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## AN INHABITABLE CONSCIOUSNESS: TRAUMA AND HEALING IN *A CAT, A MAN, A DEATH* (2001) BY ZÜLFÜ LİVANELİ\*

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### Abstract

Despite a tendency in Turkish novels to be strictly local in terms of setting and characters, Livaneli uses a more global variety of settings and characters in his novels. *A Cat, A Man, A Death* might give the impression that it is a severe criticism of Turkish authorities in the seventies, the inclusion of characters from Spain, Chile, Japan and Iran gives the novel a more global perspective. Livaneli tends to indicate that anti-democratic governments, violence, torture, discrimination are universal problems, which cannot be reduced to only a few cultures and blamed on them. Livaneli's novel focuses on the traumatic experience of individual cases who have to go through these bitter experiences abroad as refugees. Losing friends, family, one's own land, freedom, social status and future prospects, political refugees in Livaneli's novel try to hold on to life. This study aims to show that trauma theory is a quite useful tool to read Livaneli's novels. This paper focuses only on one of Livaneli's novels but it still relates trauma theory with short references to Livaneli's other novels.

**Keywords:** Zülfü Livaneli, *A Cat, A Man, A Death*, Trauma Theory, Contemporary Turkish Novel.

### Introduction

Musician, composer, politician, novelist, film director, columnist, UNESCO Ambassador, Livaneli likes to define himself as a Renaissance man. Although Livaneli was known as a politically engaged, highly popular left wing musician for more than 25 years, (first music album 1971, a short story collection in 1978, first novel 1996 "Engereğin Gözündeki Kamaşma" in his autobiography, *Sevdamım Hayat*, Livaneli says that as a teenager his only dream was to become a writer. He was an ardent reader even before high school, he had read everything by Hemingway, Steinbeck, Jack London, Caldwell, Faulkner, and the classical Russian novelists. He tried his hand writing a novel at the age of fifteen as well as poems and short stories. Reading and writing were his passions to such an extent that his grades at high school went lower and lower until he failed seven courses one year, not an unexpected result for a teenager who had taken Jack London and Hemingway as his role models. Concerned with this excessive passion, his parents tried to forbid him reading after ten o'clock in the evenings but he would find a way to break the ban and go on reading until the morning. (Livaneli, 2007: 49-70)

The first job that Zülfü Livaneli took after he got married with his high school girlfriend in 1966, at a relatively early age, at around twenty was representing a German pharmaceutical company in the Blacksea region. Livaneli traveled all around the region organizing political activity as well as representing the company which soon drew the attention of the national intelligence agency. The German company was made to dismiss him. He decided to undertake the Ankara distribution of books mainly published in Istanbul. Later on with his partner he established a publishing house called Ekim Yayınları, October Publishing, and started to publish translations of the representatives of Marxist literature such as John Reed's, Leo Huberman's, Paul Sweezy's and Che Guavera's books. The fifth book they published became a bestseller overnight lifting all the economic pressure off the company. With the money they helped one of their playwright friends Vasif Öngören, whose Brechtian play "Asiye Nasıl Kurtulur?" would not be staged by other companies, to found a new theater company known as Ankara Birlik Tiyatrosu. The play was a sensational success. It was also at that time that Livaneli was encouraged and urged to do an album with the Anatolian folk songs he sang for his friends, not a great success though, he had been arrested two times, persecuted, had lost his confidence and voice. (Livaneli, 2007: 112-150)

At the height of his career as a publisher and producer came the 1971 March coup. He was considered to be a prominent figure in the leftist politics, consequently arrested 3 times after the 1971

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(military memorandum) coup, stayed more than a month each time before he was brought to the court to learn the accusations: having links with hijacking a Turkish Airlines plane to Sofia, as Livaneli sees it there was no evidence whatsoever against him. As the investigator could not connect him directly to the hijack in any possible way, Livaneli says that he was released only to be arrested again with fabricated evidences and reports of intelligence agents. This time he was accused of being a member of the "Titrek Hamsi Hücresi". (I apologize from my non-Turkish speaking audience but my English fails me in translating this tragi-comical phrase.) When he was informed that he was to be arrested a fourth time by a friend already in prison, his family and friends urged him to flee. (Livaneli, 2007: 147-152, 175)

The prison was not the worst thing to be expected as he narrates in *Sevdaım Hayat*:

Bu zeki ve acı şakaya gülerken aklım Hollandalı bir radyocuyla yaptığım söyleşiye gitti.

Telefonla bağlantı kuran radyocu, darbeler yaşadığımı, askeri cezaevlerinde yattığımı, on bir yıl sürgüne gitmek zorunda kaldığımı biliyordu. Bana "En acı deneyimim" in ne olduğunu sordu.

Ben de duraklamadan "Yakın arkadaşlarımın öldürülmesi" olduğu cevabını verdim.

Önce yanlış anladığını sandı. Arkadaşım mı öldürülmüştü, arkadaşlarım mı? Tekil mi, çoğul mu?

"Evet" dedim. "Arkadaşlarım."

"Kaç kişi?"

"Sayısını bilmiyorum ama herhalde yirmi otuz kişiden fazladır."

...Bunun en son örneğini sevgili arkadaşımız Ermeni kökenli gazeteci Hrant Dink'in katledilişinde yaşamıştık.

Hollandalı radyocunun sorusu üzerine eşimle birlikte öldürülmüş arkadaşlarımızı saymaya başladık.

50 sayısını bulunca devam edecek halimiz kalmamıştı, çünkü ikimiz de gözyaşlarına boğulmuştuk.<sup>1</sup> (Livaneli, 2007: 20-21).

When he was rejected a passport by the authorities, he decided to go to Sweden with a fake passport. His autobiography "Sevdaım Hayat" tells the story of these years in Livaneli's life with a great attention to detail. Even some of the paragraphs have been taken from *Bir Kedi, Bir Adam, Bir Ölüm* verbatim. In the exile, Livaneli's virtuoso as a bağlama player and folk singer saved him economic concerns. He was invited to make programs at the Swedish and Norwegian radios. Encouraged by this keen interest to his music, he made an album with his own compositions which became marching songs for the leftist groups in Turkey in the early seventies, yet it did not bring any revenues to the artist, as it was pirated and sold in hundreds of thousands. (Livaneli, 2007: 200-205)

### Shock and Trauma

During the seventies, eighties and nineties his songs were extremely popular in the leftist circles, he made albums with Theodorakis, Farantouri, Joan Baez and many other left wing international musicians. (Livaneli, 2007: 249-252) In Sweden he spent his time learning languages, attending to the music and philosophy programs of the university, making radio programs, writing music and trying his hand at novels. (Livaneli, 2007: 200-205) His first attempt, as he declares it, was *Bir Kedi, Bir Adam, Bir Ölüm* (*One Cat, One Man, One Death*) which was also published in English, French, Persian, German, Greek and Serbian. (Livaneli, 2001: 9-11) The novel tells the story of a trauma suffered by the hero, a wounded man, wounded by the most wasteful death of his fiancée by a conscript soldier at a checkpoint. *One Cat, One Man, One Death* also tells the parallel stories of refugees from Iran, Chile, Uruguay, Spain and Japan which gives the novel a global perspective on the traumas suffered by politically engaged characters of the novel. The first thing we

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated translations are mine: "As I was laughing at this witty and bitter joke I recalled an interview I gave to a Dutch radio presenter. The presenter who reached me via telephone knew that I had gone through coups, did time in military jails, and had to live in exile for eleven years. He asked me what my most painful experience was. Without stopping I said "my close friends were killed". At first he thought he got it wrong. Was it a friend that was killed, or friends? Singular, or plural? "Yes" I replied "friends". "How many?" "I do not know but probably twenty or thirty." The last time we suffered this pain was the assassination of our friend Hrant Dink, a journalist of Armenian origin .... Upon his question I and my wife started to count each loss, at fifty we could not go on any longer we had burst into tears." (Livaneli, 2007: 20-21)



come across as readers in Livaneli's novel is an epigraph from Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea* which I believe set the the central theme and tone of the novel:

Volcanoes cast forth stones, and revolutions men, so families are removed to distant places; human beings come to pass their lives far from their native homes; groups of relatives and friends disperse and decay; strange people fall, as it were, from the clouds – some in Germany, some in England, some in America. The people of the country view them with surprise and curiosity. Whence come these strange faces? Yonder mountain, smoking with revolutionary fires, casts them out. These barren aërolites, these famished and ruined people, these footfalls of destiny, are known as refugees, émigrés, adventurers. If they sojourn among strangers, they are tolerated; if they depart, there is a feeling of relief. Sometimes these wanderers are harmless, inoffensive people, strangers – at least, as regards the women – to the events which have led to their exile, objects of persecution, helpless and astonished at their fate. They take root again somewhere as they can. They have done no harm to any one, and scarcely comprehend the destiny that has befallen them. So thus I have seen a poor tuft of grass uprooted and carried away by the explosion of a mine. No great explosion was ever followed by more of such strays than the first French Revolution. (Hugo, 1866: 8)

The epigraph reveals how helpless the victims of revolutions are before the forces that uproot them from their homes to force them to live in foreign lands where they are not always welcome, but still tolerated at best. The Sweden of 1970s and early 1980s was quite welcoming towards the refugees from all around the World; Japan, Chile, Turkey, Iran, Spain. The problems that the refugees in the novel face do not stem from being discriminated against in a foreign country; the loneliness, the distance, the strangeness, the unfamiliarity of the culture, cuisine, climate, society and the nature make exile a heartbreaking experience.<sup>2</sup>

In the early 70s a young man and his fiancée drive home at a winter night. Lost in the excitement of their approaching wedding, they do not notice the military police checkpoint on the high street and their lives disastrously shattered by a bullet shot by one of the conscripts at the checkpoint. In order to cover the scandal, the victim's fiancé Sami Baran was forced to keep quiet and accept the official announcement which clears the responsibility of the officials. Even the minister of internal affairs has to get involved and personally see that it does not "stain" the country's reputation. Having gone through the shocking loss of his fiancé first and the torture subsequently, Sami Baran loses all his equilibrium, joy of life and sense of security and safety. His family decide to send him to a safer country where he might forget about it all and will not be prosecuted by the authorities.

Livaneli's novel opens with the sentence "Sami Baran, cinayet tohumunun ilk kez içine düşeceği o salı akşamından yedi gün önce, karanlık ormanların içinden kıvrıla kıvrıla giden buzlu yolda araba sürmekteydi."<sup>3</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 13) In Stockholm he works for the city, driving a garbage truck and makes forty kronas a day which is enough even to be able to afford an old and rusty Volvo which he would drive madly in the country, in dark forests whenever the crisis strikes: "o garip sıkıntı yüreğini kemirmeye başladığında atlayıp şehir dışına çıkması ve ormanlar, göller arasında delice sürmesi için birebirdi." (Livaneli, 2001: 13) The novel presents Sami as a distressed, broken, hallucinating young man. He finds it very difficult to find peace of mind. Robson's observation on traumatic experience just perfectly describes Sami's state of mind:

To tell the story of trauma risks diluting the horror of traumatic experience and "forgetting" what happened, thereby losing the possibility of remembering and bearing witness to the traumatic past. Narratives of trauma are balanced between an imperative to convey the horror of trauma and the equally urgent need to contain or minimize that horror, between the requirement to remember and the urge to "forget". This poses questions of crucial importance in

<sup>2</sup> A popular song composed by Livaneli and the Lyrics written by Aysel Gürel summarizes the mood of the exile in the novel in a nutshell: "The exile: On the face of the earth and the sky/When the sun is born/Always the first day/Every other day bright/Without hope yet/Would all be blight/My beloved in another land/My breast holds my soul/As if in a cage/How incurable/An endless separation/Time has stopped/Each evening is the same/In storm or in White frost/The exile is everywhere/And always lonesome/No matter/how beautiful the rose bloomed/Or the bird flew/The exile will not see them/He is broken/At every stop and every sleep/The exile is lonesome/At every breath/At every dawn/And every morsel/Hears a voice /Or passes mountains/Each step is the last/Each moment a last step/On your own,/Loneliness echoes all through". Yet at the end of the novel, having established his equilibrium the protagonist finally manages to get used to his life as a refugee. Livaneli once more puts forward the idea of the adaptability of human beings into new conditions and that human life and human nature have similar courses anywhere in the world. This optimism also promotes change as a normal course of human existence.

<sup>3</sup> "Sami Baran who had been living in Stockholm as a political refugee, seven days before the night that the seed of murder fell into him, was driving on an icy road which meandered in the dark woods." (Livaneli, 2001: 13)



literary theory as well as in therapy and in law: what is at stake in assimilating trauma into narrative? What are the limits and possibilities of a narrative of trauma? And how do we interpret or judge such narratives? (Robson, 2004: 12)

“Between the requirement to remember and the urge to forget” Livaneli’s characters prefer to assume the character of another to distance themselves from the traumatic experience thus alienating themselves from their personal history. Sami decides to become a cat “Oysa şimdi bir kediyim ben: uzak denetimli, soğukkanlı ve güçlü bir kedi. Eski Mısır’da, Beni Hassan’da yapılmış üç yüz bin kendi mumyasından biriyim: Onlar kadar soğuk, onlar kadar güçlü ve mağrur.”<sup>4</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 32) This identification, or the transfer of identity to another being, in this case not even a living being is a relief for the subject.<sup>5</sup>

In a quite similar line Sami of “Kimseye bağlanmazdı o. Katherine’e bağlanmadığı gibi, bana da bağlanmamıştı. Bir otobüsün altında kalsam, ertesi gün gidip bir başkasını bulacağı belliydi. Bu yüzden ben de aynı biçimde davranmalıydım... Ben yıllar önce buna benzer... Yoo! Bunu yazara anlatmadım.”<sup>6</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 35) The reason why he would like to be transformed into a cat is that he has suffered for getting attached too closely in his past and that his emotional involvement and investment have caused him severe pain. When he meets Clara this pain, numbness, or frozenness seems to disappear: “O benim uzun süren uyku dönemimi sona erdiren, yüreğime ilk yaşam kıpırtıları, küçük heyecan titreşimleri salan kişiydi. Çünkü yıllar boyunca kablosu çekilmiş ölü bir radyo gibi yaşamıştım... O olaydan sonra hiçbir kadına değil el sürmek, bakmamıştım bile. Kurumuştum, tükenmişim, canım çekilmişti, değersiz bir tahta parçası kadar takır takırdım...”<sup>7</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 43-4) In Freudian terms, meeting Clara puts him back again on the Life drive. As Freud explains the binary opposition between the life drive and the death drive<sup>8</sup> with these words and I quote: “Our speculations have suggested that Eros operates from the beginning of life and appears as a ‘life-drive’ in opposition to the ‘death-drive’ which was brought into being by the coming to life of inorganic substance. These speculations seek to solve the riddle of life by supposing that these two drives were struggling with each other from the very first.” (qtd. in Bird-Pollan, 42) (Erikson’s observations on the social aspect of trauma might help us read Clara’s positive effect on Sami. As Erikson notes “Trauma is normally understood as a somewhat lonely and isolated business because the persons who experience it so often drift away from the everyday moods and understandings that govern social life. But, paradoxically, the drifting away is accompanied by revised views of the world that, in their turn, become the basis for communality.” (Erikson, 1995: 198)

The fact that Sami survived the shooting by mere coincidence and could have been himself the victim in the shooting, in Caruth’s words the very “survival” itself also creates a “crisis”. She observes “for those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic”.<sup>9</sup> (Caruth, 1995: 9)

<sup>4</sup> “Whereas I am a cat now: distant, checked, cold-blooded and a strong cat. I am one of the three hundred thousand cat mummies made in the ancient Egypt, in Beni Hasan.” (Livaneli, 2001: 32)

<sup>5</sup> In *Kardeşimin Hikayesi (My Brother’s Story)* for instance when Ahmet realizes that he is himself actually Mehmet, the one who has had to suffer the loss of his twin brother Ahmet and his parents at a traffic accident, the maddening loneliness of a prison cell for more than a year in a Russian jail, and the revelation that all he had to suffer was because of someone whom he thought was a friend. Through telling the story he cannot find the energy, strength, will, reason, courage whatever you call it to exist any more. It is the transfer of identity to another entity that kept him alive after that traumatic experience; when that illusion is discovered by Mehmet, he is left with only one chance as the death drive beats the will to live and to survive; in a way Mehmet with his personal history of shock and the traumatic memories is an inhabitable existence.

<sup>6</sup> “She would not be attached to anybody. Just as she never got attached to Katherine, she was not attached to me. If I were to run down by a bus, she was surely to go find someone else the next day. For that I should act the same way...Years ago I ... a similar event . . . No! No! I did not tell this to the writer.” (Livaneli, 2001: 35)

<sup>7</sup> “She was the one who ended my long lasted sleep period, first life stirrings, little excitement thrills came by her... After that event let alone touching a one, I did not even look at one. I had dried up, exhausted, my lifeblood had withdrawn, I was as withered as a worthless piece of lumber.” (Livaneli, 2001: 43-4)

<sup>8</sup> Let us begin with the death drive. The conclusion to be drawn from the traumatic war neurosis, Freud argues, is that “an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces.”<sup>42</sup> That is, according to this description of the death drive, the living thing has been somehow energetically animated and seeks to return to its original state of rest by dissipating its energy. Freud writes, “The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavored to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state.”<sup>43</sup> The death drive, then, is the thought that the original unity toward which the subjectivity strives is to be achieved by rejoining material nature. Freud conceives of this rejoining as the return to a state of constancy. (Bird-Pollan, 41)

<sup>9</sup> Livaneli’s novels abounds with characters who have turned their faces to death, rather than holding to life. Life has become a burden, a pain, an unendurable suffering to these characters. In *Bir Kedi, Bir Adam, Bir Ölüm (A Cat, A Man, A Death)* driving like mad on frozen dark forest roads can be considered as an attempt for suicide; in *Huzursuzluk (Unrest)* (2017) the little girl commits suicide having lost all her drive for life sucked out of her energy for good; in *Serenad (Serenade)* (2011) Maximillian tries to commit suicide only to be saved by



As Caruth also notes in most of these cases For it is not just any event that creates a traumatic neurosis, Freud indicates, but specifically “severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life.” (Caruth, 1995: 12 ) Finding their life more of an unpleasant turbulence and disturbance Livaneli’s characters “seek to return to its original state of rest by dissipating its energy”. In each of Livaneli’s novels there is at least one character who would like to “dissipate its energies” to return to “a state of constancy”. The sources of these drives in Livaneli’s works are usually political decisions, events leading to tragic consequences. For instance, in *A Cat, A Man, A Death* the government try to maintain social stability and peace through inviting the army into the cities.

Checkpoints are built in many busy streets of the city where conscripts who are not very delicate or careful with their guns are given the authority to shoot at suspicious subjects. Lost in their approaching happiness the soon to be wedded couple miss the signal to stop given by a conscript only to be shot at at their happiest moments of their lives. The bullet gets into Sami’s fiance’s skull from the back and takes out one of her eyes with the socket. The Sami survives this shooting but can never fully recover from the shock he experiences at that moment. As if this was not enough, he is forced to betray the memory of his fiancé. Moreover, to crush the last bits of sanity and integrity and self-respect he is forced to exonerate the authorities from the responsibility of the murder: “Yaptık bile! Dedi “Kazanın ikinci günü resmi bir açıklamayla bunu herkese duyurduk. Örgüt mensubu bir kız militan otomobille eyleme giderken kendisinden şüphelenen timin dur ihtarına uymadı ve sonra tim kendisini takibe aldı. Bunun üzerine kız militan arabadan ateş etmeye başladı. Çıkan çatışma sonunda ise ölü olarak ele geçirildi.”<sup>10</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 116)

### Inhabitable Consciousnesses

Sami is deprived of his only hope of reestablishing and restoring his unity by seeing that justice is done and that the World is a place worth living where justice can be maintained-sustained-reigning. “En korkuncu da Filiz’in parçalanmış kafatası ve yarısı olmayan yüzüyle resminin yayımlanmış olmasıydı. Bir tek gazete yapmıştı bunu, demek ki yetkililere en yakın olanı oydu. Birinci sayfadan bastığı bu korkunç resimde Filiz’in elinde otomatik bir silah görülüyordu ve resmin üst tarafına “İşte terörirstin sonu!” yazılmıştı. Birden kustum....Uzun sürecek kusma dönemimin ilk belirtisiydi bu.”<sup>11</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 116)

After what Sami has gone through the death drive is the dominant drive as far as Sami is concerned; one happy coincidence saves Sami’s life, coming across the man who puts him to all these pains is left to his mercy at the hospital; although he has all the possible means to revenge himself in all the possible ways he can; by pardoning the perpetrator Sami gains his old equilibrium and finds peace in his life and the life drive wins again: “Doktora söylemediği en önemli şey, yaşlı adamın varlığının kendisini daha çabuk iyileştirmekte oluşuydu. O adamı görmekle gündelik sıkıntılarını unutuyor, kendini daha büyük bir amaca yönlendirilmiş hissediyordu.”<sup>12</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 110) Not all the characters in the novel are as fortunate as Sami though, the Japanese refugee woman, on the other, cannot find a way but to return to her “original unity” “to a state of constancy”. (cite the part): Livaneli, narrates, Yoriko/Hanako’s last moments thus: “Artık o birbirine benzeyen günleri, odasındaki inanılmaz yalnızlığı, dostsuzluğu, sevgisizliği, yüzlerce kabak ve bakla arasına sıkışan yaşamını aşmış ve bir başka kişi olmuştu.”<sup>13</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 142) As Livaneli expresses in another part of the novel, relating his experience as an eleven-year exile “Ağaçlar, bitkiler gibi o toprağa dikilmiştik. Sürgünün en kötü yanıydı buydu. Doğaya aykırıydı sürgün. Bu yüzden hepimiz perişan olmaya

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Maya Duran, the official Turkish hostess of the Harvard professor who taught at Istanbul University during World War II; in *Kardeşimin Hikayesi (My Brother's Story)* (2013) Mehmet ends his own life when he realizes that the tragedies he has survived, the pain of existence is beyond endurance. On the other hand, these are still exceptions in Livaneli’s novels. Most of those who had to suffer traumatic experiences and survive them find a way to hold on to life and start anew. Sami in *A Cat, A Man, A Death*, Maximillian in *Serenade*, Meryem in *Bliss* (2011) are just a few instances to these survivors. Sami and Meryem do not only survive but they also build themselves a happier life with better economic and social prospects.

<sup>10</sup> “We have already done it! He said “On the second day of the accident we announced this officially. A girl belonging to a radical jem while heading for a terrorist act was asked to stop by armed forces, when she did not stop she was followed by the team. At this she started to fire from the car. At the shooting she was captured dead at the end of the firefight.” (Livaneli, 2001: 116)

<sup>11</sup> “The most terrifying of all is publication of Filiz’s picture without the half of her face. One paper had done that, obviously it was the one closest to the authorities. At this horrible picture they printed on the front page there was an automatic rifle in Filiz’s hands and at the top of the picture read “Here is the end of the terrorist”. I puked instantaneously...That was the first symptom of a long-lasting period of puking.” (Livaneli, 2001: 116)

<sup>12</sup> “The most important thing that he had not told the doctor was that the presence of the old man was healing him faster. Seeing that man he was forgetting his Daily troubles, and feeling himself directed by a higher cause.” (Livaneli, 2001: 110)

<sup>13</sup> “She had then overcome the days which resembled each other, the unbelievable loneliness in her room, friendlessness, lovelessness, and her life which was stuck between hundreds of beans and zucchinis, she had become a different person.” (Livaneli, 2001: 142)



yazgılıydık. Mutlu sürgün yoktu ve olamazdı.”<sup>14</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 132) Yoriko’s suicide is a grim reminder of the hardships of exile, the exile experienced at its severest and most painful even at a welcoming country which do their best to help the newcomers.

The “crisis of truth”<sup>15</sup> experienced by Sami, his uncertainty is at a pathological level. Sami cannot be sure of even very immediate and sensual experiences he goes through. At the beginning of the novel he thinks that he has hit a deer with its fawn licking the mother’s face to get it up. He even feels the moist of the fawn’s tongue on his hand. The scene is so overwhelming that he cannot bear to go though it so he just runs away. But when he regrets this action and goes back he cannot find the deer or the fawn, nor can he find any signs of brakes, nor any damage in his car. When he meets a ghost, the minister who got him tortured and denied him a closure after the most brutal death of his fiance he cannot be sure of himself, he needs a lot of proofs to make sure that it is not just a hallucination but a real flesh and blood man, the very man who made him suffer. “Derken hafiften uç gösteren bir kuşku yüreğini kemirmeye başladı. Acaba yine hayal mi görmüştü? Bir psikiyatri hastasının, aynı hastanede yatan bir düşman yaratması doktorları hiç şaşırtmazdı doğrusu. Yolda çarptığı geyik gibi bir hayal miydi adam? Geyiğin yaralı gövdesinden yükselen sıcaklığı duyma mıydı?”<sup>16</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 52) The cat in the title, Sirikit also holds a significant place in the structure of the novel to help us understand Sami in his “crisis of truth”. Sami sees himself like a dog before he met this cat.

O dönemde yaşamayı unutmuştum sanki. Bunu birinin hatırlatması gerekiyordu. Nefes almam gerek! Diye düşünmesem nefes almayacaktım.

Bütün bunlar bir köpek gibi bağlanmam, sevgi ve merhamet dilenmem yüzünden başıma gelmişti. İnsan denilen yaratıklara ilişkin düşüncelerimin yanlışlığı yüzünden. Dünyayı aydınlık ve sıcak, merhametli bir yer gibi düşünmem yüzünden. Bütün köpekler saftır zaten.

Oysa şimdi bir kediyim: uzak, denetimli, soğukkanlı ve güçlü bir kedi. Eski Mısır’da, Beni Hassan’da yapılmış üç yüz bin kedi mumyasından biriyim: Onlar kadar soğuk, onlar kadar güçlü ve mağrur.

Bana bütün bunları Sirikit öğretti.<sup>17</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 32)

He further describes Sirikit as “Hiçbir zaman, hiçbir şeye ve hiçbir kişiye ihtiyacı olmayan, bağlanmayan, sevmeyen, sevilmeyen muhteşem yaratık...”<sup>18</sup> (Livaneli, 2001: 48-49) At the end of the novel we are made to understand that Sirikit is just a creation of his imagination. Yet as I discuss in the conclusion the cat is created by Sami’s creation to be able to escape from his own consciousness, it is a sanctuary which leaves him with room to forget and relax.

## Conclusion

This study has been attempt to read *A Cat, A Man, A Death* under the light of the critical terms supplied to us trauma theory. In that this reading focuses on the traumatic experiences suffered by the characters of the novel, but especially by the protagonist Sami who manages to build up his equilibrium by the end of the novel. By creating an imaginary cat, Sami creates himself a friend he can talk to, care for and

<sup>14</sup> “Just like trees and plants we were planted to that soil. That was the worst part of being an exile. Exile was against nature. We were all destined to be miserable. There is nothing like a happy exile and there could never be.” (Livaneli, 2001: 132)

<sup>15</sup> “The survivor’s uncertainty is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns, as Freud points out, insistently and against their will. Nor is it a matter of indirect access to an event, since the hallucinations are generally of events all too accessible in their horrible truth. It is not, that is, having too little or indirect access to an experience that places its truth in question, in this case, but paradoxically enough, its very overwhelming immediacy, that produces its belated uncertainty. Indeed, behind these local experiences of uncertainty, I would propose, is a larger question raised by the fact of trauma, what Shoshana Felman, in her essay in this volume, calls the “larger, more profound, less definable crisis of truth . . . proceeding from contemporary trauma.” Such a crisis of truth extends beyond the question of individual cure and asks how we in this era can have access to our own historical experience, to a history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple access.” (Caruth, 1995: 6)

<sup>16</sup> “Just then a slight suspicion began to gnaw me. Was I imagining things again? It would not surprise the psychiatry doctors in the least that he should create an enemy who lies in the same hospital. Had not he felt the warmth that rose from the deer’s body?” (Livaneli, 2001: 52)

<sup>17</sup> “It was as if I had forgotten to live at that period. Somebody needed to remind me that. I would not breathe if I did not think I need to breathe. I had brought all those to my head because I had attached myself like a dog, that I had begged for love and compassion. It was all because of my faulty thoughts on the creature called human. Because I had thought the world as a radiant, warm and compassionate place. All the dogs are naïve actually. Whereas I am a cat now: a distant, reserved, coldblooded and strong cat. One of the three hundred cat mummies which were made in Beni Hasan in Egypt: As cold, as powerful and as proud as they are. Sirikit taught me all that.” (Livaneli, 2001: 32)

<sup>18</sup> “The awesome creature who needs nothing or nobody and never gets attached to, loves, or is loved by anyone.” (Livaneli, 2001: 48-49)



leave without any sense of duty or responsibility. The cat plays a significant role in his healing process, it gives him courage and energy to hold on to life and try it in another mood, from a different angle. In a way it is hope that alternative ways of existence might be possible and less painful. As for Juan Perez, a refugee from Uruguay, he heals his obsessive disgust of odors through acquiring a new hobby: orchids; Clara, through her new relation with Sami, who in his own way reminds her that she is not all alone in her suffering and wound; the experience she has had with the Turkish minister reveals her that revenge is not the solution, the closure that she really needs.

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