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Sufism in Turkish Crime Fiction: the Mystery of Shams-i Tabrizi in Ahmet Ümit's *Bab-ı Esrar*

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Introduction

- ¹ *The world is a dream within a dream.* With this Indian proverb in its prologue, *Bab-ı Esrar* already hints at the Sufi belief that the reality of the world is actually an illusion, which is the result of human ignorance at the fact that all persons are God and that everything is connected to him. Thus it is even possible to read *Bab-ı Esrar* as the *Bildungsroman* of the female protagonist Karen Kimya Greenwood, who embarks upon a journey to the land of Rumi where she eventually comes to perceive the world in this enlightened manner. The journey is arduous, and like a Sufi disciple, Karen Kimya passes through different stages in order to achieve her ultimate state of awareness. Only then is she able to come to terms with her internal personal struggles, which for her is the earlier abandonment by her Sufi father.
- ² Published in 2008, *Bab-ı Esrar* is one of the most prominent examples of contemporary Turkish crime fiction and has remained one of the best-selling novels since that time.² Its popularity indicates widespread popular interest in the book, which is linked to both its genre as well as its subject matter, which is Sufism and the relationship between Rumi and Shams.³ '[It] is more than a thriller, it is a book of secrets' is written at the back cover of its English translation. The story revolves around two main secrets; one is the 'secret of a passion spanning over seven centuries: a flame first lid between Jelaladdin Rumi and Shams of Tabriz' and the other is the 'secret behind a seven hundred year old crime: the murder of Shams of Tabriz' (back cover *The Dervish Gate*, 2011). As readers, we witness the protagonist Karen Kimya's life changing experiences in Konya, where she investigates a hotel fire and a murder in the present time. The novel also functions as a revisionist historical novel, which presents the reader with

multiple perspectives on the relationship between Shams and Rumi and Shams' murder. These multiple perspectives are presented through Karen Kimya's dreams, hallucinations and several fantastic events that happened during her stay in Konya, including becoming Shams of Tabriz himself and experiencing what he had gone through firsthand. Through using various narrative techniques, Ümit has created a multi-layered thriller, which consist of fantastic elements as well as political and ideological criticism while forcing the reader to question Shams' murder and what it allegorically stands for. Thus this article proposes viewing *Bab-ı Esrar* as an exemplary work in which Sufism manifests itself in everyday secular Turkish culture (as depicted in the novel), and also aims to explore the novel's conventions and ideology in relation to Sufism.

- 3 There are of course myriad questions one could explore in relation to why Sufism appears in modern Turkish crime writing, such as how and why mysticism in general and Sufism in particular became one of its main motifs, and how the marketing of history and mysticism has become a feature of tourism. For these answers, one must address broader issues such as the influence of globalization on literary trends, the changing position of Islam in Turkish culture, the role of literature in identity politics, and in the construction of cultural memory. As the scope of these topics is greater than the length of this paper, this article will be limited to the discussion of how the incorporation of Sufism is a major literary device in *Bab-ı Esrar*. Moreover, it argues that this device segments the storyline so one can identify the individual aspects of Sufism's contribution to the conventions of crime fiction, the recurring manifestations of Sufi philosophy, and the ways in which these themes contribute to the creation of alternative cultural memory.
- 4 This article stems from the idea that *Bab-ı Esrar* offers an alternative cultural memory with its handling of Shams as well as his murder and relationship with Rumi. In so doing the novel presents an unconventional solution to the contemporary question of secular and religious identity, which is historically rooted in the Kemalist-Islamist dichotomy of the early Republic.⁴ Sufism is presented as a medium for and an alternative to the question of identity, and *Bab-ı Esrar* proposes looking at one's inner self as a means of separating religion from politics. As Ernst rightly argues, 'in the contemporary situation, Sufism has been officially pushed into a dubious and marginal posture, while still providing spiritual and intellectual tools that hold their appeal in many diverse and irreducibly local contexts related to religion and politics' (Ernst 2009: § 30). In this vein, Sufism as the novel's main motif implicitly hints at the author's interest in identity politics. Arguably the depiction of Shams and the representation of his murder are an implicit criticism of recent events (the murder of Hrant Dink and the debates surrounding the minorities in Turkey) that are related to contemporary disputes related with ethnic identities. The implicit criticism of current events and ideologies in the novel goes beyond the scope of religion, linking Sufism directly with politics. Thus the novel is an exemplary work of mainstream literature that serves simultaneously as revisionist fiction.

Early Turkish Crime Fiction

- 5 While crime fiction has become increasingly popular in Turkey since the 1980s, its history goes back to the nineteenth century. There have been few studies on this topic

(Üyepazarcı 2008; Sagaster 2006), but it is known that prominent authors of Tanzimat literature like Ahmet Mithat Efendi experimented with the crime genre when adopting Western prose styles.⁵ As stated by David Mason, who investigates early Turkish crime fiction in his PhD thesis, ‘propaganda was at the heart of the development of the genre and its subsequent popularity ensured that it would continue to be an effective vehicle for propaganda for generations to come’ (2010: 7). In his analyses of five Turkish crime fiction series written between 1928 and 1950, Mason argues that the genre was intended to spread Turkish nationalism and that the novels included several ‘messages of character traits Turks should embody [which] adhered closely to Kemalist concepts of Turkism’ (2010: 2).

- 6 Aside from the embedded national ideology, it is also possible to recognize traces of the Islamic epistemology of Tanzimat literature in early Turkish crime novels. For instance, in the first Turkish crime novel *Esrar-ı Cinayât*, written by Ahmet Mithat Efendi in 1884, one sees that the typical analytic abilities and scientific enquiry of Western crime fiction are juxtaposed with the Islamic epistemology of Tanzimat literature.⁶ This is not to imply that Islam was the primary subject or motif in this novel the way Sufism is in *Bab-ı Esrar*, but only to illustrate that Islamic philosophies were embedded in Turkish crime novels from the very beginning when the form was just beginning to develop. However, as Jale Parla notes, Tanzimat authors were not aware that the Tanzimat and the Western novel had completely separate epistemologies. According to Parla, the Tanzimat novel has an Islamic epistemology while the Western novel contains the positivist epistemology of the ideology of liberalism (2004). Unaware of this difference, Tanzimat authors used the Western novel (including the crime genre) as a new literary tool to convey their message to the masses. It is for this reason that the early Turkish crime novels contain both nationalist and Islamic agendas.
- 7 With regard to Sufism, Tanzimat authors such as Ahmet Mithat, Namık Kemal and Şemseddin Sami had a different method of narration. While their texts demonstrate an Islamic epistemology, these authors had an uneasy engagement with the mystical subtext of classical literature. They promoted didactic narratives and, influenced by Western prose, they emphasized the need for greater realism. Hence they were ultimately critical of Sufi literature while continuing to maintain an Islamic epistemology of their subjects.
- 8 Since the publication of *Esrar-ı Cinayât*, crime fiction has remained part of Turkish writing, but its ideologies and epistemologies have evolved, as has its popularity with the public. In Üyepazarcı’s extended study of the history of Turkish crime fiction, one sees a high number of crime novel publications in some years and in others only a few; and as in some years there are multiple translations, in other years there are not (2008). Since the publication of crime novels in the early years of the Republic that have included Kemalist depictions of Turkish nationalism (which Mason investigates), much has changed in Turkish literature as it has in the world in general. Not only are there shifting ideologies of states and new theories about the functions of literary texts, but there are new characteristics of written genres that are subject to new interpretations.

Contemporary Turkish Crime Fiction

- 9 What has not changed since the genre’s first appearance in Turkish literature in 1884 is arguably the position of crime fiction. The genre has been perceived as lowbrow

literature and has remained secondary in comparison to the novel despite the fact that their roles are similar. As Sibel Irzık rightly argues,

The Turkish novel has seen itself as a means of social critique and mobilization ever since its beginnings during the last decades of the nineteenth century. It has always exhibited a preoccupation with social and historical themes, ranging from the first novels' warnings against excessive Westernization to the romantic depictions of the spirit of the Anatolian people in the so-called village novels of the early years of the republic, or the criticism of class oppression and state corruption in the social realist novels of the 1950s (2003: 555).

- 10 Similarly, starting with *Esrar-ı Cinayât* (1884), crime fiction can also be read as a means of social critique. Behind the simple plot of the search for the villain in *Esrar-ı Cinayât*, Ahmet Mithat both warns his readers against excessive Westernization and, with the didactic tone of an intervening author, he criticizes the judicial system of the Ottoman Empire. Similar practices arise in later crime books as well. For example, Peyami Safa's popular dime series about Cingöz Recai implicitly underline class oppression in the early years of the Republic. Prominent Turkish authors such as Kemal Tahir, Halide Edip Adıvar, Aziz Nesin, and Çetin Altan also wrote crime novels and stories that examined the social themes of the day. While some of these authors used pseudonyms to publish crime fiction, textual analyses of these novels reveal similarities to the ideologies and critiques in their more prominent works. One can therefore postulate that since its origin in Turkish literature, crime fiction has been directly linked to politics. However, this feature of crime fiction has long been neglected by Turkish critics, such as Nurallah Ataç, who accused novelist Peyami Safa of writing lowbrow crime and romance novels in order to earn more income (Üyepazarcı 276: 2008).
- 11 In her analysis of contemporary crime fiction, Eva Erdmann argues that 'the complexity and contradictions of cultural identities are foregrounded and traditional discourses on nationalism are exposed to new interpretations' (2009: 2). This new interpretation is a harsh criticism of conventional national identity, and indicates the changing features of the genre. Many authors in general have recently adopted crime fiction to convey criticism of a dominant ideology and a fixed identity whether it is national, religious or gender.⁷ For this reason it is no longer possible to define crime fiction as a conservative genre.⁸ Moreover, realism is not necessarily a crucial feature of a crime novel. On the contrary, one of the distinctive features of contemporary crime fiction is that it is a hybrid genre (Krajenbrink and Quinn, 2009). Therefore, a crime novel can be 'a text of impeccable postmodern sensibility [...], one which [...] reveals itself ultimately to be a thoroughly hybrid and restless creation, mixing detective and anti-detective fiction modes, [...] blending ugly realism and metaphysical speculation, and challenging throughout facile solutions to the question of identity, be it of genre, character, or reality' (Duffy 2009: 311). It is possible to recognize these characteristics in *Bab-ı Esrar*, which is both a fantastic crime novel and a postmodern thriller in which dreams and reality merge.
- 12 Aside from being a prominent example of the contemporary Turkish crime novel, *Bab-ı Esrar* is one of the most notable examples of how Sufism is represented in a popular text – together with Elif Şafak's *Aşk (Forty Rules of Love)*, it is by no means one of a few. There has recently been growing interest in Sufism in Turkey, in both fictional and non-fictional works that deal with Sufi thought across a range of sub-genres including histories and the biographies of Sufi masters and their teachings.⁹ There are also noticeable links with the various spiritual themes of Sufism that are manifested in

popular culture. One can see explicit references to Sufism in various cultural formations, including popular music, TV shows, and literature.¹⁰

- 13 Among the secular popular literary texts in which Sufism appears, *Bab-ı Esrar* is particularly interesting for a number of reasons. Most importantly, it projects the changing features of Turkish literature. There are two important issues at stake: it is no longer possible to classify crime fiction as a purely realistic genre, as it has various sub-genres that include the fantastic and postmodern, just as it is no longer possible to classify the secular and non-secular literary texts by their subject matter. Thus this article's assertion that Sufism is a new theme in Turkish popular literature extends specifically to the secular literary texts, which have a vast readership in Turkey. The literary and cultural worlds in Turkey are otherwise still very polarized. Thus while Sufism and other mystical themes have been explored in the salvation novels or *hidayet romanları* since the 1980's,¹¹ these bestsellers are not even mentioned in liberal literary publications. One can argue that it is only after the recent publications such as *Bab-ı Esrar* and *Aşk* that Sufism became a familiar literary motif to a readership that certainly extends beyond Islamic-conservative circles. This can be interpreted in two ways: first, that the novel's popularity is due to general growing interest in Sufism; and second, that the novel itself piqued curiosity in Sufism by presenting Sufi ideas to the public, including the very young readers of *Bab-ı Esrar*. With these topics in mind, one can go beyond the relationship between Sufism and the novel to explore how these features are linked with cultural memory.

Global Interest & Local Skepticism: Sufism and Crime Fiction

- 14 Exploring the relationship between Sufism and crime fiction can be worthwhile particularly because of the ambiguous connections between each other. It is also worthwhile given the overall lack of information on cultural memory in Turkish literary studies.¹² As suggested by Mieke Bal:

Because memory is made up of socially constituted forms, narratives, and relations, but also amenable to individual acts of intervention in it, memory is always open to social revision and manipulation. This makes it an instance of fiction rather than imprint, often of social forgetting rather than remembering. Cultural memory can be located in literary texts because the latter are continuous with communal fictionalizing, idealizing, monumentalizing impulses thriving in a conflicted culture (1999: xiii).

- 15 What is unique about Sufism's place in crime fiction is how it communicates the ideology of the novel and is linked with identity politics and memory. The way Shams is depicted in *Bab-ı Esrar* becomes a matter of propaganda, but unlike in the earlier crime novels of 1928-1956, Turkish nationalism is not the issue. On the contrary, as in most of Ümit's fiction, it is actually possible to see a resistance against nationalism. In *Bab-ı Esrar*, the importance of love is underlined in order to enjoy this life and beyond, and Rumi is depicted as the poet of love underlining the equality of all human beings rather than differences of ethnicity, nation or gender. Rumi's portrayal as 'a universal polymath who foreshadows both Turkish nationalism and the secular values of post-Enlightenment modernity' (Ernst 2009: 17) is not unique in contemporary cultural

productions, i.e. in the Turkish film *Tolerance* (1995), but what is new is the underlying importance of Shams in Rumi's life and the emphasis on their relationship.

- 16 Rumi himself is a globally recognized figure. UNESCO declared 2007 as the International Year of Rumi while celebrating the 800th anniversary of his birth on September 6. This has led to the general teachings of Sufism and the biographies of Sufi masters attracting more attention worldwide, which helps one to understand the rapid popularization of Sufism in Turkey. The national and international tours to Konya, where Rumi had spent his life as well as the several TV shows in which Sufi teachings and Rumi's poetry are discussed, are few examples of how the local population has been influenced by this global attention, and why the rituals, ceremonies, and teachings that had been subjected to legal restrictions for decades have recently become a part of public and popular culture. This interest is also linked to a growing general interest in esoteric topics: 'Major booksellers bear witness to the "esoteric boom" in the Turkish publishing industry, and to reader demand for the global range of New Age and occult literature in Turkish translation, in addition to a growing number of relevant works by Turkish authors' (Taji-Farouki 229: 2007). However, the publications on Sufism are not uniform and neither is its perception in public. Some are hostile to the concept while others are sympathetic, and due to the diverse manifestations of Sufism there are varying theories on its origins, definition, and nature. It is thus possible to claim that while there is growing interest and curiosity toward Sufism, there is also (still) skepticism and criticism.
- 17 Another example of the influence of global trends on local culture is the increasing popularity of the crime fiction genre in Turkey. This is also the case in other countries such as France, Germany, and Sweden, where millions of domestic and translated crime novels are sold each year. However, a key difference in Turkey is the perception of crime fiction by readers and critics. Crime fiction has been one of the most acknowledged and prolific literary genres worldwide for over a century now. Consequently, it has become a popular area of academic investigation in many countries, where crime fiction is no longer considered to be a lowbrow genre by literary audiences. In Turkey, the number of young authors who choose crime fiction as the genre of their debut novels has increased since the 1980s, as has the number of prominent authors whose novels incorporate elements of this genre (such as Orhan Pamuk's *Kara Kitap* [1990]). The rising number of crime novels in Turkey certainly indicates the genre's proliferation, although the question of how much respect they actually elicit from readers and reviewers remains open. Critical reception appears to still identify crime fiction as a lowbrow genre, although scholars such as Ömer Türkeş and Erol Üyepazarcı point out its various functions and have written articles on its history, in addition to writing analyses of recently published crime novels. However, there have still been only a few projects devoted to crime fiction in Turkish literary studies.¹³
- 18 In addition, the position of crime fiction in Turkey (to be discussed in the next section) allows the genre to function as an 'imaginative counter-discourse'. This denotes the 'confrontation of [...] systems with a holistic-pluralistic approach that focuses specifically on that which is marginalized, neglected or repressed by [...] systematic realities, and articulates what otherwise remains unarticulated in the available categories of cultural self-interpretation' (Zapf 2001: 93). In cultural narratological analysis, this function of literature¹⁴ is useful in examining 'the relationship between

the polyphonic structure of novels and their challenge to dominant cultural discourses' (Nünning 2004: 358). To better explain how one can read *Bab-ı Esrar* as imaginative counter-discourse in relation to the function of Sufism, one must return to the status of crime fiction in contemporary Turkish literature. The example of Ahmet Ümit illustrates this topic most clearly.

Extra-canonical Works of Ahmet Ümit

- 19 Regardless of the lack of scholarly interest in this genre, the majority of crime novels can provide as much insight into Turkish culture and society as do the canonical texts; perhaps even more so at times because of its lack of serious interaction with critics or readers. In this vein, Sagaster argues in her analysis of modern Turkish literature that:

On one side we still have the (social realist) literature of the Kemalist canon which is controversially discussed but seems at the same time also to undergo a new revival [...]. On the other hand, we have the (extra- or outside) canonical literatures with diverse literary trends [...]. Last but not least, we have the anti-canonical popular literatures of the Islamists and Ultra-Nationalists who use literature as a tool to propagate their ideologies (Sagaster 2009: 71).
- 20 To an extent these categories reflect the diversity of voices and political ideologies in Turkish literature; thus by extension they reflect the general heterogeneity of Turkish culture. Sagaster aptly positions the majority of contemporary crime novels within the extra-canonical literatures. The very fact that these novels are considered *extra* or outside the canon enables them to embrace a more subversive tone although this may not be initially explicit. For instance, Ahmet Ümit's crime novels carry strong social critiques and touch upon almost every taboo subject that occupies the current public discourse in Turkey.
- 21 Ümit's decision of writing exclusively in this genre¹⁵ is clearly linked with his interest in politics and his ideology. In many interviews, Ümit argues that crime fiction is the most convenient genre through which to communicate his message to his readers. As a previous member of the Turkish communist party, Ümit became a professional author in 1989 and after illegally fighting for democracy for ten years, he decided to use his works to convey his leftist ideology.
- 22 Hence, all of Ümit's novels are political. What is striking about them is not only their bestseller status, but their unorthodox characters and subjects. While his fiction centers upon a type of crime – usually multiple murders – Ümit's work includes issues that are considered controversial or taboo in Turkey such as the question of the Armenian genocide, the status of Kurdish minorities, and the role of Islam in society. His texts reflect the dynamics of Turkish popular culture, functioning as a platform to examine issues that are highly debated in the public sphere.
- 23 Moreover, those of Ümit's novels that can be classified as extra-canonical (irrespective of their best-selling status) enable him to address controversial issues more freely; they are unique 'as a privileged medium of oppositional memory, as a "counter-memorial" and critical force that undermines hegemonic views of the past' (Rigney 2008: 348). As extra-canonical texts, they exist in the periphery of literature despite their increasing popularity. Thus to acknowledge the potential of these novels to produce an alternative cultural memory (often a subversive, revisionist way of examining history) is to make strong assumptions about contemporary Turkish literature. Aside from questions of

who was killed by whom and why, Ümit's novels contain significant questions regarding cultural memory. While the two most prominent Turkish novelists, Elif Şafak and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk, have been formally tried for 'denigrating Turkishness' in their works, crime fiction's position allows Ahmet Ümit to freely deal with controversial topics. For instance, he discusses the Armenian massacres of 1915 in *Patasana* (2000) and the 'Susurluk Olayı'¹⁶ in *Kukla* (2002), in addition to several other subjects within Turkish history and identity politics, as embedded themes of the generic narratives of crime fiction. One prime example of Ümit's novels' link to cultural memory and their function as 'imaginative counter-discourse' is his eighth novel, *Bab-ı Esrar*, which is among those contemporary works that contain Sufi elements.

Narrative Analysis of *Bab-ı Esrar*

- 24 *Bab-ı Esrar*, meaning the 'gate of mysteries' in Ottoman, was published in 2008 as Ümit's eighth crime novel and immediately became a bestseller in Turkey.¹⁷ In *Bab-ı Esrar*, specific spiritual themes arise particularly in the depiction of the relationship between master and apprentice. This is especially the case in the novel's depiction of the relationship between Shams and Rumi, while other characters also fill the role of the spiritual seeker - the one who questions the meaning of life and ultimately arrives at an answer through a process of self-questioning and experiences. Among these characters, Karen Kimya Greenwood is the homodiegetic narrator of Ümit's novel. The book blends two parallel narratives - one contemporary and the other set in the thirteenth century. Told in the first person by Karen Kimya, the contemporary story revolves around the mystery behind a hotel fire in Konya in which two people are burned to death. Karen Kimya travels to Konya as she is employed with the hotel's insurer. And while on her journey there, she is forced to face her past and question certain decisions in life. Konya is the city where her father, a Sufi master named Poyraz Efendi, grew up, and it thus acquires a new significance in Karen Kimya's life and leads her to address a question looming in her future: whether or not to abort the baby she is carrying as her boyfriend wishes, or to deliver it herself.
- 25 The thirteenth century narrative is a reconstruction of the relationship between Rumi and Shams. Told mostly through Karen Kimya's character, who has become Shams himself in this part of the story and therefore acquires Shams's philosophical teachings, her new perspective in this storyline ultimately offers her modern self insight into ancient Sufi philosophy, which is based on the unity of all people and religions, and the presence of love in all beings. The novel presents Rumi and Shams' complex relationship from its inception and includes episodes such as Rumi's famous 'awakening' that later arises from his meeting the wandering dervish Shams, as well as Shams' mysterious murder.
- 26 Karen Kimya's quest for the truth behind the hotel fire -whether it was a setup to get money from the insurance company or an accident as stated by the owner- is complicated by her confrontation with her past. As a child, her father abandoned the family for the sake of Sufism, which is gradually explained and linked to the relationship between the Sufi masters Rumi and Shams. Ümit thus constructs the crime plot around the popular curiosity in Rumi's biography instead of foregrounding it in Sufi teachings. As Carl Ernst claims, another distinctive feature of Rumi is

the view that he and his teacher Shams-i Tabriz had a homosexual relationship. This theory of “gay mysticism” plays into significant transformation of gender roles that are taking place in some modern societies, which indeed may be projecting onto the 13th-century mystic. In any case, what is striking is the way in which Rumi has become the touchstone for modern rethinking of identity in a non-authoritarian mode (2009: 9).

- 27 In *Bab-ı Esrar*, too, the relationship between the two is discussed at length. For some characters, it is perceived as homosexual love and for others, as one of the most important examples of the relationship between a master and an apprentice in Sufi culture as they seek the Divine love:

“They were searching,” he murmured patiently. “In that silence, without flinching, without asking questions, without offering explanations, they sat just so and searched within themselves. But what they sought in themselves was none other than God himself. That’s how one became the lover and the other beloved. Because without love, they knew they would never be able to attain Truth.” (DG 359)¹⁸

- 28 These disparate ideas are presented as the characters’ points of view and through different narratives, which are mostly negotiated by Karen Kimya in her inner monologues:

I found it sad that people still felt the need to defend the relationship between them [Shams and Rumi] seven centuries on. On the other hand, it wasn’t as though the bond between these two extraordinary men didn’t warrant that kind of interest. They themselves called it love, though I suppose there was a huge discrepancy between the meaning they applied to that feeling and our concept of it. (DG 343)¹⁹

- 29 These different perceptions of this complicated relationship are presented together with some poems of Rumi’s along with references to his *Mathnawi* and other secondary sources. The novel does not try to give an answer to what really happened between the two, but rather, as Ernst argues, represents Rumi in a non-authoritarian mode. For this reason various interpretations of these two characters play a crucial role in showing different ideas on this topic, and the decision is left to the reader. This complicated relationship is presented with the main ideas of Sufism. There are several conversations among characters through which the meanings of Sufi teachings are discussed, where for instance Poyraz Efendi explains the meaning of the saying ‘one must die before death’, (DG 21), or when historical information is transferred through a documentary that Karen Kimya sees on TV, or by a tour guide that she overhears in the Mevlana Museum. Hence, two elements with which Ümit incorporates Sufism and Sufi masters in the text are narrative multiperspectivity and intertextuality. *Bab-ı Esrar* features a number of conversations in the form of phone calls, long dialogues, as well as Karen Kimya’s inner monologues, all of which present different accounts on Sufism and the life stories of Shams and Rumi.

- 30 The informative aspect of this book is thus not an authoritative voice, but rather comes from the multiple narratives of its characters. There is no claim for true information regarding history and the relationship between Rumi and Shams, but rather various interpretations of it through the perspective of numerous characters. Most characters belong to different groups; they have different education levels, ages, and family backgrounds. The owner of the hotel, Ziya, is an educated middle-aged man and a local from Konya whose father is also a Sufi dervish like Karen’s father, Poyraz Efendi. Some stories from the two major works of Rumi, *Diwan-i Shams-i Tabrizi* and *Mathnawi* are retold in *Bab-ı Esrar* as Karen Kimya’s dialogues with Ziya’s father, İzzet Efendi. These

dialogues offer yet another interpretation on the definition of love and the relationship between Rumi and Shams:

As [God] breathed life in through Adam's nostrils, God gave a piece of his own soul to that life. God, creator of heaven and earth and master over the four seasons, seven continents, and seven levels of heaven, is within us, so to speak [...] most people are not even aware of this sacred element. The person, who does, however, become aware of it, and sets off on their quest, is called aşık – a besotted. And what is being sought is aşk – or love itself [...] it is not a quest to be undertaken alone, however. One must have a teacher, a guru if you will, what we call a maşuk, meaning a beloved person. (DG 361)²⁰

31 While İzzet Efendi informs Karen Kimya (and by extension, the readers) of the history of Sufism and its main teachings, Mennan Bey – a local from Konya who speaks in the vernacular – shares his personal knowledge of Sufism based on what he has heard over the years. His ideas are not based on books and experience but rather on social communication and collective memory of the people of Konya.

32 Karen Kimya's mother presents yet another perspective that both challenges Sufi teachings while simultaneously underlining their importance. Susan, a Brit and human rights activist who is an ex-hippie and the ex-wife of Poyraz Efendi, tries to relate the Sufi teachings to current political events as she attempts to draw parallels between the ideologies that she supports while trying to understand why Poyraz Efendi abandoned her during Karen Kimya's childhood:

[...] What I find wrong is their [Sufis] undervaluing the life we live now. They don't appreciate it in the least. All they care about is the one on the other side [...] Meanwhile, the world we live in is real, not only its abundance, but also its scarcities. A child dying of hunger is real. Disease is real. War is real. The decline of humanity's happiness is real. (DG 376)²¹

33 These characters and their ideas establish their places in the novel either through Karen Kimya's conversations with them, or in her dreams and memories about them. Karen Kimya, named after Rumi's stepdaughter Kimya (who later became Shams's wife; Kimya is also another character of the story told in the 12th century) is a pensive figure among everyone else. Her mother calls her Karen, and we are informed that her father, Poyraz Efendi, would call her Kimya. Karen Kimya's name is obviously not only a language issue but a cultural one as well, one that reflects her multicultural experience and her position as a mediator for the multiple thoughts and ideologies presented throughout the text. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that the name Kimya itself is a most telling and symbolic name: It refers to *alchemy* – a concept that could only emerge by means of the continuous exchange between oriental and occidental ideas and knowledge throughout many centuries– and to one of its key terms, the *transmutation* or change of metals and change of soul.

34 Karen Kimya does not have clear ideas on either love or death. Instead she is seeking answers, all of which are crucial to her: should she get an abortion or give birth to her baby? Why did her father, Poyraz Efendi, abandon the family and run away with Shah Nesim? What really happened in the hotel fire? Karen Kimya's uncertainty, lack of knowledge, and increasing unreliability as a narrator complicate the plot even more. While she witnesses the lives and love of Shams and Rumi in her dreams and hallucinations, her narrative is unreliable as it is the only account that can inform the reader of these images and events. As Karen Kimya investigates the hotel fire, she unearths her forgotten memories and is faced with even more important questions of

her past. Thus these multiple narratives, as well as Karen's unreliability, remove any authoritative perspective and therefore require the reader to make his own judgments from these different points of view.

- 35 Furthermore, Karen Kimya remains an interesting crime fiction character for, unlike in Ümit's other novels, in *Bab-ı Esrar* she is a female amateur investigator who is forced to investigate murders of the present as well as a murder in the past. In this respect, the novel's representation of time is also important. From the story's beginning when Karen Kimya arrives in Konya, she sees flashbacks of her childhood from when her father Poyraz Efendi took her to the town as a little girl. In these flashbacks, the reader is informed of the rituals of Sufism when Poyraz Efendi tells Karen Kimya of his memories in the dervish lodge where he grew up. These passages where Karen Kimya remembers the informative dialogues with her father function as ethnographic data regarding the life in the dervish lodges.
- 36 The present narrative is further disrupted by Karen Kimya's hallucinations as she walks through a secret gate in her hotel room to become Shams himself, and subsequently witnesses Shams' life firsthand. On the textual level, these mystic features increase the element of suspense in the story, which is crucial for any crime novel. Karen Kimya's dreams, merging with her reality, enable her to travel back to the 13th century and witness Rumi and Shams' relationship. However, as a rational woman she constantly questions the possibility of such an experience and doubts everyone around her, as she continues to believe there is a conspiracy regarding the hotel fire. Stuck between her dreams, hallucinations, experiences in Konya, and her rational mind, Karen Kimya gradually becomes an unreliable narrator and complicates the reader's chances of arriving at an easy solution to either the mystery of the hotel fire or of Shams' murder.
- 37 The chapters in which Karen Kimya becomes Shams take place simultaneously in the past and present. The Shams story is retold through Karen Kimya's individual experiences. The gate of mysteries, which gives the novel its title, is the location where identities and histories merge. This element of blurred chronology makes the novel a more powerful thriller, as the reader is forced to construct the missing links himself.
- 38 One can thus realize how the fictional biographies of Rumi and Shams have been embedded into the plot in order to increase the suspense, creating a more mysterious narrative. These additions also communicate the main Sufi tenets to the reader. Yet there remains another complicated relationship between Sufism and the narrative of the novel: not only does Sufism contribute to the construction of the crime plot, but also the plot itself can be read as an example of contemporary Sufi literature. The text does not discuss Sufism in a conventional way, but is rather a modern version of it; it is a thriller that is strewn with Sufi motifs.
- 39 It is worth noting the informative historical features of almost all of Ümit's books, whether a history of Istanbul in *İstanbul Hatırası* (2010) or the history of the region of southeast Turkey in *Patasana* (2000). At times, his novels can be rather didactic. In the manner of Ahmet Mithat, Ümit attempts to educate his reader while simultaneously trying to solve the primary mysteries in his novels. But unlike Mithat, Ümit does not want to instruct his reader by simply acting as an intervening author. In *Bab-ı Esrar*, there are references to secondary sources and to scholarly works on Sufism such as Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (in its Turkish translation), as well as numerous quotations from Rumi's *Mathnawi* and Shams' *Makalat*. It is clear that Ümit had extensively researched his subject, yet all this information is spread through the

plot only as bits of information and clues rather than as direct statements from the author. These clues are ultimately helpful in solving the puzzle behind the hotel fire and Shams' eventual murder.

Reading *Bab-ı Esrar* as Contemporary Sufi Literature

- 40 The numerous ideas of Sufism in the story's narrative are immediately evident: the idea of the gate and mystery in the title *Bab-ı Esrar*; Shams' guidance of Karen Kimya during her loss of identity, and the significance of her dreams in the search of herself and her perception of the world as an illusion are some of the story's aspects that are redolent of Sufi literature. Major elements of Sufi concepts appear throughout the story, most notably as the idea of the guidance of the soul and its rejoining with God, which parallel Karen Kimya's movement between past and future, and dreams and reality, while on her spiritual journey. Thus while Ümit connects Karen Kimya's journey through time and space with the mystery and suspense of the plot, he implicitly uses the language of Sufi mysticism.
- 41 Similar to traditional Sufi texts, Karen Kimya's journey from London to Konya can be interpreted as the soul's journey to return to the divine source of God. Thus her journey, which concludes with the realization of herself and God, is more a return than a departure. In this sense, Karen Kimya's story can also be read as a *Bildungsroman*. In ultimately choosing to forgive her father and to give birth to her baby, the story's conclusion also coincides with the Sufi objective of union with the divine one. Both Karen and her father's souls return to their pure and fundamental origins, hinting at the two perfections of Sufi thought:
- The first perfection can be called "natural", and it leads to physical death and then to resurrection and the meeting with God [...] The second perfection can only be achieved through the voluntary cultivation of the soul. From the first standpoint, people are compelled to grow and die, but from the second they are free to choose what sort of existence they will experience in the next stages of becoming (Chittick, 2008: 106).
- 42 Poyraz Efendi's death and resurrection hints at the first perfection while Karen Kimya's decision regarding her baby hints at the second perfection, for she comes to such a decision only after going through numerous experiences. These elements allow one to read *Bab-ı Esrar* as a Sufi tale. However, the novel can also be read as revisionist fiction.

Revisionist Fiction and Cultural Memory

- 43 One can indeed read *Bab-ı Esrar* as revisionist fiction, which both presents a reconstruction of Rumi and Shams' relationship and offers an alternative cultural memory. The story's structure strengthens the element of suspense and contributes to generic conventions of crime fiction. With its fantastic elements and shifts of time and place, it disrupts the linear plot and ultimately creates a complicated thriller. More importantly, this multiperspectivity allows Ümit to present alternative scenarios to those dominant in cultural memory; specifically to those in which Rumi is acknowledged with great respect and Shams is almost forgotten. In different points in the story, the following is emphasized several times:

[...] It was always Rumi who was the focal point of the articles I found on Shams. Everyone showered Rumi with praise, while Shams always seemed to linger in the background like his sidekick. (DG 109)²²

[...] Shams had played such an important role in Mevlana's life, I couldn't help but find it significant that he wasn't buried in the same mausoleum. It looked as if this dervish, though closer to Rumi than his own family, had been driven away by someone hoping to pretend he never existed. (DG 194)²³

Why isn't Shams-i Tabriz's grave next to Rumi's? Rumi's most beautiful poems were written to him specifically, so how is it the most important person in his life is lying in another mausoleum? (DG 239)²⁴

44 These quotes, along with the progression of events in the story itself, are a strong reference to alternative cultural memory. Shams' murder is a mysterious event that is suited to the generic conventions of crime fiction, which itself contributes to construction of an alternative memory than what is conventionally told. There are many comments on how Shams suddenly disappeared, and his possible murder by a group of statesmen including Rumi's son. However, there are no documents to prove this theory and many believe that his murder was purposely hidden. Shams' murder becomes one of the story's major puzzles, rather than accepting the conventional story about his disappearance.

45 In the same vein of revising cultural memory, the novel familiarizes its reader with another aspect of Rumi's life that has until recently remained unknown. The Turkish public is familiar with Rumi's works and to some degree with his life, but Shams, who is the one taking Rumi to 'a far loftier level of Sufi mysticism' (Mojaddedi, 2004: xvii) has until recently been a less known figure in Turkey. Even though Rumi's biographies emphasize the importance of Shams in Rumi's life and poetry; and even though the poems in his famous *Mathawi* and *Diwan* are written with Shams' inspiration, Rumi has been much more famous. Within the complicated plot structure of a thriller, and within a fragmented narrative, *Bab-ı Esrar* inexplicitly presents history in a way that is similar to the claim Nünning makes about revisionist historical novels:

Revisionist historical novels are inspired by the wish to rewrite history, particularly from the point of view of those all too long ignored by traditional historiography, and to offer alternative histories. They often do so by relying heavily on multiple focalization, adopting points of view of several character-focalizers whose limited perspectives project highly subjective views of history (2004: 362).

46 This is also the case in Ümit's novel. *Bab-ı Esrar* constructs an alternative cultural memory by shifting the attention from Rumi to Shams. Not only is Shams' influence on Rumi and his poetry underlined throughout the novel, but Ümit emphasizes Shams' own contribution to Sufi teaching and literature. Additionally, the novel revolves around his murder by the statesmen, which has been hidden from public for a long time.

47 Shams is depicted as the opposite of Rumi, for even though the two have much in common they also have many differences. Shams is portrayed as ready to commit a crime, which Rumi would never conceive of. 'One of the titles Shams was known by was Seyfullah, meaning "Allah's sword", because he never forgave anyone who slighted himself or his loved ones.' (DG 188)²⁵. More importantly, he is the *other*; an outsider: 'It is a fact that Shams-i Tabriz was not well-loved by the people of Konya in those days [...] How could he be? Some crazy man from Tabriz just pops up one day and steals away their great theologian, their sheikh and veritable saint, their Mevlana' (DG 239-240).²⁶

- 48 These representations of Shams, the focus on his biography, and the emphasis on his position in Rumi's life parallels Hubert Zapf's assertion that literature is an 'imaginative counter-discourse, which implies that one function of the novel is to imaginatively recover counter-memories' (2001: 88). However, this recovery of counter-memory is not limited to the novel's shift in interest to Shams' life. While it both presents Shams' current legacy and proposes a new reading of his life, what is more crucial is the metaphorical meaning of Shams' murder. As stated by Ümit himself in several interviews, one can draw parallels between Shams' murder and the murder of Hrant Dink²⁷ in 2007, as well as for other political murders that have recently occurred in Turkey. Ümit claims that the nature of Shams' murder is a reflection upon contemporary Turkey, where political crimes arise from intolerance. Moreover, like the murder of Dink, Shams is also killed by state officials of the Seljuk Dynasty and in both cases the real criminals are not revealed or properly judged. In this respect, Shams is not merely a religious or literary figure but also a political one, and serves as a tool for recovering contemporary political counter-memories in Turkey.
- 49 As stated earlier, the crime genre is never discussed at length in Turkish literary studies but still has multiple narrative functions. As Irzik argues, 'politics is never a "pistol shot in the middle of a concert"' (2003: 555). With Stendhal's famous quotation, Irzik underlines the importance of politics in Turkish literature. *Bab-ı Esrar* is a crime novel that may at first seem unworthy of literary and cultural analysis, but which may actually reflect the political agenda and ideology of its author, and which is implicitly embedded in the narrative. Arguably, the novel stands as an example of thinking of Sufism as an alternative and moderate alternative to political Islam; while it also presents Sufism as an answer for secular fears and non-religiosity. The leftist political agenda of the author is implicit in the character of Shams, which functions as an allegory of Hrant Dink's murder in particular and all the ethnic inequalities taking place in Turkey in general.

Conclusion

- 50 *Bab-ı Esrar* ends with a resolution. The idea of transformation is one of the central themes in the novel and is one of the main precepts of Sufism. In this contemporary narrative, this transformation takes place by having Karen Kimya face her past and learn to understand her father's decision to abandon her family. Moreover, *Bab-ı Esrar* expresses the Sufi idea of [spiritual] union and the arduous journey toward its achievement. Thus the novel's ending hints at the completion of the main characters' journeys: as the link between Shams' murder and Karen Kimya's presence in Konya is revealed, while Karen Kimya comes to a decision regarding the choices she is faced with. She forgives her father, and both come to peace with themselves and each other. Karen Kimya's embodiment of a mystical experience resonates with the Sufi doctrine of transformation, as well as with the individual need to question one's current existential condition.
- 51 After the novel nears its ending and the answers to the parallel mysteries are revealed, Karen Kimya decides to give birth to her baby. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of an individual; it acknowledges her as a figure capable of spiritual choice. Her journey was none other than a personal quest for meaning, or coming to truly understand herself and by extension, the purpose of her existence in relation to others.

In the end, the reader is made aware of the power of the individual and the divine, and of the transcendental gift that exists within each soul. Thus it is no surprise that in the end, Poyraz Efendi finds peace as does Karen Kimya. In that respect, the novel depicts the arduous journey of growth, change, and empowerment of the individual figures while also portraying instances of rebirth and liberation.

- 52 The spiritual and philosophical concepts that arise in *Bab-ı Esrar* are some of the basic teachings of Sufism. Yet one wonders why this novel – along with Elif Şafak's *Aşk*, which deals with similar themes – should become a bestseller in Turkey. Further examination of both Sufism and popular literature may also uncover additional instances of spiritual phenomena in contemporary Turkish culture, and how the crime novel displays a general shift towards the mystic-religious arena. One could postulate that the esoteric contents and themes of Sufism in Turkish popular culture work to fill a gap in the Turkish reader's own search for identity. Considering the turmoil of identity politics due to the ever-changing role of Islam in society and the polarizing effect it has on populations (most visible in discussions of the headscarf and secularism), novels like *Bab-ı Esrar* may be seen as presenting a potential alternative social narrative to their intended readers. This is the reason for their classification as revisionist novels: not only do they reconstruct our memory of the past, but also influence our understanding of the present.

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NOTES

1. All the quotations from the novel are from the first edition of its English translation, *The Dervish Gate*, (Elke Dixon, trans., 2011) .

2. Ümit was the second best-selling author in 2010, after Elif Şafak (Retrieved in 22.08.2011). *Bab-ı Esrar* is still on the bestseller lists of many mainstream bookstores such as D&R and Remzi Kitabevi.

3. Jalal ad-Din Rumi, also known as Mevlana in Turkey, 'was born in Balkh in present-day Afghanistan and moved in his youth to Anatolia, eventually settling in Konya in present-day Turkey, where he died in 1273. He composed about sixty-five thousand verses of breathtaking Persian poetry along with three short prose works. The Persian world, from Turkey to India, looks back upon Rumi as the greatest spiritual poet in history' (Chittick 2008: 76). 'Rumi had been a sober scholar, teaching law and theology to a small circle of students [in Konya], but the coming of Shams [the wandering mystic] turned him into a devotee of music, dance, and poetry. Three years after Shams's appearance out of nowhere, he abruptly vanished, never to be seen again. It was Rumi's longing for the lost Shams that transformed him into one of the world's greatest poets. Rumi immortalized Shams's name by constantly celebrating him in his poetry as the embodiment of the divine beloved. Very little is known about the historical Shams—indeed, some have even doubted that he was a real person. Everyone interested in Rumi's poetry has been curious about him, and beginning with Rumi's own son and other hagiographers, a great deal of legend was built up [...]. Modern scholarship has made little headway in explaining who Shams was or how he was able to play such a decisive role in Rumi's life, though a good number of theories have been advanced' (Chittick 2004: ix). For more about Rumi and Shams-i Tabrizi, see Chittick William, *Me and Rumi: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabrizi* (2004).

4. Kemalism and Islamism have been two opposing ideologies, which have also caused polarization in Turkey since the foundation of the Republic. There have been numerous studies on these ideologies and identity politics that link these issues with Turkey's modernization process, history, economy and recently, globalization. Among these studies, Bozdoğan, Sibel and Reşat Kasaba (eds.) *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (1997) and Haldun Gülalp, *Kimlikler Siyaseti: Türkiye'de Siyasal İslamın Temelleri* (2003) are particularly useful for understanding the changing dynamics of Turkey between Kemalists and Islamists from a historical perspective.

5. Tanzimat (literally 'reforms') is a crucial period between 1839 and 1876 when the Ottoman state implemented modernizing reforms. Literature, too, was influenced from these reforms and many authors such as Ahmet Mithat and İbrahim Şinasi started to adopt Western literary forms.

6. The first novels of Turkish literature had an Islamic epistemology, which was framed by the unquestionable word of the Koran; the superiority of Aristotelian deductive reasoning; the worldview of a clear-cut distinction between good and evil; and an abstract idealism of mysticism, Islamic law and theology (Parla 2004: 15; translation mine). Hence the worldview and philosophy of Tanzimat intellectuals were not dichotomous at all. Their conception of the world was prescribed by Islamic norms and culture; when they adopted the Western novel as a literary

tool to spread their ideas to the masses, they were unaware of the epistemological contrast with that of the Western novel (Parla 2004: 7–15).

7. In German literature, for instance, Jacob Arjouni's *Kayankaya* series challenges ethnic identity while in Turkish literature Mehmet Murat Somer's *Hop-Çiki-Yaya* thrillers challenge sexual identity.

8. There are numerous recent studies that challenge the perception of crime fiction as a conservative genre. Some of these include Plain, Gill, *Twentieth Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (2001) and Andrew Pepper, 'Black Crime Fiction' (2009).

9. For instance, publishing houses such as Sufi Kitap and Kurtuba publish books particularly related to Sufism either by Turkish authors or as translations of foreign works. See Şefik Can, *Mevlana ve Eflatun* (2009) and Ömer T. İnancı, *Dinle Neyden: Mesnevi Sohbetleri* (2009).

10. Example of these cultural formations include the music of Mercan Dede; the TV series *Kurtlar Vadisi* and *Ekmek Teknesi* (in which Sufi themes are imparted as part of the plot in various episodes), and in literature – other than the titles mentioned above – Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (2004).

11. *Hidayet romanları* are the works written mostly by an Islamist female author in which the story revolves around a female protagonist. For more on the features and historical development of this genre see Ahmet Sait Akçay, *Bellekteki Huriler: İslamcı Popülist Kültüre Eleştirel Bakış* (2006), and Kenan Çayır, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık ve İslami Edebiyat, Toplu Hidayet Söyleminden Yeni Bireysel Müslümanlıklara* (2008).

12. There have been only a few studies in the Turkish literary and cultural fields on cultural memory. See Catharina Dufft (ed.) *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory: Multiculturalism as a Literary Theme after 1980* (2009) and Leyla Neyzi (ed.) *Nasıl Hatırlıyoruz? Türkiye'de Bellek Çalışmaları* (2011). However, cultural memory has already been subject to numerous scholarly studies outside of Turkey. Nünning, Ansgar; Gymnich, Marion; Sommer, Roy (eds.), *Literature and Memory: Representations, Functions, Intersections* (2006) and D'haen, Theo (ed.), *Literature as Cultural Memory* (Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, 2000) are especially important studies that link narratology and cultural memory.

13. Among these studies, Erol Üyepazarcı's *Korkmayınız Mister Sherlock Holmes! Türkiye'de Polisiye Romanın 125 Yıllık Öyküsü* (2008) provides an extensive history of the Turkish crime novel and analyses of several Turkish crime novels.

14. For more, on Zapf's theory, see Zapf, Hubert *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie. Zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte an Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans* (2002) and *Kulturökologie und Literatur* (2008).

15. Ümit has written in a variety of genres including short stories, novellas and poems, but it is his works in crime fiction that has made him one of the most popular and influential authors in Turkish literature.

16. Bovenkerk, Frank; Yeşilgöz, Yücel 'The Turkish Mafia and the State' (2004), retrieved 13.02.2012.

17. *Bab-ı Esrar* was sold over 45,000 copies within a month after its first publication and over 100,000 in total, placing Ümit among one of the highest selling Turkish authors.

18. 'O sessizlikte, hiç kıpırdamadan, hiç soru sormadan, hiç cevap vermeden öylece oturmuş kendilerini arıyorlardı. Ama kendileri diye aradıkları Cenabı Hak'tan başkası değildi. Bu yüzden biri aşık oldu, öteki maşuk. Çünkü aşk olmadan Hakk'a ulaşamayacaklarını biliyorlardı.' (BE 349)

19. 'Aradan yedi yüz küsur yıl geçmiş olmasına rağmen, insanların onların arasındaki ilişkiyi savunmak zorunda kalması üzücüydü. Öte yandan, bu iki sıradışı insanın ilişkisi merak edilmeyecek gibi de değildi. Onlar buna aşk diyorlardı, ama onların bu duyguya yüklediği anlam ile bizim kavramlarımız arasında sanırım epeyce fark vardı.' (BE 335)

20. 'Allah, Hazreti Adem'in burnuna yaşam nefesini verirken, kendi ruhundan bir parçayı da onun canına katmıştır. Yani yeri, göğü yaratan, dört iklim, yedi kıtanın, dokuz katlı göğün hakimi olan Allah aynı zamanda içimizdedir [...] çoğu insan kendi içindeki bu cevherin farkına bile varmaz. İşte bu parçayı fark ederek aramaya başlayan kişiye aşık deriz. Aramanın kendisine de aşk [...] arayış tek başına olmaz; bize bir öğretmen, bir mürşit başka bir deyişle bir maşuk gerekir.' (BE 350)

21. 'Sorun, onların (Sufiler) yaşadığımız hayatı küçümsemelerinde. Onlar gerçek yaşamı, perdenin ötesinde var olduğuna inandıkları öteki yaşamı önemserler. [...] Ama şu an yaşadığımız dünya gerçek. Sadece zenginlikler değil, yoksulluklar da gerçek. Açlıktan ölen çocuklar gerçek, hastalıklar gerçek, savaşlar gerçek, giderek daha mutsuz olan insanlar gerçek.' (BE 364)

22. '[...] şems hakkında bulduğum bütün yazılarda Mevlana öne çıkıyordu. Herkes Mevlana'ya övgüler yağıdırıyor, şems ise hep gölgede, hep ikinci adam gibi kalıyordu.' (BE 119)

23. '[...] şems gibi, Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi'nin yaşamında büyük önemi olan bir dervişin mezarının aynı türbe içinde yer almıyor olması bile manidar. Mevlana'ya kendi ailesinden bile daha yakın olan bu derviş, sanki birileri tarafından ondan uzaklaştırılmış, yok sayılmak istenmişti.' (BE 198)

24. 'Neden şems-i Tebrizi'nin mezarı Rumi'nin yanında değil? [...] Rumi en güzel şiirlerini ona yazmış, neden yaşamındaki en önemli insan başka bir türbede yatıyor?' (BE 238)

25. 'Kalbi uyanık bazı büyükler şems-i Tebrizi'ye Seyfullah (Allah'ın Kılıcı) derlerdi; çünkü o kimden incindiye, ya onu öldürür ya da ruhunda yaralar açardı.' (BE 191)

26. 'Şurası bir gerçek ki, şems-i Tebrizi o dönemin Konya halkı tarafından pek sevilmezmiş [...] şems'e karşı açık düşmanlık gütmeye, kin beslemeye başlamışlar.' (BE 239-240)

27. Hrant Dink is a well-known journalist of Armenian descent who was assassinated in 2007. His murder provoked a public discussion and deepened the problems regarding ethnic identities in Turkey.

RÉSUMÉS

This article takes Ahmet Ümit's novel *Bab-ı Esrar* (*The Dervish Gate*)¹ as its object of study in order to understand the functions and connotations of Sufism – the story's main motif – in connection with cultural memory. Sufism is explored in three of the book's facets: its genre, where Sufism contributes to the plot of crime fiction; its style, with *Bab-ı Esrar* being a contemporary example of Sufi literature; and its ideology, which identifies *Bab-ı Esrar* as revisionist fiction. This article argues that Sufism contributes both to the generic conventions and the underlying philosophy of *Bab-ı Esrar*. Moreover, it proposes that the novel be read not merely as a thriller but also as contemporary prose in keeping with Sufi thought. In this respect, *Bab-ı Esrar* can be viewed as a remarkable example of how Sufism manifests itself in secular Turkish popular culture.

INDEX

Keywords : crime fiction, cultural memory, popular literature, revisionist fiction, Sufism