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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Elif Şafak, Sexual Trauma, and Turkey

Gender inequality and sexual crimes against women are among the major themes in the novels of the contemporary Turkish woman writer Elif Şafak. Some of her novels provide a vivid perspective on women's lives in Turkey, reflecting on how women—and also men—suffer as the result of sexual crimes. In particular, her works of trauma fiction, which involve trauma both at the structural and thematic level, explore and shed light on how both women and men attempt to cope with the traumas they suffer as the result of sexual crimes and the extent of their success in overcoming their pain. Her novels also deal with how social and cultural norms, which are based on patriarchal system, contribute to sexual crimes and inhibit the healing of traumas.

Sexual crimes are like an ever-bleeding wound deep in the heart of Turkey, too pervasive to be cured, and while they are conspicuous because of how often they occur, they remain a taboo subject. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they always go unspoken. Literature is one alternative way of speaking out about issues that are difficult to openly discuss because it has the power to represent to readers that which is often inexpressible and inaccessible. As such, it is able to render audible the voices of those who have been silenced. In that regard, literature can serve a means of raising awareness about sexual crimes, supporting victims, and threatening perpetrators. The works of Elif Şafak often delve into issues concerning minorities, sexual violence, male and female victims of patriarchy, and people with physical disabilities. As she says, “The land of storytelling is a land of compelling truths told in the form of little lies,”¹ which reflects her belief that fiction in particular is a site of struggle for freedom. She makes use of fiction to examine themes that she could not express otherwise.²

Rape, incest, and honor killings are among the most common gender-related traumatic events that are difficult to speak about or “express otherwise.” Şafak uses various narrative techniques in her trauma novels to convey different aspects of trauma to readers. She uses the power of literature

¹ Elif Şafak, “Storytelling, Fake Worlds, and the Internet,” *World Literature Today*, January 2015. <https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2015/january/storytelling-fake-worlds-and-internet-elif-shafak>

² “Migrations: A Meridians Interview with Elif Şafak,” interview by M. Myriam. J. A. Chancy, *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2003): 58.

to raise awareness about the destructiveness of patriarchy and examine how it encourages sexual crimes, while also exploring how most sociocultural norms contribute to the dissemination of patriarchal ideas. She does so by allowing the characters in her books to speak up for those who have been traumatized and silenced. My interest in literary trauma theory and the fictionalization of gender-based trauma in Turkey paved the way for me to explore the trauma novels written by Elif Şafak. My central questions in this study pivot around the following issues: What narrative strategies and devices does Şafak employ in her trauma fiction at the structural level? How does she portray the relationship between gender-based/sexual trauma and Turkish sociocultural norms at the thematic level? How do style and themes correspond in her work? I will focus on three of Şafak's novels which I argue are works of trauma fiction both at the structural and thematic level: *The Bastard of Istanbul*,³ *The Gaze*,⁴ and *Honor*.⁵ Respectively, they illustrate the traumas caused by incest, childhood abuse, and honor killings. While trauma is a common theme in these novels, they are also largely concerned with the destructive effects of social/cultural norms brought about through patriarchy. In addition to sexual trauma, the Turkish-Armenian conflict is another major issue in *the Bastard of Istanbul*, but I will not explore that issue as it does not directly relate to sexual trauma. Şafak wrote another novel, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*,⁶ which takes up the theme of child abuse and its effects, but I will not discuss that work in this dissertation because I had already completed my study when it was published.

A sub-issue I will also examine here concerns how Şafak portrays the complex relationship between sexual trauma, recovery, and the sociocultural conditions in which the characters are embedded. Since all three novels in my corpus explicitly depict Turkey as having a strongly patriarchal society, one wonders if patriarchy is represented as promoting sexual violence. How does it affect recovery from trauma? As gendered parenting and sexist discourses are common issues in these novels, does Şafak assume that there is a correlation between them and sexual trauma? Moreover, I aim to explore Şafak's point of view about gender. Does she solely blame men or do the novels portray both women and men as supporters of patriarchy? Furthermore, as conservative societies have a tendency to blame victims for provoking sexual violence, how does Şafak depict that relationship in Turkey as an example of a conservative Muslim country? How is the concept of

³ Elif Şafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

⁴ Elif Şafak, *The Gaze*, trans. by Brendan Freely (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

⁵ Elif Şafak, *Honour* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

⁶ Elif Şafak, *10 Minutes, 38 Seconds in This Strange World* (New York: Viking Books, 2019).

“honor” for both men and women portrayed? Although Şafak’s works have been the subject of numerous academic and non-academic works, to date no research has been done that takes up her novels within the framework of trauma theory or addresses the questions I have posed here.⁷ Indeed, despite its importance, trauma theory has received little attention from researchers working on the field of literature in Turkey, and I believe that this study will contribute to the field by filling that gap.

Aside from examining the content of Şafak’s works, I aim to inquire if there are specific narrative strategies that she employs in her novels to render visible the unrepresentability of trauma. Does she utilize the same narrative devices in her trauma novels or does she use different narrative

⁷ Twenty-eight master’s theses and three doctoral dissertations have been written on the works of Elif Şafak at Turkish universities. Most of them take up all of her novels as their corpus and the most common themes are mysticism, multiculturalism, the gaze, women, and the translations of the books. None of them, however, examine the theme of trauma in the novels or utilize trauma theory. Among the theses submitted to universities outside of Turkey, the following are worth mentioning: Elif Şimşek’s doctoral thesis “Elif Şafak and Emine Sevgi Özdamar: Politics of Fiction, Re-negotiating Secularism, Decolonial Feminism and Decolonial Aesthetics” (2016), which examines Turkish feminism comparatively through the selected works of the two authors, and Joan Conwells’s master’s thesis submitted to East Carolina University in 2011, which analyses Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, Elif Şafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Edwidge Danticat’s *The Dew Breaker*, and Fadia Faqir’s *Pillars of Salt* as emblematic works of antipatriarchal fiction penned by contemporary transnational women writers. In her book *Rhetorics of Silence and Disarticulation in Transgenerational Spaces in World War I and World War II Literature* (2016), Irina Nersisova’s explores various war novels and works of historical fiction, including an examination of the issues of the Armenian genocide, silence, and perpetrator’s arguments in Şafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul*. In her PhD thesis, Berivan Saltik examines honor killings in literature as a social phenomenon; in one of her chapters, she “address[es] the construction of masculinity in Turkish author Elif Şafak’s British-set novel *Honour* (2012),” examining ways in which victimhood and culpability are linked when honor killings are used as a way of proving masculinity. İlknur Meşe’s article “Motherhood Creating its Killer: Based on Elif Şafak’s Novel *Alexander* Questioning the Femininity and Masculinity in Turkey” primarily examines mother-son relationships. Although these works address similar issues as the third chapter of this dissertation, my focus in that chapter is not limited to honor killings or mother-son relationships, but rather I offer a thorough examination of representations of trauma. Except for the dissertations that have been written about Şafak so far, to date no articles have been written that touch on the theme and representation of trauma in her novels. However, mention should be made of Zeynep Ergun’s book *Erkekliğin Yitdiği Yerde*, which analyzes images of masculinity in the works of three contemporary Turkish novelists: Orhan Pamuk, İhsan Oktay Anar, and Elif Şafak. Ergun discusses masculinity as well as its constructions through the devaluing of women and its loss through the deaths of the characters. The clash of masculinity and femininity in *Baba ve Piç* (*The Bastard of Istanbul*) is also a part of my chapter on the same book. However, the scope of my analysis is not limited to gender issues but takes a broader approach by examining trauma and its narration in the novel. The first academic conference about trauma and literature in Turkey was held at Ege University in 2016, but none of the papers presented at the conference shared the same approach as mine and none of them were about Elif Şafak’s trauma novels. In her dissertation “Cold War Masculinities in Turkish Literature: A Survey of March 12 Novels,” Çimen Günay-Erkol explores novels written about the March 12 military coup between the years 1970-1980. Pointing out that gender trouble has always been associated with femininity in Turkey, she mainly focuses on masculinity and masculine values in March 12 novels. So although we both study trauma novels, she deals with coup novels while I examine trauma fiction about sexual violence.

strategies based on the content of the novel and the type of trauma? This is significant because the “impossibility” of representing trauma lies at its very core. In his book *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Art, Literature, and Theory*, Ernst Van Alphen describes the relationship between representation and trauma by focusing on the Holocaust as a traumatic event:

...representation does offer the possibility of giving expression to extreme experiences. Even so, it must be remembered that representation itself is historically variable. Sometimes there are situations or events—of which the Holocaust is prototypical—which occasion experiences that cannot be expressed in the terms satisfied by language or, more broadly, the symbolic order *at that moment*. I therefore want to stress the fact that for me representation is not a static, timeless phenomenon, of which the (im)possibilities are fixed once and forever. For every language user, representation is a historically and culturally specific phenomenon. Languages, whether literary/artistic or not, are changeable and transformable. This assumption suggests that to answer the question of the causes of the unrepresentability of the Holocaust, it is best to focus not on the limits of the language or representation as such, but on the features of the forms of representation available to Holocaust victims/survivors to articulate their stories. The difficulty survivors of the Holocaust have in expressing their experiences can be explained by the terms and positions the symbolic order offers them... I contend that the problem Holocaust survivors encounter is precisely that the lived events could not be experienced because language did not provide the terms with which to express them. This unrepresentability defines those events as *traumatic*.⁸

In order to understand how Şafak approaches sexual crimes, especially in addressing the issues of rape, incest, and honor killing, it is necessary to provide a sociocultural introduction to such crimes in Turkey. A narratological analysis of her novels demands familiarity with how Turkish society responds to the trauma caused by sexual crimes, how common those crimes are in Turkey, how Turkish culture affects the causes and effects of traumatic events, and how effective Turkish Law is in penalizing perpetrators and compensating victims. As John Brannigan argues in his book *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, historical and cultural contexts should not be disregarded in interpreting literary texts, and literary texts possess the potential for power and subversion that exist in a given society.⁹ The sociocultural norms of a society cannot be ignored in studying representations of trauma because society and individuals play dual roles in the construction of what trauma means. The traumatic events that Şafak focuses on in her novels show

⁸ Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

⁹ John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 6.

that while women are usually the victims, men also suffer from traumatic events that are rooted in society and are strongly related to the power struggles in that society. Victims' struggles continue not only in the private sphere but also face challenges in the public sphere. On the other hand, through the construction of her novels and portrayals of her characters, Şafak demonstrates that recovering from trauma requires bridging the gap between society and individual, past and present, because cultural pain is internalized at an individual level and facilitates the victimization of people, which is especially true for women in Turkey. In short, a brief sociocultural discussion of rape, incest, and honor killings in Turkey will help us better understand the literary treatment of these crimes in Şafak's novels. In this chapter I will first provide an overview of the author's novels and the issues she articulates therein. Then I will describe the social and historical background of the sexual crimes in my corpus. I will end the introduction by explaining my methodology and describing the novels and issues that are central in the chapters that follow.

The Ambiguous Case of Elif Şafak: A Turkish Writer with No Origins

Elif Şafak writes trauma novels by using diverse narrative devices to give form to the unrepresentable trauma of sexual violence. In particular, her works explore the relationship between violence and silence as well as femininity and masculinity as defined by Turkish society, the possibility of healing from trauma, and the role that society plays in the healing process. Since I focus on those narratives that enact the trauma caused by sexual violence and gender-related issues at the structural and thematic levels, my corpus consists of novels that portray the complex relationship between rape, childhood abuse, honor killings, and sociocultural dynamics in Turkey.

Elif Şafak's life and the stories she narrates in her books are strongly correlated with each other. For that reason, knowing some biographical information about Şafak can help lay bare the traces of her life experiences and her way of representing those issues in her novels. In addition to gender, identity and alienation are among the main themes of her books, and she frequently refers to Sufism and mystical Islamic beliefs in many of her works as well.¹⁰

¹⁰ "Sufism," or Islamic mysticism, is often referred to as the internalization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice. Sufis strive to constantly be aware of God's presence, stressing contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction. In contrast to the academic exercises of theology and jurisprudence, which depend on reason, Sufism depends on emotion and imagination in the divine-human relationship. Sufism is unrelated to the Sunni/Shii split, schools of jurisprudence, social class, gender, geography, or family connections. Rather, it is closely associated with both popular religion and orthodox expressions of Islamic teachings. It has been both opposed and supported by the state. Sufi rituals typically consist of

Şafak was born in Strasbourg, France in 1971. Her mother, Şafak Atayman, was working as a diplomat in France at the time. Her father, Nuri Bilgin, was a sociologist and an academic. Her mother and father got divorced shortly after her birth. From that time onward, she rarely saw her father and led a life without him. She refused to use her paternal surname (Bilgin), opting instead to use her mother's name Şafak as her surname.¹¹ She has noted,

All throughout my childhood and youth, I received almost no financial help at all from my father. As for my maternal grandfather, who was a retired army officer, he made it very clear that should my mother get a divorce and come back to Turkey, he would pay the rent for us to stay in his house.¹²

Not all families in Turkey welcome their daughters back when they get a divorce. Divorcees may not be accepted by their families and they are encouraged to continue with their marriages despite the problems they may be having with their spouses. Şafak once said, "I myself have never been raised in a family structure, never had a solid notion of home and was never happy with the national identity or religious labels attached to me."¹³ Indeed, her refusal to use either her paternal or maternal surname served as a means of erasing her origins, which is indicative of her desire to be rootless, without origins. That is partly how she was able to slip free of the labels attached to her. She also believes that such labels serve as a means of discriminating against people: "I am more interested in showing the things we have in common as fellow beings, sharing the same planet and ultimately the same sorrows and joys rather than adding another brick in the imaginary walls erected between cultures/religions/ethnicities."¹⁴

At the age of eleven, she started attending an international school in Spain where she lived with her mother, who had been assigned as a diplomat there. The experiences she had in Spain

the recitation of prayers, poems, and selections from the *Quran*, and methodical repetitions of divine names (dhikr) or Quranic formulas, such as the shahadah. In communal gatherings, Sufis perform dhikr aloud, often with musical accompaniment. The specific structure and format of the daily devotional exercises and activities were set by each order's founder as a special spiritual path. The founder was the spiritual guide for all followers, who swore a special oath of obedience to him as their shaykh (teacher). The record of the transmission of the ritual was preserved in a formal chain of spiritual descent (silsilah) extending back to the founder and then usually to Muhammad. Leadership was passed down either within a family line or on the basis of spiritual seniority within the tariqah (order). The typical initiation rite transmits a blessing (barakah) to the disciple, transforming his or her soul. Accessed January 12, 2020, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2260>

¹¹ "Elif Şafak Kimdir?" *Hürriyet*, January 12, 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/elif-safak-kimdir-40610853>

¹² Chancy, interview, 58.

¹³ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴ Elif Şafak, "Elif Şafak on Our Common Humanity," interview by İrem Kök, *Free Speech Debate*, January 1, 2016. <http://www.freespeech.com/en/discuss/elif-shafak-on-our-common-humanity>

taught her about the hierarchy of nationalities because she saw that being Dutch or English was the most prestigious while she, along with an Indian girl, were relegated to the lowest ranks at the school. After the Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Ağca attempted to assassinate the Pope, the children at her school would shout at her, “Pope killers!”¹⁵

In her novels, Elif Şafak brings together characters of different nationalities, ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds because she wants to break down the walls that separate people with such labels. She believes,

Nationalism is not a naive love that one feels towards one’s country. Nationalism is a very shadowy pool: what is visible at the surface might not reflect what looms deep down below. Nationalists’ fervor always goes hand in hand with patriarchal structures and phallogocentric discursive practices.¹⁶

Her life experiences seem to have had a major impact on the formation of her ideas, not only about nations but also about religion. As a young child, she lived with her grandmothers both on her father’s side and on her mother’s side. She described this situation as living in two completely different worlds. While their understandings of religion differed radically from each other, they both had a strong influence on her childhood. As Şafak describes it,

The grandmother on my father’s side in Izmir was quick to teach me “fear.” Her *Jalal* (punishing and masculine) God was an ever-watching eye, always watching you and seeing every single move you made down here. Returning from the house I was full of fear and the thrill of the thought of being watched constantly was inscribed in every move I made. And yet, paradoxically, I had internalized the Gaze and developed an inner-eye—an eye that would take me too long to transform into a nonintrusive nonjudgmental Gaze. But my grandmother on my mother’s side introduced me to a very different idea of God—a *Jamal* (beautiful and feminine) God—one that was based on love and with whom you could always negotiate... I came to realize that the tension between those who prioritize Jamal and those who prioritize Jalal as aspects of God...might have serious implications in daily life, especially for women.¹⁷

The above quote about the gaze of God is significant because it points directly to Şafak’s novels *The Bastard of Istanbul* and *The Gaze*. In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, the protagonist questions if there are ever private moments in a person’s life that go completely unobserved, even by God, who is an ever-

¹⁵ Chancy, interview, 57.

¹⁶ Chancy, interview, 58.

¹⁷ Ibid., 56.

watching eye. The protagonist of *The Gaze* is another victim of sexual violence. After a stranger rapes her orally, she hopes that nobody saw the traumatic event. Moreover, she cannot shake off the idea that God, ever watchful, might have seen what transpired. She constantly dreams of turning into a balloon and floating up into the sky to see if God really watches people all the time.

Especially in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, the protagonist wavers in terms of her belief in God. She wants to believe in his existence but cannot believe that God could have let such incest take place if he is omnipresent and omnipotent. In addition to feeling in-between in terms of believing or not believing in God, there is also the issue of being geographically in-between and not feeling bound to any particular country, nation, society, or identity, which is another theme she addresses in her novels. She cites Turkey as an example of being in-between and thinks that the in-between state of Turkey can be best described through an analogy with the Bosphorus Bridge. As you drive across the bridge, you see a sign on one end that reads “Welcome to the European Continent” and on the other end there is a sign that says “Welcome to the Asian Continent.” However, Turkey belongs neither to Europe nor to Asia; it is in between them. Historically, that imagined geographical divide led to the emergence of a rigidly pro-Western elite on the one hand and a backlash against them on the other. Those two sides are different from each other, even in the language they speak.¹⁸ She reflects that state of being in-between through the language she uses in her books. She often uses Ottoman terms and words specific to Sufism. She believes that if such words are not used, their meanings will be lost, which would also entail a loss of culture.¹⁹ In the early days of her writing career, she was criticized by staunchly secularist intellectuals for using old words instead of sticking to modern Turkish. As she has said,

In Turkey, my fiction has been, from time to time, targeted by some rigidly *Kemalist* intellectuals who have accused me of betraying the nationalist project because I do like “old” words—words that were expelled from the written language fabricated by the forefathers of the National Language Building Process.²⁰

In the same way that she likes bringing together characters of different nationalities, religions, and backgrounds, she also likes harmonizing Ottoman words with modern Turkish. So just as she prefers “giving voice to characters who are kept in the margins, left unheard in life,” she seeks to

¹⁸ Chancy, interview, 59.

¹⁹ Şirin Payzın, *Oradan Bakınca Öyle mi Gözüküyor* (Ankara: Carpe Diem Kitap, 2007), 99.

²⁰ Chancy, interview, 59.

breathe new life into words that have been abandoned.²¹ At this point it is important to note that she writes novels in both Turkish and in English. She has claimed that she prefers to write humorous stories in English and sorrowful narratives in Turkish, stating that for her Turkish is an emotional language whereas English is more precise and expansive in terms of vocabulary.²²

Şafak's works are inclusive of both female and male characters, many of whom share the common feature of being kept in the margins, silenced, and shunned. However, the female characters outnumber the male characters. She is deeply interested in gender inequality in both the domestic and social domain. After completing her bachelor's degree at Middle East Technical University in Turkey, she finished her master's degree in gender studies at the same university. In that way, it can be seen that her interest in gender studies is not only a part of her fictional world but also her education. Later she taught classes such as "Sexualities and Gender in the Muslim world" at The University of Arizona and at several universities in Turkey and abroad. In 2005, she got married to Eyüp Can Sağlık, a journalist.²³ The claim has been made that Eyüp Can Sağlık the foster child of the leader of FETÖ (the Gülenist Terror Group).²⁴ Though he denies the claim, he admits that Fethullah Gülen had an influence on him as he grew up.²⁵ For that reason, Şafak has been accused of being "the daughter-in-law of Gülen" and criticized as such.²⁶ Unlike her husband, she has neither denied nor verified those assertions. Because of such claims and her criticism in *The Bastard of Istanbul* of the Ottoman Empire's role in the Turkish-Armenian conflict, she has been harshly critiqued by some people like the journalist Nihat Genç, who once asked, "When will the daughter-in-law of the *cemaat* be arrested?"²⁷ Şafak has two children, Şehrazat Zelda, who was named after the character Scheherazade in *1001 Nights* and Zelda Fitzgerald, and a son, who is named Emir

²¹ "Q&A with Elif Şafak, Author of Honour," *Penguin Random House*, May 30, 2013. www.penguin.com.au

²² Louisa Ermolina, "East Meets West," *Publishers Weekly*. Accessed December 1, 2006,

²³ After the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15, 2017, he was charged with being a member of the terrorist group FETO and taken into custody. He claimed that he had no connection with any group. "FETÖ'den Aranan Gazeteci Eyüp Can: Büyük İftira," *Birgün*, September 2, 2016. <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/feto-den-aranan-gazeteci-eyup-can-buyuk-iftira-126787.html>. Unless otherwise noted here and elsewhere, all translations are my own.

²⁴ "Fethullah Gülen'in Gelinini Tanıyalım" [Let's Meet Fethullah Gülen's Daughter-in-Law], *Turkish News*, August 4, 2013. <https://www.turkishnews.com/tr/content/2013/08/04/fethullah-gulenin-gelinini-taniyalim/>

²⁵ Eyüp Can Sağlık, "Geceleri Sokağa Çıkar Bağırırdım" [I Used Scream on the Street at Night], interview by Ayşe Arman, *Hürriyet*, February 11, 2007. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kelebek/geceleri-sokaga-cikar-bagirirdim-5927143>

²⁶ "Fethullah Gülen'in Gelinini Tanıyalım," *Turkish News*.

²⁷ Nihat Genç, "Nihat Genç Yazdı: Cemaatin Gelini Elif Şafak Ne Zaman Tutuklanacak?" [Nihat Genç Wrote: When Will the Daughter-In-Law of Gülen Group arrested?], *Oda Tv*, July 4, 2016. <https://odatv.com/cemaatin-gelini-elif-hanim-dunya-aleme-rezil-ve-kepaze-oldunuz-0407161200.html>.

Zahir.²⁸ She lives in London and visits Istanbul frequently. She often uses those two cities as the settings of her novels.

As touched on earlier, in addition to gender issues she frequently writes about Sufism and identity. Her first novel *Pinhan*, which was published in 1977, deals extensively with Sufism.²⁹ Referred to as an “introverted novel” by the author, *Pinhan* is the story of a hermaphrodite dervish³⁰ that examines the difficulties of being different or an “other” in a highly traditional society. The protagonist questions his identity within a cultural and philosophical context and also probes the experiences s/he has during her/his journey to find her/his true self. The name of the protagonist is Pinhan, a Persian word that means “hidden.”³¹ Indeed, the word refers to Pinhan’s secret—the duality of her/his gender. This duality is reflected throughout the book, as Şafak says: “...a story within a story, religion in atheism, disbelief in belief, cosmos in chaos, will be found there.”³² At the beginning of the novel, Pinhan arrives at a famous *tekke*.³³ The name of the *tekke* in the novel is *Durri Baba tekkesi* [the Tekke of Durri Baba]. While “*baba*” normally means “father” in Turkish, it is used in that case to refer to the spiritual leader of a Bektashi congregation.³⁴ Therefore, *Durri Baba tekkesi* is named after Durri, who is the congregation’s leader. Ayşe Melda Üner argues that “the bird with a pearl” in the book refers to the transformation of Durri Baba, as Durri means “particular to pearls.”³⁵ This dual form of Durri Baba, his transformation from a bird into a human being, also is a reference to the duality of Pinhan and the transformation he undergoes at the end of the novel. At the beginning, Pinhan sets off on a journey to find her/his true self, ultimately

²⁸ Wikipedia, “Elif Şafak.” Accessed May 15, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elif_Shafak

²⁹ Elif Şafak, *Pinhan* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2014).

³⁰ “Creating the Story Together: An Inclusive Interview with Elif Şafak,” *Journal of Turkish Literature: Elif Şafak Special Issue*, Bilkent University Center for Turkish Literature, Issue 6, (2009): 9-20.

³¹ “Pinhan,” *Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Association)*. Accessed July 20, 2018, www.tdk.gov.tr

³² “Hikâye içinde hikâye, dinsizlik içinde din, inanç içinde inançsızlık, hayal içinde hakikat, kaos içinde kosmos bulacaklardır orada.” Feridun Andaç “Elif Şafak: Hikaye Anlatmayı Bilen Yazar” [Elif Şafak: The Writer Who Knows How to Narrate Stories], *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, July 11, 2002.

http://www.metiskitap.com/catalog/interview/2833_112.01.2018

³³ *Tekke*: The Turkish term for a Sufi residence, hospice, or lodge. Typically, a building where Sufi activities, such as teaching, rituals, and worship, occur. The head of the order may live there. They became suspect during the colonial era as potential sites for arms stockpiling and dissident activities, and were targeted for abolition under Atatürk following the declaration of the secular Turkish state. Accessed January 1, 2018, “Tekke,” Oxford Islamic Dictionary <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2365>

³⁴ “Bektashi Order.” Accessed January 01, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bektashi_Order

³⁵ Ayşe Melda Üner, “Elif Şafakın Pinhan Adlı Romanında bir Anlatım Tekniği Olarak Dil” [Language as a Narrative Technique in Pinhan], *Türkblilig: Türk Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol. 11, Issue 19, (2010): 206.

hoping to put an end to the duality of her/his sex. After an adventurous journey, Pinhan wakes up as a beautiful girl. The metamorphosis of Durri Baba thus parallels Pinhan's gender transformation.

Another important element that emphasizes duality and transformation is the neighborhood in which Pinhan arrives in Istanbul. The neighborhood, which was previously known as Scorpion Arif [Akrep Arif]³⁶ has been renamed Nakşı Nigar.³⁷ While Arif is a male name, meaning a knowledgeable person, Nigar is a female name that means embroidery/painting.³⁸ This change from a male to a female name (and symbolic shift from a wise man to a beautiful woman) foreshadows the gender change Pinhan undergoes at the end of the book. Neşe Demirci explores the relationship between the names of the characters and the content and claims that the names have symbolic meanings.³⁹ She asserts that the neighborhood symbolizes "the south" through the name of Akrep Arif. When it becomes Nakşı Nigar, it symbolizes "the west." She emphasizes the change from a male name to a female name, and she associates being male with the south and being female with the west. The reaction of the residents in the village to this alteration is important because they are both in favor as well as afraid of the change. In that way, Demirci draws parallels between this demand for and fear of change during the era of modernization in the Ottoman Empire and its resurrection as the Republic of Turkey. Thus, duality, transformation, and metamorphosis are exemplified in the book through the duality of Pinhan's sex, Durri Baba's transformation into a bird, and the Ottoman Empire becoming the nation of Turkey.⁴⁰

Şafak's master's thesis titled "The Deconstruction of Femininity along the Cyclical Understanding of Heterodox Dervishes in Islam" is directly related to the story Şafak narrates in *Pinhan*. She has asserted that Sufism reflects very closely her worldview,⁴¹ and she is specifically interested in the Mawlawi order, which was founded by Mevlana Jaleddin Rumi's son, Sultan Veled.⁴²

³⁶ "Arif" *TDK*. Accessed July 20, 2018,

http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.5c49fb0157ea73.01098924

³⁷ Nakşı has two meanings; it can mean a miniature painting and also a trick. Nigar means "beautiful like a painting."

"Nakşı," *TDK*. Accessed July 20, 2018,

http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.5c4a001ca61a97.16532267

³⁸ *Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: Sev Yayıncılık, 1999), 1968.

³⁹ Neşe Demirci, "Symbolism of Names in Elif Şafak's *Pinhan*, *Araf*, and *Mahrem*," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 5, Issue 3, 2010: 999, doi: 10.7827/Turkish Studies.

⁴⁰ Demirci, "Symbolism of Names in Elif Şafak's *Pinhan*, *Araf*, and *Mahrem*."

⁴¹ "Creating the Story Together: An Inclusive Interview with Elif Şafak," *Journal of Turkish Literature: Elif Şafak Special Issue*.

⁴² Rūmī, in full Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, also known by the honorific Mawlānā (born c. September 30, 1207 in Balkh (in present-day Afghanistan) and died on December 17, 1273 in Konya in present-day Turkey), was a majör Sufi mystic

The linear understanding of time, which we are accustomed to use and reproduce, relies heavily on the existence of three basic categories, namely the past, present, and the future, although the boundaries between them may seem somewhat blurring and confusing. A careful observation of the construction of time prevalent at different historical periods and geographical locations will concede not only that the linear understanding of time evolves slowly throughout the history, but that there have been (and still are) other constructions of time which differed significantly from it. The cyclical understating of time adopted by Bektashi and Mawlawi dervishes is merely one of these other constructions.⁴³

As discussed above, a *tekke* is a place where Sufi activities such as worshipping and teaching take place. In his analysis of *Pinhan*, Onur Bilge Kula emphasizes the inclusive nature of *tekkes*, pointing out that worshipping in a circular formation at a *tekke* is indicative of diversity. No one is left out of the circle, and the differences between people do not make them strangers but draw them closer together.⁴⁴ Therefore, it stands for unity against discrimination, as all boundaries are eliminated and everyone is welcomed. Şafak challenges the boundaries that place people, locations, and everything else into classes and create discrimination. She wants all the walls surrounding people to be levelled, as she seeks to create a world where everyone is accepted unconditionally.

Although national, religious, and ethnic labels are meant to unite people, in effect they also create barriers for people with differing national and religious backgrounds. Şafak not only opposes the idea of labeling others, she also refuses to be labelled herself. She asserts that she does not identify with any of the labels attached to her such as “Turk” or “Muslim” because they create discrimination.⁴⁵ That may give one a sense of freedom, but alienation or estrangement are an inevitable outcome of making such a choice. The feeling of being a stranger everywhere is a common theme in her novels, and she makes a connection between her novels and her own life experiences:

and poet who often wrote in the Persian language. He is famous for his lyrics and for his didactic epic *Maṣnavī-yi Ma'navī* (Spiritual Couplets), which influenced mystical thought and literature throughout the Muslim world. After his death, his disciples were organized as the Mawlawiyyah order. Rūmī's use of Persian and Arabic in his poetry, in addition to some Turkish and to a lesser extent Greek, has resulted in his being claimed variously for Turkish literature and Persian literature, a reflection of the strength of his influence in Iran and Turkey. The influence of his writings on the Indian subcontinent is also substantial. By the end of the 20th century, his popularity had become a global phenomenon, with his poetry achieving wide circulation in Western Europe and the United States. Accessed September 1,

⁴³ Bilgin, “The Deconstruction of Femininity,” 162.

⁴⁴ Onur Bilge Kula, “Elif Şafak Romanı: *Pinhan* ve *Baba ve Piç*, Örneğinde Bir Çözümleme Denemesi” [A Novel by Elif Şafak: An Analysis of *Pinhan* and *Baba ve Piç*], *Frankofoni*, Volume 19, (2017), 486-488.

⁴⁵ Chancy, interview, 57-8.

My interest in such themes is partly a reflection of my own life. Until becoming a mother, I lived my life out of a suitcase. I was raised by a single mother and family was something I observed from a distance, not feeling a part of it. So a nomadic lifestyle has been with me ever since my childhood. But that said, such themes are also important for me philosophically, intellectually. A nomad or commuter is always wandering. Wherever he goes, he carries within a sense of estrangement. Paradoxically, he is equally “at home” in different places.⁴⁶

Şafak’s *Şehrin Aynaları* (*Mirrors of The City*),⁴⁷ published in 2009, combines elements of Sufism with multiculturalism and alienation. It narrates the journeys that the characters make through time and to different places. The first journey begins with the Jewish people who fled the brutal Inquisition carried out in 1500s Madrid. The protagonist, Alonso, is the least favored son of his father and people taunt him because he has a voice. Another major character, Miguel, is the only irresponsible member of his family, indicated by the fact that all the others are successful doctors. The story continues in Istanbul, a setting by means of which Şafak brings together people of different origins, backgrounds, and religions. She also refers to one of the most important elements of the Mawlawi order—the circle—in the book:

After cutting countless cadavers into pieces as he worked over the years, Rinozzi came to understand that the body of a person is a hoop that always circles around. He says that, if examined carefully, it can be seen that blood circles as it moves through the human body. The circle symbolizes infinity as it does not have a beginning or an end.⁴⁸

Esra Sazyek argues that in the Mawlawi order blood that is polluted in one half of the circle and cleaned in the other half symbolizes multiculturalism.⁴⁹ While Rinozzi despises the Jewish origins of his bloodline, his discovery that blood moves in circles is a reference to the need to accept that all cultures, origins, and religions are part of the circle and should not be left out.

⁴⁶ “Creating the Story Together: An Inclusive Interview with Elif Şafak,” *Journal of Turkish Literature: Elif Şafak Special Issue*.

⁴⁷ Elif Şafak, *Şehrin Aynaları* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2011).

⁴⁸ “Sayısız ceset parçalayıp, yıllarca çalıştıktan sonra insan vücudunun sürekli dönen bir çember olduğunu anlayan Rinozzi, dikkatlice bakılırsa damarlarda dolaşan kanın da bir çember çizmekte olduğunu söyler. Çember, başı ve sonu olmayan yönüyle sonsuzluğu ifade eder.” Şafak, *Şehrin Aynaları*, 137.

⁴⁹ Esra Sazyek, “Elif Şafak Romanlarında Çokkültürlülük Olarak Tasavvuf” [Mysticism as a Multicultural Tool in the Novels of Elif Shafak], *bilig, Journal of Social Sciences of the Turkic World*, Issue 66, (2013): 209. <http://bilig.yesevi.edu.tr/yonetim/icerik/makaleler/2404-published.pdf>

The character Miguel makes a journey from Spain to Istanbul, which also reflects an inner journey to find his true self. As Miguel undertakes that trip, his unconscious repressed feelings and fears become visible through his dreams. Just like in many other of her novels, Şafak uses the symbolic power of dreams, which are also a Sufi element, to depict the characters' inner selves. In Miguel's dream, the world is an upside down place where beggars are kings. In that way, the conscious and unconscious, reality and imagination, known and unknown, all become jumbled and blurred. Another character who finds his true self is Alonso, who communicates with his inner voice and transforms himself from a failure into a respected preacher. It can thus be seen that the parallelism between inner journeys and physical journeys is a main theme in the novel.

Şafak's *Forty Rules of Love*, which was originally written in English and then translated into Turkish,⁵⁰ deals with the life stories of Mevlana Jalaleddin Rumi and his spiritual love for Shams Tabrizi. There are four main parts in the novel: earth, water, wind, and fire. The narrative shifts back and forth between the years 1200 in Konya and 2000 in Boston through multiple narrators. *Forty Rules of Love* consists of two plot lines, namely the love between the main characters Aziz and Ella, and the spiritual love between Jalaleddin Rumi and Shams Tabrizi. Şafak not only discusses Sufism in the book but also depicts the origins of the Mawlawi order through the lives of the latter two characters. In an interview, Şafak described how she drew on Sufism:

In my novel, Sufism is not presented as a theoretical bulk of information. It is a living, breathing, moving story. In that sense, I am interested in what Sufism means for the modern world today, for us in the modern world. I wanted to bring out how Rumi's philosophy appeals to us today, when we seem to be miles and centuries and cultures away from it.⁵¹

The love between Aziz and Ella brings them together, even though they have different backgrounds—while Ella is from America, Aziz is a Scottish Sufi.⁵² Their love breaks down the walls between cultures and becomes multicultural. Şafak draws attention to the power of love, which does not view difference as an “other” but rather as “a half” uniting with its other half. In that regard, the most important love is its transcendental nature, which goes beyond physical reality.

⁵⁰ Elif Şafak, *Forty Rules of Love: A Book of Rumi* (London: Penguin Books, 2009).

⁵¹ “Creating the Story Together: An Inclusive Interview with Elif Şafak,” 9-20.

⁵² Aziz means “saintly, holy, sacred.” *Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: Sev Yayıncılık, 1999), 82.

Another issue Şafak frequently deals with in her novels is identity. The characters in her novel *The Saint of Incipient Insanities*⁵³ are all alienated lost individuals with no sense of belonging to anywhere; regardless of where they go, they are both at home and strangers. The book was published in Turkish with the title *Araf*, which means “purgatory” in English, the hinterland between heaven and hell. The people in *araf* are neither good nor bad, as the good and evil deeds they committed in their lives balance each other out. Consequently, they belong neither to heaven nor to hell.⁵⁴ The title *Araf* firstly refers to where Turkey is geographically situated, belonging neither to Europe nor to Asia. Straddling two continents, Turkey is in precisely such a geographical state of limbo. Just like the main characters of the novel, Turkish university student Ömer and his American girlfriend and future wife Gail, Turkey does not have a sense of belonging to a continent. That point is further emphasized in the novel when Gail commits suicide by jumping off the Bosphorus Bridge, which hangs suspended between Asia and Europe. Gail has no attachments to her home country America and feels estranged everywhere else, and ultimately she takes her own life.

Another important aspect of the novel are the characters’ names, as well as the connotations of and people’s feelings about names. Gail, who is introduced to readers as Zaprandit at the beginning of the novel, uses various names throughout the novel because she feels estranged from her name/names:

But why is it that a person is given a once-and-for-all name when she or he might have been called any other thing, even with the same letters of that name huddled in a different order? When was the opportunity to rename everything around us, including ourselves, taken from our hands? How can I manage not to worry about being permanently stuck to my name, when my only consolation for being me is a chance to the contrary?

I am anchored in a world that fixes names forever, where letters are not permitted to be in frenzy. But every time I thrust my spoon into the alphabet soup, I hope to fish out new letters to recompose my name, and along with that, recompose my fate.⁵⁵

Her identity problems are narrated through her perception of names. For Gail, names are like walls around surrounding her, and she longs to knock them down. She hopes to create a new identity by adopting a new name. When the main character in *Araf*, Ömer Özsipahilioğlu, arrives in the

⁵³ Elif Şafak, *The Saint of Incipient Insanities*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004). The Turkish translation of the book, *Araf*, was first published in 2010 by Doğan Publishing.

⁵⁴ “Araf,” Wikipedia. Accessed May 23, 2018, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Araf>

⁵⁵ Elif Şafak, *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004), 58.

United States, the first thing he experiences is the loss of the umlauts in his name, whereby he becomes Omer Ozsipahilioglu. The new identity he acquires with his new name reflects his feeling of losing his sense of Turkishness and becoming closer to America than to Turkey.

Another character facing identity problems is the protagonist of Şafak's *Three Daughters of Eve*.⁵⁶ The mother of the novel's protagonist Peri is a deeply religious woman while her father is a supporter of Atatürk, the secular-minded founder of the Republic of Turkey, and he makes fun of his wife's convictions.⁵⁷ Peri's older brother is a leftist while her younger brother is a zealous nationalist. Caught up in the midst of these characters, Peri is a confused young woman who moves to the United Kingdom to study at Oxford University. Indeed, Peri's religious and Kemalist parents, transitions between the west and the east, and studies abroad are very similar to Şafak's own life, indicating how her experiences have shaped her novels.

The three main characters Peri, Şirin,⁵⁸ and Mona⁵⁹ represent opposing worldviews and as such they are very different from each other. Şirin is the daughter of Iranian parents and lived as a refugee for years with her family before settling in England. Despite being of Muslim origins, she is an atheist. In contrast to Peri, who is quite shy, Şirin is outgoing and lives life to the utmost. The third daughter of Eve is Mona. Unlike Şirin, she is a Christian activist. Şirin is depicted as being sinful, Mona as a believer, and Peri as confused. Şafak's interest in multiculturalism is highlighted in the novel, as she points out:

It is true in my novels I bring together people from completely different backgrounds. Life itself, especially in this day and age, is replete with "encounters with the other." At a most basic level, I believe that in life, if we are ever going to learn anything we will be learning it from people who are different than us, not people who are exactly like us. Rather than hearing the same repetitive echoes, we need to be exposed to multiple voices, multiple interpretations of reality, so that we can understand better. I am not romanticizing cosmopolitanism or multiculturalism, I am aware that it is not a bed of roses, or if it is, it has its own thorns, that is its own problems and clashes. However, I do believe that it is in a heterogeneous, cosmopolitan setting that art and literature and creativity flourish and democracy can be worthy of its name.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Elif Şafak, *Three Daughters of Eve*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

⁵⁷ "Peri" means "fairy" (in the Turkish context usually envisaged as a beautiful maiden). *Redhouse*, 692. It is also a Persian word meaning an imaginative character with supernatural powers. Accessed February 16, 2018, http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&sarama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.5c488b25666155.56882691

⁵⁸ "Şirin" means "cute" in English. *Redhouse*, 811.

⁵⁹ In Greek and Arabic, "Mona" means "wish" or desire. Accessed January 15, 2019, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Mona>

⁶⁰ Kök, interview.

In this case, Şafak was expressing the desire to seek out the possibility of becoming close friends—as sisters, since these characters are Eve’s daughters—with people with different origins, cultures, and religious beliefs. As with her confused attitude regarding her family members in Turkey, Peri is again an in-between character in contrast to her best friends Mona and Şirin. In this novel, Şafak mainly examines minorities, emigrants, religion, and belief in God. This is further bolstered by another character, Professor Azur, who teaches a class simply called “God.”

The novel *Bit Palas* is primarily concerned with the issue of identity. It was first published in 2002 in Turkey and then in 2004 it was published in English by Marian Boyars Publishing as *The Flea Palace* (translated by Müge Göçek).⁶¹ Michael McGaha notes that the book could have drawn more attention worldwide if it had not been poorly translated.⁶² *The Flea Palace* is a postmodern novel of stories within stories interwoven with black humor and tragedy. The setting in *The Flea Palace* is an apartment building with ten flats in Istanbul.⁶³ The tenants who live in each apartment come from different places and they all have their own stories. Şafak depicts cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism in Istanbul through the diversity of the tenants, and the apartment building—the Bonbon Palace—is symbolically a miniature of the city. It was built on two cemeteries, one Muslim and the other Armenian, on the orders of a Russian man as a gift to his wife. In the basement live the janitors Musa and Meryem and their son Muhammet. The names Musa, Meryem, and Muhammet are the Turkish equivalents of the names Moses, Mary, and Mohammed. All these names have religious references to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as Moses is the most important prophet of Judaism, Mary symbolizes the Virgin Mary according to Christianity, and Mohammed is the prophet of Islam. Mohammed is usually accompanied with another name because in Islam it is considered disrespectful to call a person by the prophet’s name. Living on the same floor is a student who shares his flat with his dog and is hounded by thoughts of suicide. Cemal and Celal are twin brothers who run a hairdresser salon on the ground floor. The names Cemal and Celal refer to the various names of God, meaning beautiful and punishing, respectively. Another tenant is the 22-year-old Blue Mistress, who is guilt-ridden and cuts herself as a form of punishment.⁶⁴ She is called

⁶¹ Elif Şafak, *Bit Palas*, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2002); Elif Şafak, *The Flea Palace*, trans. by Müge Göçek, (London: Marian Boyars Publishing, 2004).

⁶² McGaha Michael, “Garbage In, Garbage Out,” *Journal of Turkish Literature*, Issue 6, 2009: 109.

⁶³ The setting of *The Flea Palace* is reminiscent of Georg Perec’s novel *Life, A User’s Manual*, in which the setting is an apartment building and Perec takes the reader on a journey through the building room by room.

⁶⁴ Blue Mistress is “Mavi Metres” in Turkish.

the Blue Mistress because she is having a relationship with a married man and has blue eyes. Another character, Metin Çetin, lives with his Russian wife Nadya, whom he cheats on. Hygiene Tijen's husband also cheats on her, and she is obsessed with cleaning. Ziya and Zeren Firenaturesons [Ateşmizaçoğulları] live with their children Zeynep, Zelish, and Zekeriya in another apartment, the curtains of which are closed all the time as they are obsessed with the idea that they are being watched. The character Hadji Hadji [Haci Haci] lives with his son, daughter-in-law, and grandson.⁶⁵ As his name suggests, he is a religious man and tells his grandson tales about djinn. The narrator of the story is an academic teaching in the local university's department of sociology. He is an alcoholic just like his father. Lastly, there is Madam Auntie [Madam Teyze], an old woman whose hoarding habits cause the building to be infested with insects and vile odors. When Madam Auntie's apartment is eventually cleaned, she refuses to eat and dies. After her death, the narrator starts collecting junk as well.

Şafak's autobiographical book *Black Milk*⁶⁶ was published in 2007. She dedicated it to three important people in her life: her grandmother, mother, and daughter. In the book, the main characters are called the "five finger women" and they represent Şafak's inner voices. Each "finger woman" is the embodiment of one of Şafak's characteristics, so just like the fingers on a hand, they are inseparable and only meaningful when taken together. The book is a combination of fiction and reality. Şafak depicts the painful situation of being caught in a dilemma—to have children or not to have children. Describing herself as "having a confused mind and identity," she scrutinizes the difficulties of being a woman and a writer.⁶⁷ The patriarchal social order often does not let women write or, at the very least, it does not offer as many opportunities as it does for men to write. After referring to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*⁶⁸ and a fictitious sister of Shakespeare, she imagines a similar case in which Fuzuli has a sister. One day, Fuzuli's fictitious sister has her period for the first time, and she is told to keep it secret, clean herself, and watch her behavior because she is now a woman. While she didn't choose to start menstruating and it was merely biological, nonetheless she feels dirty, and she is warned not to touch the Quran when she is having her period.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Hadji is the honorific title given to a person who has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

⁶⁶ Elif Şafak, *Black Milk* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

⁶⁷ Elif Şafak, *Siyah Süt*, (Istanbul: Doğan Egmont Yayıncılık, 2007), 14.

⁶⁸ Mehmed bin Süleyman Fuzuli, also spelled Fuḍūlī (born c. 1495 in Karbalā', Iraq and died in 1556 in Karbal). A Turkish poet and a leading figure in the classical school of Turkish literature. Accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mehmed-bin-Suleyman-Fuzuli>

⁶⁹ Şafak, *Siyah Süt*, 51.

Like Fuzuli, she is very talented but the social order forces her to marry at a young age and be a mother and wife, not a poet, as it is believed that girls should not get an education because they might shirk their “natural” maternal and wifely duties.⁷⁰

She describes this conflict in terms of making a choice “...to write, to survive as a female writer, to proceed alone towards my goals, to survive in a society, to obey, to be denied something in order to possess something.”⁷¹ When she cannot silence her inner voices, she decides to listen to them. Each of these finger women represents Şafak’s hidden personality traits. One of them is Little Miss Practice [*Pratik Akıl Hanım*]; she lives behind the west door. She is good at solving problems through a practical approach. Şafak asks her if she should have a kid or not and Little Miss Practical replies that she can manage being a mother and a writer at the same time. Behind the east door lives Dame Dervish [*Can Derviş Hanım*]. She is a religious woman who wears a headscarf and devoutly worships God. She advises Şafak to leave everything to God because ultimately He will decide if she’s going to have a baby or continue with her career as a writer. As an east-west comparison, Little Miss Practical sticks to a logical plan while Dame Dervish is strongly religion-oriented. Behind the south door she meets Miss Ambitious Chekhovian [*Hırs Nefs Hanım*]. She is strongly opposed to the idea of her having a baby because she believes it will ruin her career as a writer. Behind the northern door, she meets Miss Highbrow Cynic [*Sinik Entel Hanım*], an admirer of Marlon Brando and Che Guevara. She is an existentialist and thinks that it doesn’t matter if she has a baby or not because whenever people make a decision, they lose something, which is why people are never satisfied or happy.

Her dialogues with her inner voices symbolize an inner journey, the aim of which is to learn more about herself. Each of the finger characters symbolize her feelings, which she sometimes represses and sometimes freely experiences. Of all the characters, Mama Rice Pudding [*Anaç Sütlaç Hanım*] has been the most repressed. Şafak is surprised to meet this character because she is the embodiment of her repressed motherly nature. Mama Rice Pudding encourages her to get married as soon as possible and have a baby so she can become a housewife who cooks for her family and looks after the household. Mama Rice Pudding complains that all the other finger characters have been repressing her. This suggests that Şafak had a desire to have children and be a wife and mother

⁷⁰ Ibid., 55.

⁷¹ “Yazabilmek için, bir kadın yazar olarak tutunabilmek için, seçtiğim yolda bir başıma ilerleyebilmek için, bir toplumda varolabilmek için... Bazı şeylere sahip olabilmek için bazı şeylere sahip olmamayı idrak ve kabul etmek.” Ibid., 47.

but she suppressed that wish. In addition, the last character she meets after she gives birth to her daughter is Blue Belle Bovary [*Saten Şehvet Hanım*]. As her name implies, she represents a libidinal character who is fond of hedonic pleasure, passion, love, and sexuality. This again surprises Şafak because she believes she does not contain within herself such a character for the reason that as a woman writer, her libidinal character is repressed by society.

Although Şafak has stated that *Black Milk* is an autobiographical book, it is not the only work in which she inscribes traces of her life. In an interview, she once said that growing up without a father made her feel lonely and also like a “bastard.”⁷² Şafak says that she was raised by her grandmother and called her mother “*abla*.”⁷³ Just like Şafak, Asya in *The Bastard of Istanbul* is raised without a father and calls her mother “auntie.” Şafak, like Asya, does not understand what it means to have a father, and she defines that lack as a “gap.”⁷⁴ She notes that she had a lonely, gloomy childhood, never experiencing what it means to be a member of a family, and she always felt rootless because she and her mother moved around a lot during her childhood. Indeed, those are the most common themes that Şafak deals with in almost all her novels.

Another point that should be noted is the religious characters in her novels. Banu in *The Bastard of Istanbul* and Şişko’s grandmother in *The Gaze* are very similar to Şafak’s own grandmother. An uneducated woman, her grandmother would cure people’s illnesses by praying and with other rituals, and Şafak says that no matter what, she always strove to cure those who came to her.⁷⁵ Spending her childhood with a religious, superstitious grandmother and a secular, diplomat mother surely contributed to her feeling of being caught in between two opposing worldviews. Her grandmother’s belief in djinn⁷⁶ must have affected her as a child as well, since she frequently refers to them in her novels. Djinn, spelled also jinn, are mentioned several times in the Quran and in Islamic belief they are thought to be supernatural spirits that can take numerous forms. In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, djinn serve as a bridge with the past; they tell Banu that Mustafa raped Zehra,

⁷² Elif Şafak, “Aska Geline....Bak Orada Acemiylim,” interview by Ayşe Arman. Accessed December 15, 2013, www.hurriyet.com

⁷³ Ibid. In Turkish, the word *abla* is used to address an older sister or a woman who is a bit older than the speaker.

⁷⁴ Arman, “Aska Geline.”

⁷⁵ “Ted Talk Transcript.” Accessed June 6, 2018, <http://www.elifsafak.us/roportajlar.asp?islem=roportaj&id=337>

⁷⁶ Creatures known in popular belief in pre-Islamic Arabia and mentioned several times in the Quran, they are parallel to human beings but made out of fire rather than clay. Believed to be both less virtuous and less physical than humans, they are endowed with the ability to choose between good and evil. In folk religion, djinn are spirits invoked for magical purposes and are often held responsible for miraculous or unusual events and for a wide range of illnesses which are popularly believed to be caused by an imbalance between internal and external djinn. Healers often speak directly to djinn prior to driving them out of patients. Oxford Islamic Studies Online. Accessed September 22, 2019, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1204>

and they disclose various details about the past. In *Honor*, midwife Cemile is believed to be married to a djinn and to have supernatural powers. In *Black Milk*, Şafak elaborates on the belief that djinn sometimes attack women who have recently given birth, describing how her grandmother takes precautions against them.⁷⁷

*The Architect's Apprentice*⁷⁸ was written in English and translated into Turkish by Omca Korugan together with the author. It was published in 2013 as *Ustam ve Ben*. It is the story of Cihan, who travels to Istanbul with a white elephant and arrives at the palace of the Ottoman Sultan. Because of its unique color, the elephant attracts much attention and becomes a member it is taken into the palace zoo.

Although the story is told by an external narrator, Cihan sometimes intervenes and acts as an embedded narrator. The painful memories of each character are depicted as the narrators move back and forth in time. Although it is the golden age of the Ottoman Empire and Suleiman the Magnificent is the sultan, the palace is filled with pain, grief, and tears. As a child, Cihan lost his father, whereupon his uncle married his mother. Unable to endure his uncle's violence, he leaves his hometown in India with his elephant. Indeed, the Indian Shah wanted to send this extraordinary white elephant as a gift to the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman. Cihan loves his elephant so deeply that he longs to go to the palace together with the elephant. When he is refused permission to do so, he sneaks aboard the ship and arrives at the palace, where he is introduced as the elephant keeper. Once there, he falls in love with the daughter of the sultan, Mihrimah. Interestingly enough, Mihrimah is as unhappy as Cihan. Neglected by her mother because of her gender, she suffers much grief when she witnesses the murder of her brother by the sultan and is forced to marry a man she does not love. The great architect Sinan, Cihan's master, was converted to Islam as a young boy and has endured many painful experiences in his own life as well. The story depicts the unhappy lives of the characters; no matter where they are in the social hierarchy, they are all survivors of tragedies, and they feel trapped in that grand palace. In the novel, Şafak explores themes related to war, the murder of heirs by fathers and brothers, castrated boys, loyalty, the shift from purity to immorality, past and present, east and west, and companionship with animals, all through Cihan's point of view. For example, he takes part in wars together with his elephant as part of the Ottoman Army, but his affection and deep love for the elephant stands in sharp contrast to the human brutality he witnesses

⁷⁷ Elif Şafak, *Siyah Süt* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), 169.

⁷⁸ Elif Şafak, *The Architect's Apprentice*, (London: Viking Books, 2014); Elif Şafak, *Ustam ve Ben*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2013).

during the battles. As the novel progresses, Cihan grows into an adult and loses his pure drive to survive. Ultimately, the elephant dies and Cihan returns to India to help in the construction of the Taj Mahal, as his master Sinan had trained him as an architect.

Aside from the novels I briefly introduced in this section and those in my corpus, Şafak also has a collection of stories, *Kem Gözlerle Anadolu*, and four collections of essays, *Firarperest* (Runaway), *Şemspare* (A Piece of Sun), *Med-Cezir* (Tide), and *Sanma ki Yalnızsın* (Don't Assume That You Are Alone).⁷⁹ Another book, *Kağıt Helva* (Wafer), consists of short quotations she compiled from her novels.⁸⁰ She also wrote a children's book, *Sakız Sardunya* (Ivy Geranium).⁸¹ The topics she discusses in her essays are very closely related to what she writes about in her novels and her biography. In *Tide*, she compares herself to a Tuba Tree, saying that she feels that she is just as rootless as that kind of tree.⁸² She also criticizes people who say that she writes about Rumi simply because "it is fashionable nowadays." She notes that Rumi is often presented as a Far Eastern scholar in America and argues that she feels a need to represent her own culture in her books.⁸³ In *Runaway*, she writes about how people in Turkey are now more open about discussing the issue of incest, a sign of growing democracy and freedom.⁸⁴ She also refers to her childhood and compares herself to the character Asya in *The Bastard of Istanbul* because she was likewise surrounded by many women in her childhood. She also mentions "Kıymethanımtayze,"⁸⁵ one of her grandmother's neighbors, who served as a model for the neighbor of Fatty's grandma in *The Gaze*. The collection of essays mainly deals with the issues she takes up in her novels and frequently refers to her life experiences.

Elif Şafak has become a very popular author not only in Turkey but around the world as well. Prestigious publishing companies have published her novels in forty-eight languages, and her books have been bestsellers for months on end in Turkey. She received the Rumi Prize for *Pinhan* in 1998, the Writers Union of Turkey Award [*Türkiye Yazarlar Birliği Ödülü*] for *The Gaze* in 2000 and the

⁷⁹ Elif Şafak, *Kem Gözlerle Anadolu* (Istanbul: Evrensel Yayınevi: 1994); Elif Şafak, *Şemspare*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015); Elif Şafak, *Med Cezir* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınlar, 2005); Elif Şafak, *Firarperest*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010); Elif Şafak, *Şemspare*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015); Elif Şafak, *Sanma ki Yalnızsın* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2018).

⁸⁰ Elif Şafak, *Kağıt Helva*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2013).

⁸¹ Elif Şafak, *Sakız Sardunya* (Istanbul: Doğan & Egmont Yayıncılık, 2016).

⁸² "Tree of Life." Elif Şafak, *Medcezir* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010), 28-30.

⁸³ Şafak, *Medcezir*, 77.

⁸⁴ Elif Şafak, *Firarperest*, 117.

⁸⁵ *Kıymeyhanımtayze* means "Aunt Mrs. Value."

Chevalier Des arts Letters in 2000. Talat Sait Halman, a major scholar of Turkish literature, predicts that Elif Şafak will be the next Turkish author to receive the Nobel Prize.⁸⁶

Despite her success as a woman author, she has also received a certain amount of criticism. In 2006, Şafak was charged with insulting Turkishness because a character in her novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* says, “I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives to the hands of the Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been raised and brainwashed to deny the genocide by some Turk named Mustapha!”⁸⁷ In the end, the charges were dropped at the prosecutor’s request.

After *Honour* was published, Mefkure Bayatlı, who translated Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* into Turkish, accused her of plagiarism. She asserted that “Şafak used Zadie’s book *White Teeth* as a template; this is called plagiarism.”⁸⁸ While both novels narrate the painful experiences of immigrants in London, the characters, plot, and narrative styles are completely different from each other. Mehmet Recep Taş concludes that:

Through a close reading, one can observe that though there are similarities between Şafak’s *Honour* and Smith’s *White Teeth*, on the contrary, there are also differences as well in terms of the basic elements... [D]espite the thematic similarity and the spatio-temporal multiplicity in both novels, the two authors have picked up various distinct stories to weave their plots in different tones and narrations applied to the characters that face common issues of late 20th century.⁸⁹

Moreover, Zadie Smith sent Şafak an open letter that put an end to the accusation, stating, “Dear Elif, Hanif Kureishi sent me the link to an article where there are ridiculous accusations about our novels. I just wanted to tell you how absurd I find those accusations.”⁹⁰

She was criticized again after she explained her sexual preferences during her Ted Speech in New York. She stated:

As I was thinking about this TED Talk, I realized one thing: I have never had the courage to say in a public space that I was bisexual myself, because I so feared the

⁸⁶ Talat Sait Halman, “Editor’s Note,” *Journal of Turkish Literature: Elif Şafak Special Issue*, Bilkent University Center for Turkish Literature, Issue 6: 2009, 4-9.

⁸⁷ Elif Şafak, *Baba ve Piç* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2005), 63-4.

⁸⁸ Burak Kara, “İskender’de İntihal Yapılmış İddiası.” Accessed February 12, 2015, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-iskender-de-intihal-yapilmis-iddiasi--392430-kultur-sanat/>

⁸⁹ Mehmet Recep Taş, “Literary Analysis of *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith and *Honour* by Elif Şafak From the Standpoint of Plagiarism,” *Turkish Studies, International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Volume 12/5, 497-508.

⁹⁰ “Elif Şafak’a Destek Mektubu.” Accessed May 20, 2015, <http://www.haberturk.com/kultur-sanat/haber/660202-elif-safaka-destek-mektubu>

slander and the stigma and the ridicule and the hatred that was sure to follow. But, of course, one should never, ever, remain silent for fear of complexity.⁹¹

Although Şafak stated that she was revealing her bisexuality for the first time in order to break her silence and overcome her fear of being attacked by society, her confession was not seen as sincere by some people in Turkey. She was accused of using it as a ploy to draw attention to herself.⁹² As both a bestselling and a highly criticized author who writes extensively about Turkish culture with the use of Ottoman words but refers to herself a “rootless” person with no nationality and describes herself as being stuck between two opposite poles of religion both in reality and in her novels, she is an ambiguous novelist.

Gender-Based Trauma in Turkey

“Victim” is not a psychological category.

It is in variable ways, a social, political,
and ethical category.⁹³

The novels I take up in this dissertation revolve around a particular topic—sexually based trauma. In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Şafak examines the issue of an interfamilial rape, which is still a taboo topic today. In *The Gaze*, she tells the story of a young girl who is raped orally and tries to deal with the trauma of that experience. In *Honor*, she draws attention to honor crimes in Turkey and critically examines how a son attempts to murder his mother. In this section, I will discuss these three sexual crimes and the existing sociocultural dynamics in Turkey as a means of setting up the background for Şafak’s trauma novels.

⁹¹ “Award Winning Turkish Author Comes Out Bisexual.” Accessed January 1, 2018,

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/award-winning-turkish-author-elif-safak-comes-out-as-bisexual-120855>

⁹² “Elif Şafak’ın bu açıklamasının ardından Habertürk gazetesi yazarı Oray Eğin, Twitter’da ‘Elif Şafak yıllardır bildiğimizi şimdi ilgi çekmek adına açıkladı, şapkadan çıkartacak yeni tavşan bulamayınca buna kaldı’ mesajını paylaştı. Yazar ve Müzisyen Tuna Kiremitçi de Elif Şafak tartışmasına katıldı. Oray Eğin’in yorumunu Twitter’da paylaşan Kiremitçi, ‘Türkiye’deyken muhafazakâr Evropa’dayken avangard olmak geçer akçeyse kızcağız ne yapsın.’ yorumunu yaptı.” “Ünlü yazar itiraf etti.” Accessed June 15, 2018, <https://odatv.com/unlu-yazar-itiraf-etti-1510171200.html> [“After Elif Şafak’s confession, Haberturk columnist Oray Eğin wrote: ‘Elif Şafak confessed what we already knew for years in order to attract attention. This is the only thing she can take advantage of now.’ Author and musician Tuna Kiremitçi also commented on that point. Kiremitçi shared Oray Eğin’s comments on Twitter and wrote: ‘If being conservative in Turkey and being avant-garde in Europe is what matters, what can the poor girl do :)’”]. Accessed June 15, 2018, <https://odatv.com/unlu-yazar-itiraf-etti-1510171200.html>

⁹³ Dominick La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 79.

In her article “Incest: Morals in General and the Decision of the German Constitutional Court,” Türkan Yalçın Sancar provides a definition for incest in the context of Turkish society: “Today this term is used in our society in the sense of a woman and a man (non-wedded) whose marrying is forbidden by law and by religion and who are close relatives and have a sexual relationship.”⁹⁴ According to the codes of the Turkish Criminal Law system, incest is mutually consensual sexual intercourse between people who are older than eighteen and for whom marriage is forbidden. Turkish Civil Law stipulates who is forbidden by law from marrying:

Article 129 - Marriage between the following people is forbidden:

1. Members of a lineal kinship: sisters/brothers, uncles/aunts, and nieces/nephews.
2. Even if a marriage is terminated, neither of the partners are permitted to get married to members of the other’s lineal kinship.
3. An adopted person may not get married to either of the adopted parents, and/or members of that person’s lineal kinship or husband/wife.⁹⁵

While incest is defined as a crime (committed by more than one person), it is impossible to punish people who commit incest because there is no provision for it in the Turkish Criminal Code.⁹⁶ In her study of incest in Turkey, Alanur Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu (2010) notes that blood relations between the victim and perpetrator are not the main criterion for incest. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and grandparents are not the only people who are included in definitions of incest. People who do not have blood relations with a child but have authority over her/him such as her/his parents, stepfathers/stepmothers, sons/daughters-in-law, and uncles/aunts-in-law are also included in the definition of incest provided by Bozbeyoğlu.⁹⁷ In another study, she asserts that the main criterion for defining incest is that it must be perpetrated by one of the people mentioned above against a child or an adolescent. It ranges from using sexual language or sexual content to exposure

⁹⁴ “Bugün bu terime toplumumuzda evlenmeleri hukukça ve dince yasaklanmış (nikah düşmeyen) yakın akraba olan kadın ve erkeğin cinsel ilişkide bulunmaları anlamında kullanılmaktadır.” Türkan Y. Sancar and Tuğçe N. Yaşar, “Ensest ‘Genel Ahlak’ ve Alman Anayasa Mahkemesi’nin Kararı” [Incest: ‘Morals in General’ and the Decision of the German Constitutional Court], *TBB Dergisi*, no: 80 (2009): 246. Accessed February 1, 2018, www.tbddergisi.barobirlik.org.tr/m2009-80-484

⁹⁵ “Madde 129 - Aşağıdaki kimseler arasında evlenme yasaktır: 1. Üstsoy ile altsoy arasında; kardeşler arasında; amca, dayı, hala ve teyze ile yeğenleri arasında, 2. Kayın hısımlığı meydana getirmiş olan evlilik sona ermiş olsa bile, eşlerden biri ile diğerinin üstsoyu veya altsoyu arasında, 3. Evlât edinen ile evlâtlığın veya bunlardan biri ile diğerinin altsoyu ve eşi arasında,” “Türk Medeni Kanunu.” Accessed July 1, 2018, <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k4721.html>

⁹⁶ Sancar & Yaşar, “Ensest ‘Genel Ahlak’ ve Alman Anayasa Mahkemesi’nin Kararı,” 247.

⁹⁷ Alanur Ç. Bozbeyoğlu, “Ailenin Karanlık Yüzü: Türkiye’de Cinsellik,” *Sosyoloji Araştırmaları Derneği*, 13:1, 2010: 6.

to films with sexual content, as well as stripping, indecent displays of genitalia, peering at genitalia, touching and fondling; to, anal-oral-vaginal sexual intercourse and sexual violence.⁹⁸ According to the estimations of the World Health Organization, 18 percent of girls and 8 percent of boys were sexually abused worldwide in 2016.⁹⁹ In Turkey, the percentage of incest victims varies depending on the clinical studies that have been carried out and legal cases. According to Alanur Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu, the data obtained by clinical studies showed that 7 percent of women were victims of sexual abuse before the age of fifteen and 60 percent of the perpetrators were acquaintances of the victims. 57 percent of the perpetrators were fathers, 4 percent were brothers, 13 percent were close relatives and 26 percent were secondary relatives. She also refers to legal cases in her research and notes that 39 percent of the aggressors were fathers, 15 percent were older brothers, 17 percent were close relatives and 28 percent were distant relatives.¹⁰⁰ It should be pointed out that these numbers only reflect reported cases and that these studies suggest that incest mostly remains unreported. Victims and families generally prefer to cover it up for several reasons. First of all, families are afraid of the social reactions they will face if a case of incest is reported. They are afraid of losing their “family honor” so they try to cover it conceal it, even though that further victimizes the victim. In addition, some think that social pressure will affect a child victim psychologically if incest is reported.¹⁰¹

In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Zeliha, the sister who gets raped, keeps the incident a secret and refuses to discuss it with any of her family members. When her sister Banu finds out about it, she also keeps it a secret. There is a strong tendency in Turkey to avoid talking about incest. One of the reasons for that situation is that people are afraid of the reactions they will face if they discuss it. As in the previous paragraph, they are afraid of losing their “family honor,” which represents a major risk if a case of incest comes to light. This is probably the reason why Zeliha’s sister keeps it a secret after she learns about what happened. As for Zeliha, as someone who does not care about family honor (as evidenced by her lack of qualms about giving birth out of wedlock), she knows that no one in her family will support her if she reveals her secret. The biggest reason why she is

⁹⁸ Alanur Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu, “Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey,” (Population Association: Ankara, 2009), 24.

⁹⁹ “Child Maltreatment.” Accessed January 18, 2019,

https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/child/Child_maltreatment_infographic_EN.pdf?ua=1

¹⁰⁰ Bozbeyoğlu, “Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey,” 17.

¹⁰¹ Bozbeyoğlu, “Ailenin Karanlık Yüzü,” 18.

condemned to silence is the patriarchal family structure, and her mother's unconditional love and support for her son leaves Zeliha no opportunities to share and heal.

Clearly, male authority is the biggest advantage that incest aggressors hold over and against their victims. That is why the statistics discussed above indicate that the most pressing danger is at home. The highest percentage of aggressors are fathers and older brothers. In cases in which brothers are the perpetrators, parents may try to see the case of incest as acceptable by representing it as an act of innocent adolescent curiosity or the result of a psychological burden as a means of protecting their sons, and they may accuse the daughter of tempting the perpetrator. If the perpetrating brother is the breadwinner in the family, the possibility that the incident of incest will be tolerated is much higher.¹⁰² Alanur Ç. Bozbeyoğlu notes:

The despotism and power of fathers in families with incestuous experiences are very dominant. Another notable fact is that society usually blames the child/adolescent victimized by incest or his/her mother. Such accusations are based on the belief that the child/adolescent asked for and provoked the act of incest and he/she was either lying or willing since he/she did not disclose anything immediately.¹⁰³

On the other hand, most incest victims cannot share their experiences because they are threatened or pressured by their aggressors to remain silent because they hold authority over them.¹⁰⁴ So how are cases of incest revealed? Generally, the inevitable outcomes of incest are the reasons why they are exposed. For example, the victim is no longer a virgin so getting married will pose a problem, as traditionally women are expected to strictly avoid sexual intercourse before marriage. Pregnancy and giving birth outside of wedlock can also reveal cases. The victim's parents may be driven to divorce, killings may be carried out to punish incestuous acts, and victims may commit suicide. Those are the most general reasons why incidents of incest come to light.¹⁰⁵ In Zeliha's case, her sister finds out about the incestuous rape through her communication with *djinn*. Although Zeliha's sister keeps it a secret, she, in her own way, punishes the rapist brother: she prepares a poisoned dessert and has him eat it. Ironically, the punishment that should be meted out to the rapist by legal means is carried out supernaturally. And since it is supernatural and cannot be "real," Şafak draws attention to the fact that rapists usually go unpunished in Turkey.

¹⁰² Bozbeyoğlu, "Ailenin Karanlık Yüzü," 23-4.

¹⁰³ Bozbeyoğlu, "Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey," 19.

¹⁰⁴ Bozbeyoğlu, "Ailenin Karanlık Yüzü," 15.

¹⁰⁵ Bozbeyoğlu, "Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey," 105.

All the same, cases of incest are usually covered up and wealthy families are better equipped to conceal it than poor families, which is why most reported cases involve families with lower incomes. Moreover, research has shown that neither the aggressors nor the families in which incest occurs can be easily categorized. Aggressors are not usually pedophiles, alcoholics, or chronically unemployed, and they do not always have psychological problems. They go about their daily lives without any disruptions. The only common point they share is that they are often authoritative figures. Moreover, in most cases incest occurs in nuclear families. At the same time, however, children can be exposed to incest in large families and single-parent families as well.¹⁰⁶

So what is the punishment for incest in Turkey? That is a controversial issue. Firstly, in some unreported cases the families may opt to protect their family honor by forcing the victim to marry someone who is much older than her or marry a man who is already married as a means of covering up the fact that she is no longer a virgin or pregnant out of wedlock. If the aggressor is not legally forbidden from marrying the victim, she may be forced to marry him.¹⁰⁷ For instance, it is common in eastern and southeastern Turkey to marry first cousins, so if a girl is sexually harassed by a first cousin, she may be given no choice but to marry him. In fact, if a woman has resisted getting married to a cousin, he may rape her as a means of getting his way, as the victim's family will marry off their daughter to her cousin to "purify" their family honor. Moreover, babies that are born from incestual encounters are usually either killed immediately after birth or adopted by others.¹⁰⁸ In that way, the aggressor is rewarded while the victim and baby are further victimized.

As regards legal cases, Trkan Yalın Sancar points out that if incest occurs as a result of mutual consent, there is no punishment according to the Turkish Criminal Code. Such an incident occurred in Turkey in the summer of 2017. A famous model and his niece were accused of having an incestuous relationship and the accusation was ultimately proven through camera records. The Bodrum Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor charged them with "behaving perversely [*hayasızca davranışlarda bulunmak*]."¹⁰⁹ Although they were not legally punished, the social made it almost impossible for them to go on with their lives in Turkey. Another case was reported in the summer

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 105.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "Bodrum Cumhuriyet Bařsavcılıęı, Murat Bařoęlu ve B.B.K. hakkında, 'hayasızca davranışlarda bulunmak' suçundan iddianame hazırladı," "Son dakika... Murat Bařoęlu ve yeęenine řok: Hapis cezası istendi." Accessed May 1, 2018, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/son-dakika-murat-basoglu-ve-yegenine-sok-hapis-cezasi-istendi-40576880>

of 2018 when accusations were raised that a wealthy media boss had been sexually assaulting his daughter from the age of 8 to 13. Traumatized, the victim attempted to commit suicide for three years. The father denied the charges but he was found guilty and sentenced to 18 years and 9 months in prison.¹¹⁰ The main difference between these two cases is that the first one was a consensual incestuous relationship while the second involved the sexual assault of a young daughter.

Research shows that gender inequality, patriarchy, and power relations in the family are the main contributing factors to incest. In *Telling Incest*, Janice Doane and Devon Hodges summarize the 1970s feminist theory that the sexual harassment of girls by fathers, uncles, or brothers is underpinned by unequal gender relations and patriarchy,¹¹¹ and that is what precisely what Şafak portrays in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. As far as family relations are concerned, the mother plays the largest role in the incest by raising her son as the only authority and overseer of all the family members.

I contend that patriarchy is still the key factor not only in incest but also in all forms of sexual abuse. Bozbeyoğlu notes that “in incestuous relations between siblings, the aggressors use their advantage in domestic power relations made possible by age difference and gender for the purposes of perpetrating and concealing such acts.”¹¹² It can thus be seen that parents must play the largest role, especially mothers, in creating equal gender relations to prevent sibling incest. In order to stop other possible aggressors, it is necessary to stop male domination firstly at home.

Child rape, another common sexual crime in Turkey, is the main topic of *The Gaze*.¹¹³ The novel narrates the story of a child who is raped orally by a stranger. In *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, Susan Brownmiller (1975) notes, “If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will that is a criminal act of rape.”¹¹⁴ Child sexual abuse is defined as “any sexual activity that the child cannot understand or give consent to or that violates the law.”¹¹⁵ As regards children, “will” can never be questioned in cases

¹¹⁰ Zülfikar Ali Aydın, “Medya Patronuna Öz Kızına Cinsel İstismardan 18 Yıl 9 Ay Hapis.” Accessed July 29, 2018, <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-medya-patronuna-oz-kizina-cinsel-istismardan-18-yil-9-ay-hapis-2064994#>

¹¹¹ Janice Doane & Devon Hodges, *Telling Incest*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 48.

¹¹² Bozbeyoğlu, “Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey,” 43.

¹¹³ Elif Şafak, *Mahrem* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010). First published in Turkish in 1999 and published in English in 2006.

¹¹⁴ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schular, 1975), 18.

¹¹⁵ Manoel E.S. Modelli, “Child Sexual Abuse,” *Forensic Science International*, Vol. 217, Issues 1-3, April 10, 2012: 14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2011.08.006>, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/science/article/pii/S0379073811003975>

of rape, and perpetrators take advantage of the authority that they wield over children. In other words, children are afraid to refuse the advances of adults because they are usually raised to respect and submit to their elders. In *The Gaze*, Fatty initially hesitates about whether or not she should do as he asked her. Naively, she accepts the stranger's offer to play hide and seek, and when she does so, he ultimately gets his way. In her article "Analysis of Child Sex Abuse Cases in Turkey: A Provincial Case," Sibel Küçük draws attention to the fact that children generally do not resist the rapist, as the abusers resort to threats, rewards, and punishment during and after the incident, which shows that children's naivety and vulnerability have been taken advantage of. She also points out that few cases are reported to the police and that most of the time the children reveal what happened to their mothers or the mothers notice that their child has suffered physical harm. Furthermore, she states that there is no clear classification for the social class and status of abusers. As for gender issues, she notes that gender is an important parameter because more girls are abused than boys.¹¹⁶

Redjeb Tutku defines honor killings as "a murder committed against a woman for actual or perceived immoral behavior that is deemed to have breached the honor of household or community."¹¹⁷ Although this definition mentions only women, honor killings are one of the most brutal crimes that are committed against women, men, and babies alike under the guise of "purifying honor." In places like Turkey, the murders of women and men who do not adhere to the unwritten codes of society are seen as ensuring that the "honor" of the family is restored. Their brutality lies in the fact that they are often carried out by the closest relatives of the victims, such as their fathers, brothers, or husbands, and sometimes rape victims or even the newborn babies of rape victims are killed for the sake of "honor." They are also brutal in the sense that they serve the aim of placing one sex under the control of another. Honor killings are indeed a violation of the right to live independently. The book *Honor*, as implied by the title, is the story of an honor killing that takes place in a Turkish-Kurdish family. Though Şafak's characters and plot are fictitious, hundreds of such incidents occur every year in Turkey.

There is still widespread gender discrimination in Turkey. In The Global Gender Gap Report of 2018, Turkey was ranked 130th out of 140 countries.¹¹⁸ People are expected to unquestioningly

¹¹⁶ Sibel Küçük, "Analysis of Child Sex Abuse: A Provincial Case," *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, Vol. 25, Issue 3, 2016, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10538712.2016.1153557>

¹¹⁷ Redjeb Tutku, "Violence Against Women: Turkey and The Economics of Honor Killing" (PhD diss., St. John's University, 2013), 1.

¹¹⁸ "The Global Gender Gap Report 2018." Accessed January 10, 2018, www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018

obey a set of unwritten set of rules or run the risk of being ostracized by society. These rules assign certain roles to women and men, and social pressure forces people to act in line with them. As regards honor killings, women's honor is a key factor. A study on honor killings in Turkey concludes,

The content of the concept honor springs from traditions regarding sexuality. The code necessary for this concept is sexual purity and avoidance. It is one of the responsibilities of women to protect their purity. As for avoidance, it must be practiced by both sexes. Purity of women means protecting their virginity from everybody before marriage. After marriage, she has to serve only her husband sexually. Any sexual act except for the one with the husband is considered to be a sign of not being honorable. At that moment, murders take place because women have failed to protect their honor.¹¹⁹

Another study conducted by the Turkish Demographic Association [*Nüfusbilim Derneği*] in 2005 noted that honor is perceived as a quality that first should be possessed by a woman. Women's role in maintaining their honor is a passive act; she has to follow the honor-based codes of society. Men, on the other hand, are actively engaged because it is their duty to make women obey the rules and control them. If women fail to do so, it is again men's duty to punish them. For example, if a married woman has an extramarital relationship, it is expected that her "controllers" will kill her—in addition to the man with whom she has the relationship.¹²⁰ These normative rules in effect turn women into possessions and deprive them of one of the main qualities a human being possesses, which is independence.

Because "honor" is the key word here, it must be clearly defined to reveal what it means for different cultures. In her book *Patriarchal Murders of Women: A Sociological Study of Honor-based Killings in Turkey and in the West*,¹²¹ Aysan Sever discusses four different types of honor. She refers to *izzet* as meaning being generous, and wealthy people are more likely to have it. *Şeref*

¹¹⁹ "Namus kavramının içeriği, cinsel davranışa ilişkin gelenek ve göreneklerden kaynaklanır. Bu kavramın kuralı, cinsel saflık ve sakınmadan oluşur. Saflığı korumak kadınlara düşen sorumluluklardan biridir. Sakınma ise, her iki cinsi ilgilendirir. Kadının namusu, saflığını evlenmeden önce herkese karşı korumak biçiminde kendini gösterir. Evlendikten sonra ise cinselliğini sadece kocasına sunmak zorundadır. Bunun dışındaki her cinsel eylem namussuzluk sayılır. İşte bu durumda cinayetler devreye girer. Çünkü kadın, cinselliğini koruyamamıştır." Başbakanlık, Kadın Statüsü ve Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü, *Töre Cinayetleri*, (Ankara: Beyda Basımevi, 1999), 21.

¹²⁰ Filiz Kandam, *Türkiyede Namus Cinayetlerinin Dinamikleri* (Ankara: Turkish Demographic Association, 2005), 29.

¹²¹ Aysan Sever, *Patriarchal Murders of Women: A Sociological Study of Honor-based Killings in Turkey and in the West* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013).

is related to accomplishments and successes. Lastly, *namus*, the issue I explore in this study, is related to “the honor men derive from the chaste and virtuous behavior of ‘their’ women.”¹²² As Sever argues, *namus* is a class-free type of honor, which means that both rich and poor are equally expected to have it. Moreover, “it is dichotomous—you either have it or you do not,” which is why social pressure is so intense and honor killings are still common in some parts of the world.¹²³

Some Turkish sayings listed by Ayşe Kudat in her book *Al Kocayı, Vur Sopayı (Marry the Man, Beat the Man)* (2007) exemplify men’s position as the “overseers” of women quite well:

In our country, sayings like “a rose blooms on the body of women where her husband hits her,” “A husband both loves and beats his wife,” “Beating someone originates from heaven,” and “Keep hitting a woman on the back while making her pregnant at the same time,” and the expression parents say to teachers about their children when they start primary school is “Her/his meat is yours, her/his bones are mine,” and all of these make violence against women and children a part of traditions.¹²⁴

The saying “her/his meat is yours, her/his bones are mine” is used very commonly in Turkey. Its usage for children who are just starting school implies that they are under the control of the teacher and that the teacher is their “overseer.” Teachers are thereby given permission to resort to violence against children because they are perceived as their possessions at school. The underlying idea is that children need to be controlled by adults because they are not mature. The sayings above indicate that the roles assigned to women resemble those of children. It can thus be seen that the discourses used by a given society are very important in the dissemination of patriarchy in the minds of people. Such sayings serve patriarchal structures and support the maintenance of the exploitation of women by men. They are so pervasive that not only men but also women use them without questioning the destructive effects they have on people. As they are exposed to such sayings throughout their lives, women and men come to believe they are true and behave accordingly. For that reason, discourses play a key role in maintaining social roles. Yücel Can notes that language is a significant aspect of

¹²² Sever, “Patriarchal Murders,” 111.

¹²³ Ibid., 112.

¹²⁴ “Ülkemizde ‘kocanın vurduğu yerde gül biter’, ‘Kocadır döver de sever de’, ‘dayak cennetten çıkmadır’, ‘Kadının karnından sopayı, sırtından sopayı eksik etmeyeceksin’, ve okula başlayan çocuklar için velilerin öğretmenlere yönelttiği ‘Eti senin, kemiği benim’ gibi özdeyişlerle, kadınlara ve çocuklara şiddet uygulaması bir anlamda gelenekselleştirilmiştir.” Ayşe Kudat, *Al Kocayı Vur Sopayı* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2007), 95.

the transmission of culture. All of the commonly used expressions that refer to women negatively make violence against women a normal part of life.¹²⁵

Şafak refers to such sexist proverbs throughout her book. They are internalized in such a way that not only men but also women use them frequently. Pembe always overvalues her son and imposes on her children the idea that boys are superior. Again that is why mothers play a major role in honor killings; each time a young boy is exposed to a sexist saying, he becomes more inclined to believe in his superiority over women. Moreover, as children learn by experience, violence and sexism in the family is another trigger for future honor killings. Children who witness violence in their families often develop a predisposition for engaging in violence with family members in the future.¹²⁶ That is why parents have the potential to play a major role in decreasing honor killings in Turkey. However, Turkish traditions and gender relations, both of which contribute to the maintenance of patriarchy, limit that possibility to a certain degree.

All these sexist sayings imply that just like small children who need to be protected and controlled, women do not have the psychological maturity to control and protect themselves in terms of honor, which is why they need men to step in. In *Honor*, it is the duty of Pembe's husband to guard her honor. However, when he isn't at home, social norms dictate that her son İskender must be the guardian of the mother's and sister's honor. Men protecting women's honor entails protecting them from other men. But why should women be protected from men? Why are other men viewed as such a threat to women?

Honor killings originated from patriarchal societies and they date back to the pre-Islamic period. They are constructed according to the traditions and customs of that form of society, and they basically serve the purpose of maintaining male hegemony in the family.¹²⁷ Thus, there is a strong correlation between patriarchy and honor killings.

In her book *Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar (Masculinity: Power Impossible)*, Serpil Sancar explores the issue of patriarchy and masculinity in Turkey. She notes that the gender gap in Turkey is fundamentally the result of believing that men are superior to women by birth because of biological differences. Because that superiority is considered to be a part of nature, it is seen as

¹²⁵ Yücel Can, "Türk Ailesinde Aile İçi Şiddetin Kültürel Dinamikleri," *Turkish Studies International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Volume 9/8, Summer 2014: 13-19.

¹²⁶ Kudat, *Al Kocayı Vur Sopayı*, 86.

¹²⁷ Ülkü H. İnci, "Basında Yer Alan Namus Cinayetlerinin Sosyolojik Analizi," *Tarih, Kültür ve Sanat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2:3, September 2013: 283.

unalterable. Notably she goes on to say that this perception of sex-based difference is not unique to religious, conservative, and/or rural segments of society but is also common among modern, middle-class, urban people. The notion of the superiority of men is widely accepted in Turkey because it is also supported by Islam. The basic features of masculine hegemony are rooted in a belief in anatomical, biological, and, for some, divine “truths,” so it is natural and hence cannot be changed. As a result, male violence and female obedience become a natural part of this biological difference.¹²⁸ Moreover, in her search for a definition of masculinity, Sancar lists certain features that are attributed to men; around the world they are figures of authority, they are strong and successful, they behave logically not emotionally, they act independently, and they are leaders. Those are the qualities that define a “man.”¹²⁹ In the novels I explore in this study, Şafak draws attention to masculinity and patriarchy by creating characters who fail in the end. By doing so, she offers up a deconstruction of masculinity in Turkey.

Susan Brownmiller’s ideas about patriarchy and Carol Lowery Delaney’s research about sexuality in Turkey are very important in this respect. Brownmiller notes that once a man finds that he can rape women, he becomes a natural predator and women are his natural prey. Physically, men can be stronger than women, and this makes women powerless in the case of rape. How can women protect themselves? Some male predators, such as husbands, can be their protectors. Therefore, women’s fear of rape, not a natural inclination toward monogamy, motherhood, or love, may be the reason for their “historic dependence” and domestication through protective mating.¹³⁰ In Brownmiller’s words:

Once the male took title to a specific female body, and surely, to him this was a great sexual convenience as well as a testament to his warring stature, he had to assume the burden of fighting off all other potential attackers, or scare them off by the retaliatory threat of raping their women. But the price of women’s protection by some men against an abuse by others was steep. Disappointed and disillusioned by the inherent female incapacity to protect, she became estranged in a very real sense from other females, a problem that haunts the social organization of women to this very day. And those who did assume the historic burden of her protection—later formalized as her husband, father, brother, clan—extracted more than a pound of flesh. They reduced her status to that of a chattel. The historic price of woman’s

¹²⁸ Serpil Sancar, *Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar* (Istanbul: Metis Yayıncılık, 2008), 305-6.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹³⁰ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 16.

protection against man was the imposition of chastity and monogamy. A crime committed against her body became a crime against the male estate.¹³¹

This applies well to the notion of honor in Turkey in terms of how it is related to women's chastity and how the loss of chastity entails men's loss of honor. Such a construct means that men are a threat for women and also assume the role of women's protector against the threat of other men; in that process, he becomes the "overseer" of women so he can protect them. This role was incorporated as a part of Turkish culture and the social system, and it has a normative function. Men internalize this norm because "from the point of view of males, it was very important to keep women under control to protect/maintain their own honor."¹³² In other words, in order to secure their social position, men need to control their women's honor.

After conducting research in Ankara, Turkey in 1991, Delaney concluded that there is a striking similarity between perceptions of women and the land a man owns. She noted that men are considered as a seed and women are considered as the land a man sows. Many different crops can grow on a piece of land, so it is the seed that determines what will grow. Metaphorically this implies that men have an active and determining role in procreation. Impregnation and fertilization are a key aspect of that metaphor:

The difference between seed and field is radical. Different seeds can grow in a field, what actually grows is defined by what is sown. The theory is borne out by the word used to describe the male role in the process: *döllemek* (to inseminate). *Döllemek* incorporates the word *döl*, which means seed, fetus, child. *Döllemek* is thus almost the exact equivalent of the English "inseminate," literally "to put the seed in." *Döllemek* implies that the man's role is primary, he is the one who creates. The *döl* is inserted in *dölyatağı* (literally seedbed, meaning womb; also referred to as *rahim*, which is derived from Arabic), by way of the *dölyolu* (literally seed path, meaning vagina).¹³³

Therefore, soil and seed respectively symbolize the womb and sperm. Here is how Delaney explains the relationship between men and women in parallel with men and soil:

¹³¹ Ibid., 17.

¹³² "...erkekler açısından, kadınların kontrol altında tutulması kendi namuslarının belirlenmesinde çok önemliydi." Filiz Kardam, "Türkiyede Namus Cinayetlerinin Dinamikleri" (Ankara: Nüfusbilim Derneği, 2005), 17.

¹³³ Carol Lowery Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 33.

Like land, women must be “covered”; a woman must always be under the mantle of a man (whether father, husband, brother, or son) and this is symbolized by wearing the headscarf. A woman who wears the headscarf is referred to as *kapalı* (covered, closed) as opposed to *açık* (uncovered, open). A woman who walks around *açık* is open to sexual advances from men; it is as if she were openly exhibiting her private parts. Women without cover, without a headscarf, indicate that they are without protection, and are considered loose, immoral, and common property.

...The protection of women in Muslim societies, I believe, intimately and essentially, is related to the protection of the seed; in other words, it is an integral part of the theory of conception we have been discussing. A man’s power and authority, in short his value as a man, derives from his power to generate life. His honor, however, depends on his ability to guarantee that a child is from his own seed. This in turn depends on his ability to control “his” woman.¹³⁴

Men’s fear that another man may impregnate his wife lead him to try to control his wife all the time. How can another man impregnate his wife? Either the woman chooses another man as a mate or another man rapes her. In the first case, killing a woman for choosing another male is a violation of her independence. In the second case, it is the rapist who commits the crime, not the woman. In other words, the threat always comes from men and men assign themselves the role of the protector of women’s honor against men. So, I agree with Delaney when she says that women are viewed as a possession by men and kept under his hegemony. Nevertheless, I do not agree that this is unique to Muslim societies.¹³⁵ By saying such I mean the view that “women are protected as a possession” does not only occur in Islamic societies. Susan Brownmiller makes the same claim with reference to the relationship between men and women in general, not only in Islamic countries, and, as noted previously, she says, “A crime committed against her body became a crime against the male estate.”¹³⁶

Turkey falls short in terms of the punishment of cases of rape. İbrahim Sarı has pointed out that the rapes of sixty-two thousand women were reported between 2002 and 2008. However, there are many unreported cases because women are afraid to go to the police. Moreover, he also provides statistics obtained from the Turkish Statistical Institution, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, and the General Directorate of Security which indicate that 241 police officers, 91 soldiers, 17 members of task forces, 15 rangers, and 4 guardians have been put on trial for rape

¹³⁴ Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil*, 39.

¹³⁵ In her book, Clementine Van Eck also claims that it is a Mediterranean phenomenon. Clementine Van Eck, *Purified by Blood: Honour Killings amongst Turks in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 2002.

¹³⁶ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 17.

in the last 15 years but none have been punished.¹³⁷ This may partially explain why women are afraid to report rapes or other forms of sexual abuse.

As far as honor crimes are concerned, it has been reported that before 2005 the code of Turkish Criminal Law was not a deterring factor. After 2005, however, honor killings began to be more strictly punished.¹³⁸ According to a report drawn up by the Ankara Bar Association's Women's Rights Center, a declaration was made in 2005 stating that honor killings are to be categorized as voluntary manslaughter and such murderers are to be sentenced to penal servitude for life.¹³⁹

On the other hand, in her book *Al Kocayı, Vur Sopayı* Ayşe Kudat emphasizes that the number of men murdered in honor killings is higher than that of women:

This report, which was written by the General Directorate of Security and which consists of data collected from general directorates of security from 81 provinces covering 2000-2005, analyzed 1091 murders that could be categorized as honor murders. [...] In honor killings, men experience violence as much as women and most of the time men pay for them. Almost all of the murderers and most of the victims are male. [...] The number of people killed is 1190. 60% of them (710) are male, 40% (480) are female.¹⁴⁰

The statistics about sexual crimes show that they are still one of the most significant threats in society, but not only to women. The number of female victims but also male victims is undeniably high.

The first means by which women can be empowered is education. Educated women feel stronger and more confident, so they have the courage to protect themselves and their children against the destructive forces of patriarchy. For example, in cases of incestuous child abuse, the closest person who can help the victim is the mother. It has been noted that mothers play vital roles

¹³⁷ İbrahim Sarı, *Çocuk: Taciz, Tecavüz, Cinayet*, (İstanbul: Nokta Publsihing, 2016), 16-7.

¹³⁸ O. Celbis, B. Özdemir, M. Oruç, M. Doğan, & M. Eğri, "Evaluation of Honor Killings in Turkey," *Medicine Science*, 2013;2 (2): 640-8.

¹³⁹ "Türkiye'de töre ve namus cinayetlerinin önlenmesi amacıyla, sivil toplum örgütlerinin baskısı sonucu, 2005 yılında yürürlüğe giren Türk Ceza Kanunu'nda kasten öldürme suçunun ağırlaştırılmış müebbet hapis cezasını gerektiren nitelikli hallerinin düzenlendiği maddeye 'töre saikiyle' ifadesi eklenerek, töre cinayeti faillerinin en yüksek cezayı alması hedeflenmiştir." "İnsanlığın Namus Lekesi: Töre Cinayetleri," *Ankara Barosu Kadın Hakları Merkezi*, Volume 66, Issue 4, Fall 2008: 18-19, <http://www.ankarabarusu.org.tr/site/ankarabarusu/tekmakale/2008-4/3.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ "Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü tarafından yapılan ve 81 ilin Emniyet Müdürlüğü verileri kullanılarak hazırlanan bu rapor 2000-2005 yılları arasında kapsayan, töre hapsamına girebilecek 1091 cinayet olayını analiz etmiştir... Töre cinayetlerinde, kadınlar kadar şiddete uğrasa da bunun bedeli çoğunlukla erkeklerin başına patlamakata ve katillerin nerdeyse hepsi, ölenlerin de büyük çoğunluğu erkek olmaktadır... Öldürülen kişi sayısı 1190'dır. Bunların yüzde 60' (710) erkek, yüzde 40'ı (480) ise kadındır." Kudat, *Al Kocayı Vur Sopayı*, 94-6.

in protecting children from incest. Filiz Kardam and Emine Bademci assert that mothers are the most aware of everything that takes place in the home. It is also notable that they believe it is impossible for mothers to be unaware of incidents of incest. Either mothers realize that incest has occurred because of changes in the attitudes of victimized children or the victimized child talks about it with her/his mother.¹⁴¹ However, unequal gender roles in the family may prevent a mother from protecting her child and reporting it to the police. I believe this is more probable if the woman is economically dependent on her husband to maintain her own life and her children's lives. This is why education is crucial, because it can make it possible for them to make a living on their own and thus have the courage to stand up to their husbands.

Moreover, mothers play key roles in the way children are raised. Education can help women see the harmful effects of patriarchy. In order to discourage future generations from supporting patriarchal social structures, mothers should raise their sons and daughters by teaching them about the equality of the sexes. Since Turkey is a highly patriarchal society, boys are raised with a belief in their superiority over girls. Illiteracy and patriarchy are highly correlated, as indicated by a study about sexual violence in Turkey:

There is a direct correlation between levels of education and the region one lives and the rates of poverty. For example, eastern Turkey is the least developed and had the highest levels of physical/sexual violence against women; Eastern Anatolia had the highest rate with close to 50% of women experiencing sexual/physical violence at some point in their lives. The lowest rates of violence both physical and sexual were in western Turkey, which is also the most developed socioeconomically; West Marmara had a rate of 26.2%, followed by Aegean at 34.7%, and Istanbul had the third lowest rate at 38.4% of women over the age of 15 experiencing physical/sexual violence. Overall 42% of women in Turkey and 47% of rural women experienced violence of sexual and/or physical nature.¹⁴²

Diane Sunar and Güler O. Fişek note that as the rate of literacy goes up, financial power increases and sexual violence decreases. I think this is because educated people usually lead more independent lives and live far away from their relatives. As seen in the case of rural areas, honor killings are usually more common among people living closer to their relatives because gossip is the most important trigger for honor killings. Normative honor codes in rural areas lose their power

¹⁴¹ F. Kardam & E. Bademci, *Mothers in Cases of Incest in Turkey: Views and Experiences of a Professional*, Published Online. March 1, 2013: 260.

¹⁴² Tutku, "Violence Against Women," 17.

to a certain extent in urban areas where people live more independently away from communities acting like guardians of so-called honor. In the words of Sunar and Fişek:

Urban, educated middle class and elite groups constitute an important exception to the foregoing description of the honor system. Among educated urban youth, male-female encounters are much less closely controlled than in other sections of the population... In their words, although traditional values have not disappeared in the urban setting, they have been heavily moderated by a new emphasis on love, fulfillment, independence, and happiness.¹⁴³

In addition, honor is considered “amorphous—and contagious—in nature. It either glorifies or taints an individual, and all others who are related to that individual by marriage or by blood.”¹⁴⁴ That is why people who have been sexually victimized generally must contend with negative responses from society and most mothers in Turkey do not want their daughters to be friends with a rape victim, as if rape was a contagious disease. Rather than further victimizing the victims by isolating them, society should approach them with empathy. It is very common in Turkey to blame rape victims for provoking the attack because of the way they are dressed or the way they behave. Rape should not be seen as the inevitable and uncontrollable act of a man who is provoked by a woman wearing a mini-skirt or going out at night alone. Overall, I contend that Şafak’s work is motivated by an intention to bring to light sexual crimes, the psychology of victims, the reasons perpetrators have for committing sexual crimes, and the fact that sexual crimes usually go unpunished in Turkey.

Trauma Fiction

My main goal in this study is to show how Şafak’s works provide a means for narrating trauma, the role of socio-cultural dynamics and individual/collective history in the causes and effects of trauma, and the potential for recovery. The theoretical framework is threefold as it will be supported by theories on psychoanalysis, trauma, and narratology. More specifically, I will largely draw upon trauma theory as well as Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and I will specify strategies that facilitate the writing of trauma fiction. These strategies are at work on the thematic level as well as

¹⁴³ Diane Sunar and Güler Okman Fişek, “Contemporary Turkish Families,” in *Families in Global Perspective*, ed. Gielen and J. Roopnarine (Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2005), 10.

¹⁴⁴ Aysan, *Patriarchal Murders of Women*, 111.

the structural level. I found that I had to take into account both the thematic and structural levels because Şafak's trauma novels combine both of them to express traumatic events and reenactments.

Trauma theory has garnered much attention in the last forty years, in particular after the American Psychiatric Association acknowledged the frequently ignored phenomenon of "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" in 1980. The theory initially included symptoms that had previously been referred to as shell shock, combat delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis caused by both human and natural catastrophes. This classification was later expanded to include a number of other violent occurrences like rape and childhood abuse.¹⁴⁵ The stories in my corpus are based on incestuous rape, childhood abuse, and honor crimes, so reading them within a framework of trauma theory will make it possible to glean meaningful insights.

In her book *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth defines trauma in the following terms:

In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.¹⁴⁶

She provides critical insights into the "unpresentable," "unknown," "repetitive," and "belated" nature of traumatic events in literary and psychoanalytic texts, noting:

[...] trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language.¹⁴⁷

Trauma narratives go beyond representing traumatic events as violent and catastrophic instances and also provide readers with a means of witnessing the victim's physical and psychological struggle to survive. Trauma fiction represents characters' struggle to endure "the unbearable nature of an event" and "the unbearable nature of its survival."¹⁴⁸ I argue that reading trauma fiction does not just entail reading about traumatic events and their reenactments, which the characters suffer

¹⁴⁵ Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

from, as there is much more to it beneath the surface. Trauma fiction is the written representation of a traumatized person's mind. Each page in a trauma fiction is like a journey that readers undertake in the mind of a trauma victim; as readers turn the pages, they witness the reenactments of the traumatic events that the victim underwent. Therefore, trauma fiction represents a locale where victim and reader share and witness the unexperienced or unclaimed experience of the original event that caused the trauma and its reenactments. Therefore, what qualifies *The Bastard of Istanbul*, *The Gaze*, and *Honour* as trauma fiction is not only the fact that the plot of each novel is about a traumatic event. The structural and thematic elements in trauma fiction complete one another.

Traumatic events are usually narrated by means of flashbacks, irregular punctuation, nonlinear time flow, multiple narrators, embedded stories, reconstructed past events and characters, and fragmented narrations; all of these devices together qualify novels as trauma fiction. Since trauma is not experienced as it happens, it cannot be integrated into narrative memory so it reemerges through reenactments in its full immediacy. Repetition, flashbacks, and other narrative devices symbolize how survivors live both in the moment of the trauma and in the present. In other words, survivors live both in the past and in the present, and the past continues to exist in the present. At the same time, events are not integrated into a certain chronological order. The nonlinear time flow in such novels shows that trauma is not temporally arranged, and traumatic events are not integrated into the main stories. The use of multiple narrators also has symbolic meaning. Alternative narration by a focalizer and by an external narrator as a narrative strategy symbolizes the victim's dissociation from the traumatic moment. Additionally, the fragmented self of a trauma victim is symbolized by the fragmented narration of traumatic events. When representing trauma, irregular punctuation and breaking words apart are strategies that echo the impossibility of integrating trauma into narrative memory. Because of the way that Şafak integrates trauma, the construction of these novels resembles how trauma as a failed experience cannot be remembered yet is embedded in the victim's memory.

In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Lewis Herman notes, "The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word unspeakable."¹⁴⁹ As trauma is not experienced when it happens and cannot be integrated into narrative memory, it is unspeakable. However, victims need

¹⁴⁹ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 1.

to tell their stories in order to heal their souls; as Herman points out, trauma resists being buried and the prerequisite of recovery for victims and society is to tell the whole truth about the trauma.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Shoshana Felman emphasizes the importance of speaking out about trauma: “The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their story; they also needed to tell their story in order to survive.”¹⁵¹ In my corpus, Şafak asks if victims can find a way to share their trauma and, if they can, how others will react. Sharing trauma with a sympathetic listener is crucial in the healing process as it enables survivors to “work through” rather than to “act out” their trauma. La Capra defines and explains the importance of working through and acting out in recovering from trauma:

I would argue, or at least suggest, that undecidebility and unregulated difference, threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions including that between present and past, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and in post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes... Working thorough is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transference relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one or one’s people back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future.¹⁵²

In the novels I analyze, while some victims are able to work through their trauma, others are not. What helps them work through and differentiate between a traumatic past and the present can be a sympathetic listener, as in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. The opposite, a lack of a sympathetic listener as in *The Gaze*, leads to acting out. The role of society is also significant in sharing and recovering from trauma; for that reason, the exploration of trauma in my corpus is useful for excavating the relationship between trauma, gender, patriarchy, and the socio-cultural dynamics of Turkish society. It provides the reader with a means of understanding the phenomenon of trauma and discovering its personal and public aspects.

My theoretical framework will also draw upon Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis in my readings of trauma in Şafak’s novels. Literature and psychoanalysis both benefit from each other in the way they explore and articulate trauma, as Caruth argues:

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Shoshana Felman & Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 78.

¹⁵² Dominick La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 2001), 22.

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relationship between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet.¹⁵³

Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* or "deferred action" is defined as the relationship between two events, the first of which is too shocking and too recent to understand, and the second of which activates memories of the first event that caused the traumatic symptoms.¹⁵⁴ Freud concludes that a victim may not feel affected by a traumatic event when it happens, but analysis of traumatic symptoms takes one back to the very moment when the traumatic event happened. This period between traumatic event and *deferred action* is called *latency*. Freud explains this as follows:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which one can ascribe only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a "traumatic neurosis." This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the "incubation period," a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease. As an afterthought we observe that in spite of the fundamental difference in the two cases, the problem of the traumatic neurosis and that of Jewish monotheism, there is a correspondence in one point. It is the feature which one might term latency.¹⁵⁵

In light of this explanation and Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, it is possible to recognize the traumatic symptoms of the victims in Şafak's books and find out how they are related to the traumatic event, whether implicitly or explicitly. In the novels, sometimes an image, a number, a color, or a sound in the present that is associated with the traumatic event make the victim re-live the traumatic event with all its effects and feel exactly the same as when they were traumatized.

¹⁵³ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74), 3: 191-221.

¹⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, translated by Katherine Jones, Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, Hertfordshire, 1939, 109-110. Accessed May 1, 2018, https://archive.org/stream/mosesandmonothei032233mbp/mosesandmonothei032233mbp_djvu.txt

These instances are repeated to show that trauma victims inevitably reenact traumatic events over and over again, and the victim's present life is surrounded by the past.

Memory relates to the problem of trauma since traumatic memories differ significantly from narrative memories. In "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engravings of Trauma," Van der Kolk refers to Janet's observations to explain the differences between narrative and traumatic memory. In contrast to narrative memory, traumatic memory is inflexible and invariable; it is not addressed to anybody in particular, and just as it has no social components, it is not integrated with other experiences. When one element of traumatic memory is triggered, others follow automatically.¹⁵⁶

I will also utilize close readings to focus on and analyze the structural elements in the novels. Paying attention to even the smallest details is invaluable in interpreting a literary work. Narrative strategies, as well as the plot, used by authors are effective in qualifying a novel as a trauma novel. Just one word or a recurring image can say a lot to the reader. Characters that seem to have no connection might in fact be closely bound to one another. Moreover, the symbolic use of images, places, and even colors are common in Şafak's novels. Even irregular use punctuation is symbolic in her trauma fictions. Therefore, reading these novels by closely paying attention to both literal and figurative meanings will help me answer my questions in this study. As Mieke Bal points out, "True enough, a text does not speak for itself. We surround it, or frame it, before we let it speak at all."¹⁵⁷

At the thematic level, a crucial topic in Şafak's trauma narratives is the victimization of women. The way I explore gender relations in the works of Şafak is based on the hypothesis that patriarchy plays the largest role in the victimizing of women, and mothers play the largest role in the dissemination of patriarchy in their children's minds. In order to investigate what makes women perpetuate patriarchy and encourage its maintenance, I will draw on Lacan's arguments about the Oedipus complex and his concept of privation. According to Lacan, privation is different from castration; privation of the phallus does not mean that women lack a penis as an organ, but rather it refers to the fact that the penis is transformed into a signifier which marks the lack of a penis that

¹⁵⁶ 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* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 163.

¹⁵⁷ Mieke Bal, "Working with Concepts," *European Journal of English Studies*, 1 April 2009, 15.
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713734315>

can never be attained.¹⁵⁸ Frequent use of cultural-based idioms that devalue women, raising children according to the norms of patriarchy, and a desire to have a son rather than a daughter are among the common characteristics of the female characters in Şafak's novels, and these characteristics can be understood in terms of Lacanian privation. They symbolize a desire that can never be satisfied. In particular, discourse has a fundamental role in the maintenance of patriarchy, creating gaps between gender roles, and traumatizing women. It has the power to manipulate and shape the way people interpret experiences, as Van Alphen points out: "Discourse is no longer a subservient medium in which experiences can be expressed. Rather, discourse plays a fundamental role in the process that allows experiences to come about and in shaping their form and content."¹⁵⁹

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of three chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter, "Rapist, Raped, and the Bastard," explores traces of trauma in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. It examines representations of incestuous rape, so I will focus on the psychic struggle that the protagonist Zeliha undertakes, her ways of dealing with that trauma, and how her family members react and take revenge. As Caruth points out, "...trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also fundamentally an enigma of survival,"¹⁶⁰ so the difficulty of experiencing and surviving such a catastrophic event will be examined. The protagonist's decision to give birth to the child of her rapist leads to the creation of another traumatic character, Asya, and her struggle with memory will also be analyzed as a child born as the result of a rape. Moreover, Laub and Felman's¹⁶¹ theories of trauma will be used together with the essays in *Acts of Memory*¹⁶² to investigate the uncontrollability of traumatic memory, the difficulty of giving it a representational form, Şafak's metaphorical narration of the rape, and the subversion of gender roles in the family. The necessity of trauma's transference to others for the sake of recovery will be examined because despite all of the difficulties involved, the victimized character shares the truth with her daughter. I will examine

¹⁵⁸ Adrian Johnston, "Phallus Non-Existence and Sexual Identity: Some Brief Remarks on Meinong and Lacan," September 1, 2017. <http://www.lacan.com/nonexist.htm>

¹⁵⁹ Ernst van Alphen, "Symptoms of Discursivity, Experience, Memory and Trauma," in Mieke Bal, ed., *Acts of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), 25.

¹⁶⁰ Caruth. *Unclaimed Experience*. 58.

¹⁶¹ Felman & Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*.

¹⁶² *Acts of Memory*, edited by Mieke Bal (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999).

whether Zeliha and her daughter, who is called a “bastard,” are ultimately embraced by society in the narratives.

Another point that will be discussed in this chapter concerns people who are born to trauma victims. One of them, as mentioned above, is a child who was brought into the world because of a rape and the other is the daughter of an Armenian family that left Turkey years ago. These two girls, which represent the younger generation in the book, are Asya and Armanush. They represent two different forms of memory. Asya represses her memories and prefers to live a life without a past. Armanush represents the opposite, as the past is persistently present in her life. As such, I will explore the motivations that drive one of them to forget the past and the other to dwell in it. Moreover, “the transmission of trauma” (Alphen, 2006) of the parents and their children will be examined in the novels as well.¹⁶³

The Gaze will be central in the second chapter, “Trauma and Gaze,” so the traumatic experience that will be explored in this chapter is child abuse. *The Gaze* may very well be one of the best representations of Freud’s concept of latency, in accordance with rape as a traumatic event. Şafak writes the story of a female character who was raped orally and cannot stop eating as she grows up because she is trying to get rid of the taste in her mouth. That is why she becomes the target of people’s gazes because others like to watch such fat women, although she would prefer if no one noticed her at all. Hence, I will examine the traumatic experience the protagonist has gone through, plunge into the depths of her traumatic memory, and raise to the surface her unconscious feelings. Through my examination of this novel, I aim to unravel trauma’s effects on individuals’ psyches, explore the difficulty of integrating such experiences into one’s life, and question whether it is possible to recover the undone self.

Because Şafak employs a range of narrative devices that mimic traumatic symptoms, my analyses of her narrative techniques will constitute an important part of this chapter. Moreover, as *The Gaze* consists of two main stories, this chapter will explore the relationship between these two narratives at the structural and contextual levels.

In the last chapter, “Trauma in the Family,” I will carry out a close reading of *Honor*, which depicts the traumatic life of a Kurdish family that cannot escape the culturally embedded ideas imposed on them not only in their village but also in London. The story involves the murder of a

¹⁶³ Ernst van Alphen, “Second-Generation Testimony, Transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory,” *Poetics Today*, 27 (2): 2006, 473-488.

mother by her son, the suicide of a father, and hatred between family members. In order to heal her trauma, Pembe, one of the main characters, goes back to her village and recreates a new identity for herself, that of her twin sister.¹⁶⁴ She witnesses the murder of two sisters by family members, one in her childhood and the other one years later in a foreign land. Both murders are honor killings that are committed to restore a family's tarnished name. The main question addressed in this chapter concerns the role of the cultural dynamics that victimize characters and subsequently result in trauma. Traumatic events are sometimes inevitable because of brutal cultural norms. I will examine how Şafak represents a Kurdish family, their lives in a Kurdish village in Turkey and later in London, the relationships in the family before and after the trauma, and the contradictions between individuals' sense of well-being and society's restrictions. *Honor* is a crisp representation of the idea that wherever you go, you take your memory and culturally embedded ideas with you. The novel sheds light on the power struggle between the sexes, the vulnerability of both victims and perpetrators, and the role of parents in integrating patriarchy into the worldviews of children.

