

# **Logoteunison**

Literary Easternization in Orhan Pamuk's Works

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**Series in Literary Studies**



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*To My Lovely Parents and Sasan*



# Introduction

The Nobel Committee for Literature at the Swedish Academy announced Orhan Pamuk as a writer who “in the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures.”<sup>1</sup> Orhan Pamuk sees himself as a Turkish and local, as well as a postmodern and global author. He sees himself as both Turkish and Western—that is, “global” in present-day jargon by saying: “My world is a mixture of the local—the national—and the West”<sup>2</sup>. According to his personal website, Sander L. Gilman, an American literary historian, describes him as “a central figure in any understanding of the ‘new’ Turkey and through this understanding the desires and aims of a large swath of North Africa and [the] Middle East”<sup>3</sup>. In 2017, the President of Germany, Steinmeier, celebrated Orhan Pamuk’s birthday and introduced him as a “great narrator, a passionate European, a critical analyst of politics and society”<sup>4</sup>.

In an interview, Pamuk points out how he went back to his “roots” and tried to “invent a modern national literature”<sup>5</sup>. Although he tries to illustrate and maintain a complete cultural heritage: “we are completely devoted to the Turkish traditions that have come down over thousands of years”<sup>6</sup>, but his novels are not in a particular historical and cultural position, they portray a global view of humanity in any nation. During his visit to Turkey in 2004, former United States President George W. Bush pointed to Orhan Pamuk’s works as “a bridge between cultures.” What is important, he says, is to realize “that other people in other continents and civilizations” are “exactly like you”<sup>7</sup>.

Pamuk represents identity problems of people such as being stuck between East and West or Past and Present; thus it is understandable that a writer like Pamuk would choose one of the most significant capital cities of Ottoman Empire— a multinational, multilingual empire controlling parts of Southeast, Eastern, and Central Europe, Western Asia, the Caucasus, and North Africa— as a theme for his works. In his theoretical non-fiction, *The Naïve and the*

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<sup>1</sup> Orhan Pamuk 2019, 1

<sup>2</sup> Pamuk 2007, 410

<sup>3</sup> Afridi 2012, xv

<sup>4</sup> Sencer 2017,1

<sup>5</sup> Pamuk 2007, 366

<sup>6</sup> Pamuk 2012b, 210

<sup>7</sup> Spengler 2006, 1

*Sentimental Novelist*, Pamuk emphasized that after reading about any coincidence, everything that “remains” in mind is not “history”, but “our thoughts on the fragility of human life, the immensity of the world, and our place in the universe; and in the course of reading, we have had the pleasure of experiencing the sentence-by-sentence illumination of a center”<sup>8</sup>. In the twenty-first century, when Turkey seeks international integration, Pamuk condemns both Turks because of their cultural identity crisis, and also Europeans for biased denunciation of Turkish culture: “I will remain all alone with my pains, my past, and my thoughts. All right, leave me to my nice thoughts”<sup>9</sup>. This is a fantasy that the main character of Pamuk’s screenplay *The Hidden Face* experiences; he imagines the world as a different landscape.

Studying at İstanbul’s American Robert College, a branch of the American Ivy League, Pamuk knows how to write to be accepted as a new global author by a Western reader. His challenge is to be a respected author and a famous novelist at the same time. In chapter fifty-six of *Other Colours*, Pamuk points out the importance of novels in the national art of previous centuries, as he recalls its effects on international literary views today. He reviews the latest decades and their cultural order by screening recent literary authors as writers who “gradually write less for their own national majorities (who do not read them) than for the small minority of literary readers in the world who do”<sup>10</sup>. Pamuk, on the other hand, seeks “to engage with the world in which he lives...to understand his changing position in the world”<sup>11</sup>.

Azade Seyhan in her book about the modern Turkish novel states that Pamuk’s international success increased public interest in Turkish authors’ translated works. She emphasizes that this matter leads to “a closer investigation of the cultural spaces from which modern Turkish literature has drawn intellectual and aesthetic substance”<sup>12</sup>. These widely disparate views about his works are because of the different perspectives of readers on the same texts. Perceptions and associations in Pamuk’s works foster a global perspective of humankind despite settings in specific cultures and periods. He combines literature and social history and sometimes changes some historical facts intentionally to challenge historical perceptions. Pamuk even uses his family to explain the pros and cons of his times: alienation, isolation,

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<sup>8</sup> Pamuk 2011b, 163

<sup>9</sup> Pamuk 2012b, 95

<sup>10</sup> Pamuk 2007, 243

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Seyhan 2008, 4

industrialization, the effects of Eastern history on the West, and Western ideas on the development of the East.

As Turkey's best-selling international author who sold over eleven million copies of his books in over sixty languages, Pamuk's writing style is compared to Kafka, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Paul Auster. All of Pamuk's works, except for his first novel and his only screenplay, have been translated into more than fifty languages. Local feelings in Turkey are conflicted about Pamuk and his works. Some even say that Pamuk is not that good a writer and that what he says seems amusing in other languages while it is dark and dull in Turkish. However, Pamuk as an author and philosopher deals with the difficulties and problems that Turks face in a modern state while trying to discover their cultural roots. Loss of identity in an era of globalization makes him an important figure in Turkish society that is trying to be born from its ashes.

Turkish literature is comprised of both oral and written texts, either in less perfect literary forms (such as that of oral folk literature in the Republic of Turkey today), or in its previous, highly stylized Ottoman forms that are the basis of much of the written core that was influenced by Arabic and Persian language and literature, and that used the Ottoman Turkish alphabet in Arabic and Persian script. Turkish literature's inheritance of written works extends back twelve centuries under the influence of Persian and Arabic poetry. Intellectuals absorbed Arabic and Persian vocabulary and grammatical rules, forms, rhyme, meter, rhythm patterns, mythology and the *Weltanschauung* of these two languages and cultures. As the Turks embraced Islam, they showed a passion for Islamic narrative traditions in Arabic and Persian, and also the richly Persian literature of countless new tales.

*My Name is Red*, and *The Black Book* are two of Pamuk's prominent novels concerned with Turkish identity and introduce Turkish Divan poets with their homoerotic fantasies and early Western travellers' tales. *My Name is Red* is about the Westernization of Ottoman visual art of the Persian tradition of miniature painting, which had been protected by the Sultans during the sixteenth century. On the other hand, *The Black Book* analyzes the identity of the Turkish people and Istanbul's identity as a city between East and West, antiquity and modern secularism, and Islam. It judges modern time through the loss and gains of the collective culture. Pamuk considers the relation of personal and group identity to morals and ethics, and links between identity and culture.

Ferdowsi, Nizami, and Saadi are some of the Eastern, Persian poets praised in Pamuk's novels. Luculently, Pamuk describes how the texts of the past make the present. References to the mystic Sufi tradition of the East against the West show how Pamuk tries to keep Eastern values alive. The academy that awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature to Pamuk mentioned him as a writer who found signs

and symbols of the clash of cultures in his native Istanbul, as the symbols of his country. Like the miniaturists in *My Name is Red*, the central characters of *The Black Book* convey what they meant in pieces of the past.

In this regard, Shams al-Din of Tabriz was the most influential person in Rumi's life, and after a year or two they remained inseparable in Rumi's house, and Rumi became a different man. *Diwan-i Shams al-Din of Tabriz* and the story of Rumi and Shams is one of the need-to-know parts of *The Black Book*. Also in *The Black Book* Pamuk cites the mystical parable, *The Parliament of Birds* by Attar, a poem that shows the author in his role of allegorist. The fantastic adventure of *One Thousand and One Nights* or the book known in English as the *Arabian Nights*, which reminds the readers of ancient Persian civilization, is another important masterpiece cited in Pamuk's work. These collected folk tales by various authors is a heritage of centuries. The ruler's wife Scheherazade begins to tell the king Shahryar a tale that does not end. The king, who is interested in how the story ends, postpones his wife's execution in order to hear the finale.

*My Name is Red* and its main character Kara make allusions to Nizami's *Khusrau and Shirin* and also, *Laila and Majnun*. *Khusrau and Shirin* recounts couplets of the love story of the Sassanian emperor, Khusrau Parviz and his beloved Shirin, and the tragedy of his rival, poor Farhad. Also, *Laila and Majnun* is the melancholic passion of the desert-poet Qais or Majnun for the lovely Laila. Jami's *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, which was written on the same subject, is another book referred to Pamuk's work. Jami's work points to the story of the prophet Joseph and Potiphar's wife as told in the surah Joseph of *The Holy Quran*.

*The Epic of Kings* or *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi is the national epic of Iran and the Persian speaking countries. The work is regarded as a literary masterpiece of poetry and historiography. *Shahnameh's* stories of fighting the injustice optimized at the battle of the father (Rostam) and the son (Esfandiyar) is not only mentioned in *My Name is Red*, but also in Pamuk's other novels, too. The great Persian poet, Saadi, whose *Bustan*, which means "the fruit orchard," contains Saadi's long experience and his judgments upon life. *Kalila and Dimna*, a collection of humorous stories about animals, and also Jami's *Haft Awrang*, meaning "Seven Thrones," are other Persian masterpieces that appear in Pamuk's *My Name is Red*. The story of the great Persian mystics, revolutionary writers, the theoretician of Sufism, hagiographers, and teachers of Sufism like Mansur Hallaj, Attar, Shams al-Din of Tabriz, and Bukhari in *The Black Book* and other mystics, writers, and preachers like Ahmad Ghazali and Muhammad Ghazali in *My Name is Red*, show influential and adaptable aspects of Persian literature. These are some of the Eastern classical literary treasures that Pamuk uses to introduce Eastern values.

This study consists of four chapters. Chapter one deals with the theoretical background of the research and includes two topics: “Easternization” includes eight parts: first, the theory of Easternization to demonstrate how Colin Campbell methodologically defines this cultural term is reviewed. Second, Max Weber’s sociological view through Campbell, as a neo-Weberian sociologist is analyzed. Third, the impact of the New Age Movement and particularly Sufism in contemporary Western countries is fully discussed. Fourth, Edward Said’s theory of *Orientalism* as a theory of the East in the West and its similarities and contrasts with the Easternization thesis is mentioned. Fifth, the features of postmodernism in the age of Easternization is described. Sixth, the binary concepts of East and West, and Us and the Other is studied. Finally, the importance of Istanbul to demonstrate how this city as a bridge between East and West and a symbol to analyze the Easternization thesis is reviewed. The second topic defines a conceptual theory of “Literary Easternization.” Based on the sociological theory of Easternization, a new approach of Easternization in literary study is assembled. This title includes two parts: first, through studying David Damrosch’s concept of World Literature as a revised statement of comparative literature, the idea of Literary Easternization in the context of world literature is reviewed. Second, Literary Easternization in the scope of my concept of Logoteunison is explained.

In Chapter 2 the effect of intertextuality and pastiche as essential techniques in Literary Easternization to bridge genres, styles, and cultures is evaluated. Successive theories of intertextuality by Kristeva, Barthes, Bakhtin, Jenny, and Riffaterre to demonstrate how Pamuk uses intertextuality in his works are described. As Eastern masterpieces play a significant role in Pamuk’s novels, the main focus of this chapter is to show how Pamuk uses intertextuality and pastiche in his books.

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