

The Subversion of East and West in Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The White Castle*

Adile Aslan Almond

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Aslan Almond, Adile. "The Subversion of East and West in Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The White Castle*." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.2 (2018): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3223>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 152 times as of 11/07/19.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and CultureISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 20 Issue 2 (June 2018) Article 15**Adile Aslan,****"The subversion of East and West
in Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The White Castle*"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss2/15>>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.2 (2018)Thematic Issue ***The One Asia Foundation and its cooperation and
peace-making project***Ed. **Asunción López-Varela Azcárate**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss2/>>

Abstract: In her article "The subversion of East and West in Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The White Castle*" Adile Aslan seeks to show how Orhan Pamuk plays with the theme of East versus West in his third novel *The White Castle* (1985), with the aim of de-essentializing both concepts. In 1928, Perso-Arabic script, in use for centuries as the main writing system in the Ottoman Empire, was replaced with Latin alphabet (accompanied by an intensive Turkification of the Ottoman language in the coming years) as a part of a larger modernization-Westernization project in the new nation state, a move which effectively turned every document from before 1928 into an archive. For new generations in Turkey, pre-1928 history is not readily accessible unless one is specifically trained as a historian or a Turkish philologist. While the transition from a multinational, multiethnic, multilingual, and multicontinental empire to a nation-state may never be a smooth process in itself, as it can be reflected in other former empires-current nation states, in the Turkish case it proved to be an epistemic and psychological rupture due to the unfathomable speed of reformations. In an attempt to consolidate one nation-one language-one culture, the westernizing fathers of the new nation-state tried to turn the entire history of their forefathers' empire into an a forbidden, repressed, inaccessible archive for the generations after 1928. In this sense, the Turkish case represents an internalized colonization. The fact that Turkey became an ally of the US during the cold war and opened itself up to the global market system in the 1980s only deepens this sense of internalized colonization. In most instances, cultural and literary works have been the first to capture the tensions between (post)colonial theory and colonized resistance. *The White Castle* is a good example that makes visible how intricately intertwined the concepts of East and West are.

Adile ASLAN

The subversion of East and West in Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The White Castle*

"[The Castle] was at the top of a high hill, its towers streaming with flags were caught by the faint red glow of the setting sun, and it was white; purest white and beautiful and unattainable thing only in a dream. In that dream you would run along a road twisting through a dark forest, straining to reach the bright day of that hilltop, that ivory edifice" (128).

Set in seventeenth century Istanbul, Orhan Pamuk's 1985 novel, *The White Castle* is a tale about an Ottoman scholar and his captured Venetian slave. The novel is presented as an archival text -a first person account by the kidnapped Christian- with a fictitious preface by the modern scholar who allegedly has 'discovered' the text. The Venetian, who is given as a slave to the Turkish master, enjoys by chance an uncanny physical resemblance to him. In a tale in which each figure mistrusts and simultaneously learns from the other, the novel blends the two identities – that of the Turk and the Christian, master and slave, teacher and pupil, East and West. Roles change again at the end of the novel, creating confusing situations for the reader and the characters alike. This article examines the ways in which history is narrativized and fictionalized as opposed to or rather playing with the discourses of orientalism and occidentalism. I argue that through the character of Hoja (the representative of East), the Venetian slave (the symbol of the West) and their inability to maintain solid positions and personalities, ultimately stage mutant identities that situate the novel in contrast not only with Orientalism but also with Occidentalism.

In relation to the discussion of the historicity of the literary text, Pamuk partly acknowledges the novel's relation to historical concepts as such:

If there had not been so much misgiving about this distinction [East and West] made with excitement over the ages, this story wouldn't be able to find many of the colors which sustain it. The application of the plague as a litmus paper for the East-West distinction is a longstanding idea. In his memoirs, Baron de Tott says the following: "The plague kills a Turk, it makes the European suffer!" This kind of observation is neither a nonsensical statement nor a piece of wisdom for me; it is a color which would be of help during a fictional adventure, some of whose secrets I try to present here. Maybe it can help its author to remember an adored past of his or a beloved book, yet the ways the colors were found and held together never cease to be told. (my translation)

Bu ayrımın heyecanıyla yüzyıllardır yapılmış onca kuruntu olmasaydı bu hikaye de kendini ayakta tutacak renklerin birçoğunu bulamazdı. Vebanın, doğu-Batı ayrımı için bir turnusol kağıdı gibi kullanılması da eski bir düşüncedir. Baron de Tott, anılarının bir yerinde şöyle der: "Veba bir Türk'ü öldürür, bir Frengi ıstırap çektirir!" Böyle bir gözlem, benim için bir saçmalık ya da bir bilgelik kırıntısı değil, yalnızca, sırlarının birazını vermeye çalıştığım bir kurgu serüveni sırasında yararlanılabilecek bir renktir. Belki yazarına sevdiği bir geçmişi ve kitabı

hatırlatmaya yarayabilir, ama renklerin nasıl bulunduğu ve bir araya getirdiği anlatmakla bitmez. (Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale*, *The White Castle* 193)

According to Pamuk, historical constructions and fantasies, created and maintained by the East/West division throughout the centuries, are the elements that provide his novel with color and taste. However, these are not its fundamental foundations, as the possible ways in which these historical constructions and fantasies were created and sustained is impossible to narrate within a novel. Indeed, in the fictitious preface to the novel, a certain Faruk Darvinoğlu, whose surname means "a descendant of Darwin," writes of his fascination with the three-century-old text he has found, especially of its high relevance to the contemporary issues: "To make it seem more interesting I talked about its symbolic value, its fundamental relevance to our contemporary realities, how through this tale I had come to understand our own time, etc. When I made these claims, young people usually more absorbed in issues like politics, activism, East-West relations, or democracy were at first intrigued, but like my drinking friends, they too soon forgot my story." (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, 3) (Onu ilgi çekici kılmak için simgesel değerinden, aslında, bugünkü gerçeklerimize değindiğinden, günümüzü bu hikâye ile anladığımdan, vb. den söz ettim. Bu sözlerim üzerine, daha çok politika, şiddet, Doğu-Batı, demokrasi gibi konulara meraklı gençler ilgilendiler, ama onlar da, içki arkadaşları gibi, kısa sürede hikâyemi unuttular [Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale*, 10]).

Although he does not explain how this archival text is related to the issues of his time, the fact that this detail is placed within the text is intriguing – especially the fact that in a Pamuk novel, someone with the surname of Darvinoğlu says that he talks about the text to his friends "as if he had written it himself," which is quite a possibility. Faruk Darvinoğlu is a character from Pamuk's previous novel, *The Silent House* (1983). He is a historian who has been forced to leave his position at the university due to the military coup of 1980 and begins to work as an encyclopedia compiler, his grandfather's profession. Jale Parla notes that the preface of the novel holds multiple references, not just to *The Silent House*, but also to the circumstances of those intellectuals in the 1980s who had to change professions under the military regime. Parla also points out that the grandfather of the Turkish novel, Ahmet Mithat Efendi was also an encyclopedist (Parla, "Roman ve Kimlik: Beyaz Kale" 88). Darvinoğlu tells the reader that he has found the manuscript in an old archive at Gebze and does not know at first what to do with it. Due to his strong distrust of history, he focuses on the story itself, "rather than the manuscript's scientific, cultural, anthropological, or 'historical' value" (Pamuk, *The White Castle* 1). When his fascination with the text grows, he decides to include an entry about its author in the encyclopedia and translate the manuscript into contemporary Turkish through a highly interesting technique: "[A]fter reading a couple of sentences from the manuscript I kept on one table, I'd go to another table in the other room where I kept my papers and try to narrate in today's idiom the sense of what remained in my mind" (Pamuk, *The White Castle* 3).

This method of translation may imply the impossibility of objectivity in any kind of act, even in scholarly activities which are supposedly ruled by objectivity. Translators, historians, scholars, and intellectual figures filter their findings through personal perceptions based on their individual background and tendencies. On another level, this translation method may represent the fact that "the

value of a text lies not in the original or in the copy but in the complicated whole formed by the content and transmission (the silences/blanks, details, omissions, errors in the text)" and through this translation technique "the text is freed from its author as well as its origin" (Göknar, "Beyaz Kale'de Özdeşleşme Politikası" 121). This highly individual rendition of the manuscript removes the reader from the original the White Castle alluded in the novel as unattainable, except only in a dream, while the preface makes the novel a framed tale, re-told by the writer of the preface and "thus a double-text" (Pamuk, *The White Castle* 128; Bayrakçeken and Randall, "Meetings of East and West: Orhan Pamuk's Istanbulite Perspective" 192).

The White Castle is closely related to the discourses of Orientalism through its characters, story, structure, narrativity, and intertextuality. The novel may be said to take a stance against Orientalist discourses, since it refuses to (re)produce the binary oppositions. Moreover, turning the assumed irreconcilable binary oppositions into slippery, flexible and interchangeable concepts, the novel endeavors to undermine the hegemony of Orientalist discourses: the West is neither the superior entity, nor is there such a thing as West without the East. Jale Parla describes anti-Orientalism as such:

The argument propounding that if the Western subject has an unconsciousness that structures its relation with the East, the Easterner is not a passive or an innocent object either and that it, too, possesses an unconscious that constitutes its relationship with the West, is considered an anti-orientalist discourse proposed against orientalist discourses since it implies an optimism regarding the disruption of the binary of East-West which relies on power relations. (my translation)

Batılı öznenin Doğu ile ilişkisini yapılandırılan bir bilinçaltı varsa eğer, Doğulu'nun da edilgen ya da masum bir nesne olmadığını, onun da Batı ile ilişkisini kuran bir bilinçaltına sahip olduğunu ileri süren bu görüş, güç ilişkilerine dayalı Doğu-Batı çiftliliğinin bir gün gelip bozulabileceğine ilişkin iyimser bir imayı da barındırması açısından, oryantalist söylemlere karşı üretilmiş anti-oryantalist bir söylem olarak görülür. (Parla, "Roman ve Kimlik: Beyaz Kale" 93)

Pamuk's novel can be said to be anti-orientalist as it exhibits Hoja not as a passive or innocent subject. On the contrary, he is the most active character in the novel, with his ardent ambitions, high-brow plans, challenging theories, resembling Westerner figures represented by Orientalist discourses. According to Parla, the novel depicts how the Westerner splits up due to his desire to dominate the other. This is visible in the references to Don Quixote in the text, a novel which is also framed in a similar way, as it is the Muslim historian Cide Hamete Benengeli who finds the original manuscript of Cervantes' novel in a metafictional pirouette. "The transformation of Orientalist discourses, with their desirous gaze of the East as an object to be possessed, yet their splitting up in themselves during their endeavor to possess this object, goes back to Cervantes' story of the East, to which the Venetian refers in the beginning and end of his story." (own translation) (Orientalist söylemin Doğu'yu arzulayan bakışıyla, Doğu'yu sahip olunacak bir nesneye dönüştürmesi, ama bu nesneye sahip olmaya

çalıştıkça kendi içinde bölünmesi, Venedikli'nin öyküsünün hem başında hem de sonunda gönderme yaptığı Cervantes'in Doğu öyküsüne kadar gider [Parla, "Roman ve Kimlik" 94]).

Erdağ Göknaar pays attention to the historical relation of modern Turkey and the novel via the use of imperialistic terms associated with the Orientalization of the Ottoman Empire. He argues that in the formation of its national identity, the Turkish Republic separated itself from the Ottoman Empire by means of presenting insurmountable differences between the cultures, religions and traditions of the two respective states (Göknaar "Beyaz Kale'de Özdeşleşme Politikası" 118). An evolutionary historical process is implied in the transition from the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic. Thus, it is from the very history of the Turkish Republic that the surname of Faruk Darvionoğlu comes. Indeed, the republican Turkey is supposedly more developed but in an irreversible phase within the Ottoman Empire in its evolutionary history, a discourse which makes the Ottoman Empire the Oriental of modern Westernized Turkey. Moreover, Göknaar emphasizes the implicit references to the history of republican Turkey throughout the novel, including Turkish nationalism, westernization, military coups, Islam, imperialism and so on. He argues that the novel is about economic, political and cultural power relations. What is evident in the novel, according to Göknaar, is that it shows how interrelated and interdependent these phenomena are in terms of dichotomies such as inside/outside, psychology/history, past/present. He argues that it also underlines the cultural pluralism as fundamental to the existence and maintenance of [a monolithic] culture (Göknaar, "Beyaz Kale'de Özdeşleşme Politikası" 116).

It should be made clear that Turkey has never been the colony of a Western power, unlike many of the countries that today constitute the so-called third world countries. This is a point suggested by Pamuk himself in his interviews and talks. For example, during a conference titled "World Literature in Between," held at Istanbul Bilgi University in 2009, he asserted that Turkey has never been a colonized country the way India was. Yet, as Göknaar also claims, many traces of an internalized imperial domination are visible in the history of Republican Turkey. The embracement of Western garments, the language reform, the adaptation of Western legal rules, and the education reform can be seen as the tangible symptoms of internalized imperialism in modern Turkey, a process whereby the Ottoman Empire is transformed into the obsolete other/oriental of the westernized republic. Since Atatürk's modernization reforms are based on the model of imperial Europe, an identification with the aggressor is inevitable.

Therefore, the transition from the Ottoman Empire into the modern Turkey, where the main aim of the nation has been reflected as progress, modernization, and development, implicitly comprises a history of evolution from a primitive stage to a developed one. Göknaar claims that the psychological consequence of modernization was the identification with the father (Atatürk) through a process of internalization (West is the role model). In this regard he asks, "What is the modernization/westernization which has been forced upon a nation, if not an imperial dominance?" In *The White Castle*, Pamuk wanders around the borders of the same issue and provide some reflective passages, one of which is as follows:

A professor friend, returning the manuscript he'd thumbed through at my insistence, said that in the old wooden houses on the back streets of Istanbul there were tens of thousands of manuscripts filled with stories of this kind. If the simple people living in those houses hadn't mistaken them, with their old Ottoman script, for Arabic Korans and kept them in a place of honour high up on top of their cupboards, they were probably ripping them up page by page to light their stoves. (Pamuk, *The White Castle* 3)

Bir profesör arkadaşım, ısrarım üzerine karıştırdığı elyazmasını bana geri verirken, İstanbul'un arka sokaklarındaki ahşap evlerde, içinde bu tür hikâyelerin kaynaştığı elyazmalarından on binlerce olduğunu söyledi. Eğer ev sakinleri, onları Kuran sanıp yüksekçe bir dolabın üstüne kaldırmıyorlarsa, sobalarını yakmak için sayfa sayfa yırtıyorlarmış. (Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale* 10)

This passage makes an implicit reference to the language and alphabet reform carried out by Atatürk in 1928, which replaced the Persio-Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet almost overnight—within three months the replacement was completed. It also presents the divided nature of the social climate in Turkey, where centuries of cultural heritage were turned into an archive, not readily accessible for subsequent generations unless they were specifically trained as a historian or Turkish philologist.

Gökner interprets Pamuk's rejection of dialectic in the novel as a gesture of resistance and freedom of expression, which gives a voice and space to Darvinoğlu and to the narrator of the manuscript in the historiography of the Turkish Republic. Gökner states that the historian Darvinoğlu is imprisoned like the Venetian slave, that is, in the sense that he has no access to the historical archives which contains ostracized manuscripts and names of historical people. But also, in a metaphorical sense, he is alien to contemporary Turkish identity which is based on imperial (and Orientalist) domination. Nevertheless, Darvinoğlu defies the official narrative of history and identity by publishing the manuscript in contemporary Turkish and brings to light some of the suppressed past of modern Turkey. He also negates evolutionary models through his rejection of representation of a change from bad to good (Gökner, "*Beyaz Kale*'de" 124). Since the binary oppositions come from a hierarchical structure and implicitly comprises evolution from primitiveness to modernity, from socio-political and cultural underdevelopment to development and progress, the "elusive narrative of the novel may symbolize an opening of textual sphere for identification without reductive identity" (Gökner, "*Beyaz Kale*'de" 124; my translation).

The exchange of roles and identities disrupts the solidification of generalizations and restrictive binarism, evident in the characters of Hoja and the Venetian slave. Hoja is not the absolute master, while the slave is not irreversibly a servant. There is no recourse to originality; imitation is part of both characters. The Orientalist reflections conveyed through the novel and the ways in which Pamuk represents and embodies the character of Hoja pave the way for a discussion regarding Occidentalism.

The figuration of the West in Hoja's 'temporal/spatial imaginings' is a good example of what Meltem Ahıska has called "Occidentalism" (Ahıska "Occidentalism," 353). In Hoja's mind, the West and the East are in a constant opposition to each other: the West, which Hoja desires, represents

progress, power, and success, whereas the East, to which he belongs, symbolizes backwardness, failure, and stagnancy. Moreover, Hoja insists that there must be a characteristic and moral difference between the West and East: the Westerner should be immoral and wicked, like his Venetian slave whereas the Easterner should be moral and decent like himself. For Hoja, the West is "[...] a source of frustration and threat, and [...] a symptom of internalized inferiority" (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 353). His projects, books, inventions, plans for a huge weapon and designs for observatory reflect his attempts at modernization in the non-West Ottoman Empire and the West always remains as a model, whereas the East figures in his thoughts as an insufficient copy. Thus, the backward Ottoman Empire is seen as lagging behind the onward-moving West. (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 354). The Ottoman Empire is reduced to impotence and invisibility in "the hegemonic conceptions of Western modernity" /progress, which dominates Hoja's imagining (353).

Indeed, Hoja's obsession with the West amounts to a sort of chronic anxiety. Thus, Hoja, as if living in twentieth century Turkey, could be said to be trying to catch the train to history and modernity, which points at the sole existence and the definite address of the West. Hoja's speeches persistently refer to the need for weapons, symbol of the modernity and technology of the West, as well as to "the enemy's strength," and the necessity of science "to understand the nature of their minds" (Pamuk, *The White Castle* 123; *Beyaz Kale*, 94). In this regard, definitions of the East are as timeless as that of the West as they depict the East as an infantilized entity, which "needs the West to survive" (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 354-355).

If the portrayal of the character Hoja in the novel remains at this stage, the novel would be another reproduction of Orientalist discourse. However, the events and most of the characters of the novel contradict Hoja's Occidentalism, contrasting classical modernization theories, refuting the simple model/copy binarism in many of them (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 358). At the end of the novel neither the West nor the East are a model for each other. Imitation is also transformed through the relation between Hoja and the Venetian slave as well as through the final exchange of roles, if there is ever such an exchange—and even the existence of these two characters is highly susceptible: "I loved him, I loved that false exhilaration he got from his exaggerated sense of victory, his never-ending plans, and the way he said he'd soon have the sultan in the palm of his hand. I couldn't have admitted, even to myself that I had thoughts like these, but while I followed his movements, his daily actions, I was sometimes overcome by the feeling that I was watching myself" (Pamuk, *The White Castle* 105).

(Seviyordum onu, abarttığı _zaferinden aldığı _o yapmacıklı _çoşkuyu, bitip tükenmeyen tasarılarını, Padişah'ı _avucunun içine alacağını _söylerken avucunun içine bakışını _seviyordum. Böyle düşündüğümü kendime itiraf bile edemezdim, ama hareketlerini, günlük davranışlarını _izlerken, kimi zaman kendimi izliyormuşum gibi bir duyguya kapılırdım [Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale* 114-115]).

Hoja's Occidentalism is especially eliminated through the Venetian slave. Instead of representing the learnt, rational, sophisticated, disciplined Westerner of the Occidentalism, the slave is too lazy to search for new findings or any novel information:

When he'd return from the hunt, I'd act as if I had discovered a new truth about whatever subject he'd left me to wear out my mind on, and that we could change everything in its light: when I said 'the cause of the rising and falling of the sea is related to the heat of the rivers emptying into it', or, 'The plague is spread by tiny dust-motes in the air, and when the weather changes, it goes away', or, 'The earth revolves around the around the sun, and the sun around the moon', Hoja [...] always gave me the same answer, making me smile with love: 'and the idiots here don't even realize this!' (Pamuk, *The White Castle*)

Avdan dönüşlerinde, bana üzerinde kafa yormam için bıraktığı, herhangi bir konuda, yeni bir gerçeği ortaya çıkarmış, her şeyi de, buna dayanarak değiştirebilirmişiz gibi yapardım: "Denizin yükselip çekilmesinin nedeni ona dökülen ırmakların ısıyla ilgilidir," dediğimde;ya da: "Veba havanın içindeki taneciklerle buluşuyor, hava değişince çekip gidiyor";ya da: "Büyük bir silâh yapıp uzun namlusu ve tekerlekleriyle herkesi önümüze katıp kovalamamız mümkündür";ya da: "Dünya güneşin çevresinde dönüyor, Güneş _de Ayın çevresinde," dediğimde üzerindeki tozlu av elbiselerini değiştiren Hoca beni sevgiyle gülümseten aynı _cevabı _verirdi hep: "Ve bizim ahmaklar bu gerçeğin farkında bile değiller!" (Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale* 118-119)

It is Hoja, the Easterner who is in fact the Westerner to Occidentalists' tenets. Like his ideal of Western men, he passionately looks for new knowledge and unexplored discoveries every day, while his Western slave is not interested in all these flaming searches. To disguise his laziness, the Venetian concocts false theories, which makes Hoja despise the East all the more. To find the characteristic difference, which causes the disparity between the Western world and the Eastern world in his (falsely)-constructed notions of the two cultures, Hoja decides to interrogate the Christian villagers and Muslim villagers on their way to the Doppio Castle. His questions include the worst thing they have ever done, their biggest transgressions and their greatest sins. His assumption is that the sins committed by the Christians should be more profound than those committed by the Muslims. The results contradict Hoja's expectations: the sins of the Christian villagers are quite similar to those of the Muslim villagers. Enraged by the frustration of his expectations and the collapse of his hypothesis, Hoja increases the dose of his coercion he enforces during his interrogations.

Homi Bhabha states that "space of writing interrogates the third dimension that gives profundity to the representation of self and other" (48). Pamuk's *The White Castle* seems to actualize the existence of the third dimension which Bhabha theorizes, by means of the application of the Orientalist and Occidentalists' themes through the narrative structure and the characters, only to undermine both. Bhabha elaborates on this understanding of the third space with a focus on the notion of identification as follows when he states that, "the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy – it is always a production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (45). Following Bhabha on the never-stable boundaries in terms of the supposedly solid distinction of the West vs. East, Pamuk's novel inhabits the characters who do not behave according to the pre-given identities constituted by the binary

opposition of the West/East, but they undergo a continuous process of transformation. Seemingly, at the end of the novel, Hoja transforms and fulfills his identity after his possession and perception of a particular lack, and the Venetian slave becomes the master and leads a satisfying life in the East assuming Hoja's identity; on another level, the impossibility of ever escaping this sense of lack is also implied by the fact that the slave still feels the absence of Hoja, his other, in his otherwise content and conflict-free life. This would appear to confirm the proposition that the self cannot be without its other. The sense of lack is significant in analyzing the ways in which Turkish modernization situates itself within Western perception of civilizing mission, which takes us to Nurdan Gürbilek's "Dandies and Originals."

In her "Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel," Gürbilek treats the criticism of 'absence' in Turkey, and her observations resonate like Meltem Ahıska's notion of Occidentalism. She observes that socio-cultural and literary criticism is almost choked by "a critique devoted to demonstrating what Turkish society, culture, or literature lacks" (Gürbilek, "Dandies and Originals" 599). Most of the criticism in Turkey is equal to the exhibition of what "the 'other' has but 'we' don't have" (599). Gürbilek believes that "the persistent lack, the irremovable deficiency, the unyielding inadequacy of [Turkish culture]" in Turkish criticism are inevitable consequences of "the traumatic shifting of models under the heading Westernization," which, she states, are closely related to Gregory Jusdanis' "belated modernity," Daryush Shayegan's "consciousness retarded to the idea," Jale Parla's "sense of fatherlessness," Orhan Koçak's "missed ideal" (600).

I perceive that this traumatic shifting of models also closely resembles Ahıska's Occidentalism, since both entail the infantilization of the belatedly modernized, self-otherized non-west nation in the face of the so-called original, superior, modernized West. Gürbilek recognizes a similar attitude in Turkish readers, who, almost reflexively, regard many theoretical works in Turkish as "crude adaptations of an alien theory, [and] shallow imitations of an original model" (600). The criticism of the novel focuses on the "secondhand characters lacking spontaneity and originality, characters who are prisoners of imitated desires, copied sensibilities, bookish aspirations, and belated torments" (ibid, 600). Turkish critics act like detectives who trace the "foreign debts, imitated books, stolen plots, and derived characters" in Turkish novels back to their originals and prove how "crude, primitive, and childlike" the Turkish novels are. (Ibid, 600)

Among these two extreme approaches in Turkish criticism, the first one places the original in the West, whereas the second advocates for an authentic literature devoid of any imitations of the West. Hoja may be said to be representative of the first type of criticism, which amounts to "an unconditional admiration for the foreign model" and a rejection of anything local (601). Hoja's attitude towards the Ottoman Empire can be defined as "a detached observation reproaching its object for its inadequacy," "snobbish arrogance," and "an unconditional admiration of the stranger" (601).

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, himself one of the greatest Turkish novelists who continues to take the Western novel as the ideal model in defiance of his otherwise acute observation of the dilemma of the Turkish novelist, connects what he calls "the great lack" in the Turkish novel to the absence of "an extensive and tense art life," "the narrowness of individual experience," "the differences in class

structure in Turkey," "the lack of introspection," "the lack of religious confession in Islam" (601). Tanpınar's solution to the dilemma is "to go back to ourselves" and to create "a literature that is completely our own." According to Gürbilek, the first type of criticism (the original novel is somewhere else and we do not have it) regards originality as an ideal code created somewhere else and distorted beyond measure when it is employed "to our clumsy reality," whereas the latter form of critique, ("let us return to our original selves and create our own authentic novel") disregards the point that "this self is already shaped by the other" (624).

All these discussions culminate in a paralyzed literary scene: "the Turkish novelist is either a snob, a dandy, or an unrefined provincialist stuck in the narrow traditional world" (603). It should be noted that the snob includes not only the novelists but the novel's characters as well, such as the famous Bihruz of *The Carriage Affair* by Rezaizade Ekrem. The snob figure of the Turkish novel results from "the overemphasis on originality" and "the obsession with authenticity," which makes those characters admiring the West and imitating its manners unconditionally snobs (605). Hoja may also be claimed to be the symbol of snob, with his admiration for the West and infantilization of the East, his unquestioning labeling the West with superiority and the East with inferiority and his uncritical conceptualization of the West with progress/center and the East with backwardness/periphery. Enraged by the idea that he lives in the underdeveloped periphery, Hoja is belated: "In the modern world being belated is imagining oneself peripheral, provincial, underdeveloped, and inadequate, and it is precisely this inadequacy the snob hides" (621). The novelty of *The White Castle* lies in the fact that Hoja does not hide his inadequacy: he openly despises the inadequacy he observes in the East.

The treatment of the snob character is only one of the many twists of literary traditions in Turkey in *The White Castle*. The parody of the satire and subversion of the self-assured narrator are other examples of these types of contortions in the novel. Gürbilek defines satire as the kind of writing where "an insurmountable wall, an unsurpassable boundary between the false other and the true self" protects the true self against the false one through the derision of the latter. *The White Castle*, in this regard, is the satire of the satire since the author refutes the solidification of binary oppositions and mocks the ideas of protection of the self against the other. Besides, as opposed to "self-confident, determined, clear voice" of the satire, the voice of *The White Castle*'s narrator is dubious, unsure, and blurred (612). Along similar lines, *The White Castle* "break[s] the illusion of the autonomous self" and thus is a novel where "the writer is no longer the guardian of the true self" (619, 612, respectively).

As a conclusion, we can say that *The White Castle* is a good novel to the extent that it faces "the inevitable lack of originality, the fact that it is always too late to return to an original self" (Gurbilek, "Dandies" 623) and depicts the impossibility of a unique, secure, autonomous identity, an identity purified of otherness (Bayrekçeken, 2001 193-201). Pamuk seems to reflect in his story of Hoja and the Venetian slave the idea that the inner world is always already shaped by the exterior world, that the self is always already constituted by the other and that the inner is inner "to the extent that it faces its own inevitable dependency" (Gurbilek, "Dandies" 624). The impasse between the urge to return to the original self and the desire to catch up with the Western model is reflected through Hoja and the Venetian slave, who is desirous to be the other and is simultaneously anxious to "los[e]

oneself in the other (Gürbilek, "Dandies" 621). What is remarkable about the novel is that the author does not end merely by illustrating the critical situation in modern Turkey. He also shows that snobbism is in the very heart of the Turkish critic, reader, novelist, a trait which they try to hide by the projection of unwanted characteristics onto the others (the West, snobs, dandies etc.), just as snobbish Hoja charges the Westerners with cruelty and evilness, while he is the one who inflicts pain on others for his egoistic needs. In that regard, it would not be wrong to describe *The White Castle* as a literary representation of "the historical interdependence between Turkey and the West without either collapsing particular differences into a dubious universalism or celebrating particularisms for their own sake" (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 363).

The White Castle shows that "what is thought to belong to the past of Turkish modernity, and is assumed to be surpassed (i.e., the Western hegemony; the perspective of 'lack'; the non-contemporaneous perception of time; the binary opposition of traditional/modern) is very much present in the hegemonic deployment of what modernity means" (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 362). The Occidentalist fantasy elicits in Hoja (Turkey) a feeling of lack, which is followed by an ardent desire to fulfill. On the other hand, Hoja's imagining may be identified as projection in the psychoanalytic sense: he displaces "what is intolerable inside into the outside world/the West, thus as a refusal to know," and introjection of what is threatening in the external world so as to contain and manage it" (Ahıska, 366). Hence maintaining some sort of fulfillment within himself.

Furthermore, although in *The White Castle*, the story and the characters are symbolic representations of modern times, discourses and persons, the author chooses to ground the story in the seventeenth century. This choice may be representative of the mythical time of the Occidentalist fantasy where "the past reappears as the desirable future" and an emphasis on the lack of attention which should be paid to "the realm of forces that produce things as they are" in the present time, and on the "lack of historicity" in republican Turkey (Ahıska, "Occidentalism" 367).

In the light of the term "lack of historicity," it can be suggested that in the context of the republican period, the official historical narrative separates itself from the Ottoman history through the Orientalization of the Ottoman Empire, and tries to create a national history from zero. On the other hand, the trajectory of republican history is based on the frame of Westernization. *The White Castle* responds to this historical narrative by advocating cultural pluralism as opposed to cultural homogeneity, and by criticizing the traumatic modernization reforms such as the alphabet reform which caused an irreversible divide in the cultural heritage of the nation.

The novel offers a parody of this problematic situation and offers to undo the Orientalization of the Ottoman Empire, instead suggesting a heterogeneous and diversified production of culture and knowledge at the hands of the characters of Hoja and the slave by refusing to conform to the stable and fixed binary identities. In this regard in the novel, it is not important whether the manuscript is written by the Venetian slave or by Hoja, or even whether these two characters exist or not. What is crucial is "the possibility of this transition/crossing, exchange of roles" (Akyıldız 236). The constitution of this narrative of cultural pluralism functions as a fictional form that deconstructs the fixed historical oppositions of East and West.

Works Cited

- Ahiska, Meltem. "Occidentalism. The Historical Fantasy of the Modern." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 2-3 (2003): 351-379.
- Akyıldız, Olcay. "İki Dünya Arasında Kararsız: Orhan Pamuk'un Kitaplarında 'Doğu-Bati' ("Indecisive in-between Two-Worlds: 'East-West' in Orhan Pamuk's Books"). *Orhan Pamuk'un Edebi Dünyası*. (*Literary World of Orhan Pamuk*). Eds. Nüket Esen, Engin Kılıç. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008.
- Bayrakceken, Aylin and Don Randall. "Meetings of East and West: Orhan Pamuk's Istanbulite Perspective." Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction. Volume 46, Number 3. (2005).
- Gökner, Erdağ. "Beyaz Kale'de Özdeşleşme Politikası" ("Politics of Identification in *The White Castle*"). *Orhan Pamuk'u Anlamak*. (Understanding Orhan Pamuk). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006.
- Gürbilek, Nurdan. "Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness and the Turkish Novel." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102. 2-3 (2003).
- Pamuk, Orhan. *Beyaz Kale* (*The White Castle*). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009 (1985).
- Pamuk, Orhan. *The White Castle*. Trans. Victoria Holbrook. New York: Faber and Faber, 2001.
- Pamuk, Orhan. "Beyaz Kale Üzerine" ("On *The White Castle*"). In *Beyaz Kale* (*The White Castle*). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009.
- Parla, Jale. "Roman ve Kimlik: Beyaz Kale" ("Novel and Identity: *The White Castle*"). In Orhan Pamuk'u Anlamak. (*Understanding Orhan Pamuk*). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006.

Author's profile: Adile Aslan Almond teaches Comparative Literature at University of Massachusetts Amherst and Georgetown University in Qatar. Her interests in research include comparative modernisms, postcolonialism, world literature, the novel, Global South, Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Empire, Turkish literature, and Austrian Literature. Aslan's publications include "Reading Rainer Fassbinder's adaptation of *Fontane Effi Briest*. *Cultura* (2016), and a review of Aamir Mufti's *Forget English: Orientalisms and World Literature* (*Cadernos de Tradução* 2017).
Email: <aaslan@umass.edu>