

2 | The smile of death and the solemncholy of masculinity

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The main premise of this chapter is that all existing forms of masculinity, including Islamic ones, operate within a negative logic which avoids the simple submission to death and rules out the possibility of an unmediated, incalculable encounter with it.¹ The same logic presumes that death has an intrinsic, secretive kernel coded as an unspoken law, the Law of Death. Although no one knows what the law is, it is protected by innumerable doorkeepers who, as in Camus' *The Plague*, try to save human lives medically and religiously or, as in Kafka's *The Trial*, accuse mankind of an unidentified crime and prohibit entry into the law.

The doorkeepers of the Law of Death have traditionally assumed a male gaze to the dark, secretive, mysterious unknown where one is taken away, disappears or gets lost. The fear of the dark has constructed historically appropriate discourses of light, sun, life, scientific knowledge and different images of Paradise to mediate the ground between the known and the unknown, here and there, this world and the other. The fear of the unknown has been interpellated by doorkeepers whose preaching constructed a make-believe world of the Judgment Day, punishments, rewards, rituals and prayers for forgiveness about one's deeds. Such inventions as sleeping pills for insomnia, sex for easy exit from existential anxiety, have provided human kind with 'technical' facilities to cope with the fear, whereas erotic art transformed fear into desire, and poetry transformed the void into a habitat of senses, feelings, colours and sounds. The eternal irony of this universal fraternity is that the negative logic of death affirms life by denial, renunciation or by means of knowledge, analysis and explanation. One needs to be coded in innumerable layers in life, often in punitive and prohibitive terms, to be prepared for death. Gender coding in this logic is a sure way to direct human existence against loss, disappearance and all the negative values attached to the human psyche.²

The story I am about to tell starts with a simple admission that there is no escape from the negative logic of death or a practical way to avoid the doorkeepers. In being circulated within different phases of the eternal loop of masculinity, what I find particularly healthy is the possibility that everything there is to be known and lived will be known and lived after one

dies. As for here and now, the least one can do is to laugh at oneself. This gives me an actual possibility, momentarily, in the way in which Kierkegaard talks of possibility: 'In the end it seems as though everything were possible, but that is the very moment that the self is swallowed up in the abyss. Even a small possibility needs some time to become actual. But eventually the time that should be spent on actuality gets shorter and shorter, everything becomes more and more momentary' (Kierkegaard 1989: 66). If the possibility of the unknown takes one into the abyss, then I suggest that one takes momentary laughter into the abyss and brings out the actual smile on the face of death.

Tragedy is comedy

On 17 August 1999 at 3:02 a.m., an earthquake, which registered 7 on the Richter scale, hit Golcuk, a small city renowned for its naval base on the Marmara sea in Turkey (Arlidge 1999: 1). A week after the earthquake, the official death toll was 17,000. Turkish media did not give the number of the missing; it was estimated at 35,000. The difference between the dead and the missing was estimated in an idiosyncratic way which scratches the surface of the relationship between matter, body and the Islamic rules and values concerning death.

In Turkey, where even simple everyday life activities are regulated by laws, there is a rigid, elaborate bureaucracy which governs funeral procedures under 'normal' circumstances. In accordance with the law, the dead have to be registered as dead by a medical report; then the body is taken either to a hospital morgue or a cemetery where the dead person is washed by an imam. Male imams wash male bodies, female imams wash female bodies. Relatives of the dead person can attend the rite. After the dead body is washed, it is wrapped in white cloth, put in a coffin and taken to a mosque where the head imam leads the ritual of praying. During prayer, two rows are formed: in the first, men stand closer to the coffin and follow the head imam's leadership; in the second, women stand behind and pray in the feminine form ascribed by Islamic rules.³ The next religious ceremony takes place in the cemetery where, under the leadership of the imam of the cemetery, the body is taken from the coffin, laid to rest and the grave is filled with soil. While all this manual labour is undertaken by workers of the cemetery and the male relatives of the dead person, the imam prays and recites special passages from the Qur'an in Arabic. As during prayer in mosques, traditionally, women ought to stay away from the burying procedure, their physical distance being determined by the collective agreement of the family and the imam.

In spite of a national emergency, the state did not change the procedures,

which meant that those people officially counted as dead in the earthquake were the 'fortunate' souls whose bodies went through this ordeal on hot summer days. Two weeks after the earthquake, when I went to Golcuk, I came across state officials with notepad in hand, visiting mosques, taking the number of 'religious burials' from imams. In Yalova, a nearby city, the officials constructed a collective graveyard and literally dumped dead bodies without any identification. The number of dead in this graveyard remains unknown. By this account, the missing are individuals and families reported as dead by their relatives, but their bodies have not been coded as dead by medical, religious and state authorities.

My parents, aunt and uncle died in that earthquake. They were staying in their summer houses near Yalova when the earthquake hit. On the first day of the earthquake, phone lines were jammed, roads were closed, and the 'emergency office' established by the Prime Minister was overwhelmed by lack of information. In his first public address, the Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, admitted the helplessness of the government and asked people to seek aid from Allah.⁴ Being cut off from all means of communication, I used my imagination, pretending to get in touch with my parents by telepathy. My sister, who was also in Ankara, was doing the same. We assured each other that our parents were alive and well. In a funny way, Father was saying the same thing to me and to my sister, almost in the same tone: 'Don't worry; we are fine'. From this 'telepathic' insight communicated to close relatives, the story we were constructing was that the whole family was safe and it was only a matter of time before we would hear from them.

My sister is a clinical psychologist, but in this instance we were our parents' children and aunt's beloved nieces, showing no trace of Freudian neurosis resulting from a forced decision to choose between Mum and Dad as the most loved object.⁵ We loved all four of them. For close to ten hours that day, my sister and I created our make-believe world, telling each other not to believe in television, official statements or other rumours. We refurbished our imaginations by making up more detailed stories of our own as to what Mother was saying, where Father was and what Aunt and Uncle were doing.

The bare, naked truth arrived around sunset. Why sunset? Does it have any gender bearing? I do not know. At sunset, I often had long conversations with my father and mother separately, comparing colours, clouds and the condition of the sea. Until the sun set that particular day, I firmly believed that my parents, Aunt and Uncle were alive and they could not reach us because of jammed phone lines. Then, the revelation hit me instantly: if my parents did not call me at sunset, it meant they were dead. Shortly after this inner knowing came the expected call from my cousin,

the first person on the site of the earthquake. Her remark on the cellular phone was: 'It is tragic; there is nothing here; here, there is nothing; it is so very tragic'. She could hardly talk, but from this brief conversation we concluded that there was no building left, there was no rescue team, no officials to be found and that it was impossible to reach the bodies of my parents, Aunt and Uncle.

Which one do you love most? My cousin stayed on site, day and night for four days, preventing officials from turning the site into a collective graveyard and forcing rescue teams to bring my aunt's and uncle's bodies from the rubble. Although their apartments were next to each other, because of the way the building collapsed, we were able to bring my parents' bodies to Ankara with the 'proper' medical report in just over two days. My personal circulation in various phases of masculinities started the moment I put myself in charge of the funeral procedures.

In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida examines the aporia of responsibility in relation to making decisions. He argues that responsibility on the one hand 'demands an accounting, a general answering-for-oneself with respect to the general and before the generality' and, on the other hand, the ethical temptation to absolute responsibility presents itself as irresponsibility in a singular, non-repetitive, silent way. Derrida traces the aporia of responsibility in the instant which 'belongs to an atemporal temporality [...] a duration that cannot be grasped [...] apprehended or comprehended. Understanding, common sense and reason cannot seize [*begreifen*], conceive, understand, or mediate it'. An instant conceptualized as such also applies to instants of decision whereby, in Kierkegaard's words, 'the instant of decision is madness' (Derrida 1995: 65).

There were decisions to be taken immediately, concerning the selection of the cemetery, the dates of the funerals and the extent to which Islamic traditions were to be applied. Each of these decisions was taken collectively by the family in the context of the incomprehensible ritual of the 'last duty.' In my extended family on the father's side, we are, otherwise, a joyful group of women. My father had four sisters, no brothers, and all except one of my cousins are female. We were all brought up in the same familial Islamic environment and came to know Allah in an intimate way through my grandmother's stories, prayers, unrequited love, generosity, affection and humour. In spite of this bond, in the instant of performing our duty before death, each of us was faced with singular, particular contradictions of our own.

One particular reason I went through different phases of intense madness was that I wanted to perform my last duty to my parents directly, as

if they were alive, and the remainder of the family, including my sister, were caught in between the last duty before Allah, the last duty before organized, institutional Islamic rules and the last duty to their loved ones. In an ethical temptation to resist the intrusion of social, religious and cultural norms, I was willing to go to the extremes of irresponsibility, but my parents were also a social construct whose dead bodies were textually interwoven with the history of the Turkish Republic, the common sense of Islamic traditions and the familial modes of love, affection and respect.

In the selection of the cemetery, the obvious destiny proved to be impossible by Islamic rules. Because there was not enough space for four bodies in the family plot, my practical solution was to bury them by the rule of love. Since they all died in their beds, it was all too 'natural' for me to put my parents in one grave, and my aunt and uncle in another. Islam said no. A woman and a man, even if married for more than forty years, cannot be laid to rest in one grave. I accepted the gender segregation and suggested we bury one fresh dead next to an old dead body according to their sex, but then my uncle's blood ties with the family became an issue. Since he was the 'foreigner' in the family, his body was to be treated differently from the rest. To decipher the irrefutable Islamic common sense, it is significant to note that as far as blood relations are concerned, my mother, also an outsider to the family, was nevertheless considered part of the family because, by marrying my father, bearing his children and adopting the family's last name, she became one with the Helvacioğlu entity, whereas my uncle with a last name of his own was coded as the foreigner who could not be buried in the same grave with a Helvacioğlu man.

When this discussion was taking place, we were consulting my father's only male cousin who, after my father's death, became the patriarch of the extended family. Since it was his first performance, he was uncomfortable, unsure and unprepared. Nevertheless, he was the only person in the whole family who knew Islamic rules. It was important to give a learned decision because to bury the dead in the family plot, we needed to get an official letter of approval from the Directory of Religious Affairs, a state organ in charge of regulating religion. It was forty degrees centigrade and there was considerable anxiety that by the time we decided, there would not be any space left in other cemeteries because of the massive number of dead brought to Ankara. I gave in reluctantly. Four plots were purchased in another cemetery, with a large bribe to make sure the plots were all side by side.

This is my mother and I am the daughter of a holy man If an instant is an atemporal dimension of temporality, in the instant of responsibility before the dead, there are incomprehensible, eternal moments. My parents' bodies

were brought to a state hospital morgue through the help of relatives. By this time, friends had become part of the family as well. The more well connected one is to the tentacles of bureaucracy, the more efficiently tasks are performed.⁶ In Ankara, a city remote from the centre of the earthquake, the morgues were already full. Rumour had it that elsewhere there was not even a morgue. All this was to comfort us by Islamic submission, that we are fortunate and ought not complain or protest because the worst 'could have been more worst'. The particularly Islamic side to this otherwise universal fatalistic approach is that Islam requires from the believers a blind faith which encourages the unconditional acceptance of an unacceptable condition by relying on the infinity of the worst condition in a cumulative way. In other words, this fatalism does not promise an improvement in the future; the present and the future are constructed from the purview of a doomsday scenario.

On account of this blind faith, I was to be happy that the male members of the family washed my father's body without informing the rest of the family. They confessed that they wanted my mother's body to be washed the same day, but they could not find a female imam because all female imams were on sick leave. No one was able to think straight, which meant that everybody was performing their internalized gender tasks instinctively. The male members were performing the paternal, protective role by being clandestine about my parents' dead bodies in the morgue. They were acting as a shield against the pain of seeing my parents' bodies. I was having fits, in an exemplary mode of what Adler called 'masculine protest'. To over-compensate for my grief at my parents' unexpected death, I started acting aggressively.⁷

In hindsight, the first week of the earthquake was in many respects like a state of war. Not only were the hospital morgues and cemeteries full, but the already dysfunctional political mechanism was also completely paralysed. Moreover, everybody was talking and deciding in the name of Allah. The collective devotion to the transcendental existence of the nation implied that funeral procedures were taking place within a morose setting. Like a soldier, I adopted an aggressive stand as a means of survival, except that I was still my mother's daughter who could not stand leaving her mum in mud. I wanted to wash her and comfort her just as she used to do when I was a kid. My decision to wash my mother in the morgue was taken as the action of a tragic heroine, courageous and self-sacrificing, acting out of an incommensurable love, boldly sacrificing myself to perform my absolute duty to my religion. Caught in between my own desire to be with my mother for the last time and the social construction of my action, I was made to hesitate, to be fearful of my own action.

In the morgue, when I was told that there were no female imams to be found, I gave a sermon about how Allah would have changed Islamic rules in an emergency. Then, like a commander in chief, I told the head imam: I am to wash my mother and he is to help me wrap the cloth and prepare her body for funeral procedures. For a male imam to touch a woman's body is inconceivable, regardless of how impressive my preaching might have been. But my militaristic stand had an impact. Miraculously, a female imam was found in less than an hour. It was my first triumph, which came with a deep sorrow about how submissive the whole society in Turkey is. From the military to imams to university professors, there is a chain of command founded on fear, obedience and a readiness to receive orders.

Masculinity is performative indeed.⁸ Inside the morgue, I was my mother's daughter, again doing the most sensible thing, refusing to wear gloves (my mother did not wash us with gloves on), talking to her, kissing and caressing her body and teasing her about the journey she and father took from Yalova to Ankara. I was actually having a good time when I heard Madame Imam ordering me to stay away from the corpse. 'Do not touch,' she said in such a tone that I immediately froze. Above and beyond doubt, she was the commander in chief with the hose in her hand. I was told not to touch not only because my mother was a martyr, but touching the body of a martyr is the worst sin in Allah's eyes. To decipher the irrefutable nationalist Islamic common sense in this instant, one has to remember that the Turkish military has been in a civil war with the PKK, the Kurdish guerrilla group fighting for independence. To reach the height of martyrdom has the resonance of Turkish soldiers who die for the indomitable, indivisible integrity of the Turkish state, military and the nation. According to this belief, the bodies of martyrs have a transcendental value which guarantees a special place in heaven.

I do not know what a soldier does when faced with an enemy soldier. In that room, although Madame Imam was in command, I was in the presence of my mother. My mother would have strongly disapproved of my getting into a fierce argument with Madame Imam, not because she is a religious authority but because my mother always felt uncomfortable in aggressive settings. 'Madame Imam,' I said, 'she is my mother, I love her dearly and I would kindly request that we co-operate.' Without waiting for her response, I started undressing my mother, assuring her that everything was all right and that she need not be upset. Madame Imam agreed, but she ordered me to go out and find a nail polish remover. All her life, my mother took special care of her hands and feet. Her body, brought from under tons of rubble, came with the gift of beautifully manicured fingers and pedicured toes. But Madame Imam could not receive the gift because

not only is nail polish a sin, it is also a mortal sin for a woman to be buried with it. I received my mother's body as a gift and gave in to Madame Imam. I assumed my militaristic stance, marched outside, ordered one of the male relatives to find nail polish remover and walked inside to resume my childish and joyful work.

By embracing and kissing my mother's body, I created a singular feminine narcissism in my imagination; turning her uterus into the country I came from, her breasts and lips the last belonging I had for my mother tongue, and her face spoke tranquilly the simple naked truth about death. By the time we wrapped her body, I was convinced that my mother and I had had a happy, joyful relationship in just the way we had always been mother, daughter, friend and muse. Our relationship was not dependent on my father, but neither was it independent of him.

My narcissism was spacious enough to enjoy his presence. I was not to let him go without performing our ritual before journeys: embracing each other for an atemporal duration, giving mutual advice about things not to be forgotten – documents, money, tickets, eye-glasses – wishing each other happy times and the opportunity to travel in Allah's protection: *A Dieu*.⁹ My father's body was in a collective room in the morgue. The officials tried to stop me, out of Islamic protective masculine/feminine concern that I would be sick if I saw his body. But, by then, my 'tragic heroine' act was known to a few men, including the head imam, whose special permission gave me a restricted visitation right.

I was not to demand the unwrapping of the cloth. In the head imam's words: 'I believe you when you say he is your father, I respect that. But our religion ... I mean ... you ... well.' The law that the head imam could not spell out clearly was: 'Our religion prohibits a daughter to look at her father's naked body.' To touch my father's naked body was inconceivable. I do not know if there is any religion which permits such an act, but this religion of the head imam was so prohibitive that it did not permit him to speak directly to a woman. I was amazed by how shy, embarrassed and awkward he was. I felt as if my aggressive presence was causing him grave suffering. I realized once again that masculinity in its most segregated, prohibitive mode is the same as feminine subordination, submission and oppression. My masculine triumph to win a restricted visitation right was due to the head imam's feminine, shy curiosity.

My short visit to the collective morgue room was accompanied by the head imam and a few male morgue officials who kept watching me and my father. I kissed my father's face, embraced his body and wished him a joyful journey. At that moment I decided to enjoy myself. I turned to the spectators and told them that I saw a smile on my father's lips. They

were like little children, slightly intimidated but curious. A few came and affirmed in Allah's name. I decided to pursue this game and told them that my father was a holy man, at which they nodded and affirmed in a few Arabic statements, which I did not understand. I was rewarded for being the daughter of a holy man. A morgue official told me that he would be glad if I performed his task: to write down my parents' names and attach them to the wrapped bodies.

I must admit: at a young age, my phallic consciousness was shaped by a peculiar, recurring sequence of my mother's no, my father's yes, my mother's yielding to my father's yes and my father's repeating my mother's favourite statement: '*Baba, baba degil, sam babasi*' (the father is not a real father, but a father made of pastry). My mother's no and my father's yes were two sides of masculine/feminine authority which would eventually lead to the affirmation of my father's authority. My mother always gave in to that authority. Years later, she confided in me that a father made of pastry was also a husband made of love. I never had a chance to ask them how on earth they managed to create a playground of love and laughter in the midst of strict gender codes shaped by Islamic prohibitions. Yet, there they were in the morgue of a state hospital in the middle of a national calamity, consenting to my childish dissidence.

The playful bond with my father must have been engraved in my unconscious. Months after the funerals I was still sulking; I wanted to wash my father's body before the burial, but my male relatives did not let me. I was inconsolable. Then one night I had a dream: my father was wearing his swim suit from thirty-five years earlier, sitting on a stool in our old bathroom which in real life was fashioned after a mini *hamam* with a marble water container (*kurna*) for warm water. I was a child with loose panties, who could barely reach the marble water container, which was closer to my height, and I was throwing water at my father's body. Could this be Lacan's veiled phallus? To me the real authority has always been my sister, not my parents. The next day I happily reported my deed to her. By then, she and I had developed alternating performative tasks of priesthood, listening to each other's confessions, of the wise sage who, by listening, helped the young apprentice develop knowledge of the self, and of the mother/father who repeated the same neurotic, obsessive traits of our parents in self-awareness. She and I had a serious argument as to which swim suit my father was wearing in my dream. Was it the one he wore in the summer we went to Amasra, or the one he wore when we went to that beach in Istanbul? No, not that beach, but the other in Istanbul. To this day I do not know whose solemncholy we inherited.

Bon Dieu, Mr President! The playful relationship with my father is only one side of the otherwise infinitely layered, universal and particular expressions of masculinity. My parents' funeral was on a Friday. A male relative told me that the more crowded the mosque was, the more prayers my parents would receive, and the more points for good behaviour I would get from Allah. He was adamant about his calculation, giving me comparative numbers of total prayers and their proportional value, which would surely take my parents to heaven. To me his remarks meant two things. One, in the age of globalization, this must be a petty bourgeois investment in heaven, collecting prayers individually and multiplying them by the holiest of all holy mosques in the city on the holiest day of the week.¹⁰ Two, in the self-sacrificial universe of any religion, the more one suffers for a greater cause than oneself, the more docile one gets. The holiest mosque and the cemetery are far away from each other. In a city when traffic is always jammed during all hours, our ticket to heaven implied that we ought to fight against distance and time under the hot blazing sun.

Instead of choosing the holiest of all holy mosques, I chose the most spacious at the centre of the city, with a large open plaza, thinking we could have some privacy in paying our last respects. Alas, on a hot summer day at noon, there were at least twenty earthquake funerals taking place at the same time. For the first time in my life, I saw women hitting the coffins with their fists, losing control, hitting their heads and hurting themselves. Advocates of multiculturalism call for tolerance, but I was not to tolerate this self-tormenting group next to my mother's coffin. In a violent setting, the more one tries to escape violence, the more violent one becomes. I wanted my parents' coffins to lie side by side so we can gather and cry in our own familial way, but the head imam, the second imam in charge and distant relatives nearby enforced prohibitive Islamic laws one after another. One, a male and female coffin could not be put side by side. Two, Friday prayer is only for men; my mother's coffin ought to be put aside. Three, I was offending Allah, my parents and relatives. Four, I was obstructing funeral procedures. Five, I ought to be taken away.

Holy places are known for their unexpected miracles. In the middle of a furious fight about to get physical, all the imams started running in panic in the same direction. The President came to the mosque to attend one of the funerals. When the imams left the scene, with the help of my father's friends we managed to put the coffins side by side. But privacy, even in the familial form, was too much to ask for. The presence of the then President Suleyman Demirel implied that the prayers and preaching were unduly long, geared to media coverage, and I was to listen to my parents' names listed among other martyrs of the earthquake through loud

speakers. The mosque was so crowded and noisy that I walked from one end of the open plaza to the other, screaming from the top of my lungs and not a single person turned to look at me. That particular moment in the eternal instant of performing my last duty was the climax of madness, doing the unthinkable, screaming in the open plaza of a mosque on a Friday and not being heard or noticed.

Islamic masculinity, will you please stand up?

The mosque gathering was a wholesome but incomplete representation of existing forms of masculinity in Turkey. In our familial gathering, there were women and men over the age of fifty who, in tears and panic, reclaimed my father as their father and older brother. In the meantime my father's sisters were mourning quietly. They lost both their older brother and their sister. My youngest aunt and I embraced each other, not knowing whose loss we were grieving most. At the time, I was not conscious of the fact that, in the same earthquake, I had lost my childhood friends, their parents and children vacationing in the same summer complex.

I received a formal handshake from a stranger, who later turned out to be our paternal lawyer shielding us with his body and using his expertise and connections to protect us from the endless bureaucracy concerning my parents' deaths. Our lawyer also assumed the role of a father, giving me advice about the outcomes of yelling at everybody regardless of rank in government offices. I am still under his tutelage, apprenticing in masculinity and in bureaucracy. The golden rule, I am told, is to look sad, say my parents died in the earthquake and give in to the mercy of the petty administrator. Pity is the surest way to receive 'public service', be it a signature among infinite signatures in the labyrinth of bureaucracy, or an official seal confirming that the death occurred in the earthquake. The silver rule is to recognize that the endemic legitimacy crisis of the state needs to be reproduced in begging for mercy.

What is the difference between a citizen in state bureaucracy and a beggar on the street who looks sad, tells you about her family misfortune and asks for money for Allah's sake? In bureaucracy, the citizen has two options: to beg, using all the means of emotional manipulation, or to steal by means of local patronage networks. Either way it is the victim syndrome, recurring in an eternal loop of the victim victimizing the victimized. There is no way out of the guilty conscience shared between the petty administrator and the victim of the earthquake other than calling for Allah's mercy. In the absence of the state, in whose name all these bureaucratic procedures are undertaken, Allah becomes the only helper to soothe the bad conscience of the state functionary and the citizen.

But of course, in my parents' funeral rite at the mosque, the state was present in all its absent grandeur. There were cameramen, policemen, bodyguards and imams, all running after the President, the father of the nation,¹¹ who was pulling nationalist tricks out of his hat and turning all of us 'victims of an earthquake' into transcendental beings as relatives of people who died for the state. The head imam was preaching about the evils of political Islam, terrorism, traffic accidents, and other sinful acts, which threaten the well-being of our beloved nation.¹² In the meantime, some people who lost their loved ones in the earthquake were cursing at contractors and building companies, declaring them criminals who ought to be hanged. The death penalty, at the time, was a topical issue because of the nationally constructed hysteria about Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK brought to Turkey to be tried on charges of national treason and murder of 'innocent babies and women'. Hence, within the national imagination, hanging was regarded as the short cut to seek redress for any injustice, be it an earthquake or a war. Missing in this wholesome gathering were a few military officials. Their absence, however, did not make this a civil gathering because the soul of the nation was as religious as it was militaristic.

The spiritual family Writing in 1882 against the principles of blood and soil in German nationalism, Ernest Renan argued that 'a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle' which results from 'the complications of history', 'the common possession of a rich legacy of memories' and finds its expression in the present in 'the common will' and 'the consent on the clearly expressed desire that common life should continue'. In his conception, a nation is a spiritual family founded on memories of sacrifice, devotion and common suffering. These memories leave their mark in the moral conscience (Renan 1996: 57–9). In Turkey, the soul of the nation is deeply religious, patriarchal, misogynistic and militaristic. At the same time, though, this 'spiritual family' is forever schizophrenic and undecided about its past and present. This being the case, the love of the land, state, Islam and nation present a rich medley of paradoxical articulations.

Before attending to each of these, I would like to recall Fanon's (1968) distinction between the official ideology of nationalism and nationalist consciousness. In Turkey, the former dates back to the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and is referred to as Kemalist ideology, promoted by the military, the state elite and the 'secular, modern' sections of society. Nationalist consciousness, on the other hand, is a much broader category, closer to what Renan calls the moral conscience. In Turkey, nationalist consciousness is articulated by both the left, revolutionary groups of the

1960 and 1970s, and the right, religious groups actively involved in politics in the present conjuncture. The nationalist conscience in the current political/social conjuncture remains an enigma to the extent that it opposes and overlaps with the official state-centred Kemalist ideology. One of the difficulties of isolating Islamic masculinity in this context is that Islam is the bond that unites different nationalist articulations and at the same time it is the contested terrain of political struggle between state-centred groups and Islamicist ones.¹³

Underlying the enigmatic nature of the nationalist conscience is the dictum 'I must come to hate what I love, in the same moment, at the instant of granting this death' (Derrida 1995: 64). This love/hate relationship dates back to the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, which came into existence by granting death to the Ottoman Empire. In the official nationalist ideology of the early Republican years, the Islamic Ottoman tradition was constructed as the hate object. To start anew, cultural reforms were enacted with the net result of changing the alphabet, introducing a new language, and imposing a new lifestyle, which included changes in dress codes, fashion, music, education and the arts (Toprak 1981). All these reforms were enacted by means of laws. What is puzzling in the break from the Ottoman tradition is that, although the abolition of the caliphate was taken as the first step towards the construction of the Turkish state as secular, the means of change remained squarely within the Islamic Ottoman tradition.

More specifically, the Arabic word '*din*', which in Turkish came to be known as religion, also means faith and denotes the moral law. Freedom of conscience in the Ottoman tradition was granted from within the Islamic moral law. The secular Republican state did not abolish the moral, cultural, traditional aspects of Sunni/Hanefi orthodox Islam but instead introduced regulations as the right, lawful way of practising religion. Thus, laws and freedom of conscience came to be enforced from within the moral power of the secular state. To this day, the state and the military maintain their moral power. Any political challenge or resistance to the inseparable entity of state/military is construed from within the pervasive and persuasive moral context of the enemies of the state/military/nation.

If the first continuity from the Ottoman past was to preserve the moral power of the state, the second heritage is to identify the whole civic society with the collective consciousness of a community. The word '*millet*' in Ottoman denoted a religious community, as well as a nation. In the Turkish Republic, '*millet*' came to be known as the secular Turkish nation. With the continuation of the patrilineal, patriarchal Ottoman system, the secular Turkish nation came to be identified as a particular type of a collective

whole: the spiritual family. Hence, not only a political challenge is again construed in moral terms as an act of defiance in the family/community, but also it is rehabilitated from within the collective consciousness and moral conscience. Repentance is the most frequently used form of rehabilitation since the 1960s' revolutionary movements.

Serif Mardin, who has written extensively on the social and political constitution of Islam both in the contexts of the Ottoman Empire and of the Turkish Republic, addresses part of this problem in the following way: 'Republican laicism was [...] a Janus like affair: on the progressive side the Caliphate was eliminated in 1924, but on the other, platoon practice in officer training in the 1950s still culminated with the storming of a hill with cries of Allah, Allah' (Mardin 1971: 238; see also Mardin 1977). I am not in a position to explain the common bond between the Sunni Orthodox Islam and the Turkish military, except to note that within the nationalist conscience, the military is constructed as an object of faith, love for the nation and the state. It has a transcendental existence, founded upon a collective belief. The specific articulations of this faith in the military are provided by the politically tailored legacies from the national war of independence in the 1920s. In the post-Cold War era, the Turkish nation still looks up to the military not so much for national defence against foreign invasion (though the possibility of a Greek invasion is always kept alive within the nationalist imagination), but as a transcendental protective power. Moreover, in the current struggle between the secular, modern groups and politically active Islamic groups, the military projects itself as the guardian of secular, Republican, Kemalist principles.

The masculinity of the 'new woman' The enigmatic, complex relationships between Islam, state, nation and the military find their particular expressions in the specific context of gender roles. The problem is the one-sided view which focuses on the pivotal role played by women in the construction of the new nation. On this issue, we are again faced with ambiguities resulting from the problematic aspect of the break from the Ottoman tradition.

On the one hand, the legal, administrative and cultural reforms aimed at creating an ideal, pro-Western, educated, professional woman as the prototype of the new Republic; on the other, traditionally, Islamic gender roles for women remained intact in both the official ideology of nationalism and its different articulations. The predominant discourse on this transformation is that the break from the Ottoman Empire brought a pro-Western, secular attitude at the level of state and society. When the pro-Western, secular character of the Turkish Republic is examined in con-

trast with Arab Middle Eastern countries, Turkey appears as the champion of women's rights and Arab countries as the site where women's rights remained within the Islamic gender relations (Cagatay and Soysal 1995: 269; Ahmed 1984). This contrast between the pro-Western, secular Turkey and Arab Middle Eastern countries with 'a stronger Islamic identity' creates a false dichotomy whereby Islamic influences in both Turkish society and the official nationalist ideology of Kemalism need to be re-problematized over and over again (Jayawardena 1988; Kandiyoti 1977, 1987, 1991).

In investigating the historical lineage of a repressive gender regime, Kandiyoti refers to men of letters in the nineteenth century. She argues that at the time of the Tanzimat Charter,¹⁴ male novelists were in 'a form of [...] rebellion against Ottoman patriarchy in the family; [they] no longer wanted arranged marriages, controlled and manoeuvred by their older female relatives, they desired romantic involvement and love, educated wives with whom they could have intellectual communication, a social life where the sexes could mingle freely without the fear of scandal and gossip' (Kandiyoti 1991: 310).

Naila Minai makes a similar argument about the most prominent male writers from the Tanzimat period to the early 1900s. She argues that Tanzimat writers published books and articles defending women's rights to go to school and to practise various professions. Following the formation of the constitutional governments in 1876 and 1908, bolder demands were made. Halil Hamit demanded women's suffrage in 1910; Celal Nuri wanted the abolition of polygamy; Ahmet Agaoglu called for women's emancipation along with public education, which he considered the most important prerequisite for progress in the Islamic world. Minai examines these demands for women's rights in conjunction with travel accounts of Arab writers from the fourteenth century, the British women living in Istanbul at the time of Tanzimat, and the personal life of Zeyneb Hanim in Istanbul at the turn of the century. The point where reform-minded male attention to women's rights and the personal accounts of women meet is Pierre Loti's novel *Les Désenchantées* (1906), 'which describes the malaise of a Turkish woman [Zeyneb Hanim] whose brain had leaped to the twentieth century while her body remained imprisoned by medieval customs' (Minai 1981: 47-52).

This schizophrenic split between the mind and body is a heritage of an ahistorical male gaze to both male and female sexuality. In Turkey it has been reincarnated in different disguises since the Tanzimat period. If it were possible to strip layers from the contradictory gender roles and public images of women in Republican Turkey, the characteristic feature of the masculinity of the 'new woman' is the schizophrenic split between her brain and her body. While the brain has been governed by Republican

modern values, the body has been repressed by the collective consciousness of the family, community, and by specific national and Islamic values. In that respect, the masculinity of the new woman contains: motherhood as the most sacred status in Islam and motherhood construed from within the Republican ideology, comrade women from both the Qur'anic perspective and that of nationalist independence. As to asexual, professional women, it dates back to an idealized interpretation of the Enlightenment idea of an all-knowing intellect that knows by means of an undiluted virgin reason embodied in the mind. In each of these contradictory articulations, the masculinity of the ideal new woman is at the same time the suppression of male sexuality.

Before attending to this universal-particular construction of masculinity, we need to recall the enigmatic nature of the nationalist consciousness, shaped by the spiritual family of Islam, state, military and nation as a moral collectivity. The pervasive nature of this wholesome familiarity is to be found in the left revolutionary gaze of women as well. Fatmagül Berktaş draws attention to the recurring theme of the repression of female gender in the context of the revolutionary politics of the 1960s and the 1970s. She notes that the revolutionary discourse has borrowed an Islamic notion, *fitna* (discord), and a national/cultural notion, *bacı* (sister), in producing an image of women introducing discord into the revolutionary unity and solidarity as well as unsexed, depersonalized comrades. The net effect of this articulation was to justify the control and supervision of women (Berktaş 1995: 252, 260).¹⁵

There are too many continuities between this specific gender repression and the existing repression in the current political conjuncture. To name the predominant trends: first, the revolutionary unity was maintained in part by strict dress codes for women and in other part by the suppression of male and female sexuality. Any trace of femininity, sexual attraction, dating, falling in love is considered bourgeois. Disciplinary action was taken within the confines of revolutionary solidarity. At present, this has been reincarnated in political Islam in another disguise. It imposes dress codes for women, proper moral codes of conduct within Sharia (e.g. a man does not shake hands with a woman) legitimated within a combative mind-set against corrupt Western values. The militancy of the revolutionary left of the 1960s and that of Islamic groups in the 1990s have striking parallels in guerrilla organizations, in constructing images of self-sacrificial male heroes willing to die for the cause, and militant women as sisters of the wider community devoted to a transcendental destiny.

The second similarity between the 1960s and today is the systematic use of torture under police custody. Those subjected to torture in the

past were left on their own to deal with the resulting physical, emotional and psychological trauma. Women and men were expected to be stoic on this issue. Nowadays, youth subjected to torture talk openly about the treatment they undergo. They become news items in the daily press and media in a skilful way so that the public is informed about the existence of torture but somehow it is not perceived from within the collective national conscience. The familial collective body, exhibiting deep emotional and emphatic bonds with the nation, does not take offence or feel injured by the existence of torture. The systemic nationalist silence on torture breaks the existing forms of masculinity. This silence, in fact, introduces another dimension of masculinity founded on the worthlessness of male and female bodies. While all other forms of masculinity give a value to the human body, torture violates all values.

The third parallel between the past and the present is to construct media images of 'terrorist' females. In the 1970s, a woman nicknamed Leila Khalid was portrayed as a militant, trained in military camps in Palestine. Today there are too many of them. Each time such a woman is captured or put under police investigation, the media interview her father who invariably says either that his daughter is innocent and the truth will be revealed in due time or that she should be punished in the way the state deems just.

The endemic problem in this repressive gender regime is the fixed focus on the physical appearance and public performance of women, be it in the form of revolutionary or Islamic dress codes, or in the images of a terrorist woman, a militant Islamic woman. This, on the one hand, contributes to the suppression and manipulation of female sexuality and, on the other, continues to reproduce more contradictory images of masculine women, such as a dangerous terrorist woman, who is also the daughter of a law-abiding man, or a well-educated woman, coming from a well-to-do family and who happens to be a militant's lover.

Whose solemncholy is this? If the gender regime since the 1920s produced an ideal Republican woman and her devilish counterpart as a potential seductress, militant, terrorist and revolutionary type, what types of men did it produce? First, the utmost importance is given to physical outlook produced by men in military uniforms, in Western suits, in revolutionary, guerrilla outfits with the moustache as the sign of masculinity, the salon man of Paris in artistic circles, Islamic spiritual leaders with specifically-grown beards in traditional outfits. Men's outlook has been subjected to self-supervision. In a protest against the revival of the 'Islamic beard and moustache', several secular men shaved their beards and moustaches on behalf of Western, modern values. On the other side, the political rivalry

between PKK and Hizbullah led to a peculiar punishment: while one group shaved the beards of rival group members by force, the members whose beards were shaven shaved half of the moustaches of the other group in front of their wives.

Second, as to the national demands put on the ideal man of the Republic, he is obliged to be circumcised, do military service, and be subjected to varying hierarchical ranks in the family, at work and in society. He is also expected to be an obedient son, the breadwinner of the household, the patriarchal self-sacrificial man ready to suffer for a cause greater than himself, be it the nation, Islam or a revolutionary change. At the same time he is to protect the honour of his sister, mother, wife and female comrade. In the absence of an older male, he is to be the paternal figure protecting and supervising the female members of the family. Like the petty administrator in state bureaucracy, the power of these men is always determined by the presence of a grander absence. They are victims and victimizers at the same time.

Third, the ideal, professional man of the Republic is expected to subject himself to the schizophrenic split between his brain and his body. He has to believe in progress, science and professional achievement as a sign of his complete devotion to the national project set by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He is also expected to be a complete stranger to his own body and instead subject himself to the conventional regimes of sexual regulation. The well-known conventions include scientific/medical knowledge about male and female reproductive organs, myths about an omni-sexual, over-eroticized female body, myths about free sex in Europe, 'news and information' provided in pornographic magazines, competitive standards set for the size of the penis, and the record number of times a man can have sexual intercourse in one day.¹⁶

As if unsure of his manhood, the ideal man has to prove himself to himself by taking part in any one or all of these conventional, recreational activities. These conventions produce an over-sexed man in appearance, with an insecure, boyish, shy outlook. Most ideal men are deeply devoted to their mothers.

The ideal man of the Republic is a cultural icon and a product of gender segregation in high schools, military and family. What is Islamic about this man? What needs to be problematized is the complex relationship between language, body and orthodox Islamic practices. Language is a precarious issue in general, and also subject to particular political manipulations in terms of cultural essentialism, authenticity and protection of some sacred traditional values. What is being manipulated in this regard is access to history, memory and sexuality.

The endemic problem in Turkey is the rupture brought by cultural reforms and a series of abrupt changes in language in the 1920s and the 1930s. Turkish grammar does not have masculine and feminine features; instead, genders are described in metaphors. The love for the nation is ambiguous and undecided. The land is our mother (*anavatan*) whose honour, esteem and outlook depend on the exemplary actions of a prototypical, masculine citizenship. The land is also our father because the land, the state and the military are often inseparable. Islam in this undecided stance complicates the situation. In Islam Allah is neither male nor female. As my grandmother used to say, 'Allah does not have a sex, and all there is to know is that Allah loves everybody equally.' Since my childhood, however, Allah has been through several interpretations, translations and transliterations.

The end: go in laughter

Citing from the Qur'an, Fatna Sabbah argues that human beings are imprisoned in the process of birth, life and death, whereas God is above and beyond being born and giving birth. The omnipotence of God is attributed to its infinity in its own rhythm, accompanied by mercy, forgiveness, compassion, generosity, wisdom and all-awareness (Sabbah 1992: 118, 136, 137). Those who, in all-awareness, imprison themselves in birth, imprison their death in fear. I came to this life via my mother's birth canal, aided by my father as the midwife of my mother's delivery. I listened to my father telling the same story over and over again, until I was convinced there was no mystery left in my birth. At the end I accepted their unexpected deaths when I heard my father telling me that there was no need to think any more. 'We are dead,' he said, and I believed him. But I was upset. 'Why didn't you tell me that you were going to die?' I said. 'We wanted to surprise you,' said my mother. 'Are you two still together there?' I asked in surprise. 'Yes,' they said, 'until you let us go.' So I let them go in laughter, reluctantly, in tears, smiles, thinking perhaps they will meet Kierkegaard there. Who knows? 'Possibility is like offering a child some treat: the child straightaway says yes, but then there's the question of whether the parents will give their consent – and as it is with parents, so it is with necessity' (Kierkegaard 1989: 67). So as it is with parents, aunts and uncles, friends, their children and parents, it is with necessity that I embrace life in laughter. Momentarily.

Notes

- 1 For an explanation of this logic, see Bataille (1992).
- 2 Elsewhere I investigated the negative logic of death in the context of

masculine conceptions of time, temporality and memory, all of which construe death as loss. The will to death in this logic is to be found in the speed of life and the dizziness caused by socially driven modes of efficiency, productivity, self-discipline on the one hand and by the politically and religiously constructed calls for a return to an 'origin' on the other (Helvacioğlu 1999: 98–105).

3 This is the 'modern' rite recognized by the secular state and practised in cities by 'moderns' – the professionals, middle to high income groups, and by those categorized as secular in the political, social rift between Islamicists and seculars in the current conjuncture. Since 1998, there has been an unresolved debate over women praying side by side with men. The debate is often resolved in the actual site of the mosque and the cemetery where, after considerable aggression, the decision depends on the collective consciousness of the particular community involved in the funeral rite.

4 In Turkish there are expressions which concern the all-mighty, all-knowing, forgiving, giving, understanding, helping, reasoning nature of Allah. In this case, the Prime Minister's words '*Allah yardımınız olsun*' translate as 'May Allah help those who have relatives in the earthquake region'.

5 According to Freud, the question 'Who do you love most, Daddy or Mummy?' accompanies the child throughout life. The child initially enters into the contradiction of an either/or opposition but later in life reaches a satisfying resolution by acknowledging unequal demands from both the mother and the father (Freud 1957: 128).

6 Deniz Kandiyoti explains this situation as follows: 'since the state itself uses local patronage networks and sectional rivalries in its distributive system, citizens also turn to their primary agencies of the state to compensate for or take advantage of inefficient administration' (Kandiyoti 1992: 387).

7 Masculine protest 'means over-compensation in the direction of aggression and restless striving for triumphs'. 'Adler considered the masculine protest to be active in normal as well as neurotic mental life [...] The masculine protest was a feature of women's psychology as well as men's, but overdetermined by women's social subordination' (Connell 1995: 16).

8 Judith Butler argues that gender is performative, which suggests two things. One, that the performance retroactively produces 'the illusion that there [is] an inner gender core [...] when there is no gender "expressed" by actions, gestures and speech'. Two, 'there are clearly workings of gender that do not show in what is performed as gender, and the reduction of the psychic workings of the literal performance of gender would be a mistake'. In psychoanalysis, 'what is exteriorized or performed can be understood only through reference to what is barred from the performance, what cannot or will not be performed' (Butler 1995: 31–2).

9 The two expressions my father used before journeys were *Allahaismarladik* and *Allah'a emanet*, both of which translate as *A Dieu*.

10 'Devoid of imagination, as the petty bourgeois always is, he lives within a certain orbit of trivial experience as to how things come about, what is possible, what usually happens, no matter whether he is a tapster or a prime minister. This is the way in which the petty bourgeois has lost himself and God' (Kierkegaard 1989: 71).

11 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, is regarded as the father of the nation. In the existing political climate, if Atatürk is the transcendental father whose soul and spirit govern the official national ideology, the President of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, is the father of the nation in a human form. He has the nickname of a father, and acts like a father in social and political settings.

12 Shortly before the earthquake, mosques were given orders to talk about the danger of traffic accidents. The head imam must have been reading the text given to him by an authority. Since the times of the Ottoman Empire, mosques have traditionally been centres of education. In the current climate they are used by the state, politically active Islamic groups and by state-sponsored feminist groups.

13 I examined the parameters of this struggle in 'Allahü Ekber, We are Turks' (Helvacıoğlu 1996). Here it is important to specify the type of Islam being contested. The majority of the population in Turkey is Sunni and within the Sunni tradition they belong to Hafezi school. The minority Islamic groups are Alevis and Bektasis. Alevis make up about 30 per cent of the Kurdish population.

14 The Tanzimat Charter was launched in 1839 with a decree providing for the protection of life, property and honour as fundamental rights. It paved the way for the abolition of slavery and the elimination of concubinage system. The next reform was undertaken in 1856 with the Islahat Charter aimed at formal equality before the law. For further details of these charters and constitutional governments in 1876 and 1908, see Özücü (1996: 92–3).

15 On the question of the relationship between the revolutionary politics and women's issues, also see Sirman (1989: 16).

16 My young friends tell me that cyber-sex is also very exciting.

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