Conclusion

Orhan Pamuk’s oeuvre is literary magnificent. There is subtlety and intensity, both at once in treatment in his novels. Through his writing, which throbs with elegance, versatile themes and distinctive narrative style, he has achieved a stature which is unsurpassed by any other Turkish novelist. His uniqueness as a novelist lies in the fact that his stories and characters are true to the reality as much as they are part of his fictional world. He drives his readers into the mesmerizing world of his stories and touches the most intimate emotions in a subtle way. The beauty of his fiction is that it defies boundaries and becomes universal in its appeal. He raises questions which demand anger and attention, and issues which are essential in the world we live in. His fiction focuses on the possibility of East-West collaboration but at the same time it doesn’t overlook the complications associated
with their interaction. According to critics, through his treatment of the East-West themes he has opened “new vistas of literary modernity” (Goknar, 2013, p.101). Pamuk believes in the westernization of Turkey but not the way the staunch westernizers depicted in his novels believe in it. He opines that tradition, local culture and religion are important elements of a nation or individual’s identity and “upholding one’s history and tradition is not incompatible in a modern secular state that seeks to join the European union” (2006, retrieved). He vehemently stresses that Turkey is different from other eastern countries because it belongs partly to East and partly to West and due to this it possesses two selves, one eastern and the other western. During the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, one of these two selves was suppressed and discarded to westernize the country which gave rise to a collective disillusionment. Pamuk sees his own writing as an outcome of this. In an interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Pamuk said “Freud tells you that when something is suppressed it comes back in disguise, then my novels are, in fact, that disguise” (2003, retrieved). His novels, as discussed in this study, which are a mixture of tradition and modernism, myths and theories, rationality and sentimentality, offers a new and optimistic way of looking at the East-West question.

Chapter I entitled, “The Rise of Turkish Novel”, provides the general outline of how different socio-political events that took place during the 19th and 20th century paved way for the emergence and development of novel in Turkey. The chapter also presents a review of how Turkish novel, for decades after its
inception, served as one of easiest and successful means of introducing and popularizing the westernization process. The chapter also discusses how, this subservience to the westernization cause, gave rise to a clash dividing novelists into two factions; the traditionalists and the westernizers. Apart from this, the chapter also illustrates how different novelists in the post 1950s era, mostly under the impact of western literature, began to experiment with new genres and literary techniques which elevated the status of the Turkish novel to the utmost heights.

Chapter II of the study entitled, “Orhan Pamuk as a Novelist: Changing Attitude”, first of all provides a detailed biographical account of Orhan Pamuk. The chapter demonstrates how as a novelist, he gained inspiration from both the eastern and western literature and how living in West helped him find his original artistic voice. The chapter also discusses the response his Nobel Prize evoked in Turkey and the harsh criticism he faces for his views and, even, for his innovative literary techniques. Apart from all this, the chapter also briefly discusses his first novel Cevdet Bey and Sons (1979) and his recently translated novel A Strangeness in My Mind, which was published in October 2015.

Chapter III of this study entitled “Orhan Pamuk: Problematizing East-West Cultural Confrontation”, is devoted to an examination of the consequences of cultural confrontation between the East and the West as identified by Pamuk in his select novels. The chapter discusses how Pamuk explores the rift between tradition
and modernity, religion and science, past and present as the root cause of the Turkey’s cultural and spiritual entanglement.

Chapter IV of the study entitled “Orhan Pamuk: Bridging the Gulf between East and West”, has tried to illustrate how Pamuk tries to bridge the gap created by the cultural and religious difference between the East and West. The chapter explores different themes to elucidate why there is a need to bridge the two cultures and to generate an understanding between them.

Pamuk is widely considered as an expert on the East-West question as he has been dealing with this theme from the past thirty-five years of his writing career. His main focus is on bridging the gulf between the East and the West which he believes has being magnified by a number of reasons, as discussed in the chapter III of this study. He asserts that he belongs to West as much as he belongs to East and “can, without any guilt, wander between the two worlds” (Jaggi, 2007, retrieved). The aim of this study was to explore new questions, themes and symbols related to the East-West encounter, as presented in his novels, which have not been much discussed in order to open up new spaces for future research.

Pamuk’s fiction offers hope in an era when the East and West are going through a tumultuous phase freckled by violence and extremism justified either in the name of religion or democracy. In an interview with Dieter Bednarz, Pamuk said, “My books are a testimony to the fact that East and West are coming together. There needn’t be a clash between East and West, between Islam and
Europe. That’s what my work stands for” (Pamuk, 2006, retrieved). He is one of those influential writers of this century whose writing exerts the power to shape our imagination, change our perspective and inspire us. It is a measure of his artistic talent that he has earned the title “the bridge”, from critics worldwide, suggesting his ability to create a cross-cultural literary union.

At a time when Turkey is struggling to find an entry in to the European Union, Pamuk, through his novels, demonstrates what Europe symbolizes for East and how their alliance would be mutually beneficial. It is hard not to be swept by his depiction of the East-West kinship. Through his novels, he has opened new possibilities of the cross-cultural dialogue and this is above all his greatest contribution to literature and, most importantly, to humanity.