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Medicalization of Sufism: the discourse of psychiatry, psychopathology, and secularity in Karay's *Kadınlar Tekkesi*

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Abstract

This article examines the complex relationship between Sufism, secularity, and psychiatry through Refik Halid Karay's 1956 novel, *Kadınlar Tekkesi* (Women's Lodge). The article argues that *Kadınlar Tekkesi* recontextualizes Sufism by medicalizing and pathologizing it through psychiatry and psychopathology. This analysis draws upon discourse analysis and Michel Foucault's exploration of abnormality and power dynamics. The article contends that this approach diverges from previous anti-Sufi agendas of Turkish novels, which were primarily motivated by religious and moralistic criticisms. The article argues that the application of psychiatric terminology to Sufism suggests a shift in Turkish secularism's attitude toward Sufism, which transitions from dismissing Sufism as obsolete to engaging with it systematically through scientific study. Informed by modern scientific rationality, this shift signifies a redefined interaction between knowledge and power and the gendered aspects of the medicalization process. The article underscores that interactions between the discourses of secularism, Sufism, and psychopathology suggest a new regime of truth based on secular and scientific thought, while implicitly supported by orthodox Islamic principles.

Keywords: literature; secularism; Sufism; psychiatry; knowledge/power; gender

Introduction

Fascination with the theme of perversion in Sufism has intrigued scholars and literary enthusiasts, particularly in twentieth-century Turkish literature. In this article, I examine an example of anti-Sufi literature from the mid-twentieth century, Refik Halid Karay's (1888–1965) novel *Kadınlar Tekkesi* (Women's Lodge), published in 1956 (Karay 2009).¹ My analysis focuses on the complex interplay between literature, science, and religious discourse within the novel. Specifically, I explore how the portrayal of Sufism as a subject of psychiatric inquiry reflects the socio-cultural

¹ Unless stated otherwise, all translations of *Kadınlar Tekkesi* are the responsibility of the author.

dynamics of the period, primarily concerning secularity. I argue that the novel recontextualizes Sufism in a medicalized framework through the disciplines of modern psychiatry and psychopathology, diverging from previous anti-Sufi agendas based largely on religious critiques. This renewed secularist strategy of making Sufism a subject matter of scientific inquiry suggests a nuanced critique of Turkish secularity, indicating a shift from denouncing traditional and heretic forms of Islam to adopting a medical perspective firmly grounded in modern scientific rationality.

Various studies have investigated the political and social significance of the *dergâhs* and the *tekkes* (Sufi lodges) in modernity (Silverstein 2007, 2011; van Bruinessen 1992; van Bruinessen and Howell 2007). The representation of tekkes and *şeyhs* (*shaykh*; religious leader), particularly in early Republican literature, as irrational and antagonistic to the values and ideals of modernity has also been the subject of scrutiny (Baş 2022; Hendrich 2017; Özbolat 2012; Uğurlu and Demir 2013; Wilson 2017). These studies offer valuable insights into Republican secularist ideology, particularly its positivist perspectives on religion and the stigmatization of Islamic and Sufi practices and worldviews as immoral. Nevertheless, the discursive role of psychiatry and psychopathology in marginalizing Sufism in general and the Sufis in particular have not been explored. This article examines how the positivist approach marginalizes Sufis by positioning them as the “other” of both secular and religious individuals. Thus, this article presents a nuanced critique of the connection between secularist ideology and positivist scientific practice as depicted in *Kadınlar Tekkesi*.

In this analysis of the relationship between Sufism, secularity, and psychopathology, I draw primarily upon Michel Foucault’s 1974–1975 Collège de France lectures on normalization and abnormality and his methodological guidance in *the Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 2002, 2003). Using Foucault’s historical exploration of abnormality in the nineteenth century and discourse analysis, I illustrate how Sufism is stigmatized and classified as abnormal and pathological, associated with notions of irrationality and sexual deviance in *Kadınlar Tekkesi*. The novel’s psychopathological perspective suggests a form of disciplinary mechanism, given that real individuals practice Sufism, with defined roles for *şeyhs* and disciples, rather than merely existing in theory. Furthermore, by applying Foucault’s analysis of abnormality, we see that *Kadınlar Tekkesi* foregrounds gendered power dynamics by depicting unrestrained sexual desires, particularly among Sufi women.

The categorization of Sufism as a pathological deviance has its roots in the secularization thesis, which was prominent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This thesis posited that as societies modernized, religion would diminish in importance and transform into a private matter, leading to the separation of secular domains like the state, economy, and science from the religious sphere (Casanova 1994). Although contemporary social scientists have challenged this thesis (Asad 2003; Bennett 2001; Taylor 2007), in Turkey, it was Sufism rather than Islam, with its unorthodox practices, that was often seen as incompatible with the rational and scientific outlook of modernity and thus a form of irrationality. Modernization efforts emphasized a rational and secular national identity, which resulted in the suppression of the tekkes and their practices in 1925. Modernist interpretations of Islam, which emerged alongside nationalist and reformist movements, also contributed to the marginalization and pathologization of Sufism. These interpretations sought to align

Islam with modern values such as rationality, progress, and science, and often viewed traditional practices such as Sufism as backward or superstitious.

In this article, I explore phenomena related to secularity using their commonly used English equivalents. “Secular,” “secularization,” and “secularism” are interconnected concepts, rather than distinct realities (Casanova 2011, 54–55). The secular is a modern epistemic concept encompassing “certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life” (Asad 2003, 24–25; Casanova 2011, 55). While secularization represents modern world–historical processes, secularism is a political doctrine rooted in nineteenth-century liberal society and an assumed norm of modern reality (Asad 2003, 24–25; Casanova 2011, 54–55).

Talal Asad’s genealogy and anthropology of the secular emphasize that secularism presupposes novel concepts of religion, ethics, and politics, along with new global imperatives (Asad 2003, 1–2). Viewing the secular and the religious as mutually constitutive, a secular state does not automatically ensure toleration but operates within distinct “structures of ambition and fear,” with its laws aimed to “regulate violence” rather than eradicate it (Asad 2003, 8). Therefore, comprehending modern secular societies requires examining how conceptual binaries are established or subverted in “the politics of national progress” and the power dynamics between the secular self and the religious self (Asad 2003, 15–16).

The 1937 constitutional reform in Turkey, which implemented French *laïcité* as *laiklik* (secularity), aimed to establish secular norms for public life and governance,² align the country with contemporary European norms, and reduce the impact of heterodox institutions and practices, such as Sufism. Based on the analysis of *Kadınlar Tekkesi*, I contend that the criticism of Sufism in the 1950s indicates a shift from being seen as a deviation from modern Enlightenment values and orthodox Islam to being considered a psychiatric pathology. Thus, the alleged deviance is tackled as a societal mental health concern.

To understand the power dynamics involved in criticizing Sufism with psychopathological terms, it is important to situate *Kadınlar Tekkesi* within the discursive grid of the era, namely, secularity, modernization, and scientificity. Understanding “medicalization” as “a form of control and rationality that medical knowledge and power” are asked to provide, I argue that the construction of abnormality, and thereby the danger of Sufism, is a field where sexuality, psychopathology, and Sufi religiosity interact discursively (Foucault 2003, 264). Overall, I explore how the medicalization and pathologization of Sufism shape secularism and secular societal norms although *Kadınlar Tekkesi* can be interpreted through three distinct lenses: as a manual on psychiatry; as a religious text distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic şeyhs; and as a Sufi romance elucidating the lover’s quest to attain their Beloved. Due to the limitations of this article, I focus specifically on how secular criticism and modern psychiatric approaches identify Sufis as pathological individuals requiring psychiatric supervision and intervention.

First, I provide a brief historical overview of the criticism and castigation of Sufism as a perversion within late Ottoman society and early twentieth-century Turkish

² In effect, the 1928 regulation, which revoked the 1924 designation of Islam as the state religion, is regarded as the official proclamation of secularity.

literature. I then examine how *Kadınlar Tekkesi* diverges from this historical context by presenting a scientific approach through fictional or expert opinions. My argument centers on the representation of Sufism in *Kadınlar Tekkesi* as a new episteme that pathologizes and medicalizes Sufism, in contrast to the dominant anti-Sufi discourse in early twentieth-century Turkish literature. By depicting a pseudo-şeyh and his female followers as pathological cases, the novel prompts critical reflection on how it redefines Sufism and its hazards in relation to secularism, modernity, and scientificity.

This argument examines the characteristics of the secular individual by using what Foucault calls “psy-sciences” – namely, the psychiatric, psychopathological, psychosociological, psycho-criminological, and psychoanalytic functions that serve as agents in the organization of a disciplinary apparatus (Foucault 2006, 85). The medicalization of Sufism through the discourse of psychopathology is significant in that it not only defines a new stance toward Sufism but also clarifies the relationship between power and knowledge as propagated by Turkish secularism. My intention with this analysis is to trace the historical development of intellectual discourses within the apparatuses of power/knowledge identified by Foucault, and to show how various forms of knowledge have developed in the matrix of Sufism, secularism, and psychiatry in Turkey, ultimately establishing a new regime of truth rooted in positivist secular ideals.

Secularism, literature, and the perception of tekkes as sites of corruption

Both Islamic and secular, numerous critiques have targeted Sufism, often characterized by radical anti-Sufi rhetoric with either an orthodox Islamic focus or an Enlightenment perspective (Ersoy 2018; Ülgener 2006). According to Baki Tezcan (2022), the first instance of disenchantment (or demystification) in the Ottoman Empire dates back to the early seventeenth-century Kadızadeli movement, known for its anti-Sufi stance. However, it was during the nineteenth-century modernization process that disenchantment reached new dimensions and left a longer-lasting impact.

From 1826 onwards, the Ottoman political structure underwent a series of centralization moves concerning tekkes. Allegations of moral corruption against the Bektâşîs, including alcohol consumption, heretical practices, and non-adherence to gender segregation norms, led to the closure of Bektâşî tekkes or the appointment of Nakşibendi şeyhs to their posts in 1826. In 1866, Sultan Abdülhamid II instituted the *Meclis-i Meşâyih* (Council of Şeyhs), dissolved in 1917, intensifying state control over *tarikats* (Sufi orders).

During the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918), criticism of Bektâşîs extended to other *tarikats*. Sufis, journalists, and politicians expressed concerns about state control and advocated for restructuring *tarikats*. In 1913 Kılıçzâde Hakkı published *The Declaration of War Against False Softas* (religious extremists) and *Dervishes*, arguing that fraudulent dervishes, religious extremists, and superstitions contributed to the backwardness of Muslims. Celâl Nuri, even more radical than Kılıçzâde, asserted that Sufism was akin to hashish and morphine that paralyzed the mind (Kara 1991, 311–312).

In the early twentieth century, the theme of morally corrupt fraudulent şeyhs and tekkes as abodes of sexual promiscuity became a significant literary motif. Pseudo-şeyhs first appeared in Yakup Kadri's *Nur Baba*, written around 1913 and published in 1921–1922 (Karaosmanoğlu 2023). Its publication led to a genre of anti-Sufi literature that focused on the exploitation of religion by pseudo-şeyhs, who were portrayed as driven by greed and carnal desires, using *aşk* (love) to justify their sexual exploitation and financial schemes.³ Sufi tekkes were depicted as environments marked by sexual disorder, debauchery, drug and alcohol use, and illicit relationships (Wilson 2017). This criticism was part of a broader effort to condemn superstition and obscurantism in the context of modernizing and secularizing the nation (Silverstein 2007, 53).⁴

When tekkes and *türbes* (tombs) were outlawed and officially closed in 1925, the eradication of visible signs of Sufism from the public sphere was finalized. Law 677 banned Islamic religious titles and attire, mandated the seizure of tarikats' assets, and outlawed *zikir* (ceremonial chanting) and *ziyaret* (visitation to shrines and tombs), prescribing imprisonment and fines for non-compliance (Akşit 2012; Beyinli Dinç 2017; Buğdaycı 2021; Kezer 2000, 2015). Republican reformers, including Mustafa Kemal, opposed heterodox figures and practices associated with superstition and irrationality, such as Sufism, rather than orthodox Islamic practices. The 1925 law articulated the features of “true” Islam by codifying a secularism model that placed religion under tight state control (Dole 2012, 35–37). Thus, the secularization thesis reformulated the conventional binary opposition between the religious and secular, creating a new dichotomy between the secular and the heterodox, or popular Islam, which encompassed Sufism, its institutions, members, and other marginalized groups.

Following the 1925 ban, the role of the şeyhs and their tekkes resulted in diverse experiences that defied easy categorization. This complexity arose from their involvement in lay jobs and the informal use of the title “şeyh” among close friends and fellow Sufis (Koç 2021). The “bureaucrat şeyhs,” a group that emerged in 1866 with the establishment of the Meclis-i Meşâyih, actively participated in public affairs and remained in parliament until the 1950s (Silverstein 2011, 74–78). Additionally, some şeyhs contributed to intellectual life through their writings in journals or books on various topics – from studying Armenian to Turkish women poets – while others worked as teachers (Koç 2021, 35–62). Simultaneously, some şeyhs agreed to participate in religious education or services within *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs), established in 1924.

During this period, some tekkes were confiscated by the state and repurposed for (secular) use under the supervision of *Vakıflar Müdürlüğü* (Directorate of Pious Foundations), founded in 1924 (Kezer 2000). Other tekkes were preserved as *mescids* (small mosques). The law allowed individuals to receive salaries until death and to remain in tekkes if they were already residing there. However, openly identifying as a şeyh and defying the ban resulted in fines and criminal charges. This posed a serious

³ Other notable examples of anti-Sufi literature during the Republican period include Peyami Safa's (under the pseudonym Server Bedî) 1927 novel *Bektaşiler Arasında Genç Bir Kız* (A Young Girl among the Bektaşis), Reşat Nuri Güntekin's 1928 novel *Yeşil Gece* (The Green Night), Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar's 1936 short story and 1952 novella *Ali Nizami Bey'in Alafrangalığı ve Şeyhliği* (Alafranga Şeyh Ali Nizami Bey), and Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu's 1945 novel *Bektaşî Kız* (The Bektaşî Girl).

⁴ For a further discussion on superstitions, see Beyinli (2021).

threat to their lives, as previous instances of disobedience, such as the Şeyh Said rebellion in early 1925, led to the execution of several şeyhs. Consequently, non-compliant şeyhs (as opposed to the compliant ones) were marginalized, reflecting the establishment of secularity as the norm and secular citizens as the standard.

In the 1950s, the focus shifted from internal criticism and mystical interpretations aimed at reforming Sufism to widespread condemnation and rejection. These discussions, including those by Islamic proponents of rationalization, centered on the role of şeyhs, particularly “actor şeyhs,” who lacked fundamental theological knowledge (Kara 2015, 120). The burgeoning psychiatric discourse adopted a similar approach, critiquing Sufism from a Sunni perspective. Notably, İzzettin Şadan (1895–1975), the first Turkish psychiatrist, attempted to Turkify psychoanalysis by distinguishing between Islam as the religion of God and Sufism, which incorporated “non-Islamic elements and artifacts such as ‘feminine ornaments’ and obvious homoerotic features” (İzzeddin 2007, 23–29; Soyubol 2018, 63).

Kadınlar Tekkesi represents a significant case in post-1950 criticism. Karay was labeled a *mürteci* (reactionary) in intellectual and political circles from the 1910s to the 1930s (Birkan 2019; Philliou 2021). This was partly due to his opposition to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) policies, which led to his first exile to Sinop in 1913. Upon returning to İstanbul in 1918, Karay continued to critique the CUP politicians and contested Mustafa Kemal and the national liberation movement in 1919. After the nationalist victory in late 1922, he sought refuge in Lebanon, where he resided until eventually settling in Syria. His inclusion on the *Yüzellilikler* (List of 150) in 1923 resulted in the revocation of his Turkish citizenship. After 1928, Karay embraced Kemalism, and, following his pardon in 1938, resumed his career in journalism and authored numerous novels. Nevertheless, he remained an “iconic *muhafif*” (opponent/dissident) (Philliou 2021, 3).

Kadınlar Tekkesi is a testament to Karay’s enduring zeal for social critique, using his renowned satirical style to castigate Baki, an actor-şeyh who exploits religion for personal gain. The novel’s “Introduction” begins with a claim to truth, wherein the first-person narrator, a journalist, recalls noting that on June 12, 1941, a young journalist left a lengthy interview at his editor-in-chief’s office. The editor-in-chief hands it over to the narrator, describing it as “a fascinating story, a scandal” that reveals the persistent manipulation of religion within “a well-educated circle, high society” (9).

The interview, which the narrator describes as “important, lively, and surprising,” was never published due to wartime censorship and opposition from high-ranking officials (10). Consequently, the incident was overlooked. After the war, when the narrator discusses the incident in greater detail with a high-ranking police officer, he decides to write it as a novel. The narrator ends the introduction by insisting that the plot and characters are based on this “true incident.” Addressing the readers, he adds: “If you wish, you may view this introduction as a novelist’s tactic and consider the subject matter entirely fictitious. You are free to do as you please, as long as it pleases you” (11).

In this frame narrative, Karay, also known for his articles in newspapers and novels, creates ambiguity between fiction and reality. By identifying the protagonist and his followers as real individuals who, despite Law 677, received protection from (Kemalist) bureaucrats throughout the 1940s, he makes a truth claim. Indeed, the

portrayal of Baki resembles Kenan er-Rifâi (Büyükaksoy) (1867–1950), an actual Ottoman bureaucrat, teacher, and şeyh, suggesting the novel was inspired by his life. Kenan er-Rifâi, who championed modern Sufi education after the 1925 ban, had many intellectual and affluent female disciples, including writers Sâmiha Ayverdi, Safiye Erol, translator Sofi Huri, and journalist Nezihe Araz (Aytürk and Mignon 2013).

Karay further supports the narrator's truth claim by describing Neşide, the female protagonist of *Kadınlar Tekkesi*, as a real person known to him, in an interview with the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Karay 1954).⁵ His position illustrates Erdağ Gökner's notion of "the secularist master plot" in Turkish literature. Gökner argues that this framework positions authors as key figures in promoting Turkish secularism by challenging superstition and religious irrationality and advocating for a progressive future where the role of religion is diminished (Gökner 2012, 304–306). By presenting Neşide as a real person and integrating her into the narrative, Karay reinforces the authenticity of his novel and participates in the broader ideological trend aimed at fostering secular values in Turkish society.

In the following discussion, I examine the characteristics of the actor-şeyh and his female disciples to illustrate how moral anxieties continue to shape the anti-Sufi discourse within secularism in *Kadınlar Tekkesi*. Additionally, I explore the emergence of a new scientific discourse that diagnoses Sufis as mentally ill and thus as a potential threat to society.

Sufism as an anomaly in *Kadınlar Tekkesi*

Kadınlar Tekkesi revolves around the pathological case of Baki, a pseudo-şeyh characterized by his good looks and elegance. The novel begins with a first-person frame narrative by a journalist writer, then shifts to an omniscient third-person perspective. Through his comprehensive identification with the characters, we learn that Baki's actions have led to scandalous events, transforming his lodge into a hub for immoral, lustful, and seemingly insane high-society women in Istanbul. The narrative is set in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as indicated by references to the end of "the single-party regime" and the early years of "the new party" (Democrat Party) (528–529; 544–545). Baki dies a few months after the first free elections, which took place in May 1950. The passage of time is marked by the changing seasons, suggesting the novel's final sentences are set in 1952 (689–697). Through flashbacks, the characters' pasts are revealed. This time-frame allows the novel to critique the exploitation of religion through Baki's downfall, highlighting mutual elements of both the single-party and multi-party eras.

The novel opens with Baki's infatuation with a young girl, Neşide. To keep her close, he arranges her marriage to his devoted disciple, İrfan. Although Neşide and İrfan marry happily, Baki soon attempts to charm her. Despite Baki's charisma and manipulative tactics, Neşide remains steadfast in her rejection. This unrequited love drives Baki to the brink of madness. In his frustration, he undergoes a gradual transformation from an impostor to a true dervish. The authenticity of his love, the very theme of the Sufi poems he recites to abuse his disciples, begins to affect him.

⁵ The interview date raises doubts about the authenticity of the novel's claimed publication year of 1956.

Consequently, he becomes a genuine lover of God, renounces his position as a şeyh, starts performing religious injunctions, and eventually dies as a pious Muslim.

As in *Nur Baba*, the motif of moral corruption is evident in the initial portrayal of Şeyh Baki, who is an *epiküryen* (epicurean) (176), a *kadın düşkünü* (womanizer) (277), and a *Rasputin*⁶ (290). He lavishes his wealthy female disciples with praise, adoration, and attention, while exploiting their flaws to his advantage. Despite complying with the 1925 ban, he continues to attract followers who regard him as a şeyh during the 1940s. He refers to his tarikat merely as fictional *Işkı*, derived from the Arabic root of aşk (187). His self-proclaimed title, *aşk peygamberi* (the prophet of love) (164), carries ambiguous sexual undertones supported by dubious alleged Sufi rituals.

Nevertheless, Baki's character diverges from the typical Nur Baba stereotype, presenting a şeyh as a refined and respectable gentleman. Baki dresses fashionably in Western suits and sports an elegant goatee, deviating from the traditional appearance of a şeyh with a coarse robe and a long beard. Unlike his sixty-year-old peers, he lacks a protruding belly or a hunched back; instead, he resembles a "professor" (30), a "foreign diplomat" (65), and even a Hollywood actor, Errol Flynn, known for his romantic swashbuckler roles (372). Fluent in French and knowledgeable in English, Persian, and Arabic, he is well-read in both Western and Eastern literature, as well as in philosophy and psychiatry.

Despite his pleasant Western appearance and adherence to the modernist project, Baki leads a double life as a şeyh. Baki poses a threat to secularity not only by continuing to be a şeyh despite the 1925 ban but also as an exemplar of modernization. The narrator describes Baki, a şeyh, wearing Western clothes and leading a Western lifestyle, as a threat to the new secular way of life, referring to him as a *centilmen-evliya* (gentleman saint) (95). In the following pages, the anomaly, partly inherited from his father, is elaborated with the help of psychiatric discourse.

The anti-Sufi critique, originally rooted in religious discourse, is now contextualized within scientific terminology, thereby enhancing its legitimacy. This is evident in the narrator's authoritarian voice, reflecting psychiatric expert opinion. Foucault explains that psychiatric opinion criminalizes irregular conduct as a psychological-moral offense, creating a new category of delinquency where moral fault is equated with illness. In this context, expert psychiatric opinion combines medical expertise with judicial authority. The power relations in this medico-legal practice suggest a "technique of normalization," a type of power sovereign in modern society that operates independently of any single institution or their interactions (Foucault 2003, 15–26).

In *Kadınlar Tekkesi*, the relationship between psychiatric opinion and Sufism, particularly the concept of aşk, reveals the technique of normalization. Both Sufism and aşk, as in Sufi love, are referred to as *anomali* (anomaly) (97), illustrated by the relationship between the unconventional şeyh and his promiscuous female disciples. This characterization is contextually related to the discursive foundations of Turkish secularization and modernization, first expressed in Yakup Kadri's *Nur Baba*. Unlike Nur Baba, however, Baki and his tekke, despite their modern and fashionable

⁶ Süha Kalendarli, a character referred to as "the aphorist," compares Baki to Rasputin, the Russian mystic and self-proclaimed holy man, not for his political influence on the Russian royal family in the early twentieth century, but for his fondness for women.

characteristics, still emerge as deviant, echoing Foucault's analysis of abnormality and normalization. This is due to Baki's adherence to the outdated master-disciple relationship and his use of Sufi terminology while adopting a Western lifestyle. The critical issue in pathologizing Sufism in modern society is the redefinition of the secular through the technique of normalization, which identifies Sufism as an anomaly.

Below, I examine how *Kadınlar Tekkesi* illustrates the secular norm in the secularization of a predominantly Muslim society whose literary, cultural, and emotional background is firmly rooted in the Ottoman culture of love influenced by Sufism (Andrews 2016). Additionally, I explore how abnormalizing Sufism relates to modern power.

The shifting contours of the secular norm

According to Foucault, the concept of norm is crucial to the circulation and proliferation of modern power. It serves not just as a principle of intelligibility but also as the foundation and legitimization for a specific exercise of power. After the nineteenth century, normalization across domains such as education, medicine, industrial production, and the military displaced sovereign power, leading to a new conceptualization of power as both "positive" and "political." Instead of exclusion and rejection, the norm in this power is "always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of normative project" (Foucault 2003, 49–50).

Disciplinary systems must deal with individuals who evade monitoring and those who cannot be categorized or integrated – "the residual, the irreducible, the unclassifiable, the inassimilable," such as feeble-minded or mentally defective schoolchildren, deserters who escape the disciplined army, or delinquents, and the insane (Foucault 2006, 53–54). Normalizing disciplinary techniques that classify, hierarchize, and supervise require continuous abnormality or deviation to establish a standard of normality. Abnormality, defined as deviation from the norm or "nonconformity," becomes the "other" that defines the "normal," thereby retaining and normalizing power relations (Foucault 1995, 178). Therefore, disciplinary power possesses the "double property of 'anomizing,'" discarding certain individuals while highlighting anomie. By inventing new recovery systems, disciplinary power simultaneously normalizes and reestablishes the rule (Foucault 2006, 53–54).

Much like Foucault's concept of the "double property of 'anomizing,'" Şeyh Baki appears as an unclassifiable individual under Turkish secularism's disciplinary power – alternatively known as Şeyh Baki Bey (24) or Bay (Mr) Baki Nurlu (414).⁷ The ambiguity in Baki's blend of modern and religious traits positions him as a subject of psychiatric scrutiny, categorizing him as abnormal compared to a secular individual. This deviation poses a threat to the established norm, necessitating his correction and normalization. Baki, thus, cannot be assimilated into the given disciplinary system unlike individuals who can be accommodated by the disciplinary power of

⁷ Literally, "Baki" is one of the ninety-nine divine names, meaning "everlasting" or "immortal" in Arabic, while "Nurlu" means "with divine light" in Turkish. The latter's root *nur* also alludes to *Nur Baba*, implying that Baki is of the *Nur Baba* type.

normalization. To mark this contrast, another şeyh, Fikri Can, briefly appears as an approvable Sufi to highlight the proper place of Sufism in the new secular society. Although he is the “perfect human” (*insan-ı kâmil*) (225), he neither has a tekke nor disciples following the 1925 ban, reaffirming the secularist view of religion as a private matter.

Şeyh Baki’s response to the modernizing project, on the other hand, is complex. He adheres to secular law by officially closing his tekke and replacing his şeyh garb with Western attire, yet he continues having Sufi *sohbets* (conversation) and disciples.⁸ He stands on the threshold between modern and traditional worlds. His satirical moniker, centilmen-evliya, is an oxymoron: a şeyh, or a dervish or *fakir* (ascetic), traditionally turns away from the world to focus on divine reality (Ernst 1997, 4), whereas a gentleman engages in worldly affairs. This unsettling ambivalence between the modern and the traditional leads the narrator to highlight similar binary oppositions of Republican values: “. . . Şeyh Baki’s tarikat was not a tarikat but a school; it was a new Sufi école, an academy of mysticism” (24). Despite references to Western civilization and modernization through words such as “new” and “école,” his house/tekke remains incompatible with Turkish secularism.

Like the hyphen between “gentleman” and “şeyh,” the impossibility also resides in the “Sufi tekke” that resembles a “school.” In the new Turkish Republic’s modern imaginary, these terms should not be hyphenated; they are to be opposed. Representing the past, tradition, and religion, they are meant to be eradicated from the public sphere. Even Baki’s disciples express binary oppositions that reflect the new Republic’s aspirations and its conception of perils. According to the “rational-minded” Melal, neither Şeyh Baki nor his followers exhibit the “coarse desires” associated with the Bektaşî tarikat; instead, they are quite modern in their attire and meetings. Eventually, this is her rationale for becoming a disciple:

They [Şeyh Baki and his followers] did not hold a ritual; instead of wearing the *on iki dilimli taç* (twelve-sliced crown) on their heads, carrying the twelve-edged *teslim taşı* (stone of surrender) on their chests, dressing in garb reminiscent of Oriental scenes in American movies, and engaging in *gülünç* (ridiculous) rituals, they dressed in modern clothing and conducted their meetings in a serious and polite manner. This was a *salon tekkesi* (salon lodge) and a *salon kadını tarikatı* (salon women’s Sufi order) (24).

Baki’s “salon tekke” is normalized in the eyes of his disciples, as this coinage presents no antagonism to secularism and demonstrates its participation in modern society as a “salon kadını tarikatı” (24). While this departure from traditional Sufism emphasizes how Baki’s so-called tekke is seen as normal and modern by his disciples, this very normalcy and modernity become problematic for the narrator. Both Baki and his tekke possess an ambiguous character: they do not entirely fit within the secular framework, which does not tolerate mixing the traditional with the modern, the past with the present, and the Eastern with the Western. Sufism, particularly Baki’s, is difficult to categorize as anything other than an anomaly.

⁸ Brian Silverstein (2011) translates *sohbet* as “companionship-in-conversation.”

Baki exemplifies respectability in both civilizations. However, this synthesis falls far short of Turkish modernization's goals. It represents a degeneration by carrying the past, symbolized by the title "şeyh," into the present and making it respectable through the "gentleman" image. Şeyh Baki Bey appears contradictory not because he fails to integrate the two worldviews and cultural heritages, but because the secularization and modernization projects ascribe a strict and clear divide between them. According to the unwritten code of the secularization project, a gentleman in a tuxedo, drinking wine, and elegantly kissing the hands of beautiful ladies cannot preach scrupulously about abstinence from concupiscence like a devout Muslim. Combining the secular Western image with the Eastern Islamic image is abnormal. Şeyh Baki Bey, however, exemplifies this conflation of civilizations: he constantly trespasses on these fictitious borders of secular and Muslim identities, flawlessly adopting aspects of each, much to the dismay of his adversaries, who envy his charisma and success with women.

Although he is another "Rasputin" (290), whose mystical talents enable him to seduce wealthy women and thus acquire financial gain, much like any other charlatan who follows in the footsteps of Nur Baba, his image of the perfect centilmen-evliya starts to shatter when he meets the young and beautiful Neşide. The more he immerses himself in intense love for Neşide and claims it is a manifestation of divine love, the more "tekin değil" (uncanny) he appears. Soon after, he is portrayed as a monster, with his past medically detailed as a psychopathological case (147). This is a critical argument reinforced in relation to love and, subsequently, female sexuality: aşk (or sexuality) itself is not the problem; the underlying problem is the fusion of Western secularism and Sufism. Crucially, love is what makes the problem acute, threatening, and visible.

The monster

Foucault traces the origins of the modern abnormal individual through three figures in the domain of sexuality: the medieval human monster, which persisted until the eighteenth century; the individuals to be corrected in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and the masturbating child of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The monster is the most problematic figure, as it is the root of the modern abnormal individual and the privileged object of psychiatry. The monster is "the fundamental figure around which bodies of power and domains of knowledge are disturbed and reorganized" (Foucault 2003, 56–62). From the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, each period favored a particular type of monster, with monstrosity indicating breaches of civil, canon, or religious laws (Foucault 2003, 63–64). By the early nineteenth century, monstrosity shifted to being associated with eccentricities, imperfections, and natural errors, and conduct that required condemnation. Monstrosity became juridico-moral rather than juridico-natural, with "moral monstrosity" indicating "pure and simple criminality." This figure of the monstrous circulates in various discourses and practices, including literature, politics, and judicial and medical systems (Foucault 2003, 72–75).

Şeyh Baki is also portrayed as a monster whose ethical conduct threatens Turkish secular society. His monstrosity is both natural and moral, rooted in his transgression of civil and religious law, in addition to his eccentric conduct. His natural monstrosity

originates from his identification as centilmen-evliya, blending Sufism and secularity. To maintain his dual identity, he constantly blurs the boundaries between civil and religious law, mixing secular and religious realms. The delineation between normal and deviant behavior is further accentuated by depicting his idiosyncratic actions as those of a sexual “psychopath” (47).

Crucially, Sufism is not monstrous in itself; rather, it becomes monstrous when aşk is immorally misconstrued. The narrator claims that Sufism is “a creed that frequently falls into the hands of perverts” and “primarily taken up by *anormal* (abnormal),” while also acknowledging its influence in producing “fabulous poets, scholars, and distinguished personalities” (87). This ambivalence stems from the Sufi description of aşk, which often resembles sexual love. Indeed, when Baki attempts to clarify aşk, his audience interprets it as synonymous with carnal love:

... ordinary mortals struggle to distinguish between our love and carnal love; it is a secret beyond their narrow, simple, abysmal, horizonless minds! Indeed, what you see is a corporeal beloved of flesh and blood. But is our love for her? Since man and nature are merely manifestations of Allah in various forms—because the glory of the Absolute Being is to manifest Himself and that is the reason for his genesis—when we kneel before our beloved, it is not out of superficial passion but because our beloved manifests herself in the form of Beauty (38).⁹

Karay accurately portrays Baki’s love in accordance with the Sufi tradition, yet the ambivalence inherent in aşk also serves as a catalyst for abnormal sexual behavior. “Watching the beloved’s beauty” to admire the manifestation of God’s beauty leads first to immoral conduct and then to criminal offense, as befits any monster (39). His eccentric conduct reveals that his idea of love is not merely theoretical; he manifests it transgressively by attracting high-society women to his alleged tekke. They are all impressed with “his attitude,” “his harmonious voice,” and especially with “the thought-provoking beauty of his eyes like a starry summer night sky” (39).

The sarcastic tone about Baki’s divine love and insatiable appetite for women generates a mix of Sufi and scientific terms to depict his monstrosity. Baki uses both Sufi terms and “the newest theories of the century,” particularly referencing Freud, to explain how “lust became a religious ecstasy and attained a lofty nature—what the Germans refer to as ‘*sublimierung*’ (sublimation)” (38). The narrator is uncertain whether he engages in “*otosüjjesyon*” (autosuggestion) (415) but is confident that he is a “psychopath” who also suffers from “*dépression*.” His female followers attempt to fit his anomalies into Sufi terminology, referring to his depression as “*reften*” (transition from the human world to the spiritual) or his manic excitement that occurs two weeks after his depression as “*şive*” (manner or accent) (48).

⁹ ... alelade faniler için bizim aşkımızın şehevi aşktan ayırt edilmesi güçtür; dar, basit, dipsiz ve ufuksuz havsalalara sığmayan bir sırdır bu! Filvaki ortada etten ve kandan ibaret cismani bir sevgili görürsünüz. Fakat sevgimiz ona mıdır? İnsan ve bu arada tabiat, Allah’ın başka başka suretlerde tecellisinden ibaret olduğuna göre—zira Vücut-u Mutlak’ın şanı kendini izhardır ve tekvine sebep de budur—sevgilimizin güzelliğini seyrederken önünde diz çöküp cezbeye tutulmamız süfli bir ihtirastan değil, Cemal’in sevgilimiz suretinde zahir olmasındandır.

Şeyh Baki's monstrosity escalates into immoral conduct, which assumes a criminal character because of his unfulfilled desire for Neşide. Neşide, a devout Sunni, finds his seductive methods, which include hypnotic practices and Sufi doctrines on love, repugnant. One day, Baki appears unexpectedly at Neşide's home with a set of keys obtained from her sister-in-law, who is one of his followers. Not only does he commit a legal offense by uninvitedly intruding into a married woman's home, but he also violates religious norms that dictate the separation of unrelated men and women in private spaces or the expectation that the door be left open to avoid misinterpretation. As his contrived religiosity materializes in the figure of the monstrous criminal, his monstrosity is articulated from both secular and religious perspectives.

Baki's goat-like appearance is particularly suggestive of Foucault's concept of juridico-natural monsters. Neşide – the novel's only innocent and sober female character capable of resisting Baki's numerous advances – sees Baki as half-human, half-monster. When she sees a goat chewing grass, she almost believes Baki has transformed into a goat. She thinks he has “all of a sudden transformed into this goat as it happens in fairy tales” and “is staring at her with meaningless, blank eyes. He has turned into a goat, but he is hidden inside . . . they both look alike anyway” (147).

Karay uses descriptions of Baki as a (metaphorical) juridico-natural monster to discursively support his characterization as a juridico-moral monster. He weaves the two discourses together to create an uncanny aura around Baki. Before the goat incident, Neşide dreams of a goat with a head identical to Baki's, an omen of impending danger. In her dream, Baki chases her with razor-sharp horns, causing her to flee in sweat (91). Neşide is intimidated by Baki, unsure if monsters with supernatural powers exist. Later, Baki cunningly affirms that he turned into a goat to demonstrate his power to Neşide (217). He exploits her anxiety to suggest that he is like Sufi saints who frequently transform into animals, typically gazelles. However, while the gazelle represents elegant beauty, goats grazing with blank eyes convey the opposite impression; it is simply a natural monstrosity that scares people. Thus, Baki, the centilmen-evliya, embraces this monstrosity not as “a shape-shifting saint” opening the disciple's heart and mind to the Sufi path (Soileau 2018, 9), but simply to charm women.

Medicalization of Sufism through psychiatric discourse

In *Kadınlar Tekkesi*, Sufism is portrayed as a pathological phenomenon that warrants analysis from a fresh psychiatric perspective. Baki's abnormality is not solely due to his unique blending of Eastern and Western cultures, values, and lifestyles; it is further described in an explicit psychiatric language, referencing esteemed psychiatrists from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The pathological cases of Baki and his disciples are defined using psychiatric terms, drawing from the scientific study of sexual pathology in Europe during the late nineteenth century. Noteworthy figures in this field include Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1965 [1886]), who extensively researched and categorized sexual abnormalities, as well as Sigmund Freud, Alexis Carrell, and Auguste Forel. As Foucault elaborates, these scientists addressed abnormality through the problem of sexuality, primarily via heredity and degeneration (Foucault 2003, 167–168).

Degeneration is a significant theoretical element in the medicalization of abnormalities. The degenerate, whose deviant conduct is linked to a hereditary condition, enables psychiatry to function and enhances its authority (Foucault 2003, 315–316). The depiction of Şeyh Baki's (and some of his disciples') abnormality because of hereditary degeneration invites psychiatric intervention to safeguard society from sexual aberrations that threaten social order in both religious and secular contexts.

Morel's 1857 popular theory of "degeneration" posits that heredity significantly contributes to the development of psychiatric pathologies. Mental instability in a patient's family can indicate a proclivity for psychological abnormalities and an incapacity to make moral decisions. Baki's late father's eccentric behavior, which defied societal norms, is cited as evidence of Baki's degeneration. His father compelled his devout wife to wear a Western hat indoors, finding it sexually appealing despite the prevailing restrictions on Muslim women's clothing. In addition to Baki's mother, he married around twenty women, divorcing each after a brief period, exploiting the lax marriage and divorce procedures of Islamic law. His insatiable desire is further evident in his systematic approach to selecting a spouse, consulting books with miniatures – the genre of eighteenth-century costume albums – such as Ârifzâde Âsım's *Tuhfe-i zenân* (Extraordinary Women), Enderunlu Fâzıl's 1792–1793 *Hûbannâme* (Book of Beautiful Young Men), and 1793 *Zenannâme* (Book of Women). Although not explicitly stated, his interest in the boys' pictures accentuates his deviant nature (242–244).

Significantly, Baki's explanation of his father's unusual behavior in psychiatric terms differs from the narrator's perspective. Baki describes his father as an "addict of carnal aberration," a "fetishist," and a "slave to lust." However, he admires his father's approach, noting that he did not "*refoulé*" (repress) his desires and thus "must have been a strong-willed man" (243). The narrator views Baki's use of psychiatric terminology to validate his father's idiosyncrasies as indicative of Baki's manipulative power and perversion.

The clinical references to Baki are not limited to nineteenth-century psychiatric terms; they also include his institutionalization at a French mental institute in İstanbul (207). Though no longer a clinical case, his oscillation between divine and carnal love makes him appear insane. He fervently exclaims, "I am an *âşık* (lover); that's right! But I am not an *âşık* of you or anybody else . . . I am *divane* (crazy) for Allah" (82). With this, the narrator intervenes:

. . . when sexual desire and joy are combined with aesthetic pleasure, divine pleasure results, followed by greed manifested in the form of a *bahname* [an Ottoman book on sexuality] . . . This was a crisis of lust with unforeseeable consequences that drove one to do the greatest good and commit the greatest murder (83).

This confusing crisis of lust, encompassing sexual, aesthetic, and spiritual gratification, becomes evident as Baki nearly gestures toward himself while invoking the name of God. Once more, the narrator interjects with an insider observation, his voice becoming scientifically explanatory, elucidating the relationship between *aşk* and insanity. He consults psychiatry as a science capable of explaining the "scandalous" nature of Sufism (9):

Medical literature and eulogy manuscripts written by disciples, namely patients, document that Sufi perverts are occasionally smitten with a crisis of pride. When this happens, they become more brazen, consider themselves great, on par with Allah or even Him in the flesh, and go insane from love (85).

The resemblance between the narrator and von Krafft-Ebing, particularly in assuming the role of a nineteenth-century psychiatrist or a sexologist, is most visible in his attempt to translate foreign scientific terms into Turkish. He defines, names, and discusses various sexual desire-related illnesses and anomalies in *Kadınlar Tekkesi*, much like von Krafft-Ebing did in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (von Krafft-Ebing 1965 [1886]). The narrator refers to Baki as a *psikopat* (psychopath) (47), an *érotico-religieux* (475), suffering from *depresyon* (depression) (48), caught up in *dinî bir erotizm* (a religious eroticism) (80) and a *şehvet buhranı* (crisis of lust) (83), as this is “what medical science calls” such a person (258). He uses words written in their original languages (German and French) in italics, Turkish transcriptions in quotation marks, or Ottoman Turkish translations. These include terms coined by von Krafft-Ebing, such as “hysteric” (53), “masochist” (258), “nymphomaniac,” “sadist” (174), or “fetishist,” all in quotation marks (142, 219, 243). Furthermore, the narrator coins new Turkish phrases by combining obsolete Ottoman words, such as *cinsi arzu şikempveri* (sexual glutton) (209).

The narrator, like a true encyclopedist, creates entries, defines them, and illustrates them using the characters. Thus, *Kadınlar Tekkesi* becomes a sequel to von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* (von Krafft-Ebing 1965 [1886]), with narrative depictions of sexually aberrant figures rather than pictures. Nevertheless, his collection of mental disorders focuses solely on Sufism, which he describes as a fertile field for psychiatric patients. He asserts that Sufi principles “particularly appeal to the mentally sick” and that Sufi literature embodies “a sense of humiliation and miserable obedience” (157). By linking Sufism with psychiatric disorders, *Kadınlar Tekkesi* not only solidifies its position within the Republican secularist discourse, but also situates Sufism as a social danger within a scientific discourse whose contours are explained below.

Psychiatric discourse, sexuality, and Sufism

Kadınlar Tekkesi’s third-person omniscient narrator, like İzzettin Şadan, the first Turkish psychiatrist, acts as an agent of the state’s disciplinary power, establishing orthodox Sunnism as the legitimate doctrine. He uses psychiatric terminology to depict Baki and his female disciples, highlighting their irrationality and danger to developing healthy and productive Turkish citizens. Furthermore, the psychiatrist Dr Şükrü Şakir, a fictional character whose name alliterates with and shares similar criticisms of Sufism as Şadan, frequently appears alongside the narrator. He often mentions the common accusation against Sufism – that Sufi masters claim divinity – as evidence of their culpability. Dr Şakir disapprovingly describes their arrogance, using a religious remark: “Indeed! Occasionally, they are struck by a crisis of divinity and declare themselves Allah, *sümme hâşâ*”¹⁰ (95).

¹⁰ The Redhouse Turkish–English dictionary translates the term as “Perish the thought!” (Bezmez and Brown 2003). However, Within the context of Islam, the use of *hâşâ* implies the idea of sacrilege.

This psychoanalytical voice reflects Foucault's observation that the psychiatrist acts as a "judge," conducting "an investigation" at the level of an individual's "own guilt" (Foucault 2003, 23). However, his observation is not solely a psychiatric assessment of insanity; he also believes that these individuals commit blasphemy under Islamic law. His words recall the Sufi poet and teacher Mansur al-Hallaj's (858–922) ecstatic exclamation of being the embodiment of Truth (God), which led to his execution for heresy in Baghdad. Remarkably, despite being a scientist, Dr Şakir repeats normative Islamic arguments to bolster his secular and scientific stance. Through his psychoanalytical voice, we read that Sufism impedes the secular disenchantment of society, unlike Islam, which is portrayed as rational and free from social danger. He further asserts that purging all traditional elements is necessary to achieve genuine Islam. Hence, Dr Şakir identifies Sufism as an anomaly due to şeyhs' arrogance in equating themselves with prophets and God, a grave sacrilegious act in orthodox Islam. He explains Sufism's contemporary popularity in a scientific tone:

The situation can be described as an anomaly. Sufism flourished among the populace in the past due to state administrators' dry, rigid, intolerant religiosity and the way they turned it into a form of oppression. It has now started to spread among the upper and middle classes, who are exposed to and suffer from the exhausting, superficial, *şiriyetsiz* (non-poetic), and *idealsiz* (purposeless) qualities of modern life. New life is insufficient to console the *gönül* (heart) (97).

According to Dr Şakir, Sufism offers an escape from Weber's disenchanted modernity through the aesthetic delights of its poetic expression. However, this escape is an "anomaly" that requires correction through psychoanalysis. In addition to Baki's portrayal as a psychopath within a secularist framework that equates religious deviation with mental deviance, his disciples are also depicted as mentally ill or insane, with their conditions validated by psychiatric institutions. His female disciples are particularly disturbed, suffering from a range of psychiatric disorders, such as nymphomania, masochism, and sadism, or they are immoral women pursuing perverse pleasures. While their devotion to the şeyh illustrates the traditional Sufi disciple–master relationship, Süha, one of Baki's old acquaintances and a cynical critic, portrays it as a disease caused by unfulfilled desires that primarily affects older women:

When a woman reaches a certain age, she seeks compensation for her *aşk*, which gives her a distinction and something to brag about. In such cases, mysticism and religion take precedence; this is true everywhere; women cannot resist Christian priests and preachers, as well as şeyhs, dervishes, and Bektaşî babas (104).

Some men also share this "anomaly," but they have lost their masculinity and virility, as the novel's title and subject suggest. Baki's allure and ability to attract many women – and emasculated men – has a rationale: women, driven by emotions and irrationality, yearn for love. Therefore, they gravitate toward the "sick" field of Sufism, enjoying being Baki's "mystical mistresses" (105). The narrator makes

scholarly references to von Krafft-Ebing, faithfully paraphrasing *Psychopathia Sexualis* (von Krafft-Ebing 1965 [1886], 1–6):

As von Krafft-Ebing explains, *din cezbesi* (religious enthusiasm) is closely related to the enthusiasm of love; unrequited and unfortunate loves often find solace and compromise in religion. According to him, religion and eroticism mix in quite a specific way; again, love, like religion, has some mystical features. Therefore, the two types of excitement—mystical and erotic—are intertwined in the formation of faith (474).

Baki's female disciples' abnormality stems not only from their perverted nature but also from their renunciation of free will. Except for the virtuous Neşide and her family, all women in *Kadınlar Tekkesi* lack rational thought. These women, from high-class ladies to maids, exhibit various aberrant behaviors caused by excessive sexual desire and are interested in "abnormal pleasures" (136). They are either "sick," "half-sick," "prone to sinking into the realm of imagination," or they are "half-intellectuals" if they seek learning (166). For instance, Melal, one of Baki's most learned disciples, "had long believed that her primary duty was to serve the Şeyh without any criticism through self-indoctrination; she no longer thought in a normal human way" (26). She even becomes agitated upon realizing that she has not "reached the absolute faith" required to "accept everything blindly" (59).

Princess Peryal, on the other hand, is described as "a half-unbalanced woman who only reasoned with her feelings" (29). Her conscience was already "dimmed" (32), reaching the level of "half-perversion" (36–37). Others, including Samiye, her brother İrfan, and their mother, are labeled as "mental patients" since they are devoted to him with "the weak-willed and semi-ignorant's faith, tending to accept any exceptionality by nature" (53). They are willing to do anything the Şeyh commands, mistaking "degenerate lustful feelings" for religious acts (87). Samiye is "prone to indecency in love" and frequently "dreams scenes that a normal woman would find revolting and even hate herself for," indicating a "manifestation of a sexual aberration" (157). Like the inconsistency of the centilmen-evliya, these women are hard to classify as either modern or religious due to their submission to the dictates of a şeyh. They disregard the code of modesty promoted by the Kemalist elite, but their liberation does not equate to freedom from authority.

Despite the implied sexual availability of his female disciples, Baki only desires the virtuous Neşide. She is a secular woman with private religious feelings, possessing "the heart of a pure Muslim girl" (69), and is unaffected by his poetic speech. His infatuation with her stems from his disturbed mental state, as he is "a little fond of the mental disorder called 'masochism' in medicine," fantasizing that she is "blind by the desire to torment" and "hits, slaps, and even whips him to make him writhe in pain" (258). Nevertheless, her normalcy even has the power to normalize Baki: "Such faces would make even the most *cinsî dalalet sapıkları* (sexually aberrant people) turn to the *tabii* (natural), luring them to normal thoughts and desires" (136–137).

The contrast between Neşide's normalcy and Baki's sexually aberrant, gullible disciples sets them apart from the ideal Turkish women who challenged traditions. The Republican "Turkish woman in the singular" disregarded differences such as ethnicity, religious beliefs, or class to promote a uniform concept of modernity (Arat

2005, 17–18). Nevertheless, Baki's female disciples are excluded from this ideal. Their medicalization as deviants rationalizes their participation in the outlawed and masculine Sufi space, highlighting their heresy. This portrayal suggests that their involvement in Sufism signifies both mental and sexual deviance and poses a threat to the secular order. From this vantage point, the entire narrative reenacts the secularist view of Sufism's perils and underscores the proper religiosity expected of modern Turkish women.

Conclusion

This article examines the intricate relationship between Sufism, secularity, and psychopathology in Refik Halid Karay's novel, *Kadınlar Tekkesi*. Drawing on Michel Foucault's discussion of the organization of knowledge and power through the technique of normalization, it demonstrates how the secularist approach pathologizes Sufism in *Kadınlar Tekkesi* through medicalized jargon. While *Kadınlar Tekkesi* continues the late Ottoman anti-Sufi literary tradition, its true significance lies in its contextualization of Sufism within psychopathology. The novel highlights the emerging relationship between secularism and contemporary science, particularly focusing on female sexuality as evidence of pathologies linked to Sufi practices.

Kadınlar Tekkesi, with its truth claim about an actual tekke and şeyh, critiques private forms of religion and advocates state intervention for normalization by emphasizing abnormal conduct to delineate the boundaries of secular norms. The novel portrays Sufism as a threat unless confined to the private sphere and views the blending of Sufism with contemporary Western lifestyles as pathologically dangerous. This critique of secularism is nuanced, expressing concern not only for maintaining secular society but also for the health and moral harmony of society. It underscores the futility of modernizing tekkes in a Western mold, illustrating the tension between private religious expression and state-defined secularism.

The authoritative discourses of psychiatry, psychopathology, and psychoanalysis establish a new regime of truth that intersects with secularist ideology to construct the Sufi individual as an abnormal threat to secular society and its moral structure. The novel emphasizes this threat through the portrayal of a fraudulent şeyh and his female followers, who flout the 1925 law on tekkes and Sufi practices, in contrast to the compliant Sufis who represent true Islam. This medical gaze, as explained by Foucault's discussions of power and expert psychiatric opinion, categorizes certain behaviors as condemnable, circumventing legal limitations. Consequently, *Kadınlar Tekkesi* uses secularist imagery to portray Sufis as morally degenerate and uses psychiatric assessments to stigmatize them as deviant individuals requiring psychiatric scrutiny.

This discourse analysis of *Kadınlar Tekkesi* examines the medicalization and pathologization of Sufism as a crucial aspect of power/knowledge dynamics in Turkish secularity. It discusses how forms of knowledge intersect and evolve within the frameworks of Sufism, secularism, and psychiatry in Turkey. It highlights the role of these intersections in shaping the cultural and social organization of Sufism. Additionally, it elucidates the establishment of a new regime of truth based on secular and scientific thought, implicitly supported by orthodox Islamic principles.

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