

# Orhan Pamuk's Literary Exploration: Redefining Turkishness Through Symbolism, Geopolitical Narratives, And Cultural Heritage

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## Abstract

This seminar paper delves into the profound literary contributions of Orhan Pamuk, the recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, acknowledged by the Prize Selection Committee for his ability to unearth new symbols depicting the clash and interlacing of cultures in his native city. Focusing on Pamuk's distinctive writing methodology and influence, the study examines how he redefines Turkishness by weaving a geo-political backdrop from his region into his works, exploring the celebrated cultural heritage while navigating the excesses of Turkism and the Kemalist cultural revolution. The narrative also investigates his key works such as *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, *The Black Book*, *The Bab I-Ali*, *The Silent House Snow*, *The White Castle*, and *The New Life*. Set predominantly in Istanbul, these novels feature protagonists caught between modernity and tradition, embodying a clash of East and West that encapsulates the dualism of Turkey. Furthermore, the paper explores Pamuk's literary revisions, as exemplified in *Cevdet Bey and His Sons* redefine the tropes of Turkishness. It analyses the profound impact of works like *The White Castle* and *My Name is Red* in reimagining the Ottoman legacy and archives. Additionally, it delves into Pamuk's political stance and incorporation of secular Sufism, as evident in *The Black Book*. Through comprehensive research, this paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of Orhan Pamuk's contributions in redefining not only Turkishness but also its resonance on the global literary stage.

**Keywords:** Orhan Pamuk, Turkish literature, Symbolism and Geopolitical Narratives, Cultural Heritage, Literary Contributions

## Introduction

Orhan Pamuk, born in 1952, is a distinguished Turkish author and social philosopher renowned for his exploration of the challenges faced by individuals in a modern state, particularly Turks seeking to define their identity within a cosmopolitan framework. Widely regarded as an international literary figure, Pamuk has been likened to notable authors such as Kafka, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Paul Auster. His extensive body of work has been translated into over fifty languages, earning him prestigious international accolades, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006. Beyond his role as a novelist, Pamuk also holds expertise as a historian. His novels are marked by a profound engagement with the political, cultural, and religious dynamics surrounding the processes of Westernization and Islamization. The Swedish Academy, in its announcement of the 2006 Nobel Prize, commended Pamuk for his adept exploration of the melancholic soul of his native city and his innovative use of symbols to depict the clash and interweaving of diverse cultures.

This analysis captures the essence of Orhan Pamuk's exploration of Turkish identity and history in his novels. Pamuk's works indeed delve into the complexities of Turkish identity, grappling with the aftermath of the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and the attempts to reshape the national narrative. The Romanization of the Turkish alphabet, the erasure of Ottoman history, and the ambivalent relationship with the European Union all contribute to a sense of cultural and historical disorientation. Pamuk's novels are perceived as a challenge to official Turkish historiography and the overarching metanarrative of the Turkish Republic. His postmodernist approach allows him to reimagine Turkish identity by incorporating diverse narratives and engaging in revisionism of Turkish historiography. This is particularly evident in works like *My Name is Red* where Pamuk critiques both orientalist and self-orientalist perspectives on the Ottoman past and modern Turkey. The novel's exploration of the connections between European and Ottoman painting styles serves as a metaphor for the struggle with national identity. Pamuk suggests that the imitation of the West has played a role in the challenges faced by modern Turkey in defining its identity. The critical examination of Turkish modernity, juxtaposed against Ottoman traditionalism, adds layers of meaning to Pamuk's narratives. Erdag Goknar's book, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism, and Blasphemy* (2013) provides a critical analysis of Orhan Pamuk's entire body of work, including his untranslated novels. Goknar's analysis provides valuable insights into Pamuk's thematic choices, his engagement with Turkish history, and his exploration of the tensions between the secular and the sacred. The book offers readers

a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of Pamuk's literary contributions and his impact on the discourse of Turkish literature.

## 1. Pamuk's Literary Journey

Pamuk's literary journey began with his first novel, *Karanlık ve Işık*, which was later published as *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (*Mr. Cevdet and His Sons*) in 1982. While initial success took time to materialize, Pamuk gained widespread recognition with his 1990 novel *Kara Kitap* (*The Black Book*), a work celebrated for its intricate and rich narrative that stirred both controversy and popularity within the Turkish literary landscape.

### 1.1 *The New Life*

Orhan Pamuk's fifth novel, *The New Life*, created a significant impact in Turkey upon its release in 1994, quickly becoming the fastest-selling book in Turkish history. By this time, Pamuk had gained prominence in Turkey due to his advocacy for Kurdish political rights. In 1995, he faced legal proceedings along with a group of authors for essays critical of Turkey's treatment of the Kurds. *The New Life* is a captivating novel of ideas that functions as a parable for modern Turkey. Orhan Pamuk skilfully addresses the contemporary challenge of national identity in Turkey by immersing the main characters in the world of an enigmatic unnamed book. The narrative challenges prevailing ideological doctrines in Turkey, navigating the tragic absurdities of its past and present, and exploring the concealed clash between Eastern historical values and Westernization. The novel critiques globalization and multinational corporate expansion, characteristic of Turkey in the present day.

### 1.2 *My Name is Red*

Orhan Pamuk's international acclaim reached new heights with the publication of *My Name is Red* in 1998, marking a pivotal moment in his literary career and solidifying his position as a globally recognized novelist. The novel's narrative structure, with its chorus of different voices, creates a captivating symphony that not only unravels the intricacies of the story but also brings attention to marginalized perspectives. Set against the backdrop of 16th-century Istanbul during the nine snowy winter days of 1591, *My Name is Red* commences with the gruesome murder of a miniaturist working on a secret book commissioned by the Sultan. The murdered miniaturist narrates his own death, initiating a chain of narratives that gradually unveil the novel's secrets. The work

seamlessly weaves elements of mystery, romance, and philosophical puzzles, providing a rich portrayal of the cultural tensions between East and West.

Translated into 24 languages, the novel received the International Dublin Literary Award in 2003, underscoring its global significance. Numerous literary accolades, international success, and scholarly studies further affirm the novel's literary merit on the world stage. *My Name is Red* stands out as a vital contribution to modern Turkish literature's presence on the global stage. Its meticulous exploration of the world of Ottoman miniature painting and its departure from the Republican nationalist meta-narrative position it as one of the early examples of the modern Turkish novel. The novel goes beyond mere storytelling, emphasizing Ottoman transnationalism and Istanbul's cosmopolitanism. Contrary to depicting Ottoman culture as conservative, *My Name is Red* advocates for cultural blending as essential for the existence of art and culture. Through its narrative, the novel challenges preconceived notions and showcases the dynamic, diverse nature of Ottoman society, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the historical and cultural complexities of the era.

### 1.3 *The Black Book*

Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book*, also known as *Kara Kitap* in Turkish, is often regarded as the work that propelled him onto the international literary stage after its translation in 1992. Positioned as a postmodernist text, the novel skilfully intertwines different genres to offer a sharp commentary on the cultural and social landscape of Turkey. The central character, Galip, becomes consumed by an obsessive quest to unravel the disappearance of his wife Rüya and his cousin Celâl, who happens to be Rüya's half-brother. The simultaneous disappearances serve as a backdrop for the exploration of identity clashes, with Galip ultimately assuming Celâl's identity, writing his columns, and responding to his posts. While Galip is the protagonist, the narrative accentuates the absence of Celâl, creating a pervasive sense of emptiness that extends beyond the characters to encompass meaning in texts, everyday objects, conversations, and even mystic traditions. *The Black Book* delves into the theme of absence, probing the quest for meaning within the seemingly meaningless aspects of life. The novel introduces the genre of the black book as a tool for exploring silent themes related to Turkish society's Ottoman past, the secular-sacred divide, historiography, and identity. It serves as an exploration of hidden layers of narrative beneath the master narrative, adding depth to the primary narrative without overt visibility.

#### 1.4 *Snow*

Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow*, originally published as *Kar* in 2002 and later translated into English in 2004, is a profound exploration of the ideological conflict between Islamism and Westernism in contemporary Turkey. Set in the border city of Kars, the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of political turmoil, encompassing aimless Islamists, MPs, headscarf advocates, secularists, and various factions entangled in a web of contradictory ideals that lead to death and violence. The protagonist, Ka, is a Turkish poet who, after twelve years of exile in Germany, returns to Istanbul and subsequently embarks on a journey to Kars with a journalistic mission. Despite being a member of the secular Istanbul bourgeoisie, Ka finds himself immersed in the complexities of Kars—a city on the cultural and geographical margins of Turkey. The novel explores contested ideological, political, and metaphysical positions related to Turkish identity, portraying Kars as a space where the tension between Islamic faith and state-imposed laicism is palpable. Pamuk skilfully employs multiple perspectives to narrate the story, presenting Ka as both a detached observer and a character on a personal quest for transcendence. The novel challenges easy assessments of the rise of Islam in Turkish society, weaving a complex narrative that captures the intricate dynamics at play.

One central theme in *Snow* is the ambiguity surrounding cultural symbols, particularly the headscarf, which serves as a marker of cultural identity. Pamuk utilizes multiple perspectives to delve into the meaning of these symbols, avoiding clear-cut judgments of right and wrong. This approach transcends the confines of Turkish modernist ideology and adds nuance to the exploration of cultural symbolism. The novel also delves into theological questions, addressing fundamental inquiries about the existence of God, heaven and hell, and the consequences of atheism. Pamuk navigates these topics with stunning directness through the characters' dialogues and the narrator's reflections. The novel serves as a powerful reflection on contemporary Turkish identity, cultural conflicts, and the search for meaning in a complex and evolving society.

#### 1.5 *The White Castle*

*The White Castle* by Orhan Pamuk explores the East-West conflict through a historical setting, challenging the boundaries between Eastern and Western patterns of thinking. Pamuk uses a narrative structure that adds layers of complexity to the identity of the implied writer of the manuscript. The novel introduces two main characters, an Ottoman master known as Hoja and an Italian slave, both of whom become intertwined in a complex relationship. Pamuk intentionally blurs the lines of identity between these

characters, leaving the question of the actual writer of the manuscript unanswered. This ambiguity challenges readers' expectations and defies conventional East-West dualism.

Pamuk's postscript to the Turkish edition of the novel in 1986 reveals his ironic claim that he himself does not know whether the Venetian slave or the Ottoman master is the true writer of the manuscript. The intentional ambiguity serves as a literary device to explore the fluidity of identity and challenge preconceived notions about East-West relations. The characters in the novel, particularly Hoja, are portrayed as faces of the same author, symbolizing the coexistence of Eastern and Western spirits within a single self. Pamuk suggests that these seemingly opposing cultural forces can belong to one unified individual. Hoja's free-spirited nature is juxtaposed with the stagnant notions, dysfunctional institutions, and narrow-minded people of his own culture, emphasizing the internal conflict within the character.

The narrative unfolds through double-voiced discourse, inviting readers to question the assumed identities of the characters. The found manuscript initially believed to belong to a Venetian narrator, transforms as hints are dropped regarding Hoja's involvement as the actual writer. This narrative strategy challenges readers' willing suspension of disbelief and forces them to confront the elusive nature of authorship.

Orhan Pamuk's *The White Castle* is a nuanced exploration of the East-West conflict, using narrative ambiguity and complex character dynamics to challenge traditional perspectives and highlight the coexistence of diverse cultural elements within individuals.

### 1.6 *The Museum of Innocence*

Pamuk created an actual *Museum of Innocence*, consisting of everyday objects tied to the narrative, and housed them at an Istanbul house he purchased. Pamuk collaborated on a documentary *The Innocence of Memories*—that expanded on his *Museum of Innocence*. Pamuk published a memoir/travelogue *Istanbul—Hatıralar ve Şehir* in 2003 (English version, *Istanbul—Memories and the City*, 2005). Pamuk's *Other Colours*—a collection of nonfiction and a story—was published. Asked how personal his book *Istanbul: Memories and the City* was, Pamuk replied: I thought I would write *Memories and the City* in six months, but it took me one year to complete. And I was working twelve hours a day, just reading and working. My life, because of so many things, was in a crisis; I don't want to go into those details: divorce, father dying, professional problems, and problems with this, problems with that, everything was bad. I thought if



I were to be weak, I would have a depression. But every day I would wake up and have a cold shower and sit down and remember and write, always paying attention to the beauty of the book. Honestly, I may have hurt my mother, my family. My father was dead, but my mother is still alive. But I can't care about that; I must care about the beauty of the book.

## **2. Turkishness: Pamuk Redefining the Turkish Identity**

Orhan Pamuk's body of work is deeply rooted in the exploration of Turkish identity and the challenges it faces in a rapidly changing world. In Erdag Goknar's critical analysis, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism, and Blasphemy*, the author delves into Pamuk's engagement with Turkishness, and the various forms of blasphemy presented in his novels. Pamuk's literary journey reflects the impact of political upheavals in Turkey, particularly the military coups that aimed to maintain a modern secular state.

Pamuk's first novel, *The Black Book*, is viewed as an allegory for the Turkish state's struggle to reconcile with its Ottoman past and its reluctance to acknowledge what preceded the modern Republic. The narrative symbolically captures the political dysfunction and the state's refusal to acknowledge historical realities. In *The Black Book*, the theme of *hüzün*, a sense of melancholy and spiritual loss, is manifested in Master Bedii's mannequins. The realistic yet unpopular Turkish mannequins signify reluctance among the public to embrace their Turkishness, preferring European likenesses. This suggests that Turkishness is treated as a subaltern identity, relegated to a peripheral position by those who refuse to acknowledge it.

The theme of hidden secrets and suppressed narratives is explored in *The Black Book*, where Fazlallah Astarabadi's teachings resonate with the Quranic notion that the world conceals its precious secrets. Pamuk uses intertextualities to draw attention to Quranic passages and Ottoman history, emphasizing the selective nature of official state narratives.

Pamuk continues to explore themes of identity in *The New Life* where the male protagonist and his female lover embark on a surreal journey symbolizing Turkey's search for a new identity. The novel challenges established ideologies, including communism, Islamism, and Kemalism, while presenting nostalgic portraits of Turkey amid the invisible forces that shape people's lives.

In *Snow*, Pamuk intricately connects disparate exilic experiences, revealing parallels between Turkish and Kurdish communities in Germany, the Armenian past, and the Islamist movement in Turkey. The novel reflects a crisis of Turkish identity triggered by the revival of Islam in politics, challenging the established secular order. In *Snow*, the city of Kars becomes a complex site for the contestation of ideological, political, and metaphysical positions related to Turkish identity. The novel grapples with the struggles between the East and West, modernity, truth, and narration, offering a nuanced portrait of modern-day Turkey.

Pamuk's engagement with Turkishness, the exploration of suppressed narratives, and the complex interplay of identity and ideology make his works a compelling reflection on the challenges faced by Turkey in defining its cultural and national identity.

### **3. Historiography: Pamuk's Silent Representations of Ottoman Archives**

Orhan Pamuk's engagement with historiography is a prominent aspect of his works, challenging official versions of Turkish history and exploring the silent themes that have been marginalized or ignored. Erdağ Gökner highlights four major areas in which historicity plays a crucial role in Pamuk's works: Ottoman history in a European context, the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the modern Middle East, the early-twentieth century Kemalist revolution, and the legacy of all three on present-day Turkey.

In *My Name is Red*, set in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire, Pamuk captures the glory of the empire while hinting at hidden narratives within the competing accounts presented in the text. Pamuk's exploration of Ottoman themes in his works aims to rewrite the official narrative of Turkish history, shedding light on how Ottoman history has been relegated to the periphery in modern Turkish society. The novel becomes a witness to the pinnacle of Ottoman glory in 1591, yet there is an underlying sense of the empire's decline.

*The Black Book* serves as a vehicle for revisionist historiography, challenging elitist historiography and exposing biases in master narratives. Pamuk utilizes subaltern narratives to create tensions in the overarching historical narrative, emphasizing their power in questioning Eurocentric perspectives. The Turkish alphabet, a relic of the Ottoman era, symbolizes elements pushed into the background, and the novel invites readers to question national and transnational accounts of Turkey.



Pamuk's 'Ottoman novels' present a revised approach to the Ottoman past, inviting readers to question both national and transnational narratives. The exploration of the Ottoman Empire's sixteenth-century art in *My Name is Red* highlights the intricate relationships between Ottoman Istanbul, Venice, Central Asia, and Persia through miniature painting. The novel serves as a pioneering example of postmodern literary features in Turkish literature.

*My Name is Red* also explores the clash between Eastern and Western forms of art, reflecting the tension between traditional Ottoman practices like miniature painting and the Western-style art valued during the era of Atatürk. The secularist understanding of modernity in Republican thought dismisses Eastern forms of art as backwards, aligning with the prohibition of graven images in Islamic tradition. The novel, in its exploration of art, ironically supports the notion that Ottoman culture is perceived as insular by the secularist understanding of modernity.

Orhan Pamuk's Ottoman novels represent a significant departure from the predominant Republican Turkish national view of the Ottoman Empire. These novels invite readers to question both national and transnational accounts of Turkey, presenting a cosmopolitan Ottoman-Turkish world that resists homogenization. The Ottoman theme in Pamuk's works challenges the Republican master narrative of secular modernization, which often portrays the Ottoman legacy and Islamic tradition as obstacles to Turkish modernity.

In *The White Castle*, Pamuk uses the preface to situate the Republican historian narrator in a forgotten 'archive.' The narrator hints at revealing something different from the assumed boring documents, highlighting the neglected Ottoman past by the Republican metanarrative. The narrative unfolds as a captivating story within the archive, encouraging readers to imagine it as an Ottoman-Turkish narrative. Pamuk underscores the richness of the archive, moving beyond faded government documents to offer a nuanced view of history.

The use of two different languages, Ottoman Turkish and modern Turkish, and two distinct historical periods further emphasize the duality in the narrative. Pamuk challenges the notion of purity, illustrating that nothing is pure from the start. The disappointment of the protagonist with the Venetian's "baseness" reflects the futility of trying to embody an incompatible self, particularly within the context of Ottoman characters. Pamuk critiques the unexamined acceptance of the Western lifestyle with a connotation of self-orientalism prevalent in Republican modernism. Pamuk goes on to

challenge Orientalist accounts of the Ottoman world, originating from both Western and Republican perspectives. In *My Name is Red*, Pamuk surpasses the achievements of *The White Castle* in resurrecting the Ottoman theme within contemporary Turkish and world literature. The novel provides an Ottoman context that contrasts with the Republican, nationally restricted perspective, emphasizing the need to revive and reinterpret the Ottoman past for a comprehensive understanding of modern Turkey's national and international representation.

#### 4. Geographical Representation: Orhan Pamuk's Istanbulite Perspective

Orhan Pamuk strategically employs Istanbul as a central setting in his works to convey a sense of the cosmopolitan past, especially in the context of the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul, being the capital of the Ottoman Empire and a melting pot of various ethnicities and cultures, serves as an ideal backdrop for Pamuk's literary exploration. In novels like *Silent House*, *The New Life*, and *Snow*, even when the narrative is set outside Istanbul, the city remains a constant reference point. This choice may be attributed to the vastness and complexity of Istanbul, where some elements might get lost, making it more effective to place the story away from the city while maintaining a connection to it. This approach enhances both the reader's and the author's understanding of the city.

In *Snow*, the play between the names Ka, Kars, and the Turkish title Kar adds layers of meaning. The remoteness of Kars from Turkey's cultural and political centers, Istanbul and Ankara, respectively, becomes a notable aspect. The historical identity of Kars, situated between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, Armenia, and modern Turkey, enriches the city's symbolic function in the novel.

*My Name is Red* unfolds in Istanbul in 1591, providing a historical and cultural context that adds depth to the narrative. Pamuk's choice of setting allows readers to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Istanbul's past, contributing to the novel's intricate exploration of masters and subalterns.

Pamuk's upcoming work, the *Museum of Dreams*, is expected to offer a different version of a love story set in Istanbul through objects. This project, along with Grant Gee's film, emphasizes the enduring fascination with Istanbul as a dynamic and multifaceted setting in Pamuk's literary endeavours. The Istanbul of 1591, as portrayed in *My Name is Red*, becomes a witness to historical events, contributing to the shifting narratives of masters and subalterns in Pamuk's novels.

## 5. Pamuk's Political Interpretations Through Literature

Orhan Pamuk's novels, particularly *The Black Book*, *The New Life*, and *Snow*, delve into the political landscape of Turkey, focusing on the tumultuous era between the 1960 and 1980 military coups. These periods were marked by the persecution of intellectuals, censorship, and an overall atmosphere of gloom. Pamuk's protagonists, in response to authoritarian rule, turn to writing as an act of redemption, using parody as a dominant mode to transcend the existential nihilism imposed by the coup.

The notion of the coup becomes a recurring literary trope in Pamuk's works, representing not only changes in political history but also in literary modernity. The 1980 military coup, for example, is situated between *The Silent House* and *The White Castle*. The coup's explicit effects, such as leftist purges and job loss at the state university, lead characters to reevaluate their perspectives on history. In *The White Castle*, Darvinog'lu responds textually to the reassertion of national secular authority through the translation and publication of a manuscript with hybrid and cosmopolitan authority, representing both Ottoman and Venetian perspectives.

Tropes of coup and conspiracy shape Pamuk's novels, with military coups serving as implicit but powerful forces in the narrative. The first three novels touch on different coup periods, emphasizing the social alienation resulting from these political upheavals. However, in *The Black Book* and *The New Life*, coups are transformed into subjects of parody, turning nationalist logic into forms of collective paranoia. *Snow* takes this trope further, portraying the coup as a farcical performance with dire consequences.

In *Snow*, Pamuk complicates the binary opposition between Westernized individuals and radical Islamists by enveloping it in a love story. The novel engages with Samuel Huntington's controversial thesis of a civilizational clash between Islam and the West along so-called fault lines.

*The New Life* explores the spread of fundamentalist political literature in a changing Turkish society caught between Christian and Muslim influences, and European and Middle Eastern cultures. The novel critiques the Western world's contemporary search for meaning and purpose, reflecting the ongoing battle between Westernization and Islamization in Turkish culture.

## 5.1 Turkeys Clash between East and West: Pamuk's Imaginations

Orhan Pamuk's novels engage with the clash between East and West, reflecting on the cultural, political, and historical complexities of Turkey. This clash is a central theme in Pamuk's works, and it resonates with the broader discourse on the relationship between Islamic and Western civilizations. Samuel P. Huntington's concept of Turkey as a "torn" country caught between two civilizations is addressed in Pamuk's fiction. While Pamuk's narratives are deeply rooted in the Turkish landscape, they possess a universal quality that allows them to be identified on a global level. Istanbul, much like James Joyce's Dublin, serves as a city influenced by both Eastern and Western civilizations, offering a timeless and universal appeal.

In Pamuk's novels, particularly *My Name is Red*, the clash between Eastern and Western traditions is explored through themes of revelation and concealment of self. The dichotomy between the Western tradition of sharp contours in painting and the Eastern tradition's emphasis on the supremacy of the painting itself is a key binary in the narrative. Pamuk's work has been analysed for its portrayal of desolation and its critique of imperial powers that have left regions ravaged. His storytelling is seen as a means of highlighting desolation, attributing responsibility, and pointing out Europe's reluctance to acknowledge Turkey's place in the European context.

Pamuk himself acknowledges the dualities within Turkey's spirit, seeing the eternal fight between East and West not as a weakness but as a strength. His novels, such as *The New Life*, use literary elements to underscore the ongoing struggle between these two spirits within Turkish culture. *The White Castle* dramatizes the eternal fight between the East and the West, challenging the boundary between Eastern and Western patterns of thinking. Pamuk plays with mixed identities, leaving unanswered questions about the implied writer of the manuscript. The novel challenges conventional East-West dualism and explores the possibility of an Easterner portraying the mindset of a Westerner and vice versa.

In essence, Orhan Pamuk's novels serve as a bridge between East and West, offering a nuanced view of the clash between civilizations and contributing to a global understanding of cultural identity. His exploration of universal themes within the context of Turkish history and culture has earned him international acclaim and readership.

## 6. Religion and Sufism: Pamuk's Spiritual Explorations

Orhan Pamuk's exploration of religion, spirituality, and the subaltern in his works reflects a complex engagement with Turkey's history, particularly its transition from the Ottoman Empire to the modern Turkish Republic. The lens of subaltern studies allows for an analysis of the marginalized voices, silenced traditions, and the tension between religious and secular identities in Pamuk's narratives.

In *The Black Book*, Pamuk employs a Sufi parable that serves as a subaltern voice representing the sacred and mystical traditions that have been lost or suppressed. Set against the backdrop of the modern Turkish Republic's authoritarian stance, which denounces religious and Ottoman legacies, this parable becomes a means of liberating a silenced narrative. Pamuk's fiction captures the vanishing point where conventional explanations fail, leaving only the possibility of description, emphasizing the uncertainties linked to spirituality and religion.

Pamuk's task extends beyond representing the vanishing sacred traditions. He also presents an alternative version of Islam and Muslims that encourages a reinterpretation of the challenges faced by the Muslim world. His exploration of *hüzün*, the Turkish word for melancholy, connects spiritual and identity loss, depicting the impact of the invasion of modern European businesses on Turkey. This sense of *hüzün* permeates many of Pamuk's works, reflecting a broader reflection on the consequences of societal and cultural shifts.

Within the universe of *The Black Book*, Sufism plays a significant role. Pamuk uses Sufi parables to challenge the dominant discourse of the Republic. References to Rumi and Shams, prominent figures in Sufi philosophy, become a way to contest the prevailing narrative. Additionally, the mention of the Hurufis, a mystical brotherhood from the fourteenth century, and their leader Fazlallah Astarabadi contributes to a sense of mystery and loss in the narrative. This loss extends to the abandonment of the old Turkish alphabet, further emphasizing a general sense of cultural and spiritual decline.

By engaging with Sufi parables and subaltern voices, Pamuk addresses not only the historical and cultural transformations in Turkey but also questions the dominant narratives imposed by the modern state. His nuanced approach allows readers to consider alternative perspectives on religion, spirituality, and the complex interplay between tradition and modernity.

## Conclusion

In short, Pamuk's novels become a literary platform for challenging established narratives, questioning historical perspectives, and offering a nuanced understanding of the complex forces shaping Turkish identity and culture. Orhan Pamuk's exploration of the history of the Ottoman Turkish world in contemporary Turkish novels reflects a broader engagement with world literature. Turkish authors, including Pamuk, aim to situate their literary representations within the global landscape, hoping to redefine Turkish cultural identity in a universal context. The specific cultural context of Turkey offers a unique perspective for understanding Turkish works circulating globally.

In Pamuk's fiction, particularly his depiction of Istanbul, there is a universal appeal that transcends specific geographical or cultural boundaries. Much like James Joyce's Dublin, Pamuk's Istanbul is not merely rooted in a particular locale but is influenced by both Eastern and Western civilizations, possessing timeless wisdom and beauty that resonates universally. This perspective allows Pamuk to address issues that are not only relevant to a Turkish audience but hold significance for humanity worldwide. The international success of Pamuk with foreign readers underscores not only his skill as a writer but also his ability to provide subaltern voices in his texts a platform to move from the periphery toward the center of the narrative. By inviting readers, both local and global, to consider various components of cultural identity, Pamuk contributes to the redefinition of Turkish identity on a universal level within the broader context of world literature. Thus, this study delves into the deep understanding of commonalities in Pamuk's fiction such as historiography, politics and Turkishness.

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