THE NOTION OF IDENTITY IN ELIF SHAFAK'S WORKS

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic purpose other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The program of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of :

i) Theoretical ground of discussions around identity,

ii) Examination of the novels written by Shafak.

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ABSTRACT

Pınar Karartı **June, 2010**

THE NOTION OF IDENTITY IN SHAFAK'S WORKS

Elif Shafak's narrative offers a great deal of material on multiculturalism and shifting identities of culture, religion, and nationality. She depicts the individual of the global world with her characters that lack boundaries of culture, religion, gender, and nationality. This work deals with the notion of identity on various levels (nationality, culture, religion) in addition to the factors that shape identity such as history, language, or place in the novels of Shafak.

Beside her readerly and entertaining style, Shafak draws a picture of "modern Turkey' and a "peaceful world", with dwellers of various types living together despite innumerable differences. Identity is dynamic, both taken and given, constructed and reconstructed, in Shafak's works; besides, there never are rigid borders between different ways of identification. Shafak's faith in the possibility of compromise in any condition; however, diminishes the extent of her objectivity in her fiction. Still this study indicates that Shafak comes out to be one of the most prominent writers of Turkish Literature introduced to the world stage for her lively descriptions, magic realism with mystical elements, and particularly for her success to observe identity interactions and shifts in the postmodern age.

All the work is to demonstrate how flexible Shafak handles the notion of identity with an immense effect of her cultural background.

Key Words: Literature in English, Turkish Literature, Elif Shafak, Identity, History, Multiculturalism

KISA ÖZET

Pınar Karartı ***Haziran 2010***

ELİF ŞAFAK'IN ESERLERİNDE KİMLİK KAVRAMI

Bu çalışma, Elif Şafak'ın romanlarının ana unsurlarından olan kimlik ve kimlik çeşitliliğinin yazarın eserlerinde ne şekilde ele alındığını incelemektedir. Ayrıca milliyet, din, kültür alanlarında kimlik kavramı irdelenmekte, geçmişten günümüze bu kavramların kimler tarafından nasıl ele alındığı, nasıl tanımlandığı, postmodern çağda ne anlam ifade ettiği konusu da incelenmektedir. Şafak'ın kişisel altyapısı, çocukluğundan itibaren dünyanın çok farklı ülkelerini görme ve oralarda yaşama şansı elde etmesi çok kültürlülüğü tanıma ve tanımlama konusunda yazara büyük katkı sağlamıştır. Bu çalışmamda açıklandığı gibi, Şafak kimlik kavramını tarih, yer, ve dil gibi unsurların da etkisinde sürekli şekillenen, değişen, ve kimi zaman kişisel tercihlerle seçilen bir etiket gibi algılar. Romanları her ne kadar farklı kimlikler ve farklılıklar üzerine kurgulansa da yazarın amacı bu faklılıkları ortak bir paydada buluşturmak, kimlikler ve kültürler arası çatışmaları sulhe kavuşturmaktır. Bu amaç zaman zaman yazarı gerçekçilikten uzaklaştırsa da güçlü tasvirleri, kimlik konusundaki esnek bakış açısıyla Şafak Türk Edebiyatının dünya vitrinine çıkardığı sayılı romancılar arasındaki yerini korumaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Elif Şafak, Türk Edebiyatı, İngilizce Edebiyat, Kimlik, Çok-kültürlülük

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Introduction

As one of the prominent contemporary writers of Turkish literature, Elif Shafak has contributed to raise the voice of Turkish literature in the world with her two novels written in English, and four more translated. Beside her descriptive and entertaining style, she depicts a picture of 'modern Turkey' and 'a peaceful world' with dwellers of various types living together despite innumerable differences in her novels. The notion of identity" appears to be a fundamental issue to be held, as we see shifting identities of culture, religion, and nation in The Flea Palace, The Saint of Incipient Insanities, and in The Bastard of Istanbul. Identity, in the narrative of Shafak, is "dynamic" (Hecht 76), "multiple and overlapping" (Lützeler), and constructed and reconstructed through folk culture, "state, or marketing" (Mathews 6) with a notable influence of history, language and place. There seems to be no rigid borders between different ways or labels Shafak's characters identify themselves with despite a few exceptions. Besides, some characters of Shafak lack the sense of belonging to a certain culture, nation, or society -Ömer in SII[1] or Zeliha in BI[2]- like Shafak herself.

Shafak's background has an immense effect on her approach to identity. She was born in France, raised in Turkey, educated in Spain, lived in Jordan, Germany, Boston, Michigan, and Arizona.[3] She had the chance to encounter different cultures and different

[1] The Saint of Incipient Insanities
[2] The Bastard of Istanbul
[3] "Linguistic Cleansing" New Perspectives Quarterly. Vol. 22, No.3, 2005.

peoples which could explain diversity in her novels. As she remarks in another interview, her life is full of migrations:

> Migrations, ruptures and displacements…have played a crucial role in my personal history. I was born in Strasbourg, France, in 1971. I was still a baby when I left the city. After a while my parents separated. My father stayed in Strasbourg; my mother and I came back to Turkey. After that I hardly ever saw my father again. In Turkey, in early childhood, there was a time when I found myself moving between two cities, two grandmothers, each in utterly different worlds. ..After that I went to live in Spain in 1980, shortly after the military takeover …In Spain, I was the only Turkish child in an international school. It is there that I learned about the hierarchy of nationalities, about an unwritten hierarchy even children knew about and were perhaps more cruel in expressing. (Chancy 56)

In the same interview, Shafak asserts that the ways we define and categorize ourselves are all interrelated. She fails to feel attached to the labels, as she never had a "solid notion of home". It astonishes her to see people "advocating" the systems they belong to without even thinking about the fact that if they were born into another society they would defend other religions, nations, or races equally (Chancy 57). This approach could well explain her ideas of "identity", which are also expressed by Gail- a Jewish American character in SII:

> It's something like… I mean if you were born a Mexican, try living like an Arab for one year, and the next year be something else, choose another from the 'Other'. Change your name and your identity. Have no name and no identity. Only if we stop identifying ourselves so much with the identities given to us, only if and when we really accomplish this, can we eliminate all sorts of racism, sexism, nationalism, and fundamentalism, and whatever it is that sets barricades among humanity, dividing us into different flocks and sub-flocks. (145)

Rubin points to the relationship between the social identity of the writer and construction of social identity in her works. One can easily grasp Shafak's views of identity from her fiction without a detailed knowledge of her life story. The function of her statements in the interviews is to assure the accuracy of my analysis. As Rubin asserts:

> Stylistic options "leak" clues about writers' social identities. Rhetorical choices help writers construct the social identities they wish to project in given writing episodes…Written language reflects or conveys a writer's social identity, but it also constructs and instantiates it. (4)

I studied Shafak's novels in order to analyze her characterization and perspective of the notion of "identity". Although the background of the writer beside her fictional characters, give an idea of her general outlook on the term, it seems quite arduous to comprehend all the levels of "social identity" together with the factors and forces that

shape it. As Rubin remarks, “Social identity is complex in several respects”, and he asserts:

> Social identity, is to some degree imposed by others and to some degree embraced by the self. It is to some degree a function of what people conventionally regard as ‘a Jew’ or ‘a Latino’ or ‘a German’ or ‘a woman’ or ‘an educated person’. It is to another degree a function of one’s own construction of ‘my affinity with Jewishness at this time’ or ‘my wish to identify with La Raza at this time’ or ‘my appropriation of a sense of Germanness’ or ‘my current feelings of authority with respect to this topic or this audience’. (10)

Shafak’s novels, too, seem to offer various characters with social identities shaped by various factors. In the first chapter of my study, I will analyze “cultural identity” in the narrative of Shafak in the light of Gordon Mathews’ theory. Matthews elaborates on varying definitions of culture, and asserts that culture in the postmodern world, is a combination of the earlier idea of culture as “the way of life of a people” (Herskovits 29) and the latter of Hall’s as “the information and identities available from a global cultural supermarket” (1). I displayed how Shafak portrays cultures with similarities and differences, and how she depicts ‘cultural identity’ which is shaped by the state, religion or by marketing. Auntie Cevriye, for instance, a character influenced by Kemalist and nationalist discourses in BI; whereas Asya cannot be placed to a certain cultural category with her nihilist life philosophy peculiar to herself, listening to Johnny Cash, taking ballet classes, still living in Kazancı domicile and favoring pious Banu

among her three aunts. Another character in the novel, Banu, exposes the details of Turkish folk culture as observed by Shafak in her childhood. Shafak's insight of 'cultural identity' appears to be diverse including both traditional and postmodern components.

Apart from her endeavors to compromise Armenian and Turkish cultures via similar dishes, Shafak tries to prove there actually is no clash of cultures by constructing a friendship between Armanoush and Asya, and a kinship between Kazancıs and Tchakhmakhchians as well. Besides, 'multiculturalism' stands as the common theme of her three novels, and thus explicated in the first chapter.

I deal with "national identity" in the novels of Shafak in the second chapter where I argue Shafak exposes two different approaches. Though having embraced the constructivist view of national identity remarked by social scientists Gellner, Anderson, and Hobsbawm, Shafak fails to apply the constructivist view to 'Armenian nationalism' which appears to be ethnic rather than civic in the novel. In the latter part of this chapter I analyze "Turkishness" in BI which happens to be the most popular theme in Shafak's novel as she was charged according to article 301 of Turkish Penal Code for attacking "Turkishness".

Third chapter is about history and identity in Shafak's works where I examine her fiction in terms of 'objectivity' in the light of arguments set by Hayden White in "Historical Pluralism" and "Historical Discourse and Literary Writing". White points to the difference between historical knowledge and meaning in terms of functions of both in the former article. For White, "The business of the historical profession is meaning

rather than knowledge because it is always written for a certain group, society, or culture that draws on the past for its praxis in the present and in the future"(59). White's argument can well be applied to the BI as the claims concerning 1915 events are carried on insistently by the Armenian diaspora. Whether the claims are true or not is not a question of my thesis, as mine is not a history thesis but an analysis of the works of a novelist who is directly involved in the hot disputes of genocide. Obviously, Shafak holds a view on the subject; and though she fails to base her arguments on a solid historical ground, she composed this novel with the assumption that Armenians are to be apologized for what happened in 1915. White's statement verifies the subjectivity of any historical discourse, including Shafak's which deals with meaning rather than knowledge. The Armenian are "a huge family with a very traumatic past" (BI 58) according to Shafak. She reveals the tragic events of 1915 by the help of the djinni, and seeks to evoke some sympathy for the Armenian. However, her approach remains subjective, and far from conveying the truth.

The next chapter handles the relationship between language and identity. Language is used as a means by the novelist to display her insight of the past, and her struggle with the Kemalist elite as well. She expresses how she feels about modernization of Ottoman Turkish in an interview:

> The alphabet is something more technical, but how can you change a language? We got rid of words coming from Arabic and Persian. As a result, very few people in Turkey question today the Turkeyfication of the language that we went through. I find that very dangerous because I

> think that linguistic cleansing is something comparable to ethnic cleansing. (Shafak NPQ)

Language serves as a component of national and cultural identity in Shafak's works, and could be either a gap or a bridge in identity interactions.

I look into "place" in the fifth chapter as an indicator of identity, of course with an identity of her own in the narrative of Shafak. She personifies Istanbul in some parts of BI and SII. "Place" comes out to be a key figure in determining identity, especially in SII, where the lives and the problems of the immigrants are exposed. The struggle of the immigrant to survive in the US is a major theme in SII, where Shafak underlines the necessity of the sense of 'belonging' for the individual. "Place" has a crucial role in our identification of ourselves as Relph argues: "There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now or where we have had particularly moving experiences" (quoted in The World of Cities by Orum&Chen.24).

The notion of "identity" holds a significant place in Shafak's narrative. It is possible to observe various types of national or cultural identities "dynamic" (Hecht 76), "overlapping" (Lützeler), constructed and reconstructed by external factors.

I. Cultural Identity and Multiculturalism in Shafak's Novels

As the notion of identity is considered the major theme in Shafak's work, it would be essential to look into her novels to examine various levels of social identity. Cultural identity seems to be the primary theme concerning identity constructions and relations in Shafak's novels. Due to Shafak's multicultural background-she was born in France, lived and educated in Spain, Turkey, Jordan and Germany-, her novels are full of characters of various cultural origins. Like her characterization of the other forms of identity, Shafak prefers to create a fictional world of plurality concerning cultural identity in The Saint of Incipient Insanities, The Bastard of Istanbul, and The Flea Palace. Her approach to culture is neither traditional, nor postmodern, but a combination of ideas of culture "as a way of life" (Herskovits 29) and as "the information and identities available from the global cultural supermarket" (Hall 303). I will look into the ways in Shafak's novels how 'culture' is handled, how cultures are depicted, and how cultural difference is represented. Finally, I will examine 'multiculturalism' as a recurring theme in her works; but it is crucial to elaborate on the meanings and connotations of the term "culture" before analyzing 'cultural identity' in the narrative of Shafak.

Definitions of culture could be enumerated in the works of social scientists from 19th century on. Nineteenth century poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold saw culture

as “a study of perfection”. This view of culture is still used today as explained by Mathews: “I am thought to be ‘cultured’ if I can sit through an opera without falling asleep and can comment knowingly-or at least pretend to comment knowingly-on the subtleties of literature and art” (2). However, what we understand from ‘culture’ today can not adequately be explained by this definition from the nineteenth century. Another meaning of culture, asserted by anthropologists later, is “the way of life of a people” (Herskovits 29). This meaning, still inadequate in the postmodern world, regards culture as an “essential condition” for human existence; thus it seems to be impossible to think about humanity independent from culture (Geertz 49). A primitive tribe living in Australia without any connection to the world is as cultured as a civilized society according to this view.

Today, we can hardly define culture as “the way of life of a people” as for the reasons set by Mathews:

> Various anthropologists of late have sought to get rid of the term ‘culture’ for a number of interlocking reasons, but one of the most pivotal is that, in today’s world of massive global flows of people, capital, and ideas, a ‘culture’ can’t easily be thought of as something that people in a certain place on the globe have or are in common, as opposed to other peoples elsewhere. (4)

A more appropriate definition of ‘culture’ in the postmodern world asserted by Stuart Hall is “the information and identities available from the global cultural supermarket” (303). Culture has become a fashion in the postmodern condition as stated by Lyotard:

> Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games. (76)

Mathews finds both definitions inadequate to explain the culturally complex situation we live today. He has written that there still are communities of a 'shared way of life' in the world. Mathews points to the factors such as "language that molds the thinking of members of these societies in different ways", different patterns of childrearing that "shape distinct ways of thinking", "governments shape the thinking of their citizens through public schooling", and finally mass media imposes and creates a national state (4). These factors all serve to produce "a way of life" peculiar to a society like Turkish or Armenian. The problem with this view is the interactions and relations of these societies in the postmodern world. Gordon Mathew overcomes the problem by blending the traditional and postmodern definitions in his work:

> Clearly, culture has become in part a matter of personal taste, to a degree, we seem to pick and choose culturally who we are, in the music we listen to, the food we eat, and perhaps even the religion we practice. However, our choices are not free, but conditioned by our age, class, gender, and level of affluence, and by the national culture to which we belong, among other factors. (5)

This theory of culture seems quite applicable to the narrative of Shafak, as she treats 'culture' in two different ways: first as "the way of life of a people", and second as

a matter of choice. It is possible to observe both approaches in Shafak's novels where diversity appears to be one of the most frequently used themes. She struggles with the state-oriented mythical culture on one hand, and seeks to maintain the traditional symbols and customs of the folk culture on the other. Besides, she creates characters that fit well to the postmodern age without any notable attachment to a certain cultural group (like Ömer in SII or Zeliha and Asya in BI).

Shafak's own experience of Turkish folk culture in her childhood happens to be dual. As her parents were divorced, she was looked after by two grandmothers until the age of nine. As she explains herself in the article "Women Writers, Islam, and the Ghost of Zulakha", the influence of these grandmothers upon Shafak is huge. This experience showed her that different interpretations of the same culture/religion were possible.

> As the child of a single mother, there was a time when I grew up with two different grandmothers. At first glance these two women were so alike: they were both Turkish, they came from similar class backgrounds, and both were Muslims. Yet my father's mother was a follower of the religion of fear. The Jalal side of Allah appealed to her more than anything else. She taught me about patronizing, paternal, and celestial gaze always watching me from above to then make a note of all the sins I committed down here. But shortly after, I moved to the house of my other grandmother and thus entered an iridescent universe replete with folk Islam and superstitions. This was an old woman who poured melted lead to ward off the evil eye, read the coffee cups, and taught me not to step

> on the thresholds where the djinn danced at night. ...For her Allah wasn't a God to be feared but a God to be loved. (155)

Banu in BI makes a perfect example of traditional Turkish folk practicing Turkish folk culture. It would not be too assertive to argue that Banu is similar to Shafak's grandmother in embracing the all-loving side of God. She happens to be faithful, compassionate, and superstitious like her. Banu's attachment to superstitious folk culture is explicated by Shafak in detail:

> Just like her appearance, her techniques of clairvoyance underwent profound change throughout her psychic trajectory. At first she solely used coffee cups to read the future of her customers, but in the fullness of time she gradually employed new as well as highly unconventional techniques… Sometimes she chatted passionately with her shoulders whereupon, she claimed, sat two invisible djinn, dangling their feet. The good one on the right shoulder and the bad one on the left shoulder… (BI 69)

The parallels between Banu and Shafak's beloved grandmother are striking as observed in the descriptions of both. Banu, a representative of Turkish folk culture, comes out to be the key figure in the novel illuminating the unknown for the reader. We take a journey through the past from the viewpoint of traditional, superstitious, still wise Banu, and give a sight to the tragic deportation of the Armenian minority.

The history of Kazancıs is explored only by Banu, and she happens to be the one to punish Mustafa (the incestuous brother of Zeliha) in her own way. She is portrayed as

a capable woman by the author despite her ignorance. Besides, her superstitions and involvement in the meta-physical serves to create a magical realism in the novel.

Shafak's emphasis on cuisine in her description of cultures in BI should be seen as another example to depict folk culture. Kazancı sisters, especially Banu, can cook very well like the Tchakhmakhchians. Shafak displays the parallels and differences of the cultures by introducing the dishes peculiar to that culture. She introduces American Armenian Tchakhmakhchians by describing the food they prepare:

> Dikran Stamboulian gazed longingly at the food set out on the table, and reached for a jar of yogurt drink, Americanized with too many ice cubes. In multihued clay bowls of different sizes were many of his favorite dishes: fassoulye pilaki, kadın budu köfte, karnıyarık, newly made churek, and to Uncle Dikran's delight, bastırma. Though he was still fuming, his heart warmed at the sight of bastırma and entirely melted when he saw his favorite dish next to it: burma. (51)

It could simply be acknowledged that the main function of dishes, related with our subject, is to expose cultures or to build bridges or gaps between them. Armanoush's reaction when she sees the table prepared by Kazancı sisters for her evokes sympathy for the Armenian girl among the sisters:

> Armanoush then looked at the dishes on the table with growing interest. "What a gorgeous table." She beamed. "These are all my favorite foods. I see you have made hummus, baba ghanoush, yalancı sarma… and look at this, you have baked churek!" "Aaaah, do you speak Turkish?! Auntie

> Banu exclaimed, flabbergasted as she walked back in with a steaming pot in her hands and Sultan the Fifth still tailing her. (156)

On the other hand, a negative effect of the dishes on the relationship between Rose and Tchakhmakhchians is observed. Rose is criticized not to be able to cook delicious dishes of different sorts by Tchakhmakhchian women. Auntie Varsenig complains about the case during a conversation with Barsam about the future of Armanoush, "When you come to think that the only food she knew how to cook was that horrendous mutton barbecue on buns! Each time we came to your house, she would put on that dirty apron and cook mutton." (58) Dishes, in Shafak's narrative, are used as symbols of cultures functioning as either gaps or bridges. Although an American Armenian identifies herself with the American instead of the Turkish, culturally she happens to be more like the Turkish in terms of cuisine.

Family names, in the BI, are used by Shafak to draw some parallels between the cultures:

> "You can call me Amy if you want but my full name is Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian." Auntie Zeliha's face brightened as she exclaimed in recognition, "I've always found it interesting. The Turks add this suffix –cı to every possible word to generate professions. Look at our family name. It is Kazan-cı. We're the 'Cauldron Makers'. Now I see Armenians do the same thing. Çakmak…Çakmakçı…Çakmakçıyan." (159)

When Mustafa hears for the first time of Rose's Armenian ex-husband, his reaction disappoints Rose who was expecting a harsh one with an annoyed but not

uninterested tone. However Barsam's being an Armenian makes a slight difference for Mustafa who is more interested in the similarity of the cultures,

> It was only then that the young man's hazel eyes flickered, though not exactly in the way Rose had anticipated. "Chak-mak-chian…Çakmakçı…! Hey that sounds like Turkish!" he exclaimed happily. "Well, as a matter of fact, it's Armenian," Rose said. "Oh yeah?" he said nonchalantly. (48)

However, Tchakhmakhchians arrange an urgent family meeting as soon as they hear of the relationship between Rose and Mustafa. Their attitude is not as mild as Mustafa's though. Tchakhmakhchians can not bear even the possibility of Armanoush's being raised by a Turkish stepfather: "Rose can date and even marry whomever she wants, but her daughter is Armenian and she should be raised as an Armenian." (59)

Cultural transformation in Turkish society after the Republic is another theme in Shafak's novels. This transformation has occurred during the modernization period in Turkey, and the culture aimed to be produced by modernization is quite artificial, and invented as explained by Anderson (Imagined Communities) and Hobsbawm (The Invention of Tradition). As remarked by Mathews, "culture as 'the way of life of a people' is in today's world almost everywhere shaped by national states" (6). Turkish state, too, aimed to create a new nation out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire which resulted in a cultural clash in Turkish society as underlined by Shafak in an interview (Chancy). There emerged a group of people who could well be called the 'cultural elite'

in Turkey. The writer takes the reader back to the era in BI and describes a scene from a party in Rıza Selim Kazancı's house in detail:

> In the ladies section there were two types of women, starkly different from each other: the professionals and the wives. The professionals were the comrade-women, the epitome of the new Turkish female: idealized, glorified, and championed by the reformist elite. These women constituted the new professionals-lawyers, teachers, judges, managers, clerks, academics…Unlike their mothers they were not confined to the house and had the chance to climb the social, economic, and cultural ladder, provided that they shed their sexuality and femininity on the way there.(140)

The Kemalist elite in Turkey are represented by Auntie Cevriye, a teacher of Turkish national history in the novel. Unlike Banu, she has some biases and red lines and she is not favored by Asya. I should note that she is not liked by Shafak either as it is observed in the following lines from the novel:

> When it was Cevriye who had cooked the dish, however, it was always sweeter, because she added powdered sugar to every edible thing no matter what, as if to compensate for the sourness of her universe. And today it happened to be she who had made the dolmas. (24)

The postmodern interpretation of culture as "the information and identities available from the global cultural supermarket" could well explain Shafak's sophisticated characters such as Asya, and Zeliha in BI, or Ömer in SII. Though born

into conservative Kazancı family, Zeliha comes out to be an eccentric character being both rebellious and strong. Her decision to give birth to her illegitimate baby despite social oppression, her job-she works as a tattoo parlor-, her Armenian boyfriend, and her appearance all make her an unusual Turkish character beyond the labels like the author herself, who resists attachment to any labels including nation or religion-culture. Her appearance shocks Armanoush at first sight:

> While packing for her flight to Turkey she had thought hard about what kind of clothing to take with her and had ended up choosing her most modest clothes so as not to look strange in a conservative place. It had therefore come as a shock to be welcomed at the Istanbul airport by Auntie Zeliha wearing an outrageously short skirt and even more outrageously high heels. (BI 154)

She has some rules established by herself to determine how she should act instead of the other practices in her society. Zeliha's daughter, Asya, appears to be as rebellious and eccentric as her mother. After receiving a good education, she has adopted a nihilist life philosophy of her own. Her participation in the intellectual debates in Café Kundera, love affair with the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist, and the nihilist life philosophy all serve to compose a postmodern character out of any cultural category. Still I can not argue that these characters act completely in accordance with their life philosophies shaped by their personal choices; if so, they have apparently included some traditional attitudes from the Turkish society. For instance, Zeliha keeps living with the family regardless of Gülsüm's insults. Another example is Asya who fails to stop her

aunts interfering in her life. Although she seems to have an anarchic soul, she fails to put her many ideas into action because of social pressure. She can't decide alone to quit ballet classes which she takes reluctantly. Despite being an atheist, she carries a grain of wheat consecrated by Petite-Ma in her pocket to protect her against evil-eye (BI 150).

Although most of the characters display some characteristics of their cultures, it seems almost impossible to draw rigid borders between the cultures in SII. If we take Ömer, for instance, it is hard to claim that he's a typical Turkish or Muslim character although at the very beginning of the novel, he is introduced with his friend Abed by Shafak as foreigners from Muslim countries (3). Later in the novel, as if to prove the differences between these two Muslim characters, the novelist distinguishes Ömer and Abed so clearly that Ömer has no connection with Islam, or tradition whereas Abed looks more conservative and stuck to his religion. Furthermore, the difference is not only between Muslim Ömer and Muslim Abed, but between Turkish and Turkish or in another context might well be between a Spanish and a Spanish as Gail finds out in the novel,

> Gail also sensed that behind this jumble of appearances wherein all unfamiliar ways and faces were deemed to be equally "foreign", there lay more of a structural riddle, some sort of a duality that divided Turkish people into two camps. On the one hand, there were the more educated, the more affluent, and far more sophisticated who were irrefutably Western and modern; and there was a second group of people, greater in numbers, less in power, less Western in appearance. The discrepancy in

> between could transfer the members of the former bunch into "tourists" in the eyes of the latter group. A Turk could easily look like a foreigner to another Turk. (330)

Although it seems to be hard to argue that Ömer is a Turk by observing his actions and life style, he is one. It is his preference to live that way, free from labels, and restrictions. He prefers to marry Gail, an American girl in search of an identity. Gail is disturbed by the labels like Ömer, and believes the world would be a better place only if "we stop identifying ourselves so much with the identities given to us". "Only if and when we really accomplish this, can we eliminate all sorts of racism, sexism, nationalism, and fundamentalism, and whatever it is that sets barricades among humanity, dividing us into different flocks and sub-flocks (SII 146). The practicality of this approach could easily be questioned since it is not so easy to replace the labels and forms we identify ourselves with. It might be the ideal world yet unrealistic, because today, our choices are not free, but shaped by "two opposing forces: the forces of state and of market" (Mathews 6).

Diversity of the characters and cultures makes it essential to look into another term concerning 'cultural identity' in the novels of Shafak: multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism and Shafak

Lützeler examines the authors who write about the reality of multiculturalism in Europe. In his article he points to the background of the authors; and implies that it becomes easier for a writer to create multicultural works as she/ he encounters with "The

Other" more. He exemplifies the writers who were born into cosmopolitan geographies or families by Pazarkaya, Honigmann, and Frischmuth and explains how to experiencing diversity helps to know other cultures (457). If we take this argument as a basis, Shafak would hold an advantageous position. Since her childhood, she has had the chance of encountering different cultures and countries as I mentioned before. Frischmuth, depending on her own writing experience, asserts that it becomes easier for a writer to write about the other cultures as she/he feels less attached to any form of identity. She believes that one fails to understand 'the other' as long as she stubbornly clings to her own identity (459). Creating fictional characters of various cultures does not appear to be difficult for Shafak with respect to these assessments.

There exist a variety of definitions for the term multiculturalism beside objections to the connotations of the term. "The spoke-persons of multiculturalism, according to Frischmuth, advocate a peaceful cooperation among the various cultural and linguistic groups" (Lützeler 454). Shafak's understanding of multiculturalism can well be explained by this argument as she tries to create a peaceful world of harmony both in her fiction and non-fiction (including her essays, articles, and interviews). The common feature of her three novels studied in this thesis (FP, SII, and BI) appears to be diversity, and characters managing to live together despite their different cultural backgrounds.

The setting for FP is an old building, "Bonbon Palace" in Istanbul. The novel is a story of dwellers of "Bonbon Palace" suffering from an awful smell of garbage besides fleas and insects invading the building. More interesting than the story, is the diversity

of the characters from various origins and cultures living in the building. “Bonbon Palace”, which was once built for a Russian family, inhabits Turkish-Kurdish, educated-illiterate, traditional-modern, religious-atheist; people of various levels. They manage to live in peace in the heart of the city despite their differences in ideology, belief, sexual preference, and social and cultural status. The setting of the novel could be taken as a metaphor to symbolize the ideal world, doubtless a cosmopolitan one with various people living in peace and harmony.

SI appears to be another example of Shafak’s attempts to create a harmonious picture of multiculturalism. The Turkish PhD student Ömer, Spanish Piyu, American Gail, Moroccan Abed, and Mexican-American Alegre meet in Boston. Although they are all different, they all happen to be foreigner, or “the other” in the US. This common point unites them all in the same place like the dwellers of the “Bonbon Palace” in FP. The peaceful picture in SI shows parallels with one of the most well-known interpretations of multiculturalism asserted by Friscmuth: “the ideal of a relatively trouble-free and peaceful union of as many different language and culture groups as possible” (461).

Shafak’s interpretation of multiculturalism is similar if not the same in this respect that she uses another metaphor ‘ashure’ in BI to refer to diversity.

Ashure is a dessert specific to Turkish culture with ingredients of various types including rice, wheat, hazelnuts, pistachios, raisins, figs, apricots, peels, garbanzo beans, sugar, and rosewater with garnishes such as cinnamon, almonds, and pomegranate seeds.

In the novel, Shafak introduces the dessert to her reader as “the symbol of continuity and stability” (272).

The novel begins with the chapter titled “Cinnamon”, and Zeliha is asked to buy some cinnamon for her elder sisters, which is necessary to garnish rice pudding. Shafak lists the ingredients for ashure in the titles of eighteen chapters, and in each chapter she constructs a set of events with a direct relation or connotation with the title. As I mentioned before, ashure could be seen as a metaphor for multiculturalism in the novel due to the diversity of ingredients. Furthermore, Mustafa is punished at the end of the novel by being served a poisoned dish of ashure brought to him. Obviously, Shafak uses food or dishes for different purposes in BI.

Cultural identity in the narrative of Shafak, appears to be an amalgamation of folk culture, “the way of life” suggested by the state, and the one chosen by the individual from the global cultural supermarket. She exposes different aspects of cultures which denote similarity and difference such as food, language, or family. Moreover, Shafak implies the possibility of peace and necessity of multiculturalism via the metaphors ‘Bonbon Palace’ and ‘ashure’ in FP and BI. In SII, she displays the different practices and personalities of different people who are labeled the same way in the eyes of the other culture and shows the necessity of cooperation.

II. National Identity in Shafak's "The Bastard of Istanbul"

The concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' are among the most popular debates of the nineteenth and twentieth century and debates are still going on through the works and discussions of the scholars in the field of social sciences. The constructivists such as Gellner and Anderson argue that 'nation' is an invented concept of the modern age, and the necessity of the nation's existence stems from some social, political, and economic reasons. On the other hand, the primordialists like Herder base their theories of nationalism on an ethnic ground, and they support the view that 'ethnicity' is a genetic tendency rather than a geographic and socioeconomic necessity.[4]

Where is BI in this debate? What is Shafak's approach to 'national identity? Answers to these questions appear to be quite easy at first sight, as Shafak asserts so often the necessity and beauty of diversity beside the fact that we're living in a global world. In an interview she remarks 'nationalism' as the most dangerous inclination of our times (Chancy 59). If her upbringing and own life story are considered as a whole, she definitely should be conceded to be a constructivist rather than a primordialist. Although she maintains her attitude toward multiculturalism and diversity in her novel BI, her characterization of 'the Armenians' in the book is based on ethnicity, and her over-sympathizing or commiserating with the 'other' constitute a contradiction with

[4] "Foundations of Ethnic Identity". May 2009.
<http://www.usm.maine.edu/~kuzma/security/roberts/Ethnic_Identity.html>

Shafak's general approach to 'nationalism' and 'ethnicity'. I will examine Shafak's insight of 'national identity' which becomes rather complicated owing to this contradiction.

In this chapter, I will elaborate on Shafak's approach to 'national identity' in BI with respect to current theories on nationalism, but the terms such as 'nation', 'nationalism' , 'ethnicity', and 'national identity' will be elucidated first to clarify my points in the above argument.

i. National Identity, Nation, Nationalism and the Bastard of Istanbul

National identity comes out to be a dominating form of identity in the modern age although it's possible to list various other ways to identify ourselves including culture, gender, religion, or occupation. Sometimes these ways or forms of identity are intermingled; sometimes they might enable, dominate or preserve each other whereas in some other cases they should be assessed separately. Poole points to different cultural forms and social identities which complement or conflict with the nation and its identity in his work Nation and Identity. Nonetheless, he maintains the priority of the nation over other forms of identity, the reason for which is that nation has strong bonds with politics (15). Furthermore, nationality is a way of identifying ourselves with other people 'like us' in any time and place, thus nation stands as a broad form of identity beyond any time and place.

Anderson in Imagined Communities note that: "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: It is an imagined political community-

and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6), he remarks: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6)

For him, the nation is imagined as limited, "because all nations have finite boundaries, ´beyond which lie other nations; it is imagined as sovereign, "because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm; it is imagined as a community because:

> Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.(7)

Anderson's theory is efficient enough to explain the causes and results of nationalism by pointing to its bonds with modernity like Gellner who links the invention of the term with socio-economic developments of the modern age in his Nations and Nationalism.

Poole agrees with the view of the above theorists that nationalism is a creature or artifact of the modern world (18), and explains the circumstances that paved the way for nationalism in the modern age. When the developments of the modern era such as

industrialization, or the emergence of nation-states are regarded, it becomes easier to base the appearance of 'Nationalism' as an ideology on a pragmatic ground.

There's a "widespread assumption that the concept of ethnicity is central to the understanding of the nation" (Poole 37). However, this assumption fails to work within the framework of polyethnic nations and multiculturalism. Turkey, in this sense, provides a good example of diversity, that's why Shafak puts so much emphasis on "achieving to live together in peace" (254). However, if nationalism will be scrutinized in BI, the term alludes to two different types: Turkish Nationalism and Armenian Nationalism. Although Anderson's theory of nationalism might explain Shafak's general approach to the subject in the light of her interviews (Chancy 57), and efforts to create a peaceful world of various dwellers in her novels like FP, SII or BI, her characterizations of Turkish and Armenian nationalisms in BI are evidently distinguished.

Turkish nationalism is a concept in the novel invented and supported by the founders of the new Republic to motivate Turkish people after the National War of Independence. Shafak refers to the attempts to evoke national conscious at the very beginning of the foundation of the Republic:

> During the 1920's the new Turkish Republic was still throbbing with fervor and manual work, though systematically venerated in government propaganda, and brought little money. The new regime needed teachers to create patriotic Turks out of their students, financiers to help generate a national bourgeoisie, and flag manufacturers to adorn the entire country

> with the Turkish flag, but it surely did not need any cauldron makers. This is how Rıza Selim entered into the flag-making business. (138)

Unlike the Turanists in the late Ottoman period, Turkish nationalism evolved into Atatürkist nationalism after the Republic which view all those living in Turkish territory as natural members of the nation without regard to race, language, or creed; which might be called as a Turkey-centered nationalism (Ağaoğulları 184). Shafak creates such a Turkey in her novel, and her understanding of Turkish nationalism is in regard to 'motherlandism' (Ülken 480) without any bonds with ethnicity. When Auntie Cevriye talks about a citizen's allegiance to his/her country and his/her duty to represent her, she supports the above interpretation of nationalism:

> "Auntie Cevriye, as a comrade-teacher of the Turkish Republican regime it was her belief that every Turkish citizen, no matter how ordinary she might be in society, had a duty to proudly represent the motherland vis-à-vis the whole world. What better opportunity than in an international pen-pal friendship was there to represent one's country?"(135)

Since Turkish nationalism is civic rather than ethnic, Turkish characters' notion of history date back to 1920's, not before. Therefore characters like Auntie Cevriye or Armanoush in the novel lack the continuity of time and history:

> "Twenty years in her career as a Turkish national history teacher, she was so accustomed to drawing an impermeable boundary between the past and the present, distinguishing the Ottoman Empire from the modern Turkish Republic, that she had heard the whole story as grim news from a

> distant country. The new state in Turkey had been established in 1923 and that was as far as the genesis of this regime could extent. Whatever might or might not have happened preceding this commencement date was the issue of another era—and another people."(164)

The 'Non-nationalist Scenarist of Ultranationalist Movies', a character from Cafe Kundera in the novel, might help to comprehend Shafak's approach to Turkish ultra-nationalism which regard ethnicity as a central figure for nationalism.

> He was the writer and creator of a popular TV series, Timur the Lionheart, which featured a hefty, robust national hero capable of mashing entire battalions of enemies into a bloody puree. When asked about his tacky TV show and movies, he would defend himself by arguing that he was a nationalist by profession but a true nihilist by choice. (79)

Shafak handles ultra-nationalism as a discourse imposed on people through media; what is more, not even the creator of such a myth believes in a stuff of his own. However, it is hard to observe the same witty attitude by Shafak towards Armenian nationalism which is interwoven with ethnicity throughout the novel, which can well be regarded as a contradiction in her overall view of nationalism. Furthermore, her emphasis of both nations' view on history and memory is noteworthy as it is possible to claim that her repeating judgment about The Turkish attitude sounds negative, whereas she sympathizes with the idea that history is continuous like the nations:

> She, as an Armenian, embodied the spirits of her people generations and generations earlier, whereas the average Turk had no such notion of continuity with his or her ancestors. The Armenian and the Turks lived in different time frames. For the Armenians, time was a cycle in which the past incarnated the present and the present birthed the future. For the Turks, time was a multi-hyphenated line, where the past ended at some definite point and the present started anew from scratch, and there was nothing but rupture in between. (165)

Although her argument about the Turkish approach to the notion of history and past can well be questioned, the contradiction does not stem from this view, but from her sympathy with Armenian ultra-nationalism, a manner which appears to be far from being constructivist. In the article "There is No Clash of Civilizations" written in 2005, Shafak notes that there are "the ones who believe that we are all dependent on one another, financially, culturally and socially, there can be no nationalisms but only a constant give and take". This is a quite constructivist view, but her credit to Armenian nationalism in BI distorts the author's integrity on the subject as so much belief and dependence in history results in a clash. As Sarup puts,

> Every nation has its own story. Every nation has its myths, myths that can exploit contradictions. Nations make claims to land, and they make appeals to blood, native soil, homeland, motherland, fatherland... Nationalism has a popular and powerful fascination because it appeals to people, their need for belonging. ...But if some belong to the nation,

> others do not. Nationalism, inevitably, excludes others from the ranks of the privileged group. Once nationalism gains momentum, others have to assimilate- or to resist. (131)

Armenian nationalism is ethnic rather than civic or territorial in BI; therefore obviously differs from Turkish nationalism. Armenian characters' approach to ethnicity can easily be explicated in the novel as it is observed in the description of Grandma Sushan at the beginning:

> "Her refusal to admit defeat no matter what, her unflagging conviction that life was always a struggle but if you were an Armenian it was three times as grueling, and her ability to win over everyone she came across had over the years bewildered many in her family." (BI 52)

Auntie Varsenig's decisive objection to Armanoush's being raised by Mustafa, without even knowing his character and ideology, indicates the dimensions of hatred towards the Turks:

> "What will that innocent lamb tell her friends when she grows up? My father is Barsam Tchakhmakhchian, my great-uncle is Dikran Istanboulian, my name is Armanoush Tchakmakhchian, all my family tree has been Something Somethingian, and I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives at the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa! What kind of a joke is that? …" (BI 54)

More than a Turkish-Armenian conflict, may it be an evidence to prove Sarup's argument which points to the inevitable result of nationalism centralized in ethnicity. This sort of nationalism results in the exclusion of the other. American Rose is also excluded as observed in the following conversation:

> "When you come to think that the only food she knew how to cook was the horrendous mutton barbecue on buns! Each time we came to your house, she would put on that dirty apron and cook mutton."
>
> "But you guys gave her a hard time too," Barsam said without looking at anyone in particular. "Mind you, the very first word she learned in Armenian was odar."
>
> "But she is an odar." Uncle Dikran lurched forward, slapping his nephew on the back. "If she is an odar, why not call her an odar?"
>
> Shaken by the slap more than the question, Barsam dared to add: "Some in this family have even called her Thorn."(BI 58-59)

Although so much emphasis is put on Armenian ethnicity in BI, Shafak interweaves the family stories of Kazancıs and Tchakhmakhchians at the end of the novel. Her focus on the cultural similarities of the Armenian and the Turkish should also be evaluated as Shafak's attempts to show the possibility of reconciliation in any condition. I think 'compromise' is the key term to understand Shafak's contradictory approach to nationalism in general, and Armenian nationalism specifically in the novel. She seems to have conceded to compromise with the Diaspora, while trying to create a peaceful world. The question whether she deliberately or unconsciously has contradicted

her constructivist approach to identity still remains unanswered although it can well be argued that she has given some credit to nationalism in the ethnic sense in her novel, and this attitude is a discrepancy when Shafak's general interpretation of the term 'nation' is regarded.

ii. Turkishness

It was in 2006 that Shafak attracted the attention of world press for her being charged according to Article 301 of Turkish Penal Code for insulting Turkishness in her novel BI. Article 301 has caused the charge of many Turkish writers owing to the same reason (insulting Turkishness) including Pamuk along with some Turkish journalists, but Shafak's case has evoked more curiosity and she has been supported by many journalists all over the world. The charge was finally dropped but the incident attracted attention to Shafak's approach to "Turkishness" in BI.

Shafak's characterization of Turkish nationalism is examined in the preceding part of this study in comparison with Armenian nationalism; nevertheless the term "Turkishness" should further be elucidated to understand Shafak's attitude towards the notion in the novel.

The notion 'Turkishness' is treated by Shafak as defined in Turkish constitution and Ataturkist thought; therefore, the term includes all Turkish citizens without any respect to their ethnicity (Ağaoğulları 178). Shafak's approach to Turkishness in the novel is not only based on diversity and multiculturalism in Turkey, she points to the

cultural gap within the Turks and the social problems of the country during its integration with Europe as well.

Diversity in life-styles of the Turks is explicitly depicted in the novel by the characters. Kazancıs provide a good example of an average Turkish family with members of varying life philosophies personalities. Banu, the pious, head-scarved elder sister with a gift of wisdom, deals with clairvoyance. Cevriye, a Turkish national history teacher with a "Spartan sense of discipline and self-control" continuously "crusades against impulsiveness, disruption, and spontaneity at home" (30) where Feride, the third sister with a set of mental disorders, is interested in the calamities of all sorts including "car accidents, serial killings, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires and floods, terminal illnesses, contagious diseases, and unknown viruses" (25). Zeliha, the most beautiful and unluckiest of all, with an anarchist soul, displays her strength and courage in any situation. Finally, Asya, the rebellious daughter of Zeliha, represents the unconventional with her acts and her philosophy in the novel. The diversity of Kazancıs shocks Armanoush at the very first sight:

> While packing for her flight to Turkey she had thought hard about what kind of clothing to take with her and had ended up choosing her most modest clothes so as not to look strange in a conservative place. It had therefore come as a shock to be welcomed at the Istanbul airport by Auntie Zeliha wearing outrageously high heels. What was even more startling, however, was to meet Auntie Banu afterward in a head scarf and a long dress, and to learn how pious she was, praying five times a

> day. That the two women, despite the stark contrast in their appearance and obviously in their personalities, were sisters living under the same roof was a puzzle Armanoush figured she would have to work on for a while. (154)

The picture in the Kazancı domicile is a model of the whole Turkish society including various groups of different origins. In search of Grandma Shusan's roots, Armanoush talks to a cook who points to the cosmopolitan structure of Istanbul:

> "Because Istanbul is not a city," the cook remarked, his face lighting up with the importance of the statement he was about to make. "It looks like a city but it is not. It is a city-boat. We live in a vessel!"… "We are all passengers here, we come and go in clusters, Jews go, Russians come, my brother's neighborhood is full of Moldovans. Tomorrow they will go, others will arrive. That's how it is…" (BI 170)

The roots, and story of Kazancıs and Tchakmakhchians are intermingled, too; which should be regarded as another example of the writer's strong emphasis on the inevitability of the blend of different ethnic groups on a land where they live together. Towards the end of the novel, Aram, the Turkish Armenian character in the novel, emphasizes this fact,

> "I was born and raised in Istanbul. My family's history in this city goes back at least five hundred years. Armenian Istanbulites belong to Istanbul like the Turkish, Kurdish, Greek, and Jewish Istanbulites do. We have

> first managed and then badly failed to live together. We cannot fail again."(254)

As Shafak argues in an article, "Turkish society is far more heterogeneous then it is often portrayed in Western media", a condition which leads to a conflict or "clash" between different opinions within Turkey. The conflicts between state-minded and civil-minded people beside the problems during the process of modernization and integration to Europe constitute the basic perplexity in Shafak's analysis of Turkishness. The Dipsomaniac Cartoonist remarks:

> "...Western politicians presume there is a cultural gap between Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization. If it were that simple! The real civilization gap is between the Turks and the Turks. We are a bunch of cultured urbanities surrounded by hillbillies and bumpkins on all sides. They have conquered the whole city."(81)

At this point it will not be too assertive to argue that Shafak reveals her ideas of Turkey and Turkishness through Dipsomaniac Cartoonist, an intellectual and artist, who has been charged for depicting the prime minister as a wolf in the novel. He, like Shafak herself, complains about the clash between the groups and seeks an appropriate place for himself among the contradicting groups and ideas,

> "We are stuck. We are stuck between the East and the West. Between the past and the future. On the one hand there are the secular modernists, so proud of the regime they constructed, you cannot breathe a critical word. They've got the army and half of the state on their side. On the other

> hand there are the conventional traditionalists, so infatuated with the Ottoman past; you cannot breathe a critical word. They've got the general public and the remaining half of the state on their side. What is left for us?"(81)

Shafak touches on the rapid change and modernization during the republican era in Turkey so often in BI that most of the characters interpret modernization in his/her own way. History teacher, Auntie Cevriye tries to set the difference between the Turks and Arabs in order to prove the Turks' suitability to European ways and culture, "The problem with the Turks is that we are constantly being misinterpreted and misunderstood. The Westerners need to see that we are not like the Arabs at all. This is a modern, secular state."(135)

Grandma Gülsüm is annoyed at Banu's covering her head with a scarf for the same reason, "What kind of nonsense is that?" Grandma Gülsüm frowned. "Turkish women took off the veil ninety years ago. No daughter of mine is going to betray the rights the great commander-in- chief Atatürk bestowed on the women of this country"(68). However, Banu keeps on living the way she wishes under the same roof with her mother and sisters of various worldviews. Zeliha, a character belongs to none of the groups at home is aware of the situation,

> Half of her family was staunchly secularist Kemalist, the other half, practising Muslim. While the two sides constantly conflicted but also managed to coexist under the same roof, paranormality, cross-cutting

> ideological divisions, was deemed to be as normal in their lives as consuming bread and water on a daily basis. (BI 299)

The new regime (republic) seems to be crucial in the novel as Rıza Selim Kazancı asserts,

> It was the year 1923...You and the Republic have arrived in this city together. I was desperately waiting for all of you, her husband Rıza Selim Kazancı told her amorously years later. "You both ended the old regimes forever, the one in the country and the one in my house. When you came to me, life brightened up. (BI 137)

This positive approach to the Republic by liberal Shafak is replaced with criticism regarding the social problems and gaps during the process of modernization. The most outstanding of these problems depicted in the novel is the gap between the past and the present of Turkey. The characters also lack the sense of continuity and fail to keep their bonds with history like Asya or Aunt Cevriye. As Armanoush puts, "For the Turks, time was a multi-hyphenated line, where the past ended at some definite point and the present started anew from scratch, and there was nothing but rupture in between"(BI 165). The people who listen to Armanoush's story feel sorry though not responsible which confuses Armanoush, "The women in the house listened to my family's history with sincere interest and sorrow but that is as far as they could get. The past is another country for the Turks." (BI 183)

"History and Identity" seem to be one of the central themes in this novel thus further analyzed in a complete chapter in this study. The reason I've pointed to the issue in this part is for its important role in Shafak's characterization of Turkishness.

To conclude this part, I should note that Turkishness is depicted as a civic rather than ethnic identity in BI; and besides her aim to draw a peaceful picture of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity in the novel, Shafak points to the problems that have occurred during the process of modernization of the young Turkish Republic.

III. History and Identity in The Bastard of Istanbul

On the construction of personal and collective identity in BI, history and memory have a considerable effect. Especially in her construction of identities for the Turk and the Armenian characters, Shafak exposes the significance of history and memory. In this chapter, I will look into the stories of the nations, of the families, and of the persons in the novel through a new historicist perspective and elaborate on the subjectivity of the stories told by Shafak. I think that BI should be considered as fantastic fiction rather than a realistic novel introducing some historical facts as the novelist fails to be objective and realistic in her approach to Turkish-Armenian conflict.

The question of objectivity is crucial in BI as the novel is not mere fiction, but embroidered by allusions to history, especially to the tragic events occurred in Ottoman Turkey in 1915. Turkish-Armenian conflict, treated carefully by the author, appears to be the major theme in the novel. The historical narrative (both fiction and non-fiction) regarding the Armenian claims of genocide should be held decently as the political consequences of the debate seem to be of more importance than the historical ones. Lewy points to this fact by describing the current situation:

> The ramifications of the dispute are wide-reaching. The Armenians, encouraged by strong support in France, insist on a Turkish confession and apology as a prerequisite for Turkey's admission into the European Union. Ankara's relations with Yerevan remain frozen because of the dispute. Across the West, Armenian activists try politically to

predetermine the historical debate by demanding various parliaments pass resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide.

Shafak being neither a historian nor politician is directly involved in the dispute by placing the conflict in the center of her novel. As my main concern is the question of objectivity in BI, where Shafak stands personally in this discussion does not really matter. The question is: to what extent we should take her historical and sociological assumptions seriously?

In the first part of this chapter I will analyze how Shafak uses history to construct the characters and in the second part I will answer these questions by elucidating the subjectivity of the BI.

In Poetics, Aristotle compares the functions of the poet and the historian. For him, the difference between the works of a historian and a poet is about the materials they deal with. The historian deals with what has happened and the poet with what may happen. Aristotle believes in the superiority of the poet in the sense that what is probable is more universal and philosophical (7). Hayden White reconstructs the Aristotelian approach to historical writing and fiction by scrutinizing the nature of the modernist literature. Modernist literature aims to "manifest, express, or represent reality, to summon up and interrogate the real world in all its complexity and opacity" which "brings it into conflict with writers of historical discourse" (32). The subject matter of literature is not the probable, as Aristotle argues, any more; but the reality and the history. In "Historical Discourse and Literary Writing", White points to the battle between fact and fiction, or between rational argumentation and imaginative

presentation (33). Despite the contrasting nature of reality and imagination, the fact and the fiction are intermingled through literature. BI falls into this category of literary works as history appears to be the major constituent of both the characters and the plot of the novel.

The novel is the fictional story of Asya, the illegitimate grand-daughter of Kazancıs. Asya's gloomy history is enlightened despite her indifference to reveal the truth about her past through Armanoush's attempts to dig up her own roots. Histories of the characters and families (Kazancıs and Tchakhmakhchians) intersect with the histories of the Turkish and Armenian nations. By the way, history becomes the major constituent of the novel, and Shafak is involved in the hot Turkish-Armenian historical debate on the Armenian claims of genocide.

The word "bastard" in the title refers to Asya, whose life story remains unexplored till the end of the book. She is depicted as someone of loose bonds with history, both in the personal and national level. History is nothing but a blank term for her as she does not even know who her father is. Her indifference stems from the huge gap in her personal story as she states in a conversation with Armanoush:

> For me history starts today, you see? There's no continuity in time. You can't feel attached to your ancestors if you can't even trace your own father…Don't you see that the past is a vicious circle? It is a loop. It sucks us in and makes us run like a hamster on a wheel. Then we start to repeat ourselves, again and again. (180)

In this sense, Asya is very much alike the Turkish Republic with a loose, if any, connection with the past. Shafak points to the nature of the new Republic of Turkey and the efforts to create a new nation through reforms. The foundation of the Republic ends the Ottoman dynasty. Therefore, the Republic could not be interpreted as a continuum of the Ottoman Empire as Auntie Cevriye thinks:

> 'Twenty years in her career as a Turkish national history teacher, she was so accustomed to drawing an impermeable boundary between the past and the present, distinguishing the Ottoman Empire from the modern Turkish Republic, that she had actually heard the whole story as grim news from a distant country. The new state in Turkey had been established in 1923 and that was as far as the genesis of this regime could extend. Whatever might or might not have happened preceding this commencement date was the issue of another era --- and another people. (164)

In this respect, it would not be too assertive to argue that Asya appears to be a perfect symbol of the Turkish Republic in respect to her personal history. Shafak describes the Republic without any connection to the past, and the new nation with no sense of belonging to the predecessors; very like Asya, who neither knows her father nor past. The novelist figures out how she overlooks the birth of the new republic in an interview for Meridians:

> In my opinion the dissolution of the age-old empire brought along a process of de-masculinization and the "loss of a father" in the Lacanian

> symbolic sense. Now the empire had lost its center; it was dissolving. This, in turn, created a deep anxiety on the part of the Ottoman male elite. … It was a huge anxiety for the Ottoman male elite, many of whom would find comfort and solace, years later, in the persona and image of a new father, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk when the republican regime was established in 1923. Between the loss of the previous father and the encounter of another one, there is a stage that corresponded to the latest period of the Ottoman Empire. For me it is interesting to see how the fatherless stage created a deep, deep anxiety and fear on the part of the political and cultural elite.

In the novel, all Kazancıs have a problematic perception of history, and they prefer to keep other people's stories in their minds instead of their own stories as Asya states: "The Kazancıs were a family inclined to never forget other people's stories but to blank when it came to their own" (BI 60). They prefer to talk about the pleasant memories of their family, and of the Turkish nation, but not the sad ones which might be seen as an escape from the unhappy past. Asya complains about the subjectivity of her family in terms of history: "My family is a bunch of clean freaks. Brushing away the dirt and dust of the memories! They always talk about the past, but it is a cleansed version of the past."(BI 147) Mustafa's escape to America, and attempts to forget his sin makes another example to Kazancıs' inclination to forget: "How he wished he could remove his memory, restart the program, until all of the files were deleted and gone" (BI 45).

The most outstanding characteristic of the Turkish characters of Shafak are their tendency or preference to forget and escape. Asya points to this fact towards the end of the novel:

> "Alzheimer's is not as terrible as it sounds. The past is nothing but a shackle we need to get rid of. Such an excruciating burden… If only I could have no past—you know, if only I could be nobody, start from point zero and just remain there forever. As light as a feather... No family, no memories and all that shit…." (BI 148)

What the Turkish characters of Shafak have in common is a problematic history to be cleansed or forgotten as in the case of Asya, Zeliha, Mustafa, Gülsüm and Banu. Turkish history is not much different in the eyes of Shafak in respect to the gloomy atmosphere of 1915. If one is to derive a message about history out of the novel, it would be 'forgetting is not enough to cleanse the past', as none of the characters can really forget and simply go ahead with their lives. Zeliha has to tell the ugly truth to her beloved daughter at the end; Asya cannot keep ignoring the past as she is informed with the fact she is a product of an incestual rape; Banu loses the chance to be close to god and guarantees to be condemned as she kills her brother; and Mustafa failing to survive with a guilty conscience, prefers death. The same approach in the novel can well be adapted to 1915 events for Turkish people with the assumption that to ignore or forget cannot change the history, or cure the wounds.

Armenian characters in the novel, on the other hand, are quite responsive to their past. The major difference between Asya and her Armenian friend Armanoush is their

perception of history. Unlike Asya, Armanoush tries to explore the past, wishes to see the places where her grandmother once lived. She comes to Istanbul secretly just to understand how the enemy, the Turks, see the history and how they feel about it. Armanoush and her Armenian family members are strictly bound to their history, which to be used as a means of identification as Sarup puts: "The past figures importantly in people's self-representations because it is through recollections of the past that people represent themselves to themselves" (40). Shafak's identification of the nations in this novel is apparently in accordance with this argument by Sarup as she employs history in the first place to shape her characters.

Auntie Surpun points to the significance of history in the lives of the Armenian diaspora:

> "…If you have no appreciation of history and ancestry, no memory and responsibility, and if you live solely in the present, you certainly can claim that. But the past lives within the present, and our ancestors breathe through our children and you know that." (BI 55)

Apparently, Shafak's Armenian characters are fascinated with the past unlike the Turkish with an indifference to their history. The main difference between an Armenian and a Turk, then, seems to be their perception of the historical events which took place during World War I. Whether this approach reflects the truth or not can only be overshadowed by questioning the objectivity of the novelist.

White explains the relationship between history and literature in "Historical Discourse and Literary Writing". In his essay, he points to the subjective nature of the

historical narratives. Subjectivity is not a matter of telling the truth or not for White since:

> No one denies that historians- of whatever stripe- want to tell the truth about the events and persons of the past; the question is: can they ever do so given the constraints on both unambiguous referentiality, on the one side, and the fictionalizing effects of narrativization, on the other? (30)

This view can both be applied to history and historical fiction as well. The question of subjectivity should be stressed more for the latter as historical fiction is the narration of historical knowledge which has already been narrated by the historian. This is a second level of narration embroidered by the ideology of the writer along with the literary devices he/she prefers to use.

Shafak's BI should therefore be firstly discussed in terms of the historical background which the novelist constructed her novel on; then her narrative should be examined in terms of objectivity. As for the historical facts, there seems to be almost no objective evaluation of 1915 events from both sides as Lewy states in his article "Revisiting the Armenian Genocide". Lewy examines the Turkish-Armenian conflict in his work, and concludes with fixing that;

> "Both Armenian partisans and Turkish nationalists have staked their claims and made their case by simplifying a complex historical reality and by ignoring crucial evidence that might yield a more nuanced picture. Professional scholars have based their positions on previous works, often

> unaware that these represented a bastardized interpretation of the original sources".

Lewy's argument is crucial to understand Shafak's view of 1915, which has most probably been shaped by the Armenian nationalist historical discourse. The positive response to the BI from the Armenian diaspora could be exemplified by Vartkes Sinanian's article "Elif Shafak- A Rising Star in Literature" can well explain Shafak's viewpoint of the issue. This viewpoint; however, does not matter for my study, as my concern is not to explore the facts about the Armenian claims of Genocide, but to question the objectivity of the novel.

The objectivity problem reappears in the author's identification of the characters with their historical backgrounds, especially on the national level. Nevertheless, White points to the handicaps of such kind of characterization:

> "But problems arise precisely in any effort to use historical knowledge for purposes of identity construction. … And these problems arise because historical knowledge always comes to the present in a processed form, not as row data or information stored in an archive or data bank. It is only as represented knowledge, as written, filmed, videotaped, photographed, dramatized, and narrativized, that historical knowledge enters into the public domain."(29)

She depicts Turkish people in respect to their bonds with the past, and emphasizes the futility of Turkish tendency to ignore the unpleasant. As the major theme of the novel revolves around the tragic events of 1915, what Shafak means exactly by the 'past' here

is what happened in 1915; and what Turkish people think about it. She tries to explain the Turkish indifference to the Armenian claims of genocide throughout the novel. Whatever her purpose is, she seeks to mediate the two nations in the conflict about the events that took place in 1915, of course with the espousal that Armenian claims were true. Her explanation of the Turkish denial of the Armenian claims of genocide is the Turks' intentional/unintentional tendency to forget the unpleasant memories rather than their being brutal.

Shafak's description of the Turks in the novel is directly related with the Turkish perception of 1915 events. Armanoush's expectation for an apology for 1915 from the Kazancıs is in vain, because they fail to feel guilty for what has happened:

> "And yet that apology had not come, not because they had not felt for her, for it looked as if they had, but because they had seen no connection between themselves and the perpetrators of the crimes. She, as an Armenian, embodied the spirits of her people generations earlier whereas the average Turk had no such notion of continuity with his or her ancestors. The Armenian and The Turks lived in different time frames. For the Armenians, time was a cycle in which the past incarnated in the present and the present birthed the future. For the Turks, time was a multi-hyphenated line, where the past ended at some definite point and the present started anew from scratch, and there was nothing but rupture in between." (164-165)

Her assertions about the Turkish people should be reexamined in the light of scholarly studies. It would be hard to argue that Turkish denial of the claims of genocide stem from Turkish indifference to the past. Instead, this attitude should be regarded as an outcome of the nationalist discourse, embraced by the vast majority of the Turkish society (Demircioğlu 1). This nationalist discourse, contrary to Shafak's argument, reminds Turkish people of their sufferings in the past continuously. What Moses puts for Palestinian-Jewish Israeli conflict seems to be valid, too in Turkish-Armenian case: "Both sides construct their respective collective identity in such a way as to totally negate the victimization experience of the other. This is not just a symbolic conflict" (315). As Akçam argues, 'Turk', for a Turk is anything that is not Armenian; and 'Armenian', for an Armenian is something that is not 'Turk' (3). Turkish people do not confirm the Armenian claims of genocide, because they believe themselves were victimized by the Armenian during World War I, not for they forget the unpleasant past. Whenever this conflict is mentioned, Armenian massacres in Anatolia are recalled relying on Turkish historical documents like in the book written by Laçiner and Kantarcı (112-113). Gur-Ze'ev and Pappe point to the nature of this struggle over control of the memory of victimization; "It is a matter of life and death, and suffering and death-as actuality and as memory-are philosophical, political and existential issues"(93).

Apparently, this is not a matter of forgetting, but all about refreshing the memory not to forget. Then Shafak has failed to be realistic in reducing the Turkish side of the conflict to mere ignorance. The dispute is nourished by the nationalistic approaches of

both the Turkish and the Armenian sides as Belge states in a newspaper article he wrote for Taraf.

The last part of my argument of subjectivity of the novel is about how the novelist employs her novel to overshadow the truth (of course in her own terms). The points explicated so far provide enough evidence to regard BI as a subjective treatment of 1915 events. Nevertheless, there seems to be another factor to support my assessment in the light of White's assessment of historical narratives:

> "So, historical narratives refer to a real world (that no longer exists but of which we have traces) and presents that world as having narratological coherence. And the question is: does the manner in which they refer and techniques used in narrativization render their accounts more fictional than realistic, more imaginary than rational, more artistic than scientific in nature?"(30-31)

The answer to this question with respect to Shafak's BI is affirmative for the reasons explained before. In addition, Shafak's rationality could be challenged just because she employs the djinns to reveal the truth about Mustafa and about the Armenian deportation. Djinns tell the tragic story of the Armenians in the novel, because there seems to be no other way to go back to the past and see what happened from the perspective of eye-witnesses. Only djinns live enough long to go ninety years backwards.

> The gulyabani were the ugly witnesses of the ugliness human beings were capable of inflicting one another. Consequently, Auntie Banu reasoned, if

> Armanoush's family had really been forced on a death march in 1915, as she claimed, Mr. Bitter would surely know about it. (192)

Shafak's purpose is to evoke sympathy on the reader for the deported Armenians by bringing an eye-witness account into sight. Mr. Bitter, the djinn of Auntie Banu takes her to the past to slake her curiosity:

> Now, Auntie Banu and Mr. Bitter will together travel back in time. From 2005 to 1915...It looks like a long trip, but it is only a matter of steps in terms of gulyabani years.
>
> In front of the mirror, between the djinn and the master stands a silver bowl of consecrated water from Mecca. Inside the silver bowl there is silvered water and inside the water there is a story, similarly silvered. (224)

Then, the Mr. Bitter tells the heartbreaking story of Hovhannes Stamboulian from an omniscient viewpoint. It is the story of an Armenian intellectual who has nothing to do with politics or rebellion, the story of a victim of deportation. The narration of the djinn is full of pity evoking descriptions including the suffering kids, starving people, death and pain.

Auntie Banu can not bear the things she hears as the extent of the disaster goes far beyond her imagination. She tries to stop Mr. Bitter, but he is determined to tell Grandma Shushan's story as Banu's wish in the first place, is to learn the true story of Shushan, Stamboulian's daughter and Armanoush's grandma. At the end, she is not happy with what she has heard, and questions the necessity of the knowledge of the past:

> …Together with the djinni's corona, a thorny question flared up: Was it really better for human beings to discover more of their past? And then more and more…? Or was it simply better to know as little of the past as possible and even to forget what small amount was remembered? (BI 2)

The questions emerging in her mind are typical to Turkish characters of Shafak, who are depicted as people who tend to forget or ignore the unpleasant memories. As the reality appears to be too harsh to recognize, ignorance could be more preferable. What Shafak implies here is the immorality of such kind of ignorance for a person, but the question is: how rationality let one believe in the reality of a story narrated by a djinni? The narration of Mr. Bitter might evoke pity on the reader, but distorts the objectivity of the story told by the novelist.

What Shafak says in her novel might not make any sense for the historians studying in this field, as she is neither a historian nor politician. As a novelist, she is not obliged to create realistic characters and to hold an objective view of the historical or political issues, either. However, it is necessary to evaluate her in terms of objectivity to understand what she really says as she touches a highly controversial historical issue in BI. Her objectivity in treating such a dispute would directly affect our criticism of the novel, and would guide us to deal with her narrative either as an example of historical fiction with a realistic approach or as mere fiction with an irrational treatment of some historical events. To be objective requires giving up all concerns such as compromising or justifying which Shafak has failed to achieve in BI. Her novel should therefore be read as mere fiction of a fantastic type rather than a realistic work.

In conclusion, the contributions of history and memory to compose BI seem to be noteworthy considering the fact that most of the story has been inspired by the past. Most of the characters were depicted in respect to their bonds with the past as well. Besides, Shafak produced Turkish-Armenian stereotypes in terms of their views of 1915 events. Still, her narrative can not reach the standards of historical fiction mostly due to the fictionalizing effects of narrativization underlined by Hayden White in "Historical Discourse and Literary Writing".

IV. Language and Identity

Language should not only be taken as a means of communication, but should rather be regarded as a determinant and an indicator of identity. This social function of language is emphasized in the works of most social scientists including Anderson and Hobsbawm. Anderson explains the reason why language should be treated differently from some other forms of identity: "Where cultural or national identity can be taken as invented, language seems to be primordial in the sense that it is almost impossible to give a birth-date for languages (144). Language, unlike the invented levels of identification, has functioned through history, "to create myths and collective conscious to produce national, cultural, ethnic, or religious identity" (Hobsbawm 47-67). It should be considered that Shafak is conscious of this impact of language, which can easily be observed in her narrative.

She employs language to demonstrate similarities and differences of her characters, their cultures and nations. Language appears to be either a gap or a bridge in Shafak's works. It is also a means to figure out Shafak's identity as a novelist, and her approach to the notion of identity. In this chapter, I will analyze how she uses language as a means of identification both for herself, and her characters.

Shafak's stylistic preference to blend Ottoman Turkish with modern Turkish should be evaluated as a consequence of her awareness of the sociological interactions of language. She explicates the reason for this preference in an article:

> Concomitantly, while culture has been modernized, language has been Turkified. As a writer who happens to be a woman, and attached to Islamic, as well as Jewish and Christian heterodox mysticism, I reject the rationalized, disenchanted, centralized, Turkified modern language put in front of me. Today in Turkey, language is polarized and politicized. Depending on the ideological camp you are attached to, e.g. Kemalists versus Islamists, you can use either an 'old' or a 'new' set of words. My writing, however, is replete with both 'old' and 'new' words, and plentiful Sufi expressions that had been systematically excised by the cultural elite. (156)

The language Shafak prefers to use is a "manifesto of remembrance against the collective amnesia prevalent in Turkey" (Shafak 156). Her personal choice of the words[5], and struggle with the Kemalist elite via language can well exemplify the power of language in identity expositions. Shafak explains her fiction further:

> Accordingly, I sometimes liken my fiction writing, both in language and content, to walking on a pile of rubble left behind after a catastrophe. I walk slowly so that I can hear if there is still someone or something breathing underneath. I listen attentively to the sounds coming from below to see if anyone, any story or cultural legacy from the past, is still alive under the rubble. If and when I come across signs of life, I dig deep

[5] The Turkish titles of her three novels are Pinhan, Mahrem, and Araf. All three titles are from Ottoman Turkish, and the words here are rarely used today. Even these titles can give an idea about Shafak's fascination with Ottoman Turkish. It is hard to observe such characteristics of her style in English.

> and pull it up, above the ground, shake its dust, and put it in my novels that it can survive. (156)

Language has a major role in Shafak's construction of her characters as well. It serves as a determinant of identification for persons or groups. Sometimes, language unites people (like in the case of Asya and Armanoush in The Bastard of Istanbul), and sometimes alienates people from the others (as in Mustafa's first meeting Rose in the same novel); but it appears all the time to construe personal, cultural, and national identities.

Poole points to the significant role of language for the individual: "It is language which provides the crucial link between the individual and the wider spheres of work and pleasure, the media, culture and tradition, and ultimately politics" (14). Although the connections between language and identity can not only be explained in the framework of nationality and culture, the contributions of language in the construction of national identity should not be underestimated. The cultural symbols and signs of nationality are produced through language. This is why American-Armenian Armanoush feels estranged in her first night in Turkey, in Kazancı domicile:

> When she hung up Armanoush looked around her and felt a deep estrangement. The Turkish rugs, the old-fashioned bedside lamps, the unfamiliar furniture, books and newspapers that spoke another language…Suddenly she felt a panic that she hadn't felt since she was a small child. (BI 167)

Books and newspapers in Turkish scare Armanoush and make her feel insecure in a foreign land. On the other hand, she joyfully reacts to the Armenian dishes of the special Turkish menu on the table, prepared by the Kazancı women for Armanoush. The common words for the common dishes in Armenian and in Turkish reduce her estrangement:

> "What a gorgeous table." She beamed. "These are all my favorite foods. I see you have made hummus, baba ghanoush, yalancı sarma… and look at this, you have baked churek!"
>
> "Aaaah, do you speak Turkish?!" Auntie Banu exclaimed, flabbergasted as she walked back in with a steaming pot in her hands… (BI 156)

Anderson points to the function of language as it appears in poetry and songs of a nation or culture, and he puts special emphasis on national anthems unifying a whole community unknown to each other (145). As Shafak sees "nationalism as the most dangerous inclination of our times" (57), she denounces and deconstructs this relationship between nationality and language by creating characters with an indifference to songs in their own language. It is Ömer in SII, and Asya in BI fascinated with the English songs they listen to. The common point of these characters is their alienation from their own culture. The dialogue between Asya and Armanoush would help to understand Asya's view of Turkish music:

> "Some time ago I got hooked on Johnny Cash. And that was it. Ever since then I stopped listening to anything else. I like Cash. He depresses me so deeply, I am not depressed any more."

> "But don't you listen to anything local? Like Turkish music…Turkish pop…"
>
> "Turkish pop!!! No way! Asya flapped her hands in panic as if trying to wave away a pushy street vendor.
>
> Sensing her limits, Armanoush did not press the question any further. (BI 176)

Not by chance that Ömer of SII seems to be a similar character, an estranged one like Asya without rigid boundaries of national identity. With her emphasis on the characters' listening to foreign music, Shafak points to the universality of music regardless to nation and culture, and annuls the borders of identity.

Another indispensable indication of identity in Shafak's narrative happens to be "names" of persons. She attributes a special meaning to names in her novels, and figures out the essentiality of names for identity constructions in SII. Although Shafak prefers to deconstruct the labels attached to people in her novels, she holds a conservative position in terms of names and personal identity. "Names are the bridges to people's castles of existence" (SII 22); that's why Gail avoids letting Ömer into her mysterious inner world by hiding her real name 'Zarpandit'.

> Falling in love is an appropriation of the names of the beloved, and so is falling out of love re-appropriation… To learn someone's name is to capture half of her existence, the rest is a matter of pieces and details. Children know this deep down in their soul. That is why they instinctively refuse to answer back when a stranger asks their name.

> Children comprehend the power of names, and once they grow up, they simply forget. (SII 22)

Names also have cultural or national connotations as in Armanoush's case. Although Barsam's family insists on the baby to be named Armanoush, Rose is disturbed afterwards by the racial connotation of the name and decides to call her baby "Amy":

> Her husband's family had wanted to name the baby girl after her grandmother's mother. How deeply Rose lamented not having named her something less outlandish, like Annie or Katie or Cyndie, instead of accepting the name her mother-in-law had come up with. (BI 43)

Briggs notes that reflections on language, identity, and power could take narrative form, which should not surprise us when the Bakhtinian capacity of narrative is regarded to bring multiple voices and to open up wider fields that could be related to each other (xiii). Shafak uses narrative to display power relations between languages, and people who speak those languages. The situation of 'The Other' (whether an immigrant or a member of a minority) is demonstrated through the examples of exclusion:

> When a Turk, for instance, realizes he has just mispronounced the name of an American in Turkey, he will be embarrassed and in all likelihood consider this his own mistake, or in any case, as something to do with himself. When an American realizes he has just mispronounced the name of a Turk in the United States, however, in all likelihood, it won't be him

> but rather the name itself that will be held responsible for that mistake. (SII 5)

In BI, a similar problem is mentioned about the Armenian minority in Ottoman Turkey. Auntie Varsenig criticizes Turkish imperialism, of course from an Armenian viewpoint, in a conversation with Barsam:

> "Tell me how many Turks ever learned Armenian. None! Why did our mothers learn their language and not vice versa? Isn't it clear who has dominated whom? Only a handful of Turks come from Central Asia, right? And then the next thing you know they are everywhere! (55)

Mustafa's wife, Rose can well be another example of a similar situation. She's married with Mustafa, but she never needs to speak Turkish, not even a word. Therefore, she fails to communicate with Kazancıs when she visits them in Turkey. When Mustafa meets Rose for the first time in the novel, Rose recognizes immediately that he is a foreigner:

> That was one thing Mustafa still had not gotten used to. In America everyone asked everyone how they were doing, even complete strangers. He understood that it was a way of greeting more than a real question. But then he didn't know how to greet back with the same graceless ease.
>
> "I am fine, thank you," he said. "How are you?"
>
> The girl smiled. "Where are you from?"

> One day, Mustafa thought, I will speak in such a way that no one will ask this rude question because they will not believe, even for a minute, that they are talking to a foreigner. (46)

Speaking a foreign language binds people of different origins in SII. Although they are all foreigners, Ömer, Abed, Piyu speak a common language, English. Turkish Ömer, Moroccan Abed, and Spanish Piyu live together in peace via this common language. A friendship between Asya and Armanoush emerges the same way. In this respect, it is obvious that a foreign language functions as a uniting element both in SII and BI. For Banu, Asya's responsibility to translate Armanoush's speech is more important than it is supposed to be:

> "Therefore, dear, you will be her translator. You will ferry her words to us and our words to her." Auntie Banu narrowed her eyes and furrowed her brow in an attempt to hint at the magnitude of what she was about to announce. "Like a bridge extending over cultures, you will connect the East and the West." (BI 134)

There seems to be another function of learning a second language embraced by the Turkish nationalist view represented by Auntie Cevriye in BI. Auntie Cevriye comments on the possible friendship between Asya and Armanoush:

> "This is going to be so exciting. And when she goes back to her country, you girls can become pen-pals," Auntie Cevriye trilled. She was a strong believer in pen-pal friendships. As a comrade-teacher of the Turkish Republican regime it was her belief that every Turkish citizen, no matter

> how ordinary she might be in society, had a duty to proudly represent the motherland vis-à-vis the whole world. (135)

Kazancıs' encounter with Armanoush, in this respect, is a chance, especially for Asya, to introduce her nation and country to an American girl. Auntie Cevriye seems to be quite disturbed by the negative connotations of her country in the United States:

> "The Americans have mostly been brainwashed by the Greeks and the Armenians, who unfortunately arrived in the United States before the Turks did," Auntie Cevriye continued. "So they misled into believing that Turkey is the country of the Midnight Express[6]. You will show the American girl what a beautiful country this is, and promote international friendship and cultural understanding." … "What is more, she will improve your English and perhaps you will teach her Turkish. Won't this be a wonderful friendship?" (BI 135-136)

Shafak holds a negative view of the Turkish nationalist discourse as stated before. Therefore, it is hard to argue that she believes in the necessity of Turkish propaganda through English. She says in an interview (Chancy) she does not feel connected to any national identity or religious label. As a novelist and social scientist, she challenges "nationalism" which she regards as "the most dangerous inclination of our times" along with other forms of identification.

Poole points to the fact that German philosophers Fichte and Herder were among the first to realize the role of language in the composition of the nation beside its

[6] 1978 American film adapted to screenplay by Oliver Stone from the same titled book by Bill Hayes. The Academiy Award winner film is notorious for its extremely negative portrayal of Turkish people.

function as a means of communication, thus regarded language as an element to construct identity (23). Despite the fact that "many discussions of language and social identity preserve Herderian assumptions regarding one-to-one relations between homogenous, bounded languages and nations" (Bauman and Briggs 2000), the postmodern condition, as in the works of Shafak, offers a more complicated and interrelated relationship between language and social identity. As Briggs suggests,

> When one moves from the notion of a bounded, homogenous, and relatively stable "system" to acceptance of complex, overlapping, dynamic, and heterogeneous discourses that are shot through with ideologies, histories, and collective and individual voices, the desire to map connections between language and identity can no longer be satisfied with simple one-to-one correlations." (xi)

Shafak constructs a complex and dynamic society in her works as suggested by Briggs. For this reason, it is hard to fix any one-to-one relationships between language and other forms of identity in Shafak's novels. She employs language as a constituent of identity in a way, but the languages spoken by the characters of Shafak do not function alone to compose national and personal identities. For instance, Armanoush, being an American Armenian raised under the influence of nationalist diaspora Armenians, can not even speak Armenian. The other example is Grandma Shushan who speaks Turkish with the elder in the room when she wants to convey a message without being understood by the younger ones (BI 56). Although she hates Turkish people, and believes that she has once been a subject to Turkish imperialism, she speaks the

language of “Turkish butchers” (BI 53). She speaks Turkish, because her Turkish-Armenian identity still underlies the American-Armenian one. For the same reason, Armanoush wants to visit Turkey to dig the roots of her family.

Although most characters of Shafak could be identified with a language peculiar to their nation, a common language unites people of different nations as observed in SII. Despite the conflicts and problems created through language, Shafak maintains her view of identity with flexible borders. She tries to unite people regardless of their national and religious identities. She gathers the characters of multiethnic backgrounds by a common language they speak in SII, or displays the similarities of Armenian and Turkish cultures by alluding to the same words in Armenian and Turkish cuisines in BI. Shafak’s language itself challenges the labels and attachments of society, and shows how she evaluates the notion of identity. Whatever her purpose be, Shafak demonstrates the power of language very well in the composition of social identity and relations.

V. Identity of the Place and Place as an Indicator of Identity

One should regard the notion of place not only as a physical being, but a means to shape our personality, psychological and mental state or world-view. Orum&Chen argue that: "We mean the very idea of the place, of something so fundamental that it furnishes not only the basis for our sense of cities but also for our very perceptions of other things in general" (5). This approach to the notion of place in general is apparently applicable to Shafak's narrative as she treats place, especially city, as a viable being with the characteristics of its own which can dominate its dwellers' lives, personalities, and actions. In this respect, identity of the place has a crucial role in Shafak's novels to constitute an identity for the characters and to create a story as well.

According to Orum&Chen, "Our sense of placeness only becomes meaningful through these connections. There are four of them: (1) a sense of individual identity, of who we are; (2) a sense of community, of being a part of a larger group; (3) a sense of a past and a future, ..; and (4) a sense of being at home, of being comfortable"(11).

In this chapter, these functions of the place in Shafak's narrative will be discussed, though not in the above order. Besides, the identity of the place will be overlooked.

Shafak sometimes describes the place so vividly that the reader thinks it has a soul, nature, and an identity of its own, and its impression on people is directly related with this nature. Istanbul, in this respect, holds a considerable place in her works, especially in BI. The citizens are Istanbulite; regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or ideology, they try to survive in this city, and have to learn the ways to live in peace with other people of

various origins and faiths. Shafak's strong emphasis on the power of place, especially of Istanbul, leans upon the city's mosaic-like structure both in the past and in present, by which Shafak's personal belief in necessity and possibility of compromise can well be supported.

In this chapter, I would like to discuss Shafak's two novels outshine with powerful descriptions and contributions of setting: SII and BI. SII, her first novel in English, is set in Boston and Istanbul. Ömer, the protagonist, is a Turkish PhD student in America, and the first detail about him introduced by the novelist happens to be his foreignness:

> "When you leave your homeland behind, they say, you have to renounce at least one part of you. If that was the case, Ömer knew exactly what he had left behind: his dots!
>
> Back in Turkey, he used to be ÖMER ÖZSİPAHİOĞLU.
>
> Here in America, he had become OMAR OZSIPAHIOGLU.
>
> His dots were excluded for him to be better included." (5)

Definitely, Ömer not only leaves the dots in his name behind, but adapts himself easily to the ways of the country he migrates to. His estrangement is so immense that he even forgets his aim to get a PhD in the US, and sinks into nonchalance. Mustafa in BI is a similar character, migrating to America and managing to live there in peace for years. Both end up with an American girl, and as a matter of interest, none faces a serious problem in the process of adaptation except from getting used to talk in a non-native language. For Shafak the process is so painless that neither Ömer nor Mustafa yearns for

the homeland or family, or has some problems with the cultural transformation. Although these characters prove the fact that the place one lives in changes and shapes his attitudes, and as a result estranges him, Shafak's excessive attempts to compromise cultures might be criticized as she takes the issue as simple as leaving the dots in your name behind.

Shafak points out the strong bond between a person and his mother land that a person may break off his ties with the family like Ömer in SII or like Mustafa in BI, but the connection with the mother city is maintained regardless of years and distances. The instance in SII when Gail and Ömer arrive in Istanbul for the first time is quite exciting for Ömer:

> ".....You don't show any enthusiasm about me meeting your mother. But you get frantic about me meeting your mother city...
>
> Though he had not confessed this to himself yet, deep down in his soul Ömer wanted Gail to like the city, if not the country where he came from. Nevertheless, that longing had less to do with promoting Istanbul than feeling better about himself." (325)

Shafak associates identity and belonging with a certain place in the novel. This sense of belonging is crucial for human kind, and the lack of it leads to the tragic end of Gail, who does not have the sense of belonging neither to a place nor life. As a result of continuous despondency, she prefers to die in Istanbul, with a sudden decision, between two continents belonging to none:

> Long behind her, long behind the time, a fleeting consolation crosses Ömer's mind. She won't die. No, she'll not. People do not commit suicide on other people's soil, and this is not her homeland. But did she ever have one? Who is the real stranger- the one who lives in a foreign land and knows he belongs elsewhere or the one who lives the life of a foreigner in her native land and has no place else to belong? (350)

Belonging to a certain place is also crucial for Asya in BI. She decides to commit suicide a year after she recognizes the fact that she belonged to Istanbul "no more than did the 'road under construction' or 'building under restoration' signs":

> The very next year, exactly two days before her eighteenth birthday, Asya plundered the pillbox in the house and swallowed all the capsules she found there. She opened her eyes in a bed surrounded by all her aunts and Petite-Ma and Grandmother Gülsüm, having been forced to drink muddy, smelly herbal teas as if it wasn't bad enough that they had made her vomit up everything she had had in her stomach. (62)

Zeliha, on the other hand, is unquestionably Istanbulite; when she visits the doctor for abortion at the beginning of the book, she is annoyed with the question of the secretary about her birthplace:

> "Your birth place?" the receptionist continued drearily.
>
> "Istanbul!"
>
> "Istanbul?"

> Zeliha shrugged as if to say, where else could it be? Where else on earth but here? She belonged to this city! Wasn't that visible on her face? After all, Zeliha considered herself a true Istanbullite, and as if to reprimand the receptionist for failing to see such an apparent fact, she turnt back on her broken heel and invited herself to the next chair next to the head-scarved woman. (13)

If we take the lack of the sense of belonging as the primary reason to commit suicide in Shafak's novels- Gale in SII, and Asya in BI- we could arrive at the conclusion that to the bonds with a certain place, even more meaning may well be attributed. It's true that most of our actions and attitudes are related with the place we live in, as Orum&Chen argue; but Shafak carries this relationship to a more vital ground that one's connection with life is determined by her/his sense of belonging. In this respect, Zeliha's resistance to live, and to keep her illegitimate baby alive may be explained by the sense of belonging to the city. Although she's raped by her brother, and harshly criticised by her mother, she's able to keep the secret for almost twenty years. If we consider the fact that there has been no one in her life to support her and she has had no religious or ethical motivation either, we can claim that she's empowered by this strong sense of being Istanbulite. Here, the mosaiclike nature of the city should not be underestimated as this nature helps Zeliha to find a place for herself with her illegitimate child. Her emotional connection with the city is even more emphasized than her connection with her daughter through the novel; therefore, there seems to be one way to

explain Zeliha's strength to struggle with the burden of past, and raising a fatherless child in a seemingly conservative house, which is the strong bond with her home-town.

There are lively definitions of Istanbul in the novel (BI) alongside some particular facts and manners attributed to this city. Istanbul, for Shafak, is not only a city but a being with soul and certain characteristics. These characteristics influence and even dominate its dwellers lives, manners and decisions like the instance when Zeliha is impelled to have an abortion. Apparently, the act of having a child out of wedlock is regarded an unethical act in Turkish and Islamic culture; Zeliha, by pointing to the difficulty of bearing such a baby in Istanbul, emphasizes the power of the city in relation to cultural and religious bonds: "A fatherless baby in Istanbul was just another bastard, and a bastard just another sagging tooth in the city's jaw, ready to fall out at any time" (12).

As Zeliha assumes herself completely Istanbulite, she sets up rules to survive as a citizen, sometimes as a woman in Istanbul. Although her rules may be valid for many other places and cultures, they appear to be particular to Istanbul for Zeliha, which could be explained by the strong sense of belonging in her: "The Golden Rule of Prudence for an Istanbulite woman: When harrassed on the street, never respond, since a woman who responds, let alone swears back at her harasser, shall only fire up the enthusiasm of the latter!"(5)

> "The Iron Rule of Prudence for an Istanbulite Woman: If you are as fragile as a tea glass, either find a way to never encounter burning water

> and hope to marry an ideal husband or get yourself laid and broken as soon as possible. Alternatively, stop being a tea-glass woman!"(221)

Descriptions of the city and the emotions it evokes could be enumerated in the novel. Armanoush, for the first time feels the pulse of the city when she goes out with Zeliha and Aram; this pulse is so strong that she understands why people love Istanbul that much despite the sorrow it might cause them "It would not be easy to fall out of love with a city this heartbreakingly beautiful"(257). Aram, Zeliha's boyfriend, is in love with Istanbul which is a harmony of the streets, the crowds, the ferries, the music, and the Bosphorus. He belongs to this place but nowhere, and unlike the Armenians in the diaspora, he believes that Armenians can manage to live in peace with Turks in this city.

> "I know every single street in this town," Aram continued, taking another sip of rakı. "And I love strolling these streets in the mornings, in the evenings, and then at night when I am merry and tipsy. I love to have breakfasts with my friends along the Bosphorus on Sundays, I like to walk alone amid the crowds. I am in love with the chaotic beauty of this city, the ferries, the music, the tales, the sadness, the colors, the black humor..." (BI 254)

When Armanoush invites Aram to live in America Aram refuses gently as he believes that he belongs to Istanbul but nowhere else: "Why would I want to do that, dear Armanoush? This city is my city. I was born and raised in Istanbul. ... Armenian

Istanbulites belong to Istanbul, just like the Turkish, Kurdish, Greek, and Jewish Istanbulites do."(254)

In SII, a detailed description of the city attracts attention along with personification. When Gail visits Istanbul with Omer at the end of SII, she is impressed by the city, and captivated by her complexity, too, like Armanoush of BI. Gail is eager to discover this city in this part of the novel where Istanbul objects: "A city to discover? Istanbul sniggered. Do you think I want to be discovered?" (328) Personification of the city continues in the following line: "So the roofs shriek in Istanbul, but it is the streets that talk." Istanbul appears to be a living mosaic-like structure in Shafak's narrative, with her components and dwellers.

Another point in Shafak's narrative is the geographical effect on the formation of cultural and ethnic identity. Shafak handles personal and national identity in relevance to the place that being a Turk in America differs from being a Turk in Turkey, or being an Armenian in Turkey and being an Armenian in America may vary. For instance, the Armenians in the diaspora (exemplified by the Tchakhmakhchians in BI) hate Turkish people and accuse Turkish people of the problems between two nations in the past, and they have a purely negative view of the Turkish people and Turkey, but Armenians living in Turkey, like Aram, have various impressions including both positive and negative views. The difference is displayed through the conversation between Armanoush and Aram:

> They fell into an awkward silence, taking a rare distant glimpse into each other's positions, realizing there could be more than geographical

> distance between them- he suspecting she was too Americanized, she construing he was too Turkified. The mordant gap between the children of those who had managed to stay and the children of those who had to leave. (254)

Another occasion in the novel is when Asya introduces Armanoush to her friends in Cafe Kundera:

> "Now the word Armenian wouldn't surprise anyone at Cafe Kundera, but Armenian American was a different story. Armenian Armenian was no problem—similar culture, similar problems—but Armenian American meant someone who despised the Turks. All heads turned toward Armanoush now. Their stares revealed interest tainted with alarm, as if she were a flamboyant gift box with unknown content."(208)

Transformation of the Turks living in the US is another theme exemplified by the characters such as Mustafa in BI, and Ömer in SII. During the process of adaptation, they change gradually, and are estranged finally. Migration requires change; and starting by losing the correct pronunciation of their names which are "the bridges to people's castles of existence" (SII 22), Mustafa and Omer adapt the American life-style to conform to the society. At the end of SII, Omer fails to display any organic or spiritual connection with his family or culture, except from his like of the city where he was born. City, in Shafak's narrative appears to be a living organism with a history which functions in a couple of ways: It may be a melting pot (as Boston is in SII) where people from various origins meet and constitute a life style or an identity peculiar to that place;

It may be a means to explore the past and understand who you really are (as Istanbul is in BI), or it may be a consensus or a common point arrived at by diverse people and varying life-styles (as Istanbul is in FP and BI). Whatever its function is, place furnishes, directs, diverges and unites the characters in Shafak's novels, thus along with other agents, contributes a lot to construct an identity, both personal and communal.

Conclusion

The notion of "identity" holds the major place among the other themes of Shafak's narrative. The novelist handles this quite sophisticated issue by composing various characters of different origins and world-views to point to the possibility of living peacefully despite differences. Her novels reflect the postmodern individual in search of an identity. Identity, in the narrative of Shafak, seems to be fluid, complex, constructed and reconstructed through tradition, history, language, and place. The plurality of the factors lead to flexibility of the labels attached to us. However, the power of the state, tradition, and marketing is still visible via the characters Banu, Cevriye, Feride, or Ömer in the narrative of Shafak.

Shafak reveals her world-view, which has been expressed many times in different interviews. It seems possible to assess her fiction as a manifesto of her personal ideas about people, cultures, and nations. Nevertheless, her attempts to compromise cultures, nations, and people of various life philosophies sometimes result in inconsistency, and she ends up advocating nationalism (Armenian nationalism in BI) while commiserating with the Armenian for their tragic loss in 1915.

Although, this subjectivity distorts Shafak's integrity, it should be noted that her attitude towards nationalism, racism or any discrimination happens to be negative, as it could apparently be observed both in her fiction and non-fiction. Identity is a combination of our preferences, and the impact of folk culture, state or marketing on us which seems to be uncontrollable for the individual. Therefore, "social identity" is both given and taken, of course with an immense effect of history, language, and place in the narrative of Shafak.

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