Promise	121
Public Secrets.....	125
From the Third Page to the Headlines	129
A New Governmental Regime.....	133
Sixth Floor	135
A Nationalist Rhizome.....	148
Becoming-State: A Nationalist Answer to the Sovereignty Question.....	152
Chapter 4: The Sacrificial Crisis	158
They must not be Politicized!	158
A Floating Signifier	159
Gazis of the Nation	168
Millennial Avatars of Gazi.....	173
Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty	179
Gazis and Beggars.....	182
The Sacrificial Crisis.....	189
Making Sense of the Sacrificial Crisis.....	195
Chapter 5: Prosthetic Revenge	198
The "Enemy"	198
The "Hunt"	200
A Theater of Sovereignty.....	202
A Carnal Language of Pain.....	203

An Impossible Gift	206
Surrogate Victim(s).....	207
Enjoyment	213
A Collective Exhibit of Loss.....	218
Prosthetic Protests	221
Lingering Prosthesis.....	223
Conclusion	227
Bibliography	234

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation concerns the disabled veterans, “gazis,” of the Turkish army, who fought against the guerillas of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)¹ as conscripted soldiers. Over the last two decades, these disabled veterans have been increasingly valorized in the realm of nationalist politics as sacrificial heroes, who, in the words of every other army or political party spokesmen, “sacrificed their arms and legs for the indivisible unity of the state with its territory and nation,” that is to say, for the sovereignty of the state. However, while the disabled veteran body has been transformed into a potent object of nationalist reverence, disabled veterans have continued to face socio-economic exclusion, corporeal stigma, and demasculinization despite the state’s welfare and compensation policies. Against this backdrop, disabled veterans’ organizations have championed an ultranationalist agenda around the issues of state sovereignty and Turkey’s pending European Union (EU) membership, becoming the leading actors of an ultranationalist campaign against dissident public intellectuals who espoused critical perspectives on the same issues.²

In this dissertation, I locate the disabled veteran body at the intersection of medical and welfare institutions, nationalist discourses, and cultural formations of

¹ Founded in late 1970s as a Marxist-Leninist organization under the influence of socialist and anti-colonial national liberation movements, Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan/ PKK) is an armed Kurdish organization that has led guerilla warfare against the Turkish state since 1984. Since the capture of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, the illegal organization has stalled its secessionist agenda and pursued cultural rights, multicultural citizenship, and democratic pluralism, while continuing guerilla warfare. Nearly forty thousand people have been killed in the course of the ongoing armed conflict.

² While using the term ultranationalism, I refer not to an extremist variant of a normative healthy nationalism but to a novel political movement that successfully united right wing and left wing nationalists around a reactionary bloc against Turkey’s EU membership, democratization, and minority rights in the 2000s.

gendered normativity in order to trace the embodied socio-cultural and political processes that constitute disabled veterans as ultranationalist political subjects. I approach this political subjectification process through the analytical lens of the body to understand the ways in which veterans' gendered and classed experiences of warfare, injury, and disability are hardened into an ultranationalist political identity in contemporary Turkey. Exploring the tensions between the nationalist construction of the disabled veteran body and veterans' embodied experiences as lower-class disabled men, I show how the dialectic between political rites of consecration and everyday rites of desecration translates disability into a political force. By unraveling the ways in which disability caused by violence generates new forms of masculinity, embodiment, and political identity, I illustrate how "social suffering" (Kleinman et al. 1997) of disabled veterans is brokered into a militarized civil society and ultranationalist protest in millennial Turkey.

As an ethnography of the disabled veteran body, this dissertation stands at the crossroads of medical anthropology, gender and disability studies, and political anthropology. While positing the disabled veteran body as an analytical object, I draw from different theoretical approaches to the body (Lock and Schepers-Hughes 1993), which conceive it as a crucial source of representation and symbolic elaboration (Comaroff 1985, Douglas 2000, Kantorowicz 1997), a spatial unit of power (Foucault 1979, 1980, Feldman 1991), and as the very ground of subjectivity and experience (Csordas 1994, Good 1994, Merleau-Ponty 2002). This syncretic approach enables me to address the disabled veteran body on multiple levels—symbolism, inscription, discipline, biopolitics, experience, embodiment, emotions and affects, and performativity—by

putting power-centered and phenomenological approaches in dialogue to explore the dynamic interrelations between power, meaning, and embodied experience in the formation of disabled veterans as particular masculine subjects and political actors.

The disabled veteran body is a corporeal by-product of the execution of state sovereignty, which turns (often male) bodies into instruments of sovereign power in order to exercise violence over other bodies and populations. In the context of the Kurdish conflict, disabled veterans are produced at the intersection of two different practices of state sovereignty. The first is the compulsory military service, through which the state attempts to subjugate and subjectify all “fit” male citizens as perpetrator-subjects of the sovereign power to reinforce its claim to monopoly on violence and to mold young male bodies into proper docile citizens. The second is the exercise of the “sovereign prerogative” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005) to declare an internal enemy in the face of the threat that the PKK poses for the state’s monopoly of violence and territorial integrity. At the interstices of these two exercises of sovereign power, the disabled veteran body materializes as the embodiment of a crisis of both state and masculine sovereignties.

The recent anthropological scholarship on sovereignty (Agamben 1998, Mbembe 2003, 2005; Navaro-Yashin 2002) suggests shifting “the ground for our understanding of sovereignty from issues of territory and external recognition by states, toward issues of internal constitution of sovereign power within states” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 2). This approach problematizes sovereignty by reconceptualizing it as a precarious effect of the state that seeks to create itself as sovereign “in the face of internally fragmented,

unevenly distributed, and unpredictable configurations of political authority that exercise more or less legitimate violence in a territory” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 3).

My theorization of the relationship between the disabled veteran body and sovereignty is both inspired by and critical of this body of literature. Tracing the political activism of disabled veterans over a crucial decade during which the meaning of state sovereignty was reconfigured nationally—by the restructuring of the sovereignty relations between the state and the Kurds—and internationally—by the EU harmonization processes— this dissertation contends that the internal and external constitution of sovereignty, and the power over life and death and the power over territory are not so easily separable in most conflict zones. Nevertheless, the space that this literature opens for the scrutiny of the volatile interplay between the multiple registers of sovereignty is indispensable for understanding the contemporary disabled veteran political subjectivity. In order to use this analytical space, though, I question the gender-blind nature of this literature by looking at the constitution of sovereignty through the analytical lens of gender.

The scrutiny of citizenship practices, state institutions, and nationalist ideologies through the perspective of gender has illustrated how operations of modern nation-states enact and reproduce gender norms and inequalities in different social settings (Chatterjee 1993, Najmabadi 1997, Pateman 1988). In this body of literature, the military institution has drawn particular attention because of its key role in the sustenance of gender hierarchies (Altnay 2004, Enloe 1984, Taylor 1997). Compulsory military service in Turkey both reflects and consolidates the gendered project of forging a national

community of equal (male) citizens (Sirman 2000, Koğacioğlu 2004). Making each able-bodied man equal vis-à-vis the state by subjecting them to universal conscription, this exclusively male institution holds the key to the republic's gendered promise for its young male subjects: masculine sovereignty.³

In order to become sovereign citizen-subjects—breadwinners and the heads of their own independent households with legally endorsed authority over women in the domestic sphere—men in Turkey first have to submit themselves to the sovereign power's grip. Not only potential employers but also prospective in-laws insist that a young man completes his military service to become an eligible for work and marriage. In this context, compulsory military service has historically been the seal of the patriarchal contract between the modern Turkish state and its male citizenry, forming a suture between state sovereignty and masculine sovereignty as a key rite of passage for heterosexual adult masculinity.⁴ However, this co-constitutive relationship between these two registers of sovereignty has been dramatically destabilized in the context of the still

³ The Turkish state has long endorsed a particular form of masculine sovereignty; an adult man's sovereignty over his lawfully wedded wife, as part of the modern patriarchal contract it established in the name of national fraternity and equality of all (male) citizens. This sovereignty was legally endorsed through a set of rights that the state conferred to husbands over their wives, such as the husband's status as "the head of the household" and the wife's obligation to adopt her husband's last name and residence and to obtain his permission to work. Since the mid-1980s, feminist groups have campaigned against such legally endorsed patriarchal rights, including penal codes encouraging honor killings, as well as against those exercised thanks to the state's unwillingness to legally interfere in the private sphere such as domestic violence. However, it was the recent EU harmonization process that pushed the state to finally "clean" the civil code of patriarchal rights and gendered references, and propelled the ongoing nation-wide campaign against domestic violence. In short, the last decade has witnessed the state's dissolution of the gendered entitlements that it has traditionally provided for its male citizens. The disestablishment of the patriarchal contract, coupled with the neoliberal retreat of the state from its promise of breadwinner status for men, manifests itself as a broader crisis of this particular mode of masculine sovereignty.

⁴ The Turkish military-medical establishment defines homosexuality as a psycho-sexual disorder and bans gay men from serving in the army (see Başaran 2007 and Biricik 2008 for succinct analyses of the issue).

ongoing armed conflict. Disabled conscripts, who were rendered socially and economically dependent rather than acquiring masculine sovereignty, became embodied symbols of this destabilization, evoking intertwined crises of masculinity and political legitimacy.

The emergent scholarship on disability has shown us the multiple ways in which disability gets entangled with issues of inequality and identity (Davis 2006, Garland-Thomson 1997, Shakespeare 1998). In particular, the productive dialogue between disability and gender scholars has led the scrutiny of how gender and corporeal otherness are co-constituted in a variety of social fields (Abu-Habib 1997, Das and Addlakha 2001, Fawcett 2000, Smith and Hutchison 2004). Turkey has historically had a bad record in terms of the living standards, employment options, and (social/spatial) mobility chances of its disabled citizens, notwithstanding some recent improvements recorded in the scope of Turkey's European Union (EU) harmonization process (Bezmez and Yardımcı 2010). The strong social stigma associated with disability, condensed in the disabled street beggar figure, persists despite the recent governmentalization of disability. In such a milieu, the post-injury lives of disabled veterans, especially given that most of them are already from lower or working-class backgrounds, have been characterized by the loss of breadwinner status in the discriminatory labor market, difficulties in finding a spouse, and dependence on their natal families for financial support and daily care.⁵ In short,

⁵ Despite the existence of universal conscription, compulsory military service is a thoroughly classed phenomenon in Turkey. Those who are enrolled in higher education are allowed to postpone their military service as long as they are enrolled, and those with college degrees have the option to serve as reserve officers or to have reduced duration of service. Moreover, those who have worked outside Turkey for three

disabled veterans have been disenfranchised, infantilized, and expelled from the institutions and performative practices associated with masculinity.

From the mid-1990s onwards, the disabled veteran body was inscribed and molded by two interrelated processes in Turkey: Political commodification and governmentalization. While accruing symbolic value in an increasingly militarized public culture, the disabled veteran body became the target of a new governmental regime, through which the medical and welfare institutions of the state campaigned to remasculinize the disabled veteran body via a variety of discursive, institutional, and medical practices. These two processes finally got intertwined in 1999 at the turning point of the armed conflict, during the trial of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, when the state conferred on disabled ex-conscripts the most powerful honorific of the Turkish nationalist lexicon, transforming their status from “duty-disabled” (a welfare category with political implications) to “gazi” (a political category with welfare implications).

The Turkish term “gazi” is often translated into English as (war) veteran or disabled (war) veteran; yet, this translation erases the historical and religious significance of the term. The Turkish word “gazi” is the cognate of the Arabic “ghazi,” which refers to those who took part in “ghaza” (raid against infidels). Over the last millennium, the term served as a floating signifier denoting Islamic warrior orders like medieval knights, an idealized warrior masculinity model within tributary empires’ Islamically legitimated ideology of conquest and booty, as well as a title of sovereign rulers and top rank military

full years are offered the basic military training option instead of full-service if they accept to pay a certain fee in foreign currency (currently around \$8000).

officers. As an irony of history, this Islamic notion found a new host in secular-modernist Turkish nationalism, which incorporated the idioms of gaza and martyrdom (şehadet/shahada) to sacralize the new state. Starting with the body of Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the modern republic, the Turkish state constructed new avatars for the embodiment of the title of “gazi”.

The latest “gazi” avatars were the disabled veterans of the counterinsurgency war against the PKK. The conferment of the title on disabled conscripts in 1999 was a consecratory act, which elevated disabled soldier bodies into the domain of religionational sacred by constructing them as victim-heroes who, in the words of every other nationalist politician, “sacrificed their arms and legs for the indivisible unity of the state with its territory and nation,” that is to say, for the sovereignty of the state. Through this logic of sacrifice, the state assigned a meta-meaning to soldiers’ losses and offered them a distinguished place in national cosmology as the embodiments of the everlasting Turkish military spirit, side by side with past gazi-heroes. However, through a series of unintended consequences, the sacrificial limbs of sovereignty would return to haunt the Turkish state in a political phantom limb syndrome that yearns for the wholeness of the body politic.

The concept of “sacrificial crisis” is key for my understanding of the political subjectification of the disabled veteran body in contemporary Turkey. I use the term in two senses. In the first sense, building on Hubert and Mauss’ work (1964), sacrificial crisis refers to a collapse of the sacrificial schema as a result of the incommensurability between the political and social values of the disabled veteran body. Juxtaposing the

“gazi” and the beggar figures, this level of analysis illustrates the generation of a sacrificial crisis by the dialectic between political rites of consecration and everyday rites of desecration. The second sense of sacrificial crisis designates disabled veterans’ feelings of betrayal towards the state, which stemmed from the non-execution of the death penalty of the PKK leader Öcalan, whose corporeal punishment was promised as a reciprocal gift for “gazis.” On this level of analysis, informed by Girard (1977), I demonstrate how the ultranationalist campaign against dissident public intellectuals replaced the PKK leader’s body with intellectual’s body through a conspiracy-fueled mechanism of sacrificial substitution, rendering intellectuals surrogate victims for Öcalan.

Violence imprints bodies, injuring, disfiguring, dismembering, and disabling them. Yet, violence is not only a destructive but also a generative force that gives way to new forms of signification, subjectivity, political agency, and community (Daniel 1996, Feldman 1991, Peteet 1994). How can we think about the disabled veteran body in the light of this basic premise of the anthropology of violence? What kinds of gendered political subjects are generated by disabled veterans’ violently altered bodies? How can we better understand the interrelations among the body, violence, gender, and politics?

This dissertation seeks to ethnographically address these questions by exploring the becomings of the disabled veteran body in Turkey. Produced from conscripted soldiers—perpetrator-victims of sovereign violence— in the context of a transnational ethno-political conflict and subjected to the structural/symbolic violence of the ableist society condensed in the figure of the street beggar, disabled veterans re-become subjects

of violence in millennial Turkey. By anchoring disabled veterans' arduous quest for recovering their masculine sovereignty to the right-wing agenda of "restoring" state sovereignty, ultranationalism remasculinizes disabled veterans by making them once again bearers of violence, expanding the very spiral of violence that afflicted disabled veterans themselves.

Fieldwork in a "Gray Zone"

"True journey is return," Ursula Le Guin writes in the *Dispossessed*. Le Guin's words echoed in my mind as my plane landed in Istanbul, my hometown, in June 2005, concluding my twenty-one hour journey from Austin, Texas. For the following twenty-nine months (June 2005-December 2007), I conducted ethnographic fieldwork with disabled veterans in Istanbul and Ankara. My field site was a dynamic and ever shifting one because I sought to trace the multiple—and not always physical—spaces in which the disabled veteran body was embodied, circulated, institutionalized, molded, and represented in contemporary Turkey. The focal locations of my fieldwork were two support and advocacy associations in Istanbul—the "official association"⁶ and the "popular association"—that brought disabled veterans with martyrs' families together within the same organizational spaces.⁷ During my fieldwork, I spent countless days attending these organizations, where I met most of my informants. I followed my

⁶ I use the pseudonyms "official" and "popular" for the two associations I attended during my fieldwork.

⁷ Although the analytical focus of this dissertation is on disabled veterans, it is crucial to note that disabled veterans often inhabit the same cultural, institutional, and political zones with "martyrs' families," the families of soldiers killed in the armed conflict.

informants to after-work get-togethers, military hospitals, welfare institutions, coffeehouses, weddings, picnics, and soccer games. In addition, I participated in numerous political demonstrations and nationalist commemorations that took place in locations like stadiums, city squares, or martyrs' cemeteries. I carried out interviews with disabled veterans, retired military physicians and officers, disability activists, social workers, and journalists. Further, I collected life stories from thirty-five disabled veterans. Last but not the least, I conducted extensive archival research in order to understand the broader socio-historical forces that impinge on the bodies and subjectivities of my informants.

This smooth linear narrative is a necessary academic convention, yet it is one that erases all the ambiguities, vacillations, fears, and enjoyments of ethnography for an illusionary mastery. Moreover, such linear narratives are rarely possible while conducting "fieldwork under fire" (Nordstrom and Robben 1995). When I arrived in Istanbul in June 2005, I was ecstatic to be back at home, yet clueless and nervous about where to start my research, and how. People grimaced when I told them about my research topic. "You've chosen a sensitive topic," they exclaimed, pointing out the possible risks of conducting research on such a politically volatile issue. I already knew. One of my first lessons in life as a child raised in a broken leftist family in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup was that things related to the state were "sensitive" in Turkey. The spectral persecutory power of the state was an intimate force for my generation. "How are you going to publish even if you can conduct the research?" my reproachful family and concerned friends asked me. I was not sure. I grew more and more edgy.

So, days passed by. I constantly postponed my entry to the field using my archival research as a pretext. Sitting at the Ataturk Library in Taksim set against the magnificent view of the Bosphorus, I meticulously collected an extensive variety of sources, including early republican novels, military officers' memoirs, military publications, and legal documents such as codes of law and verdicts of military courts. I examined the representations of disabled veterans in print media in three historical periods—the Korean War in 1950-53, the Cyprus War in 1974, and the contemporary context of the Kurdish conflict since 1984—in order to outline the changing discourses, narratives, and images about disabled veterans. Furthermore, I watched the emergent TV genres that featured militarized themes and disabled veteran/martyr protagonists, such as mafia-like series (*Deliyürek* and *Kurtlar Vadisi*), Islamic occult series (*Sır Kapısı* and *Sırlar Dünyası*), and army shows (*Mehmetçik* and *Mehmetçikle Elele*). Then, the autumn came. As the color of Istanbul was turning to red, I finally had the courage to call the official association from the number I found on the Internet.

Approaching the official association as a complete outsider seeking research permission, I first gained the status of a “student doing homework,” then a “welcomed guest,” and later, the “adopted son” of the female head of the organization. It was via this organization that I met my first informants, who introduced me to other veterans until I reached the popular association on the other side of Istanbul through the snowball effect. In short time, I found myself immersed in the daily rhythms of these organizations to realize that they were at once hubs of mourning, healing, redistribution, and activism, knitting disabled veterans and martyrs' families together in communities of loss.

Participant observation in these organizations enabled me to learn about the places, objects, and practices (which I describe in detail in Chapter 2) that bound the communities of loss together. Cultivating in me a sense of the tacit aspects of the political/cultural repository in which disabled veteran activism was anchored, fieldwork also helped me to decipher the processes of collective identity formation.

Becoming a regular at the associations also provided a unique opportunity for dispelling the aura of suspicion that surrounded my long hair and my middle-class able-body. Disabled vets I met in the privacy of these secluded spaces mostly welcomed, or at worst kindly refused, when I asked to meet them for an interview. With those I met outside these organizations, especially with activist veterans, I was not always that lucky, even if I was introduced by a fellow vet. I first had to “pass some tests,” as one of my informants frankly told me as soon as we met. Most of my informants were used to journalists, but I was not from the press either. Was I a terrorist?

So, my informants gazed back at me as I tried to observe them. I was asked about my hometown by informants, who were trying to anticipate my ethnic and political background. The license plate number of my car was taken in addition to the address and phone number on my business card. People told me that they had me checked out and that I was “clean.” Despite all this, almost all of my informants, even those who were initially suspicious, were friendly and helpful. I remember feeling uncomfortable only twice. The first moment was when a veteran I visited in his apartment half-jokingly told me that he had his gun within the reach of his hand in case that I was planning something bad. The second incident occurred when I was waiting at the garden of a vet’s workplace

in Ankara. I had only talked to him on the phone and did not know what he looked like. So, I assumed the stranger suspiciously glancing at me from a distance would be him. When I approached the guy, he hostilely interrogated me and checked my ID, making me think that he was an undercover agent. To my surprise, he revealed to be a disabled veteran and a co-worker of my informant. In the course of my fieldwork, I would come to understand how these performances of vigilance and statehood and feelings of vulnerability and sovereignty characterized disabled veterans' experience of publicness in the ethnically mixed urban space.

In Istanbul and Ankara, I collected thirty-five life stories from disabled veterans from different backgrounds. I was not in a position to be picky, but I tried and succeeded in incorporating differently structured experiences in relation to age, class, ethnicity, religion/sect, military branch, rank, cause of injury, and disability type. Interviews often took place in my informants' homes, which were mostly located in working or lower-class neighborhoods that I had never been to as a native Istanbulite. This allowed me to observe their neighborhoods, houses, and families and to record life stories without being frequently interrupted. Sometimes, the interview process took up to seven hours, leaving behind piles of cigarette butts, hoarse voices, puffy eyes, and exhausted bodies. The interviews I carried out at my informants' workplaces often produced shorter, disrupted, and bad quality recordings and less intimate conversations. Nevertheless, the interview process itself offered an unanticipated yet welcomed opportunity to get a sense of the work conditions and power dynamics at state institutions where most of my informants

were employed as manual workers despite their disabilities. This would later help me to conceptualize the sacrificial crisis that I describe in Chapter 4.

Life stories were portals to the subjective worlds of my informants (Portelli 1998, Plummer 2001). They provided me a deeper understanding of how my informants performatively renegotiated the boundaries of their selves as they narrated and made sense of their experiences of warfare, injury, and disability. However, re-constructing their testimonial life stories was not an easy task for my informants. The flow of their narratives was often disrupted by long pauses, silences, inarticulate expressions, and emotional outbursts while they recounted their experiences of clash, injury, dismemberment, amputation, and disability-caused social isolation. Sometimes, we had to take breaks and smoke a few more cigarettes before resuming the interview. Sometimes, we wandered, entered blind alleys, or took detours in our conversation. All these moments were, to say the least, as important as the biographical and semantic content of my informants' stories as they carved an affective space for "understanding the pain of the other" (Sontag 2002).

Pain and trauma stand at the threshold of our understanding, presenting epistemological challenges to our ability to know and to represent (Caruth 1996, Leys 2000, Scarry 1985). Traumatic experiences cannot be easily assimilated into language and symbolism, and even when they are, they produce fractured and erratic narrative structures that "will not sustain integrated notions of self, society, culture, or world" (Robinett 2007: 297). What makes testimonial narratives valuable is not only their recording of an often silenced past, but also their ability to bear witness even when words

do not work. Bearing witness in testimony, some scholars assert, is only possible through the breakdown of representation at the moment of traumatic reenactment (Caruth 1995, Felman and Laub 1992). That is the only way, they argue, to learn from history; history is itself a symptom that cannot be cured but just transmitted through “the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” (Caruth 1996: 24). I would not go as far, but I still have to admit that the vicarious effects of witnessing on my own body was more useful than any other source of data for my understanding of the process of subjectivity formation.

Through their life stories, my informants introduced me to a narrativized “gray zone” (Levi 2004) in which the categories of the perpetrator and the victim became increasingly blurred. In this zone, which I call “Being-on-the-Mountains,” my informants were both perpetrators and victims of violence as conscripted soldiers. Before entering the field, I had already prepared myself for the vicissitudes of this gray zone. The gray zone that I witnessed through participant observation, though, was something unanticipated.

The protests against intellectuals that my informants participated in constituted the limits to participant observation in my fieldwork and placed me along multiple lines of “ethnographic seduction” (Robben 1996) and ethnographic betrayal. I had ample political, ethical, and practical reasons not to attend these highly mediatized ultranationalist demonstrations. Nevertheless, I increasingly started to feel that the space for ethnographic witnessing was getting thinner. One day, I encountered one of the protested intellectuals at a pricey breakfast café overlooking the Bosphorus and found

myself dealing with strong feelings of complicity. But complicity with whom? The answer was disturbingly unclear. On the one hand, I felt the urge to declare my support of her, apologetically explaining why my informants' rage was directed at her. On the other hand, being aware of the class base of my informants' political resentment, I was ashamed of sharing this upper-class breakfast.

The murder of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, a key target of my informants' protests, by an ultranationalist teenager in 2007 was a threshold event, which slowly but gradually alienated me from activist circles. Leaving the field was not easy though when the field did not leave you. As clashes with the PKK escalated through the end of the year, nationalist demonstrations became after-dinner entertainments even in middle-class residential neighborhoods, including mine. My informants were constantly on TV. Before football games, cheerleaders announced the names of the latest martyrs making the whole stadium chant "Present!" in newly invented ghostly performances. The militarization of the public life became more suffocating than ever. On top of all that, I now had conspiracy theories to explain all that. Leaving the field is not easy, when it does not leave you.

"True journey is return," Ursula Le Guin writes in the *Dispossessed*. "Return to where? From where," I asked myself while my plane took off from Istanbul after twenty-nine months of fieldwork.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 1, *Being-on-the-Mountains*, explores what it was like for my informants to be a conscripted soldier deployed against the PKK in the Region. While coining the concept, “*Being-on-the-Mountains*,” I am informed by the works of Heidegger (1996), Merleau-Ponty (2002), and to a lesser extent Deleuze and Guattari (2002) and Foucault (2008). In *Being-on-the-Mountains*, I attempt to theorize how counter-guerilla warfare brings together a military assemblage that shapes embodied soldier-subjects’ engagement with the world through its spatial, biopolitical, and ideological formations. In this direction, I seek to answer: What are the traces other than disability that these formations left on the bodies and psyches of disabled veterans? How does *Being-on-the-Mountains* accumulate as intensities, memories, pleasures, habits, premonitions, and affects? What kinds of belongings, becomings, alterities, and subjectivities does it produce?

Answering these questions, Chapter 1 opens up by introducing a surreal war geography, mountains, which made a guerilla war imaginable and sustainable in the first place. Then, it illustrates the operative principle of counter-guerilla warfare: *Becoming-guerilla*, or as my informants express it, “*Becoming-terrorist*.” *Becoming-guerilla* is a mimetic process through which the soldier-body is biopolitically re-made in the mirror image of the guerilla-body. In the chapter, I analyze soldiers’ embodied experience of this transformation and the violent play of mimesis and alterity that accompanies it. The sections on the formations of gender and premonition take the question of the self and the other to a magical realist plane that is animated by strange figures, dreams, and otherworldly encounters. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how *Being-on-the*

Mountains is reproduced through the sensory channels of everyday life, finding unexpected ways to permeate the post-military life of my informants and to shape their attachments.

Being-on-the-Mountains brought loss, disability, and social suffering for my informants, but it also placed them in novel sociabilities, “communities of loss,” which therapeutically filled the gap left behind by the violent loss of their pre-military social environments as a result of their disabilities. Chapter 2 explores the communities of loss engendered by Being-on-the-Mountains. In the chapter, I aim to convey the reader both “a sense of the place” (Aretxaga 1997) and a historicized understanding of the ways in which these communities bring my informants together around shared losses, sentiments, needs, and interests.

Communities of loss perform a variety of social, economic, and political functions. They constitute centers of redistribution, hubs of activism, and most importantly spaces of healing. In these communities, the negativity of loss, pain, and suffering becomes a therapeutic force that pulls the members of these communities in an intersubjective field of non-medicalized healing. This therapeutic force, which is crucial for my informants in the process of making a new life-world, consists of community-making intensities that are generated by culturally specific responses to loss. In the chapter, I discuss two such responses—the collective melancholy (*hüzün*) of martyrs’ families and gallows jokes of disabled veterans—as well as the broader historical forces shaping them, such as the nationalist politics of mourning and the stigma of disability.

Chapter 2 closes with an ethnographic anecdote from a martyrs' cemetery that hints at the ways in which ultranationalism permeates in the everyday practices of these communities in contemporary Turkey. Being-on-the-Mountains had a profound influence on the Turkish political culture through the communities of loss, which brokered mourning and suffering into a militarized civil society and ultranationalist protest in the new millennium. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the embodied socio-cultural and political processes, which paved the way to the eruption of disabled veterans as vital actors of the ultranationalist politics of revenge and resentment described in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 focuses on the changing terms of the volatile sovereignty relationship between disabled veterans and the state in the mid 1990s. The chapter is primarily interested in elucidating two processes, which transformed the meaning and experience of being a disabled veteran, as well as disabled veterans' relationship with the state: Political commodification of the disabled veteran body and the formation of a new governmental regime, within which state institutions campaigned to restore disabled conscripts' masculine sovereignty. In the chapter, I also examine the emergence of new masculine subjectivities within the liminal medical spaces of this new governmental regime and the ramifications of this process for the upcoming disabled veteran activism. At the end of the chapter, I explore the reverberations of the sovereignty problem in the public culture and introduce a Turkish cinematic genre that stands in dialogic with disabled veterans' tentional relationship with the state, offering veterans an ultranationalist resolution for the problem of sovereignty: Becoming-state.

In order to understand how becoming-state resonated for my informants, Chapter 4 shifts our focus to the sacrificial crisis generated by the dialectic between the political rites of consecration and the everyday rites of desecration. The chapter starts with an analysis of the legal amendment that enabled the state to grant the title of gazi (veteran) to disabled ex-conscripts in the absence of an officially declared war by re-defining the meaning of the title. Chronicling the historical journey of the title through the last millennium, the chapter shows how the historically specific juxtaposition of heroism and victimhood in the title of gazi constitutes disabled veterans as split subjects, caught in the tensions between nationalist construction of their bodies and everyday experiences of lower-class disabled masculinity. Chapter 4 concludes with a scrutiny of the ways in which this sacrificial crisis is translated into terms of ethno-political violence and gets entangled with the issues of the state and sovereignty within the conspiratorial nexus between disabled veterans' quest for masculine sovereignty and the ultranationalist agenda of "restoring" state sovereignty.

Chapter 5 follows the vicissitudes of the disabled veterans' political career as they are transformed, first, into national victim-heroes sacrificed in the name of state sovereignty, secondly, into nationalist protestors pursuing a vengeful politics asking the state to sacrifice "enemies of the nation" in exchange for their sacrifices, and lastly, when failed by an impotent state, into "sacrificial limbs of the state" proper, symbolically re-sacrificing themselves in a last gesture to restore, or even to become, the sovereign state.

CHAPTER 1- BEING-ON-THE-MOUNTAINS

Spatial Formations

In my first visit to the Region⁸, I travel from Diyarbakır to Bingöl in a minibus with an anthropologist friend, who introduces me to the geography of war. As our minibus ascends the snake like mountain roads our trip is frequently interrupted by military checkpoints. Once in a while, my friend points at a crack on mountain walls to show me the mark left by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) or at a now-bleak hill, once covered by oak forest, to tell me how the forests of the Region were burnt down to destroy the hideouts of guerillas. Here, violently inscribed mountains function as “mnemonic artifact(s) that store repertoires of historical narrative and collective action” (Feldman 1991: 27).

Gabar, Cudi, Kato, İkiyaka, Buzul... These are the names of some of the mountains located in the Region that have become familiar topographical structures for any regular follower of news in Turkey from the 1990s onwards. Frequently referred to as “some of the most inhospitable terrain in the world” (Bulloch and Morris 1992), these are the mountains where the dialectics of guerilla-counterguerilla warfare take place; where the soldiers of the Turkish army, paramilitary village guards and the guerillas of the PKK daily engage in a deadly hide and seek game. These mountains form the spatial and

⁸ Naming is a controversial issue, especially in contexts of ethno-nationalist conflict. “Region” is a deliberately ambiguous word. It is used officially as an abbreviation for “the Region of Southeastern Anatolia,” one of the seven regions of the nationalist-modernist geographic discourse in Turkey. In leftist and Kurdish circles, it is also used as an allusion to the legally banned term, “Kurdistan,” which was transformed from the name of a governmental district of the Ottoman Empire into the imagined homeland of Kurdish nationalism.

fantastical contours of the now ghostly war geography, which has been formed through the historically sedimented practices of violence, terror and resistance.

Mountains of Turkey, like in many other countries (Hobsbawm 1981), have long been the strongholds of all sorts of people who escape or defy centralizing and regulating practices and the violence of the state: Outlaws in hiding, social bandits challenging corrupt local authorities, nomadic tribes resisting forced settlement policies of the Ottoman Empire, smugglers violating physical and economic borders, Marxist guerillas struggling to topple the state. Mountains have a mythical character in popular memory attained through their signification in oral epic poetry as the last bastion of those who face injustice, sloganized in the verses of the 19th century folk poet Dadaloğlu: “If the law belongs to Sultan, mountains belong to us.” This epic tradition has been celebrated as the authentic core of Turkish national culture by the republic, which has construed itself as a radical break with the Ottoman Empire, but it also inspired the folk music of the revolutionary left, like Ahmet Kaya’s “My Songs to the Mountains,” the all time best-seller album in Turkey.

The symbolism and cultural meanings of the mountains of the Region in Turkey have followed another historical trajectory from that of the now tamed and touristic mountains in other parts of Turkey. Since the foundation of the republic, the modernist discourse of the Turkish nationalist imagery has constructed the mountainous topography of the Region as the source of its historical alterity. In this figurative discourse, the backwardness of the Region, articulated in the tropes of tribal organization, feudalism and customary law, is linked to the precipitous and impenetrable nature of the Region.

Thereby, mountains constitute a material force that generates and sustains difference, and claims to ethnic difference. The radical denial of the state's existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group until 1991 was legitimated on the ground that Kurds were indeed Turks who were alienated from their own ethnic identity due to the isolation and dispersion of the local population and to difficulties in transportation. This historical narrative goes as far as to attribute the origin of the word "Kurd" to the sound that Kurds made while walking on the snowy mountains: "Kart kurt." Thus, Kurds have been pejoratively called "mountain Turks," in other words, Turks whose identity has been lost or, to put it more accurately, stolen by mountains.

While Turkish nationalism ascribed a negative aura to the mountains of the Region, the Kurdish nationalist discourse celebrates the mountain figure as the only reliable source of refuge in a politically volatile and hostile environment. Thus, the saying in Kurdish political folklore, "Kurds have no friends but the mountains." Sacralized in the poetics of national struggle, mountains are the privileged sites of Kurdish national memory, which accumulates sedimentary layers of resistance and martyrdom. In the only published first-hand journalistic account of guerilla life on the mountains (Gürsel 1996), as well in guerilla memoirs (Çiyayî 2002), the border between mountains and plains is constantly recoded as the border between life and death, dignity and submission, and good death and bad death. "Plains means destruction for the guerilla," guerillas say, adding, "But no one can dislodge us from these mountains" (Gürsel 1996).

The ongoing spiral of violence and the competing “spatial mnemonics” (Feldman 1991) of Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms transform mountains into charged locations, burdened by the historical weight of damnation and salvation myths. In the context of the ongoing counter-guerilla warfare, the linear time of modernist Turkish nationalism and the Messianic time of Kurdish nationalism come together or rather collide to produce the mountain figure as a hybrid chronotope, a damned site of redemption.

From the foundation of the republic to the 1990s, the mountains of the Region remained an alien presence within the Turkish national geography, marking de facto boundaries of state sovereignty. In the first decades of the Republic, especially during the Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s, the only acts of sovereignty targeting the mountains were naming and bombing. The state progressively replaced the Kurdish place names with invented Turkish ones to make these places its own, dissociating meanings from the fabric of social space and evacuating local memories. Sometimes simultaneously, the state also bombed the mountains from the air to exterminate the Kurdish rebels. The nationalist gaze at the mountains, therefore, took the perspective of a bird’s eye, registering the geography from a distance and with a sense of mastery. But this gaze also carried the anxiety of a lack, created by the elusive materiality of mountains, which was beyond the reach of soldiers who had to return to their barracks every night and remain locked there for several months every winter.

After the introduction of counter-guerilla warfare techniques in the early 1990s, both the social geography and ecology of the mountains and the nationalist imaginary’s relation to the mountains have changed determinately. Through a variety of biopolitical

and anatomopolitical techniques, which I examine in the following section, a new soldier body/sensorium and a new army were created in the mirror image of the guerilla and the PKK. Soldiers started to live on the mountains day and night, sometimes uninterruptedly for months. The military units have been altimetrically reorganized in accordance with the dominant/subordinate location dichotomy, referring to the higher (safe) and lower (unsafe) grounds respectively. All villages remote from highly populated areas except those converted to paramilitary village guards were evacuated. The mountains of the Region have become spaces par excellence for the nationalist fantasy that the Turkish state is omnipresent, that not a single piece of land within the borders of the fatherland is beyond the reach of “the hand of the state.”

The spatial doctrine of counterguerilla warfare has radically transformed soldiers’ experience of being-on-the-mountains as well as the meanings and emotional moods attached to the mountains of the Region. These mountains, as they shift from being the devilized spaces of the nationalist Manichean metaphysics of place into sites of an antagonistic copresence of soldiers and guerillas, have become incorporated into the nationalist imaginary as enchanted sites of heroism, adventure and martyrdom. In 2000s Turkey, this fascination with the mountains has put its stamp on the cultural products that circulate widely within the emergent nationalist public: Poems and songs, soldiers’ pictures and diaries, memoirs of ex-military officers, and personal videos of ex-recruits on the Internet all abound with representations of mountains. The most striking character of this novel nationalist fascination with the mountains is the assimilation of the aesthetic, emotional and narrative structures previously associated with the leftist and Kurdish

struggles. Through this assimilation, the mountains of the Region are recast in the nationalist imaginary as objects of reverence, sites of redemption, silent witnesses of sacrifice, and tombs of heroic fighters, “who go to their death as if they are going to their nuptial nights.”⁹ Yet, the long-established nationalist anxieties regarding the “loyalty” of these mountains have not simply vanished; quite the contrary, they are deeply embedded in the nationalist glorification of the mountains. It is exactly the coexistence of contesting discourses and conflicting emotional moods and the regular shifts of rhetoric and tone that gives the nationalist veneration of the mountains its peculiar character. A corny poem that I encountered in a nationalist website provides an illustrious example to these ambivalences:

Gabar Dağı Cudi Dağı¹⁰

Tuzak oldun askerime
Sebep oldun ölümüne
Şahit ol şehadetine
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

Mount Gabar Mount Judi

You've been a trap for my soldier
Causing his death
Witness his martyrdom
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Oluşumun kayalardan
Uçurumdan mağralardan
Nefret ettirdin dağlardan
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

You are made of rocks
Abysses and caves
You've made me hate mountains
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

⁹ It was the famous sufi poet Rumi who described his death as a “nuptial night.” Today, this phrase is popularly used for conscripted soldiers.

¹⁰ The poem can be found at the following URL address: <http://www.antoloji.com/gabar/siirleri/sayfa-168>. The same website contains hundreds of nationalist poems about Mount Gabar and most are infused with the same structures of feelings.

Görmek istemem resmini
Duymak istemem ismini
Anlatmasınlar cismini
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

I don't want to see your picture
I don't want to hear your name
Let your substance untold
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Dağlar yeşil Çiçek olur
Yağmur veren orman olur
Nihayet faydalı olur
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

Mountains must be green with flowers
Covered with rainy forests
And ultimately salutary
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Yataklık yaptın düşmana
Üzerin bulandı kana
Yakıştıramadım sana
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

You've harbored enemy
Got covered in blood
I wouldn't expect it from you
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Başında kara bulutlar
Tutuluyor bu kayıtlar
Asla değişmez hudutlar
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

Black clouds on your head
These records are kept
The borders will never change
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Bu sitemim değil sana
Üzüntümü anlasana
Bu olanlar vatanıma
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

I don't reproach you
Understand my affliction
All that is happening to my country
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Her taşınız benim canım
Orda şehit düştü kanım
Başı sağ olsun vatanın
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

All your stones are my dears
They are where my blood was martyred
Condolences to the country
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

Ayar derki yürek yanar
Çünkü ağlıyor analar
Şahit olsun bütün dağlar
Gabar dağı cudi dağı

Ayar says, the heart burns
As mothers are crying
May all mountains stand witness
Mount Gabar Mount Judi

The poem fuses two different images of the mountains, the abominable abettor and the beloved one, to enact the slippery mood of the Turkish nationalist attitude towards these mountains.¹¹ It evokes gory images (a mountain covered with blood, rivers flowing blood) to portray the mountains and juxtaposes these images with the utilitarian aesthetics of nationalist literature on nature to emphasize their subversive and murderous nature. Then, with a significant move in the last three stanzas, “my reproach is not on you,” the poem takes an apologetic tone. As the poem develops, the mountains shift from the domain of profane to that of sacred. Interestingly, as explicitly stated in the poem, what makes these mountains profane—causing Turkish soldiers’ death by harboring the enemy—is also what makes them sacred by rendering them the site and witness of martyrdom.

This nationalist ambivalence toward the mountains of the Region both structures and is structured by soldiers’ experiences of being-on-the-mountains. It also characterizes my informants’ personal and public recollections of their military days in the Region. In disabled veterans’ narratives, these mountains are simultaneously sublime and monstrous,

¹¹ The ambivalent structure of attraction and repulsion that shapes the emotional tone of this poem is a distinguishing feature of colonial desire according to McClintock (1995).

objects of awe and contempt, spaces to redeem and conquer. During my fieldwork, I frequently heard statements like “Gabar is a damned mountain; its soil smells of blood, its rivers flow with blood,” “Gabar must be drilled from its peak to its base by oil drillers to be filled with explosives and blown up,” and “You can only appreciate that our country is the most beautiful country in the world after you see those mountains,” sometimes all in the same narrative.

On the one hand, my informants remember mountains as animated enemy spaces. They tell affirmatively how soldiers changed the name of the Hayırlı (loyal and auspicious) Mountains across the Iraq border to Hayırsız (disloyal and worthless) Mountains since they harbored and hid enemies. They picturesquely describe each individual mountain to spatially anchor their stories on how they “could not find the terrorists hiding in an underground cave just below their feet” or how “an army of terrorists could fit into just one of the hundreds of underground tunnels under the mountain.” Yet, mountains are enemies not only because they harbor enemies and help them hide but also because they wear out soldiers through their “ill-tempered” nature. In disabled veterans’ narratives, surviving on these rugged mountains is itself an act of heroism. Their accounts picture a completely dry land so steep that even mules and ibexes cannot climb. My informants frequently emphasize that no living being inhabits and no plant grows on those mountain peaks as an evidence of their incompatibility with life.

The remembering of mountains as enemy spaces conjures the conquest (gaza) imagery for my informants. In spirited performances, they recount the “adrenaline” of the

ritualized combat practices of charging mountain peaks chanting “Allah Allah” (the war chant associated with the Ottoman Janissaries) and raising flags after peaks are “captured.” These ritualized practices closely echo the ritual structure of the Turkish-Islamist annual commemoration of the conquest of Istanbul, which is acknowledged as a prophecy of the prophet Mohammed. By building an analogy between the Janissaries climbing the city walls of Constantinople and present-day soldiers seizing the Region’s peaks, these practices represent the “struggle against the PKK” as a holy war, in other words, as a war against infidels. Through these practices and accompanying discourses, such as that “the PKK terrorists are uncircumcised,” mountains of the Region are marked as lands to be conquered and converted in order to re-make an eternal home for the Turkish nation. Then, there is the re-conquest of the mountains through the mechanical reproduction of the conquering gaze through the military service souvenir pictures, where my informants pose on the peaks or while pointing their weapons at the mountains in the horizon.

On the other hand, disabled veterans’ narratives of their military service days are tinged with lamentation and longing for a pastoral landscape, devastated by war and littered with ruins and military garbage. Yet, “rather than using pastoral motifs to create an imaginary golden world,” they evoke a “traumatic pastoral in which both nature and humans are [perpetrators] victims and witnesses of catastrophe” (Coffey 2007: 28, parenthesis mine). These narratives portray the magnificent views from mountain peaks or the sublime scenes of evacuated or deserted and then mined or booby-trapped mountain villages, where spring water wells up in the atriums of houses. My informants

affectively convey the intensity of these scenes by pointing at where they felt the chilling, usually neck or shoulders, when they first saw those scenes. They tell of how they regretfully burnt the beautiful fruit tree gardens of empty villages so that they would not bear fruits for the consumption of “terrorists” or how they shot the “beautiful-eyed” mules of guerillas to death. They describe how mountains have been turned into dumping grounds, rendering mine detectors useless in a land covered with bullet and shell casings and empty tins of canned food. Now and then, they interrupt their stories to tell me how much they would love to go back to those mountains.

One frequently comes across the “going back” theme in disabled veterans’ carefully state-monitored public accounts. “If necessary, we will go back and fight with terrorists without our legs for this country,” says a double leg-amputee disabled veteran on the television. In private, most of my informants often harshly criticize this going-back theme. “Are we the only suckers? We paid all our debt by sacrificing our limbs. If someone needs to go, they should start with the able-bodied.” However, they also repeatedly and yearningly voice their desire to go back to mountains in their life stories. This hints at a psychic force beyond the pleasure principle. The going back theme is an expression of a traumatic attachment to a land where gazis painfully enjoyed moments of encounters with the Real. In order to grasp the intensity of their experiences and their compulsion to repeat, we have to understand how Being-on-the-Mountains has been biopolitically structured through the corporeal formations of counterinsurgency.

Corporeal Formations

On August 15 1984, the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) declared guerilla war against the Turkish state by organizing coordinated attacks on the provincial towns of Eruh and Şemdinli. Even though several revolutionary leftist organizations had made attempts at initiating guerilla war in rural Turkey in the 1970s, these organizations did not pose a real challenge to the massive security apparatus of the state and were decisively crushed by the 1980 military coup. Thus, the Turkish army, which had not faced a serious “internal” threat since the Kurdish rebellions of the 1930s, was caught off-guard by the spatial/temporal dynamics and strategies of guerilla warfare.

In his otherwise boringly written chronicle (2005), Hasan Kundakçı, Martial Law Deputy Commander and brigadier general back in 1984, narrates the surprise in a satirical language. According to Kundakçı, especially in the four months period between the initial attacks and the capture of the first PKK guerilla, soldiers were disheartened by stories ascribing guerillas supernatural qualities. These stories, Kundakçı deduced using his previous experiences in the Region, were derived from local popular myths surrounding prominent social bandit figures like Hamido and deployed “the same kind of propaganda to demoralize soldiers.” One such myth that Kundakçı recounts in his chronicle concerns a talking bear, which dwelled in Mount Ararat in the 1960s and used to scare soldiers going to the river to get water. The talking bear immediately disappeared from the scene after Kundakçı realized that it was a trick of smugglers and responded by establishing hunter teams and disseminating this news in the nearby Kurdish villages. Thus, Kundakçı concluded, the first task of a counterinsurgency

commander was to dispel such mystifying stories and to convince soldiers that guerillas were ordinary humans, not untraceable, bulletproof beings.

On August 19 1993, the headlines of Turkish newspapers read, “I won’t ask my soldiers to collect carcasses,” quoting another famous brigadier general Osman Pamukoğlu, one of the main figures in the organization of counterinsurgency and the admired ex-commander of several of my informants. Pamukoğlu uttered this sentence during a large military operation, named “Operation Hedgehog,” in response to the journalists, who asked him to order his soldiers to collect the guerilla corpses so that they could take a gory picture sensational enough to serve both as a journalistic and political commodity. Whether or not Pamukoğlu’s real motive was to hide the real number of PKK casualties and inflate it for state propaganda is less relevant than the ramifications of his use of the word “carcass” to refer to guerilla corpses. The Turkish word for carcass, “leş,” is sometimes idiomatically used for a beaten or exhausted human body; yet, through Pamukoğlu’s literalized use, the word acquired a new political meaning and got further incorporated into the military argot of the Region, coining new phrases like “leş almak,” literally meaning “taking carcasses.” The use of the word “carcass” for guerilla corpses finalized the relegation of the guerilla body to the outside of both human and divine orders, stripping guerillas of from human rights and entirely nullifying religious duties and responsibilities regarding the tending and burial of the dead, such as the Islamic principle of the sanctity of the corpse. Thus, this utterance may be deemed one of the symbolic markers of the start of counterinsurgency proper, which is often referred to

as “the 1993 Concept” both in leftist/pro-Kurdish and official/nationalist accounts of the war.

When these two anecdotes related by Kundakçı and Pamukoğlu, separated by nine years, are juxtaposed, it is impossible to miss the shift from anthropomorphic to zoomorphic themes in the representation of the guerilla body. In both anecdotes, the body serves as an outer shell that conceals the true identity of its wearer. In the first one, the talking bear has the appearance of an animal but in reality hides inside a human who animates the fur of the already dead bear. In this anecdote, the most urgent requirement of counter-guerilla warfare is to convince soldiers that guerillas are ordinary flesh-and-bone and flesh human beings. In the second anecdote, in contrast, the guerilla body is construed as a human fur that harbors an unassimilable animalistic presence. The guerilla body construed in this way belongs neither to the imagined national or religious community nor to a generic humanity. It is obvious that in the nine years that passed between these two anecdotes the military discourses and practices targeting guerilla bodies are notably transformed. This transformation, I contend, is intimately linked to the processes through which new soldier bodies were fashioned in line with the counterinsurgency.

Between 1984 and 1993, the Turkish army slowly but gradually metamorphosed from a conventional army devised for interstate warfare to an increasingly multifarious machinery of counterguerilla warfare. This metamorphosis was modeled upon a set of infamous military technologies that are alternately referred to as counter-insurgency, low-intensity, or unconventional warfare in the military “science” literature. Some of these

technologies, such as forced displacement, already made their way to the public because of their devastating macro-scale effects or their flagrant violation of basic human rights. However, others, such as the creation of a new soldier-body, were too subtle and procedural, contained and limited in their reach and goals to become that visible or controversial. Nevertheless, through their effects on soldiers' bodies and psyches, these micro technologies have profoundly shaped the nationalist ideology and public culture of the post-1990s Turkey and reconfigured the meanings of and the relations among military service, masculinity, and the disabled male body.

While reading one of the recently popularized memoirs or chronicles written by the retired generals of the Turkish army who served in the Region, one realizes their fixation on the idea of “beating terrorists with their own tactics” (Kundakçı 2005, Pamukoğlu 2004). Indeed, this idea reveals one of the guiding principles of the reorganization of the Turkish army: The re-making of the conscripted soldier-body in the mirror image of the guerilla-body.

In his war chronicle, Osman Pamukoğlu (2004), now a nationalist celebrity and political party leader, builds an analogy between soldiers' relation to guerillas and a fox hunter's relation to a fox. In order to be successful, Pamukoğlu asserts, a fox hunter has to learn thinking and acting like the cunning fox by mimicking its behaviors. Continuing the analogy, he argues that to be able to defeat guerillas soldiers must learn their ways and become like them—i.e. mobile, small, flexible, and not bound by stations, bureaucracy or legality. The retired general narrates in detail the process through which soldiers were trained, encouraged, and forced to mimetically reproduce the military

tactics and embodied practices of guerillas under his commandment. I call this one-way mimetic process through which the soldier-body is transformed into a mimetic copy of the guerilla-body “becoming-guerilla.” Becoming-guerilla entails a move away from conventional military drills, inter-rank relations, discipline and enemy conception in order to inculcate conscripted soldiers with skills, daily-life patterns, and sensorial and physical capacities associated with guerillas. It also involves a spatio-temporal re-arrangement of the military units in a way to replicate guerilla tactics. Below, I reflect on this process of becoming-guerilla, paying particular attention to both soldiers’ embodied experience of this mimetic transformation and its overdetermining effects on guerilla bodies.

The *sin-qua-non* aspect of becoming-guerilla process is the permanentization of military activity and its temporal and spatial expansion. Borrowing Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology (Deleuze and Guattari 2002), this process can be best understood as the state’s seizure of a “war machine” that has flourished in domains outside or at the margins of state’s regulatory practices. Through becoming-guerilla, the military captures smooth time/spaces, i.e. mountains, nights, winters, cross-border zones, and etc., striating them in order to restrict nomadic flows like the movement of guerillas, and in this course, becoming partially nomadic itself.

In the early 1980s, the movement of soldiers and guerillas resembled two waves traveling in opposite directions and forming a matrix of smooth and striated time/spaces with destructive interference zones. The principle force overdetermining soldiers’ movements was the rhythms of the nature. Soldiers conducted patrol and military

operations during the daylight and in summers and remained locked in their barracks at night and in winters. Guerillas, on the other hand, followed the rhythms of soldiers and restricted themselves to hit-and-run attacks when the military units were mobile and expanded in space, and attacked in full force when soldiers were stationary and condensed. Thus, guerillas always had the initiative advantage provided by their flexible and unrestricted move in smooth time/spaces. Yet, this was to change when the Turkish army shifted from static territorial defense strategy of permanently protecting the land to the field domination strategy.

Kadri Gürsel, a journalist abducted by the PKK in 1995 and held hostage for 26 days during which he and a group of guerillas struggled to arrive at a PKK camp on Mount Gabar, describes the striation of time/space on the mountains in his book “Those on the Mountains” (Gürsel 1996). In a thrilling account, Gürsel narrates how their journey, once a short and easy one according to guerillas, became virtually impossible due to the omnipresence of military units and paramilitary village guards, technological surveillance, and the increasing compression of sanctuary time/spaces. This journey reflects the effects of the temporal and spatial expansion of the military through the field domination strategy on the other side of mountains.

I do not intend to analyze the multiplicity of rearrangements and reconfigurations required for this transformation, but certain relevant aspects should be mentioned. To begin with, this transformation demanded the technological upgrading of the army through the introduction and the routinization of the use of transportation technologies such as 4x4 off-road motor vehicles and military helicopters, sensorial technologies such

as thermal imaging and night vision, winter gears and non-recoil artillery, etc. It also required the reorganization of soldiers under small, flexible, and mobile teams with the ability to act as an organic totality with specialized sensory organs and firepower capacities. It even involved the re-negotiation of certain national memories concerning past wars such as those of the military catastrophe of the Battle of Sarıkamış, the worst single defeat of the Turkish national history. The memory of 80,000 Ottoman soldiers ill-prepared for winter conditions freezing to death in the Caucasus was still haunting military officials who remained unwilling to conduct winter operations after seventy years and had to be dispelled, much like the memories of past bandits that haunted their soldiers. Most importantly, though, this transformation required the invention and deployment of various anatomopolitical techniques that addressed soldier-bodies at a preindividual level, “below the human body and above the human subject,” and enabled the formation of a new embodiment and sensorium to live and fight on the mountains.

The most immediate manifestation of the becoming-guerilla process in soldiers’ everyday lives is the obligation to live on mountains and be constantly on the move just like guerillas. “You want to know what I did in military service. I walked, walked, and walked. That’s what I did in military service,” says one of my informants, wickedly. My informants’ narratives are saturated by the theme of walking. Indeed, one of the most frequently used words in my interviews is a rather odd phrase that one hears very rarely in ordinary speech, “intikal etmek,” which literally means “changing place.” For most of my informants, arduous walks on the mountains characterized by unbearable moments of thirst, hunger, fatigue, and pain are the main source of suffering in military service and of

narrative in post-military life. They remember and describe, in a very Foucauldian way, how their bodies were broken into embodied capabilities of walking and carrying weight in their basic training so that they could walk great distances on a rugged terrain while carrying above seventy pounds in their backpacks. They tell, for example, about their exercise hikes where they were forced to carry backpacks loaded with heavy stones until their commanders decided that their mental and physical resistance to bodily exhaustion was broken and until they learned their lesson that immobility equaled death in the Region. But they also tell how they fell asleep for a few seconds every time they crouched down on the ground and how they desperately hoped that they would fall in an ambush so that they could finally stop walking and rest. Oftentimes, these walking stories are concluded when the narrator recounts how he got injured during one of these walks, either stepping on a landmine or in an ambush.

One day, a mischievous informant asked me, out of nowhere, if I knew why most amputee veterans lacked their left feet. I did not know the answer. To be honest, I was not even aware of such a fact, if it was true at all. But as usual he was successful at arousing and directing my attention, so, I asked him to explain why. Smirking, he replied that the explanation lay in the way soldiers were trained in marching drills. “Left, right, left,” he loudly reminded me of the military cadence and added, “They take the first step with their left foot.” Regardless of its empiric validity, this observation carries an insightful kernel of truth regarding the close connection between the anamopolitical regime of military institution and the soldier-body’s differential exposure to bodily harm and injury.

The strategic investment of the military in mobility as a part of counterinsurgency turns certain body parts, especially feet, into extremely valuable and vulnerable organs. Several of my informants had stories about buying quite expensive boots from their own pocket or spending the last portion of drinking water to clean feet covered with sores and blisters. The same feetology also exists on the other side of the mountains: The best gift for a guerilla is said to be sports walking shoes. Ironically and poignantly though, in a landscape so littered with landmines, the counterpart of increased mobility in military service is often loss of mobility in the civilian life. Even more ironically and poignantly, disabled veterans continue to use the phrase “intikal etmek” in their post-military lives as a subcultural idiom referring to their commutes to and from various sites of ultranationalist political protest in the city.

Sensorial Formations

Benjamin describes the everyday experience of walking in the anonymous urban public in the nineteenth century as a visceral sense of shock (Benjamin 1999). For Benjamin, this shock can be generalized as the emblematic feature of modernity, where/when human senses are flooded with stimuli through the forces of mass media and commodification and subjected to a “complex training” in various social spaces like streets, factories, battlefields, and movie-theaters. In line with the general thrust of his work, Benjamin simultaneously finds both a crisis/loss and a possibility/salvation in this transformation of the human sensorium. While enabling revolutionary changes in humans’ experience of the world through tactility and the technological extension of

human senses, this change also “opens the human sensorium up to new kinds of trauma” (Buck-Morris 1989).

Benjamin’s reflections on the malleability of human sensorium and the associated shock experience provide crucial insights for our understanding of the transmutation of the sensory apparatus of conscripted soldiers in becoming-guerilla process, but in a rather odd way. To my knowledge, despite Nazism’s constant evocation of a pastoral idyllic landscape harboring an organic community, Benjamin never speculated on the possible sensory effects of the return to the nature from the city. For the conscripted soldiers deployed in active duty in the Region, this is exactly one of the most pressing concerns, since the relative or absolute absence of electricity, mass media, noise, pollution, anonymous crowds and the distractive force of commodities on the mountains engenders a strong sense of shock and disorientation. This shock of being-on-the-mountains is not the kind of world-historical, epochal shock that Benjamin meditates on; nevertheless, it is a generational one. Moreover, this generational shock needs to be situated not only in relation to the de-colonization of the senses on the mountains but also to their simultaneous re-colonization by the military.

Becoming-guerilla process entails the re-education of conscripted soldiers’ senses and reconfiguration of their sensorial capacities through the cultivation of new modes of attention and the utilization of sensory prosthetic devices. In a guerilla/counterguerilla war characterized by mutual exchanges of sneaking and ambush, soldiers have to learn the intimate relationship between perception and death and to develop new ways of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic attention, especially in order to deflect the constant

threats posed by scattered anti-personnel landmines. A slight crunch, a whisper in Kurdish, a momentary image caught by the corner of the eye, a shade in the dark, a small heap of stones, or the softness of the soil may be the harbinger of death. Always keeping this heightened perception mode at the background, it is possible to chart out two more specific sensorial formations of Being-on-the-Mountains. The first one belongs to long nights in guard posts and trenches and is characterized by extended periods of sensory deprivation in which all stimuli are reduced and soldiers' visual sense is often completely cut off. The second sensory formation belongs to the interludes of armed engagement, when the sensorial impact of modernity is intensified through mechanized warfare and the optical unconscious of military technologies like night vision. Soldiers' senses are strained in both of these cyclical periods of sensory deprivation and sensory overload and the intensity of these moments is inscribed in soldiers' bodies through sensory means.

If the experience of being-on-the-mountains is a shock in the Benjaminian sense, so is the return to the city. After constantly hearing about it from my informants, I have in my memory a vivid picture of the panoramic night scene visible from the windows of the sixth floor of the Gülhane Military Hospital in Ankara, where severely wounded soldiers from the Region are treated. This bird eye's view of the capital city's bright neon lights possesses the visual sense of the soldiers transferred from the Region, who rarely, if ever, saw such artificial brightness throughout their military service. There is not only a sense of amusement but also a sense of dazzling and threat in these moments of fascination by lights, anonymous crowds, buildings, or traffic. The sensorial requirements and arrangements of the city life are radically different from those of the Region. Many ex-

soldiers cannot walk on asphalt roads for a while since walking on this smooth surface requires a completely different kinesthetic coordination than walking on the rugged mountains. Moreover, the modes of attention habitualized as lifesaving strategies on the mountains are only distractive forces in civilian life. There is little point in the endless tracing of landmines or the automatic search for signs associated with terrorists in the faces, gestures, and talks of people. Yet, they last for long, just like the enjoyment of my informants with the violent play of mimesis and alterity on the mountains.

Formations of Mimesis and Alterity

The mimetic success in the becoming-guerilla process constitutes a source of both suffering and masculine warrior pride for conscripts. In disabled veterans' narratives, the moment of coming back to the station from mountains with filthy and ripped uniforms covered with countless numbers of blood-sucking earth lice, riven boots, bearded faces, and matted hair—all violating the norms of military discipline and bodily comportment—is often told in a tone of excitement and pride: “You had to see me! I was exactly like a terrorist. No one could tell that I was a soldier.”

I must dwell on these sentences, if for nothing else, for their initial shock effect on me. Archetyped by the figure of Rambo, a tough survivor and a master of guerilla tactics, the investment and enjoyment in the unconventionalization of warfare is not an unfamiliar phenomenon and indeed, both media accounts and my informants' narratives are full of bragging about the Rambo-looking soldiers. Nevertheless, this should not cloud the real question: How a disabled veteran who abhors more than anything what he

associates with the PKK so casually boasts that he was “exactly like a terrorist?” These moments of boasting are clearly marked by the enjoyment of becoming something else through mimesis, of turning into the other and draining his power as in mimetic magic. This enjoyment in the erasure of differences between soldier-body and guerilla-body, I argue, is intimately linked with the anxieties regarding the real identity of the PKK “terrorist” and the increase in different forms of violence targeting guerilla bodies in the 1990s. Building on the works of Taussig (1991), Girard (1977), Appadurai (1998, 2006) and Malkki (1995), this section explores these linkages between identity, mimesis, alterity, and violence as they take shape on the mountains.

In *Mimesis and Alterity*, Taussig meditates on the “play of mimesis and alterity” in the formation of the identities of the self and the Other(s). Identity, Taussig argues, should be regarded not as a thing-in-itself but as a “relationship woven from mimesis and alterity” (Taussig 1991: 133), in which mimesis surfaces as “an impossible but necessary, indeed an everyday,” *destabilizing* affair, which registers “both sameness and difference, of being alike, and of being Other” (129). In other words, Taussig draws attention to the slipperiness of both identity and relations of mimesis and alterity by underlining that mimesis always comes in conjunction with alterity. How, then, does the channeling of soldiers’ mimetic faculty in becoming-guerilla process as a way to produce embodied copies of guerilla-bodies play out in the construction of the otherness of guerillas?

In order to answer this question, we have to take a detour around another theorist, Girard, who accords mimesis a central, even mythic, place in his theory on the origins of anything human. Mimesis, Girard contends, lies at the heart of every social relation since

one learns everything from others mimetically, including what to desire (Girard 1977). For Girard, mimesis is always inseparably associated with desire, the desire to be another, that stems from one's existential effort to fill in the lack in one's being by imitating the others who seem to possess the very being that one lacks. This mimetic desire for the object of the imitated other's desire stirs up a mimetic rivalry between the imitator and the imitated, which detaches itself from its original object and triggers mimetic exchanges of violence, through which the imitator and the imitated become monstrous doubles of each other.

Girard's eloquent theory on the relationship between mimesis and violence falls short of grasping the particularities of the mountains. Rather than being the source of violence and conflict, the mimetic structure of the becoming-guerilla process has been itself set off and thoroughly structured by the violent exchanges. In other words, violence carves out its own mimetic rivalries, desires, practices and discourses on the mountains, as well as in other comparable settings (especially see Aretxaga 1997 and Feldman 1999 for ethnographic works informing this analysis). Nevertheless, Girard's main contention regarding the entanglement of mimesis, violence, and desire in the fashioning of likeness and otherness still holds its value. Indeed, the rivalrous mimetic desire for the mountains and its cultural expressions, which was detailed in the previous section, are the products or rather the symptoms of a Girardian setting in which soldier-body and guerilla-body are caught up in a frenetic interchange.

Having put forward the relationships between mimesis, alterity and violence, the question regarding the effects of the becoming-guerilla process on the construction of the

otherness of guerillas can now be answered. The more the soldier-body resembled the guerilla-body through the mimetic structure of becoming-guerilla, the more guerilla bodies were exposed to emergent violent practices. Especially during the consolidation of the becoming-guerilla process in the early 1990s, the mutilation of guerilla corpses, e.g. cutting off ears as a war trophy, became a widely shared public secret in Turkey. Discharged soldiers carried the material culture of this “space of death” on the mountains to the cities in the forms of necklaces made out of cut-off ears and personal pictures posing while stepping on the heads of slain guerillas. Interestingly, while the existence of these practices were constantly refuted by the state, gory pictures of guerillas, a vast majority of whom are citizens of Turkey, circulated not only in the underground image economy but also in the front pages of the mainstream media as weapons of psychological warfare.

The escalation of such violent practices in relation to the blurring of the boundaries between the self and the other is a well-documented phenomenon in ethnographies of violence. These ethnographies, often hinting at but rarely tackling the question of mimesis, are illuminating in their emphasis on the ways through which the human body becomes a surface for the inscription and reading of otherness in contexts where social uncertainty and “doubts about who exactly are among the ‘we’ and who are among the ‘they’” (Appadurai 2006: 5) take over. Fueled by the narcissism of minor differences, violence, especially its vivisectionist and verificationist forms, becomes a “forensic means to establish sharp lines” (Appadurai 2006: 89) in these contexts.

Therefore, if the becoming-guerilla process erases the bodily marks of differences between the soldier-body and the guerilla-body, violent practices targeting the guerilla body construct and verify its otherness “in its dismemberment and disfiguration” (Feldman 1991: 64). In that sense, it is striking that one of my informants, a primary school graduate, consistently used the medical term “otopsi,” autopsy, to narrate how they handled guerilla corpses. Several of my informants argued that they actually found what they were looking for in these “autopsies:” An unremoved foreskin that marks the otherness of the guerilla at the bodily level, implying that he is a non-Muslim. Although not seeing it personally, others also believe the “uncircumcised terrorist” myth that has been created by decades of state propaganda that the PKK is the continuation of the ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia).

Here, it is important to note that such post-mortem violence engendered by the play of mimesis and alterity on the mountains has to be located both with reference to state practices and within the field of social uncertainty over national, ethnic, and religious identities in contemporary Turkey, especially with regards to the PKK and Kurdish problem. The below montage from one of my informants’ life story clearly demonstrates this uncertainty and the anxieties it brings about:

The PKK is the pawn of imperialist Western powers. It has nothing to do with the Kurds. Kurds and Turks, we are inseparable like flesh and nail. We have taken their girls as brides and they have ours.... I have gooseflesh when I hear Kurdish. Not all Kurds are pro-PKK but most of them are sympathetic. During the day, you see an ordinary guy, a grocer for example. At night, he becomes a terrorist. Most

of them are like that... The PKK is the continuation of the Armenian terror. Most of these terrorists on the mountains are Armenians. I have seen it with my own eyes. Most of them are uncircumcised... These people say, "I'm not Turk/Turkish. I'm Kurdish!" Bullshit! We all came from somewhere. My father came from the Balkans, yet I still proudly say "I'm Turk/Turkish." If they want to be citizens of this state, they also have to. Ataturk said that eighty years ago: "Happy is he who calls himself a Turk." ... If we want to end this fight, let Kurds speak their language, live their culture. It's not a matter of coercion. But you know, actually Kurdish is a Turkish dialect.

The montage shows how my informants' accounts are inflected with questions about national identity and alterity that reflect a broader crisis in the national order of things: Who are the guerillas? Who are the Kurds? Then, who are the Turks? On the mountains, my informants learned by practice that the field of uncertainty constituted by these questions was a deadly one. This is a lesson that they will not forget in their post-disability political lives.

Gender Formations

At least since Scott's positing of gender as an analytical category for historical research (Scott 1986), we know that gender structures an endless variety of practices and institutions that seem to have nothing to do with gender on the surface. Warfare is one of them. Gender structures all actors, tactics, weapons, spaces, encounters, and desires of

war, even the war itself. “It is not a manly war” is a phrase that I heard countless times from gazis during my fieldwork. Gendering of war is accomplished here as the extension of the embodied violence of street masculinity (*delikanlılık*) that rests on one’s courage to risk his own body and dignity in the attempt to create, maintain or extend his “space of violence” (Jeganathan 2000). The guerilla/counterguerilla warfare is deemed an unmanly war since it does not involve direct confrontation of enemy sides and is always mediated by the spatial logic of guerilla/counterguerilla tactics. On the contrary, the exemplary violent encounter of guerilla/ counterguerilla warfare is the ambush (*pusu*).

Çetin Altan, a seasoned newspaper columnist, once argued that “we” (referring to Turks in particular and “Easterners” in general) could not become gentlemen since we lacked the duel tradition that constituted the core of gentlemanship. Instead, he claimed, “we” had a tradition of ambush, which he saw as abject as backstabbing. In Çetin Altan’s infamous self-Orientalizing language, historical otherness of the “we” can be traced through the ethos of masculine violence. Altan recasts the duel tradition, embodying aristocratic masculinity and honor codes of the early modern period (Low 2003, Shoemaker 2002), as a Western tradition and praises its one-on-one and face-to-face encounter logic. In his account, this form of honorable fight allegorically condenses the social and moral superiority of the West, whereas the dishonorable ambush tradition reflects that “we” have never been manly enough to directly confront our weaknesses or the enemy himself.

It’s highly unlikely that most of my informants were aware of the gendered and moral distinction that Altan made between these two forms of violent encounter; yet, just

like Altan, they used the gendered trope of ambush as a narrative device of otherization while remembering their experiences on the mountains. In their accounts, guerillas never fight like a man; unlike the brave Turkish soldiers who actively seek a face-to-face clash, they always run away and hide when attacked and tenaciously wait for an ambush opportunity. Thus, guerilla tactics such as ambush and sneaking are resignified within the symbolic economy of manly fight to indicate the cowardice of guerillas.

Not only the tactics but also weapons associated with guerillas, such as landmines, are situated in this symbolic economy to emasculate guerillas. Landmines, just like ambush, are nearly always used with the gendered swear word “kahpe” in my informants’ war narratives as well as in the media. “Kahpe” is a very dense and multi-layered word. It literally means a “whore,” but its meaning metaphorically extends to backstabbing, double-crossing, betrayal, untrustworthiness, and traitorousness. In short, “kahpelik,” the condition of being kahpe, entails any deed that violates the gendered codes of honor that has fascinated the anthropologists of the Mediterranean basin for long (Abu-Lughod 1986, Gilmore 1987). Landmines are frequently referred to as “silahların en kahpesi” (the most kahpe weapon) or “kahpelerin kahpesi” (the most kahpe of all kahpes) since they violate the masculine ethics of violence by allowing the disembodied presence of enemy, and hence enabling harm without the risk of being harmed. Needless to say, as the pejorative notion of kahpelik always denotes an unassimilable transgression, the labeling of certain weapons and tactics as kahpe functions as a marker of the other’s moral inferiority.

However, the gendered symbolic economy that my informants' narratives operate within is far from being a consistent and unified one. It is characterized with silences, contradictions, and undecidable terms that destabilize its Manichean structure. Take the landmines for example. Most of my informants served in the military before Turkey signed the United Nations Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCWC), which bans the production and placing of anti-personnel landmines. Therefore, they either witnessed the installation of landmines by fellow soldiers or installed them themselves. Yet, landmines still belong to the domain of unmanly warfare and *kahpelik*, thus to the PKK, in their narratives. Or consider the following example. At a political meeting organized by a disabled veterans' association in 2006, named "Down with terror! End landmines," all speakers damned landmine use by referring to the insidious, vile, and *kahpe* character of landmines. However, most of them were also active supporters of an ultranationalist campaign against the landmine clearance programs along Turkey's border areas.

While the demasculinization of guerillas through the idioms of cowardice and *kahpelik* provides the constitutive outside of military masculinity, it also creates problems for disabled veterans' self-fashioning as manly heroes. For one cannot become a manly hero by merely fighting against cowards. While tackling this problem, my informants often resort to a narrative strategy that resembles the survival trope of one of their favorite movies: *Rambo*. In their accounts, guerillas are always in an advantageous position, no matter how absurd the ramifications of this conviction may seem. To begin with, guerillas, forming a more or less permanent cadre, are thought to be better trained

than conscripted soldiers: “We take only three months of training. Most soldiers do not even know how to aim and fire with their rifles at the end of this period. But the terrorists are trained so well that one terrorist can divert thousands of soldiers for hours.” Moreover, guerillas are said to “know the terrain like they know the palms of their hands,” unlike “soldiers coming from the West, from the cities.” They are also assumed to be better equipped:

We have G-3 infantry rifles. Fire only two times and its barrel gets overheated and “swollen out.” You have to stop fire then, if you want to use it ever again. It gets jammed whenever needed. You have to cover it with nylon if it rains. You’re fucked up if it gets wet. Terrorists have Kalashnikovs. Light, reliable, and not affected by rain. I don’t even mention their Biksis [PKM] and Kanas [Dragunovs].

Finally, in my informants’ narratives, the fight against the guerillas is constructed as a fight against “the imperialists and their pawns,” since guerillas are allegedly backed up and harbored by superpowers and neighboring countries: “We fight not only against these bandits but also against the U.S. and Europe... You had to see those terrorists we captured in our big operation. They were from all over the world. There was even a blonde terrorist woman from Germany.”

So, what transforms disabled veterans’ narratives of an unmanly war against cowards into stories of masculine prowess and heroism is the fantasized power disparity between guerillas and soldiers. In and through this fantasy, the armed struggle with guerillas becomes the tip of the iceberg of a larger and tougher struggle against wild

nature and rugged terrain, masked superpowers and betrayer neighbors, and last but not the least, against the nefs.

Nefs (nafs in Arabic) is frequently translated into English as self, nature or ego; yet, none of these words grasps the particular significance of the term within Islamic philosophy and popular culture. Nefs is most commonly used to denote a human being's lower self with appetites and worldly passions, and more specifically to refer to what drives the self to commit evil. In my informants' accounts, being-on-the-mountains is a constant struggle against the nefs, in which soldiers have to curtail even their most basic bodily needs and desires, whereas guerillas are presumed to have the means to hedonistically indulge themselves. In these accounts, animated with desire and moral condemnation, the financial and logistical support of Turkey's enemies enables guerillas to spend their winters in luxurious and warm cave shelters, while soldiers freeze to death desperately searching for them. These shelters are often likened to a supermarket where one can find any type of food or medical supply in abundance. Yet, it is the birth control pills and condoms reportedly found in the storages of these shelters that captivate my informants most. Even those of my informants who are aware of the revolutionary puritanism of the PKK cannot hide their envious resentment of the mixed gender structure of guerilla groups. The contrast between the implied sexual activity among the PKK members and the celibacy of soldiers constitutes another dimension of the struggle against nefs. Some disabled veterans tell stories about how some soldiers fell for the Kurdish Siren-like girls who tried to tempt them by taking baths in the rivers. These

stories about temptation always end with a punishment, beheading in one case, that strikes those deceived by their nefes.

In disabled veterans' narratives, there are also figures that subvert or complicate the foundational dichotomy between the lionhearted Turkish soldier and the kahpe PKK guerilla. One such figure is the fearless, which emerges in all oral histories I have collected without an exception. In contrast with the coward guerilla figure, the fearless directly charges soldiers from the front, ignoring flying bullets and without taking cover. In that sense, the fearless is an excessive performer of manly fight and valor. His valor is excess too, akin to imprudence, since he cares neither for his own nor his comrades' lives. The fearless is "conditioned to fight like an automaton" and his running amok, "swinging like a drunk," only stops when he is dead. All of my informants are firmly convinced that such valor is unnatural and the fearless is a product of a chemical substance called "bravery pill."

In the course of my fieldwork, I must have looked dubious every time I heard the name of this enigmatic substance since several of my informants tried to assure me that such a pill "really" existed and that they found such tablets in the PKK storages. Whether there is a referent for the signifier of "bravery pill" or not and notwithstanding its magical realist and cyborgic undertones, the ideological function of this trope is clear. The implication is that guerillas can acquire the natural masculine qualities of prowess, altruism and self-sacrifice only by chemically altering their consciousness. Ironically, guerillas are also sure that it is the bravery pill that causes the crazy run of Turkish soldiers accompanied by the war chant of "Allah Allah." According to guerilla memoirs,

soldiers conscripted compulsorily can face death with such serenity only through a combination of months of brainwashing and drug use.

Another subversive figure in my informants' narratives is the guerilla woman.¹² In these narratives, the guerilla woman comes out as a ghastly figure; she is cruel, cold-blooded, and totally merciless. She does not panic however grave the situation is; she never hesitates, and most importantly, her hands never shake. Because of these deadly qualities, my informants claim, the guerilla woman is a natural sniper and forms a hair-raising duo with the Dragunov sniper rifle, known as Kanas in the Region. She also possesses the silence and stealth of a cat. If she ever sneaks in an emplacement, she can calmly blow up herself and surprised soldiers with a grenade. She incites dread even among the "most lionhearted Turkish soldiers." This woman guerilla figure in the military folklore of the Region goes against the grain of mainstream representations of guerilla women in the media, which portray them as passive victims who were abducted from their villages and endured rape and forced warfare. Yet, the figure itself is not one without precedents and can be traced back to the early Republican novels of the 1920s and 1930s.

Dağları Bekleyen Kız (The Girl Who Watches the Mountains) is a novel by Esat Mahmut Karakurt, a fervent Turkish nationalist writer of Kurdish origin. The novel, published in 1927 in the midst of bloody Kurdish rebellions, narrates the story of the Turkish war pilot Adnan, who valiantly fights against the Kurdish rebels led by a sheikh.

¹² The PKK has quite a large number of female guerillas that are also organized under the semi-autonomous PAJK (Kurdistan Women's Freedom Party). Yet, as in other parts of the world (see for example, Aretxaga 1993), their voices are often silenced.

In a short time, the protagonist Adnan spots a young Kurdish woman fighter who bravely and skillfully fires at Turkish warplanes, unlike other “brigands” who are afraid of planes. Karakurt writes through the hostile voice of Adnan:

I clashed exactly six times with this savage whore. The damned broad below the rocks knows how to use the mitrailleuse so well. Maybe, I consumed a thousand tons of bombs to crush the head of this female snake! I consumed an armful of mitrailleuse ammunition. I have moved mountains and rocks; yet, I haven't been able to kill this broad.

Both in my informants' accounts of war and Karakurt's novel, the Kurdish woman fighter is constructed as a skilled sharpshooter and a daring enemy who stands out amongst her craven male companions. In both cases, the dramatic function of the trope of gender inversion is to establish utter alterity through the gendering of Kurds with inverse gendered attributes. The analogous juxtapositions of demasculinized Kurdish men with the masculinized Kurdish guerilla/rebel woman in these two periods of ethnically informed state violence and popular rebellion draw our attention to the historical continuities in Turkish nationalist discourse. However, a closer look at the attachments and disattachments of the owners of the (narrative) gaze—i.e. the conscripted soldier and Karakurt's military pilot Adnan—to the masculinized Kurdish female illustrates the historical specificity of the woman guerilla figure.

The protagonist of Karakurt's novel, Adnan, meets and later falls in love with the Kurdish rebel girl, Zeynep, whom the reader soon learns is the well-educated daughter of

the dissident Kurdish sheikh. Through their romantic love and sexual intimacy, Zeynep renounces all of her previous belongings and is incorporated into the Turkish nationalist community as a confessor. In Karakurt's novel, the intra-ethnic love story between the Turkish soldier and the Kurdish rebel girl becomes an allegory of conversion and assimilation. In my informants' accounts, however, there is there no such libidinal investment in assimilation. That chance was long lost.

Gendered tropes, particularly tropes of gender inversion, are fundamental to cultural logics of otherization because of their capacity to express difference and hierarchy (McClintock 1995, Teng 1998). These tropes are also crucial for my informants' self-construction as masculine and moral heroes, not only on the mountains but also in the cities. This heroic identity is also informed by common stories of premonition that renders moments of injury as divinely ordained events.

Formations of Premonition

In disabled veterans' life histories, injury always comes with warnings, very similar to those described in Seremetakis' work (1991) in Greece.

On the night the event would happen, I had a shave at the barber, got a shower, changed my underwear, and phoned everyone I knew. At last, I called my wife and asked for *helalleşme* [the practice of giving and receiving blessings and forgiving each other before saying farewell, particularly when death appears near]. She asked me why I was talking like that. I said, "I'm going and maybe I won't return." I must have had a hunch since that was the only time I did such a

thing. I called every single person I knew, even those I barely knew. That night, it was around midnight when the bullet found me.

The warnings come in many forms. They often appear in dreams, a culturally salient medium of divination and communication with the supernatural. In their narratives, most of my informants mention seeing themselves dead, injured, or troubled in their dreams before getting injured or “entering” their kin’s, particularly mothers’, dreams.

My mother called me just before I stepped on a landmine. I was about to go to Northern Iraq. I talked to her in the morning and the same night I stepped on the mine. My mom told me that she had a very bad dream. She sees me leaping from somewhere and rolling [In her dream]. I roll and roll and then my cap flies off my head. In her dream, she tells about her dream to my grandmother and my grandma tells her that I’m saved and she should distribute pastries. So, she asked me to keep away from trouble. She warned me, saying that she had a really bad dream. I stepped on the landmine exactly the day she warned me.

In some cases, dreams convey prophetic spatial images indexing the coming danger. Halit¹³, for example, recounts the revelation he experienced when he realized that the military station he was assigned to was the one he had been seeing in his dreams.

¹³ Throughout this dissertation, pseudonyms are used in order to protect participants’ privacy and confidentiality. Other identifying information—such as place names—has also been altered or omitted for

I used to have the same dream during my training period. [In his dream] I used to see a station. I used to see its main gate and everything. Always the same dream! When I was arrived at the station where I was going to serve, I got stunned. The exact station I had been seeing in my dream.

The warnings sometimes come as gut feelings, affective intensities felt through body parts. One might have an anxiety in the chest, a hunch in the stomach, or goosebumps at the back of the neck. Commonly, these intensities are felt as bodily resistance against the orders of the brain and daily routines, as a sort of temporary blockage that restricts embodied capacities of the subject. It is typically the feet, the primary organ of war on the mountains, which receives the warnings.

My feet were not allowing me to walk that day. Actually, I was very fit. But no, I couldn't walk! My feet wouldn't move. I wondered what was going on. "What happened to you today," I asked myself. I knew that I was going to be shot.

In one occasion, the body becomes the tangible surface to be directly imprinted by the divine will, becoming an ephemeral text bearing the religious warning sign:

I was donating blood and chatting with the nurse. When a captain arrived, I immediately finished giving blood and walked outside. From Allah came an imprint that reads şehit [martyr]. I mean blood leaked from the puncture site and

the same purpose.

formed the phrase “şehit” in my palm. Then, I took ten days off. While I toured in Taksim I felt this shiver. Not fear, but I felt his shiver as if I would go and never come back. “Whatever,” I said to myself, “We only live what is written on our foreheads” [destiny].

In some narratives, ghostly saint figures, known as Evliya (wali in Arabic, meaning friend of Allah) are the emissaries of warning. Those narratives shift the agency of warning from the body onto a divinely ordained supernatural encounter. Evoking the popular image of Evliya as the god’s helping hand, providing blessing and help to those faithful in need, these narratives reconstruct this beneficial encounter with Evliya as a sign of danger, materializing in the fleeting collapse of the worldly and otherworldly realms. In the following account, the Evliya in the form of a soldier apparition saves the narrator from his unbearable thirst shortly before he was injured.

We were on the prowl. I took my position. I took my rations and two plastic water cans with me. On the way I had spent an hour climbing. I got tired and washed my hands and face. I sipped some water. I already had two cans. Anyway, an hour passed, two hour passed... The heat was hitting me hard. I finished one can. I poured some on my head. I was not worried about water since I still had another can. I was on the prowl. The clock was ticking. Roughly three, four hours passed. I was continuously gulping down my water and there was little left in the can. How thirsty I was! I felt sleepy but I could not sleep. There would be trouble if I slept. I was thinking to myself only if I could wash my face. I don’t remember

what happened then. I must have dozed off. I woke up hearing a noise. A crack! I turned back to see who he was. I pointed my gun. Nothing! No noise at all. Whatever! I looked right and left. I checked the wireless set. There was no signal. No any incoming calls either. I rose and took a few steps and saw a crawling soldier. “Stop! Who’s that?” He did not stop. So, I opened fire. Then, I heard the radio asking what was going on. I told my commander that there was infiltration. “How come he passed in front of us and reached your spot,” he scolded me. I swore I saw him. So, he told me to be careful. When, I turned my head back I saw that the water can was full. I don’t believe the existence of such things. But the water can was brimful!

These premonition narratives provide a closure to enigmas of survival and loss by evoking the idea that my informants’ injuries were not accidental but ordained by fate or divine will.¹⁴ While these narratives concerning the otherworldly realm of the secular state sacralize and give meaning to the hardly assimilable memories of war and injury, the ways in which the body remembers cannot be contained in narratives and erupt in post-injury lives of disabled veterans. The paradigmatic examples of such fleshy reminiscences are appetites and revulsions.

¹⁴ These premonition narratives are in dialog with occult soldier representations that have proliferated with the rise of the mediatized popular Islam in 2000s Turkey.

Formations of Visceral Memory

In a foggy and rainy winter night I pick up Kaya from the meeting point we set up a day earlier and head toward his rented apartment in one of the oldest squatter settlements of Istanbul. As soon as he gets in the car he asks me whether he can smoke in the car. “It’s pouring outside. I had to throw away two soaked butts,” he murmurs grumpily. “It’s fine,” I say, even though I detest the tobacco smell left in the car, not to mention the smell of Tekel 2001, which is nearly as bad as its more expensive counterpart Marlboro Reds. He offers me one too; I kindly decline. He goes ahead and lights his cigarette and voila, he is immediately cheered up. On our way, he wants us to stop in front of a grocery store to buy another pack of cigarettes. “I need to stock an extra pack in case we finish this one tonight,” he explains.

While Kaya tells me his life story in his living room, we both chain smoke. I have a pack of Camels, which he says that he is so fond of, but cannot afford recently. So I offer him a cigarette from my pack of Camels and we each light one. Soon he reciprocates with his Tekel 2001, and I do not decline this time. We spend the evening in a thick smoke cloud as we exchange and light cigarettes one after another and drink endless glasses of hot black tea served by his wife. He tells me how his parents used to be heavy smokers, how much he hated the disgusting smell and the choking smoke as a child and how he thought that he would never ever smoke in his life. We chuckle together as I tell him that I have an exactly similar smoking history. We also discover that we both started smoking with the same brand, Camel.

Kaya tells me how he started smoking in the poorly dug trenches and ambush emplacements in the mountains, where he and his teammates stood guard for months. Since “grandpas,” i.e. more experienced soldiers who had been actively involved in “operations” and especially those who had taken “heads,” regularly evaded their guard duties, “grandsons” like Kaya had to stand guard up to twelve hours non-stop everyday in these pitch-black pit holes always covered with snow and earth lice. With no light, no sleep, and no stimulation except rare moments of clash, even fear abandoned Kaya after a few weeks. For Kaya, as well as for others, this confrontation with nothingness disclosed the primary mood that ruled the guard posts, namely, the boredom: “How are you going to spend twelve hours in a hole with the same people who had already told you several times all the minute details of their lives and all the stories that they knew? Sometimes, we just made stories up to kill time, but your imagination has its limits. How are you going to spend fucking twelve hours if you are not going to smoke?”

Smoking under these conditions of semi-confinement is a way to maintain a semi-autonomous space for the craving bodies, who form a carcinogen community through the exchanges of cigarettes and fumes. It breaks the temporal chain of military discipline and counterguerilla warfare into a relatively autonomous circular temporality governed by body’s craving for smoking and marked by the acts of lighting and putting out cigarettes. Yet, what gives smoking its particular flavor in the context of the counterguerilla warfare is not merely resistance to boredom or discipline. Smoking on the mountains is primarily an experiment and a game with the possibility of death, combining the mundane pleasure of smoking with the extraordinary pleasure of cheating death and surviving one more

time in the face of it. Every narrative on the pleasures of smoking on the mountains I heard from ex-soldiers starts with a joyful account of how dangerous and deadly smoking can become: “One can detect the light of a cigarette from two kilometers at night. That is also the range of Kanas assassination rifles. You light one cigarette and boom!” Needless to say, that never hinders anyone from smoking; yet, one has to acquire certain skills, like how to hold a cigarette in a tightly closed palm or how to use an empty coke tin as a light screen.

Kaya used to buy his cigarettes from a small general store in a mountain village near his barracks, which was totally dependent on counterguerilla war economy and inhabited by paramilitary village guards and their families. He used to buy Camel, an expensive foreign brand, rather than cheaper local brands, since he had nowhere else to spend the subsistence money given to soldiers deployed in the region, which was several times higher than minimum wage. He was not married then and his brother used to make enough money to take care of their parents. The only problem was that one could not stock more than a few packs in barracks, especially not the foreign brands, unless one wanted to “share” them with other soldiers. So, whenever he had a chance to get a day off Kaya visited the general store to reload his stock.

One day, Kaya and his teammates were ordered to chop wood for heating stoves in the barracks at a location near the village. Since his feet were blistered that day, Kaya asked his commander to be excused. His commander granted permission, yet, at the end of the shift he did not let Kaya join the group of soldiers going for shopping in the village, telling him that skippers did not deserve off-time. Realizing that he would be out

of cigarettes, he begged his commander, but in vain. Enraged by his commander's arbitrary decision, Kaya ran around amok and discharged his G-3 in the air, joined by a mate, until he heard a cracking noise coming from the bushes in front of him. Ambush! Before he could point his gun he was shot several times. The last thing that Kaya did before losing his consciousness was to ask for a cigarette from the medic.

Like the narration of his military service days, the rest of Kaya's life story is also organized around the taste and trope of smoking. The first thing that he remembers about his extended stay in a military hospital is how he woke up and asked for a cigarette before he learned about "the leg." Kaya says, he understood that his injury was serious after the first puff because the "good old cigarette left a bitter taste" in his mouth: "It's the only cigarette I wasted in my life." This anecdote anticipates the rest of his narration of his "hospital adventures." In his edgy storytelling style, the period Kaya spent in the hospital becomes an endless search for a spot where he could smoke without getting caught, which could result in his eviction from the hospital. In this gloomy quest, there are lighthearted moments like when he and other veterans smoke in restrooms like high school kids, leaving someone as a lookout. Pleasures of smoking, feelings of belonging and transgression, and anxieties over the disciplinary hospital regime blend in these moments.

After leaving the hospital, Kaya, like most others, had to endure a long period of financial deprivation, while his application was pending in the bureaucratic mazes of courts, the military, and the Retirement Fund. In this period, he had to rely solely on his natal family for financial support, since his physical and psychological condition

hindered him from working in his pre-military job as a low-skilled blue-collar worker. In his narration of this period, smoking again emerges as the central theme that condenses post-injury angst and accompanying social and moral concerns. Kaya tells me how he did not have a single penny to buy a pack of cigarettes and how ashamed he was to ask for cigarette money from his father like an “unblushing high-school kid;” how he had to break the social norm of not smoking in the presence of the father during his convalescence period, and how this slowly but gradually destabilized his relationship with patriarchal authority; how he constantly had to ask for cigarettes from his friends like a “fallen bum” and how nicotine deprivation became the sensual lens through which the whole set of deprivations he faced during this time of financial deprivation and infantilization made sense. Then, he lights a new cigarette and concludes his narrative by telling me how he bought cartons of cigarettes for the few friends he had left in an excessive gesture of reciprocity after he finally received his “blood money” from the state. He cannot help adding that he misses the taste of Camel on the mountains.

Despite the dramatic twists and the overarching narrative function of the trope of smoking in it, Kaya’s story is not exceptional in a country where more than half of the adult male population smokes. Being-on-the-mountains has its own pleasures and smoking is definitely one of the most popular and accessible ones. Another is the plethora of canned tuna, a luxurious food item for most soldiers. My informants’ narratives of their life on the mountains are saturated with sensuous accounts of carnal pleasures. For example, one of my informants interrupts his story about a military operation to tell me in detail about the mouth-watering kebabs he cooked for his commander. One other tells

about the steaming hot pides (a kind of pizza) with ground beef that were served for the troops returning from operation. Another one spends ten minutes narrating in detail how his buddy managed to carry eggs and tomatoes in his already heavy backpack without cracking the eggs or squeezing the tomatoes for days; how they chopped the tomatoes on a flattened tin can with a soldier knife and cooked menemen (scrambled eggs with tomatoes) on a mountain peak using a pan that had not been washed for a very long time; how it was the most delicious menemen he ever had in his life; and how he even told this to his mother at the expense of upsetting her. Still another one tells me repeatedly how he and some other soldiers bought “mellow flavored authentic Bitlis” or smuggled tart tobacco from the Region. He and his friends, he adds, still continue smoking tobacco sent from the Region, both because it is cheap and because they “cannot give it up.”

In these accounts, there is a sensual dimension that both singularizes the experience in the Region and reproduces this experience through the sensory channels of everyday life. This sensual dimension is a trace of the war, just like the blue landmine scars, spinal decay, ugly feelings, and wounded, dismembered, amputated or disfigured body parts. For the war experience affectively shapes tastes, appetites, and structures of desire and repulsion. In this sense, the eruption of Real within the post-war lives of disabled veterans has to be understood not only in relation with the traumatic reenactment of war experiences, but also in relation to mundane pleasures inculcated by the war. Consider the following field anecdote:

I visit Serkan in his cozy house for an interview on a terribly cold winter day. He tells me that we cannot smoke inside since his wife is pregnant. He leads me to a

bedroom that opens to a small patio surrounded by tall, narrow apartments without plaster. The patio, full of flowerpots with numerous types of flowering plants and trees, looks like a green oasis in the grayish neighborhood. Rejoicing in my apparent surprise, Serkan explains that he has been working on this garden ever since he “got over” his injury. Looking around, I notice amazing-looking pickle jars stuffed with a colorful variety of vegetables. He proudly explains that he is quite skillful in pickle making and then hesitantly adds that he is a vegetarian. While I think about how vegetarianism is feminized to the point that it is shameful for a man to admit to it, Serkan goes on to say even more hesitantly that he stopped eating meat after his military service. Then, taking his courage in his hands, he puts an end to the tension in air: “I cannot stand the smell of meat anymore. It reminds me of how it smelled when I stepped on that landmine.”

This anecdote brilliantly illustrates the importance of attending to the frequently overlooked minute enjoyments and pleasures, in addition to suffering and pain, in attempts to grasp the formative force of “traumatic” experiences. This force is commonly understood solely in its negativity, in terms of shattering, at the expense of the myriad of ways in which intense experiences cling themselves to bodies. The examples above clearly demonstrate that my informants’ military service, warfare, injury, and healing experiences are brought to the present not only through the ordinary or traumatic work of memory, but also through their visceral memories, their pleasures and pains, and their “ordinary affects” (Stewart 2007).

Conclusion

Being-on-the-Mountains is an assemblage. It is an assemblage of intense collective experiences that not only my informants but also hundreds of thousands of conscripted young men deployed in the Region have gone through in the last two decades. This assemblage structured by the spatial, bodily, and cultural formations of counterinsurgency form my informants as particular “coagulations of intensities, surfaces, sensations, perceptions, and expressions” (Stewart 2007: 79), that is to say as particular subjects, which my informants did not exactly intend to become. Being-on-the-Mountains finds unexpected ways to permeate the everyday of my informants, shaping their attachments and disattachments, turning nationalism into something palpable. The next chapters tell the story of how this assemblage is brokered into a militarized civil society and ultranationalist protest in contemporary Turkey.

CHAPTER 2- COMMUNITIES OF LOSS

The Official Association

While in the “field,” I spend most of my time at the Istanbul branch of the official national association for disabled veterans and martyrs’ families. The association is located on an extremely busy street in a financial district that also hosts countless other organizations and political party offices in its worn out adjacent apartment blocks. Only a handful of the millions of inhabitants of Istanbul passing by the association everyday would notice its modest signboards, placed by the apartment entrance and on the front façade of the building, among the jungle of commercial signposts dominating the scenery. The amateur murals on the windows of the association, which read, “Soldiers die not when they are shot, but when they are forgotten,” and “Martyrs do not die! Fatherland shall not be divided,” are too small to be legible from the street. Even the huge Turkish flag that occasionally hangs from the windows of the association falls short of catching attention, especially after the recent nationalist flag campaigns, since the buildings on both sides of the street display hundreds of Turkish flags of all sizes.

This is why I cannot locate the association at my first attempt and have to ask for directions at a small corner shop. The shopkeeper, who joins the nationalist parade of flags by a small paper print one hanging behind the counter, initially tells me that he has no idea about the whereabouts of the association. Soon, however, he is able to guide me to the association a few yards away after remembering seeing some “handicapped guys” loitering in front of the building. I am surprised to discover that even a nationalist

shopkeeper in the immediate vicinity of the association is not at all aware of the spatial existence of it, let alone the melancholy and anger emanating from it.

The first thing I see upon entering the building is a pile of brochures featuring low-budget neighborhood restaurants left on the radiator by the elevator, suggesting that the flats in this apartment are mainly used as office spaces. Caught off guard by a purr, I notice a great looking puffy tabby. Petting her helps me build up the nerve to take the elevator upstairs. When I exit the elevator, I see the huge signpost of the association on the door to my left. “Strange,” I think to myself, “Why don’t they change this signpost with the smaller one outside the building?” as I knock on the door. A fortyish man warily half opens it and asks whom I am looking for. After hearing about my appointment with the association’s head he unwillingly invites me in with a gesture of his fingerless hand.

I step in and glance around. A massive bronze emblem of the association welcomes the visitors from the wall opposite the door. The wall by the door displays the pictures of the association’s previous presidents—all men and high-ranked military officers— and its current head, a martyr’s widow. A large, black-and-white panel fixed above the door on the left quotes a saying of Ataturk: “Sacrificing everything they have for the fatherland and the nation, the war disabled are living monuments. They deserve more than we could ever possibly give.” Above the opposite door, another panel displays the Article 61 of the 1982 constitution: “The state protects the widows and orphans of war and duty martyrs and its disabled and ghazis and provides them with the standard of living that they deserve.” Reading these, I feel my anxiety surprisingly fade away. I will decode this feeling later on, when I realize that the entrance hall uncannily resembles the

management office of my own apartment complex, which also looks stuck between a summerhouse and a state office, with a similar décor of Atatürk pictures on pine paneled walls. But some members are not comfortable with my presence. A man with an empty sleeve dangling from his left shoulder unsympathetically questions me before I am allowed to walk into the main room. Months later, he will tell me how suspicious I looked that day and we will share a big laugh.

When I step into the main room, the first things I see are the hundreds of pictures of young men hanging on the wall across from me. They are mostly passport photos, but I can also spot scattered military service souvenir photos or casual ones. Just from the way they look, I can tell that most of these pictures belong to lower class conscripts. This is the martyrs' gallery, a silent tribute to nationalized death that gives the room a palpable aura of mourning as the now deceased young men gaze back.

Since there was no place left on the main wall for the increasing number of soldier deaths during the escalation of the armed conflict in early 1990s, I learn later, the martyrs' gallery has extended to the sidewall. Occasionally, a martyr's mother comes to the association with a picture of her deceased son and submits it with shaking hands so that her son is literally placed within this horizontal comradeship of martyrdom. Day by day, death expands into the whiteness of the empty walls, which look like the empty spots in Edirnekapı martyrs' cemetery a few miles away. Lessening in number everyday, they remind of the temporariness of life and suddenness of death, leaving one in constant anticipation.

A portrait of Atatürk, “the Gazi,” is suspended above all pictures in accordance with the spatial representation of national cosmology, watching everyone from above as usual. Located right in front of the picture-covered walls is a wooden presidential desk, where the head of the Istanbul branch, Berna Abla (elder sister), sits. On the right of her desk stands another Atatürk poster, a Turkish banner with a heavy brass pole, and a green plastic ceremony wreath with the name and the logo of the association. Otherwise, this room is meagerly furnished like the rest of the apartment: Two leather armchairs facing the desk, a table surrounded by several chairs, a few pots of yucca-like plants, and two cabinets displaying souvenirs of nationalist monuments, illustrations of Atatürk, and plaques and plates given by the military, the Istanbul mayor, and different municipalities.

In my first days at the association, I am confined to the main room as a “guest” of Berna Abla. A martyred military officer’s widow, Berna Abla is a solid middle-class woman in her mid 50s, who fully embodies the Kemalist female body aesthetics of “modern but modest.” She is a fervent secularist and like most other radical secularists she politically defines herself as left of center. Having middle-class cultural capital, Berna Abla is the public face of the association. She often represents in the media not only the Istanbul branch but also the association as a whole. Tough but affectionate, she also frequently becomes personally involved with disabled veterans’ problems. Once in a while, a disabled veteran, who is assigned defiling manual tasks like cleaning restrooms or heavy duties like lifting at his workplace, comes to the association to ask for help. Berna Abla loses her temper on those days but she is generally nice, especially toward

me. Sharing the Kemalist sympathy for education, she is supportive of my research and after a few months, she adopts me as her son.

After a few visits, I start to discover the other rooms. The apartment is originally built not as an office but as a 3+2 middle-class family residence. Loyal to this original plan, the gendered organization of the association replicates the spatial logic of bourgeois domesticity, but in a partly inverted way. In a typical Turkish middle-class apartment, there are two living rooms. The largest room of the house is used as the “salon,” the living room or parlor reserved for guests. The salon space indexes distance, formality, publicity, and ritual with its often tacky and uncomfortable furniture and glassed dressers full of rarely used porcelain and crystal items. The second largest room is the proper living room, the space of conjugal domesticity, TV, and children. In the association, the “salon” (main room) is the gender-mixed space, where prestigious visitors such as military officers, charity givers, and political party representatives, as well as all non-regulars and female visitors are hosted. Thanks to the fact that the current head of the association is a woman, the salon space sometimes turns into an exclusively feminized space, such as, for example, when a guest needs to breastfeed her baby. The “living room,” on the other hand, is the masculine space that resembles a coffeehouse or men’s locale in terms of décor and leisure practices.

The living room, where male members socialize, consists of a sofa and a few armchairs, a TV stand, and a bookcase. Over the two years that I regularly attended the association, I barely witnessed any female presence in this room, except one occasion at which the TV was reserved for a disabled veterans’ daughter. Even the association’s head

hardly ever comes in this room, where disabled veterans and martyrs' fathers read newspapers (usually *Hürriyet* and low-priced populist tabloids like *Posta*), enthusiastically play backgammon (no card games since they conjure the aura of illegal gambling), and watch TV. The small-screen TV is often on. News is always followed, especially when nationalist intensities are high, such as during a cross-border operation or after a PKK attack. Horse races are also rarely missed; a few regulars love to bet on horseracing, although they never seem to win. Rarely, if ever, someone picks up a book from the bookcase, on whose shelves donated books (regional martyrdom catalogues, military journals, prayer book, etc.) jostle each other. In a country where coffeehouses are legally required to provide a never-used library for their clientele, the pedagogical gesture of keeping an unused library in this room reinforces the analogy with the coffeehouse.

Next to the men's living room, there is a smaller room that is solely used as an office space. The room includes a few office chairs and a desk on which the only computer of the association, an outdated PC donated during my fieldwork by the military to replace the old junky one, stands. The computer is reserved for the use of a disabled veteran, Deniz, who deals with all sorts of bureaucratic issues both within the association (memberships, dues, records, etc.) and between association's members and state institutions.

Lacking an arm, Deniz still aptly handles the clerical work of the organization with the help of a heavy iron cast calibration that he uses as a paperweight. He can also provide more information on disabled veterans' rights and entitlements than any lawyer can offer and he serves as a sort of free legal counselor for the members of the

association. Once in a while, he calls a state institution to follow up a disabled veteran's job application or to help a martyr's heir to cut through red tape. He is often able to sway the person on the phone through a combination of his grasp of law and sweet tongue: "If you could help this friend solve his problem, we would appreciate your labor of love for our association." Sometimes he tries to bribe and/or seduce his interlocutor jokingly, promising to send a box of sweets if the person on the phone is a man and flowers if she is a woman. If none of these strategies work while he defends a just cause, he and Berna Abila call the benefactors of the association in the military for help.

This small office room is Deniz's turf, and the walls are filled with framed corny adages, funny stories, and sorrowful but peaceable martyrdom poems that reflect his blasé humanism and cosmopolitanism: "A young Eskimo in the pole or a poor Negro in Africa, it does not matter. One's race, language, or religion does not make him better," reads a paper on Deniz's corkboard. "If you look for a flawless friend, you remain friendless," "As I get to know humans better, I grow to love animals more," "Do not bridle a donkey for he would mistake himself for a horse, do not compliment an undeserving person for he would mistake himself for a human" are the three adages forming a triangle on the wall across the desk. Slightly above them, there hangs the longer version of the following story, my favorite, which highlights the ways in which one's weakness can become his strength through the new embodied potentials enabled by loss:

A 10-year old Japanese child wanted to become a Judo master despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a car accident. His father sent him to the most famous

Judo master, who taught the child only a single move over ten years and then asked him to compete in a national tournament. Thinking that he had no chance of winning with only one arm and a single move to perform, the boy only accepted to compete out of his respect for his sensei. He won the championship, however, by performing his only move against stronger and more experienced opponents. On their way home, the boy summoned the courage to ask his sensei why he trusted him to win the tournament. “For two reasons,” the sensei answered. “First, you have been practicing the same move for ten years and there is no one on earth who would do it better than you. And second, the only way to defend against that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm.”

The moral of the story is clear: One can overcome all obstacles with perseverance, discipline, and wit. Under this story sits Deniz, aptly handling the clerical work of the organization despite lacking an arm with the help of a heavy iron cast calibration that he refers to as “my arm.”

On the other side of the corridor, next to the salon, there is a small kitchen with annoyingly yellow ceramic tiles on its walls and counter. Every weekday, the district municipality dispatches three metal containers of meal to the association for lunch. Soup, rice, beans, chicken with potatoes, fish with vegetables, meatballs etc. Nothing fancy but delicious and containing enough animal protein to be counted as middle-class comfort food in Turkey, which makes it a precious resource to be carefully supervised. Just above the small dining table for three, a printed-out sign scotch-taped on the wall reads: “Since

only limited amount of meal is available, please do not sit at the table [for lunch] without permission.”

As a prestigious guest, I am always invited to the meal. I often decline this invitation but I never say no to tea, which is virtually unlimited. The steel Turkish double teapot on the stove keeps steaming up the kitchen all day long. Faik, the man who opened me the door for me at my first visit, is responsible for the kitchen and everyday manual chores. On crowded days Faik serves tea with his mischievous jokes. Otherwise, he is my cigarette and backgammon buddy.

The last room at the very end of the hall is used as storage. Normally it remains half-empty, harboring only some unused office furniture. When the month of Ramadan comes, however, the room is filled with hundreds of boxes of provisions containing basic food staples such as rice, flour, sunflower oil, beans, lentils, pasta, sugar, wheat, tomato paste, jam, tea and dried persimmons—a Ramadan delicacy. These boxes are evenly distributed to members, who jam pack the apartment during Ramadan to pick up their share. The Ramadan visits provide a unique opportunity for the association’s executive board to collect the annual membership due (approximately \$10) from delinquent members, who have to clear their dues to receive a box.

Ramadan also gives me the chance to meet dozens of members, whose faces I never see until the next Ramadan. During the other eleven months, the association rarely gets as crowded as the members flock to the apartment only on important occasions, like exchanging Bayram greetings, discussing elections of the association, or gossiping after a prime time TV program featuring association’s members. The only two exceptions are

the Day of Gazis (September 19) and the Day of Martyrs (March 18), when members from different parts of Istanbul meet at the association before the official commemoration and luncheon that the military holds at an officer's club (orduevi) in Istanbul. As I get habituated to the daily rhythms of the association, there comes a point when it is only these "eventful" days that mark the passing of time. Then, I feel ready to delve into origins.

Foundation Myths and Historical Foundations

Many people told me versions of the origin tale of the association with slightly different details. The story is set either during the Gallipoli Campaign or the Independence War, two wars that have a mythic status in and constitute the epic past of the official Turkish nationalism. "Our association was founded by Canakkale gazis [disabled veterans] in 1915," Berna Abla proudly explained, drawing a continuous linear line from the epic past to the present. The general president of the association in Ankara, Mert Bey, had a more elaborate version:

Our association was founded by the gazis of the War of Independence, who resisted in order not to receive pensions from the state. The carpenters throughout Anatolia made wooden prosthesis legs themselves so that gazis could stand bolt upright vis-à-vis the state. Even Greeks took care of the gazis of their defeated army.

The linear line between the epic past and the ethnographic present suggested in this tale rests on a cyclical nationalist temporality in which sacrifice is passed from one generation to the next as an inescapable heritage.

Constructing association's members as the contemporary successors of this heritage, this tale serves as the foundation myth of the association, and like all myths it has several performative functions. First, it places the official association in the national cosmology by attributing association's origins to a national epic past. Then, it extends disabled veterans' present-day tensional sovereignty relationship with the state in time, writing it back into history by creating an imaginary gazi figure so dignified that he would not accept anything from the state. Finally, by the help of this imaginary figure, it carves a space in which the state can be criticized for not properly taking care of disabled veterans and shamed through a comparison with the defeated national "enemy" Greece.

In a country such as Turke—where social memories and archives have been frequently erased overnight over the last century through overt acts of violence such as military coups as well as radical practices like alphabet change and renaming—such linear historical narratives mentioned in the above tale are always already suspect. The original documents pertaining to the 1915 dated association, "Malûlin-i Guzat-ı Askeriye Muavenet Heyeti" (Disabled War Veterans Help Committee), which is the foundational organization that the present-day association claims to descend from, are all in Ottoman.¹⁵ Fortunately, command over Ottoman is not necessary to see that the official

¹⁵ We know from a secondary source (Scognamillo 1987) that this organization oddly played a key role in the emergence of the Turkish cinema by producing some of the earliest examples of

organization, which was only founded after the military coup of 1980, does not have such historical continuity with the 1915-dated one.

The military coup of 1980 was a turning point in Turkey's history, stamping its mark on all aspects of socio-cultural and political life of the country. The violent fantasy of the military rule (1980-1983) to suppress the political left and to create a docile citizenry in line with the neoliberal transformation of the economy realized itself at the expense of the obliteration of public culture and the very notion of publicness and the erasure of archives and social memory. Suspicious of all nomadic activity, the junta banned all political parties and 23,667 associations from activity. Among these were the associations of the veterans and disabled veterans of the Independence War, the Korean War, and the Cyprus War, who were organized separately. According to the oral histories I collected, everything that these organizations possessed—finances, archives, books, documents, letters, photographs, weapons, and banners—was taken into custody in this period, most of them never to be returned. None of these associations was ever allowed to be opened again.

In 1983, the military government passed Law No. 2847, which stipulated the foundation of four new military-related associations. Two of these were reserved for retired officers (commissioned and non-commissioned). Another one brought together gazis (including both veterans and disabled veterans) of the wars of independence, Korea, and Cyprus. The fourth one, the “official association,” was initially designed for martyrs’

cinematography when the propaganda branch of the army transferred its cinema equipment to it in order to prevent its confiscation by the enemy forces after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War.

heirs (widows and orphans) and the duty-disabled, meaning conscripts injured in non-military accidents. The law defined these associations as working for public benefit and rendered them eligible for funding from the Ministry of Defense. This law, which is still in force, also prohibited any other organization from operating in these associations' areas of service and from using military terms in its name.

The law reflected the state's dual attempt to closely monitor the political activism of ex-military personnel and to monopolize the Islamic-derived honorary military titles of gazi and martyr (şehit), which became more symbolically valuable than ever with the consolidation of the military-sponsored ideology of the "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis" as the state ideology after the military coup. Yet, the lawmakers could not foresee that when these four associations were finally opened in 1984, the PKK would incite a guerilla war that would lead to the still ongoing internal armed-conflict that would destabilize the neat order prescribed by the law and transform the very meaning of being a gazi.

When I started my fieldwork in 2005, all of my informants but maybe one or two were members of the official association. Most of them were not active members; they paid their dues, received their Ramadan packets and other sorts of charity distributed by the association, read the associations' news bulletin, and visited or called only on special occasions or when necessary. They felt that the association was an indispensable part of their disabled veteran identity as it offered them a concrete sense of belonging to a community of loss; strategic connections with the military, bureaucracy, and charity providers; and information concerning their constantly changing legal entitlements and welfare benefits.

Notwithstanding the wide appeal of the official association, the current organizational landscape of disabled veterans and martyrs' families is far from the national unity that the military junta aspired for. Despite the legal ban, there are three other well-established associations in Istanbul. Two of these enroll only martyrs' families while one, which I call the "popular association," also signs up disabled veterans with gazi status. The official association occasionally files complaints against these associations only to get the Ministry of Interior to issue another circular letter to governors, reminding them of the special legal status of the official association and asking them not to allow similar associations.

These unofficial associations do not only skillfully navigate in the gaps of the law but also hold enough symbolic value, power, and prestige to discourage anyone from taking action against them. Indeed, they not only enjoy legal tolerance but also receive financial aid from municipalities and other official bodies. Their representatives pay visits to highest-level government and military officers time and again. At one occasion, they were even invited by the prime minister for breakfast, while they were protesting him in front of the prime ministry. However, their intimate relationship with the state only exists under the shadow of Law No. 2847, which gives the state a strategic control mechanism over their actions.

The unofficial associations were solidified forms of local communities of loss that were initially forged in the early 1990s by small groups of martyrs' mothers, who were pulled to cemeteries, most importantly Edirnekapı Martyrs' Cemetery, to mourn their losses. According to the oral histories I collected, these communities were weaved

especially by women, who came to know each other at their visits to their sons' graves on Fridays, during Ramadan, and at death anniversaries. The affective and material networks that martyrs' families built around the exchanges of prayer, food, and information constituted the basis of the political networks yet to come.

These communities bound by the power of mourning were initially politicized by the Mevlid (Islamic memorial service) visits of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), infamous for its murderous anti-communist legacy. With the inception of counterinsurgency proper in 1993, these communities acquired a new significance. Following the acceptance of a new associations act in the same year, the first non-official martyrs' families association was founded, according to its founding president, "to be effective in the psychological warfare against terror."¹⁶ Others immediately followed in the mid-1990s by getting organized under this, more flexible form of association.

The state strategically endorsed these martyrs' families' organizations against the "rival" communities of loss, such as the "Saturday Mothers," an extremely influential counterpublic that consisted of the relatives of the leftist and Kurdish activists who "disappeared" after being taken by the security personnel. After the Saturday Mothers successfully brought their dissident cause to public attention, the martyrs' mothers who were visiting their sons' graves in Edirnekapı on holy Fridays were mimetically hailed as the "Friday Mothers" in the media. In the late 1990s, these communities of loss

¹⁶ 1993 dated Associations Act (No. 5253) did not actually lift the legal ban brought by Law No. 2847; it just marked the onset of a new legal tolerance regime.

completed their transformation from nebulous networks to significant actors in the ongoing struggle for hegemony over loss, death, and mourning.

One of these unofficial associations, which I call the popular association, formed the second organizational space of my fieldwork. The founders of this association were a group of martyrs' mothers, all lower-class housewives, from the same neighborhood who initially met in dolmuş (a local form of shared-taxi) while commuting to the Edirnekapi Martyrs' Cemetery to visit their sons' graves. One of these women, Hatice Ana (Mother Hatice), had both the necessary charisma and aspiration to unite these women and to expand her political career alongside the influence of this community.

A banquet at an officers' club organized by the military for martyrs' families and disabled veterans provided a unique opportunity in this respect. There, the members of the popular association were introduced to a group of similar-minded disabled veterans, who had formed their own social circle after meeting at a State Medal of Pride ceremony. This informal disabled veteran group later joined the popular association. When I asked Mother Hatice why they decided to enroll disabled veterans, her answer reflected the way in which the camaraderie of martyrs' families and disabled veterans, who were initially brought together in the official association for governmental purposes, was justified through a religio-nationalist martyrology: "Can gazis and martyrs exist without each other? Gazis are the witnesses of martyrs."

I met Mother Hatice at a disabled veteran's brother's wedding. Wearing a loose veil¹⁷ around her head and shoulders, she was a sturdy woman in her early 50s, who looked exactly like a traditional Turkish housewife. Her softhearted face was very different from the face that I saw in her mediatized images taken at protests, contracted with anger. I would later conclude that she indeed had two contrasting social faces—one affectionate and humble and the other revengeful and menacing—between which she performatively shifted in conversation and politics. “What would I know,” she would start a conversation, “I am just a simple and ignorant housewife,” only to conclude:

Prime ministers, presidents, they all come and go. Now we call them ex-presidents, ex-prime ministers. Ex-president this and ex-minister that... But you won't say, “My son is an ex-martyr.” He is a martyr. He is still a martyr and will remain so. You can't say, “In the past, I was a martyr's mother.” Who am I? I am a martyr's mother. No one can take away this title from me, even if I die. You won't say, “Atatürk was once a gazi.” So, if you are a politician of this country for which I sacrificed my son, you have to give me an appointment, you have to listen to me. Otherwise, I will raid your office. The cops at your door won't even touch me; they also witnessed the martyrdom of their fellows.

When I first visited “Mother Hatice's association”, as my informants often called the popular association, I had already been regularly attending the official

¹⁷ Since the politicization of veiling in 1990s, the Turkish public distinguishes between two types of head cover. The first one (hijab) is called “türban” and covers the head, neck, and shoulders. It is associated with piety and/or political Islam. The second one (headscarf), “başörtüsü” covers only the head, often leaving some hair uncovered. This covering is associated with tradition and rural background and it is the one that Mother Hatice and all other founding members of the popular association wear.

association for more than nine months. Here I shall present the popular association as I saw it in the field, that is to say in contradistinction with the official one, and start my comparison with its foundation myth as narrated by Mother Hatice. The myth, which is remarkably enchanted in contrast with the secularism of the official association's tale of origin, opens with Mother Hatice seeing a pro-PKK demonstration, where the protesters unfurled PKK flags. She continues:

I felt so offended. I took a [national] flag in my hand. But, not the flag of Ersin [her son]; it still wraps the coffin in his room. Another big one! So, I took the flag with me to the martyrdom that day. I went in holding this folded flag in my hand. "Come on," I said, "Let us also unfurl this flag." People just stared at me but something had happened to them as if they had been woken up. I never forget that moment. I just became a dragon coming out of its shell. Such a moment! I must have been burning inside [suffering] so much that I could not come to terms with the PKK protest. "Come on," I said, "Let's unfurl this flag. Let's also march! Why can't we?" We were all distraught but some mothers were saying, "Let's not disturb our martyrs. We shouldn't scream while they're under the earth so that they can remain undisturbed." Then I told them, "They will be disturbed as long as we keep silent. Let's march!" They were hesitant. And rightly so since such things are delicate matters, and they knew it very well with a mother's heart. Even though they are not literate, they

have the heart of a Turkish woman in which indescribable amounts of affection and culture resides. So much that no one but the Turkish nation can appreciate! I said, "If we march, our kids will be happy." Something came to me at that moment. These kids are always... but I did not tell you about... I forgot to tell the most important thing. I had a dream before the march. I had told you how sick I was for a long time after Ersin's death. My children took me to the martyrdom a year later; I was so happy. Nowadays we come by the car, but back then it looked so far away. I was always thinking, "How can I go there whenever I want?" One day, I saw a dream. The day is dawning and it is twilight. I am in the martyrdom. You see, I was so obsessed with how I would be able to get there, whether I would be able to travel alone. Normally, there are three stone covers on our children's graves. In my dream, these stones are all moved. All graves are open but there is no one in them. I am in the martyrdom with my son Mahmut, who is also a soldier now. I am carrying this huge cauldron, one like those in museums. I lit a fire in the martyrdom and cook soup with a ladle in my hand. Mahmut is collecting firewood for the fire so that I can cook. "I cook this for martyrs," I say. While he is gathering wood, I tell Mahmut, "Martyrs will arrive soon. In case I don't notice, let me know when your elder brother arrives so that I can kiss him before he rests. I swear that's what I saw in my dream. I turn my head and see Ersin coming. I see his head but I can't tell whether he is wrapped in white

shroud or a military uniform. They [the martyrs] come and lie down straightaway. Click, click, click, stones get closed one after another. I catch Ersin before his grave is covered. "Ersin, my son," I tell him, "I missed you so much. Let me kiss you for a while." "We are so tired mom," he says, "We were at an operation till dawn." That's how I saw him, I swear. "I am so tired," he says, "Embrace me quickly so that I can go to sleep." When I bend down to embrace him and stroke his face, I see his grave is divided into two parts separated by a soil barrier. There is a corpse in the other part. "Who is this boy that you put here," I ask Ersin. I cannot reach the boy, cannot kiss him. So, I touch his face and caress his eyes. "Who is this boy," I ask again. "Don't touch him," Ersin exclaims, "He is not a martyr!" Then, he explains, "Don't you know who he is? He is my aunt's son Bekir. I brought him here so that he can sleep serenely." Ersin's paternal aunt's son Bekir was going to become a soldier but he died of cancer. So, I get shocked in the dream. I mean, all youngsters die sinless and Inshallah, they would be all martyrs. I startled and woke up in twilight. "Oh God," I told myself, "I was cooking them soup. I was cooking soup for all martyrs. I gave this promise to Ersin and I have to keep it." That's how I came up with the idea, when he said, "Mom! Cook soup for all martyrs!" That's how I put my mind to founding a martyrs' mothers' association. It is a blessing from god that I was able to come up with this idea in my sorrow, disturbance, and forgetfulness.

Mother Hatice is a great orator, who skillfully adorns her speech with popular Islamic themes and moral stories. Her narration of the association's foundation myth too reflects her command over popular Islam. The center of the narrative around which all other events revolve is her posthumous dream of her martyred son and the landscape of her dream is Edirnekapı Martyrs' Cemetery, a privileged spot of religio-nationalist imagination. Such dreams and their interpretation play a vital role in Islamic martyrologies. This particular dream incorporates both strains of Sufi traditions and Sunni Islamic beliefs about martyrs. In the dream, Mother Hatice sees herself cooking soup for martyrs while her surviving son carries firewood. Cooking is a pivotal practice and symbol, and so is the caldron, in the Sufi tradition, in which the kitchen is where the training for newcomers begins. Yunus Emre, a legendary Turkish poet and Sufi mystic, is said to have carried firewood for forty years for the dervish convent before he "ripened." So there is an allusion to expiation, spiritual purification, enlightenment, and maturation in the narrated dream. In the dream, all martyrs are coming back from an operation, suggesting the popular belief that martyrs continue to fight alongside the living. There are also explicit references to martyrs' posthumous quests and their rewards bestowed by God, also corresponding to popular Islamic martyrology. The audience of the dream is further assured of Mother Hatice's son's attainment of martyrdom through the presence of a deceased young relative sharing his grave, reflecting the belief that martyrs have the right to intercede for their relatives and obtain forgiveness to protect them from the torments of the grave.

Mother Hatice interprets her dream as a prognosticatory one, which renders her decision to found an association culturally intelligible and her political career divinely ordained. Her resort to such religious justification resonates very well with the overall Turkish-Islamist ideological tone of the popular association that stands in contrast with the secularist-nationalist framework of the official association. This ideological disjuncture is just one manifestation of a larger rift between these two organizations. In order to understand this rift better, let me introduce the popular association.

The Popular Association

The popular association is also located on a busy street but in the relative periphery of Istanbul. In my first visit to the association, I arrive during the Friday prayer, which I only realize when I stop by a corner shop to ask for directions only to notice the sign on its door: "I'll be back after the prayer." Several other small shops nearby are also closed, indicating that this is a more traditional neighborhood than that of the official association, where one cannot even hear the Friday prayer. I worry that my timing is off and that the association too might be closed, but I end up spending a long time trying to spot my destination. This time, the problem is not the small size of the signpost. In contrast to the official one, the popular association has a colossal signpost that is impossible to miss. The challenge is locating the entrance of the association since one reaches it only through taking the stairs at the very end of the corridor of a state institution. I later learn that the building belongs to the district municipality, which allows the association to use the apartment on its second floor.

The first thing that catches my attention while knocking on the door is a crowd of female shoes tidily lined on a blue carpet. With the exception of a small Westernized elite, one is expected to take off shoes while entering a residence in Turkey, but this scene is unexpected in front of a public office like an association. Now the official association appears to me as a bureaucratic space rather than a domesticized one.

When a covered elderly woman opens the door, my surprise is doubled. The door opens to a salon, which initially makes me wonder whether the association is using Mother Hatice's own house. The salon, including a dining set and sofa arrangement, has nothing to do with an office with its countless lace spreads on every piece of furniture, which hint at the feminized and privatized nature of this place. As a proper salon, this room often remains empty, especially in the winter when it is hard to heat the apartment that lacks central heating, and is only rarely used for banquets, mostly in Ramadan.

The apartment has only one bedroom and it is used as Mother Hatice's office. The office room houses a large office desk, two armchairs facing the desk and numerous others lined by the wall, and a wall-to-wall china cabinet by the desk. The whole room is stuffed with nationalist objects and images. There are red penholders with moon and crescent on the desk. The china cabinet is full of plates and plaques issued on Mothers' Day and dedicated to Mother Hatice or the association by schools, political parties, businessmen, and local newspapers. The cabinet also displays two tacky plastic soldier statues. The first one's tag reads, "Mehmetçik [literally a little Mehmet, used affectionately for the archetypical Turkish soldier] is the bravest and most excellent

soldier of the world.” “Martyrs’ mothers wish Mehmetçik all success,” reads the other’s tag.

There are countless frames on the walls: Atatürk pictures, Atatürk’s Address to the Youth, a picture of Atatürk’s mother Zübeyde Hanım, a picture of the Turkish folk heroine Nene Hatun, Turkish flags, etc. The eye-catching piece is a large, unveiled picture of Mother Hatice shot while she signs the honor book of Atatürk’s mausoleum. The picture conveys a clear ideological message in Turkey, where a woman’s unveiling in the presence of the state is a gesture of loyalty to the secular regime, and locates the association on the secularist side in the secularist/Islamist political debate.

Mother Hatice and other martyrs’ mothers spend most of their time in the association in this office room. While Mother Hatice talks on the phone and welcomes the guests of the association, other martyrs’ mothers sit silently on the armchairs by the wall and crochet or chat among themselves in a low voice. Male members of the association, martyrs’ fathers or disabled veterans, are very rarely present in the apartment; the interior space belongs to females. The sex-segregated spatial organization of the association and the fact that every time I want to visit I have to call Mother Hatice from her cell to make sure that it is open discourages me from hanging out there as I used to do in the official association, which provided both segregated and mixed-gender socialization opportunities.

I later learn that the association has another small room upstairs and was originally located there until it became powerful enough to claim the larger apartment downstairs from the municipality. This room is now used as “the museum of martyrs.”

When I tell Mother Hatice that I want to see the museum, she immediately picks up her keys. She takes on the attitude of a museum guide as soon as she rises from her chair. She starts with a tour of the pictures and the vast number of newspaper clippings about the Kurdish conflict adorning the walls of the salon, which constitute an unusual nationalist archive.

Among these photos I distinguish a couple that show Mother Hatice and other martyrs' mothers with prominent figures like politicians, actors, and military officers. One of those features martyrs' mothers posing with Cüneyt Arkin¹⁸, the Battal Ghazi of the Turkish cinema. In another, Mother Hatice appears with a group of children dressed like soldiers. Above, I discern pictures of nationalist pilgrimage sites, such as the Karadağ Mountain where a silhouette of Atatürk appears during sunset. The wall also displays gory pictures of civilian corpses allegedly massacred by the PKK. Small prints of a particularly ugly image of Öcalan are attached to the corner of each individual picture. As we climb the stairs to the museum, Mother Hatice proudly tells me how they initially came up with the idea of an archive wall not to lose things and how they are now planning to digitize their vast collection.

The museum is a half-empty room whose walls are completely covered with martyrs' pictures of different sizes. Just by the entrance, there stands an Atatürk corner, consisting of several pictures and phrases of Atatürk, the Gazi. The shrine is surrounded by a reproduced letter of a Çanakkale martyr and portraits of Ottoman pashas. Opposite

¹⁸ Cüneyt Arkin is one of the most famous Turkish film actors, who played the lead role in most of the ultranationalist historical epics of the 1970s. His films revitalized and re-popularized a hyper-masculinized gazi figure in Turkish cinema.

the door, mnemonic objects like lighters and rosaries that once belonged to martyrs are displayed on the tables along the walls. I also see pictures of disabled veterans laid out on the wall. Most of them are my informants and this gives me a sense of unease, especially in a social context where a sports commentator can daringly call disabled veterans “half-dead,” supposedly as a nationalist gesture to emphasize with their suffering. I start to ask questions about the museum to break the deep silence in the room. The first thing I learn is that Mother Hatice has her own personal museum; she keeps her martyred son Ersin’s room, “even his hair stuck on the soap,” untouched. Then, she tells me about the days when the association’s space was limited to this room:

In those days, PKK supporters had infiltrated us. They would come and say things like, “Oh dear! What a pity!” But then, the brother of one of these people was exposed as a PKK bomber. Of course, we cleaned out all of them. Then, they used to ridicule us. “You don’t even have a proper room,” they used to say. That’s why we bought all the furniture downstairs. We also had reactionaries [political Islamists] among us. While we were hanging martyrs’ pictures on the wall, they protested having Ataturk’s picture on the top, exclaiming, “Who the hell is this guy that my martyr son is positioned below him?” Of course, we weeded out all of them as well.

In Mother Hatice’s account, the association’s move from the small room upstairs to the larger apartment downstairs is narrated in terms of its ideological purification. The spatial expansion of the organization, in other words its increasing influence and access to

resources, has come with its ideological narrowing, leaving outside its previous members with Kurdish/leftist and Islamist political convictions.

Here lies a crucial feature of both the official and the popular associations. While they function as hubs of ultranationalist activism that I describe in detail in the following chapter, they also operate as governmental instruments regulating the actions and words of their members, making sure that disabled veterans and martyrs' families are never inclined toward dissident political causes.

Ironically, the official association is more democratic than the popular one with respect to its members' political views and their freedom of expression of these views within the association. However, it is notorious for containing its members' public performances, especially in the presence of state officials. Every once in a while, a disabled veteran bursts out against an official either for not being able to find a job or for having made to wait standing at an official ceremony while big shots are sitting. Even such individualized and spontaneous protests stir up great discomfort and result in a flurry of back and forth calls between the association and official bodies, which often conclude with the apology of the associations' representatives for the "unstable behaviour" of the veteran. Most disabled veterans loathe these efforts of governance and policing, which alienate them from their own associations and strengthen the homosocial bonds within self-regulating, informal disabled veteran groups.

Disabled Veteran Cliques

“Fuck all associations. They ain’t good for shit,” Yaman, a disabled veteran in his late thirties, exclaims when I ask him what he thinks about the political stances of different disabled veteran organizations. A key informant of mine, Yaman is the charismatic leader of a small clique of disabled veterans from close neighborhoods. He is a really sharp and likeable person, and definitely has a way with words. He defines himself as an “action guy,” whereas those critical of his group’s direct-action style of activism call him a “demonstration lover” in a politically infantilizing gesture. I like “mischievous” better.

Despite calling himself a “Türk, Türkist, Atatürkist,” in short, an ultranationalist, Yaman stores Ahmet Kaya’s songs (known for his socialist/Kurdish stance) in his cell phone and plays them to provoke his friends. And he often succeeds. On this particular day, he tells me that he would sell his car so that we can spend the money to go on a road trip in the US and shoot a documentary film showing the discrepancy between the lives of American and Turkish disabled veterans. I never ask if he really means it.

Yaman’s group, as outsiders often call it, consists of not more than seven, eight guys, some of whom are very close friends and meet every other day. But the clique’s sphere of influence reaches well beyond their immediate circle. The population of the group doubles when associate disabled veterans from other parts of Istanbul join it for a protest, Ramadan dinner, or a picnic. As an activist circle, Yaman’s group is well known and respected among disabled veterans in other cities too. Indeed, in the course of my fieldwork, I met two other disabled veteran cliques in Ankara who deliberately modeled themselves on Yaman’s group. In that sense, this clique can be regarded as the epitome of

informal disabled veteran collectivities in contemporary Turkey, where disabled veterans sharing the same neighborhood or workplace are drawn together into novel forms of biosociality.

After meeting at a State Medal of Pride ceremony organized by the military, the members of Yaman's group gradually developed a strong sense of camaraderie, which therapeutically filled the gap left behind by the violent loss of their pre-military social environment as a result of their disabilities. Although they sometimes also gather en famille, the group often meets after work or on holidays to hang out in tea gardens or coffeehouses as a male exclusivity. Sometimes, they play games like Rummikub at these meetings. The loser pays the bill (it is often a few glasses of tea, but sometimes they challenge one another for a box of Turkish delights or baklava to spice things up).

On all other occasions, it is Yaman who pays the bill. Yaman plays the role of a redistributive big man. He always pays the bill and the others reimburse him, generally as soon as they leave the place. As a proper big man, Yaman is also the person who works most for the cohesion and solidarity of the group. If a disabled veteran's child gets sick in the middle of the night, Yaman is the first person to be called. If one of them is trying to put money together to buy an apartment or a new car, he works hard to make sure that others loan the one in need their under-the-mattress savings. In the case of a marital problem of a clique member, Yaman is also the first person that mobilizes other disabled veterans' spouses to get involved to help save the marriage.

Disabled vets constituting this clique are all enrolled in both the official and the popular association; yet, they have a cynical distance toward both, just like they are

skeptical of parliamentary politics. The official association, which operates more like a lobby group that depends on its influence within the military and bureaucracy, is too torpid for their political taste. Moreover, they feel overpowered by its large duty-disabled (injured in non-combat related accidents) member population. Once in a while, they half-seriously conspire to “capture” the official association and put it in the service of an uncompromising activism. The popular association, on the other hand, seems to them to be driven by private interests. Although they are attracted to the way it effectively uses street politics as a means to negotiate rights, they are highly critical of its dependency on charity money and its electoral alliances with ultranationalist political parties. In other words, if the official association is involved too little in politics in their view, the popular one is steeped too much into it. Therefore, they take the political motivations of the popular association, which they constitute a vital part of, with a pinch of salt. “We are not the stepping stone for anyone’s political career,” they love to recite when the conversation is about their involvement in associational politics.

The direct-action type of activism of this clique became evident to me the day we traveled together to Ankara from Istanbul by train in October 2006 for a political meeting, entitled “Damn terror! End landmines!” After the long travel night, the jubilation was in the air while we had breakfast at a small patisserie by the square where the meeting would take place in the afternoon. The clique members cheerfully chatted with a group of undercover cops, who friendly warned them not to get too wild in their demonstrations in front of official buildings such as the prime ministry or the US embassy.

However, the feeling of jubilation soon faded with the extremely low participation in the demonstration. Suddenly, a rumor that a group of disabled veterans were “locked” in the rehabilitation center and barred from participation in the meeting with the threat of early discharge rallied the exhausted group. In less than ten minutes, the clique was leading an angry party of disabled veterans from all over Turkey demanding the resignation of the head of the rehabilitation center. After slightly more than half an hour of altercation, the protesters were pacified and dispersed. While we were on our way to a gazi facility for a late lunch, Yaman looked quite satisfied and smilingly said: “I blew off lots of steam there.”

This type of spontaneous direct-action with no strings attached is not politically productive in the long run, and the clique members are well aware of the fact that they are politically dependent on associations for rights advocacy. The popular association under the lead of Hatice Ana successfully manipulates this dependency. In one case, some of the guys declined the call by Hatice Ana to participate in a political demonstration against the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that was initiated by the popular association. Their argument that the popular association played both ends against the middle by organizing a protest against the AKP while continuing to receive donations from the AKP-controlled municipality opened rifts both within the clique and between the clique and the popular association.

Shortly after this incident, Mother Hatice and the clique members met at a wedding of the brother of a disabled vet. I was sitting at a table in the wedding salon with five other disabled veterans from the clique. When Mother Hatice approached our table,

two disabled vets from our table stood up and greeted Mother Hatice by kissing her hand, a gesture of respect toward authority, while others remained at the table in a defiant mode. After scolding these mavericks for skipping the protest, Mother Hatice informed them that the AKP government was planning to revoke gazis' free health service cards. All the disabled vets at the table were stirred to indignation by the news. Laughing at their excitement, Mother Hatice then jubilantly told them that the revocation was declined only thanks to the protest that some of them "irresponsibly" missed and urged them not to miss the next one. Once again, the form of association proved its hegemony over informal collectivities as a mode of political assemblage.

Communal Intensities

Associations and informal disabled veteran cliques constitute communities of loss, which can be anthropologically defined in terms of the various socio-economic and political functions they perform. Associations de facto act as an intermediary between the state and their clients. They are gatekeepers of legal advice and support, which are especially crucial for lower-class disabled veterans and martyrs' families lacking the necessary cultural and social capital to deal as individual citizens with some of the most notorious bureaucratic institutions in Turkey. Through their political influence, the associations can break through bureaucratic inertia and put things (complaint petitions, job applications, deposits) in motion in the realm of state.

Associations control other flows too. They redistribute nationalist charity, be it money, things like Ramadan packets, or more rare items such as, for example, a

scholarship provided by a “rich businessman” for “the son of a needy disabled veteran.” Disabled veteran cliques, on the other hand, provide a strong sense of camaraderie and networks of homosocial support. Finally, both associations and informal disabled vet groups serve as influential hubs of welfare and ultranationalist activism, around which disabled veterans and martyrs’ families forge a collective identity through common political struggle.

The insiders of these communities rarely define their fellowship in terms of these functions. They rather talk in terms of the body in suffering and healing, both metaphorically and literally. “We are coming here [the association] to be cured,” a martyr’s mother tells me and continues, “This is our treatment facility. Here, we can commiserate, share and understand each other’s pain.” Elaine Scarry (1985) reminds us the inexpressibility of pain and the ways it destroys the language of the sufferer. She is one of several scholars who rightly emphasize, and sometimes even overemphasize, the challenges pain and trauma pose for representation, language, and cultural expression (see for example, Caruth 1996). My informants are also aware of these challenges. “Derdini içine atmak,” suffering in silence, is a popular idiom that both martyrs’ families and disabled veterans use to describe their painful experiences after loss:

I could not tell my suffering to anyone until I started to come here. I always suffered in silence, always suffered in silence. This made me sick, so sick that I could not raise my head to visit my son’s grave. On the one side, I dealt with diabetes, on the other with low and high blood pressure, shifting daily.

Not being able to share the pain of traumatic loss distresses the body, slowly gnawing it away. Among martyrs' families, the pain of grief is often described as a burning sensation. Grief's pain scorches their chests (bağrımız yanıyor) and burns their livers (ciğerimiz yanıyor). Cardiac diseases, diabetes, hypertension, hypotension are rampant. "The mental and the physical, the psychic and the social, and the internal and external locations or sources of the pain" (Cvetkovich 2003: 18) get blurred in their accounts. "Its symptoms often emerge in the first few years," a martyr's father talks about bereavement, "unless you find someone for derdini paylaşmak [commiseration]."

While martyrs' families are haunted by the pain of grief, disabled veterans have to learn living with the shock of dismemberment, the enigma of survival, and the stigma of disability. And there is physical pain, experimenting on the range of unpleasant sensations: Pins and needles, piercing, wringing, throbbing, numbness... Festering bedsores cover the body during treatment. Bones continue to grow after amputation to form pain-inducing bone spurs. Phantom limb sensations cause fear and confusion. Wounds also hurt in another way, by causing shame. There is discharge from the stump. It looks bad. Feces leak from an abdominal wound. It smells. People move away from you in the bus. Children make fun of a disabled veteran with a disfigured face with their usual innocent cruelty. All these cause pain that is difficult to communicate: "Everybody talks about military service days. You're the only one who can't say a word despite having the most to tell. How can you? He [the interlocutor] must have gone through the same thing in order to understand."

“Ateş düştüğü yeri yakar” (An ember burns where it falls), they say in the association. This phrase is used in order to express an appreciation of the uniqueness and incommunicability of the pain of those who are or were intimates of the injured or deceased person. The fire of pain burns the victim and those in his (intimate) circle. But they also say, “Çekenler anlar,” only a fellow sufferer knows the pain of the other. Through the discourse and reality of shared experience, the negativity of loss, pain, and suffering becomes a therapeutic force that pulls the members of these communities of loss in an intersubjective field of non-medicalized healing. The below account of the wife of a veteran, a below-knee amputee, describes how this therapeutic force affectively binds them to the community:

Don't be fooled by his current even-temperedness! You had to see Ali before he met Yaman and the others. He would get drunk and go to pieces. His friends used to tease him saying, “Did you mistake the mine for a football and shoot at goal?” He would get broken, cry till the morning. He could not walk on dirt road, only on asphalt. He had all these fears. Meeting other ghazis and spending time with people who understand his situation, who know what he has gone through, had a therapeutic effect on him. May god be pleased with these guys!

This therapeutic force, which is crucial for martyrs' families and disabled veterans in the process of making a new life-world, is an intensity that generates, and in return is generated by, particular corporeal/socio-cultural responses to trauma and loss that are

shaped and constrained by two major social forces: The nationalist politics of mourning and the stigma of disability.

The ban on public mourning for the corpses produced by the armed conflict is a heated issue in contemporary Turkey. In martyrs' funerals, "Şehitler ölmez" (Martyrs do not die) crowds chant in Turkish. In the Region, the same sentence is chanted in Kurdish for guerillas: "Şehit namirin!" "Martyrs do not die," but in different ways. Public mourning for PKK guerillas has always been repressed at the threshold of the state of exception through posthumous techniques of state sovereignty: Persecution of mourners, banning of funeral ceremonies, mass-graving, and secret interment of guerilla corpses (Özsoy 2010). Public mourning for soldiers, in contrast, is simultaneously incited and restrained by the state for the purposes of the psychological warfare. Martyrs' families are continuously invited to mourn solemnly by politicians and military officers: "Don't cry. Your tears liven up the days of the terrorists." The way they mourn their losses is an important nationalist concern; their losses should not overshadow the nationalist message in any way. The ideal martyr family should contend with shedding some tears and singing some lamentations. Even short fainting attacks is acceptable as long as the family makes the final nationalist closure: "Vatan sağolsun!" (Long live the homeland!).

"One shall not cry after martyrs" and "One should not chant slogans disturbing our martyrs" have become favorite phrases in the 2000s media under the rule of the neoliberal, conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP), which tries to control martyrs' funerals that harbor extremely influential and at times violent secular nationalist protests against the government while it restructured the sovereignty relations between

the state and the Kurds in the context of the EU harmonization reforms. After several serious confrontations between the AKP representatives and martyrs' families, norms about the public mourning of fallen soldiers would be remade. For this purpose, the prescribed Islamic treatment of a martyr's body and his funeral was reinvented.

David Cook, an expert of martyrology in Islam, recites the "five unique qualities that the Qur'anic exegete al-Qurtubi (d. 1272-73) specifies with the regard to martyr":

The Messenger of Allah said: God has ennobled the martyrs with five blessings never given to any of the prophets, even me: One, all of the prophets' spirits were taken by the Angel of the Death, and he will take me [as well], but as for the martyrs, God is the one who will take their spirits in a way He wills and will not allow the Angel of Death to have power over their spirits. Two: all of the prophets were washed after death, and I will be washed [as well], but the martyrs are not to be washed, since they have no need of what is in this world. Three: all of the prophets were wrapped [in linen], and I will be wrapped [as well], but the martyrs are not to be wrapped, but buried in their clothes. Four: all of the prophets when they die are called "dead," and when I die, it will be said "He died," but the martyrs are not referred to as "dead." Five, all the prophets have the ability to intercede on the Day of Resurrection, as I do as well, but the martyrs have the ability to intercede every day that there is intercession. (Cook 2007: 42)

I am reminded of the passage above at 6:06 pm on May 21st Sunday 2006 as I come across a religious daytime show hosting martyrs' families on the Islamist Kanal 7

TV station while channel-surfing. A white-bearded Islamic “expert” answers the audience’s questions read by a hostess in prom clothing. “Are martyrs aware that they are dead?” asks someone. As an answer, the expert quotes a verse from the Qu’ran, saying that all living creatures shall taste death. “But,” he adds, the martyrs “are rewarded as soon as their blood touches the soil. Angels muffle them. They do not experience torment of the grave. Death comes sweet to them. They are given such rewards that they want to die and get resurrected over and over again. That’s why it is not appropriate to grieve for them.” He concludes, “Martyrs’ funerals should be silent. To chant slogans there is against Islamic funeral customs.” Later, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan canonizes this reinvented conclusion as he scolds martyrs’ families for mourning.

Associations form communities of healing whose participants “embrace negativity” (Cvetkovich 2003) and take on their traumas rather than hoping to return their lives without trauma by inventing non-pathologizing and non-medical responses to deal with their traumas. For martyrs’ families, this response is mourning. These communities provide privatized public spaces for martyrs’ families to continue mourning. There is a collective “mourning without end” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003: 3), a mourning in which the loss refuses to be declared dead. This kind of mourning, which does not enable the mourner to move on by resolving grief, is what Freud calls melancholy. Freud argues that “the melancholic’s sustained devotion to the lost object” is “not only pathological but also antithetical to the ego’s well being, indeed, its continuous survival” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003: 3). The melancholy I describe here, however, is a collective healing

affect that allows martyrs' families to go on. This affect is best captured with the concept of "hüzün," used by Orhan Pamuk (2006) to describe the melancholy of Istanbul.

Sometimes, cities become afflicted by melancholy. Each city experiences it in its own way, Pamuk tells us, reminding one of Claude Lévi-Strauss's description of the melancholy of tropical cities in *Tristes Tropiques*. According to Pamuk, the melancholy that possesses Istanbul is *hüzün*. Hüzün is not the expression of an individual feeling of loss. It is a collective emotion, a shared intensity that rises from the pain of what has been lost and lends a sense of community to the inhabitants of the city, who see themselves in hüzün, as if through a smoky glass.

Like cities, communities of loss consist of landscapes of affect. One feels hüzün upon entering the associations and encountering its objects, sounds, and ephemeral moods. The gloomy atmosphere, martyrs' pictures, wet eyes, locked hands, long silences, long sighs, short bursts, moments of absentmindedness, whispers of Ya sabır! (God, give me patience!)... Here, one learns the affective labor of loss, mourning, and hüzün. One learns to cultivate hüzün, to see oneself in its smoky glass, and to mourn for one's own losses.

Disabled veterans also have their own melancholic attachments. Those old pictures belonging to a different life-world, the rage that they cannot let go, phantom limb pains that they nearly always mistake for madness at first... A dead friend walking by you for seven years and disappearing only as you dive in the cold waters of the Bosphorus... Smoke and miss being-on-the-mountains, don't ever skip the channel when army shows are on! Oh yes, they do! Nevertheless, their response to loss and trauma is

not *hüzün*, but laughter, produced through gallows jokes about loss, dismemberment, and disability. Coming from politically consecrated yet socially stigmatized bodies, this laughter is to be shared only with those partaking of a particular fleshly intimacy.

The politicized bodies of disabled veterans are never exposed in the public; they are sort of taboo in public. No comic, no gory, no grotesque, and certainly no flesh is allowed when the issue comes to them. This taboo characterized my first months in the field, when my amputee informants were extremely careful not to reveal their stumps in my presence. Later, some of them “confessed” that they wanted to doff their prostheses during our initial interviews—which often occurred during my informants’ precious after-work hours when they could care for and relax their stumps by removing their prosthetic limbs—but felt awkward to ask me how I would feel about it.

This invisibility of flesh continued for me until a full-day picnic organized by Yaman’s clique. That day, Yaman and I met a dozen other disabled veterans and their families on a grass field outside Istanbul. Men and women with the children sat in two close but strictly separate clusters as we had breakfast and relaxed on rugs over the grass. Then, one of the vets tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Now you are truly one of us,” as he took off his prosthesis “to let some fresh air on” his stump. A year after I met my first informant, who was also present at the picnic, I was finally part of the fleshly intimacy between disabled veterans. Everybody laughed a lot in our male circle that day, mostly laughed at gallows jokes about disabilities, full of pejorative terms for the disabled, such as *topal* (lame) and *çolak* (one armed), which most of my informants would take as serious offenses as *gazis* in public.

10:33 am at the picnic: My very first informant, Ramazan, approaches us, limping because of his expired artificial leg. I remember that he is considering using his prosthesis fund as a down payment on his new house. The others vets make fun of him: "Doesn't he walk like a lame duck?" One shouts at him: "Hey, boy! You walk like one of those women!" Ramazan sits across from me with a sullen face and removes his worn-out prosthesis. Others scold him, "Whoa! Look at that! This prosthesis is so old fashioned! Look at it! It is a stone age artifact!" Then, they offer Ramazan tips to make the socket of his prosthesis more comfortable.

11:10 am: Someone suggests that we play football. Gallows jokes start to fly over my head. "Let the goalkeepers be Sercan and Volkan," they tease two blind vets. "Penalty taker should be Teoman," someone else jumps in, showing a below-knee amputee. "Legless penalty-taker against the blind goalkeeper," they cheer, "Let's see who wins." "Let's have blind Tufan as our referee." We play the match and my team loses, not being able to stop the hat trick of the ten-year-old pro on the opponent team: 2-3. As I score the last goal of the match, surely no more than a consolation goal, one of the guys has bleeding in the stump. The game ends and several amputees take care of their stumps. One of the guys suddenly grasps a prosthetic leg left by another on the rug and shouts: "Hey! Someone left his leg on the field!" It is corny but we still laugh.

4:02 pm. Gallows jokes take a sexual turn. "Disabled men get hornier," says an amputee in the group, and explains, "Blood does not lose time in legs." They start telling stories with this moral: One day, a disabled veteran missing both legs goes into

bed with a woman, who, being unaware of his amputated legs, mistakenly holds his stump and freaks out...

Next week. We are on a train to Ankara. "Are you sleeping?" I ask Tufan Abi (Elder brother), a blind veteran wearing sunglasses. "I am watching the scenery," he says in his usual tone. On our return, he challenges me for a chess game without a chessboard; we'll play chess from memory. Something ordinary for him, impossible for me! I completely get lost in the imagined spatiality of the chessboard after the second turn. Minutes pass as I struggle. Finally, Tufan Abi finds an opportunity to save us both when the train goes over a bump: "Damn! All chess pieces are toppled!"

Next month. I am sitting at the official association's salon with three other disabled veterans. All of them have amputated limbs and they are joking about phantom limb syndrome. "I still use my arm," the arm-amputee vet says, missing the arm he uses. The other nods, "Nerve roots are still there." The last one, a hand amputee joins in joyfully, "I always open and close my [missing] hand, but no one ever notices. So, I give them the finger!" We choke with laughter.

Communal Tensions

Hüzün and laughter are not necessarily exclusionary and antithetical to each other as community-making intensities. Yet, their co-presence corrodes each other, producing tensions within communities that bring together disabled veterans and martyrs' families, two different social groups with different ages, losses, needs, and desires. Disabled vets talk about a holiday resort/rehabilitation center for martyrs' families and disabled

veterans located in Ayvalık at the Aegean coast as an exemplary site where the tensions between these two groups are localized. “We used to have a lot of problems with martyrs’ families in Ayvalık,” one of them tells me. “They’re always sad. They can’t stand laughter. They even used to turn lights off at 10 pm because of them. Thanks to god we have separate quarters now. That situation was offending for both sides.” Another one complains about the way in which transference relations, which are psychically invested in by disabled veterans and martyrs’ families at normal times, get out of control when these two groups get too close at the rehab center: “I am trying to swim for the first time after I lost my leg. I must have looked very clumsy. One of the martyrs’ mothers calls out to me: ‘I wish my son were like you but still alive.’”

Like all communities, these communities of loss have inner tensions and conflicts. Everybody receives different benefits from the state and someone always gets less. Someone gets 50% disability rating, and someone else is angry because his rating was 40% in the same situation. Everybody has something to envy. Guys injured in non-combat related accidents envy the free interest housing credit, which the state provides for disabled veterans (gazis). Disabled veterans envy the ceremonial uniform that is worn by the gazis of Cyprus and Korean Wars. Gossip is rampant. Every single individual or association seeks to access more economic resources but accuses the others of corruption. The others “act like beggars and pile on the agony:”

They go from door to door and collect charity from shopkeepers and businessmen. Then, they distribute only one quarter of what they collect and sell the rest. They make people feel disgust when they hear the words gazi or martyr.

After each protest, someone feels like he is being used as a stepping-stone for someone else's political career. Someone does not answer the phone for a week. People are first ostracized for something, and then get reintegrated for nothing. Communities of loss go on.

So do the political fault lines of Turkey. In these communities of loss, which maintain close ties with the military, whose top-down-modernist and secularist sensibilities are alarmed by the consolidation of the neoliberal Islamist AKP's power in 2000s Turkey, there is little space for the public symbols of pious and/or political Islam, such as hijab. For example, the general assembly and elections of the official association are held at officers' clubs, where bearded men and veiled women are rarely allowed in. The fact that disabled veterans and martyrs' families, who are abstractly celebrated in state discourse, are far from the ideal citizen construction of the republic (a secular modern, educated, and unveiled subject that speaks unaccented/unmarked Turkish) also creates tensions within communities of loss. Associations give priority to presentable and "civilized" members; while deciding, for example, the invitees of an official dinner or a TV show, they leave out "those wearing gaudy turbans and cheap mules, who have bigger eyes than their stomachs." People frequently feel left out and complain, but no one really ever completely leaves the community. Things happen, scapegoats emerge, and people feel united again.

A Day at the Edirnekapı Martyrs' Cemetery

The Edirnekapı Martyrs' Cemetery (Edirnekapı Şehitliği) is a constellation of

three burial grounds located on the European side of Istanbul, just outside the historical city walls. It is said that the cemetery initially formed around the tombs of the generations of warriors who fell in Muslim sieges of Istanbul. The part of the cemetery still in use hosted only historical personas until the 19th century. In the late Ottoman period, however, “ordinary” (unranked Muslim) conscripts were also interred in this site in line with the nationalization and democratization of death.

A tangible reminder of the intertwinement of death and nation-making, this cemetery is a crucial site of national memory and eschatology. Martyrs of glorious victories and catastrophic defeats lie here in each other’s arms, forming a horizontal comradeship under the earth. Since the late 1980s, martyrs of the “war against separatist terrorism” have joined them, revitalizing the necromantic power of nationalism, its ability to mobilize people through the power of the dead.

“The cypress trees in this cemetery have very strong roots,” a disabled veteran once told me while passing by the cemetery, “Just like the Turkish nation. For they are both nourished with the blessed blood of martyrs.” That reminded me of my deceased grandparents, who used to live very close to the cemetery, and the days I felt a strange mixture of serenity and awe as a child as I watched the cypress trees in this cemetery move delicately.

I think about all this while on my way to the cemetery on a Friday afternoon. I reread the text message I received from Yaman a night ago. It just says that there will be a meeting at the cemetery that will be attended by “Rauf Denктаş, the Atatürk of

Cyprus.” Rauf Denktaş is the founder of the Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT)—a pro-partition paramilitary organization—and the founding ex-president of the internationally unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. “The Atatürk of Cyprus,” I think to myself, “What a strikingly bold praise, especially now that the Cyprus issue is a major obstacle to Turkey-EU negotiations!” I try to visualize the episode of Valley of the Wolves, in which Rauf Denktaş appeared playing himself a few months ago. I do not yet know that negotiations between Turkey and the EU will come to a halt because of the Cyprus conflict in less than three months.

When I arrive at the cemetery I realize an unusual crowd consisting of martyrs’ families praying in front of their sons’ tombstones, cleaning around the graves, and watering grave roses with water coming from the pious fountains that are dedicated to different martyrs. A young woman offers everyone small pastries as a death rite. No one I know is around, so I walk idly among the graves. Taken care of by the military, this cemetery is clean and well organized in stark contrast with the shabbiness of most civilian cemeteries. I glance at the mini flags on tombstones, skim the epitaphs, and am surprised to see the verses of the socialist poet Ahmed Arif in the middle of this nationalist setting: “Your absence is the other name for hell, I’m feeling cold, do not close your eyes.”

I spot the clique’s leader Yaman and a few more disabled veterans among newly arriving martyrs’ families. They are in business suits, wearing their medals and favorite colognes. Before I can ask them what the occasion is, a luxury car with a driver and tinted windows rolls up. A middle-aged woman in stylish clothes with heavy make-up

and freshly made hair steps out from the car and greets the crowd. She immediately arouses my curiosity since she definitely does not look like a martyr's relative. Yaman can only recall her name but that is enough to fill in the rest of the blanks from newspaper stories. She is the spokesperson of a self-declared church, which has had no congregation for the last eighty years, and oddly enough, she is the cheerleader of the backlash against the Christian missionaries and minority rights. A well-known ultranationalist figure, she will be arrested as a suspect of the Ergenekon trial after I finish my fieldwork.¹⁹

Our next company is a controversial lawyer, who has made an ultranationalist career by filing criminal complaints against public intellectuals for “insulting Turkishness” or “denigrating the Turkish Army.” I immediately recognize his sly face from the news. He will become a key suspect in the Ergenekon trial a few years from now. Today, he looks in good spirits in his wrinkled grayish business suit. Another ultranationalist lawyer, a muscular, bodyguard-looking man with piercing eyes accompanies him. This man is famous for physically harassing the intellectuals in front of courthouses. These two lawyers distribute among us chest buttons with Turkish and Northern Cyprus flags, followed by a political pamphlet against the pope's (Benedict the 16th) planned visit to Turkey. The pamphlet argues that the pope's visit is the first step in the dismemberment of Turkey through the establishment of a Byzantine (Greek Orthodox) state in Istanbul, similar to Vatican. The back page of the pamphlet is a petition to the Grand Assembly. Led by Mother Hatice, people around me

¹⁹ The controversial Ergenekon trial allegedly targeted an ultranationalist covert network that conspired to overthrow the AKP government by inciting a military coup through a series of provocative events including the assassination of the public intellectuals targeted by the ultranationalist protests discussed in the final chapter.

enthusiastically sign the petition without ever looking at it. Cameramen from national news agencies and ultranationalist TV channels (Ulusal TV, Avrasya TV, etc.) surround us. I somehow manage to break the circle without signing the petition despite outright social pressure.

The noise of police and ambulance sirens indicating the arrival of Rauf Denktaş fills the air. The colossal ex-president hardly gets off his car and hastily starts delivering a political speech before his panting slows. “We are not here today to do politics,” is the first sentence of the old hand at politics, “We’re here to visit our martyrs.” “May god be pleased with you” the crowd replies, heartfelt. We walk slowly following Denktaş as he continues his tirade on the geopolitical importance of Cyprus and how Turkey is about to lose the island. I understand that we have reached our destination when he stops in front of a familiar grave, that of Mother Hatice’s son Ersin. “The one who waits for you is your fiancée Rana, the blood on your hair is your henna,” reads the epitaph. Denktaş quotes the only Quranic verse that circulates in the Turkish secular nationalist discourse: “Do not speak of martyrs as dead; nay, they are alive but you perceive it not.”²⁰ There are silent nods. Mother Hatice places a red wool muffler that reads “Martyrs’ mothers” on his neck. Yaman starts to perform in front of the cameras. “You are the Ataturk of Cyprus” he shouts theatrically, “We, gazis, the living witnesses of martyrs support you!” That is it! Newspaper photographers take their last pictures and Denktaş takes off. Having been

²⁰ “And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, ‘They are dead.’ Rather, they are alive, but you perceive [it] not.” Al Baqarah (2.154)

publicly endorsed by the communities of loss, the ultranationalist visitors also depart together in the luxury car.

There have been many days like that at the Edirnekapı Martyrs' Cemetery. The mourning and commemoration practices of these communities often get articulated with competing nationalist agendas that are not necessarily shared by the members of the community. However, ultranationalist politics does not simply throw its voice to martyrs' families and disabled veterans either. They also take it on as their very own in order to speak about their pain, sacrifice, crisis, and revenge. The next chapters examine the political, social, and cultural processes through which disabled veterans come to take on this voice, becoming novel ultranationalist subjects in contemporary Turkey.

CHAPTER 3- TWO REGISTERS OF SOVEREIGNTY

State Sovereignty and Masculine Sovereignty

Compulsory military service in Turkey played a key role in the historical transformation from the Ottoman imperial to Turkish national sovereignty. While establishing the state monopoly on violence within the new national territory, compulsory military service both reflected and consolidated the transformation of the gender regime in line with efforts to forge a national community of equal (male) citizens (Sirman 2000, Koğacıoğlu 2004). Making each man equal vis-à-vis the state by subjecting them to universal conscription, this exclusively male institution holds the key to the republic's gendered promise for its young male subjects: masculine sovereignty.

In Turkey, all able-bodied heterosexual young males are subject to conscription upon reaching the legal age. Compulsory military service operates as a key rite of passage for adult masculinity (Altınay 2004, Sinclair-Webb 2000). Discharge certificate from the army serve as a legally and socially sanctioned prerequisite for formal employment and marriage; draft evaders are ultimately expelled from citizenship. Young men are entitled to become sovereign social subjects only through their initial submission to the military discipline and authority of the state.

This intimate relationship between military service and hegemonic masculinity has been dramatically destabilized since the onset of the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1984. This destabilization manifested on multiple levels during and after the 1990s. In the context of the conflict, the number of draft evaders has reached an unprecedented level, estimated somewhere

between 400,000 and 500,000 (Mater 2005). Middle and upper-middle classes have increasingly capitalized on their social and economic resources to develop strategies for dodging the draft, and even more importantly, avoiding deployment in the conflict zone, strategies such as paid exemption from full term military service, becoming and remaining enrolled in college and graduate school for extended periods, and obtaining a medical report documenting ineligibility for military service (aka the “rotten report”). Moreover, the first conscientious objection movement of Turkey has emerged in this period through the efforts of activists who openly resisted the draft despite the extremely harsh measures taken by the state.

Failure of a Gendered Promise

During my fieldwork, I collected life histories from thirty-five disabled veterans.

Most of them were wounded during the height of the conflict between 1993-1996. More than half of them had experienced lower extremity amputations after getting injured in landmine explosions. The rest mostly had orthopedic disabilities due to gunshot injuries and a few had bilateral blindness due to trauma. Nearly all of them were between thirty-five and forty years of age when we met, in other words slightly older than me.

The interviews for life histories took place mostly in my informants’ homes. Most of my informants live in lower-class neighborhoods at the peripheries of the city. These neighborhoods are often referred to as “gecekondu mahalleleri” (slum neighborhoods). Actually, they are not slum areas anymore since most of these buildings have been legalized. Nevertheless, the “gecekondu history” persists in their unasphalted roads and

unplastered brick walls, and on the iron bars sticking out from their flat roofs, indicating plans for adding another storey in the future. Disabled veterans co-inhabit, often but not always separate quarters of, these neighborhoods with the politicized Kurdish communities who came to the city after the systematic implementation of internal forced displacement policies by the state in the 1990s, in exactly the same period in which most of my informants served in the military, evacuated or burnt Kurdish villages, fought against Kurdish guerillas, and were wounded and became disabled. This volatile co-inhabitation has a direct bearing on my informants' sense and experience of the urban space, as well as on their political identities.

The ethnically mixed and politically turbulent class character of these neighborhoods casts an aura of uncertainty and fear on disabled veterans' lives in public. In one of my informants' words, "It's easy to discern who is an enemy and who is a friend on the mountains. In the city, you can never be sure." Even though not a single one of my informants experienced or witnessed any incident of retaliatory violence against a disabled veteran, they are continuously alarmed by the Kurdish presence in the city, especially during pro-PKK demonstrations in their or adjacent neighborhoods, in which protesters build barricades, burn tires, cars, and buses, and clash with the riot police, throwing pave stones and Molotov cocktails at police panzers and chanting slogans in support of the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

Political and sectarian belongings above or beyond ethnic identities further complicate the uncertainty produced in the absence of clear ethnic spatial divisions or bodily markers of ethnicity. Left-leaning Alawi populations, Kurdish ex-village guard

(paramilitary state forces) communities, and a number of illegal Turkish leftist organizations—whose activities have been confined to gecekonu areas after progressively losing much of their popular support and militia power following their short-lived resurgence in the mid-1990s—also populate these neighborhoods, producing an erratic cityscape.

Walking on the streets of these neighborhoods, most of which I had never visited before despite being a native of Istanbul, and reading the slogans painted on walls such as “Voice, authority, and power to the people,” “Down with fascism,” “The gangs of the deep state will pay for their crimes,” “Long live the fraternity of peoples,” I frequently felt that disabled veterans’ homes, bedecked with all sorts of nationalist objects, looked like unique pro-state oases in these districts, where the state was always present in some form of lack or excess (such as the lack of infrastructure and the excess of police violence).

At my visits, I was nearly always hosted in the salon (guest room), where my informants and I smoked packs of cigarettes and drank countless glasses of tea, often served by their wives, as we reconstructed their life stories. In almost all cases, the moment of injury constituted a sharp break both in the consistency of my informants’ life-story narratives and in their actual life trajectories, radically separating their pre-conscription and post-injury lifeworlds. Upon leaving the military hospital, most became dependent on their natal families for financial support and daily care, either temporarily until their eligibility for compensation and welfare entitlements was eventually approved through a number of maze-like bureaucratic processes, or permanently, as in the case of

most paraplegic veterans. This somewhat reverse rite of passage brought about a striking sense of infantilization and shame for disabled veterans, moments condensed in tropes of “the shame of being diapered by the mother” and “the shame of asking for cigarette money from the father.”

Most veterans had lost their former blue-collar jobs and were employed at state institutions as unskilled laborers in accordance with the state’s paternalist job placement policies. Those who were single before conscription experienced desertion by their girlfriends or fiancées and difficulties in finding a spouse, whereas the already married few faced marital problems exacerbated by financial troubles, intensified domestic violence, or bodily stigma. They frequently felt themselves cut off from their able-bodied friends, a feeling often reinforced by their inability to perform lower-class male bonding practices such as attending football games. Being both disabled and politically marked, their experience of the urban space was transformed in a way that made them feel vulnerable to various forces, such as street crime, political retaliation, and the ordinary performative violence of street masculinity.

Over the last two decades, the emergent scholarship on disability has shown us the myriad ways in which the disabled have been stigmatized and excluded from virtually all areas of social life (Davis 2006, Garland-Thomson 1997, Shakespeare 1998). Despite some recent improvements recorded in the scope of Turkey’s European Union (EU) accession process, the country has historically had a bad record in terms of the living standards, employment options, and (social/spatial) mobility chances of its disabled citizens (Bezmez and Yardımcı 2010, Bengisu et al. 2008). According to the first nation-

wide disability survey of Turkey conducted in 2002, there are 8.5 million disabled people in Turkey, constituting 12.29% of the total population.²¹ The survey findings clearly delineate the socio-economic inequalities impinging on the lives of disabled people: 78.3% of the disabled population do not participate in the labor force; 36.3% of the disabled are illiterate in contrast to 12.9% of the general population; and 34.4% of them are never married in contrast to 26.3% in the general population. Another nation-wide research project stunningly reports that the word “disabled” (sakat) is most commonly associated with the word “needy” (muhtaç). In such a milieu, the post-military lives of the vast majority of disabled veterans, especially given that most of them are already from rural and urban poor backgrounds, have been characterized by the loss of breadwinner status in the discriminatory labor market and their reliance on their natal families for financial support and daily care. In short, disabled veterans have been disenfranchised, infantilized and expelled from the institutions and performative practices associated with masculinity.

Public Secrets

Until the 1990s, relatively few numbers of disabled ex-soldiers of the conflict had not constituted a distinct interest or a public. Although they shared embodied memories of military service and violence, and arguably a generational consciousness (Gerber 2000), they were certainly not organized as a reflexive social group with a shared political

²¹ “2002 Turkey Disability Survey” was conducted jointly by the Turkish Republic Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People, State Planning Organization, and the Turkish Statistical Institute. The full text is available online in Turkish and English on the website of the Turkish Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People. www.ozida.gov.tr

identity. Officially classified as “duty-disabled” in the absence of an inter-state war, they had the same legal status with soldiers injured in non-combat activities as well as with several other state employees disabled on service, and were subject to the same rights and entitlements.

Since all disabled veteran organizations were banned by the state alongside with all other public associations after the 1980 military coup, never to be opened again, military duty-disabled could only organize under the roof of the only legal association for military welfare recipients, the Official Association, established by a special law (No. 2847) during the junta rule in 1983. Until the mid-1990s, when a number of competing organizations emerged by maneuvering through the gaps in the law and formed advocacy networks, this association functioned merely as a semi-bureaucratic institution to mediate the disabled ex-soldiers’ clientelistic relationship with the state. Yet, by the virtue of being formed top-down and strictly monitored by the state, and having just a few branches in only major urban centers, this association was far from facilitating a sense of community among disabled ex-soldiers. Largely isolated from each other, only those disabled soldiers with a prolonged stay in a military hospital could fraternize with fellow patient soldiers. As the individualized victims of clashes with “a handful of bandits” taking place far away from the major urban centers, disabled ex-soldiers were mostly invisible in public culture, a sort of “public secret” that everyone both knew but also knew how not to know (Taussig 1999).

Let me dwell on this notion of public secret in the context of post-1980 Turkey. First, it should be emphasized that the conflict itself was a public secret until the mid-

1990s. How could it not be? The shadow of the 1980 military coup, which had brutally destroyed venues of all public life and organization and rendered the very ideas of publicness and dissent impossible, was still upon Turkey. The armed contestation and the struggle for hegemony between the state and the PKK were largely confined to the Region, far from the industrial, financial, and cultural centers of Turkey, and it would remain so until the forced migration waves of the mid 1990s. It was virtually banned to talk about the Kurdish issue in mainstream political discourse since the Turkish state officially denied the very existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group, hence the Kurdish issue, reducing Kurdish to a corrupted dialect of Turkish, until 1991 when the ban on speaking Kurdish was lifted after President Süleyman Demirel's famous statement, "I recognize the Kurdish reality."

The "culture of terror" (Taussig 1991) that flourished in the maddening violence of the 1980 military coup thrived through the state of emergency in the Region, with rampant political repression, censorship, imprisonment of journalists and intellectuals, disappearances, extra-judicial killings targeting leftist and Kurdish activists, systematic torture campaigns, and more. It was impossible to get any tangible news from the Region through the media channels. The state had complete control over audio-visual media since the state-run Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) enjoyed monopoly as the public (state-owned) broadcaster until the first private television and radio channels started broadcasting in 1990. Print-press and the distribution of print-media were monopolized by a few multi-sector corporations engulfed in close economic ties with the state. None of the present-day socialist or left liberal dailies were around. A pro-Kurdish

newspaper, *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda), would not be founded until 1992. *Mehmedin Kitabı* (The Book of Mehmet), the first journalistic book bringing together the testimonies of the conscripted soldiers was to be published in 1999. One would have to wait until the 2000s for memoirs of deployed soldiers and televised and movie representations of the conflict.

If one would like to trace the effects of the armed conflict on deployed soldiers in this period, the only appropriate public, in Berlant's (2008) sense, would be the "third page," the designated tabloid section of popular Turkish dailies, where one can read sensationalist, pulpy, and tawdry human interest stories of all sorts: crime, sexual abuse, domestic violence, etc. There one finds ex-conscripts committing all sorts of excessively violent acts: blowing themselves up with hand grenades or blasting themselves in the head with shotguns after slashing their families. In the late 1990s, these incidents would be shyly called the "Southeast Syndrome" in the media but in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they were just part of a public secret that everybody knew: Violence was brought back home and was infiltrating the city. Everybody knew it; so, for example, one would be careful at the incidents of road rage, especially with the impertinent young cab drivers. I must have known it too; so, for example, upon learning that he had "served in the East," I felt too hesitant to ask from the son of my landlady who lived just upstairs to turn down the Arabesk music that he regularly listened to on full volume at any hour of the day.

From the Third Page to the Headlines

This picture started to change after the state turned to counterinsurgency to address the Kurdish issue in the 1990s, a turn which was both a result and a catalyst of the escalation of the armed conflict between the state forces and the PKK guerillas to a war level. The deployment of counterinsurgency strategies has not only dramatically increased the number of permanently injured soldiers, who now form the largest disabled “veteran” population in the history of the Turkish Republic, but also paved the way to an increasingly militarized nationalist public culture in which the production, circulation, and consumption of the figure of the “citizen-soldier who metonymically embodies the united, sovereign, national community” (Kaplan 2006:180) were augmented. It is within this public culture that both the meaning of the disabled veteran body in nationalist body politics and disabled veterans’ material/symbolic relationship with the state have been reconfigured.

Bora (1995) uses the phrase “the dark spring of nationalism” to describe the politico-cultural atmosphere of Turkey in the 1990s. Indeed, spring is a very good metaphor not only because it conveys the prolific and volatile nature of Turkish nationalism in this period but also because it allows us to picture how the seeds sown in this spring have matured in the 2000s. In this dark spring, all variants of nationalism blossomed (popular, racist/ethnic, neoliberal, etc.), producing marginal hybrid forms such as the Red Apple Coalition, which would later become a hegemonic one and form the ideological basis of the ultranationalist alliances and protests that would enroll disabled veterans in the 2000s.

Nationalist imaginaries swung between apocalyptic and millenarian visions in the 1990s, a pendulum movement that was overdetermined on many levels by the Kurdish issue. The early 1990s were years of optimism articulated in the popular nationalist motto, “The Twenty-First century will be the Turkish century.” Yet, this optimism quickly faded away in the face of the escalation of the conflict, the drastic economic effects of the Gulf War, and, the consequent formation of a de facto Kurdish state in Iraq. Thus, optimism left its place to a language of crisis and an apocalyptic vision, ratifying the reactionary patterns of Turkish nationalist ideology and corroborating a structure of political feeling around the ominous premise that Turkey was once again confronted with an international conspiracy endangering its very existence (Bora 2002). The foundational trauma —dismemberment—that the Turkish nationalists inherited from the rapid loss of territory and collapse of the Ottoman Empire was reactivated.

In the context of counterinsurgency, nationalist political parties incessantly expanded their political influence in the 1990s by cashing in on the popular discontent fed by the toll of the conflict. The Nationalist Action Party (MHP), a fascist nationalist party famous for its unabashed violence against socialists and Alawis in the 1970s, was the primary winner of this process, rapidly increasing its votes from 2.9% in 1987 to near the 10% threshold required to enter the parliament in 1995, becoming a partner in the coalition government by garnering close to 18% of the votes in 1999 and dragging the political center to the far right (Bora and Can 1999). But more important than its electoral victory was the way the MHP brought an assertive and violent anti-Kurdish (or more

accurately, anti-marginalized) discourse to public life by successfully mobilizing nationalist intensities in and through spectacular nationalist rituals.

Drawing young men especially from the urban poor, the MHP organized seemingly impromptu political performances. Flag campaigns started in neighborhoods with transsexual or Kurdish residents spread to whole cities. Martyrs' funerals turned into protests against the PKK in which angry crowds chanted nationalist slogans despite traditional burial conventions. Convoys of cars jam packed with nationalist youth blocked roads and terrorized the streets in politicized soldiers' farewell ceremonies. All these practices were harbingers of the formation of a war-induced nationalist public that would become vigorous in 2000s Turkey.

Even more important than the nationalist turn in politics was the rise of banal nationalism. In the 1990s, the very foundations of official nationalism were under fire from several sides: political Islam, Kurdish movement, neoliberalism, and an intense public skepticism which increasingly referred to the state in terms of excess, inefficiency, inflexibility, and corruption. While the state-centered nationalism was criticized on several grounds, state symbolism began to proliferate in private and public places, in "civil" society so to speak, in commodified forms, producing new symbols and consumption niches of urban middle-class citizenry (Özyürek 2004). State symbols were starting to be displayed everywhere in gigantic forms, such as the ones contending for the Guinness World record of largest flag ever (the current world record belongs to Israel), and for the first time, in miniaturized commercial forms, producing a novel type of public intimacy through Atatürk badges, star-crescent necklaces and the like. Pop icons in

costumes decorated with stars and crescents sang the reinvented (and remixed in techno) nationalist marches that evoked nostalgia for the “revolutionary” fervor of the early republican period. Pretexts to sing the Independence March (the national anthem) as an othering strategy multiplied in unexpected places like football stadiums, high society parties, and street fights.

In this pop age of Turkish nationalism (Bora 2002, Kozanoglu 1997), the body of the citizen-soldier, which already had a privileged place in nationalist imagery through the mediation of “the myth of the military-nation” (Altınay 2004), turned into a palpable and intimate figure. Disabled soldiers became increasingly present in the media through cover stories, nationalist charity campaigns, politicians’ warmongering, and reality programs merging the genres of epic, melodrama, and mourning. Produced en masse through counterinsurgency, instrumentally staged in the media, and consumed ideologically, the disabled soldier body has turned into a political commodity, imbued with national fantasies of heroism and sacrifice. In less than a decade, duty-disabled young men metamorphosed from volatile victim figures, who invoked a variety of gendered, governmental, and political anxieties as the “embodied transcripts” (Feldman 1991) of the state’s failed promise of masculine sovereignty into politicized victim-heroes, endowed with the highest honorary military title of the Turkish nationalist lexicon, “Gazi.”

A New Governmental Regime

Concurrent with and co-constitutive of the metamorphosis of the duty-disabled in public culture was the fabrication of a new governmental regime through the concerted efforts of the military, welfare, medical, and legal state institutions. This governmental regime set the duty-disabled of the conflict symbolically, legally, and spatially apart from the ordinary duty-disabled. The symbolic dimension of this compartmentalization, which takes its full-fledged form in the honorific of Gazi, is the topic of the next chapter. In this chapter, I focus on the legal and spatial contours of this new governmental regime, the ways in which it contributed to the emergence of disabled veteran collective identity and activism, and its ramifications in terms of the problematic relationship between state and masculine sovereignty.

Starting with the Anti-Terror Law No. 3713 of 1991, recruits that “became disabled as a consequence of their duty in the struggle against separatist terror” were constructed as distinctive legal subjects whose welfare rights were increasingly defined in political terms. This particular group’s entitlements were defined not merely in terms of welfare compensation but rather in terms of a debt generated by the sacrificial expenditure of their limbs, and hence their masculine sovereignty, for the sovereignty of the state (which is defined as the indivisible unity of the state with its motherland and its nation in the 1982 constitution). Indeed, the generic opening sentence of parliamentarians and military officers’ declamations on disabled veterans is always: “Whatever we do, we cannot pay our debt to our gazis who sacrificed their legs or arms for the indivisible unity of our country.”

The Anti-Terror Law of 1991 was supplemented with several amendments in the following years, granting disabled ex-soldiers of the conflict with a bunch of exclusive entitlements. These entitlements formed the basis of an emergent exclusively male interest group whose relationship with the state is politically overdetermined by the vicissitudes of the armed conflict with the PKK. In short, the legal demarcation of the disabled ex-soldiers of this conflict paved the way to the formation of new masculine political subjectivities, which I describe in the following chapters, via the political governmentalization of the disabled soldier.

Most entitlements of disabled veterans, such as job placement, interest-free housing credits, and firearm licenses, are pervaded by the same gendered agenda, which aims at recovering the masculine sovereignty of disabled veterans. The state institutions try to make disabled veterans homeowners, which increases their eligibility for marriage. Note that the Turkish word for getting married, *evlenmek*, is derived from the root “house” (*ev*) and literally means “getting a house.” The job placement policy aims to restore their breadwinner status. Firearm licences provide them with a new space for violence. It is exactly this gendered agenda that enables disabled veterans to translate the everyday moments of infantilization, disenfranchisement, and demasculinization in their lives into a direct critique of the state, which has failed twice to keep its gendered promises for those young men: first through the malfunction of the military rite of passage into adult masculinity, and again through the failure of the restoration of their masculine sovereignty.

There is an even more ticklish dimension of the gendered agenda that steers these entitlements: Its full success can lead only to its ultimate failure since, in the very attempt to make them sovereign social subjects, it turns disabled veterans into the kind of men for whom the precondition of masculine sovereignty is being utterly dependent on the state. This is a foundational paradox for disabled veteran identity, which takes its shape at the interstices of the relationship between state and masculine sovereignties. This paradox also lies at the heart of the disabled veterans' political agency, which I discuss in detail in the final chapter.

How disabled veterans work through and act upon this paradox is deeply informed by a cultural discourse on the tensional relationship between the state and nationalist young men. This cultural discourse has been produced since the late 1990s through a sequence of immensely popular TV serials that I will turn my attention to at the end of this chapter. But before delving into this paradox and its popular cultural expressions, let us first see how the new governmental regime of the 1990s created novel institutional spaces that engendered an emergent sense of collectivity among previously isolated injured soldiers alongside new masculine subjectivities.

Sixth Floor

In the Ottoman Empire, the first military medical institutions were founded in the late 19th century as a response to both modernization attempts and decades of continuous warfare. The republic, which was founded after the First World War, did not actively participate in the Second World War and never faced the need to accommodate large

numbers of hospitalized populations during the wars in Cyprus and Korea. Thus, the state was caught off guard by the unexpected escalation in the number of fatally injured soldiers after 1993. What this numerical increase brought about in practice was not only political anxieties as to how to hide the real human costs of the conflict and neutralize the populist criticisms of the state's failure to care for the politically privileged bodies of soldiers in the psychological warfare context, but also a grave medical and governmental crisis.

The infrastructural and organizational problems worsened by the disparities in health care across regions, such as hospital overcrowding and the lack of adequate coordination between state institutions hindered state institutions' capacity to adequately address several basic problems: Who was going to pay daily stipends for hospitalized soldiers who mostly had nothing but their underclothes on them? How would they commute between their homes and hospitals, or between their hometowns and metropolitan areas where all leading military hospitals were located? Who would take care of those who required continuous everyday assistance because of their disabilities? The way that these issues were tackled had a direct bearing on present disabled veteran identity and activism by shaping disabled veterans' real relationships with state institutions and their imaginary relationship with the State.

Below I quote in length from the captivating hospitalization and post-surgical care stories of two of my informants, Yaman and Aykan, who were both injured in 1994, one year after the inception of counterinsurgency proper and just one year before the opening ceremony of the sixth floor of the Gülhane Askeri Tıp Akademisi (GATA), the first

medical space designed specifically for needs of soldiers wounded in the Region. In quoting them, I intend to show how these indignant black comedy narratives from the crawling years of the new governmental regime communicate a deep sense of embitterment against the state that placed Yaman and Aykan in Kafkaesque encounters with a military-medical bureaucracy.

Yaman was wounded in the arm in an ambush. He was being prepared for an amputation when he opened his eyes while at a state hospital in the nearest town center. He openly resisted the amputation of his arm although doctors recommended otherwise. That is how his journey from one hospital to another started. First, he was transferred to a military hospital in another city by ambulance. There, he had a complicated arm surgery. Then, he was dispatched to a central military hospital in Istanbul for post-surgery care and rehabilitation. According to Yaman, what they did at this hospital was simply to remove the cast of the arm only to re-cast it and send him off home. His arm stayed in a cast for a total of nine months, during which he visited the hospital every three months for follow up doctor visits. In this period, the military-medical bureaucracy could not reach a decisive evaluation of his medical condition because of his “ongoing” treatment and hence Yaman was not discharged from the army. Officially a soldier on extended furloughs, he was turned away from every single (civilian) state hospital he went to seeking a second opinion. After several futile attempts, Yaman decided to continue his treatment in Ankara, where things worked more smoothly “thanks to concerned military officers.” Yet, in order to do so, he had to cut through red tape (obtain a dispatch paper, a residence certificate in Ankara, etc.) and he eventually succeeded with the help of some

high-ranking military officers whom he had met in his previous hospital stays. As soon as he arrived at the central military hospital in the capital city, Yaman was disillusioned by the chaotic flood of injured soldiers from all over the Region. Below is how he satirically depicts this terrorizing spectacle:

There were no vacant beds, not even stretchers. We had to share the stretchers. Those injured in the left arm shared their stretcher with those injured in the right arm. Then, there was no stretcher left for less serious cases like ours and we had to lie on the ground. It was a torment to lie there amongst the moans of friends. A real psychological torture! For forty-five days, I listened to their screams. Doctors were about to go crazy. They were amputating arms and legs one after another. You know there are cemeteries consisting of hundreds of arms and legs in the back garden of these hospitals. The scene was horrifying. There were guys with smashed shlongs. But the worst was the guy who lost both eyes, both legs, and an arm in a landmine blast. He was constantly begging the doctors to euthanize him, saying he had no one outside to take care of him.

After he was “tricked” by a military physician, who told him about a smaller and possibly less crowded military hospital, Yaman requested his transfer there. However, upon his arrival, he was immediately informed that there were only two available beds in the hospital: one in the ward of infectious diseases, where he was not allowed to stay anyway, and one in the ward of psychiatry, where Yaman agreed to stay, assuming that his ward mates would be “depressed soldiers.” Yet, the ward turned out to be full of

“cuckoos,” some of whom took refuge in madness in order to escape from the insanity of the conflict, reminding me of Andrei Konchalovsky’s film *House of Fools*, which tells the real-life inspired story of a psychiatry hospital in Ingushetia where patients ran amok after being abandoned by the hospital staff during the war in Chechnya:

They had told me that it was a psychiatry ward but it was actually a ward of lunatics. There were all sorts of them. You just need to name which one you’re looking for. Ethyl alcohol, cologne, thinner, volatile substance addicts...slashers who cut themselves with razor blades...There was one psychopath who smashed his commanding officer’s head. One of them had religious obsessions, doing nothing but praying and saying rosary. There was another, who thought himself an airplane. But the worst was the guy who mistook himself for a clock. He was swinging his arms and tick-tocking all the time. After seeing all these, I could not go to bed until 2:30 in the morning. You know, I also had some cash that my family had sent for me. I asked the soldier guarding the gate to buy me cigarettes. I smoked by the gate, thinking to myself, “I could have been a martyr but I have become a gazi only to be wasted here.” While I was smoking there, the psychopath came and asked for a cigarette. We kind of became friends. He confessed that he was faking insanity and promised he would keep the others away from me. Actually, he was a good guy, but still a lunatic. So I went inside and slept until 6 am. In the morning, I immediately called an ex-commander of mine to tell him that I would desert the hospital unless my discharge papers were prepared immediately. It still took another day. Since the airplane fellow was

jumping from one bed to another, announcing his departure from the airport and making motor noises, I spent another night by the hospital gate. I finished eight packs of cigarettes in one day and two nights. The last thing I did before I left was hide my watch and ask what time it was to the clock fellow tick-tocking in a secluded corner. It is hard to believe but he guessed it right to the second.

Aykan's story that he pantingly tells with an unfettered anger is not very different from that of Yaman. Aykan's adventures in the labyrinths of the medical system started after he stepped on a landmine. After his left leg was amputated in a nearby state hospital, he was transferred to a military hospital in the Region for post-surgical care. From there, he was referred to the central military hospital in Istanbul. It was his family who took him to Istanbul (approximately 850 miles away) in the back cargo compartment of a relative's station wagon. Once in Istanbul, Aykan found out that before he could see a doctor at the hospital he was referred to on the Asian side of Istanbul, he had to first get a referral paper from the recruitment office on the Asian side of Istanbul and then have it stamped at yet another military hospital on the European side. Moreover, he had to do these in person with a leg stump still in a cast. After making a few unsuccessful attempts at securing an ambulance, Aykan ventured to shuttle among these military/medical institutions by his personal means:

I got my referral paper that day. Then I had to cross the Bosphorus Bridge. I still had that big cast on my foot. I hanged it out of the car window just like that and that's how I drove my car. I'm not a son of a Greek, thanks to god. I'm the Turk

son of a Turk. But this state makes me drive my car with my left leg hanging out of the window. I press on the clutch pedal with the left crutch and on gas with my right foot. I hold the steering wheel with my right hand and let it go whenever I need to shift the gear. Just like that, click-click. But, oops! Cops stopped me as soon as I exited the highway. They must have seen me crossing the bridge. A police commissioner came and started to yell at me, “Are you a maniac? Are you retarded?” I explained him that was the only way I could drive. He got mad as he snarled, “Who the fuck are you? How do you even dare thinking of driving like this?” He commanded the cops to impound my car and to take me into custody. I was infuriated, you know, cursing non-stop at my heart. I was telling myself, “Shoot this guy right away!” I wished that I had died instead of seeing all those. How can they torture a human being like that? You ask for an ambulance, they don’t send it. You ask for retirement, they don’t process it. So, I asked the commissioner, “Have you finished talking?” Then, I started, “I’ve given my blood, my life to this fucking cunt country. What are you talking about? I gave my blood, my legs. What else do you want from me?” Just like that! I threw my hospital files in front of him. So many of them! He was about to say something. I interrupted and said, “Look! These are my hospital reports. I’ve given my blood and my life and I’m being treated like shit. I wish I had died like a dog.” He flopped and started to cry. “Oh son! I’m sorry,” he said, “This is how this state works.” He offered picking me up and dropping me off by a police car. I told him not to bother. “Don’t do anything my commissioner,” I said, “This is how sons of

this country have lived and died, and this is how it is going to be.” He provided me with an escort police car, gave me his phone number so that I could call him whenever I was in trouble, and told me, “I will make sure that you won’t be stopped by anyone again.” For the next six months, I traveled back and forth like that.

In stark comparison with those of Yaman and Aykan, the hospitalization narratives of my informants who were injured after 1995, are quite smooth and lack the tone of resentment toward the state. This difference in narrative styles reflects, more than anything, the consolidation of a new governmental regime through the introduction of new medical spaces in which injured and disabled soldiers of the conflict were exclusive and/or privileged patients.

The new orthopedics clinic of the GATA, “the sixth floor,” as my informants love to call it, was a fundamental breakthrough in this direction. Bringing together exclusively wounded soldiers from all over the Region and forming an institutionalized suffering community under the same roof, this clinic has also become a crucial site of the nationalist imagination of the conflict from the late 1990s onwards through largely mediatized visits of high-ranking military officers and politicians.

The sixth floor was followed by similar other medico-institutional spaces for disabled veterans. In March 1995, immediately following, or rather as a part of, one of the largest “Spring Cleaning” operations against the PKK, the state channel TRT 1 launched, and broadcast live, a three daylong charity campaign, “Haydi Turkiye

Mehmetçikle Elele” (Come on Turkey, Hand in Hand with Mehmetçik) with the support of several civil society organizations. The collected amount of 61.8 million dollars was transferred to a military foundation, Elele Vakfi (Hand in Hand Foundation), to finance the construction of a “five star” rehabilitation and care center in Ankara, which was opened in 2000.

Just a few months later, newspapers reported the opening ceremony of the Ali Çetinkaya First Bullet Rehabilitation Center, a unique holiday resort in Ayvalık on the Aegean coast designed to accommodate the needs of persons with different types and degrees of disability. The resort was named after a famous army officer who commanded the troops that fired the first bullet against the Greek army in the opening battle of the War of Independence in Ayvalık. Later, the Elele Foundation also constructed a recreational facility, Gazi Uyum Evi (Gazi Adaptation House), encompassing restaurants, hobby gardens, a small zoo, and an artificial lake with waterfalls, which frequently appear in the media for all the disabled veterans’ wedding ceremonies it hosts. Gazi Uyum Evi was opened on September 19 2004 with the participation of all high rank military officers. The political symbolism of the date chosen for the inauguration ceremony should be noted. September 19 is the day when Mustafa Kemal was granted the rank of marshal and the honorific of Gazi in 1921. Since 2002 September 19 is “celebrated” as the state designated Gazis’ Day.

All these institutions except one are located in the political center of Turkey, the capital city of Ankara. Nevertheless, they host disabled veterans from all over the country. Every single disabled veteran I met during my fieldwork has been to one of

these institutions at least once. Actually, in most cases, they have been to all of them, for a total period of months or even years. As one of the rehabilitation centers includes a prosthesis workshop and a fifty-bed guesthouse that accommodates disabled veterans not under treatment, especially amputee veterans especially continue to visit the center regularly, at least once in every three years to replace their prostheses. Many stay there for weeks, even many years after their injuries, even when they are not medically required to do so. Actually, for most of my informants, visits to these institutions provided a sort of getaway from the everyday burdens of work and marriage, as jokingly articulated in expressions like, “My wife is giving me a hassle. I’ll go and stay in the rehabilitation center for a while to rest my head.”

These new politically marked, military-medical institutions have played a key role in the formation of disabled veteran identity and activism, surpassing their role as treatment and rehabilitation centers. During their stays at these institutions, my informants were absorbed in a healing and dying community of fellow ex-soldiers, which transformed their individual traumas into a generational (and even trans-generational) trauma, one they would address collectively and politically in the 2000s.

It was also in these institutions where my informants met and established social and political relationships with military officers, who often became important figures in my informants’ lives through relations of paternalist patronage, ultranationalist mentorship or mimetic identification. Many of my informants formed fictive kin bonds with these officers and their families, such as in the case of the charity-loving wife of one of the military physicians who was called “Mother” by several of my informants. Several

worked or became members of the ultranationalist foundations or strategic research centers that these military officers established upon their retirement from the military. All of these relations have played a crucial role in the fashioning of the disabled veteran identity and in the deepening of disabled veterans' attachment to the military.

Even more important is the liminal function that these institutions undertake. These military-medical institutions are liminal spaces in which injured soldiers first learn to become disabled men and perform manhood with a new embodiment, re-discovering different domains of masculine experience from violence to sexuality as disabled men. Yet, these liminal spaces also happen to be disciplinary total institutions, where disabled veterans' practices of re-initiation into masculinity often conflict with the temporal, spatial, and bodily discipline of a setting much like a halfway house. It is against this background that a new type of masculine subjectivity, akin to adolescent masculinity of high schoolers in terms of its male bonding practices and its relationship with institutional authority, emerges in these medical-military settings. In the following quotation about his good days at the sixth floor, Tahsin introduces us to the characteristics of this emergent subjectivity:

My stay at GATA was great. I mean we used to flirt with nurses, misbehaving all the time. We ran wild in corridors after midnight, when everybody else slept. The lights were off in other wards, but our lights and TV were always on. But we had to fight. With professors, captains, nurses... The commander of the GATA was a major general then, but because of some problems about our rights, we complained even about him to the chief of general staff. We were naughty indeed!

And that period was so lively. Every week, we hosted a brigadier general. Every month, a lieutenant general or a corps commander visited us. You are constantly in the store window, on TVs. I mean, I had a very good time there, except maybe for the first few days of my stay. At first, I couldn't accept that I was injured. I mean I was there but when I woke up every morning, I pinched and slapped myself to make sure that I wasn't dreaming. But that lasted only for the first fifteen days, until I adapted. Then, I started to care less. We started to meet doctors, civil servants, interns, and nursing students as we wandered around. We learned all the dirty tricks. If we could not exit from the door, we would exit from the roof. We wanted to get out, you know! We were not allowed to leave the hospital after five pm. But we always left and then snuck back through the garden. We did all sorts of naughty things outside the hospital, chasing the tail of the nurses and so on. I mean it was really good. We had really good days there.

For the young men semi-confined in these institutions, challenging the institutional norms and authority becomes a way of asserting masculine sovereignty in a way similar to those described in ethnographies of schooling (McLeod 1995, Willis 1981). Indeed, hospitalized veterans' practices such as playing hookey in order to visit local sex workers (some of whom have developed strategies to accommodate disabled veterans such as renting first floor apartments for wheelchair accessibility) or cruising the city streets in a cab as a group of disabled flaneurs just to run away without paying the driver are all reminiscent of adolescent male-bonding performances.

Nevertheless, even though their military rite of passage from adolescent to adult masculinity has been interrupted and complicated by a medicalized rite of passage from able-bodiedness to disability, these young men are not (merely) young men subverting and resisting disciplinary power. As hinted at in Tahsin's reference to "store window," these men are discovering not only their new embodied capacities but also their emergent political ones. The political commodity value of their wounded and disabled bodies becomes evident and further raises as they are visited by a flock of by famous journalists, senior politicians, highest-ranking military officers, football stars, and pop icons:

The prime minister visited us that day. Interestingly, he brought a sweat suit and a pair of sports shoes for each disabled veteran. Anyway, everyone got theirs but there was grumbling. The last one in the line was a disabled veteran without legs. Who would give a sweat suit and shoes to this guy? The guy used to be a football player in the amateur league in his hometown but now he was missing both legs and eyes. The prime minister saw his photo on the wall behind his bed taken while he was playing football. "Don't worry", he said, "You will be able to run and play football like before. You will recover and even be transferred to a professional team." The guy boiled with rage [mocking his Black Sea accent]: "Fuck off! You son of a bitch!" Of course, they immediately shut down the cameras. Can you think of someone else cursing at the prime minister like that in front of the cameras?

This emergent subjectivity is best captured in the beautiful title of the first and only book bringing together autobiographical [but carefully edited] narratives of the disabled veterans of the conflict: “Biz Kınalı Bacaksızlar.” The author of the book, Savaş Yücel (2005), is a disabled veteran himself, who spent quite a long time at the sixth floor and rehabilitation center and later bought an apartment in the area to stay close the social environment that he was steeped in during his treatment and rehabilitation. The first word in Yücel’s title, “biz” simply means “we” and refers to disabled veterans. The second word means “hennaed” and it explicitly alludes to a popular nationalist understanding of henna as a marker of sacrificial surface, based on an analogy between the sacrificial lamb/ram and the soldier body. The final word, “bacaksız,” which is the key for our understanding of this new subjectivity, has two meanings in Turkish, one literal and the other figural. Literally, bacaksız means legless (consisting of the word “bacak” and the suffix of negation “sız”). Figuratively bacaksız means an urchin, or to put it more accurately, a mischievous child who bites off more than he can chew. “We, the Hennaed Legless Urchins!” What other phrase can better describe the state of disabled veterans who have been simultaneously infantilized and sanctified by their bodily losses that rendered them both governmental subjects under the disciplining gaze of the paternal state and masculine political subjects in the process of becoming state?

A Nationalist Rhizome

In a glass-windowed ugly media tower in Istanbul I entered the cubicle of a journalist who made a career chronicling the lives and protests of disabled veterans and martyrs’

families. I initially met him at a wedding for one of my informants' brothers that took place in a wedding salon, at whose door a group of young male relatives wearing dark suits without ties—trademark clothing of heroes of “mafia series” on TV—looked more like they were guarding their boss inside than welcoming guests. At that wedding, I got an appointment from him for an interview just before I joined my informants waiting in the line to pin a “quarter gold coin” on the chest of the groom.

That day at the media tower, I was hoping to learn about the populist media coverage of disabled veterans' lives. My visit provided more than that. I had a unique opportunity to witness the process of producing disabled veterans news when the journalist called two of my informants upon the request of one of his colleagues, who needed information concerning disabled veteran pensions. This other journalist, obviously an ex-leftist guy whose otherwise trust-inducing face was now overtaken by a sly grin, wanted to write a populist column about the poor salaries of disabled veterans for the next day's paper.

I curiously observed the journalist while he was on the phone. It was obvious that he had a cordial relationship with both of my informants. “You must have been the prime-minister of this country,” he buttered up both of my informants with the exactly the same phrase at the beginning of the conversation. Then, he tried to provoke my informants to take action against their supervisors at the state institutions they worked at and to organize a protest against the AKP government. When he paused for a minute between these two phone calls, he told me that he was one of the behind-the-scene scenarists of a famous mafia series, “Kurtlar Vadisi” (Valley of the Wolves). I was

caught off guard. Valley of the Wolves was a true nationalist sensation, which I initially started to watch in order to introduce myself to new nationalist genres just before I left for fieldwork. Captured by it, I finished watching all its ninety-seven episodes before I arrived in Istanbul, asking myself why this TV series always made me think of the armed conflict in the Region and disabled veterans despite the lack of outright references to them.

So, we started to talk about the mafia series. The journalist believed that the popularity recipe of mafia series was “our fondness of conspiracy theories: You have to incorporate all sorts of conspiracies, international agents, crime organizations, and secret societies in order to produce a successful one.” He told me that he was writing another scenario for a new TV series, which would be a breakthrough in Turkish TV history with its realistic portrayal of the armed conflict. “The terrorists, for example, will speak Kurdish. For the first time in the history of Turkish television!” He was so excited and proud that he let me read the first few pages of his manuscript before I left the plaza. I got shocked with its unprecedented verisimilitude in respect to the ethnic dimension of the conflict.

I was expecting it when I saw its trailer: “Valley of the Wolves: Terror.” The series started to air less than a month after the assassination of the Armenian-Turkish Hrant Dink. This political murder created a strong anti-nationalist wave. At Dink’s funeral, hundreds of thousands chanted: “We are all Armenian! We are all Hrant Dink!” Within such context, “mafia series” such as Valley of the Wolves were strongly criticized for their incitement to political violence, especially given that the ultranationalist teenager

that killed Dink was what the media called a “Polat Alemdar wannabe” with reference to his mimetic identification with the protagonist of Valley of the Wolves.

The trailer of the new series, consisting of animated text against a black background, which ended with the slogan, “Debt free, totally independent Turkey,” resembled more a low budget political propaganda clip than the trailer of a blockbuster TV series. The series itself, on the other hand, was a high budget propaganda campaign, which portrayed Polat Alemdar fighting against Kurdish urban terrorists and their masked financiers in Istanbul. The first episode of the series started a heated public discussion, which turned into a deep public controversy, when the Radio and Television High Council (RTÜK) banned the second episode, and de facto the series itself.

There was no clear explanation. Everybody knew that the series exceeded the official representational limits of the conflict and was deemed capable of inciting an ethnic civil war. Reha Muhtar, a famous anchorman, was one of the few who put this anxiety in words: “This is what will happen if you make a series so realistic. Turkey is not ready for this.” Others timidly repeated the mainstream concerns about the series’ positive representation of violence and crime. The supporters of the series were not so timid though. An angry group of teenagers organized a demonstration in front of the RTÜK building and chanted: “We are all Turks! We are all Polat Alemdars,” mimetically inverting the slogan of Dink’s funeral.

My cell phone was flooding with text messages circulating among my informants: “Terrorists are trying to have Valley of the Wolves removed from the TV so that their real face remains unexposed.” The producers of Valley of the Wolves

reciprocated this nationalist support shortly. The banned second episode of the serial was aired only once through an exceptional permission during a national fundraising campaign for disabled veterans and the producers donated all advertisement revenues of the episode to the campaign. A few months after I left the field, the protagonist of Valley of the Wolves, Polat Alemdar, would pass on his self-ascribed duty of urban counter-guerrilla warfare to Firat Kalender, the first disabled veteran protagonist of Turkish TV, who miraculously regained his ability to walk and took his revenge in the series.

Becoming-State: A Nationalist Answer to the Sovereignty Question

Just before the turn of the millennium, a new TV genre emerged in Turkey: “mafia series,” as it is popularly and somewhat misleadingly called. This genre became a sociological and political phenomenon in 2000s Turkey. Mafia series persistently proved to be the most popular primetime shows, earning the highest ratings except when rivaled by the most heated football games, despite their controversial status on many grounds, including accusations of encouraging the youth to violent crime and inciting civil war.

The first example of this genre was *Deli Yürek* (Wildheart), featuring Kenan İmirzalıoğlu, a previous best model of the world, as Yusuf Miroğlu, a tough petty sovereign with a soft heart. The series aired between 1998 and 2001 and reached cult status with a particularly enthusiastic reception among urban male youth, paving the way for the burgeoning of similar TV series and Hollywood-style blockbuster action flicks. *Wildheart* continued with its spin-off film “*Wildheart: Boomerang Hell*,” released to

movie theaters in 2001, which was one of the first films that was shot in the Region and explicitly dealt with the armed conflict.

The immense popularity of *Wildheart* provided the Turkish producers and directors with a successful recipe: A handsome hero, who simultaneously embodies and performs modernity and tradition, urban upper-class masculinity and traditional masculinity codes that are spatially anchored in mahalles (urban quarters), is a must. Then, the show must have two lovers who cannot unite but secretly meet against the background of breathtaking Istanbul panoramas. It must also contain lots of action and violence scenes, and conspiratorial nationalist references to real-life politics and increasingly to the armed conflict under the gimmick of mafia stories. Last but not least, the music—especially folk songs—must be deployed affectively in clip-like scenes.

This genre has fully matured with the popular media franchise *Kurtlar Vadisi* (Valley of the Wolves), which consisted of three separate TV serials and three exceptionally controversial spin-off films. Throughout the 2000s, the commercial breakthrough of the genre has inspired a number of other films and just after I returned from the fieldwork in 2008, it gave birth to the series, titled “Gazi,” featuring the first disabled veteran hero of the Turkish cinematic history, Fırat Kalender. Gazi made the narrative structure of this genre clearly discernible by making what had remained undercurrent in the earlier examples of this genre explicit, namely the tensional sovereignty relationship between young men and the state in the context of the armed conflict.

The hero of the genre of mafia series is always a single young man who was instigated to violence by the state, either as a conscripted soldier (*Wildheart* and *Gazi*) or

as an intelligence agent (Valley of the Wolves). In each series, the story opens with the hero going through a transformative event during which he is revealed to have extraordinary courage and patriotism. In Wildheart, the protagonist Yusuf Miroğlu witnesses a terrorist ambush in the city, just after serving in the Region as a commando, and intervenes in the event, killing the terrorists and hitting the headlines as a reluctant hero. In Valley of the Wolves, the protagonist Polat Alemdar is given a special mission by the “deep state” to infiltrate the mafia, for which he has to “die officially,” i.e. erase his real identity and take on a made up one. Finally, in Gazi, the conscripted soldier Fırat Kalender is kidnapped by the PKK while he valiantly strives to save his platoon from an ambush.

In all three series, this opening event brings about a double loss for the hero. In Wildheart, the initial loss is rather symbolic. Through his intervention in the penetration of terrorist violence into the peaceful city space, Yusuf Miroğlu loses his status as an ordinary neighborhood guy, even though he keeps trying to stick to his pre-military job as a car mechanic and to his neighborhood friends. In Valley of the Wolves, it takes a more concrete and palpable form. Polat Alemdar goes through plastic surgery, loses his real face and identity, and is cut off from his quarter and everybody he loves, desperately trying to reconnect with them in his new identity. In Gazi, the loss is fully grounded in the hero’s body. The protagonist, Fırat Kalender, is shot in the head by a PKK overlord, loses his ability to walk, and is confined to a wheelchair.

In each series, the initial loss is always accompanied and given its full significance by a second loss: the loss of the beloved. In Wildheart and Gazi, villains shot

the fiancées of our heroes to death. (Firat Kalender regains his ability to walk exactly at this moment, reproducing the Turkish cinema's entrenched cliché of miracle recovery from disability.) In *Valley of the Wolves*, Polat Alemdar cannot reveal his true identity to his fiancée and tries to establish a relationship with her in his new identity, caught between his desire and the burden of watching her betray his memory with himself. In each case, the hero is effectively banned from the domain of domestic conjugality and marriage, and by extension, of adult masculinity, through his double loss.

But there is a trade-off. This same structure of loss also draws the hero into the underworld deeper and deeper as he pursues revenge for his losses. In the process, the hero refashions himself as a Robin Hood sort of Mafioso, becoming a very peculiar sovereign male subject who occupies a threshold between illegality and legality, mafia and the state, the crime, and law-making/enforcement. This murky zone is generally referred to as the “deep state” in the Turkish political discourse, denoting an extralegal and ultranationalist “state within the state” composed of ex-members of the US-organized cold war security apparatus Gladio, security and intelligence officers, and mafia leaders. Thus, several social critics have rightly interpreted these series as “deep state series.” Nevertheless, our heroes are a little more complicated than that.

The heroes of these series constantly underline that they are not mafia leaders despite their mafia-like looks and language, honor code (*racon*), and criminal activities. They also insist that they do not work under the state despite their nebulous “deep” connections and alliances. In *Wildheart*, the hero is allied with his ex-commander in the Region, an ultranationalist military officer, who goes by the Kurdish *nom de guerre*

“Bozo” and has an unstable relationship with an important deep state figure, Ağabey (elder brother). In Valley of the Volves, the hero initially works for an undercover intelligence agent, Aslan Bey, but gains autonomy after his assassination and only allies with the state when he sees the need. Finally, the disabled veteran hero, Fırat Kalender, openly resists his ex-commanding officer, Lieutenant Ahmet, who tries to recruit him to work “unofficially” for the state.

Here we see the distinguishing character of the hero of this genre: He refuses to submit to any sovereign authority, including the state itself, in his violent quest to exterminate the enemies of the state. One of the ten self-authored “laws” that Yusuf Miroğlu’s men must obey or die is, “You shall have no friends or foes in the state,” whereas Fırat Kalender frequently proclaims “I take orders from no one. Not even from the state!” It seems that there is one logical resolution of the tensional relationship between state and masculine sovereignty in the nationalist doxa of the 2000s: Young men must *become* the State. Hence Polat Alemdar’s motto, “I am the State!”

It is impossible not to realize the parallels between the narrative structure of these series and my informants’ life stories. These parallels are not coincidental. The animating force of this genre—the tensional sovereignty relationship between young men and the state—is most culturally intelligible and politically visible in my informants’ experiences. Just like the imaginary heroes of mafia series, my informants were introduced to violence in the service of the state and experienced a foundational loss that banished them from normative heterosexual adult masculinity and drew them into the murky field of

ultranationalist politics, where their desire to become sovereign was channeled toward the fantasy of becoming state through mimetic performances of statehood.

CHAPTER 4- THE SACRIFICIAL CRISIS

They must not be Politicized!

Less than a month after the announcement of the imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan's death sentence in 1999, the Turkish National Assembly unanimously passed a bill, something rare in the divided Turkish political scene with the exception of situations in which parliamentarians vote for a pay raise for themselves. Passed rather quietly, the bill was presented as a trivial legal amendment of the Law No. 2847, which was created by the junta rule in 1983 in order to control the social and political organization of ex-military personnel and their heirs. The newly passed bill (No. 4417) further consolidated this sovereign monopoly by banning any financial links, including donations, between the organizations of the ex-military personnel and political parties, trade unions, and professional organizations. The representative of the center-right nationalist Motherland Party (ANAP) precisely pointed out this political function of the amended law in the opening speech of the assembly meeting:

These associations are national and have a military quality. Politics must be kept away from these associations or at least the possibility of infestation of these associations with politics should be eliminated. For we all know politics must not enter the school, the mosque, and the barracks.

“Ex-military personnel and their heirs must not be politicized” was the motto of the day at the national assembly. Yet, it is retrospectively clear that the less announced part of the amendment did exactly the opposite of this anti-political imperative by

completing the process of the transformation of disabled soldiers into full-fledged political figures. It did so by legally defining one of the most powerful terms of the Turkish nationalist lexicon, “gazi,” in a way to enable the state to confer it upon ex-soldiers who became disabled in the context of the Kurdish conflict. The parliamentarians who addressed the assembly at the meeting explained the rationale for this part of the amendment in terms of “providing spiritual satisfaction” for the disabled ex-soldiers by giving them an “honorable standing in the society.” The opening speech of the meeting explained the rationale for the codification of the term:

Despite being one of the highly regarded spiritual values of the Turkish nation, the rank of ghazi does not have a legal base, or to put it more accurately, a clear legal definition. The determination of under what conditions the members of the Turkish Armed Forces would be granted the title of ghazi is of great importance to the security personnel who serve ready to sacrifice themselves for the country and the nation. A person who has to sustain himself as a disabled individual must be satisfied not only financially but also spiritually so that he can cling to life. Given the critical condition of our country, it is against the traditions of the Turkish Armed Forces and the Turkish society to give only the adjective of “disabled” (malul) to those who got disabled (sakat) while fighting for the indivisible unity of the country and the nation.

A Floating Signifier

But what is this title of “gazi” that is supposed to provide spiritual satisfaction for

and give an honorable stance in the society to disabled ex-conscripts? The Turkish term *gazi* is often translated into English as war veteran or disabled war veteran, depending on the context of utterance. This translation risks erasing not only the peculiar historical and religious significance of the term but also its historically overdetermined polyphonic nature.

The Turkish term “*gazi*” is the cognate of the Arabic word “*ghazi*,” which refers to those who took part in *ghaza* (*ghaza* in Arabic, meaning raid against infidels). Historically, the words *gazi* and *ghaza* share a similar meaning and have been occasionally used interchangeably with the words *mujahid* (one who struggles) and *jihad* (holy war) (Tekin 2001). Over the Medieval period, the term *ghazi* grew to be a term of respect and a title of honor denoting a distinguished “warrior for the faith against infidels” (Baer 2008), and later became the title of the Muslim rulers of tributary empires, particularly the Ottoman sultans.

It was first during the Samanid Empire (819-999) that *ghazis* appeared as historical figures. In this period, Khorasan and Transoxiana witnessed the emergence of *ghazi* corporations that united bands of mercenaries and frontier fighters who relied on the booty won in *ghaza* (Melikoff 2008, Tekin 2001). These corporations attracted zealots, adventurers, and religious and political dissidents of all ethnicities, who were economically dependent on war and plunder and turned into brigands during times of peace. However, in time, they were transformed from ethnically mixed popular movements into semi-chivalric fraternities in which soldiers of Turkic ethnicity predominated, especially along the Byzantine frontier zone on the west. These

organizations reached their height during the Mongol invasions, when large numbers of Turkic tribes and dervishes fleeing into Anatolia from the Iranian provinces brought a new frenzy for gaza, which would eventually lead to the formation of the Ottoman Empire at the proximity of the Byzantine capital Constantinople, where I conducted my fieldwork approximately 700 years later.

In Ottoman historiography, the study of gaza and gazis “has been tangential to a broader debate regarding the origins of the House of Osman” (Anooshahr 2009: 7), the founder of the Ottoman (Osmanlı) Empire. After Wittek’s suggestion that early Ottomans saw themselves as gazis and were driven by a religiously orthodox notion of gaza, one of the major debates in the field has concerned the role that the ideology of gaza played in the formation of the empire (Wittek 1938, Inalcık 1980, Lindner 1983, Kafadar 1995, Darling 2000). The proponents of Wittek’s gazi thesis scarcely had any historical hard evidence, except an inscription from 1337, which ascribed the titles of "Sultan, son of the Sultan of the Gazis, Gazi son of Gazi... march lord of the horizons, hero of the world" to Orhan, the second ruler of the Ottoman dynasty. Today, it is widely accepted among non-nationalist historians that the inscription was the product of a later renovation.

Most historians today are skeptical toward the argument that early Ottomans were solely motivated by religious zeal and devotion and many criticize Wittek for mistaking gaza for holy war and ignoring this-worldly motivations. “The heterogeneous nature of Ottoman armies and alliances, mixing Christians with Muslims and often directed against co-religionists, their focus on booty and territorial expansion rather than conversion, and elements of unorthodoxy or even shamanism in Ottoman religious practice argue against

literal readings of the portrayal of the early Ottomans as Islamic holy warriors” (Darling 2000: 135). Recent scholarship proposes an understanding of Ottomans as still gazis “but with a flexible frontier air” (Anosshahr 2009:7): “The struggle for Islam did not preclude cooperation and intermarriage with non-Muslims, religious syncretism, or this-worldly motivations” (Darling 2000: 137).

For our purposes here, it makes no difference whether the first generations of Ottoman rulers saw themselves as gazis or were retrospectively constructed as such a century later. In the earliest remaining written Ottoman historical source, the poet Ahmedi, writing in the 1400s, defines ghazi with the following sentences that burn with religious fervor:

A ghazi is the instrument of the religion of God, a servant of God who cleans the earth from the defilement of polytheism; a ghazi is the sword of God, he is the protector and the refuge of the Believers; if he becomes a martyr while following the paths of God, do not think him dead, he lives with God as one of the blessed, he has Eternal Life (Wittek 1948: 14).

The first nine Ottoman sultans included gazi as part of their full throne name (or were retroactively given this title of honor and leadership). While the gazi corporations that played an important role in the first centuries of the empire were eventually disbanded, Ottoman sultans, who also constituted the last dynasty of caliphs, continued to enjoy their reputation as gazis in the Muslim world, even after they stopped personally participating in wars. The Sultan Abdulhamid II, the last Ottoman sultan to rule with

sovereign power (1876-1909), gave himself the title during the Ottoman-Russian War (1877-78) and included the title “el-ghazi” in his tughra (calligraphic seal) and on the money issued during his rule. Distinguished high-ranking military officers were also given the title. During the Ottoman-Russian war, for example, the title was also conferred on Osman Pasha in recognition of his heroic defense of Plevna in Bulgaria. It was this tradition that compelled the Grand National Assembly members to pass a bill in the midst of the Independence War in 1921 to bestow the title of gazi on Mustafa Kemal, an ex-Ottoman military officer and the founder of the Turkish Republic, who would include the title in his personal signature until his death.

Gazis as frontier warriors became obsolete in Anatolia and the Balkans as the Ottoman Empire consolidated its imperial power. Yet, the historical figure of gazi has survived the dissolution of gazi corporations and lived not only in official titles but also in popular imagination and expressive culture. Frontier narratives constitute an excellent example in this respect. Building on earlier frontier epics and saints’ tales in Arabic and Persian, these narratives have transmitted the oral lore of the frontier across centuries in the forms of epic poetry and hagiography (Kafadar 1995, Darling 2000, Dedes 1995). The image of a gazi constructed in these narratives is a warrior who lives for “battle and booty, glory and girls” (Darling 2000). The epitome of this literary image is Seyyid Battal Ghazi, a seventh-century hero, whose ritual cult, localized in the complex built around his tomb survives to this day near Seyyit Gazi village in central Anatolia (Dedes 1995). Seyyid Battal Ghazi became an immensely popular figure, particularly due to the appeal of his cult among gazis and Janissaries, and was immortalized as the eponymous hero of

the famous epic “Battalname.” Consisting of successive episodes recounting the exploits of Seyyid Battal Ghazi, the Battalname inaugurated “a famous cycle of religious-heroic prose narratives whose eponymous heroes... fight, oftentimes single-handedly, to achieve the conquest of Byzantium” (Dedes 1995). To give the reader a sense of this genre, I quote in length below the opening section of the Battalname, from its earliest known manuscript version dating back to the early fifteenth century, translated by Georgios Dedes (1995):

In the name of the God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

This is the Book of Sayyid Battal Ghazi

The storytellers of old and transmitters of tales tell the story of how one day the pride of the World, the chosen Muhammad –May God bless him and protect Him- turned his blessed back to the mihrab and thanks to the light of his moon-face the world of mortals was delivered from the darkness of unbelief. His dear companions –may God be pleased with them all- were sitting opposite Him. The Apostle was in great dismay, however, because it had been three months and three days since Gabriel had last brought him down a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. He turned His blessed face towards his companions and said, “My friends, I would be grateful if one of you could tell us a pleasant story or a wild adventure so that we may all keep busy for a while, until, God willing, Gabriel comes to me with a revelation. So He spoke and a tall and handsome young man called Abdu’l-Wahhab stood up from his place, pronounced a prayer and said, “Apostle of God, I have traveled far and wide and visited many climes, but of all

of the places I have seen, I never saw a place like the land of the Rum [Anatolia]. Its towns are close to each other, its rivers are full of water, its springs are gushing, its air is pleasant, its game is slender, its food is abundant, and its people are extremely friendly, except they are all infidels. Hopefully, God shall grant this province to the Muslims.” And he described it at such great length that the blessed mind of the Apostle became very fond of Rum indeed.

Just at that moment Gabriel came down from the heavens with news from the Lord: “Apostle of God, the Creator of the world –may His glory be exalted– sends you greetings and says, ‘My blessed Apostle has taken a liking to Rum, so I on my part must grant that province to His community. May they pull down its monasteries and set up mosques and madrasas in their places. Two hundred years after your mission is over, a young man shall be born to one of your sons. He will be tall and straight as barley, and he shall have a handsome face. His name shall be Ja’far[Seyyid Battal Gazi] from the town of Malatya. In heroism he shall be equal to Hamza, but in cunning he shall be better than Umar b. Umayya. He shall march in all directions by himself. He shall learn the four books by heart and when he preaches or recites, birds shall come down from the skies to listen. He shall be the one to conquer this province of Rum and shall destroy the churches and build mosques and madrasas in their place. He shall be the one to open Istanbul’s gate and he shall roast the livers of the priests. So let your blessed mind rest in tranquility.’” So Gabriel spoke and then ascended to the heavens again.

The above quoted section of the Battalname, entitled “The prophecy about the conquest of Rum and the coming of Ja’far,” makes evident how the notion of gazi operated as an idealized warrior masculinity model within the Islamically legitimated ideology of conquest of the tributary mode of production. As an irony of history, this Islamic notion found a new host in Kemalist Turkish nationalism, which engineered a top-down westernization and radical secularization project in the early 20th century. The title of gazi was officially incorporated into the republican lexicon on February 8, 1921, when the first national assembly granted it to the city of Antep as a tribute to its inhabitants’ courageous yet ultimately failed resistance against the French invasion during the war of independence. A columnist writing at the Kemalist newspaper *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* of the day celebrated the decision with the following words:

Oh Gaziantep, thou are a monument! Thou are a new Plevna, a new Gallipoli. Oh Antep the hero, thou are a solace in these days of dolor, a hope in these days of salvation...Under the quiet shadow of your green trees we watch the most famous event of our national history, the purest masterpiece, the symbol of our national heroism. That’s why the whole nation bows before you with awe and gratitude while the government pins the badge of gazi on your wounded and noble chest.²²

²² Müfide Ferit Tek. *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, February 7 1921.

On September 19th 1921, the national assembly also awarded Mustafa Kemal the rank of field marshal and the title gazi immediately following the victory of the nationalist army under his command against the Greek army at the battle of Sakarya, “reinforcing the idea that his rise to power was spiritually meaningful act by which the land had been cleansed of [non-Muslim] invaders” (Bryant 2002: 517). The conferment of the title clearly aimed to provide Islamic legitimacy for the nationalist struggle, which had to win over the masses while the sultan-caliph was formally still in power. “The religious symbolism was obvious and suggested that Gazi Pasha, as he was often called until he took the name Atatürk, was not as opposed to Islam as he is said to have been” (Ahmad 1993: 64). In his speech at the ceremony in the assembly and in the short statement he issued the next day, Mustafa Kemal accepted the title in the name of the whole army, making a further gesture toward the nationalization and “democratization” of the title, which had been reserved for sultans and high-ranking officials for centuries.

The use of the title for Atatürk constitutes an often-cited example of the sacralization of nation-making practices by the use of Islamic references in pre-republican Turkey (Ahmad 1993). Yet, what is often missed is that the incorporated, and often instrumentalized, Islamic idioms have survived even through the radical secularization project of the early republican decades. Even after the Surname Law of 1934 abolished all titles of the Ottoman moral-political order, which were used to indicate their users’ profession and social status, the title of gazi was preserved as the only official honorific worth retaining from the Ottoman past, other than *şehit* (martyr, *shahid* in Arabic). Mustafa Kemal continued to use the title until his death, even after he

adopted the last name “Atatürk” (the father of Turks). More importantly, the state kept addressing all war veterans as gazis, regardless of their rank or distinction on the battlefield. The holders of the Medal of Independence, which was awarded to the civilian and military cadres of the War of Independence, and the soldiers who participated in the officially recognized wars of the Turkish Republic (the Korean War of 1950-53 and the Cyprus War of 1974) were valorized as gazis. That is how the historical weight of the title has been carried over into the ethnographic present.

Gazis of the Nation

By appropriating the notion of gazi, Turkish nationalism placed the originally Islamic term under the ideological service of the secularist army of a secular republic, highlighting the epic character of the title while downplaying its religious underpinnings. How the notion has been semantically and ideologically transformed since then is a question yet to be answered. So far, no one has ever traced or documented the adventures of the term over the last century. Yet, one can construct a bricolage from the scattered academic references and gazi representations in public culture. Such an attempt makes it clear that despite the secular shift in the meaning of the term, its popular religious resonances have persisted.

During the Korean War between 1950-1953, the first time that the Turkish army fought outside the country’s borders, the “government publicly represented the bipolar Cold War as one between Muslim gazi warriors and atheist infidels, the communist forces” (Kaplan 2002: 117). In his 1969-dated classic *Din ve İdeoloji* (Religion and

Ideology), Şerif Mardin, the most acknowledged Turkish historical sociologist, notes that the four top-selling books of a street book vendor consisted of historical epics narrating the adventures of the Turco-Islamic gazis including Seyyid Battal Gazi. He also mentions that the two recently daily-serialized novels of the day were gazi frontier narratives, one on Seyyid Battal Gazi and one on Abu Muslim Khorasani.

Mardin is a unique figure within the Turkish academy both for his acknowledgement of the historical force of the concept and for his early observation regarding the popularization and proliferation of the gazi image through the mass media. Mardin sees the concepts of gazi/gaza as cultural residues of the Ottoman social formation and argues that their endurance in modern Turkey is a result of the inability of Kemalism to produce alternatives to Islamic cultural and moral idioms especially in rural areas (Mardin 1969, 1989).

For Mardin, the meaning cluster around the ideas of gazi/gaza provides an excellent example of Victor Turner's conception of "root paradigm." As axiomatic frames that serve social actors as models for action, root paradigms are "patterns of assumptions about the fundamental nature of the world and humanity which underline all social action but must clearly manifest themselves when a culture encounters severe conflict situations" (Biernatzki 1991: 51). By defining it as a root paradigm, Mardin asserts that gazi is a pivotal cultural cipher in modern Turkey that can only be compared with other key clusters of meaning, such as haram/harem (Mardin 1989). This is why a modern day Turkish conscript can be seen as Battal Gazi in his village, Mardin explains,

adding that one should expect to see other incarnations of Battal Gazi in the future (Mardin 1969).

One would not need to wait for long. As Mardin had predicted, popular culture of the 1970s produced new avatars of gazi at the interstices of the mass media. These years witnessed the wave of historic films in Turkish cinema. Between the late 1960s and early 1980s, Yeşilçam film industry produced countless low-budget, epic action flicks that thematized the conquest of Anatolia by gazis such as Seyyid Battal Gazi. Renowned for his handsome figure as well as his riding and martial arts skills, the famous Turkish film star Cüneyt Arkın was the ideal fit for the Battal Gazi image on the cinema screen and took the lead in *The Legend of Battal Gazi* (1971), *The Revenge of Battal Gazi* (1972), *Gangway! Here Comes Battal Gazi* (1973), and *Battal Gazi's Son* (1974).

The recipe of success was simple for these blockbusters targeting the lower-class male audience: Reinterpreting religious-epic myths into x-rated nationalist-epic myths. Combining embellished action scenes, in which the protagonist hero singlehandedly fights against the whole Byzantine army, jumps over city walls with acrobatic flips and kills a swarm of enemies with a single blow of his sword, with voluptuous and desirous Byzantine princesses and Sunni ultranationalist propaganda, these films are among the favorite subjects of urban middle-class humor in contemporary Turkey. Yet, in the context of the Cyprus War (1974) and the escalating political violence between the nationalist right and socialist left, these films were anything but a joke. It is again Şerif Mardin, who jotted down that “it was around the concept of gaza that large masses were

mobilized for action” (Mardin 1989:4) in the course of the Cyprus conflict in early 1970s Turkey.

In her ethnography of a central Anatolian village around the time of the military coup of 1980, Carol Delaney observed that the notion of gazi was still vibrant among the villagers (Delaney 1991). It happened to be that the concept was popular not only among villagers, but also among the junta generals, who adopted the “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis” as the state ideology while pursuing the violent suppression of the left and the neoliberal restructuring of the economy.

Having the family, the mosque, and the barracks as its three pillars (Yavuz 1997), the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was a conservative-authoritarian mixture of Sunni Islam and ethnic nationalism that the military government strategically inculcated in the name of political stability and national unity. As Kaplan (2006) notes, the long-term repercussions of this ideology for the political culture of the country can best be appreciated with a focus on the school curriculum that was entirely reconfigured during the military rule, when religious education classes were made mandatory and religious schools were established all over the country. In his analysis of the post-1980 curriculum, Kaplan argues that a new representation of the Turkish soldier as a pious defender of the faith first manifests itself in the reworked textbooks of the period. Expanding on secularist Kemalism’s “master narrative of a nation of soldiers” (Kaplan 2006: 187), these representations revived and reconstructed the gazi figure in state symbolism and language:

Current textbooks graphically and textually immerse this ideal of the Muslim

warrior into the moral universe of the modern Turkish child. The primers constantly appeal to narratives about the military exploits of the Anatolian Seljuks and Ottoman Turks. In this endeavor, textbook writers draw on the tradition of the *gazi* and *sehit* —that is, the warrior fighting and the martyr dying, both on behalf of Islam. The martyr's immediate reward is entry to *Cennet*, the Muslims' Paradise. Fourth-graders, for example, vicariously relive the Seljuk Turks' defeat of the Byzantine army at the battle of Manzikert/ Malazgirt in 1071. In the passage "Forever Anatolia," the children in the classroom are expected to take on the role of the Turkish warriors listening to their commanding sultan on the eve of battle: My lions! No matter how few we are and how many the enemy are we will attack. Do not forget that right now all the Muslims are praying for us. Either we are *gazi* heroes or martyrs. If there is someone who wants to separate from us let him leave immediately. I am hence wearing the burial shroud of a martyr. I am no longer a sultan, just one of you. I pray to God that the victory is ours" (Kaplan 2002: 35-36)

The ideological restoration of the *gazi* hero was not accidental. One of the key tenets of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was that nationalism and Islam, which had long been seen as two political rivals in the course of Turkish modernization, were perfectly congruent since the Turkish nation and Islam shared the same quintessence, which found its historical expression in the figure of *gazi*. For its proponents, the root paradigm of *gazi/gaza* constituted the nodal point, or rather the suture between Islam and the Turkish nation. In their cosmology, the primordial essence of the Turkish nation, its martial spirit,

historically realized itself in Islam through the practice and symbolism of gaza as Turks fought as the sword of Islam. This idea, which finds its expression in an eighth-grade religion textbook that I quote below, still guides nationalist historiography in Turkey.

The Turks are from birth a nation of soldiers. Islam also commands one to fight for the fatherland all the time... Among the [pre-Islamic] settled Turks were those adepts of the Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Manichaeon, Jewish, and Christian religions. Yet, it is seen that these religions did not conform to the Turks' spirit of warfare.

Millennial Avatars of Gazi

During the trial of Öcalan in 1999, the parliament passed an amendment that conferred the title of gazi on ex-recruits that became disabled in the context of the Kurdish conflict. Actually, the amendment had already been included in the previous legislative agenda of the parliament but was not discussed. Given its timing, the state's granting of the title in the course of the Öcalan trial was obviously a strategic move. It was also an opportunity to redefine what it meant to be a gazi in the 2000s.

This allowed the state to address the co-constitutive masculinity and political legitimacy crises sparked by disabled ex-recruits by granting a hyper-masculinized honorific to the duty-disabled soldiers of the Kurdish conflict and by resignifying them as national heroes whose losses were not a futile waste but an altruistic sacrifice. On a more immediate level, the amendment also helped the state to secure an indispensable political symbol under its complete monopoly just when it was needed the most, during the volatile trial of the PKK leader. The historical power of the honorific of gazi indeed

helped the state to mobilize popular support. However, the use of a title so encumbered by its Islamic past within the context of the internal conflict was not unproblematic. Despite the Marxist-Leninist history of the PKK, the “enemy” side comprised not “infidels” but Muslims. Here, the state propaganda that the PKK is the continuation of the ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) and that “most PKK terrorists captured dead are discovered to be uncircumcised,” implying that PKK members are not Muslims, played a key role by instigating the fantasy replaceability of the infidel, the communist, the Armenian, and the Kurdish guerilla in the Turkish nationalist culture.

Through the bestowal of the title in the course of the Kurdish conflict, the Turkish state, on the one hand, rejuvenated the symbolic power and harnessed the popular Islamic resonances of *gazi/gaza* paradigm. The following quotation is from an official sermon issued by several offices of mufti (a scholar with the authority to issue legal opinion (*fatawa*) on Islamic law) in different cities:

A *gazi* is someone who remained alive even though he fought in the path of Allah and for his country with the desire of becoming a martyr. A *gazi* is at the same level with martyrs since he fights in order to become a martyr and to be elevated to that level. Because he knows that the organs he lost in war will be awaiting him in heaven.

Yet, on the other hand, the state’s decision also completed the historical secularization and nationalization process of the title by uprooting it from its place in

Islamic discourse and imagery. In this sense, the Turkish state finally gained a complete mastery over it. Interestingly, my only informant who thought that the conferment of the title was not religiously justified—since the war was not fought against infidels—was also the only one with political Islamist convictions. For most of my informants, who were schooled during the rule of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, fighting for the nation and faith were automatically the same since the Turkish army was “the hearth of the prophet Mohammed”—a phrase regularly used by politicians and military officers. For my secularist informants, who were among the most fervent proponents of the concepts of gazi and martyr, the Islamic significance of the term was barely relevant and the gazi title derived its potency from the state-cult, particularly from the cult of Ataturk. So, in the course of the transference of its Islamic symbolic power to the secular nationalist state, the concept got entangled in the contemporary Islamist-secularist debate. My first day in the field commenced with an anecdote attesting to this entanglement:

The secularist head of the association, who genuinely appreciated my interest as a “student,” immediately started to tutor me as I explained my project to her. “You are preparing this homework [dissertation] for America. So, you have to carefully define them [gazilik and martyrdom]. Look, every country has gazis and martyrs. But a French does not become a gazi or a martyr. A Turk does. You see, they have Islamic roots.” However, it took less than a second for her to change her mind. “Don’t mention Islam at all. Just say that whoever dies while defending the state and the nation of the Turkish Republic is a martyr and whoever gets disabled is a gazi.” This comment startled a disabled veteran missing an arm, who was

silently listening to our conversation. “So,” he impatiently interrupted, “If Aurelio [a naturalized Brazilian football player] gets conscripted and gets disabled, is he going to be a gazi too?” Another disabled veteran also missing an arm took the turn: “What does it have to do with that? If he loses his arm of course he becomes a gazi.” Puzzled but stubborn, the first disabled veteran replied after a moment of hesitation: “Yeah, ok...He gets the title of gazi, but he doesn’t become one.”

This anecdote demonstrates how the nebulous and controversial nature of the term gazi can stir up debates even within a disabled veterans’ association. What happens if the state bestows the title on a naturalized Brazilian? Such a far-fetched hypothetical situation can easily spark a disagreement because it disrupts the delicate balance between nationalism and Islam, a balance crucial to the state’s mastery over the title.

The Islamic baggage of the title was not the only issue that haunted the decision of the state to confer the title on the disabled veterans of the internal conflict. Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the state had practically used the title in the meaning of “veteran.” Yet, this time, there was no officially declared war but an internal security and/or terrorism problem according to the state. Using the title in the way that it was used during the Korean and Cyprus Wars to denote all ex-conscripts would implicitly, if not explicitly, mean the recognition of the armed conflict as a war, which would render the PKK a legitimate player in the international arena as a bearer of rights defined by the international conventions of war. On top of that, there was also the daunting financial burden of assigning the status of gazi (veteran) to the millions of

conscripts served in the conflict zone since 1984. So, the lawmakers decided that the notion of gazi, which had been officially used by the Turkish state for eight decades without any legal specification, was in urgent need of definition in 1999.

Of course, as Derrida (1997) teaches us, every definition is a redefinition. The definition of gazi provided by the first article of Law No 4417 passed in 1999 reads:

Among the terms “combatant gazi” (muharip gazi) and “disabled gazi” (malul gazi) used in this law,

“Combatant gazi” refers to the members of the Turkish armed force who actively participated in a war; and

“Disabled gazi” refers to the members of the Turkish armed forces, who were injured by enemy or terrorist weapons or as a result of the operations or services in the combat zone, while protecting and securing the borders of the state of the Turkish Republic in war, or while struggling against the terror organizations targeting the perpetuity of the state within or outside the country, and whose disabilities were certified by a medical report after the completion of their treatment.

Echoing the military government’s 1983 dated taxonomy of military associations (war disabled and combatant gazis), this double definition made two sovereign exceptions possible. On the one hand, the state for the first time granted the title in the absence of an official war by extending the eligibility criteria to include the cases where

the sovereignty of the state is threatened by a non-sovereign party such as a terrorist organization. On the other hand, through the amendment, the state granted the title exclusively to disabled soldiers, leaving millions of conscripted soldiers who fought in the conflict zone outside the scope of the law. It was through these two sovereign exceptions that the state transformed the status of the disabled soldiers of the conflict from “duty-disabled” (a welfare category with political implications) to “gazi” (a political category with welfare implications). With this transformation, the very meaning of the term gazi shifted, adding another layer of meaning on the historical sediments of gazilik.

In today’s Turkey, gazi is a floating signifier, whose meaning is strategically fixed by the state, but nonetheless remains open to contestation because of all the ambiguities, contradictions, and multiple interpretations that engulf the term. When it is used as an absolute singularity, with the definite article and in the capitalized form “The Gazi”, it refers to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the republic. If one uses it in the plural form, “gaziler,” its primary reference is the gazis of the War of Independence. Several times during my fieldwork, I mentioned someone that I was working on gazis only to hear, “Aren’t all gazis dead?” from people looking at me with blank eyes and an odd expression. And when the last alive person with a Medal of Independence passed away just after the completion of my fieldwork, all national dailies used the headline: “The last gazi passed away,” locating gazilik in an epic absolute past. Nevertheless, even the terms of an absolute past can be rewritten in the present through invented traditions and acts of renaming.

During my fieldwork, I encountered countless of people, most of whom were below the age of thirty, who misconstrued that gazi always meant disabled. Transposing the present legal definition of gazilik onto the past, they falsely believed that the Independence war gazis also received the title of gazi because of their disabilities. This might have been seen as a trivial mistake given that the Independence gazis were all around the age of hundred and struggling with age related disabilities when the state extended their title to the disabled veterans of the Kurdish conflict in 1999, but one can also observe the same shift in the meaning of the term from combatant to disabled in the media. Over the last few years, gazi became a fashionable metaphor in football, a primary site of masculine popular culture in Turkey, to denote a football team that either unexpectedly lost or had too many players injured, in other words a team that found loss while seeking glory.

Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty

The conferment of the gazi title on disabled soldiers of the conflict was a consecratory act, which elevated the disabled soldier body into the domain of the religio-national sacred. By granting the title, the state not only retrospectively redefined the moment of injury as an instant of self-sacrifice but also constructed bodily sacrifice as the only officially recognized heroic act other than death (martyrdom/şehitlik) in the context of the Kurdish conflict. Consequently, disabled veterans became constructed as heroes who, in the words of every other nationalist politician, “sacrificed their arms and legs for the

indivisible unity of the state with its territory and nation,” that is to say, for the sovereignty of the state.

It is these “sacrificial limbs of sovereignty,” laden with the power of sacrificial gift, which create moral bonds and reciprocal exchange relations between the state and disabled veterans. In this sense, the title of gazi is a reciprocal gift for the sacrifices of disabled soldiers, assigning a meta-meaning to their losses and giving them a distinguished place in national cosmology as the embodiments of the everlasting Turkish military spirit, side by side with past gazi-heroes.

The historical irony of the state’s conferral of gazi title on disabled veterans is its stipulation that one would become a hero in “the struggle against the PKK terror” only by becoming a victim of it. To become a gazi in the course of the Kurdish conflict, it is not enough to fight against the PKK, to display martial courage, or to become wounded. To begin with, one has to be injured by “enemy weapons” –i.e. not as a consequence of accident, friendly fire, disease, etc.—as if the sacredness lies in the touch and the mark of the enemy. Then, he has to obtain a set of medical reports certifying his disability in the mazes of medical and welfare bureaucracy. The first of these reports is known as the rotten (unfit) report, indicating medical exemption from military service. This report is an extremely stigmatized document since it is also issued to openly gay men who are considered unfit for conscription by the military-medical establishment that categorizes homosexuality as a psychosexual disorder. For this reason, as Recai’s unlucky story below illustrates, most disabled soldiers initially object to getting the report, although it is a precondition for their becoming gazis.

When his age of conscription arrived, Recai knew that he would be given a rotten report since he had limited vision in his left eye. Thinking that being a rotten, with its implications of homosexuality and frailness, would create problems for employment and marriage in the future, Recai decided to keep his disability a secret. So, during the routine medical examination required to enlist, which simply consists of a general practitioner asking a group of half-naked men whether any of the conscripts has a medical problem, he remained silent. Then, he volunteered to be sent to the conflict zone, where he lost one of his feet in a mine blast. When his treatment was over, doctors told him that he was going to be given a rotten report. He was shaken. He insistently begged his doctor not to sign the report, explaining that he actually did his military service. The doctor, who did not want to break the heart of a disabled soldier, informed him that it was standard procedure. But Recai persevered until the doctor did his final persuasive trick: “Do you want to become a gazi, my son? Then, here is the paper that will make you a gazi.” Recai ended up getting the rotten report, exactly the thing that he tried to avoid at the expense of a year and a half of military service.

Not every soldier who is permanently disabled by enemy weapons can become a gazi either. To attain the status officially, he also has to be retired as disabled from the Government Employees Retirement Fund (Emekli Sandığı) by certifying that his total percentage of body function loss, which is calculated through a formula called Balthazard index, is over 40%. What this means in practice is that many veterans, whose total

percentage of disabilities do not add up to 40%, are left outside the scope of the gazi title. Since post-traumatic stress disorder is not among the criteria in the chart of impairment used by the Retirement Fund, those suffering from trauma symptoms are categorically excluded unless they also have organically based disabilities. Moreover, since medical reports taken from different state institutions often contradict each other, some ex-conscripts remain in limbo. They are furnished with some rights associated with gazi status and denied access to others. No one really knows whether they are gazis or not and most are unwilling to bring it to court for a resolution, since a lost lawsuit would put existing entitlements in risk. These exclusions leave us with approximately four thousand men in their thirties and forties as the bearers of this hero status in state symbolism.²³

Gazis and Beggars

The historically specific juxtaposition of heroism and victimhood in the title of gazi constitutes disabled veterans as split subjects, caught in the tension between the nationalist construction of gazi figure and the everyday embodiment of disability. A major challenge that the disabled veteran activists face in their efforts to forge a collective identity is negotiating this tensions within the nationalist doxa. One of the most highlighted political mottos of disabled veteran organizations, “We are not disabled but gazis,” attempts to provide a narrative closure around this question by disengaging disabled veterans from the socially stigmatized disabled population. This slogan has

²³ The Turkish state has inherited the late Ottoman state tradition of recording numbers and keeping statistics only to conceal them from public view (Dündar 2008). The general president of the Official Association informed me during an interview that the official number of disabled veterans was approximately 3,500 in 2006.

become such a constitutive trope for the self-fashioning of disabled veterans that most disabled veterans deem the adjective “disabled” an explicit insult and a non-recognition of their political status as gazis. Yet, it is easy to discern the paradoxical nature of this identity, reflected in the oxymoronic nature of the statement, “We are not disabled but gazis.” Within the context of the Kurdish conflict, one can only become a gazi by virtue of being disabled. However, for disabled veterans, it is precisely this title that separates them from the disabled. Most disabled veterans, regardless of how secular they are, deal with this paradox by explaining their disabilities in terms of the realization of divine will, reflecting the popular religious understanding of gazi as a chosen subject of god and whose place in heaven is reserved alongside prophets and saints: “This could have happened in civilian life. A car accident! Allah willed that I reached this honor by becoming disabled in military service.” In so doing, gazis resignify their disabilities as a sort of stigmata that should not be confused with morphologically similar but genetically different disabilities.

In their everyday lives, disabled veterans relentlessly seek to dissociate themselves from the larger disabled community, both individually and collectively, even when they share the same problems and welfare demands. Of course this situation is not totally unique to Turkey. One of the main concerns of disabled veterans’ rights movements has been patrolling the boundaries between civilian and veterans assistance, working “to ensure that the assistance given to their members was always constructed as an entitlement... and mixed as little as possible with the civilian welfare system” (Gerber 2000:13). Nevertheless, this tendency takes an extreme trajectory in Turkey, where the

paradoxical nature of the contemporary gazi identity as victim-hero renders the symbolic boundary between honorable gazi and marginalized disabled bodies ever more fragile and ambiguous. This is why an informant of mine, who lost vision in both eyes in a landmine explosion, shrugged at my question as to why he stopped attending the blind association where he was introduced with the Braille alphabet and the walking stick: “Why should I go there? I have nothing common with those blind people.”

It should be underlined that disability activists also respect these boundaries. For instance, the Internet portal of the Turkish Association for the Disabled, archiving the media coverage of disability issues, leaves out the news on disabled veterans. In the rare instances when these boundaries are breached, disabled veterans react furiously. Such a case occurred in 2007, when a monthly magazine attempted to photograph disabled veteran bodies as a part of its disability advocacy campaign, which aimed at countering hegemonic images of the disabled body by representing it aesthetically. Intimidated by the inimical reaction of disabled veterans’ associations, the magazine abandoned its initial plan and printed only the images of people disabled in non-military contexts.

However, outside the realms of nationalist politics and media representation disabled veterans hardly have the means to maintain their distance with “ordinary” disabled people. Thus, disabled veteran bodies consecrated in the ideologico-political realm frequently go through moments of desecration in the textures of everyday life. One such instance occurs, for example, when disabled veterans are assigned defiling chores like cleaning toilets at state institutions, where most of them work as low-skilled workers as a result of the paternalist job placement policies of the state. Interpreting such

instances as violations of their sacrificial status, disabled veterans often contact their associations or familiar military officers, who try to pull strings to improve their work conditions in an effort to keep the sacrificial body away from pollution. Yet, rites of deconsecration pervade the anonymous public life where disabled veterans avoid exposing their political status because of their anxiety about retaliation from Kurds in the ethnically mixed urban space, a concern manifest in their reluctance to wear their medals of honor outside official occasions.

The paradigmatic rite of desecration in the public is the people's confusion of disabled veterans with street beggars, as strikingly illustrated in the following quote:

I stopped by this patisserie early in the morning. I couldn't climb the stairs with my wheelchair and asked the shopkeeper for help. The shopkeeper turned toward me, saw me in my wheelchair, and embarrassedly told me: "Sorry, no sales yet. I have no money in the cash register. But I'll give you a free pastry."

The street beggar is one of the most readily available public images for the lower-class disabled male body in urban Turkey. The disabled beggar figure reflects a social context where the lack of necessary legal, sensorial, and spatial adjustments and persistent stigmas attached to disability deeply hinder people with disabilities from education, employment, marriage and political participation, and reduce them to subjects of charity. Walking on the streets of Istanbul, one sporadically encounters disabled street beggars, inhabiting the corners of pavements and mosques especially in lower-middle and

middle-class districts and erupting in the fabric of the able-bodied public. It was through such an encounter that I initially realized disabled veterans' anxieties over the conflation of their bodies with those of beggars.

On a spring day, I left an association with my informant, Erdem, a disabled veteran missing his left arm. As we exited through the apartment gate, we came across a young man begging on the pavement. The man was also missing his left arm, yet, unlike Erdem, who skillfully placed his jacket on his shoulders to hide his impairment, he was displaying his disfigured stump for the voyeuristic gaze of the passers-by. There was a feeling of intensity lingering in the air, generated by the uncanny encounter of the two bodies, corporeally so similar yet symbolically so set apart. Captured by that intensity, we uncomfortably stood still until Erdem made a hasty and somewhat angry attempt to walk away, grumbling indistinctively. When I returned to the association the very next day, I found him narrating the encounter, trying to convince others to take action in order to prevent such scenes from repeating. I never saw any beggars around the association again.

The disabled street beggar is an object of pity, repulsion, and rebuke in urban Turkey. His disability, social suffering, and "neediness" are always already in question, attested by urban myths about the fake-disabled and rich beggars. Therefore, the disabled beggar has to show off his impairment and make his impaired or deformed limb visible and palpable enough to dodge the moralizing rebukes of his spectators, such as: "You are as fit as a fiddle. Why don't you get a job?" With its tacit equation of the disabled and

beggar bodies, this rebuking statement is itself a part of the process of making beggars out of the people with disabilities.

The corporeal proximity of disabled veteran and beggar bodies presents a striking contrast with their symbolic distance. The disabled beggar is a socially abject person, relying upon the public pity that his disability evokes. Because of his total economic dependency and neediness, he does not comply with the gendered norms of sovereign individual status. Moreover, he is a rarely persecuted petty criminal. Erdem, on the other hand, is a generic national hero, whose disability renders him a member of a privileged biopolitical group that exists in an intimate relationship with the state. This relationship can be traced through the objects that Erdem was carrying on the day of the encounter: a “gazi identity card” enabling free use of public transport, a duty-freed metallic color pistol, and a medal of honor which Erdem pins on his chest only at commemorations. Yet, despite these differences, the beggar figure constantly haunts disabled veterans in the public, evoking deep anxieties about the meaning and worth of their sacrificial losses.

Somewhat paradoxically, state institutions’ efforts to extricate disabled veterans from the beggar stereotype by granting them supplementary welfare benefits further reinforce the stereotype instead of dispelling it. In disabled veterans’ neighborhoods, gossip and envious comments about gazis’ welfare entitlements abound. As the following quote testifies, most of my informants report hearing degrading statements from their relatives or neighbors:

We had tea at a neighbor’s house. A distant relative of him was also present. The next day, my neighbor’s wife blurted out that this guy was gossiping about me: “Oh,

what a great deal! I wish that I were also injured during my military service. I'm ready to give up a leg or arm if the state is going to take care of me." What a cad! As if I wanted this to happen! As if I'm a beggar! I was so close to chopping his leg with a blunt knife to say: "Here you go!"

Such degrading statements implying that disabled veterans abuse their disabilities to squeeze money out of the state under the guise of heroism are charged enough to unfold into violent confrontations. Most of my informants have also had such confrontations with self-employed city bus drivers, who often question the authenticity or validity of their free transportation cards. According to his wife's account, one of my informants even went after one such driver with his gun, and the situation was resolved only after the driver shifted his bus route. In order to describe the quotidian nature of this seemingly extreme example, let me just mention that private city buses did not even pull up at the bus stop in front of a disabled veterans' association that I regularly visited. When I inquired about it, I was told that several members of the association witnessed one bus driver's helper saying, "Speed up! Moochers are coming." Disabled veterans face these kind of humiliating comments (mooches, freeloaders, malingerers, and the like) in a variety of social settings, including their workplaces at state institutions. In stunning irony, disabled veterans frequently conjure the beggar image themselves, either by cynically comparing their stipends with beggar handouts or by blaming competing activist groups for being beggars, in other words for "making up to" the state instead of confronting it.

The Sacrificial Crisis

Self-sacrifice is one of the most cherished social values in Turkey, where powerful sacrificial discourse and imagery serve as the cornerstone of a variety of social roles and relationships, ranging from motherhood to citizenship. As would be expected, compulsory military service is the domain par excellence for the idiom of sacrifice. According to the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (TDK), the official regulatory body of the Turkish language, “hennaed lamb,” which originally refers to sacrificial sheep, is also metaphorically used for conscripts.

With the escalation of the armed conflict between the state and the PKK, the dormant sacrificial elements in Turkish nationalism were revitalized from the mid-1990s onwards. It is as if the recirculation of the martyr and gazi figures in the context of the Kurdish conflict reactivated the memories of the sacrifices of past generations. Martyrs’ cemeteries in Gallipoli became popular heritage tourism destinations among urban middle classes; gigantic monuments of martyrdom commemorating the Battle of Sarikamiş were erected; September 19, the day that Atatürk was granted the gazi title, was officially accepted as the Gazis’ Day, while March 18, which was previously the Day of Çanakkale Martyrs, was adopted as the Martyrs’ Day both in 2002. Sacrificial narratives and images were repopularized, reinvented, or simply made up in the same media of popular culture that disseminated neoliberal values of self-interest and individualism in the post-1980 era.

“Hennaed Mehmet” is a nationalist story that is taught at primary schools all over Turkey (Kaplan 2006). Even though the story is originally about a recruit who fought in

the Gallipoli Campaign, it has recently been popularized in relation to the disabled veterans of the Kurdish conflict and provides an elegant expression of the sacrificial halo that surrounds them. I read and was told many different versions of the narrative during my research but the one that I came across most commonly was the following:

Mehmet is a conscripted young villager who is ridiculed by his fellow soldiers and questioned by his curious commander about the henna on his hands (and/or head). Ignorant of the meaning of henna, he sends a letter to his mother in his village to inquire. In her response, his mother explains why she smeared henna on him: “We traditionally use henna in three occasions. We stain the sheep for sacrifice with henna so that they may be a sacrifice to Allah. We adorn brides with henna so that they may be a sacrifice for their husbands. We also smear henna on the young men who go to the army, so that they may be a sacrifice to the motherland.” We hear these sentences from the mouth of the commander, since by the time that the letter arrives, the Hennaed Mehmet had been martyred along with his ridiculing friends.

This narrative gives us the key to understand the patriarchal logic of sacrifice in Turkey through the symbolism of henna. Henna is used at various rites of passages and calendrical rites—such as the henna night on the eve of wedding and the Feast of Sacrifice—throughout the Middle East and North Africa to mark the liminal personae and/or the sacrificial victim. In Turkey, we can now add the soldier’s farewell ceremony to this list; even if it were a parochial practice in the past, which it probably was,

smearing henna on recruits' hands has become a publicly noticeable exercise with the popularization of this narrative.

In the story of Hennaed Mehmet, henna stands for the sacrificial blood spilled in three different occasions. The first is the blood of the sacrificial animal, the only kind of animal blood that is not considered a taboo in Turkey so that it is even smeared on the forehead of children for protection against the evil eye. The second is the hymen blood, which proves that a marriage is consummated and that the bride was a virgin and hence retained her sacrificial quality until marriage. The third is the blood of the slain martyr, which, according to a hadith, smells like musk, and which, according to Turkish nationalist discourse, gushes from every piece of the Turkish homeland and gives the Turkish flag its deep red hue.

The symbolism of henna unites the carriers of these three types of sacrificial blood—the sheep, the bride, and the young man—in a single scheme of sacrifice. Yet, unlike the first two, the young man occupies multiple positions in this gendered sacrificial scheme, respectively that of the sacrificer, the sacrificer and the sacrificial victim. Indeed, these positions reinforce each other for young men since military service serves as a social prerequisite of marriage and financial independence. Only by offering themselves as sacrifices for the state through compulsory military service can young men become eligible to offer sacrifice on the Feast of Sacrifice, a religious duty reserved for those who can afford and especially for household heads, and to be the beneficiaries of the sacrifice of women in marriage.

Where do disabled veterans stand in this sacrificial scheme? Hubert and Mauss remind us that the “unity of sacrificial rite consists in establishing of a means of communication between the sacred and profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of the ceremony is destroyed” (Hubert and Mauss 1964). It is exactly because of the collapse of the sacred and the profane in the sacrificial victim’s body that he needs to be destroyed, so that what is sacred is not polluted through its contact with the everyday order of things.

This is also why the sacrificial object, which is elevated to the domain of the sacred through rites of consecration, has to go through rites of deconsecration after the sacrificial rite is completed. Disabled veterans have lost their sacrificial quality as young men by the virtue of already being sacrificed, as evidenced by the rotten report given to them. Nevertheless, they are not deconsecrated—remember the motto “we are not disabled but gazis”—as their bodies have been turned into precious political commodities through the ongoing political rites of consecration. This gives way to the everyday rites of desecration, as in the case of the blurring of the borders between the sacrificial gazi and the abject beggar body, which puts into danger the entire structure of sacrifice, producing a sacrificial crisis proper.

The patriarchal scheme of sacrifice, in which young men earn the right to be the beneficiaries of the sacrifice of women in marriage by offering themselves as sacrifices to the father state, is in peril on another level too. “They don’t marry a ‘kız’ (girl/virgin) to gazis” is a common grievance among disabled veterans, who often have a difficult time finding a suitable spouse because of the social prejudices against disabled men. Even

though I had heard it numerous times before, I had not appreciated the significance of this phrase until witnessing a failed matchmaking attempt at the official association:

As soon as I stepped inside, I noticed the angry voice of Berna Abla (elder sister), the association's head, who was talking really loud on the phone with someone, whom I later understood to be the mother of a divorcee (dul) who was proposed to by a disabled veteran. After she hung up the phone, Berna Abla, upset, explained that the mother was indisposed to give the hand of her daughter to an unsound (sağlam olmayan) man despite her insistent attempts to convince her. "OK, my guy is not sound," she cried out shaking in anger, "What about your girl? As if she were sound [virgin]. Isn't your girl a dul?"

The word "dul" signifies both divorcee and widow in Turkish. Especially for younger women, dulluk (being a dul) is a very precarious social category, burdened with the stigma of unchastity. So, asking a gazi to marry a dul sounds like a betrayal to his sacrifice in the mouth of an outsider. Nevertheless, Berna Abla was not alone in suggesting that a gazi would be a good match with a dul. While criticizing a disabled veteran missing both legs for eloping with a young girl, the head of the other association, a martyr's mother and a true matriarch, also said: "I tell gazis not to marry young girls but duls. They are the ones who know the meaning of sacrifice." In her words, there is a direct sacrificial equivalence between the gazi and the dul. They have both already been sacrificed, one by becoming disabled and the other by losing her virginity.

Disabled veterans often address this sacrificial crisis by questioning their very gazi status, which bestows them sacrificial value and transforms them from duty-disabled victims to victim-heroes. It is enough to spend a single day within a disabled veteran circle to see them criticizing the state by defacing their gazi status. “We are fake (fasulyeden) gazis” is a favored saying among them. An informant of mine teased me with these words before bursting into laughter every time he saw me: “Are you still here? Didn’t I tell you that we are fake gazis? If you want to do research with gazis, go and talk to the Korean and Cyprus gazis.” But even more than that, they love to say, “We are not gazis but Niyazis,” referring to the idiom “Ne şehittir ne gazi, bok yoluna gitti bizim Niyazi” that translates literally as “Neither a martyr nor a gazi, went down the toilet our Niyazi.”

The objects that represent their gazi status also take their share of defacement. For example, they refer to their gazi identity cards as “potato prints” since the phrase “gazi” is later stamped on their cards in red ink, while it still reads “duty-disabled” at the backside of the cards. The State Medal of Pride that the state grants on disabled veterans is also a target of scandalous jokes. Among activists, this gold-coated brass medal is nearly always called “the tin” (teneke), in other words, worthless. During my fieldwork, a burglar broke into the apartment of a visually impaired disabled veteran and stole his medal. “Stupid thief,” he told me a few days later, “he could not even tell that it’s not gold. I’d love to see his face when he tries to sell it.” Of course, the problem is not the material of the medal, at least not only that. Noting that the State Medal of Pride is different from the one given to the Korean and Cyprus veterans, activist disabled veterans

repeatedly compare their medals with the medals, decorations, and awards that the state controversially gave in bulk to successful sportsmen, musicians, artists and the like in the 1990s:

Once we were at the prime ministry. People around us were discussing in whispers whether we were a football or wrestling team. “Pimps,” I shouted at them, “Don’t you see that one of us lacks a leg and another one an arm. What kind of a wrestling team would we make?”

It’s made of brass. I’m not dying for gold but you gave this medal even to Manukyan (queen of Turkish brothels) for being the top taxpayer. Am I a football player (topçu) or a pop singer (popçu)? Am I a pimp, faggot, or whore? Why did you give this medal to me?

Making Sense of the Sacrificial Crisis

The blurring of the borders between the sacrificial disabled veteran and the abject beggar body points at the collapse of the sacrificial structure, in other words a sacrificial crisis. Indeed, this crisis is frequently addressed in mainstream media in order to add a dramatic undertone to disabled veterans’ stories of suffering and sacrifice. “Gazilerimize neden sahip çıkamıyoruz,” anchors of news and TV shows ask: “Why can’t we protect and take care of our gazis?” They raise the question rhetorically of course and they are supposed to give or be given no answers. This is a question without an answer from their perspective that is more like a conjuration trick. Say it and some nostalgic thoughts about

the good old days come to life alongside complaints about people's apathy, moral decay, or degeneration of our values. Disabled veterans hate it when anchors ask this question with their paternalist tone: "Son of a bitch! Who are you to protect us? PKK servant!" Anchors' paternalist tone leaves them no cultural space in which they can reassert their dignity.

What ultranationalism offers disabled veterans through "the seductions of a coherent and comprehensive world view that is at once ordered and charged with drama and urgency" (Stewart and Harding 1999:290) is exactly this cultural space. Disabled veterans often narrate their everyday problems in relation to macro political issues. In their narratives, the structural violence against disabled veterans is translated into terms of political violence so that class and disability issues become reanimated as ethno-political ones. For example, a vast majority of my informants believe that the problems they experience while using private city buses is due to their "Kurdish-looking" drivers, who intentionally turn down their free pass cards in order to impede their mobility in the urban space. Similarly, those working at state institutions as manual workers constantly accuse their supervisors for being PKK sympathizers when they are given physical or demeaning tasks incompatible with their disabilities and/or sacrificial status. In my informants' accounts, rumors of a government plan to reduce disabled veterans' pensions is interpreted as yet further evidence for the government's complicity with the wicked plans of the imperialist Western powers to shatter "Turkish national consciousness" and dismember Turkey. Through this conspiratorial logic, disabled veterans discursively

reconstruct the humiliating moments in their post-injury lives as moments of political emergency.

The political emergency concerns the state. “Why does the state leave us alone?” is a question that I have heard several of my informants asking. “We don’t want anything from anyone. We just want to be remembered by the state. For example, why doesn’t anyone from the state visit us on Bayrams (religious holidays)?” is another commonplace among them. When I remind them of what I have learned in the field, that a military officer from their district visits them at their homes on every religious holiday, they shake their heads, “No. The military does not count. If it were up to the state, we would die of hunger.”

The appeal of ultranationalist politics for disabled veterans can be attributed to its success in “linking disparate events and discrete registers of knowledge or experience from the body” (Stewart and Harding 1999:290) to the question of the state. From the ultranationalist point of view, which is hegemonic among disabled veterans, the sacrificial crisis they experience is the manifestation of the weakness of the state, which is supposed to recover their masculine sovereignty and provide them “a life compatible with gazi honor.” This structure of feeling, which links disabled veterans’ arduous quest for recovering their masculine sovereignty to the ultranationalist agenda of “restoring” state sovereignty, constitutes the key to understanding disabled veterans’ political agency, which constitutes the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5- PROSTHETIC REVENGE

The Enemy

I do not remember the first time the name Abdullah “Apo” Öcalan and the face associated with it entered my consciousness as spectral things. It must have been during my childhood in the aftermath of the violence of the 1980 military coup. It must have been one of those days when I was allowed to stay awake and enter into the picturesque world of adults by watching an episode of *Shogun* on the only available TV channel, the state television TRT. I must have seen the news presented by the anchorman whose face I still vividly remember. As a child, I had the suspicion that he could see us from the TV screen and I would never misbehave in his presence. I was learning to become a subject of sovereign power.

Years later, I remembered those days when I saw an ugly picture of Öcalan on the cover of a propaganda booklet of the popular association. The picture showed him with a piercing, cruel look under thick eyebrows and a fiendish laught in his wide-open mouth under a brush looking and characteristically leftist mustache. The first picture of him that I saw as a child must have been a similarly grotesque one from the state’s visual repertoire. In those days, the state control over the production and circulation of images was tight. Everything was tight indeed. “Don’t read everything you find” a friend’s grandma used to warn us, telling us about a mysterious book by Öcalan, which converted its reader into a “PKK terrorist.” Her fetishistic attribution of agency to the book had its own reasons that still continue to be valid in contemporary Turkey. In cases of excess and absurdity, an ill-fated citizen gets arrested for buying a salt-and pepper-shaker set,

designed in the form of a mustached brunette cook, which resembles Abdullah Öcalan according to an overzealous prosecutor.

Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned founder of the PKK and the charismatic leader of the Kurdish movement, is arguably the most hated figure in Turkish political culture. Demonized by state propaganda over the last quarter of a century, he is the embodiment of absolute otherness. To the extent that the constitutive outside of the Turkish national symbolic-moral order can be sketched merely by looking at how Öcalan is designated in Turkish political culture.

In the recent years, several Kurdish politicians, including mayors, were sentenced to one year of imprisonment simply for referring to him with the honorific “Sayın” (“Mister,” which literally means “esteemed”) under the charge of “praising a crime and a criminal,” while several other politicians, including the current Prime Minister Erdoğan, were barely spared from the same punishment. In the media, terrorist head, murderer of thirty-five thousand people, baby murderer, butcher, and villain are the most popular titles of Öcalan. In male exclusive spaces (barracks, coffeehouses, football stadiums, sports websites), words like honorless, bastard, ırz düşmanı (literally an enemy of chastity, rapist), puşt (faggot, scoundrel), kahpe (perfidious, whorish) circulate in abundance, expelling Öcalan from the masculine honor system of the Mediterranean basin. Öcalan’s religious/national alterity complements his gendered otherness. He is regularly referred to as “Armenian spawn” and located outside the national and religious community. The symbolic potency of blood is conjured over and over again in this otherization process through expressions like kansız (literally bloodless, meaning callous and coward) and

kanbozuk (spoiled-blooded, degenerate bastard, pejoratively used for Christian minorities). Öcalan is also frequently reduced to subhuman status by the use of phrases like “insan müsveddesi” (poor excuse for a human being), cur, and monster. During my fieldwork, I heard these and similar phrases innumerable times from my informants, whose political subjectivities have been deeply shaped by the ways that the state exercised its sovereign power over Öcalan’s body in the last decade.

The “Hunt”

The capture and the trial of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan at the end of the millennium constituted a foundational moment for contemporary disabled veteran political subjectivity. Everything started in 1998, when Öcalan was forced to leave his base in Syria following Turkey’s threats against the Syrian government over its support for the PKK. “The hunt,” as it was popularly called in the media, was on.

In this period, disabled veterans of the conflict, who were going to officially become gazis in less than a year, started to attract more and more media attention. Nationalist tearjerkers and human-interest stories about them flooded newspaper pages and television news shows. Exactly at the same time that the journalist Nadire Mater was charged with insulting the Turkish military for publicizing recruits’ testimonies in her “Mehmed’s Book,” which was banned by court order and remained barred from circulation, the Turkish public completed its sentimental education about disabled veterans, learning how to feel for them. For the full-fledged instrumentalization of the

disabled veteran body in the service of nationalist propaganda, one would need to wait until disabled veterans received the title of gazi during the trial of Öcalan.

After leaving Syria, Öcalan unsuccessfully sought asylum in a number of countries including Russia, Greece, and Italy. It was first during this time that the disabled veterans were first drawn to the streets in order to protest the hosting countries. Moved by their protests, a prominent journalist suggested that they should also parade on the streets of Rome as a visual testimony to the suffering of the nation in order to protest the Italian refusal to extradite Öcalan on the basis of Turkey's maintenance of death penalty. The political discourse on the fate of Öcalan was increasingly getting entangled with the nationalist ethics and aesthetics of suffering condensed in the disabled veteran body.

Öcalan was captured in Kenya in February 1999. According to the newspapers of the day and oral histories I collected, disabled veterans and martyrs' families celebrated the event with religio-nationalist zeal. Martyrs' cemeteries were visited for Islamic memorial services and to take care of the tombs. Cattle were sacrificed on the streets as if it were the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha). "The happiness that I felt that day can only be compared with the birth of my first son," a disabled veteran in his late thirties shared with me nostalgically, "That day I felt like all the suffering I have been through would not go unpunished. It seems that I was wrong since Öcalan is still alive."

A Theater of Sovereignty

The contentious trial of Öcalan, the most important live public drama of fin-de-millennium Turkey, took place at the Imrali Island in the middle of the Marmara Sea, where Öcalan was under solitary confinement as the sole inmate of a maximum security prison guarded by over a thousand stationed soldiers. Öcalan was charged under Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code for forming and leading an armed gang in order to separate a part of Turkish territory, which carried the death penalty. Constructed as a criminal against the sovereignty of the state, Öcalan's body was turned into a site for the performative reiteration of sovereign power.

Throughout the trial, Öcalan was kept in a bullet and explosion-proof glass cage that "protected" and displayed his body as a precious political commodity. As a sensory technology of proximity and distance, the glass cage in the courtroom worked just like a shop window, placing the commodified object within the reach of the hand while also blocking access. It hinted at the vulnerability of Öcalan's body, while also protecting it from non-sovereign forms of violence. Through the glass, the Turkish state performatively declared to all interested parties that the body of Öcalan belonged to the sphere of sovereignty that he violated.

Among the interested parties were disabled veterans and martyrs' families. At the onset of the trial, the State Security Court accepted a small and carefully chosen group of martyrs' families and disabled security personnel as co-plaintiffs in the case. Actually, a considerable portion of my informants had applied to be a plaintiff in the case, some with the hopes that they would receive reparation payments, and all with the expectation that

Öcalan would be sentenced to death. Yet, only a few applicants were selected. Some of those whose applications were declined still traveled to İmralı Island, clutching crutches, photographs and mementos of martyrs, and Turkish flags outside the court, while those selected impatiently sat inside the courtroom.

The courtroom itself reflected the state's ideological construction of the trial, and by extension of the conflict, in its spatial organization. On the one side of the room, by the glass cage, sat the blood relatives of Öcalan, who was personally held responsible for all the thirty thousand deaths—of PKK members, civilians, paramilitaries, and the security personnel—that occurred during the internal conflict. On the other side were the martyrs' families and disabled veterans, who stood for the whole nation through another type of blood relation, through the spilling of their and their blood relatives' blood. In the middle, there was nothing, not even room for the unknown number of civilian casualties. With no third term to destabilize the expected tit-for-tat blood exchange, it was just a matter of time.

A Carnal Language of Pain

The trial of Öcalan was saturated with theatrical scenes, most of which were animated by martyrs' relatives who expressed their pain and suffering as they asked for retaliation on Öcalan's body. For example, a martyr's mother exclaimed in her touching testimony:

Only the one who suffers knows the pain, only its wearer knows the shirt of fire.

We have burnt and turned into ashes. We want this pain to be over. I underwent

treatment for a long time. I want to claw him (Öcalan) for burning my liver [causing me great suffering].”²⁴

In another testimony, the brother of a soldier killed in the conflict despairingly cried out:

I demand the supreme Turkish justice to punish him with the bluntest knife and the bluntest axe. I would burn the whole world for just a single hair of my brother. But I can't do anything to this man.

Making the audience and even the chief judge weep with their enunciator, these expressions of pain and suffering shared three common characteristics. Firstly, all of them were articulated in a carnal language, which brought forward vivid, visceral, and even gory images. Secondly, the pain and suffering expressed in this carnal language always carried an exchange value equal to the prospective corporeal punishment of Öcalan. Finally, this carnal language established an unyielding relationship between pain/suffering and revenge/retaliation. During my fieldwork seven years after the trial, the emotional power of this vengeful language was still solid. “If we tear apart his body into forty pieces and execute them one by one in a row, maybe then the burning of our hearts would be extinguished,” a martyr’s mother passionately scolded me as a response to my question on Öcalan as she fought back her tears.

Despite the centrality of martyrs’ relatives in the examples above, it was the disabled veterans who made this carnal language literal during the trial. “When the

²⁴ All quotations from the court proceedings are from <http://www.belgenet.com/dava/dava.html>.

intensity in the courtroom culminated,” the newspapers of the day described the moment in the language of affect, a veteran took off his prosthetic leg, swung it in the air, pointed it at the body of Öcalan, and cried out: “Who is going to pay for this?” The intensity condensed in and was conveyed through the prosthetic leg like in an anime. A martyr’s mother fainted. A new form of embodied protest was born at that moment.

This new form materialized and literalized the carnal language, while enabling the disabled veterans to raise questions of blame and accountability by unleashing the spectral power of loss. In the context of the trial, the prosthesis as a symbolic weapon was pointed at the body of Öcalan, verifying its reciprocal exchange value in relation to the sacrificial gifts of disabled veterans. Yet, the public doffing of artificial limbs as an act of protest would extend beyond the walls of the courthouse and reach as far as the stairs of the Turkish national assembly in less than a year.

In his final words addressing the court, one of the plaintiffs’ attorneys employed the emergent carnal language of pain and revenge to ask for the death penalty: “The hanging of this villain will not only set an example but will also lighten the hearts of disabled veterans and martyrs’ families.” When the chief judge announced the death sentence for Öcalan, they indeed looked lightened up. The news of the verdict was greeted in the courtroom with scenes of rejoicing and tears of joy. The next day, all mainstream dailies shared similar headlines: “Martyrs, you can finally sleep in peace. For your revenge shall be taken.” Those curious as to why the judge did not break the nib of his pen after announcing the death sentence, as the custom used to be, would get their answer in a few months.

An Impossible Gift

During and beyond the trial of Öcalan, the state harnessed disabled veterans' bodily losses by redefining them as "sacrificial limbs of sovereignty," as gifts for sovereignty, and by actively preventing any other rival narrative from offering closure to the loss. Yet, these gifts were never returned in the eyes of the disabled veterans because the state failed to reciprocate in kind. The body of Öcalan, the "enemy" of sovereignty, which was marked as carrying a reciprocal exchange value by the carnal language of pain, was an impossible gift in the international state of affairs. The declaration of the European Council that Turkey's EU membership prospects would be ruined if the execution occurred held the nationalist coalition in power off from executing Öcalan's death sentence. International negotiations over Öcalan's life were so blatant that less than a month separated the recognition of Turkey as a candidate country for the EU membership from the government's announcement that Öcalan's death sentence was not to be executed. The idea of Westphalian sovereignty, according to which nation-states held absolute right over the life and death of their citizen subjects, was "betrayed" even by its most proponent supporter in Turkey, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP).

Enraged by this sacrifice of the right to sovereign sacrifice for the sake of EU membership, disabled veterans and martyr's families did everything in their power to push for execution. They organized angry protests, in which dummies of Öcalan were theatrically hanged in front of the cameras, including one that blocked the Bosphorus Bridge for several hours and another in which a disabled veteran threw his prosthetic limbs to the prime minister of the day. Ironically, they even carried their case to the

European Court of Human Rights, which nationalists have long attacked as a colonial court of law that imposes foreign capitulations on Turkey.

Nevertheless, the Turkish state abolished the death penalty in 2002 as a part of the EU harmonization process and converted Öcalan's death penalty into life-long aggravated imprisonment. This left disabled veterans embittered against the EU and in search of a scapegoat that could be substituted for Öcalan's body in the carnal language of pain. This surrogate victim was found or rather produced within the interstices of the mid-2000s Turkish political culture: the dissident intellectual.

Surrogate Victim(s)

When unappeased, violence seeks and always finds a surrogate victim. The creature that excited its fury is abruptly replaced by another, chosen only because it is vulnerable and close at hand. - Girard, Violence and the Sacred.

In the morning of December 16th 2005, an unusual crowd gathered in front of the Şişli Courthouse, where the world-renowned writer Orhan Pamuk was on trial on the charge of insulting Turkishness. “Thirty thousand Kurds have been killed here, and a million Armenians” he had said in an interview with a Swiss newspaper and an ultranationalist lawyer, Kemal Kerinçsiz, the head of Great Union of Jurists, had filed a complaint against him. Such trials against the freedom of expression were everyday issues in 1990s Turkey, where torture, imprisonment, and murder of dissident intellectuals were rampant. Yet, it used to be the public prosecutors who filed complaints then, not “civil” society

organizations like the Great Union of Jurists acting in the name of the state. Moreover, crowds in front of courthouses used to be the left-wing supporters of the tried intellectuals, not an ultranationalist amalgam including disabled veterans, martyrs' families, and shadowy figures with military/paramilitary connections.

“Martyrs never die! Motherland will not be divided,” shouted the crowd fervently waving Turkish flags. Chanting nationalist slogans targeting him and other “traitor” intellectuals, some protestors confronted the riot police in their attempt to assault Pamuk and his supporters, which included the members of the European Parliament. Then, the cameras focused on Pamuk’s car, pelted with eggs and desperately trying to move away from the scene with a smashed windshield.

I uncomfortably watched these scenes live on TV at my apartment in Istanbul, trying to spot my informants among the crowd. I knew about the protest one day in advance because I had received an SMS group message from one of my informants, inviting all patriots to the protest. Between 2005 and 2007, similar spectacular protests were repeated in front of different courthouses, each time sparking an international controversy. The common targets of these protests were dissident intellectuals like Orhan Pamuk, who were all being tried under the infamous Article 301, which was introduced by the AKP government in 2005, criminalizing “insulting Turkishness, Turkey, and the Turkish government institutions.” This vaguely defined law made it possible to press charges against anyone who questioned nationalist ideology, official historiography, or militarization. The passing of the law was exactly the chance that ultranationalists, who were united by their “hatred of the EU and the ruling Justice and Development Party

(JDP), which is reviled for ‘betraying’ Turkey by offering unacceptable concessions to the EU for the sake of membership” (Taskin 2011: 3) had been waiting for. Ultranationalist lawyers filed dozens of lawsuits against intellectuals, especially against the celebrated figures in Europe, to sow political tensions between Turkey and the EU.

Throughout the 2000s, processes of globalization and Turkey’s EU membership destabilized the Turkish political structure, flaring up the paranoid tendencies of Turkish nationalism and drawing together previously clashing political groups (right-wing nationalists, Kemalists, and some socialist factions) around the reactionary Red Apple Coalition. The basic ideological tenet of this decentered and loose nationalist network was that Turkey was going through a conjuncture similar to the dissolution period of the Ottoman Empire, which ended with the partition of Turkey by the Sevres Treaty after the First World War. According to the geopolitics-obsessed proponents of this coalition, imperialist powers, especially the EU, were using democratization and minority rights as a means to dismember Turkey and forge separate Kurdish, Armenian, and Greek states in Anatolia.

Therefore, the Red Apple Coalition aimed to cultivate a conspiracy-fueled public anxiety and fear regarding Turkey-EU relations. In 2008, some affiliates of the Red Apple Coalition, including the organizers of these protests, would be tried for being members of the clandestine criminal organization popularly known as Ergenekon, whose mission was to overthrow the AKP government through a coup d'état and to change Turkey’s course away from the EU. Yet, especially between 2005 and 2007, they were

seen by many as fervent nationalists, who acted with impunity—in great part thanks to the support of gazis and martyrs' families.

The trial of and the protests against Orhan Pamuk, who would receive the first Nobel Prize awarded to a Turkish citizen a year later, caused an international outrage as foreseen. EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn called the trial the “litmus test” of Turkey’s EU entry. The charges against Pamuk were dropped shortly after but the ultranationalist tactic was proven to be successful. So, similar demonstrations were held at every similar trial. Disabled veterans participated in three other high profile protests in addition to the one targeting Pamuk.

Following Pamuk’s trial, journalist and writer Perihan Mağden was tried for a column, titled "Conscientious Objection is a Human Right," where she wrote: “That’s what I say; no, not every Turk is born a soldier. Not every Turk has to be born a soldier, die a soldier, and die as a soldier.” Then, Elif Şafak stood trial for the comments on the “Armenian question” made by a character in her novel, “Bastard of Istanbul.” Hrant Dink, Turkish-Armenian journalist and the editor of Agos newspaper, was the only intellectual among the four to be found guilty of denigrating Turkishness. Dink stood trial three times. After quitting from the first prosecution, Dink was dragged to the court again for a phrase, “poisonous blood,” which he used in one of his articles in order to criticize the obsession of the Armenian diaspora with Turkey at the expense of the welfare of Armenia. “The fresh blood to replace the poisonous blood emptied from the Turk exists in the great vein that will connect the Armenian with Armenia,” he wrote in 2004, calling Armenians to work through the trauma of 1915 in order to refashion a new national

identity. Nevertheless, the court misconstrued his words as implying that “Turkish blood is poisonous,” and sentenced him to six months of imprisonment, which was suspended. While on a trial a third time, an ultranationalist “teenager” murdered him in 2007.

Building on the long established nationalist tradition of scapegoating intellectuals as over-Westernized compradors/traitors, the ultranationalist witch-hunt against dissident intellectuals followed a peculiar performative logic. First, ultranationalist lawyers filed lawsuits against a targeted intellectual on charges of “insulting Turkishness.” Then, ultranationalist groups organized volatile protests against the tried intellectual, bringing the case to the attention of the media and rendering it a problematic issue in Turkey-EU relations. Finally, the ultranationalist media represented the emergent EU support for the intellectual as a proof of an international conspiracy against the state, while construing the state’s unwillingness to implement penal charges in the face of international pressure as an evidence of its impotence. These three steps completed the cycle of the self-fulfilling prophecy of ultranationalism about the compromised state sovereignty.

It was this self-fulfilling prophecy that enabled ultranationalists to reenact the social drama of the Öcalan trial through the trials of intellectuals. In each case, an intellectual was hauled to the court, while spin-doctors of the Red Apple Coalition in the media portrayed him or her as a sold-out pawn of imperialist powers. With the exception of the case of Turkish-Armenian Hrant Dink, fake genealogies were circulated in nationalist circles to otherize the intellectual by misrepresenting him/her as a convert or an Armenian descendant, that is to say, as an intimate enemy and a perfect scapegoat. Meanwhile, the same group of ultranationalist lawyers, who initially pressed the charges

against intellectuals, encouraged my informants to apply for becoming co-plaintiffs in the proceedings and provided them with legal counsel free of charge. Finally, just like during the trial of Öcalan, nationalist protests took place inside and in front of the courtroom, where my informants furiously confronted the intellectuals.

Once it is realized that these protests mimetically reproduced the performative structure of the Öcalan trial, it's easy to see how disabled veterans made a political transference from the body of Öcalan to the body of the dissident intellectual as the site of vengeance. When the initial object of vengeance for their losses, the PKK leader's body, became inaccessible with the abolition of the death penalty, disabled veterans found or rather helped forge a new object through sacrificial substitution. Thus, the body of the dissident intellectual, already marked as a traitor through the charges under Article 301, became a surrogate victim replacing Öcalan in the eyes of disabled veterans.

One of the surrogate victims was actually murdered by an ultranationalist teenager. Hrant Dink, an outspoken Armenian socialist public intellectual in Turkey, was as vulnerable as one could be in the political climate created by the ultranationalist campaign against intellectuals. A week before his assassination, Dink wrote an article, titled "The 'dove skittishness' of my soul:"

I am like a dove...

Like a dove I have my eyes everywhere, in front of me, at the back, on the left, on the right.

My head is as moving as the one of a dove... And fast enough to turn in an instance.

This is the price...Do you know Ministers what a price it is to imprison someone to the skittishness of a dove?.. Do you know it?.. Don't you look at the doves at all?

Yes, I can feel myself as restless as a dove but I know that in this country people do not touch and disturb the doves.

The doves continue their lives in the middle of the cities.

Yes indeed a bit frightened but at the same time free.

Enjoyment

In the act of asking the state to punish intellectuals as surrogate victims, disabled veterans misrecognized themselves as historical subjects who could restore the sovereignty of the state by performing statehood in the name of state, hence unclinking its compromised nature. It was through this misrecognition that disabled veterans enjoyed in these protests moments of sovereignty that they craved for in their everyday lives as they confronted the police and intellectuals and made the headlines not as disabled men but as vengeful emissaries.

I never participated in the protests targeting intellectuals. In a sense, they constituted limits to participant observation in my research. Nevertheless, after each protest I tried to meet my disabled veteran informants, who became some of the main actors and supporters of these demonstrations that started and ended within the span of my fieldwork. The below excerpt from my fieldnotes describes one of those days in which a sense of emergency and agency that breaks into the everyday and generates

enjoyment beyond the political utility of these protests—a sort of sovereign enjoyment as Bataille would put it:

The next day of the protest against the journalist Perihan Mağden, I meet Burak for an interview in a mechanic shop. It is his day off and he wants to get the “interview business” over with while visiting with one of his relatives working at a garage nearby my neighborhood. But he is unlucky. The noise of the garage makes the recording impossible. So, we decide to call Yaman to see what he is up to. We learn that he has just left work and is about to meet with the other members of the clique. I am the lucky one today.

We pick up Yaman with my car. Yaman looks absolutely delighted with rolled up newspapers under his armpit. “Have you seen us on television?” he asks me enthusiastically. “You were on all channels,” I reply and tease him a bit: “You didn’t create trouble again, did you?” Yaman does not hear my sarcastic comment as he is busy calling another disabled vet. As soon as the guy answers the phone, Yaman starts to rebuke him for not coming to the protest. We hear the last minutes of the conversation when Yaman turns on his cell phone’s speaker to deliver his didactic harangue: “We made history yesterday. But you are unaware of the world. You can’t live up to the title of gazi like that!” The voice on the other side of the line tries to explain that he could not get the morning off at work. Yaman, who always has a medical report ready for protest days thanks to his ultranationalist contacts, does not even accept that as an excuse. He turns to us and includes us in his audience as he performatively explains on the phone the role these protests play in the construction of disabled veteran identity:

What do you think our pensions are for? Is it to compensate our loss? No! What would then be the difference between paid organ donors and us? We were not injured in a traffic accident while driving drunk after an orgy. We were injured while protecting the state. If we are being paid for this injury, we have to continue this mission.

We park somewhere and wait for the others as Yaman pages through the pile of newspapers. Burak looks silent. I try to prod him to talk about the protest. He starts complaining about the pain in his stump induced by standing still on his poor quality leg prosthesis for hours during the protest. “It is upon us, the disabled, to save the country,” he grumbles. But he too gets in the mood when Yaman unfolds the newspapers to show us the pictures of the protest. I realize that he has twelve different newspapers representing the different colors of the political spectrum: Sabah, Milliyet, Ortadoğu, Zaman, Bugün, Yeni Şafak, Hürriyet, Birgün, Cumhuriyet, Akşam, Posta, and Gözcü. “Even I don’t follow so many newspapers as a researcher,” I exclaim in surprise. Yaman simply cannot hide how proud he is. “We set the agenda of the whole country,” he says, “We made history.”

We start to look at the pictures. “This one shows only your chin,” Yaman makes fun of Burak, who in response points at another picture and asks “Don’t I look handsome in this one?” They both like the newspapers that covered the protest in extenso, especially the ones that included photographs in their coverage. To my surprise, the socialist daily Birgün receives special praise because it devoted its front page to the protest. However,

they are not happy about its headline, “They were there again!” Yaman is especially angry: “What does that mean? As if we were provocateurs! We are not someone’s men! Have you realized how they enlarged the headline so that they could cover the part of the picture where a placard we hold reads, “My martyr is my entrustment?” Then, they realize the news about the novelist Elif Şafak just under the page. “Wait Elif Şafak, just wait! We’re going to protest you too,” they cheer and brighten up. When the turn comes to the left-wing nationalist Cumhuriyet, which used the headline, “Terror in front of the courtroom,” they begin swearing. They are especially annoyed with the association of the protest with the right-wing Nationalist Action Party. “We don’t need to learn Kemalism, Turkishness, or Islam from any political party. Thank god, we are in a position to teach them all these values.”

When the topic comes to the protest again, Yaman’s mouth starts spitting vile oaths.

Wow! Look at that bitch! You slut! You don’t want to be conscripted, huh? You want to eat this country’s bread, drink its water and you want it for free. No way! You have to pay your debt to the fatherland. If you don’t want [your son] to get conscripted, then go and get a faggot report [rotten report] for him. Get the rotten report. Say that he has diabetes and is impotent. Hey,[she says] she does not want to be conscripted because of her beliefs! Fuck your beliefs! Everybody lives his beliefs freely in this country. Look, no one cares if you have a shit in the middle of everyone, dump your waste, have your car leak oil, or, excuse me for saying it, fuck a woman on the street. They ask for democracy! This is the most democratic

place! Do whatever you want! Everybody serves in the military. Every Turk must. Every Turk is born a soldier! If you don't want to get conscripted, then get the fuck out of this country!

The rest of the group finally shows up. Since we are all hungry, we decide to eat something before going to a coffeehouse to play Rummikub. While we munch on unsavory “pides” I ask how many of them tried to be co-plaintiffs in the trial against Mağden. “Definitely not Zeki,” Burak answers. He is trying to bait Zeki, who slept through the protest after chatting with a girl on the internet all night. “We all tried to be co-plaintiffs,” Yaman says. Just like the trial of Öcalan I think to myself. He continues: “They did not let us in [the courthouse]. They allowed the honorless ones inside and left honorable ones outside.” Everyone at the table nods. Macit is especially angry with a group of women accompanying Mağden: “They’re looking at us and laughing. They have their bodyguards with them. As if we were going to eat them! This is why we got provoked!” He apes their timid behavior, making the whole table laugh. It is impossible not to notice the undercurrent of class resentment in his anger. Still, the way that he puts the blame of their assaulting Mağden on her supporters chills me. This discourse of “being provoked” is exactly how popular nationalist violence and lynch attempts have been justified in Turkey. While I muse on these issues, Yaman wakes me up:

Is it all our responsibility? Are we the only sensitive ones? Sometimes, I think to myself “Only if I could get myself arrested.” But they won't arrest me and put me

in a prison. I wish they would! Then, I would lie on my back all day. Well! No work, nothing!

Macit does not miss this chance:

Isn't that what they do to Apo? He enjoys the comfort of a five star hotel. He has his private doctor but we as gazis have to wait in line at hospitals. He is enjoying himself, watching television and reading books all day, while I have to stand on my prosthesis for eight hours at work everyday.

The air gets dense but it does not last long. Burak and Zeki have already lost their interest in the conversation after placing the Rummikub racks and tiles on the table and have been staring at the half-naked dancers in a video clip on TV for a while. Burak finally cuts in: "Are we playing for Turkish delights?" The game begins.

A Collective Exhibit of Loss

The murder of Hrant Dink in 2007 quelled the protests against intellectuals. After I left the field in 2008, Article 301, which constituted the legal excuse for the protests, was amended in a way to make such high profile lawsuits and protests practically impossible. Moreover, the key figures of these protests were arrested in the Ergenekon investigation, which allegedly targeted an ultranationalist covert network that conspired to overthrow the AKP government by inciting a military coup through a series of provocative events, including the murder of Dink. Then, the AKP government launched the "Kurdish opening," which stirred up the largest disabled veterans' protest wave in the history of Turkey.

On October 19 2009, a group of thirty-four people, consisting of PKK members and political refugees from Makhmour refugee camp in Iraqi Kurdistan walked through the Iraqi-Turkish border and willingly turned themselves over to the Turkish authorities. This “peace group” (as they were hailed by the Kurdish movement) was a gesture of support for the AKP government’s “Kurdish opening,” a vague package of democratization that supposedly aimed to resolve the Turkish state’s decades-long conflict with its Kurdish population. Members of the peace group, including ones in guerilla outfits, were released after being interrogated. Their release sparked heated debates about legality and legitimacy since they neither availed themselves of Article 221 of the Turkish Penal Code, popularly known as the “active repentance law,” nor were tried as PKK members. Upon their release, the group traveled from city to city and joined mass Kurdish demonstrations organized by the Democratic Society Party (DTP), celebrating the arrival of the envoys in a festival atmosphere.

The release of the group, their “unrepentant” incorporation into the body politic, and the following hero’s welcome created a strong nationalist reaction. Nationalist actors criticized the “opening” as the recognition of the terrorist other as a sovereign party and repeated one after another the famous state motto, “We will not negotiate with terrorists.” From the hegemonic nationalist perspective, the armed conflict would only be resolved when the PKK surrendered and its members fully recognized the power of the state over their life and death.

In a few weeks, numerous cities in western Turkey witnessed angry nationalist protests led by the nationalist communities of loss. Once again, familiar melodramatized

scenes flooded the screen. Martyrs' mothers carrying Turkish flags and the pictures of their dead sons sang laments and cursed the de facto amnesty granted to PKK members while bursting into tears. Their bodies communicated their pain in culturally recognized somatic forms; they wheezed, staggered, fainted, and leaned towards each other. Yet, it was once again disabled veteran bodies that hosted the most spectacular acts of protest. In several cities, disabled veterans, who were no longer content with smashing their medals to the ground or symbolically returning them to the authorities as a form of protest, took off their prosthetic limbs—eyes, legs, and feet—waved them in the air, and even threw them on the ground as an embodied form of protest.

The display and the removal of prostheses as a form of protest was not completely unprecedented in Turkey. However, the previous instances of individualized protest, such as what occurred during the trial of Öcalan, were far from generating the affective and political effects of the recent proliferation of this political form throughout the country despite the initial visceral shock they created. In these nation-wide protests, disabled veterans revealed their prostheses, which became uncannily visible in a collective exhibition of loss, rendering prosthesis a privileged object of ultranationalist material culture. The sight of the veteran taking off an artificial limb was so overwhelming that rumors about prosthesis companies financing and organizing these nationalist protests have found their way to the mainstream media.

Why has this unusual form of protest become so widespread among disabled veterans? From where does the removal of prostheses as a form of protest derive its

political meaning and power and its affective intensity and impact? Let me address these questions by focusing on three scenes from these protests that I describe below.

Prosthetic Protests

The first scene: Sitting in a wheelchair among the standing crowd in the city of Adana (which has received a large number of forced Kurdish immigrants in the last decade), a disabled veteran in his thirties, holding a framed medal of honor and having folded the left leg of his trousers in a way to display his below-the-knee prosthetic leg, starts to talk to the cameras in a weary tone: “They found this poem in the pocket of a martyr. It says: ‘Do not ever remove this stray bullet from my body for it is my true medal.’” I remember hearing the poem several times during my fieldwork. It is one of the hundreds of similar aesthetic products of counterinsurgency circulating among disabled veterans, particularly popular within the ultranationalist public because of its ability to articulate the simultaneous victimhood and heroism of disabled veterans. As the veteran recites the poem, one can easily notice the intensity in his body from the contraction of his face as he unsuccessfully tries to hold back his tears. Then, with an unexpected gesture, he removes his prosthesis, lifts in the air with one hand so that everyone can see it and shouts, “This is the medal!” while he smashes the framed State Medal of Pride to the ground with his other hand: “Not that! Not this piece of metal!” While people around him are picking shattered glass from the ground, the veteran concludes his protest in a defying manner: “I was twenty-five when I got disabled. What for? For this country! For this soil! For this flag! Not for any other intent or interest!”

The second scene: Another disabled veteran in the city of Osmaniye (the stronghold of the extreme right Nationalist Action Party) walks to the center of the protesters and removes his prosthetic leg and its silicone socket in front of the cameras. “Have I sacrificed this leg for nothing?” he exclaims and throws his prosthesis on the ground: “You want an opening; here is one!” Leaving his artificial body parts on the ground, where a poster of Öcalan was “lynched” minutes ago, he leaves the scene with his empty pant leg dangling. We hear from the back the tingling voice of an old woman, probably a martyr’s mother, crying out: “How can they give this back?”

The third scene: The final scene is also from Osmaniye. A disabled veteran, who lost one arm and both his feet and eyes in a mine blast, and his fellow protestors quarrel with a police captain, who tries to negotiate the number of people that he is going to allow to visit the mayor. “Are you speaking on behalf of the state?” the companion of the disabled veterans asks, boiling in contempt. The police captain seems to ignore him as a nuisance and continues to talk to the disabled veteran, calling him “my brother” in a soothing gesture. “He is not your brother,” the man objects furiously, “Watch your mouth! He is a gazi who lost his arms and legs in the fight against terror.” Confident of the impunity that the presence of the disabled veteran provides, the man confronts the police captain further after the captain calls for reinforcements. “Reinforcements! Are you trying to scare me? Go call for reinforcements in Diyarbakır and Kandil,” referring respectively to the symbolic capital of the Kurdish movement and the headquarters of the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan. The captain is embarrassed and realizes that the situation is getting out of his control, but he is too late. “Are you threatening me?” the angry man

asks, “Who are you to do so?” The captain makes another hopeless attempt, but the companion of the disabled veteran has already commenced the performance of sovereignty— performing statehood to, for, and against the state: “I’m a representative of thousands of people. Who are you? Who are you, huh? I am the state here. Not you! If you were the state, you would lock up those [PKK guerillas] coming from Kandil. The state, pooh!”

Lingering Prosthesis

Watching these scenes over and over again hypnotized, certain memories came back to me. I vividly remembered, for example, how one of my informants became extremely apologetic for having to take off his prosthetic leg during an interview. Then, I recalled how the two arm amputees who refused to use prosthetic devices they found ineffectual created continuous anxiety in the official association. Finally, I thought of the day one of these armless veterans came across a beggar missing an arm in front of the association and the shared but unspoken sense that something was wrong.

In the first months of my fieldwork, I never saw any of my informants removing prostheses in my presence although, as I learned later, most of my informants liked to doff their prostheses after work, when I carried out most interviews. Actually, I was not shown any prosthetic device taken off stumps and wounds for months. This was hardly surprising given the entrenched social stigma of disability, which the increasingly vocal disability rights movement in Turkey has campaigned hard to dispel over the last decade. However, the street beggar figure that epitomized the stigma of the disabled body still

haunted disabled veterans during my research. An exposed stump or a disfigured limb continued to be culturally associated with the street beggar, who relied on the pity that his loss evoked. It was exactly because of this association the veterans stayed away from rendering their disabilities publicly visible, at least until these latest demonstrations.

I was first allowed in the fleshly intimacy of disabled veterans at a picnic day, when several veterans doffed their prosthetic limbs to take care of their stumps after a football match. “Now, you’ve truly become one of us,” one of them teased me as we sat, and everybody cheerfully nodded. Thus, one of my key observations was that donning and doffing prostheses were an embodied form of communication among disabled veterans. It drew the borders of fleshly intimacy and indexed privacy versus publicness. Why and how, then, did so many disabled veterans violate in these protests the boundaries drawn by donning/doffing of prostheses that they strictly obeyed in their everyday lives?

A prosthesis is not merely an inorganic cluster of metal, silicone, and plastic that substitutes for the living limb for reasons of mobility or aesthetics (or normative comportment). It is an important object of national imagination. As a gift from the state to the donors of the sacrificial limbs of sovereignty, the prosthesis is an icon of the symbolic and material relationships connecting disabled veterans to the state form. It reflects the gendered project of the state to repair broken soldier bodies with the ultimate aim of restoring their masculinity and breadwinner status. Yet, as the prosthetic protests suggest, the mimetic materiality of prostheses is not only capable of hiding and effacing loss but also of revealing and augmenting it.

The collective display of loss created by prosthetic protests targeted the “Kurdish opening” of the government. The “opening” was the latest manifestation of the reconfiguration of the sovereignty relations between the Turkish state and its Kurdish population, a process accelerated by Turkey’s pending EU membership. It was only in 1991, when the president Süleyman Demirel declared, “I recognize the existence of Kurds,” that the state’s denial of the existence of Kurds as a separate ethnic group ended. During my fieldwork between 2005 and 2007, most of my informants were still in doubt as to whether Kurdish was an authentic language or a corrupted dialect of Turkish. In 2009, however, not only a Kurdish TV channel launched by the state was on the air but also discourses—cultural rights, multicultural democracy, regional autonomy, general amnesty for the PKK members, etc.—that were associated with terrorism and violently suppressed during the 1990s when most of my informants were injured were now matters of public discussion. “The indivisible unity of the state with its territory and its nation,” the authoritarian sovereignty principle for which my informants fought and became disabled seemed farther away than ever in the new sovereignty culture. In such a context, “sacrificial limbs of sovereignty” narrative, which constituted the basis of the relationship between the state and the disabled veterans, started to increasingly lose its authority and potential to provide narrative closure to veterans’ losses.

Prosthetic protest is like a collective traumatic flashback. It is the reenactment of the moment of dismemberment, “gazis’ second dismemberment” as an ultranationalist politician put it, which inverts the gendered attempts of the state to restore disabled veterans’ bodies. Just like the symbolic returning of medals to the state, the throwing of

the prosthesis to the ground is the act of declining a gift, an annulment of the gift exchange, or the contract, between the state and disabled veterans. By removing their prostheses, disabled veterans bring to light a material reminder of a traumatic loss that cannot be fully assimilated into the symbolic systems of gift exchange. The sacrificial limb becomes a specter that unleashes the power of loss against the “betrayed” state.

Nevertheless, the state is a deep “fictional reality” (Aretxaga 2003) that both disabled veterans and the ethnographer are deeply invested in. The sacrificial narrative that connects veterans to the state is the only one that makes disabled veterans’ losses meaningful, their bodies valuable, and their welfare rights still untouched in the neoliberal era. So, they cling on to it by sacrificing themselves once again, by using the sensory shock generated by the dismemberment of their bodies as a mode of attention to the dismemberment of the nation-state. These political performances frequently take the form of a confrontational encounter with state officials, just like in the third scene involving the police captain, through which “the state” is appealed to for the restoration of sovereignty so that the disabled veteran body can wear the prosthesis and become whole again.

The prosthesis lingers.

CONCLUSION

For an anthropologist living in a “foreign” country, everyday life is full of ethnographic encounters. While writing *Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty*, I had two unexpected encounters that prompted me to reflect on the comparative resonance of my project. The first was in Austin, just after I came back from the “field.” I saw him at an I-35 highway exit ramp, a hot spot for panhandling. He stood there by the lights under the tormenting Texan sun, holding a placard that read, “DISABLED VETERAN, ANYTHING HELPS, GOD BLESS U.” No one bothered to spare any change. People sat tight uncomfortably in their cars as he approached, with eyes locked on the horizon ahead or on their radios. As I sat in the driver’s seat with growing unease, I realized it was impossible to imagine the scene of a disabled veteran begging on the streets in Turkey. Pondering why, I remembered the story of my informant Murat.

Murat, a disabled veteran in his late 30s, was wounded and became disabled in the leg as a result of friendly fire. Because his wound was not caused by “enemy weapons,” he was not granted the gazi title and the exclusive veteran benefits it provides, such as job placement. He was unemployed when I met him. “I can’t find a job with this leg,” he said and panted, “I just can’t!” He showed me the pile of petitions he sent to different state offices. He had also piled the official responses, all of which basically said the same thing, “We are not authorized to process your petition.” Murat was indignant. “If my leg were amputated I would at least be able to get monthly pensions from the army foundation,” he said chillingly. “What am I supposed to feed these children with,” he pointed at his kids watching American wrestling on the television. “I could work as a taxi

driver if my leg were solid but... Someone is going to shoot someone one day. You'll see. No one will have the right to get surprised then." He nearly lost his temper. "Taxi driver," I repeated inside my head, like Travis Bickle played by Robert de Niro in Martin Scorsese's well-known movie, the classic example of the crazy veteran character.

One of the "craziest" things that Murat has done in his life was to walk on the streets of Ankara city center, where all military command posts including the land forces command and the general staff headquarters are located, as a sandwich board man carrying a large placard displaying the notice "I am a gazi and I'm unemployed." It did not take long for him to get noticed. He was quickly taken into custody by two young military officers, who promised to support his quest for a job while scolding him for shaming himself, the army, and other disabled veterans. Indeed, several members of the official association harshly criticized Murat's protest: "He made us all look like beggars. But what can you do? He has a screw loose." When I departed Istanbul at the end of 2007 Murat was still unemployed. In 2009, I would see him once again, in a newspaper photo of the prosthesis-removal protests staged against the "Kurdish Opening."

This brings us to my second encounter that occurred only a few months after I came back from the field. While walking by Stearns Wharf on a bright Santa Barbara afternoon, I came across hundreds of wooden crosses on the beach—Arlington West temporary memorial installed by the Veterans For Peace. Taking a walk around the sea of carefully positioned crosses, looking at the Star of David and the crescent moon displayed as gestures of cosmopolitanism, and reading the information boards about the killed Iraqi civilians, I remembered how my activist informants were greatly sympathetic

of post-Vietnam American anti-war movements. “Bravo for you! You alone will make Bush get down on his knees,” they would praise Cindy Sheehan, while being vehemently opposed any anti-militarist or pro-peace initiative in Turkey. I brought this apparent contradiction on the table once. “America is different,” Erdem corrected me immediately, “Their soldiers are not sucklings fighting to defend their country but rather mercenaries fighting for American imperialist interests.”

Arlington West provided me a welcome opportunity to chat with veterans of two different wars—World War II and Korea—and to hear their responses to my story of the Turkish disabled veterans. I told them about the cynical remarks that Yaman, the charismatic leader of a disabled veteran clique, used to make by comparing Turkish and American disabled veteran benefits: “While an American gazi can climb the Mount Everest with his Robocop-like prosthesis, our friends with prostheses can’t even walk straight on the street,” he would remark and conclude, “If the state took care of me like the American state takes care of its own gazis, I would fully enjoy my gazi status. I would pin my medal on my chest and travel from one commemoration site to another.” My interlocutors were most surprised by the obsessive fascination of my informants with US veteran benefits. In return, they shared with me stories about the “social suffering” of American disabled war veterans until sunset, when we methodically stockpiled the crosses on the beach.

From the US to Turkey, the war-damaged disabled veteran body is a ubiquitous but ambivalent presence in warring nation-states (Bourke 1996, Feo 2007, Gerber 2000, Jarvis 2004, Koven 1994, O’Connor 1997). Ambivalent, because on the one hand the

disabled veteran body embodies the horrors of violence and warfare, but on the other hand, it often turns into an affective and ideological impetus for further bloodshed through the politico-cultural logic of sacrifice. Ambivalent, also since it is simultaneously at the center and margins of “hegemonic masculinity,” valorized by the masculine ethos of nationalism, while also being violently expelled from the able-bodied world of hegemonic masculinity. Ambivalent, finally, as it occupies an indeterminate space, a sort of “gray zone” (Levi 2004), where the distinctions between the perpetrator and the victim, the sacred and the profane, and the hero and the abject get puzzlingly blurred.

The scholarly and ethico-political decision to delve into this gray zone provides a unique opportunity to bring into dialogue the issues of the state, sovereignty, nationalism, violence, sacrifice, masculinity, and embodiment. While all these areas of study have recently come to the fore of anthropological scholarship, ethnographic works on disabled veterans are surprisingly rare. This is especially unfortunate since the intersubjective space constructed through participant observation and ethnographic witnessing offers a distinct potential to critically engage with disabled veterans’ social suffering without reproducing its nationalist, medical, or popular reifications.

It was from this space that *Sacrificial Limbs of Sovereignty* tells the story of the disabled veterans of the Turkish army, novel victim-heroes emerging as the millennial avatars of the originally Islamic gazi title, who were sacralized as heroes only at the cost of being victimized as the nation’s sacrifices in the name of state sovereignty. Disabled while fighting Kurdish guerillas as the conscripted soldiers of the internal conflict, the gazis of 2000s Turkey are ambiguous figures whose bodies manifest, regenerate, and

destabilize the precarious relationships between masculinity, state, and sovereignty. Compulsory military service—the key rite of passage to heterosexual adult masculinity and a precondition of eligibility for marriage and employment in Turkey—has failed to deliver its promise of masculine sovereignty in the case of disabled veterans, who face discrimination and marginalization as disabled men despite the welfare provisions of the state. Simultaneously celebrated as sacrificial expenditures and stigmatized as disabled “half-men,” gazis are caught between sacralization and debasement, glorified in realms of the official and ceremonial while degraded in the realms of the informal and everyday. It is in this juncture that that gazis are interpellated by ultranationalist discourse, which not only explains their seemingly contradictory predicament but also offers a subject position through which gazis can enjoy precious if fleeting moments of sovereignty. Through their ultranationalist activism, gazis render their dismembered bodies a visceral surface upon which nationalist fantasies of unity and wholeness, and the anxieties these fantasies breed, can be projected. Against this background, this dissertation explored the emergent forms of subjectivity, political agency, and collective action that are produced as the conscript-cum-disabled veteran body became subjected to and became the subject of multiple forms of power and violence, first, on the mountains, then in hospitals, and finally in lower-class urban life.

Attending to the quest of the gazis provides a key to our understanding of the reconfiguration of the discourses, experiences, and embodiments of masculinity and disability in Turkey, which tries to renegotiate its national and international identity at the turn of the millennium. The present reformulation of the terms of state sovereignty, both

externally vis-à-vis the European Union (EU) and internally vis-à-vis the Kurdish population, bring new tensions and opportunities for disabled veterans. Particularly interesting is the relationship between disabled veterans and the EU. Discrimination against the disabled in Turkey has been an important concern of the EU, which noted human rights abuses against the mentally disabled in Turkey's 2005 annual progress report. As a part of the EU harmonization process, the Turkish state has increasingly defined disability as a governmental issue to be addressed through national fundraising, donation, consciousness-raising, public visibility, and anti-stigma campaigns. Turkey's EU accession process seems to promise improved living conditions and decreased stigma for disabled veterans, who have so far adopted an anti-EU political agenda and radically set themselves apart from disability rights activism.

In a second and related process, "Kurdish Opening," which was renamed by the government as the "National Unity Project" in order to hush the mounting nationalist dissent, continues to infuriate disabled veterans, as described in Chapter 5, by making them feel that their sacrifices in the name of sovereignty were meaningless and that they are being betrayed by the compromised state. The feeling of betrayal is exacerbated by the fact that the state continues to deploy the same old sovereignty discourse—"the state does not negotiate with the terrorist"—while the sovereignty is being reconfigured, i.e. today the state is indeed negotiating with "terrorists," including the imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan, as Turkey tries to resolve the Kurdish issue. Moreover, there is no available narrative that could give meaning to disabled veterans' losses other than the

“sacrificial limbs of sovereignty” because the state has crushed and still crushes all cultural and political spaces from which such narratives can flourish.

Recently, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has decided that the sacrificial debt that is owed to martyrs’ families and gazis is too burdensome for the state and that it is time to step up efforts for a professional army. Government representatives have repeatedly asked communities of loss, whose politicization owed a great deal to state policies, to “stay away from politics,” in other words, to re-become welfare subjects. What they overlook is that inscribing violence on bodies in the name of sovereignty is incomparably easier than effacing violence and its effects from bodies. For unlike the master signifier “sovereignty,” the body is not devoid of content.

Prosthesis lingers as a reminder of that.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu-Habib, Lina

1997 *Gender and Disability: Women's Experiences in the Middle East*. Oxford: Atlantic Highlands.

Abu-Lughod, Lila

1986 *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Agamben, Giorgio

1998 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ahmad, Feroz

1993 *The Making of Modern Turkey*. New York: Routledge.

Altınay, Ayşegül

2004 *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Anderson, Benedict

1991 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anooshahr, Ali

2009 *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*. New York: Routledge.

Appadurai, Arjun

1998 *Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization*. *Public Culture* 10(2): 225-247.

2006 *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay On the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Aretxaga, Begona

1997 *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- 2003 Maddening States. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 393-410.
- Baer, Marc
- 2008 Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Başaran, Oyman
- 2007 Militarized Medical Discourse on Homosexuality and Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey. Masters thesis, Department of Sociology, Bogazici University.
- Bengisu, Murat, Gökhan İzbirak, and Adham Mackieh
- 2008 Work-Related Challenges for Individuals Who Are Visually Impaired in Turkey. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* 102(5): 284-294.
- Benjamin, Walter
- 1999 The Arcades Project. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Berlant, Lauren
- 2008 The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bezmez, Dikmen and Sibel Yardımcı
- 2010 In Search of Disability Rights: Citizenship and Turkish Disability Organizations. *Disability and Society* 25(5): 603-615.
- Biernatzki, William
- 1991 Symbol and Root Paradigm: The Locus of Effective Inculturation. In *Effective Inculturation and Ethnic Identity*. Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana.
- Biricik, Alp
- 2008 Rotten Bodies / Idealized Masculinities: Reconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity Through Militarized Medical Discourse in Turkey. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag.
- Bora, Tanıl
- 1995 Milliyetçiliğin Kara Baharı. Istanbul: İletişim.

- 2002 Nationalistic Discourses in Turkey: A Hybrid Language, a Broad Lexicon. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102(2/3).
- Bora, Tanıl and Kemal Can
- 1999 Devlet, Ocak, Dergah. 12 Eylül'den Günümüze Ülkücü Hareket. Istanbul: İletişim.
- Bourke, Joanna
- 1996 Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War. London: Reaktion Books.
- Bryant, Rebecca
- 2002 The Purity of Spirit and the Power of Blood: A Comparative Perspective on Nation, Gender, and Kinship in Cyprus. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 8: 509-530.
- Buck-Morss, Susan
- 1989 The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bulloch, John and Harvey Morris
- 1992 No Friends But the Mountains: The Tragic History of Kurds. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Caruth, Cathy, ed.
- 1995 Trauma: Explorations in memory. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- 1996 Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha
- 1993 The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ciyayi, Serdem
- 2002 Sevdam Güneş Tadında: Gerilla Anıları I. Istanbul: Aram.

Coffey, Donna

2007 Blood and Soil in Anne Michaels's Fugitive Pieces: The Pastoral in Holocaust Literature. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 53 (1): 27-49.

Comaroff, Jean

1985 *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cook, David

2007 *Martyrdom in Islam*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Csordas, Thomas, ed.

1994 *Embodiment and Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cvetkovich, Ann

2003 *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Daniel, Valentine

1996 *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Darling, Linda

2000 Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context. *Studia Islamica* 91: 133-163.

Das, Veena and Renu Addlakha

2001 Disability and Domestic Citizenship: Voice, Gender, and the Making of the Subject. *Public Culture* 13(3): 511-531.

Davis, Jennard, ed.

2006 *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Dedes, Georgios

1996 The "Battalname," An Ottoman Turkish Frontier Epic Wondertale. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Harvard University.

Delaney, Carol

1991 *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari

2002 *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, Jacques

1997 *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Douglas, Mary

2000 *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge.

Eng, David and David Kazanjian

2003 *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, Chloe

1984 *Does khaki become you? The militarization of women's lives*. Boston: South End Press.

Fawcett, Barbara

2000 *Feminist Perspectives on Disability*. Harlow: Prentice Hall/Pearson Education.

Feldman, Allen

1991 *Formations of Violence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub

1992 *Testimony*. New York: Routledge.

Feo, Katherine

2007 *Invisibility: Memory, Masks and Masculinities in the Great War*. *Journal of Design History* 20(1):17-27.

Foucault, Michel

1979 *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.

1980 *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. New York: Vintage.

2008 *The Birth of Biopolitics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie

1997 *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gerber, David

2000 Introduction: Finding Disabled Veteran in History. In *Disabled Veterans in History*. David Gerber, ed. Pp. 1-51. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Gill, Lesley

1997 *Creating Citizens, Making Men: The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia*. *Cultural Anthropology* 12(4): 527-550.

Gilmore, David

1987 *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*. Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association.

Girard, Rene

1977 *Violence and the Sacred*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Good, Bryon

1994 *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Gupta Akhil and James Ferguson

1992 Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference. *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1):6-23.

Gürsel, Kadri

1996 *Dağdakiler*. Istanbul: Metis.

Hansen, Thomas Blum and Finn Stepputat

2005 *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Harun, Ahmet

2002 *Garip Hayatlar Mevsimi: Gerilla Öyküleri I*. Istanbul: Aram.

Heidegger, Martin

1996 *Being and Time*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric

1981 *Bandits*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss

1964 *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

İnalçık, Halil

1980 The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State. *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2: 71-79

Jarvis, Christina

2004 *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Jeganathan, Pradeep

2000 A Space for Violence: Anthropology, Politics and the Location of a Sinhala Practice of Masculinity. In *Community, Gender, and Violence*. Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan, eds. London: Hurst.

Kafadar, Cemal

1995 *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kantorowicz, Ernst

1997 *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Kaplan, Sam

2002 Din-u Devlet All Over Again: The Politics of Military Secularism and Religious Militarism in Turkey Following the 1980 Coup. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34: 113-127.

2006 *The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Karakurt, Esat Mahmut

1954 *Dağları bekleyen Kız*. Istanbul: İnkılap ve Aka.

Kleinman, Arthur, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, eds.

1997 *Social Suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Klima, Alan

2002 *The Funeral Casino: Meditation, Massacre, and Exchange with the Dead in Thailand*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Koğacıoğlu, Dicle

2004 *The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey*. *Differences* 15(2):119-151.

Koven, Seth

1994 *Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers, and the Great War in Great Britain*. *The American Historical Review* 99(4):1167-1202.

Kozanoğlu, Hayri

1997 *Pop Çağı Ateşi*: İstanbul: İletişim.

Kundakçı, Hasan

2005 *Güneydoğu'da Unutulmayanlar*. İstanbul: Alfa.

Levi, Primo

2004 *The Gray Zone*. In *Violence in War and Peace*. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, eds. Pp. 83-91. Malden: Blackwell.

Leys, Ruth

2000 *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lindner, Rudi

1983 *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*. Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University.

Lock, Margaret and Nancy Scheper-Hughes

1993 *Cultivating the Body: Anthropology and Epistemologies of Bodily Practice and Knowledge*. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22: 133-155.

Low, Jennifer

2003 *Manhood and the Duel: Masculinity in Early Modern Drama and Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Malkki, Lisa

1995 *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mardin, Şerif

1969 *Din ve İdeoloji*. Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası.

1989 *Religion and Social Change in Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Mbembe, Achille

2003 *Necropolitics*. *Public Culture* 15(1): 11-40.

2005 *Sovereignty as a Form of Expenditure*. In *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, Thomas Blum Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds. Pp. 148-169. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McClintock, Anne

1995 *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge.

MacLeod, Jay

1995 *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low Income Neighborhood*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Melikoff, Irene

2008 *Ghazi*. In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs, eds. Brill Online.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice

2002 *The Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Humanities Press.

Mosse, George

1990 *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nadire, Mater

2005 *Voices from the Front: Turkish Soldiers on the War with the Kurdish Guerrillas*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh

1997 The Erotic Vatan [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, to Possess, and to Protect. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39(3): 442-67.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael

2002 *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

2005 Confinement and the Imagination: Sovereignty and Subjectivity in a Quasi-State. In *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, Thomas Blum Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds. Pp. 103-120. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nordstrom, Carolyn and Antonius Robben, eds.

1995 *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

O'Connor, Erin

1997 "Fractions of Men": Engendering Amputation in Victorian Culture. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39(4): 742-777.

Özsoy, Hişyar

2010 *Between Gift and Taboo: Death and Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey*. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin.

Özyürek, Esra

2004 *Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of State Imagery and Ideology in Turkey*. *American Ethnologist* 31(3): 374-391.

Pamuk, Orhan

2006 *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. New York: Vintage.

Pamukoğlu, Osman

2004 *Unutulanlar Dışında Yeni Bir Sey Yok*. Istanbul: İnkılap.

Pateman, Carol

1988 *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Peteet, Julie

1994 Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in Palestinian “Intifada”: A Cultural Politics of Violence. *American Ethnologist* 21(1): 31-49.

Plummer, Ken

2001 The Call of Life Stories in Ethnographic Research. In *Handbook of Ethnography*. Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffrey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, eds. Pp. 395-406. London: Sage.

Portelli, Alessandro

1998 What Makes Oral History Different? In *The Oral History Reader*. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson. Pp. 63-74. New York: Routledge.

Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People

2002 Turkey Disability Survey. Retrieved 09/11/2010 from http://www.ozida.gov.tr/ENG/?menu=data_bank&sayfa=tr_disability_survey

2009 How Society Perceives Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved 06/01/2010 from http://www.ozida.gov.tr/ENG/?menu=data_bank&sayfa=projects

Robben, Antonius C.G.M.

1996 Ethnographic Seduction, Transference, and Resistance in Dialogues about Terror and Violence in Argentina. *Ethos* 24(1): 71-106.

Robinett, Jane

2007 The Narrative Shape of Traumatic Experience. *Literature and Medicine*, 26 (2): 290-311.

Scognamillo, Giovanni

1987 *Türk Sinema Tarihi*. Istanbul: Metis.

Scarry, Elaine

1985 *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scott, Joan W.

1986 Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis. *The American Historical Review* 91(5): 1053-1075.

Seremetakis, Nadia

1991 *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

Shakespeare, Tom

1998 *The Disability Reader: Social Science Perspectives*. New York: Cassell.

Shoemaker, Robert

2002 *The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800*. *Historical Journal* 45(3): 525-545.

Sinclair-Webb, Emma

2000 'Our Bülent is Now a Commando' Military Service and Manhood in Turkey. In *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*. Ghossoub Mai and E. Sinclair-Webb, eds. Pp. 65-92. London: Saqi Books.

Sirman, Nükhet

2000 *Gender Construction and Nationalist Discourse: Dethroning the Father in the Early Turkish Novel*. In *Gender and Identity Construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey*. Feride Acar and Ayşe Güneş Ayata, eds. Pp162–176. Boston: Brill.

Smith, Bonnie and Beth Hutchison, eds.

2004 *Gendering Disability*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Sontag, Susan

2002 *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.

Stewart, Kathleen

2007 *Ordinary Affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Stewart, Kathleen and Susan Harding

1999 *Bad Endings: American Apocalypse*. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28: 285-310.

Taşkın, Yüksel

2011 Europeanization and the Extreme Right in Bulgaria and Turkey: Unveiling Similarities Between Ataka Party and Red Apple Coalition. *Southeastern Europe* 35 (2011) 95–119

Taussig, Michael

1991 *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1999 *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Taylor, Diana

1997 *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Tekin, Şinasi

2001 *İştikakçının Köşesi: Türk Dilinde Kelimelerin ve Eklerin Hayatı Üzerine Denemeler*. Istanbul: Simurg.

Teng, Emma J.

1998 An Island of Women: The Discourse of Gender in Qing Travel Writing about Taiwan. *The International History Review* 20(2): 353-370.

Willis, Paul

1981 *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Witteck, Paul

1938 *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*. London: The Asiatic Society.

Yavuz, Hakan

1997 Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey. *Comparative Politics* 30(1): 63-82

Yücel, Savaş

2005 *Biz Kınalı Bacaksızlar: Güneydoğu Gazileri*. Ankara: Ümit.