


Mapping Turkish Crime Fiction

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Abstract

Crime Fiction is inaccurately argued to be a Western literary genre. Roots of Crime Fiction can be found in non-Western literature. Arguably, it is a global phenomenon that exists in ancient books. Turkish Crime Fiction specifically and Middle Eastern Crime Fiction broadly, remains one of the least studied literary genres. Scholastic research on Turkish Crime Fiction are very limited and this theme of academic enquiry offers challenging and interesting endeavours as it engages with complex and seemingly unrelated concepts like Sufism, nationalism, trauma, political identity and identity politics. This article is, thus, attempting to contribute to the existing scholarship on Crime Fiction broadly and Turkish Crime Fiction more specifically. It argues that Turkish Crime Fiction is more ancient than Western Crime Fiction which arguably emerged in the nineteenth century, and was advent by Edgar Allan Poe. In this article, it is suggested that Turkish Crime Fiction dates back to the pre-Islamic era, between the eighth and tenth centuries. It is further argued in this paper that Turkish Crime Fiction is unique in the sense that it engages with complex concepts that tackle paradoxical issues like the Kemalist-Islamist dichotomy, religion and secularism, and nationalism and politics. In addition, in the existing canon of Turkish Crime Fiction, Istanbul seems to act as a hub of Turkish Crime. The symbolic role of the location of this city is discussed at length in this article as it offers a window into understanding one of the major characteristics of Turkish Crime Fiction. These notions are explored using genealogical and analytical approaches. This article concludes that more research on Crime Fiction is needed, and that the relation between concepts of religion, secularism, modernity and nationalism ought to be explored in relation to Turkish Crime Fiction. Finally, this paper calls for more academic attention and research on Crime Fiction to liberate it from the classical classification of Crime Fiction as a sophisticated “means of entertainment”, and to clear it from being guilty of marketability literature.

Keywords: Crime Fiction; Detective Novel; Istanbul; Turkish Literature; Sufism.

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Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe is credited for creating the Crime Novel. His short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) is argued to be the first crime novel to ever exist. Consequently, this so-called modern literary genre has long been associated with American fiction exclusively and the Western one. There is an extensive body of research on this literary genre. However, most scholastic research tends to focus on Western Fiction at the expense of Eastern literature. It could be argued that Crime Fiction makes an appearance in almost all countries, including Middle Eastern nations, and it is far too ancient than the modern period. Crime fiction is a global phenomenon that can be found in ancient texts. Turkish Crime Fiction is one of the least studied in the field of literary studies, even when compared with those focusing on Middle Eastern and Postcolonial literary traditions, it remains less explored. Arguably, there is very limited research on Turkish Crime fiction, perhaps because of the difficulty of reading Turkish Crime novel. This difficulty seems to stem from its uniqueness, thematically and aesthetically, as it sets itself apart somehow from traditional Crime Fiction. Turkish Crime novels not only tackle the traditional issues of justice and the political taboo. In addition to the traditional focus of crime fiction, Turkish crime novels reflect on socio-cultural patterns plaguing Turkey. Some of these works are Orhan Pamuk's *Benim Adım Kirmizi* (1998), ethnic and pan-ethnic issues within Turkish society, like in Yasar Kemal's *Inci Memed* (1955), national trauma like in Nadim Gorsel's *Uzun Surmus Bir Yaz* (1975), and finally the plight of the Turkish immigrant, especially those taking of Germany as a host land like in Esmahan Aykol's *Hotel Bosphorus* (2003). Middle Eastern crime fiction, broadly, and Turkish crime fiction, exclusively, provide an insight into the need for more scholastic research related to crime fiction, and urge researchers to a further academic investigation on the origins of what has been widely acknowledged as a Western literary genre (crime fiction). This paper provides a genealogical and analytical reading of Turkish crime fiction and emphasises the literary and cultural significance of Istanbul in Turkish Crime Fiction. It engages with the Turkish Crime Fiction specifically because there is very limited scholarly research on the topic. Thus, this paper covers a gap in literary studies. In addition, this paper focuses on Turkish crime fiction, for it is unique and more ancient than the Anglo-American crime fiction. These two key points are explored through discussing the following points: the origins of Turkish crime fiction, its distinct characteristics which engage with religious mysticism, its multiple allegories, and finally the significance of the setting as it seems that Istanbul, as the hub of crime, appears in the majority of Turkish crime novels.

1. Origins and Development of Turkish Crime Fiction

It is argued that Ahmet Mithat's *Esrâr-ı Cinâyât* (1884) is the first Turkish crime novel. However, Crime Fiction did not gain popularity among Turkish readers until the twentieth century with Ebüssüreyya Sami's *Amanvermez Avni* (1913). Sami's crime novel has thus been considered the most prominent and highly acknowledged first Turkish crime narrative, for it paved the way to the establishment of Turkish Crime Fiction. This has been the dominant argument especially since *Amanvermez Avni* (1913) was compared with Sherlock Holmes (Ensari 2023). However, according to Tanc (2013), the first original Turkish crime narrative dates back to the seventeenth century. It was introduced by Yusuf Nabi in the form of a mesnevi entitled *Hayrabad* (1705). This later is a Sufi masterpiece made up of a collection of poems about stories and anecdotes, attempting to derive morals. These mesnevi had one objective, which is the search for the truth, a process through which the Sufi acts as a detective who seeks to discover the mysteries of creation, uncover a divine case, ponder upon his existence and purge his soul from his sins (crimes). Nabi's *Hayrabad* has been regarded as Crime Fiction for it first evokes the feeling of suspense and excitement, and second, it features a detective and criminal represented by the character Çalak (Tanc, 2013; Ensari 2023).

On the other hand, Üyepazarcı (2014), argues that Turkish crime fiction dates back to the pre-Islamic period. He asserts that the first Turkish crime narrative dates back to the tenth century and can be found in The Book of Dede Korkut produced by the Oghuz Turks, a Turkic tribe that inhabited Central Asia and Mongolia before its settlement in Anatolia, Turkey. According to Sümer (1972), this book is considered as: "one of the oldest surviving pieces of Turkish literature... now considered the national epic of Turkey, it is the heritage of the ancient Oghuz Turks and was composed as they migrated westward from their homeland in Central Asia to the Middle East, eventually to settle in Anatolia" (p 167-177). According to Şahin, Öztürk and Büyükkarman (2014) and Altıntaş and Karadağ (2019), Turkish Crime Fiction continued to evolve during and after the Ottoman period. They contend that during this period, Turkish Crime Fiction tended to focus on political identity and nationalist ideology. This is especially true during the rule of Abdülhamid II. They also note that after the decline of the Ottoman Period and the beginning of the Kemalist rule, the focus on political issues shifted to that on socio-cultural ones.

During the rule of Abdülhamid II, Turkish Literature, generally, and Crime Fiction specifically witnessed a leap in terms of narrative style and genre. The *mesnevi* was substituted with new literary forms like novels and plays, and translated works amounted to fifty-four works during his reign (Üyepazarcı, 2014). These new forms were introduced to the Turkish literary scene due to the Tanzimat Reforms, which aimed at modernising the Ottoman Empire in an attempt to stop its decline between the 1830s and 1870s. Under the Tanzimat Reform, secular school systems were established, new regulations of criminal laws were initiated, an organized police force was established in the 1840s, and major cities grew into a cosmopolitan structure (Üyepazarcı, 2014). Notably, these newly introduced criminal rules were a replica of the French system at the time. This "modern" political scene was soon translated into the literary field as the first Turkish novel entitled *Telemak* (1862) was a translation of François Fénelon's *Les aventures de télémaque* by Yusuf Kamel (Meral, 2014). In regards to Turkish Crime Fiction during the Ottoman period, the French influence remained strong as the first detective novels introduced to the Turkish reader were originally French. Amongst the first novels are Ponson du Terrail's *Les drames de Paris* (1857), translated by Ahmet Münif and translated Émile Gaboriau's *Le crime d'Orléans* (1867) translated by Ahmet Mithat Efendi who has written later the aforementioned work *Esrâr-ı Cinâyât* (1884). Tufekcioglu explains the sudden and increasing interest in translating crime novels during that period. She explains that writers of the Tanzimat Reforms had to keep up with the modernisation of Turkey and negotiate a space where East and West coexist. She continues that these writers perceived the detective novel as a means through which they channel moral lessons and educate their society. However, the Turkish "fever" of translating crime fiction was rapidly broken.

Between 1903 and 1908, the political scene in Turkey witnessed a nationalist and ideological crisis resulting in the Young Turks revolt to overthrow Abdülhamid II. The Young Turks, later known as the Committee of Union and Progress, led by Enver Bey and Ahmed Niyazi Bey, resulted in a deteriorating political atmosphere and brutal censorship. This political tension soon affected the literary scene as the wave of translations of Western literature, generally, and crime fiction, specifically, came to an end between 1903 and 1908. The Second Constitution was proclaimed in 1918, and some freedoms were granted in the field of translation and publishing. In this continuum, Ensari (2023) notes that: "After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, western detective novels continued to be translated. In 1928 the Latin-based modern Turkish alphabet replaced the Ottoman-Turkish alphabet and since then detective novels have been being published in the modern Turkish alphabet" (p. 18).

2. Characteristics of Turkish Crime Fiction

Characteristics of Turkish crime fiction can be summed in aesthetic and style, symbolism and theme. Aesthetically and stylistically, the majority of Turkish crime novels are hard-boiled and detective. They mainly shed light on political corruption. Symbolically, Turkish crime fiction employs mysticism broadly and Sufism specifically to reflect the cultural and societal changes Turkey went through. It also symbolises the political identity of the Turkish nation. In other words, it symbolises the Kemalist-Islamist dichotomy. Thematically, it seems that Turkish crime novels are set in cities, mainly Istanbul, like....or museums, which can be seen as an attempt to reconnect with, and revise the history of the Turkish nation.

2.1. *Turkish Crime Fiction as a National and Cultural Allegory*

Contrary to the popular belief that Crime Fiction is a literary device which engages with politics and the political taboo, modern Crime fiction, generally and Turkish one, exclusively, makes use of Crime Fiction to reflect on socio-cultural atmospheres of Turkey, in addition to its political environment. In this respect, it is argued that early Turkish crime fiction is employed as a “means of reflecting on the traumatic experiences resulting from modernization, colonization, the wars, and violence [the Turkish nation] witnessed” (Ensari 2023, p. 14). In the continuum, Turkish crime fiction deals with the political history of the country and depicts the national and ideological trauma of the Turkish nation. It is also a national allegory through which the concept of nationalism is depicted and analysed (Mason 2010). It is also related to political and cultural identities, and “dictates” the “traits Turks should embody”. These traits are “adhered closely to Kemalist concepts of Turkism” in a body of Turkish Crime novels written between 1928 and 1950 (Mason 2010, p. 2), deal with issues of censorship, especially between 1917 and 1920, after the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent law enforcement and violence. Examples of Turkish crime novels which reflect on the political taboo, censorship and the political trauma resulting from the aforementioned political upheavals include: Nadim Gorsel’s *Uzun Surmus Bir Yaz* (1975), Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1954). All these works serve as national allegories portraying the extreme political shift in Turkey over the course of a century, and they examine the consequence of the dichotomous nature of Turkey’s political history which can best be summed as the shift from an Islamic State to a secular country that even its alphabets were changed from Arabic to Latin. Such a shift had an impact on the cultural life of Turkey. In this context, Turkish Crime Fiction can be also seen as a cultural allegory describing the extreme cultural transition caused by the political history of the country. This cultural aspect is depicted through the inability of the characters to adjust to the “new modern” Turkish nation, like in the work of Yusuf Atılgan’s *Aylak Adam* (1959), and through class division and the conflict between the different socio-cultural and economic classes resulting from the modernisation and industrialisation of Turkey like in the work of Orhan Kemal *Avare Yollar* (1950).

2.2. *Sufism as a Reflection of the Liminality of Turkish Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics*

Sufism is highly embedded and celebrated in Turkish Fiction as it appears strongly in the works of secular and religious Turkish writers alike. With regards to Turkish Crime Fiction, Islamic philosophies, broadly, and Sufism, specifically, were embedded in crime novels from the early stages of the rise of Turkish Crime Fiction (Parla 2004). What characterises the Tanzimat period, which as mentioned earlier in this article, was a period known for its condensed translation of Western crime novels, is that Tanzimat authors incorporated two different epistemologies: Positivist and Islamic (Parla 2004). In other words, Tanzimat writers like Şemseddin Sami, Namık Kemal, and Ahmet Mithat experimented with two separate literary styles, which are

Realism and Sufism. In this sense, Turkish Crime Fiction during the Tanzimat period was experimental, as such it was an avant-garde fiction. This blend of two separate epistemologies- liberalism and Sufism- was done unconsciously by the Tanzimat authors. In this respect, Tüfekçioğlu argues, “ Unaware of this difference, Tanzimat authors used the Western novel (including the crime genre) as a new literary tool to convey their message to the masses. It is for this reason that the early Turkish crime novels contain both nationalist and Islamic agendas” (p. 3).

According to Tüfekçioğlu (2011), Sufism in Turkish Fiction serves as a motif and literary device. In light of the Kemalist-Islamist dichotomy that governs modern Turkey, Sufism plays a major literary role as it is employed by authors to depict the ambivalence of Turkish culture and its cultural memory. Emphasising this notion, Tüfekçioğlu (2011) argues, “Sufism is presented as a medium for and an alternative to the question of identity ... it is as a means of separating religion from politics” (p. 2). Sufism is thus used as a literary device that fosters secularism, but reconnecting also with the Turkish cultural heritage, which is rooted in Islam. In this sense, “in the contemporary situation, Sufism has been officially pushed into a dubious and marginal posture, while still providing spiritual and intellectual tools that hold their appeal in many diverse and irreducibly local contexts related to religion and politics’ (Ernst 2009, p. 30). In other words, Sufism occupies a liminal space that depicts the complex identity politics in Turkey. In relation to Crime Fiction, Tüfekçioğlu (2011) claims: “What is unique about Sufism’s place in crime fiction is how it communicates the ideology of the novel and is linked with identity politics and memory” (p. 5). Sufism has been employed in such a way that it is a space where two opposites (secularism and Islam) meet. This is perhaps because tolerance and coexistence are two key concepts in Sufi philosophy. In the same vein, Sufism celebrates diversity and equality between all individuals regardless of their political ideologies, gender, race, or ethnicity. In a nation like Turkey, which is a mosaic of cultures and ethnicities, such concepts are of paramount importance for maintaining unity within a nation. In other words, Sufism emphasises notions of nationalism, cultural memory and identity which are components of a nation. In this sense, Sufism typifies “both Turkish nationalism and secular values of post-Enlightenment modernity (Ernst 2009, p. 17).

3. Istanbul as the Hub of Turkish Crime

Istanbul, a city located on two continents, is a place where the East meets the West, whereby old customs and practices are fused with new ones, and cultures from every corner of the globe live together. Its exceptional geographical location and vast history is enough to justify a crime story set within it. It is safe to say that Istanbul, being the center of Turkey’s culture, economy, and history, is the case for anything suspicious, adventurous, and secretive. The civilization that merges in which the city is located has been one of the reasons for the growth of Turkish crime literature as well.

Crime fiction has become a popular genre in Turkish literature in the last two decades. The genre of crime fiction gained prominence because of the East-West juxtaposition that Istanbul is known for, which further laid a foundation for varied types of genres to thrive. Istanbul’s rich historical roots, in addition to its geography, are all factors that help in furnishing the literary scene with crime fiction, as it is in robust demand on the global stage. Being the cultural center of Turkey, as well as its economic and historical capital, Istanbul serves as a set for plots saturated with action, suspense, and mystery.

3.1. *Historical and Cultural Context of Istanbul in Crime Fiction*

For ages, Istanbul has served as a hub of culture, trade, and power. The city acted as the capital of the Byzantine Empire and then of the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the mixture of Eastern and Western traditions, coupled with the city's geography at the Bosphorus Strait, it has always been an amalgamation that embodies the intricacies of Turkish history and identity. Historical sites like the Byzantine Hagia Sophia and the magnificent Ottoman Topkapi Palace depict a city that has experienced the birth and death of empires, the inheritance of traditions and cultures, and their fusion.

The importance of Istanbul in crime fiction goes back to the early 20th century when authors like Graham Greene, Agatha Christie, and Eric Ambler had the city in their works. Being an ex-imperial capital and a meeting point of civilisations, it was always imbued with a sense of intrigue and tension that was just right for crime and espionage narratives (Ambler, 1939). Greene's *Stamboul Train* (1932) and Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) are two instances where exotic Istanbul becomes the setting for mysteries in which characters are caught up in secrets, deception and political conspiracies. The city's own complex identity - East meets West - marks it as a place of division and intrigue in these novels.

Istanbul's political and cultural conflicts are also a major theme in Eric Ambler's spy novels, especially *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1939). The city's part in the changing dynamics of World War II, a theme that is still explored by modern writers, highlights Ambler's portrayal of the city as a location for global conspiracies (Ambler, 1939). Istanbul remains a potent backdrop in crime fiction, and these early works laid the groundwork for its growth as a metropolis with strong ties to the darker, more enigmatic aspects of world affairs.

3.2. *The Symbolic Role of Istanbul in Crime Fiction*

Istanbul's symbolic function in crime fiction is perhaps best demonstrated by its use as a metaphor for cultural clashes and identity confusion. Istanbul, a city defined by its imperial past and continuous transformation into a modern metropolis, gives a rich cultural texture that adds thematic depth to crime storylines. The city is frequently portrayed as a microcosm of larger societal tensions, where personal and political conflicts overlap and the past continues to shape the present.

Ahmet Ümit's *A Memento for Istanbul* (2010) is one of the most significant modern depictions of this, with the city acting as an active player in the tale rather than just a backdrop for a contemporary murder mystery. Ümit's novel brings together aspects of detective fiction with an examination of Istanbul's architectural and cultural past, providing a picture of the city with multi-facades. The protagonist's investigation into a series of killings leads him through the streets of the current city, while recollections of the city's Byzantine, Ottoman, and Roman history alter his view of the present. Ümit employs the city's landmarks and historical characters to depict Istanbul's complexity and diversity, transforming it into a central character in the drama.

Other contemporary works reflect Istanbul's dual position as a physical site and a metaphorical entity. For example, Joseph Kanon's *Istanbul Passage* (2012) is set in the postwar period, when Istanbul has become swarming with spies, war criminals, and shady activities. Kanon's portrayal of the city as a location of Cold War intrigue emphasizes its status as a city of transitions and political turmoil, where previous conflicts are never completely settled and the future is unclear (Kanon, 2012).

3.3 Istanbul in the Works of Renowned Turkish Crime Writers

In the last few decades, Turkish crime fiction has changed drastically with numerous authors making Istanbul the heart of their stetting's narratives. By portraying the city's contemporary complexity and referencing its diverse historical and cultural legacy, authors like Barbara Nadel, Esmahan Aykol, and Jason Goodwin have added to the genre.

Barbara Nadel's detective works featuring Çetin İkmen have garnered enormous popularity. Her first novel, *Belshazzar's Daughter* (1999), sets the tone for a series that investigates the complexities of Istanbul's socio-political scene. İkmen's research sheds light on difficulties in Istanbul's heterogeneous culture, including political tensions between Turkish citizens and ethnic minorities, as well as a widening gap between old and new Istanbul (Nadel, 1999). This investigation of sense of belonging and identity is crucial to Nadel's work, and it mirrors larger problems about Istanbul's place in the contemporary world.

Similarly, Istanbul's dynamic but increasingly fragmented society is portrayed in Esmahan Aykol's *Kati Hirschel* series, which begins with *Hotel Bosphorus* (2011). Kati, the main character of Aykol, owns a crime bookshop and frequently gets sucked into investigations that expose the city's hidden underbelly of corruption and power. By putting much emphasis not just on the city but also on the social and political components that have an impact on its citizens, Aykol's art provides a more intimate picture of the contradictions in Istanbul (Aykol, 2011).

Jason Goodwin, an English novelist, has found popularity with his series about Yashim, a Eunoch investigator in Ottoman Istanbul in the nineteenth century. Yashim depicts political and private intrigues within the sultan's court, while Goodwin's *The Janissary Tree* (2006) and its sequels, including *An Evil Eye* (2011), offer the crime fiction genre a historical touch. The novels place Istanbul's imperial past at the centre of the investigation by fusing elements of mystery and adventure with the city's rich Ottoman past. Goodwin's historical depth presents readers with an intriguing glimpse of Istanbul, not only as a physical metropolis, but also as a cultural and political hub. The series delves into themes of power, devotion, and treachery.

In his latest work, *Labyrinth*, Turkish author Burhan Sonmez, who is well-known for his literary crime fiction, approaches Istanbul from a philosophical standpoint. The protagonist of the book is Boratin, a blues musician who escapes a suicide attempt and sets out to discover the causes of his hopelessness. Sonmez weaves together the city's historical landmarks, such as the *Bosphorus Bridge*, with a contemplation of the conflict between the city's Byzantine and Ottoman pasts as Boratin wanders the streets of Istanbul in quest of his forgotten memories. The book investigates the psychological effects of both individual and societal trauma on Istanbul's citizens.

In works like *A Memento for Istanbul* (2010), one of Turkey's finest contemporary crime authors, Ahmet Ümit, uses Istanbul as a rich, historical setting. Ümit combines historical research and detective fiction, delving into the city's architectural and cultural past through the protagonist's investigation of a murder. Ümit's books frequently explore Istanbul's urban transformations, especially the conflict between the city's fast modernisation and its Byzantine and Ottoman past. *A Memento for Istanbul* emphasises the importance of famous sites like the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia, bringing them into the story to illustrate the city's rich history and its function as a hub for religious and cultural exchange. It examines the ways in which Istanbul's past haunts its present, transforming it into a metropolis influenced by memory, tradition, and identity in addition to its physical locations (Ümit, 2010).

Another well-known Turkish author, Tuncer Cücenoglu, scrutinizes Istanbul's multi-ethnic identity in his crime novels. Cücenoglu writes a dark and evocative story in his novel *The Perfumed Prison* (2015), which is situated in the winding lanes of Istanbul's older neighbourhoods. Istanbul is depicted as a city of secrets where the past and present are constantly at odds. By highlighting the city's position as a nexus of various peoples and cultures, Cücenoglu gives readers an insight into the internal struggles that define its character. Cücenoglu depicts Istanbul as a psychological and physical prison where its citizens are imprisoned by their own pasts and societal norms through his nuanced characters and elaborate storylines (Cücenoglu, 2015).

3.4 Istanbul's Urban Psyche in Crime Fiction

Istanbul, as a geographical and cultural hub, serves as a metaphor for conflict and contradiction, making it an ideal setting for crime fiction. It is a city where two continents meet, ancient civilisations coexist with modern urban life, and East and West collide—both literally and metaphorically. The study of Istanbul's "urban psyche" in crime fiction goes into the mental, social, and physical places that define the city's story. As a prominent character in Turkish crime fiction, Istanbul represents not just its citizens' psychological states, but also the city's unique ability to embody tension, struggle, and transformation.

Cities are frequently portrayed as individuals in crime fiction, complete with personalities, desires, and conflicts. Istanbul, in particular, is shown as a dynamic and changing entity, with the psychological landscape reflecting the tensions of its historical, political, and social environments. Authors such as Ahmet Ümit and Esmahan Aykol have examined this dynamic by combining Istanbul's rich architectural and cultural past with its residents' fractured identities. Istanbul's multifaceted identity allows for a more in-depth look at the city as a mirror of psychological and societal fears.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Istanbul's urban psychology is the sense of fragmentation that penetrates its streets and neighbourhoods. This disintegration occurs both physically and psychologically. The city's skyline is distinguished by mosques, cathedrals, and palaces from various historical periods, while its neighbourhoods are divided into prosperous modern sections and decaying districts with traces of the Ottoman and Byzantine past. As Ümit demonstrates in his *A Memento for Istanbul* (2010), Istanbul's streets are more than just settings; they represent the characters' internal battles. The protagonist's trip through the city in search of a serial killer is linked with contemplations on the city's profound historical scars. For example, buildings like Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque are viewed not only as architectural marvels, but also as reminders of a long and violent past, influencing the mental states of individuals who visit them. The city's divided identity, with its ever-changing environment, reflects the fragmented psyches of individuals who live there, continuously negotiating the past and the present (Ümit 2010).

Furthermore, the psychological landscape of Istanbul is moulded by the city's urbanisation and rapid modernisation, both of which have had a significant impact on its residents. The fast expansion of the metropolis has created a sense of bewilderment and isolation. Barbara Nadel's Çetin İkmek series explores the mismatch between Istanbul's ancient areas and modern, commercialised settings. In *Belshazzar's Daughter* (1999), Nadel depicts Istanbul as a city where the past is never really forgotten, but its people are continually propelled into the future, attempting to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. Both the city and the protagonists appear to be at odds with themselves as a result of the tension that results, and the detective figure—who is usually portrayed as an outsider or an observer—often acts as a platform for

interacting with this tension and offering a prism through which the intricacies of Istanbul's urban psyche are analysed.

The relationship between physical and psychological geography is critical to understanding Istanbul's position in crime fiction. Istanbul's status as a crossroads of civilisations contributes to the city's reputation as a location of both opportunity and danger. The Bosphorus Strait, for example, is a physical barrier separating Europe and Asia, but it also serves as a metaphor for the psychological difference between Istanbul's residents, who frequently battle with questions of cultural identity, nationalism, and the friction between tradition and modernity. In Esmahan Aykol's *Hotel Bosphorus* (2011), the protagonist, Kati Hirschel, a bookshop owner, goes on investigations that reveal Istanbul's secret strata, not only geographically but also mentally.

Aykol portrays Istanbul as a location where social pressures and personal histories collide, forcing the characters to deal with the city's omnipresent impact through Kati's experiences there. Istanbul is a perfect location for psychological crime fiction since it is a place of both conflict and cohabitation, where it is frequently difficult to distinguish between internal struggles and external mystery. Through its social dynamics, Istanbul's urban psyche's psychological aspect is also examined. Tension and conflict are frequently exacerbated by the city's multicultural heritage, which includes a diverse range of ethnic groups, faiths, and languages. The city's rich but traumatic past is a major factor in forming Boratin's mentality in Burhan Sonmez's 2019 novel *Labyrinth*. The psychological effects of living in a city that is both a booming centre and a place plagued by its horrific past are examined in the book. Class, ethnicity, and the lingering effects of the Ottoman and Republican politics strain the city's social fabric, resulting in a cityscape where the physical and psychological spaces are intricately linked.

Sonmez's protagonist, a blues singer who survives a suicide attempt, must come to grips with both his own pain and the psychological scars of a city that has undergone centuries of change. Boratin shows how the urban landscape of Istanbul is psychologically ingrained in the brains of its residents by walking through its streets and seeing both tangible monuments and the collective trauma of its citizens (Sonmez, 2019). As a result, Istanbul serves as an effective metaphor for its citizens' broken and multidimensional psyches. The city's diverse architecture, layers of history, and ongoing struggles with modernisation all contribute to the tension that propels the psychological narrative in crime fiction. Through its numerous literary depictions, Istanbul is transformed into a setting in which the city itself symbolises the psychological and physical hardships of its citizens, acting as much of a character as any human protagonist.

Istanbul's unusual position at the crossroads of East and West makes it an alluring backdrop for crime fiction, with its complicated urban landscape mirroring the psychological and cultural problems of its protagonists. Writers such Ahmet Ümit, Barbara Nadel, and Esmahan Aykol use the city's rich historical layers and rapid modernisation to examine issues of identity, conflict, and societal upheaval. Istanbul becomes more than just a backdrop in these stories; it acts as a dynamic character, shaping the events and emotional undercurrents.

Conclusion

Turkish Crime Fiction remains one of the unexplored literary genres. The engagement with this genre provides an insight into one of the inaccurate, falsified academic facts: Crime Fiction is originally a Western literary genre, and Edgar Allan Poe is credited with inventing this literary genre. Turkish Crime Fiction is ten centuries older than American and English Crime Fiction. Turkish Crime Fiction sets itself apart somehow from traditional Crime Fiction. Turkish Crime novels not only tackle the traditional issues of justice and the political taboo. It dives deeper than the traditional focus of crime fiction, like social justice, concepts of crime, criminality, and

citizenship. Turkish crime novels reflect on socio-cultural patterns plaguing Turkey and attempt to analyse the complexity of the Turkish culture, its national, political, and cultural heritage. Turkish Crime Fiction engages with the debate regarding Turkey's position in relation to modernity and tradition; religion and secularism, the individual and the nation. These dualities are explored thematically through the characters of the novels or the setting: Istanbul. This city which is located between two continents Asia and Europe embodies both physically and psychologically the liminality of Turkish culture and its identity. In this vein, Turkish Crime Fiction ascends way beyond the traditional classification of Crime Fiction as a sophisticated means of entertainment, or the popular assumption that Crime novels are written for the sake of marketability literature. In other words, Turkish Crime Fiction is worthy of more academic research as it engages with complex literary and philosophical themes which can provide an insight into understanding the Turkish condition.

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