

POLITICAL PARODIES FROM COUPS TO CONSPIRACIES: THE POLEMICS OF ORHAN PAMUK

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Abstract:

The present paper attempts to unravel the theoretical potpourri of the research and literal Orientals in Pamuk's literary works. Also known as literary logoteunison, the terminology can significantly be defined as the western ethos that reflect, symbolize, or deploy Eastern oriental concepts eventually embodying especially the Arabic and Persian allusions. The present research paper puts forward the views of the various critics and philosophers like Colin Campbell and Weber- the sociologist and others. The paper also employs the theory of Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a reverse process in terms of literary orientalism in the West to bridge the two genres and cultures. The paper explores the enduring eastern and western themes in Orhan Pamuk's works. It significantly interprets his works on broader scales through the lenses of literary orientalism that makes him a global and postmodern author. The receptivity of his works amongst readers from all over the world makes him a global author. The postmodern features like inter-textuality by Kristeva, metafiction and fragmentation are prominent in his works. Pamuk uses Istanbul as a bridge between Asia and Europe both symbolically and physically to intertwine the east and west. The paper implores a distinct review on Turkish identity across cultures, literatures and languages. The cultural affinities between the two alternative and corresponding cultures through the eyes of postmodernism and cross fertilization are dealt with in depth

Keywords: Identity, Orientalism , Juxta-positioning of the cultures of the East –West , Quest

Introduction:

Orhan Pamuk is a well known political novelist and his literary works have been translated into more than sixty languages. He won the prestigious Nobel Prize in literature. He is read all over the world as a global author and has inspired many authors to follow him. The critics quite often compare him to postmodern authors and Paul Auster, Umberto Eco and others. The works have a trace of magic realism in their works. Pamuk refers to the Eastern texts like (Persian, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish) that introduce a western reader to the

eastern values that give them a meaning of life. The western minds are allured by the traces of Sufism found in his works. He sets most of his works in Istanbul. He discusses about people who have written before him about the city, painted it and photographed it. Flaubert once visited Istanbul and predicted that in a century's time it would be the capital of the world but unfortunately the reverse came true. The Ottoman Empire collapsed and the world almost forgot that Istanbul had once existed. Istanbul turned into a city of ruins.

Pamuk rightly calims "I've spent my life either battling with this melancholy, or (like all Istanbul) making it my own" (Pamuk 6). Pamuk laments the destruction of the Pashas' Mansions; he also mourns the loss of the great Ottoman Empire. He also tells us how the tour of the streets by him tells a sorrow, sad and melancholic picture of the present times.

In his literary works. Pamuk also mocks at the tendency of Istanbul to imitate west. He shares one of his personal experiences to demonstrate the imitation by calling the "sitting rooms" as "little museums" before the 1970s. "The sitting rooms were little museums designed to demonstrate to a hypothetical visitor that the householders were westernized" (Pamuk 10). He manages to give a string of references from his life to showcase how Istanbul had started imitating west. The enormous portraits of his grandfather and grandmother hung over the never used fireplace slightly turned towards each other in the manner favored by European kings and queens on stamps was another way of modernizing themselves or imitating the west.

Pamuk's references in *Istanbul* are self reflexive. He on one hand laments the imitation of western culture and at the same time makes clear that "we only acquire our own identity by imitating others".

Most of the western travelers have praised the city for its beauty and charm but in due course westernization began to impact it. Pamuk's love for his native place can be seen clearly again when he admits that "I've accepted the city into which I was born in the same way I've accepted my body..." (Pamuk7). Pamuk has made peace with himself in the sense he has accepted the filth of the side streets, the foul smell from open rubbish bins, the ups and downs, and holes in the pavements, all this disorder and chaos. He further explains his point that when this melancholy begins to seep into me and from me into the city, he feels helpless like the city and shares belongingness with the living dead city. Pamuk is reminded of his filth and defeat like the city and its pavements faced after the fall of the great Ottoman Empire. The reflection of clash of civilization is portrayed in his works as a "Dialogue Among Civilizations" by Pamuk. Istanbul and the Bosphorus bridge links Asia and Europe not only regionally but also culturally. This connection is depicted in Pamuk's novels as chief subject as protagonists shifting their identities and being accustomed to new roles. The Huzun (the melancholy) of Istanbul and Turk makes them reminiscent of the great past and

give birth to a yearning to be close to God and one's own self in this chaotic cosmopolitan world today.

Orhan Pamuk's heroes are on a quest like him and the melancholic soul of his native city Istanbul. He is considered a postmodern global Turkish author. The journey helps him discover key symbols, signs and aspects of his identity. In his words "My world is a mixture of the local-the national and the west." He is a great narrator and helps us understand the "new" Turkey. He is a good analyst of politics and society and cultures as well. He had to go back to his roots to invent the modern literature he has created. His novels reflect Turkey's history and culture but he portrays a global view of humanity for all nations alike. Like Turkey he also acts as a bridge between the two cultures through his writing.

Pamuk's writing style is compared to western authors and others like Kafka, G.G Marquez and Paul Auster. He is criticized for his writing in Turkey but is celebrated all over the world in various languages because the readers relate with the problems of a modern Turk portrayed by him in his works. The loss of identity or discovering one's cultural roots in an era of westernization makes him a central figure in literary world. Turkish literature comprises of both oral and written texts. He uses folk literature of Republic and tales from Arabic and Persian language and literature from the Ottoman era. He used not only mythological aspects of languages and cultures but linguistic aspects as well. *My Name is Red* and *The Black Book* are two books that treat Turkish identity question. These books have allusions from several Turkish poets, fantasies and tales of early western travelers. *My Name is Red* is about the western influence on Ottoman miniature art of painting during sixteenth century. *The Black Book* analyses the identity of Turks and Istanbul city torn between the East and West clash. It is also a war between antiquity and modern times. It is a fight for secularity but not at the cost of Islam. The collective identity as cultural identity is the result of loss and gain over generations and it tries to define the individual identity through moral and ethics therefore they are also in a tug of war with each other. The identity crisis brought upon by the clash of Eastern and Western values is a chief subject of the chaos today. Most of his works are set in Istanbul city. The city was considered no less than world capital during the reign of the great Ottoman Empire. Today it is a multicultural and multilingual nation. Pamuk belongs to an affluent family from Turkey, his education had been European but he had close association with Turkish culture because of his Islamic roots. He abhors the idea of advocating supremacy of any one culture over the other; hence, he condemns the Europeans biased denunciation of Asian culture and vice versa. He discusses pros cons of the situation in terms of alienation, seclusion, industrialization because of the effect of Eastern values system on the west and vice versa.

Weber's idea of subcultures and ethnicities within a culture explains worldview or a reflection of global concept of cultures to make mankind a meaningful cosmos to the

readers. Colin Campbell (a neo Weberian critic) published “*Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of cultural Change in the Modern Era* (2008). Easternization or Westernization is subjective worldviews for both alternative cultures. The concept can be understood from the *Age of Enlightenment* when the West opened itself to spiritual so called preaching of the East. Campbell believes there has always been “East in the West” and vice versa. Byran Turner talks about the process of globalization and understanding it from the perspective of different cultures. In respect with Pamuk’s works considering Islamic and rationalist modernist problematic relationship, it can be understood in terms of Occidentalism and Orientalism. Postmodern world complicates the relationship between individual identity and national identity. The reflection of Mystic Sufi tradition and Eastern poets like Ferdowsi, Nizami and Saudi in Pamuk’s works clearly pictures the east dwelling in his heart. *The Black Book* quite oft talks about Rumi. Sham-al-Din influenced Rumi and they both lived together, when he left Rumi, Rumi transformed into an all together different person. Galip takes on into Celal’s identity on his quest and even starts writing. *My Name is Red* makes allusions from *Laila Majnun*, *Yusuf Zulaika* and *Khusrau Shirin*. It refers to *The Epic of Kings* a tale of fight against injustice. Pamuk uses these eastern influences to preserve the east in his works. Globalization challenges traditional dominant cultures of nations and cosmopolitanism takes the local traditions as skeptical. Campbell’s view is in sync with this; he defines Easternization which is more realistic than cosmopolitan view. Europe has been lucky because it was the locus of all ideas and thus a receptacle of all the philosophies meaning an intersection of all the sentiments. Gadamer also propounds the concept of “unity in diversity” in a global world that is humanity appreciating pluralities, multiplicities and cultural differences. He believes Hegemony as dangerous or against human freedom.

Easternization takes on the accountability to employ Hermeneutics to unravel the problem whether populace can actually appreciate foreign culture or not. The philosophical stance is diverse, the East rejects the idea of dualism furthermore understanding is subjective also there is truly no universal criterion of truth and rationality or morality. The convictions emerge from artifacts. Easternization is evidence based notion supported by cultural exempla. Human race inherent culture which is a set of constructed values. Said understands culture as a sense of identity in respect with nation, this results in Xenophobia which ultimately returns to hybridity. Easternization is a reverse of Said’s Orientalism and both the alternatives give way to single world culture. For instance, in *The White Castle*, Hoja says, “You’re frightened because you believe in me more than I believe in you”. Pamuk conveys that anyone can be a Easterner or westerner or a hybrid. Turkey was never colonized hence he doesn’t lay much emphasis on the concept of Orientalism furthermore Turks were not humiliated by West as the rest of Asian colonies were treated. They were denounced by Europeans which Pamuk has strictly condemned. The reflection of both eastern and western outlooks intertwining in Pamuk’s writing is the reason for his popularity as a global author.

The two worldviews sharing a literary platform and showcasing abounding examples through intertextuality is the biggest achievement. Istanbul is the backdrop of most of his novels and he displays Turkish lifestyle of an urban society having both the components of Eastern and Western values. His works are uncritical reflection of social facts of the two different cultural regions. For instance, *The Museum of Innocence* talks about the perspective of Western and conservative families on sex before marriage. Consequently, it summarizes the assimilation of two cultural values in the novel. *The White Castle* tells about the Eastern and Western encounter of Hoja and Italian scientist in Istanbul. It talks about identity exchange and perpetual fight for self discovery through a master-slave relationship. Pamuk's naturalizes both the cultures by locating his novels in both Eastern and western region with a social perspective.

Conclusion:

Pamuk clarifies that the suffering of Turks is self inflicted in a way because they romanticize the past and it has affected the spirit of Turkey and its natives. The decline of Ottoman implored them to transform as a western and that not so complete transformation and its consequences are portrayed in his works and can be understood in respect with literary oriental theory. Campbell suggests Globalization as another name for Westernization. He clearly demonstrates that the two discourses have a thin line of difference and cannot be explained in their own boundary that is European borders. Therefore, Istanbul is an ideal site to consider the bridge between East and West; Bosphorus bridges the two continents. It is a place where the cultures fuse, however Pamuk talks about Turkish identity issues through his works Pamuk concludes that what we see with these eyes is colored by a subjective position; hence 'no real city can ever be grasped in its present or past totality by any single person'. The memoir tells us how the western culture, studies and art challenge Turkey's tradition and culture. The author as an individual finds himself in a dilemma and can't decide whether to hold on the Turkish self or embrace the modern western tradition. He mourns the lost identity of a nation and individual self, he declares Turkey merely an imitation of a western city. It laments the lost glory of the great Ottoman Empire but over time has learnt to accept the city as it is and we see him celebrating the present. This study helps us understand the oscillation of the East and the West and its effect on an individual and nation as a whole.

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