Representations of sexual trauma and the potential for recovery: The case of Elif Şafak's trauma fiction

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3. LOST IN TIME, LOST IN LIFE

> …everything could return to the past, and the old somehow does not grow old...time did not necessarily proceed in a straight line from yesterday, through today, and into the future. Sometimes it went forwards and sometimes it went backwards: sometimes it walked and sometimes it stood still; it staggered about drunkenly.[285]
>
> Elif Şafak

Of all the books Elif Şafak has written so far, perhaps the one that stands out the most is *Mahrem,*[286] which has been translated into English as *The Gaze.*[287] The novel is like a puzzle—it is difficult to read and the story is equally difficult to grasp. Reading it is like taking a journey through time and space with the characters. There are stories within stories, and each subsidiary story is like a bus stop that sweeps the reader into the main story, which starts in Istanbul in the year 1999. The reader is then swept back and forth between Siberia in 1648, France in 1868, and Istanbul in 1885 and 1999, respectively. In other words, the book ends where it starts, so it is a circular journey. During this journey, the reader encounters numerous characters, sometimes realistic and sometimes magical, as well as realistic and magical occurrences. If not read carefully, one might think that the stories exist independently of one another. But Şafak demands careful readers. While reading the stories individually does not reveal much about the book as a whole, if you look at the big picture by following the contours of the traces and seeing the connections between the characters, images, and narratives, they become meaningful. Each story, character, and recurrent image in the book is a piece of the puzzle, revealing the traumatic pasts and unconscious preoccupations of all the protagonists.

[285] Elif Shafak, *The Gaze*, trans. by Brendan Freely (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 191.
[286] Elif Şafak, *Mahrem* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010).
[287] Shafak, *The Gaze*.

The main protagonist is an obese woman who is constantly aware of the curious and judgmental gazes of the people who gawk at her because she is so overweight. She is never named but rather is referred to as "Fatty" throughout the book, in which she narrates her life with her dwarf lover. Like Fatty, he too is unnamed—even Fatty does not know his real name. Everyone simply calls him B-C, which is derived from the Turkish word *cüce*, meaning "dwarf." During his childhood, children make fun of him by calling him *cüce-büce*. B-C, originating from *cüce-büce,* thus replaces his real name.[288] Fatty and B-C never go out together because Fatty gets irritated by how people look at them: a huge, fat woman and her dwarf lover. In contrast, B-C does not mind that people look at his small body, as exemplified by the fact that he works as a nude model for art students.

As Fatty narrates her childhood, the reader learns that she was raped orally by a stranger when she was a child. After this traumatic event, she cannot stop eating; she washes her mouth out frequently and vomits up everything she eats. It is clear that her obesity is a result of her trauma because she wants to get rid of the taste of semen in her mouth. This makes Fatty's body an indicator of her trauma. As Laurie Vickroy points out, "Trauma writers make the suffering body the small, focused universe of the tormented and a vehicle for rendering unimaginable experience tangible to readers."[289] Şafak reveals that the effects of childhood trauma mark Fatty both psychologically and physically. She becomes an isolated person, serving the judgmental eyes of the people in her lonely life.

Fatty's story, which she relates herself, is the main narrative in the book. Apart from Fatty, the reader is also presented with the story of Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi, which is told by an external narrator who is also a focalizer. Unlike Fatty and B-C, whose names the reader never learns, Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi has four names, each of which has a story of its own. Keramet, mumi and keşke mean "miracle,"[290] "waxy,"[291] and "if only,[292] respectively. Memiş is a truncated form of the Turkish name Mehmet,[293] which in turn is a shortened form of the name of the Prophet Muhammet.

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[288] Ibid., 238. *Cüce-büce* is translated as "itty-bitty" in the English version of the book.
[289] Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Pres, 2002), 33.
[290] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 34.
[291] "Oxford Dictionaries." Accessed October 18, 2016, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/waxy
[292] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 37.
[293] "Türk Dil Kurumu." Accessed 18.10.2016,

Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi lives in Istanbul approximately one hundred years before Fatty and B-C. His story includes magical elements. For example, he was created out of wax and initially he had no facial features, so his aunt draws eyes, nose and a mouth on his face to make him look normal. But he still looks like a freak, and he can sense that people stare at him. He has a circus in which he exhibits strange-looking creatures, such as a sable-boy, which is half sable, half human.

The main issues that will be addressed in this chapter are the elements that make *The Gaze* a work of trauma fiction. Is it the plot, the structure, or both? What narrative techniques does Şafak employ in the novel? Bearing those questions in mind, I will first analyze how Şafak reveals the childhood trauma of Fatty and analyze the psychological, physical, and social effects of the sexual abuse Fatty suffers in her childhood. Fatty says, "My life was a bulky clock that had been left for broken in a corner... It was struggling like crazy to make up for having been left behind for so long."[294] Her description makes it clear that it is as if time does not pass in her life. It stopped at the moment of the trauma and she is stuck in that moment. Discussing the trauma of Holocaust survivors, Ernst van Alphen notes, "Many survivors still live *in* the situation of the camp, a fact that precludes the possibility of distance from it. For them, the past of the Holocaust continues still."[295] The traumatic past continues to exist in the present. Fatty's description of her life and her inevitable return to the traumatic event over and over again reveal that her trauma is not yet distanced from her life.

After that, I will focus on repetitions and the recurrence of certain images which symbolize the reenactment of trauma. The roles they play in the representation of trauma cannot be underestimated in *The Gaze.* They are influential, and they reveal much about Fatty's trauma. For example, hearing someone counting from one to three makes Fatty break out in a sweat and feel stressed out and helpless. She reacts in that way because her assaulter forced her to count from one to three before he raped her. In the novel there are a lot of images that are cherry-red, which is a reminder of the cherry tree she used to climb in her childhood. One day, while looking out the window, Fatty narrates what she sees:

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http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_kisiadlari&arama=anlami&uid=5420&guid=TDK.GTS.5c5f18da71b926.75238462,
Mehmet is the Turkish pronunciation of the Arabic name Muhammed. Turkish people usually opt to use Mehmet instead of Muhammed out of respect for the Prophet Mohammed.

[294] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 83.

[295] Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 55.

> Like warm milk/ as it moves down her throat/ life/ softly sliding down and losing itself as it warms your insides/ in the moment/ a rancid taste/ perhaps the milk is spoiled/ she spat it out anxiously/ that disgusting stickiness/ it was the cream on the top of the milk/ it turned her stomach.[296]

The image of warm, foul-tasting milk is symbolic and it is repeated twice in the book.[297] It serves as a reminder of how she feels when her assaulter releases his semen into her mouth because it looks like milk, and she has to vomit. This represents another moment of traumatic reenactment. Jean-Michel Ganteau's postulations about recurrent images are revealing in this regard:

> The recurrence of such passages or motifs act as an efficient instance of realism of effect (as opposed to a more conventionally mimetic realism of aspect) in rhythmically performing the fixation to the moment of effraction, and therefore providing a sensorial image of the compulsion to return to the moment of fixation originally described by Freud and Ferenczi. Such structural stammering comes to saturate the narrative, lending it an obsessive, haunted quality, disrupting the transparency of mimetic representation, and in imitation of the effects of trauma, performing the symptoms of post-traumatic intensification.[298]

There are numerous examples of such repetitions that take the reader to the traumatic moment. For instance, there is a description of a husband and wife making love in France in 1868. When the man penetrates her, it is not her vagina but the skin of her lips that bleeds through her mouth: "After hanging on for so long, the skin of her lips finally fell away as the young man entered her. A thin, rosy ache ran down her mouth."[299] If we recall that Fatty is raped via the penetration of her assaulter's penis into her mouth, it is as if the narrator is referring to Fatty's childhood abuse. The narrator reminds the reader of Fatty's traumatic experience of rape through these small details. In other words, Şafak makes Fatty's trauma part of the structure of the book. Certain images, colors, and ideas are repeated over and over and thus are emphasized in the process. Şafak integrates the narration of trauma into the story in such a way that the construction of the novel resembles how trauma is embedded in the victim's memory.

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[296] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 11.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Michel Ganteau, "Trauma as the Negation of Autonomy," in Susana Onega & Michel Ganteau, eds., *Ethics and Trauma in British Fiction* (New York: Editions Rodopi, 2011), 115.
[299] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 132.

This chapter will thus examine in detail the narrative techniques that Şafak utilizes to evoke the traumatic event. Laurie Vickroy describes certain narrative devices that are used to represent trauma:

> Writers created a number of narrative strategies to represent a conflicted or incomplete relation to memory, including textual gaps (both in the page layout and content), repetition, breaks in linear time, shifting viewpoints, and a focus on visual images and affective states.[300]

Some of these devices can be found in *The Gaze*. First of all, time is not linear in the book. The narrative skips across time repeatedly, sometimes even on the same page. Secondly, at times Fatty's narration is written without commas or full stops, with words separated by a slash or a hyphen. Just like Fatty's shattered self, her narration is fragmented. Thirdly, there is more than one narrator in the book. It is unclear who narrates Memiş Efendi's story. First person narration and narration/focalization by an external narrator are used interchangeably. Laurie Vickroy offers an explanation for the significance of such changes: "The complexities of traumatic memory and a subject's difficult relation to the past are suggested by the use of multiple voices and positioning within characters or narrators as well as between them."[301] The use of multiple narrators and focalizers is indicative of the challenges that traumas impose on victims.

Another point I will examine in this chapter is the different ways Fatty tries to cope with trauma and whether she recovers from it. In this respect, I contend that the tale of Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi is made up by Fatty in her imaginary world as a recreation of the story of her lover and herself. Indeed, she reconstructs her life in order to deal with her trauma. A closer look at Fatty's story and the story of Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi reveals that B-C is recreated as Memiş Efendi. Moreover, each of the ugly characters displayed in Memiş Efendi's circus possess features particular to Fatty. In other words, these characters replace Fatty in the imaginary story. When Fatty replaces herself with nine characters rather than one, she is effectively fragmenting herself as a result of the trauma she suffered. This splitting of the self into multiple fragments is reminiscent of the defense mechanism that Sandor Ferenczi describes. He states that

[300] Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 29.
[301] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction,* 28.

under traumatic conditions, the self fragments itself into pieces to protect the whole.[302] In a similar way, Fatty recreates herself in Memiş Efendi's story as multiple characters. In addition to the similarities between the characters in these two stories, there are also shared locales. The place where Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's circus is held in 1888 is in the same location as the building in which Fatty and B-C live in 1999. In this way, B-C's and Fatty's home becomes Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's circus in the imaginary story. By creating this story, she dissociates herself from her trauma and reconstructs the past.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to the theme of God constantly watching people from the sky, day and night. An obsession with the idea of God watching over us all is a common motif in both *The Bastard of Istanbul* and *The Gaze.* In *The Gaze,* Fatty dreams several times that she is a balloon floating in the air. The image of a floating balloon has a significant and symbolic place in the novel. Every time she floats up into the sky in her dream, the balloon (actually herself) pops and falls towards the ground. She longs to go up into the sky to see if God really watches people or not, though she hopes he doesn't do so because she would not want anyone to have seen her being raped in her childhood. If nobody saw the rape, then it can be considered to have never happened; this is how she tries to heal herself. Nonetheless, if sharing trauma with a sympathetic listener is one of the paths to recovery, the more Fatty dissociates herself, the more she suffers from her trauma.

Traumatic Reenactments

> Sometimes...suddenly, out of the blue, we are wounded. But all wounds heal. In time, a scab forms and covers it. It hides itself. Because no wound wants to be seen.[303]

The child in the following passage is the protagonist Fatty:

> "Don't move," said the stranger, "Don't move at all, right? I am going to play a game with you, a counting game... You know how to count, don't you?" ....Of

[302] Sandor Ferenczi, *The Clinical Diary of Sandor Ferenczi*, Judith Dupont, ed. (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 112.
[303] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 146.

> course the child knew how to count: after a brief hesitation, she nodded her head... "Good for you! When I say 'one,' you are to close your eyes. When I say 'two,' you are to open them. The game is not over until I say 'three.' There is no leaving the coal shed until I say 'three.' Do you understand?"[304]

This scene includes the narration of the rape. Until this point, Fatty narrated her present life in Istanbul in 1999. The scene about the rape takes place in Istanbul in the 1980s. It is notable that Fatty depicts her present life from a first-person point of view, while her childhood memories, which include the rape, are related by an external narrator. Because this scene appears towards the end of the book, all of the traumatic reenactments that have taken place in Fatty's life become clear after the rape is narrated. The narration of her childhood memories and the rape is significant because traces of them are frequently seen in Fatty's later life.

One day when she is a child, she is playing hide-and seek with her friends. She hides in a coal shed in the back garden of the house next door. It is dark so she cannot see that there is a man waiting there. He is well-dressed and has shiny shoes. He asks her to play a counting game, as quoted at the beginning of this section. The man begins counting. "One!" the man says. "Close your eyes!"[305] he says, which she does, seized by fear. "Two!" the man says, and then: "Open your eyes!"[306] When she does so, this is what she sees:

> A piece of pink flesh. It was surrounded by very curly, very black hairs. It hung down among these hairs like the tongue of a thirsty animal. The piece of meat must have liked being looked at, because as the child looked at it, it raised its head. Very slowly, it was changing. It was becoming bigger, and longer, and thicker...She would never again play games with strangers in coal sheds. She already regretted taking part, and was waiting for three to liberate her...but before Three, the flesh arrived...It arrived and entered her mouth.[307]

Every detail in this narration is like a piece of the puzzle needed to complete the story.

From the beginning to the end of the book, the numbers one, two, and three are mentioned repeatedly. Each time they come up, Fatty begins sweating, feels anxious, and wants to eat something immediately. As an example of this, one day while she is on a minibus, a passenger asks a child who is sitting next to her with her mother, "'Come on, tell me do you know how to count?'…

[304] Ibid., 212.
[305] Ibid., 216.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 216-7.

The bug-eyed child starts stamping her feet. As she stamps her feet, her pudding-white socks, the teddy-bear ribbons in her hair, her thick strawberry-jam colored shoes, and her skinny legs...swing back and forth before my eyes."[308] The child starts counting "onetwothreeonetwothreeonetwothree..."[309] This causes a traumatic reenactment, as Fatty associates counting from one to three with the rape, and hence she relives the event. Trauma victims frequently experience traumatic reenactments, as noted by van der Kolk, a specialist in post-traumatic stress: "Traumatic memory is evoked under particular conditions. It occurs automatically in situations which are reminiscent of the original traumatic situation."[310] The question, "Do you know how to count?" is what the rapist had asked Fatty in the coal shed. The same question asked by the passenger and the child's counting are reminiscent of the rapist's question and counting during the rape. On the minibus, Fatty loses control and relives the traumatic experience, displaying traumatic symptoms as a result:

> My brain is throbbing...I want to get off and catch another minibus. No another minibus won't do...I can't tolerate any of them now...it is surely best to proceed on foot and eat something. A nice sausage sandwich with ketchup and potato salad would be good for my nerves. Perhaps a lemonade to go with it...I am hungry. But the traffic is heavy...But the child is ugly and bug-eyed, and the numbers are awful.[311]

The moment she experiences this traumatic reenactment, she wants to eat something because she wants to get rid of the bad taste—the taste of the rapist's semen—in her mouth. She says that she had been a skinny child once. She eats uncontrollably just after the rape, and she does the same at that moment. Everything she sees reminds her of food and eating, for example the child's "pudding-white socks" and "strawberry-jam colored shoes." Moreover, the only time she does not think about food is when she feels happy. When she meets B-C for the first time, she has a great time with him. She says, "Who knew how many hours we'd been wandering around and I not only had not eaten anything but the thought of food had not even crossed my mind."[312] After a nearly life-long struggle to get thin again, she loses some weight when she is happily spending time with B-C. However, on

[308] Ibid., 23-4.
[309] Ibid., 25.
[310] Bessel A. Van der Kolk & Onno Van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," in Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 163.
[311] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 24-5.
[312] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 237.

the day when she finds out that B-C has not been sincere with her and calls her "Fatty" behind her back, she is disappointed. She quits her diet and eats everything in the refrigerator, and then she vomits:

> …from here on I knew by heart what to do. I brought it all neatly to a conclusion. I flushed the toilet. I washed out my mouth. I brushed my teeth. I soaped my hands. I washed out my mouth. I washed my face. I washed out my mouth. I brushed my teeth. I washed my mouth. I looked at myself in the mirror. I washed out my mouth.[313]

Eating, vomiting, and washing out her mouth are like a ritual for Fatty. It is also noteworthy that she counts from one to three silently before she vomits. Indeed, no matter how much she washes out her mouth, it is not the indelible taste in her mouth that does not leave her, it is the indelible mark of the trauma in her memory.

"The numbers are awful" because they take her back to her bad childhood memories. Van der Kolk points out that trauma victims suffer from an intrusive re-experiencing of elements of trauma in nightmares, flashbacks, and somatic reactions because triggering conditions cause victims to return to traumatic events. In this case, the triggers are numbers:

> The more the contextual stimuli resemble conditions prevailing at the time of the original storage, the more retrieval is likely. Thus, memories are reactivated when a person is exposed to a situation, or is in a somatic state, reminiscent of the one when the original memory was stored.[314]

Another triggering condition comes into being when she hears the numbers one, two, and three counted by B-C, her dwarf lover, while talking about his name:

> "I like B-C, they are the second and third letters of the alphabet. They look good side-by-side. As if I'm Two and Three. I am searching for One..." For a moment I couldn't speak or breathe. It was as if something clicked within me... Suddenly, unable to explain even to myself why I'd become so irritable, I snapped, "Yes, I think it is complete nonsense."[315]

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[313] Ibid., 190.
[314] Van der Kolk & van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," 174.
[315] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 238.

Again, Fatty loses control, gets nervous, and wants to change the subject. Indeed, the context of what B-C says has nothing to do with Fatty's past; nonetheless, "Victims become obsessed with any associations that can be linked to the trauma, even if they exist within different contexts."[316] There are other examples like these in the book. The repetitive use of these numbers and Fatty's reactions to them demonstrate that they automatically trigger Fatty's traumatic memory, so she relives the original event again and again.

Indeed, Fatty's present life seems to be surrounded by images she inherits from her traumatic childhood. A lot of things in the book are "cherry-colored," or at least that is how she sees them. The tent in which Keramet Memiş Keşke Memiş Efendi puts his strange creatures on display is cherry-colored, and it is always referred to as a "cherry-colored tent" to emphasize the color. When Fatty and B-C go out together one day in disguise, B-C wears cherry-colored lipstick. And after they have a fight with some strangers and Fatty has some bruises on her body, the following happens:

> B-C began to kiss my bruises softly with his cherry-colored lipstick. 'Bruised cherries' I whispered. We embraced each other and swore once again that we would never hurt each other. I was filled with peace. The wind was blowing bruised cherry, I was aching bruised cherry, my lover was kissing bruised cherry.[317]

The underlying reason why the color of cherries is stressed in Fatty's narration can be traced back to her childhood trauma. When she is raped in the coal shed, she notices that the landlord's cat witnessed what happened. She does not want anybody to have seen it because she thinks that "if there are no witnesses, a person can forget the past."[318] So she kills the cat, but before doing so she covers its eyes with a piece of cherry-colored muslin cloth. Afterwards, she hangs the dead cat from the cherry tree she used to climb in her childhood. As such, the cherry tree has a significant place in her memories. When Fatty narrates the rape, along with other childhood memories, it becomes clear that Fatty spent much of her time around that cherry tree as a child:

> While time slept, the child would sit drowsily under the cherry tree, eating all the cherries that had fallen on the ground. When the cherries on the ground finished, she would start to crave the cherries on the branches...Until time woke from its nap, she could eat as many cherries as she wished...The child used to swallow cherry pits so that cherry trees would grow inside her...a cherry pit could never be chewed, but it

[316] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 32.
[317] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 104.
[318] Ibid., 227-8.

> could be swallowed by accident; even then it could not be digested, but would be brought back out...The dead body hanging from the branches of the cherry tree was the body of a cat.[319]

"Cherry-colored gloves"[320] and "as crowded as a cherry tree"[321] and other references to cherry trees and the color of cherries show how strongly the memory of the trauma is implanted in her memory. The color of cherries is associated with her childhood and the trauma, which becomes clear when she asserts that "the back garden of childhood has the sour taste of cherries." The back garden is where the coal shed is located. This is also the reason why Fatty chooses the color cherry-red for Keramet Mumi Memiş Efendi's tent. Not only the color, but also how the women going to the tent feel remind her of the rape:

> Once in a while some women got a crazy idea. The sea was a breast, gently swollen, aching, calling softly from afar for a mouth for its milk. Now...without regret for the past or concern for the future; as if...just by relaxing, opening-their-mouths-closing-their-eyes, it would be possible to be filled with time by sucking deeply.[322]

I have already discussed the image of "milk" as metaphorically symbolizing the rapist's semen. The open mouths with closed eyes sucking at something visually resembles the child Fatty with the rapist's penis in her mouth.

Caruth notes, "While the images of traumatic reenactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control."[323] Also, in Fatty's mind the images of the trauma are quite vivid. In another traumatic reenactment, Fatty again feels stressed out and does not understand why she feels that way: "'Don't move!' I don't know why but I wasn't at all pleased that the man had said this."[324] She is displeased because she unconsciously remembers the rapist saying to her, "Don't move!" in the coal shed. One day she is having trouble with the door of the building where she and B-C live together. When an old man tries to help her and tells her not to move, she becomes distraught to an unwarranted degree:

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[319] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 194-203.
[320] Ibid., 65.
[321] Ibid., 29.
[322] Ibid., 30.
[323] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," *American Imago*, 48, 4 (Winter 1991): 417. Print.
[324] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 92.

> And there was no need for him to repeat his warning. I wasn't moving. And I knew what my motionlessness resembled. My motionlessness resembled a hard-working ant running around a dead bee lying on its back at the bottom of an empty water glass; from the same starting point it always watched the world turn, and turn again, with the same delighted amazement.[325]

Fatty repeats the same sentences word by word while narrating that the rapist told her not to move in the coal shed. The descriptions of her motionlessness from years ago and the present are exactly the same because Fatty experiences a traumatic reenactment of the original event. She feels precisely the same way she felt at that moment in the past during the traumatic event. Ruth Leys asserts that "the experiences or objects to which the emotions were attached were completely preserved in the memory. And, that's why, when emotions were repressed or dissociated, they did not disappear but were lodged in the unconscious in the form of forgotten recollections."[326] So, Fatty's emotions are reactivated in a way that is beyond her control. Fatty goes on to say,

> …my motionlessness was like a memory that resembled a consumptive spitting out his unforgettable memories into a handkerchief...My motionlessness was like the warm, yellowish pudding...Of course the water glass had an outside: a land where my memory was exempt from coughing or a layer that the pudding had not covered yet. Me, I wasn't outside in that dry, faraway land.[327]

Although Fatty does not mention the rape in the lines above, the details are reminiscent of that event. "Spitting out" refers to the habit of vomiting that Fatty acquires after the rape. The metaphor of the warm, yellowish pudding just like warm milk is associated with the rapist's semen. Fatty's motionlessness, her indelible memories, and being stuck in a glass all make reference to the trauma. Caruth says that "the event (trauma) is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event."[328] I argue that the way Fatty tells her story is just like "being repeatedly possessed" by her childhood memories and this involves an inevitable "return to

[325] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 76.
[326] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 93.
[327] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 76.
[328] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 45.

these traumatic memories" over and over again, as posited by van der Kolk and van der Hart: "A trauma victim needs to return to the traumatic memory repeatedly in order to complete it."[329]

Moreover, "her motionlessness," which is repeated in the quote, is significant in the context of the traumatic moment. The state of being motionless during an event is discussed by van der Kolk and van der Hart in the following terms:

> Physical and emotional paralysis can make an event traumatic. If a person cannot do anything to affect the outcome of the event, if physically and psychologically immobilized during the event, this is fundamental to the development of hyper amnesia and dissociation.[330]

Fatty is told not to move until the man says "three" but he never says "three." Therefore, Fatty, who wants to leave and feels frightened, is psychologically and physically paralyzed during the course of the event. This, in turn, adds to the trauma and causes dissociation.

Fatty also experiences traumatic reenactments in her dreams. In one recurrent dream she is a balloon flying through the air. She has the dream three times in the novel, and the narration each time is more or less the same.[331] In the dream, she is on a roof, watching a balloon rise into the air, and "the snow-white clouds floated coyly, the charcoal-grey sky darkened little by little, and just as the bright-yellow sun was setting silently and without an echo, a violent wind blew up."[332] The charcoal-grey is probably an unconscious reference to the coal shed where she was raped. After the rape, the childhood Fatty looks up at the roof of the coal shed, wondering if God can see everything through it. In the dream, she is on the roof and looking at the sky. During the rape, the roof is between her and God and in the dream the roof is under her, so she is closer to God. It should be kept it mind that she wants to become a balloon so she can soar up to God in the sky and ask him if he can see everything—including the rape.

> My intention is to climb higher and higher. My intention is to climb miles and miles into the grey sky, and touching the sun's shadow, sit cross-legged on the top of the clouds, watching the world. Because I want to know, can you see everything that's going on down there when you look up from here? I am curious about whether the hidden secrets of back gardens, the sins that are committed, the unfinished games,

[329] Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," 176.
[330] Ibid., 175.
[331] Shafak, *The* Gaze, 9.
[332] Ibid.

> are recorded line by line, word by word. I want to know, does humanity has any privacy at all?[333]

She goes on to say that pitch-black dust swirls up from the ground, stirred by the wind; here, "pitch-black dust" refers to the black dust in the coal-shed. As she walks, roof tiles slide down, toppling onto a bright red car, and the owner of the car tries to find who is to blame for the incident. The bright red car symbolizes the bright red car of the landlord's son. When she was playing hide-and-seek, she first decided to hide behind that car but changed her mind and hid in the coal shed. When her neighbors and the landlord's son find the dead cat hanging from the tree, they look for the culprit. In the dream, again the son is looking for her. Moreover, the bright red car in the dream is covered with a spider web, as is the roof of the coal shed. The pitch-black dust, the bright red car, and the spider web are among the images that become ingrained in her memory during the rape and thus become associated with it. She says, "I was wearing woolen baby shoes with a bird design on them. I must have forgotten to put on my shoes when I left the house. I was embarrassed."[334] Embarrassment is also what she feels after the rape. After the rapist leaves the coal shed, her feet feel moist and she thinks her tears must have gotten her feet wet: "She felt a great sense of relief at having cried so much."[335] However, based on the smell she realizes that she had urinated on herself: "She touched her eyes. They were completely dry. She had not cried, not at all. She felt a deep shame at having not cried."[336] This further suggests that the dream is a traumatic reenactment. Moreover, not only the images but also the feelings are the same in the original event and the reenactment.

In these dreams she imagines that she herself is the balloon: "So, in the end, I became what I had always wanted to be. I am a floating balloon."[337] The balloon in the dream vomits up everything it eats, just like Fatty. In these dreams, she imagines herself going up into sky so she can see if everything is visible from there. All the same, she can never succeed in doing so. The last time she narrated that she had a dream in which she was a flying balloon, she experienced the following:

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[333] Ibid., 259-60.
[334] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 19.
[335] Ibid., 219.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Ibid., 259.

> Suddenly, I am staring into a pair of bug-eyes. They are looking at me with curiosity...the bug-eyes belong to a bird of prey...I wait for it to pass me and move on, but it continues to follow me. It keeps making sporadic squawking sounds. The sound is unpleasant and frightening. And, suddenly I don't know why, it begins to attack. Its beak is pointed, its beak is the pink color of the raw meat, its beak penetrates me.[338]

As a result, in each dream the balloon pops and falls towards the ground, which is suggestive of her unsuccessful efforts to recover from her trauma.

The description of the bird in the dream as "bug-eyed"[339] is significant. Fatty also describes the girl on the minibus, the one who is asked to count, as "the bug-eyed girl." That description crops up repeatedly in the novel. Close scrutiny of the rape scene reveals that the landlord of the house calls her a "bug-eyed child" when he accuses her of killing the cat: "She did it. That bug-eyed child did it."[340] Moreover, the bug-eyed bird in the dream has a beak that is pink like the color of raw meat and it penetrates her. That is quite similar to the narration of the rape: "A piece of pink flesh. Surrounded by very curly, very black hairs... The flesh arrived... It arrived and entered her mouth."[341] All these references to images, colors, and feelings show that the rape is still very much in the present for her. Although Fatty never describes it herself, most of the events she narrates are reminiscent of the rape.

Narrative Techniques

The Gaze is a trauma narrative not only through its content but also through its form. In other words, what qualifies the novel as a trauma narrative is both Fatty's traumatic story and also the way the story is structured and narrated. Şafak has consciously created a parallelism between the narration of the book and the symptoms of trauma to make the trauma more accessible and tangible. As Laurie Vickroy asserts writers develop strategies to represent "a conflicted or incomplete relation to memory," and these strategies range from (both in the page layout and content),

[338] Ibid., 260.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid., 204.
[341] Ibid., 216-7.

repetition, breaks in linear time, shifting viewpoints to a focus on visual images and affective states.[342]

In *The Gaze*, Şafak employs a range of narrative strategies that mimic the effects of trauma. The strategies that I will analyze in this section concern shifts in point of view, shifts in time, semantic and syntactic gaps, repetition, and omissions of punctuation.

I have already discussed how *The Gaze* takes readers on a circular journey in time, shuttling back and forth between Fatty's childhood, the present, and the 1880s, eventually returning back to the point where the novel begins. The titles of each episode are significant in terms of both exhibiting the non-linear flow of time and symbolically referring to the rape. In order to make my analysis clearer, it will be helpful at this point to list the titles of the chapters in the novel:

Istanbul 1999[343]

Mahrem[344]

One "Close Your Eyes"[345]

Pera 1885[346]

Siberia 1648[347]

Pera 1885[348]

Istanbul 1999[349]

Two "Open Your Eyes"[350]

Pera 1885[351]

France 1868[352]

Pera 1885[353]

[342] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 29.
[343] Şafak, *Mahrem*, 12. The reason I refer to the Turkish version of the book here is that the titles of the sections in the Turkish version do not coincide with the titles in the English version. The last four titles "Three *Sobe*," "Two," "One," and "Zero" in the Turkish version are missing in the English version.
[344] Şafak, *Mahrem*, 21.
[345] Ibid., 43.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Ibid., 63.
[348] Ibid., 83.
[349] Ibid., 92.
[350] Ibid., 128.
[351] Ibid., 128.
[352] Ibid., 142.
[353] Ibid., 163.

Istanbul 1999[354]

Three "*Sobe*"[355]

Istanbul 1980[356]

Istanbul 1999[357]

"Two" 1868 France[358]

"One" 1648 Siberia[359]

"Zero!" 1999 Istanbul[360]

There is a clear connection between Fatty's trauma and the numbers included in the titles of the chapters. The numbers refer to the rape, as the rapist plays hide and seek with the child and counts down from three to one. Quotation marks are placed around the title "Close Your Eyes" because that is what the rapist says to Fatty before the rape. Likewise, the title "Open Your Eyes" is in quotation mark because that is what Fatty expects the rapist to say to bring the game to an end, but he never does so. The next title, "*Sobe*," is in quotation marks because it is the section in which she narrates the rape and it is revealed. Thus, they are symbolically associated with the rape. In the episode "Three *Sobe*," in which the rape is narrated, the numbers 1, 2, and 3 symbolize getting closer to the number 3—the rape—in a step by step fashion, and three, two, one, zero symbolize getting away from it. In other words, the sequence shows the narrator's efforts to narrate and recover from the trauma as the novel draws closer to the end.

There are two embedded stories in the novel. The first one is set in Istanbul in 1999 and the second one is set in Istanbul's district of Pera in 1885. While the first is Fatty's personal story, the second is the magical realist story of Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi. Moreover, there are many more realistic and fantastic stories told by the narrator within these two stories, which can make it easy to get lost in the narrative and make it difficult to remember all the characters. As a result, this episodic narration leads to the creation of fragmentation in the novel. At first sight, the characters and events may seem disconnected, but by picking up on clues and threading them

[354] Ibid., 173.
[355] Ibid., 216. *Sobe* is a Turkish word. In the children's game hide-and-seek, "it" shouts "*sobe*" when s/he finds the other players.
[356] Ibid., 216.
[357] Ibid., 251.
[358] Ibid., 273.
[359] Ibid., 275.
[360] Ibid., 279.

together, it becomes possible to grasp the narrative flow and see how the stories are interwoven. This fragmented narration mimics the effects of trauma. The gaps between the characters and stories are deliberately constructed in order to show the differences between the non-integration of traumatic memories and the integration of narrative memories. Fatty's story, Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story, the rape, and all the other stories situated within the main narrative may seem unrelated; however, they are all interconnected. As the book is a work of trauma fiction, the non-linear time flow of traumatic memories is exemplified through the journey between Fatty's and Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's stories throughout the narration. As Anne Whitehead argues:

> Novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection.[361]

As I claim that Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story is a mimicry of the effects of Fatty's trauma, I should add that the unavoidable journey between those two stories represents Fatty's connection between her present life and the trauma. Trauma haunts the victim and is always present in the victim's present life. Therefore, as Fatty narrates her present life, Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story persistently intervenes. Since it represents Fatty's trauma, it is as inescapable as the trauma itself.

Van der Kolk states that "Traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language."[362] Since traumatic memory is not assimilated or integrated into one's life story, it differs from narrative memory. Because its content is non-linear and fragmented, the way Fatty narrates it is also fragmented and non-linear. In addition to the time shifts between Fatty's and Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story, time shifts in the narration of the rape are signs of traumatic re-enactment:

> [...] the man had gone. He'd gone. He'd left without saying "Three." There was a coal shed in the neighbor's back garden; with a zinc roof, and two doors. A child was stuck... The whiteness she'd vomited, the cherries she'd eaten, the veins on Kıymet Teyze's legs, and even Abdullah's Red Show-Off were coal shed black.

[361] Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 3.
[362] Van der Kolk & van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past," 176.

> "Aren't you tired up of telling fairy tales yet? I'm fed up. Do you understand?"
>
> The young doctor was pacing about irritably. Finally, he grew tired, threw himself into the armchair across from the child and moaned "Enough!" At the same moment a snapping sound was heard. A snapping sound that was reminiscent of a breaking heart. The doctor jumped to his feet in a panic; he turned and looked at the place where he'd just sat. He'd sat on his glasses.
>
> She was swimming in a lake that was coal shed black. The lake was warm. She was not cold. Before there hadn't even been a puddle here, let alone a lake. This meant that she must have created the lake herself. This meant that the lake must have been created from her tears.[363]

In the first paragraph above, Fatty describes the moment when the rapist leaves the coal shed after raping her. She vomits up the rapist's semen and refers to the landlord's legs and her son's car. Then, she suddenly leaves the scene for what it is and moves on to the therapy sessions she has after the rape. Again, after a brief narration of the therapies, she continues with memories of the rape, including how she urinates in the coal shed after the rapist leaves. These two narrations alternate in the episode. This back and forth movement between rape memories and therapy sessions again reflect the fragmented nature of reenactments of trauma. Moreover, Fatty cannot narrate the rape to the therapist as a child, so instead she tells fairy tales. The intervention of the narration of rape within the narration of therapy creates an illusion as if Fatty is now speaking of these memories to the therapist.

Another important aspect of the narration of the rape and her childhood memories is that while Fatty narrates her present life as a first-person narrator, the rape and the childhood memories are depicted by an external narrator:

> The moment the child closed her eyes she was in darkness. She looked straight into the darkness...the piece of meat must have liked being looked at, because as the child looked at it, it raised its head…the piece of meat arrived. It arrived and entered her mouth…the child was paralyzed.[364]

Fatty narrates the event as if she was not the child who lived through that traumatic moment but rather someone else had seen it and she watched that girl from above. As Van der Kolk points out:

[363] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 218-9.
[364] Ibid., 216-8.

> Many trauma survivors report that they automatically are removed from the scene; they look at it from a distance or disappear altogether, leaving other parts of their personality to suffer and store the overwhelming experience. "I moved up to the ceiling from where I saw this little girl being molested and I felt very sorry for her" is a common description by incest survivors.[365]

As the narration moves from the present time to childhood memories and the rape, the first person "I" becomes the third person "she" or "the child." Fatty dissociates herself from the event as a defense mechanism to shunt aside any pain. This shows the existence of a clear difference between the integration of narrative memories and traumatic reenactments into one's life story. Janet explains this difference in *Psychological Healing*:

> Memory, like belief, like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially, it is the action of telling a story. […] The teller must not only know how to narrate the event, but must also know how to associate the happening with the other events of his life, how to put it in its place in that life-story which each one of us is perpetually building up and which for each of us is an essential element of his personality. A situation has not been satisfactorily liquidated, has not been fully assimilated, until we have achieved, not merely an outward reaction through our movements, but also an inward reaction through the words we address to ourselves, through the organization of the recital of the event to others and to ourselves, and through putting this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history.[366]

Indeed, the chapter about the rape and childhood memories emerges all of a sudden and seems to be irrelevant to the other chapters. This is because, as Janet explains above, Fatty cannot place the traumatic memory in her life-story. As she cannot transform it into a chapter in her personal story, it seems to be detached from other memories. As result of this dissociation, she refers to herself as "she" rather than "I." In her analysis of Duras's *The Vice Consul*, Laurie Vickroy draws attention to a similar point:

> By assuming multiple ideas and positions as the subject, object, and witness to her past life, Duras's narrative provides a medium for recreating the past, reshaping its significance, and playing out conflicting tendencies within Duras's narrator/protagonist. The narrator appears to be engaged and detached, a dual subject who alternately refers to herself as "I" and "she." These subject shifts are frequent

[365] Van der Kolk & van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," 168.
[366] Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing; A Historical and Clinical Study*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1925), 661-662.

> and not always chronologically consistent... The multiple positionings could be the consequences of a defensive dissociation from painful memories. [367]

Just like Duras's narrator/protagonist, Fatty is both "engaged and detached." The reenactments she has in her dreams and her obsession with certain numbers and colors point to the connection between her present life and childhood memories. Since she cannot get rid of any of them, she is engaged. However, when she narrates the source of those obsessions, namely the rape, she positions herself neither as a subject nor as an object and hence becomes detached. Rachel E. Goldsmith asserts that "Writers employ narrative strategies to convey the fracturing of time, self, and reality that often defines dissociation and accompanies traumatic episodes and recall."[368] Şafak utilizes a temporal fracturing with time shifts and a fracturing of the self by having Fatty both engage with and detach from her trauma.

Another important point in the narration of the rape is shifts in tenses. The following paragraph depicts the scene just before the rape occurs; she is in the coal shed and sees a strange man (the rapist whom she does not know yet):

> Perhaps he was crying. He was well-dressed. His shoes were very shiny despite being covered with coal dust. It was clear that the man was not a gypsy. The child knew that one had to stay away from gypsies. Gypsies' shoes were never like this.
>
> This man is a stranger. (I wonder who he is.) Strangers are to be avoided. (How unhappy he looks). The best thing to do is to tell someone. (What is he looking for here?) She should leave the shed at once. (The moment she left she would become it!) There was a strange man inside. (It was outside).
>
> The child sat near the door, trying hard not to make a sound. She did not take her eyes off the man.[369]

The first and the last paragraphs above are in the simple past tense; in contrast, the paragraph situated between them is in the simple present tense. However, the events are transpiring at the same time. This shuttling between past tense and present tense parallels the fragmented narration of past and present events throughout the book. A similar example is given by Van Alphen in his analysis of Delbo's "Roll Call" in *None of Us Will Return*:

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[367] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 29.
[368] Rachel E. Goldsmith & Michelle Saterlee, "Representation of Trauma in Clinical Psychology and Fiction," *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, 5:2, 2008: 35-59.
[369] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 214.

> The text starts out as a description of a unique event belonging to the past: "SS in black capes have walked past. They made a count." The narrated event seems to concern an event that is circumscribed in time: it is not an arbitrary roll call but a specific one. The two short sentences are, however, followed by a third one: "We are waiting still." The past tense has been exchanged for the present tense; the progressive form of this third sentence is the linguistic marker of this exchange. The event, which is punctual, and hence delineated in time, has been transformed into an event that is durative, that is, which is ongoing in time and cannot be situated within a chronology.[370]

As traumatic memories cannot be integrated into existing mental schemes, they do not belong to the past as narrative memories. Their inescapable existence in the present is exhibited by the use of the present tense in the narration. Fatty narrates this part in the present tense as if she is now in the coal shed with the strange man; she is caught in a dilemma about whether she should leave the coal shed immediately or hide from "it."

The reenactment of trauma is also symbolized by repeating certain words, sentences, and pages throughout the narration. Traumatic reenactments are repeated in the victim's life as nightmares, hallucinations, and flashbacks; as such, repetitions in the narration mimic the effects of trauma. The repetition of the color cherry-red, the numbers one, two, and three, and the flying balloon have already been discussed here. Another clear example of repetition takes place at the very beginning of the novel. Fatty and B-C are watching the neighbors through their window. A woman whose husband has been cheating on her has a nervous breakdown, and she cries and shouts on the street. Fatty narrates this event two times.[371] But as she narrates it twice back to back, the structure of the sentences in the narration becomes problematic. The first one lacks punctuation and the phrases are separated with a slash and ellipsis in the Turkish and English versions: "at the foot of the hilly street/ in her fifties/ meaty/ pale-faced/ docile/ a woman/ a housewife/ her night-gown is flannel/ her slippers have pom-poms"[372] *["yokusun başında/ elli yaşlarında/ etine dolgun/ yüzü solgun/ ton ton mu tonton/ bir kadın/ geceliği pazen/ terlikleri ponpon"*].[373] This gives the narration a poetic quality as each line is separated with a slash. Moreover, the lines rhyme in the original

[370] Ernst van Alphen, *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press: 2005), 171.
[371] Şafak, *Mahrem*, 18-9.

[372] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 10.
[373] Şafak, *Mahrem*, 12.

Turkish and also use poetic alliteration**.** I argue that the use of aesthetic and poetic language creates a contrast with the violence of the trauma, creating a distance between that trauma and the reader. In this sense, the use of stylistic, romantic, and mythical language separates the reader from the gruesomeness of the events that occur.[374] As for the lack of punctuation in traumatic novels, Rachel Goldsmith makes a similar point about the novel *Beloved*:

> Morrison depicts traumatic memory through a disjunctive narrative that confuses ordinary borders of time and reality by placing large spaces between words in a sentence. In addition, the sentence structure does not use any punctuation, which reinforces the feeling of trauma's timelessness.[375]

The second narration of the same event is more confusing in terms of the sentence structure. The first paragraph is written with regular punctuation, while the next paragraph lacks punctuation. Then poetic language emerges once again and rhyming lines are separated with slashes. The narration of the event continues with the random use of each style, including the omission of punctuation, the use of poetic language, and the insertion of slashes between the lines.

Another narrative technique in the book is the use of a hyphen for each syllable of certain words. For instance, the words "fa-ding, slow-ing, dark-er, step-er"[376] are written this way for the sake of emphasis. Notably, all the words have negative connotations; when the narrator says that "the night is getting dark-er,"[377] she is referring to how her life is getting darker because of the trauma. On page 29, she narrates the moment of traumatic reenactment on the bus brought on when the little girl keeps counting one, two, three. She calls the girl a "bug-eyed-child" [*pörtlek-gözlü-çocuk*],[378] and again the words are written with hyphens. Indeed, it refers to her own childhood trauma because that was what their landlord called her when she was child. I contend that all these techniques represent the trauma and Fatty's fractured mind.

A violent event is depicted in Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story on page 59 when a man is killed by his friend. There is snow everywhere and the man's blood covers it: "bloodonthesnowbloodonthesnowbloodonthesnowsnowmansnowmansnowman

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[374] Lenanne Dodd, *The Crime Novel as Trauma Fiction*. Accessed September 18, 2016, http://www.aawp.dreamhosters.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Dodd_LThe_Crime_Novel_as_Trauma_Fiction_.pdf, 10.
[375] Rachel E. Goldsmith & Michelle Satterlee, "Representations of Trauma in Clinical Psychology and Fiction."
[376] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 17-8.
[377] Ibid., 18.
[378] Şafak, *Mahrem*, 29.

[kardakankardakankardakankardanadamkardanadam]."[379] Here "blood on the snow" is repeated three times and "snowman" is repeated twice without any gaps between the words. In the Turkish version, these words consist of similar letters, so it sounds like a nursery rhyme. This violent event is a reminder of trauma. Şafak uses this narrative strategy to draw attention to trauma. The same technique is used on page 198 when she narrates her childhood memories and the rape: "coalshedevilevilcoalshedcoal."[380]

Some phrases are repeated over and over throughout the narration. For example, "in one of the two sides of Istanbul, in a neighborhood where morally upright families and freethinking single people lived side-by-side, at the top of a steep hill that was difficult to ascend and descend"[381] is repeated many times. Another example is "the numbers' demons, with lamps on their waists, brooms in their hands, their tongues cut off and their eyes poked out with hot irons,"[382] which is repeated twice on pages 24 and 238. On page 43, "Wherever a person hurts, that's where his heart beats" is repeated twice. The repetition and also the content of the sentence refer to trauma. Laurie Vickroy asserts that writers mimic the effects of trauma with repeated words, phrases, motifs, and repeated sentence structures. She also explains that repetition can be a sign of being caught in statis and of not being able to move.[383] The repetitions in *The Gaze* signify Fatty getting caught in statis as well. They are also important because of the fact that they show the connections between stories that may otherwise seem to be unconnected. That is to say, repetitions are clues that help readers thread the individual stories together.

All the narrative techniques discussed here contribute to the structural and thematic fragmentation in the novel. In other words, they create a book which is concerned with trauma in both structure and content. Therefore, it would be apt to describe *The Gaze* as a book that displays symptoms of trauma and is also a story about trauma.

[379] Ibid., 75.

[380] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 198.
[381] Ibid., 12.
[382] Ibid., 238.
[383] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 31.

The Reconstruction of the Self in Fatty's Fantasy World and Dreams

The main characters in the book are all psychologically wounded and they have physically distinctive features; another point they have in common is that they look for ways to recreate themselves. This section will analyze those approaches and examine how effective they are. I have already made the claim that the creator of Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story is Fatty herself and that his story is a distorted or reconstructed form of Fatty's own narrative. Now I will take this claim one step further and reveal the interrelatedness of the two stories. Moreover, I will also contend that Fatty reconstructs her story on the basis of an unconscious desire to dissociate herself from her trauma and transfer it to somebody else.

Fatty's obsession with the past is one of the most dominant elements of the novel, and the possibility of reincarnation is emphasized numerous times. Fatty draws a magical connection between the past and the present through the notion of having been reincarnated:

> Time was without end, space was without limit
> So why did it end up squeezed in this form?
> He took the scissors and
> Cut up the story on which his name has been stamped;
> Scattering the pieces through time and space
>
> In another time
> Either much later or very soon
> And in another place
> Very far away but also just here
> On the point of returning to the world
> It had immediately to cease existing.[384]

The narrator depicts the desire of Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi to disappear right at that moment and be born again in another time in another form. This happens when his wife sees his face for the first time on their wedding day. His wife is deaf and dumb, so she can communicate only with her eyes. However, Memiş Efendi's eyes are like two thin lines; it's as if they are always closed, so they reveal nothing about his feelings. Memiş Efendi knows that his wife wants to leave him because of his eyes, and if she cannot, she would prefer to be dead. Memiş Efendi grabs a

[384] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 40.

mirror, looks at himself for a long time, and then breaks the mirror. At that moment, he wants to disappear and be reborn in another body.

In the story, Memiş Efendi is created out of wax. When he comes into the world, everybody is surprised by the smell of the wax. Before the wax solidifies, his aunt draws facial features on his face. It can be argued that because he is made of wax, it is possible for Memiş Efendi to reshape his body, as the wax becomes malleable when it is heated. Memiş Efendi decides to change his unfortunate fate:

> In order for the wax to be consumed more quickly, he stubbornly subjected it to heat. He would sit on the top of the stove and surround himself with candles: he would seize his torch and run to every fire that broke out in the city...He wanted to melt as soon as possible, to free himself from this rigidity that confined his heart and to become liquid again...later perhaps he would harden and set again, but this time in a completely different guise. What did it matter if they didn't like that once again? He'd flow again. In any event, time was endless, and space was limitless.[385]

The fact that Memiş Efendi is made out of wax is his most important characteristic. It is possible that if he melts and disappears, he can re-harden and be reborn in another body with proper facial features and thus not suffer the same misfortune again. So "he shredded the sealed story with his name, and scattered the pieces through time and space."[386] This suggests that Memiş Efendi of 1868 is going to be born again as one of the characters in Fatty's story in 1999.

> In any event, he was not going to remain in his present form. Time was endless, and space was limitless. Surely one day he would melt; he would melt and solidify again, solidify and then melt again. In any event, he would return to this world at another time, much later but very soon, in another, very very far away but just here. With a new name, with a new occupation.[387]

In Fatty's imaginative story, Memiş Efendi has the potential to be reborn in another time in another body. In this way, Memiş Efendi can reconstruct himself. This is precisely what Şişko desires for herself.

However, it is not only Memiş Efendi who is unhappy because of his appearance. B-C is a dwarf and Fatty is an obese woman; both of them are subjected to people's curious and judgmental

[385] Ibid., 119.
[386] Ibid., 120.
[387] Ibid., 254.

stares. Fatty in particular is fed up with being stared at by people all the time. Her childhood trauma, which is the cause of her obesity, makes it hard for Fatty to endure her appearance. However, neither she nor B-C were made out of wax like Memiş Efendi. B-C strikes upon a solution: they can go out at night wearing disguises.

B-C disguises himself as a woman. He wears a floral-print dress, black mascara, eye-shadow with glitter, cherry-colored lipstick, a blond wig, large earrings, a coral necklace and rings, a snake-skin bag slung over one shoulder and a furry animal tail draped over his other shoulder, and extremely high-heeled shoes. B-C thus recreates himself as a woman and, most importantly, as a tall woman. He is no longer a dwarf. As for Fatty, she becomes a man—a man with hairy hands, chest, and legs, and a moustache as well. Her preparations take a long time because she tries to squeeze into a corset that will compress her fat body. No longer is she fat, at least temporarily.

Fatty's strong desire to reconstruct herself is highlighted by the way she refers to herself and the other characters. The reader is aware of the names of most of the minor characters, like Kıymet Hanım and her sons Abdullah and Zekeriya. However, Fatty reveals neither her name nor B-C's name to the reader. Her dissatisfaction with her present bodily form and life is quite clear, and she depersonalizes herself by not referring to herself by her name. Her obesity makes her easily noticeable, which she does not want. Rather than being "the fat woman," she wants to be like any other ordinary woman. All these elements demonstrate that Fatty is happy neither with her past nor with her present life. Going out in disguise is a temporary change, but it does not change the past.

B-C has written a text called *The Dictionary of the Gaze*. As regards Fatty's obsession with and attachment to the past, the meaning of "time" in this text is significant:

> *zaman* (time): When the cruel bullies of the neighborhood cut off the black cat's tail, she licked her two new-born kittens clean and then abandoned them. One of the kittens was taken by the people on the top floor, and the other was taken by the people on the bottom floor. The one taken by the top floor was robust, and grew quickly; the one on the bottom floor grew, but very slowly. Both cats were eating the same food. Time passed differently on the top floor and the bottom floor. The people on the bottom floor kept their clocks by the people on the top floor, but they were always late. When they saw the cats, the inhabitants of the house began to believe that they could see time. On the top floor time was sleek and fat, and on the bottom floor time was weak and puny.

> Years passed in this manner. The cats grew older. The cat on the top floor soon became ungainly, the cat on the bottom floor aged slowly. Now time was proceeding backwards.[388]

I posit that the top floor and the bottom floor are spatially in parallel with Freud's notion of the conscious and unconscious. Conceiving of it in terms of the oft-used visual representation of the unconscious and the conscious as parts of an iceberg, the unconscious is at the bottom and is occupied with phobias, obsessions, repressed wishes, and dreams. It is the dark side of the mind. The conscious is at the top and is linked with awareness. The unconscious is related to the past while the conscious is linked to the present. Therefore, time passes at its usual speed at the conscious level, while it is slower at the unconscious level. The top floor and the bottom floor thus symbolize the conscious and the unconscious, respectively. Moreover, the cats living on the bottom and top floors symbolize Elsa the cat in Şişko's childhood trauma.

It is also not a coincidence that after about two pages Fatty says that "B-C was above, I was below."[389] B-C is up above in his apartment. Fatty is down below because a thread of her cardigan got snagged on the door of the building. She cannot move, meaning she cannot go up to B-C's apartment. In terms of top and bottom mentioned in the quote above, Fatty is on the bottom while B-C is on the top. Fatty has repressed fears, obsessions, and anxiety because of her childhood trauma, so she represents the unconscious, as she cannot cast off the past. B-C represents the conscious and the present because he wants to enjoy the moment. Fatty cannot go forward in time, so she decides to go backwards, as is noted at the end of the quote above: "now time was proceeding backwards." That is to say, Fatty recreates a new story by slipping back from 1999 to 1880, at which time she creates Memiş Efendi and his strange circus characters. The common points between the characters in these two stories explicitly show that Fatty transforms her own story into that of Memiş Efendi in the unconscious. This means that the reader is alternately exposed to Fatty's conscious and unconscious through the narrative.

She says that "when time lurched backwards, a person realized that somehow everything could have been different. Everything could have worked out differently. That means every story can be narrated differently."[390] Laurie Vickroy states, "A failure to make sense of these past events

[388] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 79.
[389] Ibid., 82.
[390] Ibid., 249.

results in fixed ideas that motivate impotent attempts to re-create these events."[391] So, she transforms her story and narrates it differently by re-creating the past. Indeed, the source of Keramet's tale is possibly Fatty's dreams. In light of Freud's claim that dreams are the "fulfillment of wishes," it can be said that Fatty recreates her story in her dreams to dissociate herself, which is indeed her unconscious wish:

> ...a transference and displacement of psychical intensities occurs in the process of dream-formation, and it is as a result of these that the difference between the text of the dream-content and that of the dream-thoughts comes about...The consequences of the displacement is that the dream-content no longer resembles the core of the dream-thoughts and that the dream gives no more than a distortion of the dream-wish which exists in the unconscious.[392]

The dream-thoughts here are Fatty's story and the dream-content is Memiş Efendi's story. As a result of the dream formation process, the latter is a distorted form of the former. Moreover, I claim that the source of the reconstruction is Fatty's dreams, because Fatty's dreams are an important part of her life and her relationship with B-C. She says that she tries to keep her dreams in her mind so she can tell them to B-C. In addition, she notes that if there are gaps in her dreams, she bridges them through her imagination and if she does not dream she uses "ready dreams." Moreover, food is an important part of her dreams, as are they in Memiş Efendi's story.

[391] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 13.
[392] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 325.

Şişko's Story (1999) **Main Narrative**		**Reconstructed Story (1888)** **Fantasy World/Dreams**
Fatty	**reconstructed as**	**Sable-Girl** **Masked-Woman** **Siranuş** **Mari, Takuhi, Agavni** **Snowball Vergin** **Snakecharmer** **Kınar Hanım**
B-C	**reconstructed as**	**Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi**
Hayalifener Apartments	**reconstructed as**	**The Circus**

Table 1: The characters and places in the main narrative are transformed into imaginary characters and places in Fatty's fantasy world/dreams.

Geoffrey Hartman states that there are two contradictory narratives in trauma fiction: "One is the traumatic event, which is registered rather than experienced. The other is a kind of memory of the event, which takes the form of a perpetual trooping of it by the split or dissociated psyche."[393] Fatty's story is the memory of the event while Memiş Efendi's story is its reconstructed form in which Fatty dissociates herself. In Fatty's story, the main characters are B-C and Fatty, the setting is Hayalifener Apartments, and it is 1999. In the reconstructed story, the main characters are Memiş Efendi and the characters in the circus and the setting is the circus in 1888. The characters and the

[393] Geoffrey H. Hartman, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," *New Literary History*, 26:3, 1995, 537.

places parallel each other in many respects. Fatty moves from 1999 to 1888 and reconstructs herself and B-C, as shown in Table 1.

The most salient feature that B-C and Memiş Efendi have in common is their strangely shaped eyes. It has already been mentioned that Memiş Efendi's eyes were drawn by her aunt like two thin lines: "Not once did his eyes ever give away what he felt. It was as if those two narrow, slanting slits of eyes were devoid of any emotion."[394] His eyes, like two thin lines that never open, are the reason for his strangeness, loneliness, and disagreeable life.[395] Fatty's inspiration for creating a character like Memiş Efendi is B-C. In other words, I argue that Memiş Efendi is the transformed version of B-C in Fatty's mind. Fatty talks about the weirdness of B-C's eyes and says that they sometimes look like two thin lines, as if they were closed and don't reveal how B-C feels at any given moment.[396] Moreover, she sometimes feels obliged to re-draw B-C's eyes, but she fears that they may disappear altogether.[397] Undoubtedly, drawing eyes on a face or the disappearance of facial features is reminiscent of Memiş Efendi's story. The narrator of Memiş Efendi's story says, "Wherever a person hurts, that's where his heart beats. Memiş Efendi pressed his fingers on his eyes. To no avail. It didn't stop. His heart beats in his eyes."[398] In Fatty's story, what B-C says about himself also expresses the pain in Memiş Efendi's eyes: "Do you know, sometimes we get our deepest wounds in our eyes."[399]

Apart from their physical similarities, the way they perceive life is quite similar. Both of them feel rage towards life because of their strange appearance, and they want to get revenge on others. The way they prefer to do this is dependent on "the gaze." Memiş Efendi creates a circus, where he puts people with bizarre appearances on exhibit. A common point these characters share is that they are either extremely ugly or extremely beautiful, and people cannot stop looking at them. I argue that Memiş Efendi does so as a means of guiding people's attention away from himself to those characters in the circus. If people look at them, they will not stare at Memiş Efendi's strange eyes, which irritates him greatly. He created the circus because "whatever he has lost because of his eyes, he would gain more through other's eyes."[400] Memiş Efendi and B-C share

[394] Shafak *The Gaze*, 39.
[395] Ibid., 123.
[396] Şafak *Mahrem*, 97.
[397] Ibid., 109.
[398] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 43.
[399] Ibid., 236.
[400] Ibid., 123.

the same motivation: "That is how it is, out of stubbornness!"[401] First, he works as a nude model and encourages Şişko to do the same. He fails to convince Fatty, so he stops modeling as well. Then he starts creating a dictionary that he calls *The Dictionary of the Gaze*. Every word in the dictionary is related to the "gaze." The dictionary goes from the letter Z to the letter A, in contrast to a normal dictionary. The first word is "*zahir*: One of the ninety-nine names of God, meaning cannot hide from his sight."[402] "Fatty" is another word in his dictionary and it is defined as follows: "She is so fat that whenever she is with people, everybody does nothing but stare at her. She is so much irritated by their eyes that she leaves to eat something more and gains more weight. (Research Fatty's childhood)."[403] Fatty, whose childhood B-C is going to research, is thus the main character of the book. One day, Fatty reads *The Dictionary of the Gaze* secretly because B-C hides it from her. When she learns that B-C calls her Fatty, included her as an entry in the dictionary, and seeks to find out more about her childhood and expose it to people, she is subjected to yet another trauma. Just as Memiş Efendi places bizarre characters on exhibit in the circus, B-C wants to put Fatty's secret life on exhibit for others. Both men "started seeing everyone and everybody as material"[404] for the circus in one case and the dictionary in the other. The narrators in both stories relate that Memiş Efendi and B-C easily get bored and look for new things to do. What inspires Memiş Efendi are the characters in the circus, and what motivates B-C is Fatty.

Lastly, another clue that demonstrates that Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi's story is created by Fatty in her mind and is inspired by real characters and places in her life can be found in the paragraph quoted below. B-C is talking to Fatty and says,

> Whenever I am curious about a person, I cut them out of the frame in which they belong and put them into a background that is least like them. To do this gives me a lot of ideas about people. Let's say a woman is walking towards me. Young and a bit flighty. I'll take her out of the place where she belongs and put her in a time and place that would be strangest to her, into a frame that is as far as possible from her own, and then I watch. Or, let's say a man is walking towards me. Young and a bit slack. I'll try to find a frame that's least like him. When I put him in a third frame, he will look completely different to me. In the picture that belongs to him, he's either strong or weak, either handsome or ugly, either unique or ordinary. But in a picture that does not belong to him, he tends to lose his role. And when you look, you see that he's really not so strong, or not so weak. Neither that ugly, or

[401] Ibid., 81.
[402] Ibid., 76.
[403] Ibid., 242.
[404] Ibid., 162.

> not so handsome. You should try it. Put people in the photograph in which they are least likely to fit, and then take a look at them.[405]

First of all, the examples given by B-C in this quote are important because they also appear in Memiş Efendi's story: "A woman was passing along the street; young and healthy, and a bit flighty. Memiş Efendi planted himself in front of the woman like a thief blocking the way to the fountain"[406] and "A man was coming towards him; young and elegant and swaggering. Memiş Efendi planted himself in front of the man like a thief blocking the way to the fountain."[407] The woman and the man walking towards B-C in his imagination are walking towards Memiş Efendi in the imaginative story created by Fatty. Therefore, the role of B-C in the creation of the Memiş Efendi's story cannot be underestimated.

Moreover, B-C's suggestion to take people from the time and place in which they belong and put them in a time and place in which they are least likely to fit is crucial. Indeed, that is what Fatty does by creating Memiş Efendi's story. She takes the characters of B-C and herself from the Hayalifener Apartments[408] in 1999 and transposes them as Memiş Efendi and the characters in the circus in 1888. In other words, the characters are taken from where they belong and put into a place where they certainly do not belong—a circus, where they can be put on exhibit. When people look at these extraordinarily bizarre characters, Memiş Efendi's eyes look normal to people. In Fatty's own story, B-C uses Fatty as material for his dictionary, just as in the transformed story Memiş Efendi uses the various characters as material, each of which has a particular feature that refers to Fatty or her trauma.

Fatty and these characters have a lot in common. The most important point they share is that they are "isolated" and "alienated." In the words of Laurie Vickroy, "Trauma often involves a radical sense of disconnection and isolation as bonds are broken and relationships and personal safety are put into question. Survivors feel, often justifiably, abandoned or alienated because of their differences with others."[409] A close reading reveals how their physical appearance makes them look like aliens, just as Fatty feels when she is around people. One of the characters in the circus is a woman wearing a mask

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[405] Ibid. 239.
[406] Ibid., 40-41.
[407] Ibid., 120.
[408] The apartment building is also referred to as the Hayalifener Apartments in the English version. *Hayalifener* means skinny or scrawny, and it is a combination of the words for "imaginary" and "lantern."
[409] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 23.

> …with its bug-eyed eyes frozen as if it had witnessed a moment of terror, the tongue swollen as if it had been stuck in a beehive...was truly frightening. The masked woman did nothing, said nothing, but simply stood stock still on the stage. As if she'd been told to wait her entire life, and she obediently waited, without knowing why, or for what.[410]

Here, the masked woman symbolizes Fatty in many respects. The woman's eyes, which are frozen as if they had "witnessed a moment of terror," stand in for Fatty's eyes, which had witnessed the childhood rape, which is truly a moment of terror. The eyes frozen at that moment symbolize the indelible mark that trauma leaves on its victims, and they are frozen at the moment of trauma. In addition, the eyes of the mask are described as "bug-eyed;" likewise, Fatty is called "bug-eyed" in her childhood by the landlord. Aside from the eyes, the swollen tongue stung by bees refers to the oral rape and it is a phallic symbol. In this way, the masked woman is in fact a masked manifestation of Fatty, exhibiting her childhood trauma. Moreover, the masked woman stands still on the stage as if someone tells her not to move. This also refers to Fatty's childhood trauma, as the rapist tells Fatty not to move before the rape. Whenever someone tells her not to move, she remembers that moment and starts to feel anxious. In short, the masked woman with her frozen bug eyes, swollen tongue, and motionlessness is a clear reference to Fatty and her childhood trauma.

Three ugly sisters, Mari, Takuhi, and Agavni, take to the stage together in the circus. They belly dance, making their breasts bounce up and down. In addition to their extreme homeliness, Mari has one boob, Takuhi has two boobs, and Agavni has three boobs. I argue that the numbers one, two, and three, which are used to refer to the rape throughout the novel, are again used symbolically here. Moreover, the number of their breasts and their ugliness highlight their physical deficiencies. Fatty thus draws attention to the traces of her trauma and its physical effects through the creation of these three ugly sisters.

Snowball Vergin is another character who works at the circus. She is the daughter of a whore who catches syphilis from a rich customer. When Snowball Vergin is on the stage, people watch her with disgust. Her entire body is covered with open syphilis sores. The only part without sores is her vagina, so she calls it "snowball." The narrator relates that "none of the festering wounds that had pierced her body, none of the aches that left her mind shorn, nor the memoires

[410] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 67.

that gripped the heart...none of them touched there."[411] I think there is again an implicit reference to Fatty and her memories. She is orally raped, so she tries to wash her mouth out again and again. The need to clean shows that it is considered to be dirty in contrast to her vagina, which the rapist did not touch. Therefore, Vergin calls it "snowball," as it is white and clean.

Another character, Snakecharmer, has green eyes that reflect the world in reverse. When he is onstage, the audience sees everything through his eyes, and when they do so, the pieces of expensive gold jewelry they are wearing look like insects, so they take them off and toss them aside. Just like the Snakecharmer, the rapist has beautiful green eyes. Fatty the child thought that not only his eyes but also his hands and voice were beautiful. But this physically attractive man turns out to be a rapist, so the inside and outside of the man turn out to be polar opposites. For that reason, I think the Snakecharmer's green eyes, which show everything in reverse, refer to the opposition between how the rapist looks and his inner nature.

There are three other characters in the circus, Siranuş, Kınar Hanım, and Sable-girl. Siranuş is a tiny, ugly woman who sings cabaret songs on the stage. She sings while she is inside a pitch-black cauldron with a fire burning under it and fearful creatures all around. The narrator states that she has been sentenced to burn over the fire because of her levity. It is an Islamic belief that every sinner will burn in the fires of hell because of their sinful acts. This scene can be traced back to Fatty's childhood. After the rape, she touches her eyes to see if she has been crying or not, and she hopes that she has been weeping. However, when she realizes that she hasn't cried, she feels guilty and ashamed as if she is a sinner. Moreover, her grandmother wants to instill in her mind religious convictions when she is a child, so she frequently reminds her how sinful people will be punished by God with fire. Therefore, I contend that Fatty unconsciously blames herself for the rape. As for Kınar Hanım, she is holding ten puppets. She makes the puppets move and imitates natural catastrophes like floods, famines, and tornados. When she describes the rapist, Fatty says that he looked like a puppet she had seen at a funfair. She says that his eyes were more beautiful than the eyes of the puppet. The narrator relates that she never forgot about that puppet. Kınar Hanım's puppets, which destroy everything, seem to stand for the green-eyed puppet that resembles the rapist who destroys Şişko's life.

The last character to take to the stage is Sable-girl, who is the ugliest of all the characters. Her upper body is that of a woman while her lower half is that of a sable. When she dances on the

[411] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 69.

stage, she strikes fear into the hearts of the people in the audience. Most people close their eyes, as they are unable to bear the sight of her. Suddenly, the audience hears a voice say, "Close your eyes," and they do as they are told:

> The curtain would go down, but the women with their eyes closed tight would continue to remain frozen in place for a moment. As if there was no place left for them to go except this cherry-colored tent. They were not going to go out of the door.[412]

When we visualize the women here, the visual image is the same as that of Fatty the child in the coal shed. They are in a dark place, and someone tells them to close their eyes, just as the rapist had told Fatty to do. They cannot leave, just like Fatty was frozen in place because the rapist told her not to move. The end of the show at the circus represents the initiation of the rape.

Fatty re-creates herself as nine characters rather than just one. I would argue that this is because Şişko has "a multiple view of the self" that came into being as a result of the trauma. Vickroy states that trauma is accompanied by a splitting, which is a defense mechanism that illustrates that the integration of traumatic memory within narrative memory has failed. As a result of this splitting, survivors come to occupy a dual position; they are both inside and outside the past. Moreover, a multiple view of the self occurs as a result of "bifocal vision" and movements of avoidance to steer clear of fear and helplessness, which are the characteristics of trauma.[413]

Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi only exhibits these ugly characters to women; men are not allowed to see them. He has another show for men, which is performed by extremely beautiful characters who contrast sharply with the women's show. The first character is again a woman with a mask. However, her mask, which is in fact the same as her face, is very beautiful. After her, Hayganoş sings and dances on the stage. In contrast to Siranuş, the dancer in the cauldron over the fire surrounded by frightful creatures, Hayganoş is surrounded by flowers, and rabbits and butterflies follow her around onstage. Afterwards, three beautiful sisters—Lisa, Maria, and, Rosa—put on a performance. Hoyrat Aruzyak and Snakecharmer next take to the stage, respectively. Snakecharmer's green eyes reflect glints of heaven to the men. Betri Hanım, another character, has ten puppets and she imitates natural elements like the sun and rain, but rather than causing destruction, they help people. The last character is La Bella Anabella, whose beauty

[412] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 74.
[413] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 28.

fascinates the men. Before her show ends, the spectators hear a voice say, "Open your eyes," and the show concludes.

"Open your eyes" is again symbolic here. The rapist tells Şişko to keep her eyes closed until he counts to three. But he never says three; he rapes Şişko and leaves the coal shed. Şişko goes on waiting in the coal shed for the rapist to say "three" and "open your eyes." In this way, Şişko creates an imaginative scene for herself in which she hears the man telling her to open her eyes so that she can leave.

In contrast to the ugly characters, Şişko does not have any common points with these beautiful performers. She says,

> If you are as fat as me, it's difficult to stay out of sight...Wherever you go and whatever you do, you immediately attract attention...I think there must be other people in this situation; for instance, someone as ugly and strange as a freak, or as beautiful and as extraordinary as a djinn must face the same problem...In their view, you are material for observation.[414]

The "ugly and strange" people are a reference to the ugly characters in the circus and Şişko; the "beautiful" people are the pretty characters in the show for the men. They both draw spectators' attention, but relief for the trauma is only created in the show with beautiful characters. Şişko does not associate herself with the beautiful characters, so she again cannot hear the words "open your eyes." That is why once again attempts to find relief from the trauma fail.

Through a comparison of Şişko's and Memiş Efendi's story, it can be seen that the places where the stories take place are just as important as the characters. The main location in the second story is the circus because that is where Memiş Efendi presents his characters to the audience. The narrator informs the reader that the circus is located at the top of a steep road, so the audience has to clamber uphill to get to the circus. Most people prefer to walk along the hilly road despite the arduousness of the journey because going by coach involves much jostling and jolting and people get hurt, ultimately ending up back where they started the journey. Indeed, the hilly road is divided into two by a fountain. People stop there to rest and drink water from the fountain's basin.[415]

As regards Şişko's story, the main location is Hayalifener Apartments, where Şişko and B-C live together. Here is how it is depicted:

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[414] Shafak, *The Gaze*, 230.
[415] Ibid., 29.

> Actually there were two different hills [leading up to the Hayalifener Apartments]. Because one hill started where the other finished, from the middle it looked as if it was a single hill. And right at the point where one hill finished and the other began, there was an old fountain that dried up who knew how many years ago. [The road to Hayalifener Building is so hilly that it is difficult to go up and difficult go down.][416]

The similarities between these two locations led me to draw the conclusion that the Hayalifener Apartments are in the same place where the circus had been years earlier. I contend that just as B-C and Şişko are transformed into Keramet Mumi Keşke Memiş Efendi and the ugly circus characters in her unconscious, the Hayalifener Apartments are recreated as the circus. The color cherry-red is again used repeatedly in Keramet Mumi Memiş Efendi's story; his circus is a "cherry-colored circus"[417] just as "the Hayalifener Apartments had been painted from top to bottom in a cherry color."[418]

After they experience frequent electricity cuts at the apartment building, the authorities inform them that, based on the authorities' outdated map, there was a swamp where the Hayalifener Apartments should have been in reality. The swamp is at least a century old. They say, "It [the swamp] is like a wound with a scar on the surface that's festering underneath. It was never drained."[419] It is significant that the word trauma means "wound" in Greek.[420] And the description of the swamp beneath the Hayalifener Apartments is very similar to descriptions of traumatic moments. For instance, Şişko's trauma is like a wound on the surface that is festering underneath. Merely looking at her tells us nothing about her wound, but her reenactments, obsessions, and obesity all show how active the wound is on the inside. Therefore, the swamp beneath where Şişko lives is a metaphor referring to Şişko's traumatic wound. As for the location of the circus, "no one would believe that this area used to be a swamp after smelling the heady fragrance of the fig and lemon trees...that surround the circus."[421] This is yet more evidence of how these places overlap one another. Thus, I think that the Hayalifener Apartments and the circus are places where Şişko and the characters in the circus are put on display by B-C and Memiş Efendi.

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[416] Ibid., 181.
[417] Ibid., 27.
[418] Ibid., 182.
[419] Ibid., 177.
[420] "Merriam-Webster." Accessed January 1, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma
[421] Shafak, *The Gaze,* 31.

The symbolic items used before the exposition of the characters are purple in color. For example, B-C wears a purple velvet cape over his nude body while working as nude model. Şişko states, "He would sit on his stool, and throw off the purple velvet cape. I don't know where he found it. He would be left completely naked."[422] So the origin of the purple velvet cape is a mystery for Şişko, but traces of it can be found in Memiş Efendi's story. At his circus, before the first show "the purple curtains with threadbare fringe began to open slowly."[423] Lastly, Şişko buys herself a purple sunshade so she can sunbathe on the balcony of the apartment without anyone seeing her. Unfortunately, B-C responds negatively, saying, "Your huge body already attracts attention. You must be noticed all the way from the bottom of the hill with a sunshade in this color."[424]

The stories of Memiş Efendi and Şişko, if considered separately, may not appear to be integrated or related to one another. However, if Keramet's story is taken up in the context of Şişko's story, much comes to light and they become more meaningful: "If our conscious thoughts and behaviors sometimes appear to be random, fragmented, chaotic, even insane, they become coherent when contextualized within the logic of our unconscious wishes and fantasies."[425] If readers get the impression that the story of Memiş Efendi appears from out of nowhere, contextualizing it within the logic of Şişko's story reveals how strongly it is connected to Şişko's story. And if Şişko's own story reflects her conscious world, Memiş Efendi's story reflects her unconscious world.

Conclusion

The Gaze combines the symptoms of trauma both at the thematic and structural level. Because she is a child trauma victim, Fatty's life is divided in two parts, a "before" and an "after." The "after" part of the trauma is under the sway of the traumatic moment. The repetitions and reenactments all represent how trauma controls Fatty's life and can intrude into her life anytime, anywhere. *The Gaze* depicts Fatty's struggle to recover from her trauma and go back to the time "before" the trauma occurred.

[422] Ibid., 80.
[423] Ibid., 67.
[424] Ibid., 184-5.
[425] Horvitz, *Literary Trauma: Sadism, Memory and Sexual Violence in American Women's Fiction,* 73.

Her obsession with the gaze of God, which is based on whether he saw the rape or not, is accompanied by her naïve childhood belief that if no one saw the event, it may as well not have happened at all. When she kills the cat, which did see the rape, her aim is to kill the only witness in an attempt to undo the trauma. Her habit of vomiting up whatever she eats also symbolizes her desire to "get rid of" the trauma. The penetration of the trauma into her memory is represented by how the perpetrator ejaculates his semen into Fatty's mouth. Each time she vomits, she wants to clear her mind of the traumatic moment. This is possible only by turning back to a time "before" and reconstructing the past. Nicole King refers to the time before a trauma as a period of "innocence" and she asserts that memory "is reconstructed in narrative and implicated in notions of self-identity… [This] is rehearsed again and again in a narrative which attempts to recover the self who existed 'before.'"[426] By creating stories within stories, Şafak makes it possible for Fatty to reconstruct her innocent self. She cannot inscribe her trauma into her life story, so she makes up another story in she which attributes all of her features to that tale's characters. This is a strategy that Fatty develops as a means of recovering from the trauma and returning to an age of innocence. However, she cannot succeed in reconstituting herself as she lacks support from society and her lover, B-C.

The way that Şafak organizes the book is, in terms of typography, punctuation, time sequence, narratives, and fragmentation, representative of Fatty's traumatic mind. For me, reading Mahrem is akin to taking a journey through Fatty's thoughts. Each page turned is like a step taken as I walk in her mind, and my last step takes me back to the place where I took my first step. During the course of this excursion, I witness Fatty's before and after in her struggle to recover her failure and arrive at the point where she began her journey.

[426] Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 1.