Chapter III

Orhan Pamuk: Problematizing East-West Cultural Confrontation

Turkey was for two centuries the centre of the Ottoman Empire. After the decline of the Empire West became the new centre (ideological) and Turkey found itself receding towards the margins. While, most of the Turkish intelligentsia uphold that the change brought by the westernization process was compulsory and constructive, they are critical of certain complications perpetuated by this cross-cultural encounter. Among them, Orhan Pamuk, Turkey’s foremost novelist, who is known for “narrating his country into being” (Atwood, 2004, retrieved) too identifies himself as a westerner but at the same time a critic of the state-sponsored westernization or modernization project. What he views as problematic in the East-West encounter is the sense of collective loss created by the replacement of the native culture by a foreign one. As discussed in Chapter I, the westernization project changed the whole social and cultural set-up in Turkey, from legal reforms
to literature, everything was modeled on the western prototypes by the Turkish westernizers. This, on one hand, resulted in the scientific, economic and educational development but, on the other hand, it gave rise to a post-empire gloom and a sense of marginality, which Pamuk quite proficiently represents though his novels. Sibel Erol in a remarkable research article entitled “Reading Orhan Pamuk’s Snow as Parody: Difference as Sameness”, points out that Pamuk’s novels are full of characters whose “bodies are the visual and physical embodiments of historical erasures, the cost of the repression obfuscated by the…story of westernization” (2007, p. 404). Themes of identity crisis, loss of past, sense of being at the margins and exile loom large in almost all of his works. In Other Colours, Pamuk writes:

Westernizers dream of transforming and enriching their country and their culture by imitating the West…they remain deeply critical of certain basic characteristics of their country and culture; though they might not do so in the same spirit and same style as western observers, they.. see their culture as defective, sometimes even worthless. This gives rise to another very deep and confused emotion: shame.


He depicts this sense of shame, disillusionment and displacement and portrays characters who, having internalized the feeling of being inferior, are ashamed of their identity. Therefore, they view their own culture as worthless and try to replace it with that of the West. He adheres strictly to the idea that the East-West
encounter, in spite of its positive aspects should not take place at the cost of
national identity or cultural values and believes that there is a need to “invent a
strong local culture…a combination, not an imitation of the Eastern past and the
Western present” (2009, retrieved).

This chapter will discuss three major problems related to East-West
confrontation identified by Pamuk in his novels such as *The White Castle* (1990),
Innocence* (2009) and *Silent House* (2012). The first is the clash between tradition
and modernity. Pamuk believes that the East-West conflict is actually rooted in
this tension and as long as it remains unresolved, this clash is highly unlikely to
end. The second problem is the marginalization of the local culture, tradition and
religion which according to Pamuk has given rise to a spiritual vacuum and
identity crisis.

The third problem, which Pamuk asserts is responsible for the East-West
collision is the extremist approach adopted by the westernizers to stereotype
traditional, religious masses and to enforce their ideas on them. What Pamuk
laments in his fiction is that instead of being a smooth path between two cultures
which would lead to an exchange of knowledge and ideas the westernization has
been reduced to mere replication of the West. This chapter will also discuss how
Pamuk, with a blatant disregard for the intolerant and narrow-minded
westernizers/ modernizers, exposes the shortcomings of the state sponsored
westernization process in his novels.
The White Castle (1990)

*The White Castle* is set in the 17th century Istanbul and tells the story of an unnamed Venetian captive scholar and his Turkish master Hoja. The Venetian slave, who is also the narrator of the story, is captured by the Turkish fleet while he was sailing from Venice to Naples and is given to Hoja, his look-alike Turkish savant, after months of detention. During those months in prison he learned to trick everyone by claiming to be a doctor and making medicine for the prisoners and later for a Pasha which miraculously worked. Because of this the prison guards treated him better than the other prisoners. But, after the Pasha presented him to Hoja, his new master whom he is supposed to assist in his scientific projects, his reputation as a learned scholar created an awkward situation for him.

Hoja is keen to learn everything about the West as a result of which he continuously pressurizes his slave to teach him more and more about astronomy, arts and science. This doesn’t stop even when he realizes that he was being tricked by the slave with his superficial knowledge. The two make impressive firework and work on various other projects before Hoja one day suddenly comes up with the idea of writing down their life story, their observations and experiences. This enables them to know everything about each other’s life in only two months. The two men work on various military and scientific projects and invent new methods together for decades before they part ways and swap their identities. Hoja leaves for Italy where he marries his Venetian slave’s fiancée, take up a teaching job at
the university and the Venetian captive settles in Turkey, marries a Turkish girl and moves to Gebze where he builds a mansion.

In this novel, Pamuk through the story of these two men, a master and a slave, discusses the East-West encounter, which has always been a central question in the Turkish novel. He blends a personal tale of encounter between two men belonging to different religions, cultures and civilizations with the national history so skillfully and eloquently. Hoja, the curious, knowledge-hungry scientist could be seen as a representative of the early westernizers who turned to the West for innovative ideas. He looks up to the West and considers the easterners as fools who would first question, “what was the good of the thing they were about to learn, fools…interested not in details but in summaries” (Pamuk, 1990, p. 35). His struggle to make new war weapons using the western scientific methods to strengthen the Ottoman Empire symbolizes the endeavors of the Ottoman Sultans to modernize their military weaponry. But, Hoja at the same time personifies what Pamuk calls the “jealousy- the anxiety” of the East when it comes in contact with the West. In this novel, Pamuk seems to saying that the East-West encounter gives rise to a dilemma as, on the one hand, there is a desire among the easterners to become westernized but, on the other hand, there is sense of guilt which comes from discarding their own tradition and culture. In the novel this is best exemplified by the love hate relationship shared by Hoja and his Venetian slave. Hoja secretly envies his slave, he wants to learn from him, to become like him but he is at times so disgusted by him or by his own dependence on him, that he ends
up beating him. Similarly, he aspires to learn the western science and arts but at
the same time considers the same West his enemy and wants to defeat it in the
war.

One of the central themes in the novel is East’s sense of inferiority or
fragility when it comes in contact with the western culture. This is demonstrated in
the novel by the Venetian slave’s impression on the Pasha, Hoja, Sultan and other
men. All these men consider him, because he is a westerner, superior in
knowledge and intelligence than an easterner. The Sultan, for example, like
everyone else, accredits the Venetian for Hoja’s inventions and achievements for
he believes that it was Venetian slave who taught Hoja everything. Even, the war
weapon, for which Hoja works for years, is believed by everyone to be the
Venetian’s invention.

According to Erdag Goknar Pamuk uses the Ottoman theme “to take a
critical look at the present” (2013, retrieved). He highlights the loss of past and
Ottoman legacy using an experimental style of storytelling. The novel is presented
as a manuscript found by Faruk Darvinoğlu, a character from Pamuk’s second
novel Silent House (2012). Going through the Preface the readers come to know
that Faruk gave up his profession as a university professor to become an
encyclopaedist, like his grandfather, Selahattin. And, while on vacations in the
village of Gebze, he found a manuscript in a forgotten archive. Impressed by the
manuscript, he revised and published it, dedicating it to his late sister, Nilgun
Darvinoğlu (a character from Silent House).
For Pamuk, the Preface serves as a medium to convey the irreparable loss of the Ottoman history. Faruk, for example, finds the manuscript in a disorganized, dusty box, in an abandoned archive where, as an unsupervised visitor, he is easily able to steal it. In the very first paragraph of the Preface, Pamuk conveys the dire condition of the Ottoman legacy, for example the literature and language, in the modern Turkey. The manuscript found by Faruk becomes a symbol for the discarded past and tradition. As a friend tells Faruk that “if the simply people…hadn’t mistaken…old Ottoman script, for Arabic Korans and kept them in a place of honour…they were probably ripping them up page by page to light their stoves” (Pamuk, 1990, p. 3). Through Faruk’s act of translating the manuscript into the contemporary Turkish, Pamuk hints at the language reform which was introduced in 1928 by the founders of the Republic of Turkey. The novel according to Goknar identifies “the “gap” between “texts” is in a sense the elision and erasure of the Kemalist cultural revolution” (2006, p. 36). The disinterest shown by Faruk’s friends further exposes the indifferent attitude adopted by the modern, westernized intelligentsia towards Turkey’s history and the Ottoman era literature.

_The Black Book (1994)_

The story of the novel is quite simple, the main protagonist Galip, a lawyer by profession, comes home and finds his wife Ruya missing. At first, he suspects that
she has left him for her ex-husband but the story takes a different turn when he comes to know that her cousin Celal is also missing. He believes that the two are together and in order to find his wife, he has to find her cousin first. In his search for Ruya and Celal, Galip goes through a complete identity transformation. He shifts to Celal’s apartment, wears his clothes, writes his columns, tries to think like him and in this process he becomes a writer. In the beginning of the novel, Galip recalls telling his wife once, who was a voracious reader of detective fiction, that the only piece of detective fiction he would love to read is the one in which the author himself doesn’t know the identity of the murderer. Towards the end of the novel Ruya and Celal’s dead bodies are found and their murder remains an unsolved mystery.

At the surface level the story of the novel revolves around Galip’s search for his missing wife but at a deeper level it “penetrates into the subconscious of the city” (retrieved). In fact some critics such as Bernt Brendemoen argue that the real hero of the story is not Galip but the city of Istanbul. The novel depicts a city which in the desire to resemble someone or something else lost its own identity and has thus become “a nameless, featureless, odorless, colorless world where time itself had stopped…” (Pamuk, 2006, p.134). The novel meticulously examines the question of Turkish national identity and is critical of the state-led westernization or modernization project. Throughout the story Pamuk, through his different characters, continuously expresses a deep sense of shock and resentment
at the loss of a civilization and collective memory. Pamuk skillfully uses symbols and images to convey the sense of alienation, the spiritual vacuum caused by the loss of memory and identity. In the second chapter of the novel entitled “When the Bosphorus Dries up”, he uses the drying up Bosphorus as a symbol for the decaying Turkish culture and the lost heritage. The receding water of the once glorious Bosphorus unfolds the spiritual dryness of the city that has turned a blind eye to its own destruction and devastation. In this chapter Celal, in his column, writes of an epidemic which he predicts will plunge everyone into darkness when the long suppressed history or past will strike back. In another chapter entitled “Bedii Usta’s Children”, Pamuk at length talks about the cultural changes that took place due to the westernization process, “when gentlemen threw aside their fezzes to don panama hats and ladies discarded their scarves in favor of low-slung high heels…they’d gone along with the dress revolution, shaved their beards, reformed their language and their alphabet” (Pamuk, 2006, p.61). In this new cultural setting Bedii Usta, the mannequin artist, as Celal writes in another column, faced rejection because his mannequins didn’t resembled the European models but looked like ordinary Turks.

In the chapter “We Lost Our Memories at the Movies”, another character, Ruya’s ex-husband, laments the loss of memory and history which he believes has resulted in a collective blindness: “we’d all been blinded, every last one of us, every last one” (Pamuk, 2006, p. 128), he tells Galip. He blames the movie theaters for the drastic cultural transformation and tells Galip that “the movie
method proved far more radical and effective than anything ... it was in the ... movie theaters that they set their plan into action; long before, hundreds of people had gone utterly blind” (Pamuk, 2006, p.127). Apart from him, Bedii Usta and his son too blame the western movies for the major cultural upheaval. It is worth mentioning here that the movie theaters were established during the late 19th century as a part of the westernization project. Along with literature, cinema also served as one of the machineries of the state to popularize the western culture among the Turkish masses.

In another chapter “Do You Remember Me”, Pamuk uses the image of the mannequin (made by Bedii Usta) to signify the plight of people who have lost their memories and hence the meaning of their existence because they have severed their ties with the past. Pamuk writes:

Every time they tried to recover that meaning... they got lost; as they wandered about the blind alleys of their minds, searching for a way back, the key to their new life fell into the bottomless well of their memories; knowing it was lost to them forever, they felt the helpless pain known only by those who have lost their homes, their countries, their past, their history.


He identifies the loss of history or past as one of main problems of East-West confrontation. The term “New People” used in the novel is a reference to a generation who in the pursuit to become a part of western culture suppressed their
own identity and renounced their history. He writes that because they discarded their identity and “embraced a whole new set of gestures—each and every thing they did was an imitation” (Pamuk, 2006, p. 63). Pamuk frequently in the novel points out how Turkey’s own culture and history was marginalized and what its impact was on the collective unconsciousness in the long run. The novel uses the image of Bedii Usta’s mannequins kept in the underground passages which symbolizes the unconscious implying that the past, discarded and suppressed, is very much there and will surely come back, maybe as Celal predicts in form of an epidemic.

Pamuk’s disappointment with the westernization or modernization project which was initiated during Sultan Mahmud II’s regime (1808-1839) and reached its zenith during Mustapha Kemal Ataturk’s (1923-1938) rule is best conveyed through his mockery of these two men throughout the novel. For example, in the chapter “O Brother Mine”, an unnamed character tells Galip on phone that he will show him an engraving of Sultans “cavorting with loose women” who actually are their own wives and concubines disguised as “western whores”. The same man refers to another engraving showing Sultan Mahmud II “copulating in disguise in a dark Istanbul street, his legs naked but for his boots, which are the same boots Napoleon wore during his Egyptian campaign” (Pamuk, 2006, p. 358).

Pamuk uses the image of the boots which “Napoleon wore during his Egyptian campaign” to signify the political strategy or ideology adopted by Sultan Mahmud II. As an Ottoman Sultan, Mahmud played a vital role in importing
western technology and philosophy in Turkey. He believed that West was ahead of East in almost all fields of knowledge and that there was a lot that East needed to learn from the West. It was during his reign that new machines and, even, technicians were brought from England and France; special military instructors were brought from Germany to train army, European dress code was introduced, students and scholars were sent to western countries for higher studies and various reforms based on European models were set in different fields.

In another chapter of the novel entitled “The Story of the Crown Prince”, Pamuk tells the story of Prince Osman Celalettin Efendi who detaches himself from the world in his struggle for self identity. However, the reader easily draws comparison between this prince, who is referred to as a “queer…last Sultan” (Pamuk, 2006, p.167) by an unnamed character in the novel, and the founder of modern Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. For example, the Prince tells his hired scribe that during his childhood along with his sister he used to chase cows in a vegetable patch. This is something which at once reminds one of Ataturk who too during his childhood chased cows with his sister in his uncle’s farm. Pamuk’s subtle mockery of these two men is actually his scathing attack on the westernizers who in order to westernize their country turned a blind eye to the deterioration of their own history and legacy. The novel is studded with symbols which serve to highlight the loss of past and the decay of a culture and its hazardous effect on the collective conscious.
**My Name is Red (2001)**

*My Name is Red* is widely considered as Pamuk’s magnum opus. The novel was originally written in Turkish under the title *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (1998) and was later translated into English by Erdağ M Göknar in 2001. In this novel, he deals with the most sensitive issues, such as the clash between Islamic and western view of art, sectarian violence, the rift between the various schools of thought among the Muslims and the relation between the East and the West. According to Hywel Williams, *My Name is Red* is “a philosophical thriller constructed around the clash between two views of artistic meaning, which is also a chasm between two world civilization” (2001, retrieved). Another critic Richard Eder calls the novel “the grandest and most astonishing contest in Pamuk’s internal East-West war” (2001, retrieved). According to another critic Esra Almas, *My Name is Red* portrays conflicts which “relate more to the present than to the past. Concerns over westernization as a loss of Turkish identity and individuality characterize the novel…” (Retrieved).

Set in the 16th century, the novel begins with the murder of a miniaturist Elegant Effendi and the return of Black, the illustrator, to Istanbul after twelve years. Immediately after his return, he, still in love with the master Enişte Effendi’s daughter, Shekure, whose husband is missing for years, joins a secret workshop commissioned by the Sultan Murat III (1574-1595). Enişte Effendi, a master miniaturist, once visited the city of Venice as Sultan’s ambassador and was
so enthralled to see the portraits made by the Venetian’s painters that he decided to make a similar portrait of the Sultan. The Sultan, impressed by the idea, assigned him the project of drawing a book, in celebration of the thousandth year of the 

*Hegira*, using the western artistic technique of portraiture.

But, such a project demands secrecy, as it is an open challenge to the traditional, Islamic art, therefore Enishte involves only few miniaturists who work for him without questioning the nature of the assignment. But one of miniaturists, after he comes to know about the truth of the project, murders his fellow miniaturist Elegant Effendi and later Master Enishte Effendi. After Enishte’s murders Black marries Shekure in a hurry and sets out to find the murderer. The three master miniaturists nicknamed as Butterfly, Stork and Olive are his prime suspects and he questions them about their views on artistic style and perspective.

In the end, it turns out to be Master Olive who, as an opponent of the western artistic techniques, first killed Elegant by pushing him into a dry well and later murdered Enishte. When confronted by Black, he stabs him, leaving him crippled for life and runs away. In order to escape execution, he decides to go to the Mongol India but is murdered by Hasan, Shekure’s brother-in-law, who mistakes him as the one who raided his house in his absence and freed Shekure.

While, Black was busy solving the murder mystery, Hasan had forced Shekure to return to his house by taking away her son Shevket, but while he was away, Black came to her rescue. Before leaving the house Shevket took Hasan’s
red dagger with him and later Black carried the same dagger while he went to
meet Olive and in their manhandling Olive snatched it from him and wounded him
with it. As a result when Hasan saw Olive with his dagger he, in a fit of anger,
killed him. At the end of the novel the reader comes to know that Hasan ran away
from Istanbul to evade punishment and Black abandoned miniature and took up a
clerical job.

In this novel, Pamuk highlights the clash between the eastern and western
artistic philosophy and perspective. Throughout the novel, he makes it quite
obvious that a process like westernization is destined to encounter complication
and criticism in a society deeply embedded in religion and tradition. For example,
the book of painting which is modeled on the western art becomes the main cause
of conflict among the miniaturists. The two murders are the outcome of the
ideological differences between them. A number of them, including Master Olive,
believe that figurative art is a type of idolatry which is one of the greatest sins in
Islam. They substantiate their arguments against figurative art with hadiths, the
sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

In Islamic art, as various miniaturists in the novel narrate, portraiture is
highly condemned for the “fear that a human likeness would replace Allah as an
object of worship-idolatry” (Cole, 2001, pp. 1-2). Like portraiture, a personal or an
individual artistic style is also considered to be a flaw and a mark of shame
because they believe the work, without it’s artist’s signature, should be a
manifestation of his talent. Similarly, artistic perspective is also considered to be
dark spot, which these miniaturists oppose for they believe that only God’s
perspective is flawless and perfect. This is why they consider blindness as the
zenith of the artistic achievement and crave for it because a blind miniaturist,
having lost his sight, his humanly perspective, is able to see the world with his
mind’s eye or as Allah sees it. In the novel, a number of Muslim miniaturists argue
that the western artists portray the world as they see it, while, the Islamic
traditional art stresses that an artist should paint the world as Allah sees it. In the
West, an artist is considered as the creator of the work but the Islamic art views an
artist as a servant of Allah. In the western art perspective and individual style is
valued while the eastern art lays emphasis on imitation and repetition of the great
master of the Islamic art. For example, the miniaturists copy the same scenes from
a particular story, like that of Nizami Ganjavi’s (1141-1209) Hüsrev and Shirin
and Leyla Majnun, continuously and rigorously until they memorize it, so that they
can draw it from their memory.

The miniaturists are, on the one hand, dazzled by the western artistic
techniques but, on the other hand they view it as a threat to the Islamic, artistic
tradition of East as it challenges the codes by which these miniaturists worked for
centuries. For them adoption of the Venetian artistic techniques mean betraying
their own tradition by discarding it or by trying to change it. They are, therefore,
torn between their responsibilities towards the preservation of their centuries old
tradition and their zeal for innovation.
Like *The White Castle* (1990) this novel too depicts a society at the threshold of westernization. Like Hoja, who learns about western arts and science from a westerner, his Venetian slave, and tries to make something out of it to strengthen the Ottoman Empire. Enishte too learns about the western art in Italy during a trip and tries to introduce their techniques back home to demonstrate East’s talent to the western world. The main aim behind drawing the book of painting, which is supposed to be given as a gift to the Venetian Doge, is to prove the Ottoman Empire’s power to Europe. But, like Hoja’s war weapon, Enishte’s book too remains an unsuccessful venture. The war weapon in *The White Castle* proves fatal for Sultan’s own army, in the same way Enishte’s dream of drawing a book using Venetian artistic technique costs him his own life. However, in spite of the pessimistic ending of these novels Pamuk offers hope and possibility of a harmonious relationship between East and West. By depicting the clash between the eastern and western world he identifies the loopholes of the westernization process. For example, the Sultan, encouraged by Enishte, invites a Venetian artist to paint his portrait and later orders Master Osman, the head miniaturist, to copy it against his wish which “he did with disgust, referring to the experience as torture” (Pamuk, 2001, p.112). Enishte too instead of convincing his miniaturists about the Venetian or western art conceals the true nature of the book. The miniaturists are made to work on the book without being told the truth, and when they, for example when Elegant Effendi discovers it, he feels exploited and fears being
attacked by the religious fundamentalists. The project is in a way imposed on them.

Apart from this, the aura of mystery set in the workshop only adds to the dilemma of the miniaturists as they struggle with the questions of artistic style and sign. Another symbol of the westernization in the novel is the clock gifted to the Sultan by the Queen of England which is erected in the Royal private garden. But later annoyed by its loud music and by the fact that it symbolized the power of the West, the Sultan broke it down to pieces.

The novel also highlights the conflict between the modernizers or the westernizers and the religious fundamentalists. Apart from their own doubts and dilemmas the miniaturists are under a continuous fear of being attacked by Nusrat Hoja’s men. This is also hinted in *The White Castle* (1990) when the man who comes to Hoja with a marriage proposal tells him that his neighbours think that he has become an infidel and accuse him of different blasphemies. In this novel Pamuk highlights the tensions between East and West, tradition and modernity, science and religion and so on. The dilemma of the miniaturists in the novel to a large extent mirrors the predicament of the Turkish people as they moved towards the western culture leaving behind their history and past heritage.

**Snow (2004)**

*Snow* highlights the critical issues of the Turkish politics of 1990s--the entangled political and religious ideologies and the turbulent confrontation between the
secularists and the religious fundamentalists. The story of the novel is set in 1996
in a remote border area of Kars, “the poorest, most overlooked corner of Turkey”
(Pamuk, 2002, p. 18) which remains cut off from the rest of the country during its
famous blizzards. Kars is depicted as a black and white world far different from
dazzling city lights of Istanbul. According to Erdag Goknar, Kars is presented as a
“microcosm for the nation and ideologies of secular (Turkish), ethnic (Kurdish),
and religious (Islamic) nationalism” (Goknar, 2013, p. 184).

The novel begins on a cold night, with the protagonist Kerim Alakusoglu
known as Ka musing over the silence of the snow while traveling by bus from
Erzurum to Kars. His main purpose of visit is Ipek, his beautiful university
classmate whom he loved and wanted to marry. But, she married Muhtar, another
classmate and Ka landed himself into trouble by publishing a political article
without carefully editing it. For this, he was exiled from Turkey and went to live
in Germany. After twelve years, he came back to attend his mother’s funeral and
from a friend Taner he came to know that Ipek has divorced her husband and is
living in Kars with her family. The same friend gave him a press card and asked
him to write an article about the coming municipal election and the girl suicide
epidemic in Kars.

After Ka reaches there, all the roads are closed due to the heavy snowfall
and the town is cut off from the rest of the world. Soon after his arrival, Ka comes
to know that Sunny Zaim, a theatre actor and a diehard Kemalist and Blue, an
infamous radical Islamist are also in Kars. After he meets Ipek and her family he comes to know that her younger sister Kadife is the head of the Headscarf Girls who are protesting against the State’s ban on the Islamic headscarf. He also meets the mysterious editor of the Border City Gazette Serdar Bey, who writes the news before it happens, Muhtar, Ipek’s ex-husband, who is running for the mayor in the municipal elections, Sheikh Saadettin Efendi, the religious teacher and the two religious school boys Necip and Fazil.

Although, at first, his intentions of coming to the town are clear, once he sets foot on its soil he is caught up in the maelstrom of politics. Soon after his arrival, he witnesses a murder which he later learns was a reaction of the Islamists against the headscarf ban imposed by the secularists. During his stay Ka comes to know that after the Government of Turkey imposed a ban on the Islamic headscarf, the authorities of the Institute of Education in Kars implemented it and eliminate covered girls from the schools, colleges and workplaces. This led a number of girls to commit suicide, an act condemned by both by the secularists as well as the Islamic fundamentalists. Ka realizes that there was extreme pressure on these girls from both their families and the authorities to remove their headscarf but they resisted as Hande, a headscarf girl tells him that “when a girl has accepted the headscarf as the word of God and the symbol of faith, it’s very difficult for her to take it off” (Pamuk, 2002, p. 123). Towards the end Blue is killed and everyone blames Ka for being involved in his murder. Kadife shoots Sunny Zaim on stage
and is arrested. Mukhtar steps back from the elections. And Ka returns back to Germany where some years later he is shot dead by some unknown men. At the end, Orhan, the novelist friend of Ka and the narrator of the novel tells the readers about his visit to Kars where he met Ipek, Kadife, Fazil and others in order to know more about Ka’s four day stay in the town as he intends to write a novel on it.

In this novel, Pamuk is highly critical of the rigidity and narrow mindedness of the Turkish modernizers/westernizers who failed to eliminate their prejudice. He presents their inability to set up a stage for peaceful reconciliation and mutual understanding with the Islamist groups, as the root cause of the political crisis in Kars as well as in Turkey. One of the finest examples of this is the conversation that takes place between Professor Nuri Yilmaz, the Director of the Education Institute and his assassin in the New Life Pastry Shop moments before his death. The assassin poses some questions to the Director. For example, he asks him, “Does the word secular mean godless?”, to which the Director answers “no” and then his killer asks him, “In that case, how can you explain why the state is banning so many girls from the classroom in the name of secularism, when all they are doing is obeying the laws of their religion?”. To this the Director replies “Arguing about such things will get you nowhere” (Pamuk, 2002, p.40-41).

Apart from this, Pamuk portrays the westernizers such as Sunny Zaim, Funda Eser, Muzaffer Bey and others as more conservative than the religious
fundamentalists. These characters are struck in the era of 1920s and 30s and are quite cut off from the contemporary world of Turkish politics. For example, Muzaffer Bey, the ex-mayor tells Ka that during 1940s Kars was a city inhabited by westernizers only. He tells Ka that girls in those days were free to wear short sleeved dresses and ride bicycles and nobody would bother them. People of Kars watched plays like *Oedipus Rex*, went to balls and danced. He tells Ka that during those years he once invited a theatre company to stage a play entitled *My Fatherland or the Scarf*, in which a girl in a symbolic act takes off her headscarf and burns it. According to Muzaffer Bey, they searched for the prop black scarf in the whole city and when they failed to find it in Kars they ordered it from Erzurum. He asserts that city used to be westernized before the Islamist forces took control. But this makes Ka to question that if women in Kars were already westernized and were not wearing the headscarf then why did they had to stage such a play.

Similarly, another character Sunay Zaim, the main representative of Secularism, modernism and westernization in the novel, looks up to Mustapha Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), dresses like him and thinks of himself as a pivotal ally in his westernization project. He is obsessed with the idea of being on a mission to modernize the traditional and orthodox masses. As a result of his harsh approach and arrogance he looks like a fanatic who by hook or by crook wants to defeat the Islamist opponents. This rivalry even prompts him to replaces the
theatrical coup in his play with the real military coup and the incident results in a
great number of casualties in the theatre. He and his theater group stage a play
titled “My Fatherland or My Headscarf” in Kars which gives rise to violence and
confusion. His play is a warning to the headscarf girls who refuse to bend down to
State’s policies and to make it a successful venture he forces Kadife, their leader,
to play the main female role and remove her headscarf on stage. His obsession
with the westernization at the end costs him his own life as to make the play
appear more real he replaces the prop pistol with real loaded gun with which
Kadife shoots him in the last act.

The play “My Fatherland or My Headscarf” tells the story of a girl draped
in a jet black scarf who in order to reclaim her freedom takes off her scarf and
burns it. But, she is forced by her family and other people, including the bearded
Muslim men to put it on again. They even get violent when she refuses to obey
and drag her off by her hair to kill her but are stopped by the Republican soldiers
who at last come to her rescue. First of all, the very title of the play suggests that
women have to make a choice between their country and their headscarf. And, that
with a scarf wrapped around her head a woman’s loyalty towards her country is
doubtful and to prove her patriotism she has to throw it away.

Pamuk here also draws attention to the stereotypical representation of the
religious, traditional people by the westernizers or modernizers which further
widen the gap between them. For example, the “bearded, prayer-bead-clutching
religious” men are depicted as violent fanatics and the Republican soldiers are presented as saviors in the play. Then there is the image of jet black headscarf which is used to symbolize darkness, oppression, ignorance and slavery to cultural and religious rules. The play presents the headscarf as a burden imposed on the women against their will and from which they seek freedom for which they need the help and support of the westernizers/modernizers.

Pamuk’s sympathies and also that of his protagonist’s clearly lie with these girls. He believes that the real meaning of being modern is to let people choose instead of forcing them to be subservient. In one of his interviews, he said that “my value is everyone should be able to do what they want. The army shouldn’t tell us you just take off your headscarf if you want to enter the university or the hospital” (Pamuk, May 15, 2011, retrieved). Pamuk asserts that injustice and intolerance cannot be justified with the excuse of “oh, we have to keep the country secular” as it is a violation of the very ideals on which the Republic was founded (Pamuk, May 15, 2011, retrieved). He is critical of these westernizers who treat the scarf, fez and the turban as “symbols of reactionary darkness in our souls, from which we should liberate ourselves and run to join the modern nations of the West” (Pamuk, 2002, p. 155) and judge their own culture and tradition in a way which is both offending and discriminatory.

Apart from the headscarf girls these secularists are also harsh on the people associated with religious groups. For example, when Ka and Mukhtar go to the police headquarter, after the director’s murder, instead of questioning Ka, who is a
murder witness, they interrogate Mukhtar because of his closeness to Sheikh Saadettin Efendi, an Islamic preacher.

In *Snow*, Pamuk also deals with the theme of marginality. Kars, for example, is depicted as a poor town, a border area which once used to be the main trade route to Tabriz, Georgia and Caucasus, gateway to the south and to the Mediterranean and home to a large Armenian community and Mughal and Iranian armies. With its Ottoman mansions, Hamams, castles, cobblestone pavements, plane trees and oleanders, Kars once was a rich and beautiful city. Its loss of grandeur is symbolic of the Turkey’s fall from centre to margin. Apart from this, Pamuk highlights the irretrievable loss of past and its detrimental effects through the loss of Ka’s childhood Istanbul.

Throughout the novel different characters like Necip, Fazil, Blue and others discuss the issue of marginalization of the local Turkish tradition, culture and literature which they believe is an outcome of the westernization. Blue is critical of the westernizers who idolize the West and undermine their own identity and legacy. While, narrating the legendary story of Rustem and Sohrab from *Shehname* he points out how the local traditional literature has been abandoned and replaced with that of the West, as he tells Ka that, “we’ve fallen under the spell of the West, we’ve forgotten our own stories. They’ve removed all the old stories from our children’s textbooks…you can’t find a single bookseller who stock the *Shehname* in all of Istanbul” (2004, p.81).
The novel, by all means, is a critique of the constricted definition of modernity propounded by the westernizers and explores the consequences of the division it creates. Pamuk illustrates how different cultures collide, when forced to intermingle, and give rise to a situation as chaotic as depicted in the novel.

**Museum of Innocence (2009)**

*The Museum of Innocence* has been called by some critics as “the greatest novel of the new century” and Pamuk’s most “accessible novel and most profound” (retrieved). The novel is a tribute to the city, its distinctive posh and impoverished, old and new neighbourhoods and the finest, iconic sites, and above all to its soul which it has so brilliantly captured and eulogized. On surface the novel is a tale of a passionate lover’s longing for his beloved. It tells the story of Kemal, who, days before his engagement to Sibel, daughter of a retired diplomat, falls in love with his eighteen year old distant and poor relative Fusun. One evening after having supper together in a posh restaurant Kemal and Sibel walk past a boutique and Sibel likes a handbag, hanging on a mannequin. The next day Kemal goes to buy it and there in the shop he meets Fusun, a distant relative working as a sales girl. The two quickly get attracted to each other and thus begins a secret but passionate affair. But, their different social status forces them to part ways.

After Kemal’s engagement, Fusun leaves Istanbul to become an actress. Their separation shatters Kemal, turning his love for her into an obsession. He
starts collecting objects associated with her. These objects include Fusun’s clothes, hair clips, cigarettes, earrings, photographs and similar other things. In this novel Kemal recounts 409 weeks of his life, his engagement, his affair with Fusun, their separation, their reunion, Fusun’s death and the making of his museum of innocence. But, beneath this fateful love story, is a critique of the cultural confusion created by the revolutionary wave of modernization or westernization.

The novel, set in the era of late 1970s and 80s, depicts a society “tugged between East and West” (retrieved) while struggling to reconcile with the newly adopted identity and culture. A society where people on one hand consider wearing western clothes, drinking raki (alcohol) and ball room dancing as normal but on the other hand are outraged at the act of a girl participating in a beauty contest. These people are neither truly traditional nor modern but somewhere oscillating between their values and that of the West.

Fusun and her family are ostracized by their rich, westernized relatives including Kemal’s family after she participates in the beauty contest. Kemal’s mother, for example, not only considers her taking part in the contest a shameful act but also hints that “Fusun had begun to sleep with men” (Pamuk, 2009, p.10). Another character in the novel who exemplifies this cultural confusion is Sibel. In spite of being an educated, emancipated and westernized woman, who even challenges the norm of her society by getting sexually involved with Kemal before their marriage, she holds conservative opinions about various matters. And, even, her modernity is put in to question by Kemal who tells Fusun that Sibel didn’t
cross the line because she is modern or she wanted to violate the traditional strictures of the society but simply because she loved and trusted him.

The growing western influence on Turkish culture is depicted in terms of the rise of western products and brands, for example, electric razors, meat cutting knives, food processors, can openers, Hilton hotel, transistor radio, Chevrolet cars, Jenny Colon bags etc. While possessing a western brand or product becomes a mark of pride and reputation, the native products, which represent the native culture and tradition, are looked down upon, The Jenny Colon handbag which Kemal buys for his fiancée serves as a powerful example of this. As long as Sybil and Kemal are under the impression that the bag is made in Paris they consider it worthy of 1500 lira but once they realize that it is a mere imitation of the real brand, something made in Turkey, they return it at once. Later, Fusun while showing them the same handbag on their engagement tells them that the bag is made by the eastern artists who have very skillfully imitated the real product and it has all the same features but “the worst thing is when people care about the brand and not the thing itself” (Pamuk, 2008, p. 197).

In this novel, “Pamuk portrays an upper class that takes its cues from the West, while threatening to dislodge itself from its native culture…” (Retrieved). Through Kemal’s engagement party, the novel gives a detailed description of how being westernized is considered to be a plus-point, a virtue in the Turkish society, especially in the upper middle class who flamboyantly flaunt western fashion but,
at the same time are not ready for the inevitable consequences of that fashion and culture. The novel is thus a “lacerating critique of a social elite that styles itself after the West but fails to embrace its core freedom” (retrieved). The women, for example, are depicted in the novel as the victims of the cultural dilemma, as they are caught between their newly acquired western feministic ideas and the local societal restrictions. Pamuk in this novel captures the predicament of the people who are attracted to the West yet skeptical of its values. The novel vividly illustrates how this confusion, this sense of being in-between has harrowed Turkish people and has become a permanent feature of their personality.

**Silent House (2012)**

*Silent House* is another evocative tale narrating the predicament of a country caught in the cross-cultural conflict. In spite of the fact that it became a bestseller in Turkey soon after its publication in 1983 and remained so for a long time the novel was translated eleven years after *The White Castle* (1990). The novel is set in 1980s, one of the most politically tumultuous periods in Turkey, and hints at Turkish military coup as well as the violent clashes that took place between the armed left and the right-wing groups. The story begins in an old mansion suffused in silence where a fifty-five year old dwarf, caretaker serves dinner to his ninety year old mistress as both of them awaits the three grandchildren who are coming for their vacation and would be staying in for a week.
The story is told through the narrative of five characters and the first one is Recep, the family’s servant and the illegitimate son of the deceased head of the family Selahattin. He is stunted and his brother Ismail is crippled due to the beating lashed on them by Fatma, Selahattin’s wife, one fateful day during their childhood. After the incident, Selahattin took them to another village where he paid a man to marry his mistress and also to keep the children. Years later his legitimate son Dogan came to know about the family’s hideous past and in order to compensate the wrongs committed by his parents, rehabilitated both the brothers. Ismail built a house, started a lottery business, married and had a son namely Hasan. But Recep decided to stay with the Darvinoğlu family.

The second narrator is Fatma, Selahattin’s widow. Married at the age of fifteen to an aspiring medical doctor who she later realizes is “a child who could be led astray by three books” (Pamuk, 2012, p.21). Four years after their marriage, Selahattin was exiled from Istanbul by Talat Pasha, the minister of interior affairs for some political involvement. Seventy years later Fatma, lying on her bed, recalls how her husband came home one day and proudly told her about his banishment and his plans to move to Paris. Eventually they ended up in a village called Gebze where they built a beautiful mansion and waited for the Unionist government’s fall. Although at first they had no plans of permanently staying in Gebze but during their time in the village Selahattin got completely absorbed in writing an encyclopedia and refused to return when favorable conditions prevailed.
The third narrator is Hasan, Selahattin’s illegitimate grandson. He is a school dropout and is at home continuously abused by his father for failing in his studies. Hasan is an ambitious character who wants to make it big and not knowing how to do it he joins an ultranationalist group. He falls in love with Nilgun whom he continuously stalks but after she declines his advances calling him a fascist he severely injuries her which causes her death. Later he runs away from Cennethisar to evade punishment.

Hasan represents the section of the society who cannot afford to be western and hence end up being anti-western. His social status bars his entry in the circles of rich vacationers whom he wants to befriend. However, unable to do so he joins a right-wing street-gang, whose main target are the westernized elite, especially women whom they harass. In one of his interviews Pamuk said:

The character Hasan is an angry and resentful 18-year-old high school student who flunks his class and goes around with the ring-wing militants. His language of anti-western resentment is something that everybody knew about in Turkey but nobody cared. Now it is on the agenda. You can call it ‘political Islam’ o ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, but it’s not necessarily Islam.

(Retrieved).

The fourth narrator is Faruk, Selahattin’s eldest grandson and a history professor. He is sterile, alcoholic and chronically depressed. During his summer trip to the village he spends most of his time in the Gebze archives reading old records and documents. The fifth narrator is the seventeen-year-old Metin, a high school
student, Selahattin youngest grandson. Like Hasan he too dreams big and aspires to go to America for further studies. For this he tries to motivate Fatma, his grandmother to sell the mansion to the apartment developers. During his visit he befriends a boy namely Vedant and falls in love with one of the girls of his group namely Ceylan.

In this novel, Pamuk through his various characters highlight how the adamant attitude of the westernizers makes the westernization a problematical project. Selahattin, the founder of the Darvinoğlu house, is the main representative of the westernization or modernization. He is what Erdag Goknar calls him “a symbol of authoritarian positivism”. But instead of educating the illiterate villagers he tries to impose his ideas on them, even, on his patients and his religious wife. This creates a gulf between him and the locals who stop coming to his clinic. His extremist thoughts and proclamation such as “there is no, no hereafter, the other world is a terrible lie” (Pamuk, 2012, p. 67) only marginalize him from the rest of the society. He mocks the poor, illiterate native of the town by calling them “fools”, “animals”, “stupid villagers” and their beliefs and religious devotion terribly outrage him. He considers them ignorant fools who don’t want to learn and wake up from their slumber. For example, one day he tells his wife that he asked a villager the sum of the interior angles of a triangle which the villager didn’t knew and, even after he explained it to him, the villager stared blankly. The other day he snubs and throws out a patient because she refuses to
uncover herself. He rebukes the poor fishermen who come to him for treatment if they by chance talk about religion. He also takes one of the poor, uneducated villager women as his mistress, who later gives birth to two sons Recep and Ismail and tries to justify his extra marital affair by citing examples of the western scientists and philosophers many of whom “sought understanding and the warmth of love among women of the lower class…Rousseau’s maid, Goethe’s baker’s daughter, or Marx’s household servant…why be ashamed?...there are many more examples…” (Pamuk, 2012, p. 219).

Selahattin proclaims to be the man who can change the East by his ideas and scientific knowledge. As a result he becomes obsessed with the idea of writing a forty-eight volume encyclopedia which he believes “will shake the foundation of everything, of the whole life of the East…which has been slumbering for centuries, will wake up” (Pamuk, 2012, p. 103). Long after his death, Fatma recalls how he sold everything, including her jewellery to fund his project which at last he realized was nothing but his childishness and youthful fancy. She recalls how one day, after remaining cut off from the outside world for thirty years, he told her to throw away all his papers and machines because there is nothing left which a man from East can contribute to the vast field of science. He dies without completing his project and his wife, as a mark of protest against his irreligious ideas burns his papers.
The novel, according to McGaha, has allegorical interpretations; the old Darvinoğlu house in the town of Cennethisar is a metaphor for Turkey and each member of its household represents a particular section of the Turkish society. For example, Selahattin represents a fanatic facet of modernity. He is dominating and inflexible in his approach and every time tries to impose his ideas on others whom he considers imprudent and irrational, for example his wife. Fatma stand for the tradition, religion and the Ottoman past. Her resistance to her husband’s efforts to westernize her could be seen as struggle of traditionalist class against the westernization process. Theirs is a marriage of two incompatible minds and souls which could be interpreted as a forceful union of tradition and modernity, East and West. Recep represents an underprivileged, working class of people who too became victims of the clash between these two opposite ideologies.

*Silent House* is a story of a fragmented family whose members share nothing in common. And due to their different perspectives and ambitions they drift away from each other. The novel is dense with symbols which are suggestive of the Cultural Revolution brought by the westernization. First among these is the transformation of a quiet, peaceful village into a packed out tourist resort with huge apartment building, crowded beaches and noise of vehicles. Another example is western lifestyle adopted by the young people for example Metin and his group of friends who want to live like the Europeans. The novel presents two worlds; the old and the new. The former represented by the old Darvinoğlu
mansion, an old ailing grandmother, her empty jewellery box which was once brimmed to the top, her personal collection of condolence messages, symbolize the decaying past and lost glory. The latter is a brand new world controlled by the western market and culture.

Most of the characters in the novel are also ashamed of their identity which gives to rise to a kind of trauma and sense of inferiority. Dogan is ashamed of his physical defect, Hasan is embarrassed of his poverty and Metin is ashamed of his alcoholic brother Faruk, his leftist sister Nilgün and his low status among his rich and westernized friends. As a result of this, Recep avoids get social, especially with women and stays mostly in the mansion; Hasan joins the local nationalist groups and Metin wants to go to America. Their sense of inferiority results in frustration and makes them act in the most unexpected ways. For example Metin tries to rape Ceylan when he comes to know about her affair with a rich boy. Hasan ransack shops, he even loots Metin and beats Nilgun to death. Through these two characters, Pamuk predicts the dangerous consequences of this growing sense of marginality.

In all the novels discussed above Pamuk identifies the clash between the secularists/westernizers and the traditionalist/religious fundamentalists as one of the main barriers in the East-West relationship. He strongly condemns and criticizes the way the East-West question was and still is being handled and asserts that the westernizers believe “too much in the westness of the West and the
eastness of the East” (retrieved). Hoja’s weapon, Enishte’s book and Selahattin’s encyclopedia, Sunny Zaim’s Play, the movie theatres and others could be interpreted as symbols used for the westernization project, which due to these reasons suffered major hindrances and is still a point of dispute among the secular and religious groups in Turkey. He believes that the westernizers took up the harsh ways of implementing their ideas, in one of his interviews he said:

When Turkey became westernized, the backwards sections…resisted the demands of modernization to the fact that religion has less space in daily life…But the reaction of the Turkish state…was to bomb these people, look down upon these people, look at their culture as low culture rather than address the issues and understand their sorrow.

(retrieved).

He opines that this attitude not only widens the gap between two cultures but also turns their encounter into an alarming confrontation.

Pamuk is known as a novelist who has an unshakable faith in the East-West kinship but he has also quite vividly articulated the complications associated with the cross-cultural encounter. He identifies the disease but at the same time suggest the cure, his writing laments the loss of the past but also celebrates the present. It is perhaps this quality of his fiction that has secured him a place among the literary giants of this century. This chapter tried to sum up some of key obstacles identified by him in his novels, which have created and deepened the gap between
the East-West. The next chapter of this study will try to show how he tries to bridge this gap and how he has emerged as a hope and a powerful voice narrating the East to the West and West to the East.