



## **Otherization in the Novels Maps by Nurudin Farah, The Buddha of Suburbia by Hanif Kureishi and Snow by Orhan Pamuk**

*Nuruddin Farah'ın Haritalar, Hanif Kureishi'nin Varoşların Budası, Orhan Pamuk'un Kar Romanlarında Ötekileştirme*

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### **Abstract**


The world order has changed drastically after the Second World War. In this new world that seems to be mysterious and confusing, almost all global, national, and regional tensions are linked with group-based disparities. “Otherization” has become an important problem of the twentieth century, caused by the conflicts such as religious strife, military conflict, and poverty. Group ideologies play a key role in each of these conflicts. Each group has its own set of principles and excludes people who do not comply with them. However, difference of religion or ethnicity cannot be the reason alone in explaining such disputes; multiple identities revived under circumstances of cultural, geographical, and political backgrounds and problems should also be considered. Otherization takes place at a central point based on group identities and it is also the fundamental principle of common processes and conditions that advance group-based discrimination and marginality. Otherization is built upon many foundations such as ethnic group, race, gender, and religion. In this study, the concept of the “other” will be discussed in three novels. These novels, each describing a different type of otherization process, address the problem of the “other” and touch upon the processes that caused this problem.

**Keywords:** Otherization, Maps, Buddha of Suburbia, Snow

**Öz**

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*Dünya düzeni İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra büyük ölçüde değişmiştir. Gizemli ve karmaşık gibi görünen bu yeni dünyada, neredeyse tüm küresel, ulusal ve bölgesel gerilimler grup temelli eşitsizlik ile bağlantılıdır. "Ötekileştirme" konusu yirminci yüzyılın önemli bir meselesidir. Ötekileştirme, dini çekişme, askeri çatışma ve hatta yoksulluk gibi birçok iç çatışmayı da güçlendirmiştir. Grup ideolojileri bu çatışmaların her birinde kilit rol oynamaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, her grubun kendi ilkeleri vardır. Grup, bu ilkelere uymayan ve kendi dışında olan kişileri dışlar. Sadece din ya da etnik köken değil aynı zamanda, kültürel, coğrafi ve politik geçmiş ve problemlerle birlikte yeniden canlandırılabilen çoklu kimlikler de grup temelli sorunları açıklar. "Ötekileştirme", grup kimlikleri temelinde merkezi bir noktada yer alır. Ötekileştirme aynı zamanda grup temelli ayrımcılık ve marjinalliği ilerleten ortak süreç ve koşulların da temel ilkesidir. Ötekileştirme birçok temele dayanmaktadır. Örneğin, etnik grup, ırk, cinsiyet ve din yoluyla ötekileştirme, ötekileştirmenin en yaygın biçimleridir. Bu çalışmada öteki kavramı üç roman üzerinden tartışılacaktır. Her biri farklı tipte bir ötekileştirme sürecini tanımlayan bu romanlar "öteki" sorununu ele alır ve bu soruna neden olan süreçlere değinir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ötekileştirme, Haritalar, Varoşların Budası, Kar

## Introduction

Otherization is one of the most important issues facing the world. It is based on the principle of essentialization of identity differences, that is, perception of them as natural differences. Otherization is a process of creating a kind of group. A certain group positions itself as higher upon the other, be it a religion or ethnic identity. The other party's so-called inferiority results from being different. Because whoever holds the power to identify who is superior or inferior defines its own group as the origin and the other as the periphery, as stated by Kumaravadivelu;

*"Otherization is a crudely reductive process that ascribes an imagined superior identity to the Self and imagined inferior identity to the Other. There is a general tendency among individuals and communities to portray themselves as having an identity that is desirable and developed while presenting the identity of people who are racially, ethnically, or linguistically different as undesirable and deficient." (2008, p.16)*

The term "otherization" was developed in 2004 by Adrian Holiday, Martin Hyde, and John Kullman who suggested that "otherization" pointed to a hierarchy, ranking someone or something different than us as lower in status. They claimed that this was an essentialist approach and like all other essentialist approaches as in racism or sexism, it needed to be discussed and fought against.

Otherization specifies certain groups or people as being different or not belonging to one's group. In the meantime, it can also be perceived as despising a particular idea, colour, attitude, culture, ethnicity, or religion. Similarly, Nelson (2014, p. 29) claims that "when people are unable to see the different other as they see themselves, they rely on stereotypical representations of those they perceive as different". Therefore, the "other" is seen as a danger to the dominant community which fears that national, religious, cultural, and political cohesion would be lost. Consequently, the feeling of disparity between the host community and the stranger shows that at the center of marginalization resides the host group's desire to protect its ideals and principles. Otherization establishes gaps between various socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial classes that are constructed hierarchically, as it was seen in colonial periods. Colonialism is another aspect of otherization, where other culture, like the East, was othered by the West, who has been the dominant power both economically and politically.

The “other” has been used in different forms in debates of literary and cultural research. It emphasizes the distinction that people make between themselves and others. For Irigay such distinctions are based on gender and sex, for Said they are based on race and ethnicity. Said addresses the notion of otherization in terms of colonial and postcolonial discourses in his work titled *Orientalism*, describing otherization as a simplistic mechanism. Said;

*“I emphasize in it accordingly that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other. That these supreme fictions lend themselves easily to manipulation and the organization of collective passion has never been more evident than in our time, when the mobilizations of fear, hatred, disgust and resurgent self.”* (2003, p.7)

Enlightenment period caused European countries to reach a more powerful and wealthier status in the world, which was followed by their claim to be superior from the rest of the world. Movements and ideologies such as colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, globalization, neo-colonialism, nationalism, etc. followed one after another, adding up to the institutions of discrimination, otherization, oppression, violation, etc. There have been many theoreticians studying these historical facts from various perspectives. Said studied the differentiation of East and West and called the contemptuous methodology that western world applied on the eastern world or third world as “orientalism”.

Bhabha, on the other hand, studied the situation of the people who were obliged to migrate to their ex-colonizer's countries following the devastating effects took place in the decolonization process in their home countries. Benedict Anderson worked on the concept of nationalism and suggested that nationalism was a constructed idea and called all nations as “imagined communities”. Fanon discussed psychopathologies of the colonized people caused by the colonizers' systematical disdain applied on them. Based on these theories, the concept of “other” is discussed in three different novels from three different perspectives. Some of Foucault's statements on the discourse of “power” is used to clarify the origins of power relations as well. In the colonial context, process of otherization causes the “other” to feel an inferiority complex. The dominant colonial power establishes truths, supports spatial expansion, and determines special positions for the colonized people to keep them under control during the process of colonization. The dominant group sees itself as the authority that has a natural right to control the minority groups. Through classifying ethnically and culturally different ones, the dominant discourse leads to minorities' feeling disadvantaged and marginalized. Eurocentric point of view created stereotypes and engendered concepts like exoticism, monachopsis, marginalization and disoriented personality through the cycle of otherization. There are many other mechanisms in the identity creation of postcolonial subjects. The concept of “other” in colonial discourse is defined by differences, and therefore the post-colonial concept of “identity” is addressed in many categories. Ethnicity, gender, and culture are factors that define identity. According to Irigay (1995, p. 8) who approached to the issue of the “other” through the position of women in society and the problem of women who are under the overwhelming dominance of the masculine system, “woman” is the other.

Otherization groups people using categories such as language, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation. Not only that, but it also creates myths and stories through the features that define those groups. Such myths and stories often describe negative traits that make pertaining to that group as undesirable. Throughout history, almost all societies contained minority groups which were different from most of the people in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, traditions, or a certain type of culture. Such groups or individuals were generally treated with a cold distance, to say the least, by the people of the majority –since they held the

power of domination-. Along with social and economic developments in the world, attitudes towards the people who were somehow “different” than the rest of society, have gotten more and more hostile.

The concept of the “otherness” contains two distinct and complementary meanings which manifests itself as a paradox. Firstly, it forces the individual to join a group inseparably; secondly, it shows the unavoidable separation of the individual from the group. As Bhabha (2011, p. 6) puts it ‘The realm of the paradoxical . . . belongs neither to the one nor the Other. It is an interstitial realm of the in-between—a space and time of ‘thirdness’’. The main cause for this division is the force that the society uses to make an individual an integral part of a group.

The creation of identity is accomplished on the premise of two mediums (self and others). In *Location of Culture* Bhabha states:

*“To see a missing person, or to look at Invisibleness, is to emphasize the subject's transitive demand for a direct object of self-reflection, a point of presence that would maintain its privileged enunciatory position qua subject. To see a missing person is to transgress that demand; the “I” in the position of mastery is, at that same time, the place of its absence, its representation.”* (1997, p. 47)

According to Marx, otherization and subsequent alienation begin with class discrimination. The labor itself is alienated and this situation “(1) estranges nature from man and (2) estranges man from himself, from his own active function, from his vital activity; because of this it also estranges man from his species. It turns his species-life into a means for his individual life. Thus, the separation of the individual from the communal whole happens” (1959, p. 328). The real unity of nature and the human being is only possible with society.

It is widely agreed that gender is a system which is constructed by the society, while sex is a concept that refers to the biological distinctions between people and is a common and old form of distinction. The term gender, therefore, suggests socially constructed structure in which humans must conform to the rules without questioning. Women find themselves trying to adhere to the defined gender roles within this structure. Simon de Beauvoir draws attention to this point in her work titled *Second Sex* and states as follows: “Be women, stay women, become women. So not every female human being is necessarily a woman; she must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity” (1953, p. 23). According to her, the woman does not have an identity in the society; it is made by her relationship with the male identity. “Humanity is male, and man defines woman not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being” (1953, p. 26) From this point of view, the woman exists only with the identity of the man. Beauvoir also claims that:

*“Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man. And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called “the sex”, meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while she is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other.”* (1953, p. 26)

According to Beauvoir, women are always the “other” in the male-dominated society. In other words, it is the dominant group that determines the existence of the other. Women are not allowed to act outside the principles that men set for them.

It is possible to see a different type of otherization in each novel discussed in this study. For example, in *The Buddha of Suburbia* there is racial otherization, while *Maps* has ethnic and gendered otherization. On the other hand, in the *Snow* there is otherization based on

religion, gender and East-West conflict. Although they contain different types of otherization, the common feature of these novels is the presence of a dominant group and excluded minorities.

### **Ethnic and Gendered Otherization in *Maps* by Nuruddin Farah**

*Maps* by Nuruddin Farah tells the story of a young boy in Somalia in a setting where ethnicities, religions, nations, traditions, and perspectives of individuals clash with each other. Askar, the protagonist of the novel is born in Kallafo Village in the Region of Ogaden, which has been at the heart of the political conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia, following the period of decolonization by Italy, France, and Britain from these lands. As his father had already died before and his mother while giving birth to him, he comes into this world as a lonely orphan. He finds consolation in the compassionate motherhood of Misra of Ethiopian origin, who is a servant of his uncle Qorrax. Misra feels excluded from the Somalian community. Because she has a different ethnic origin and a different religion. She comes from Ethiopia and she is Christian. She had been subject to oppression back in her homeland as well, especially by her own family. In Kallafo she is at the lowest level in the social hierarchy, for coming from an “enemy” country, being a woman and being a servant. Although Askar has wealthy relatives, that his uncle is the leader of that community, he feels excluded too, for not having known the people who brought him to this world, his parents. He must build his identity, and in his childhood, this search of identity is reciprocated by Misra. It is an age when social norms and constructed identities are absent, so during the innocence of his childhood, Askar's identity is shaped within the hands of Misra. Misra, also in search of an identity for herself, gets a social status and a sort of place –although at the lowest level- in the society where she was totally alienated from.

Acquisition of identity takes place on many levels; sexual, cultural, social, ethnic, etc. In a traditional society, one can obtain identity through a sense of belonging. Because in general, individuality is always superseded by the power of society. In other words, one must belong to the powerful group in society so that he/she can exist as an individual. Edward Said wrote in his work *Orientalism*:

*“The construction of identity — for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction — involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us”. Each age and society re-create its “Others”. Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of “other” is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies.”* (2003, p. 332)

Accordingly, building an identity involves the creation of an “other”. The tradition of the binary way of thinking has been created in the Western World. Based on this method, Misra is an “other” against Somalian identity which holds the notion of “power” throughout the novel. Besides Somalian ethnicity, Sunni Islam religion and the patriarchal social structure are also factors of power in the community. Misra is being othered many times then, for her ethnicity, religion, and sex. She becomes the object of sexual abuse for Uncle Qorrax and Aw-Adan because she is helpless and weak. She has no social status; she ranks inferior even among the community's women, as she cannot obtain any status other than being a wife and a mother.

The intimate relationship of Misra and Askar was condemned to fail eventually, even if they had not been separated from each other. As Askar gets older, his identity is possessed by

the domineering Somalian culture, which gives all the power to men and lets women to be subdued. Askar needs an identity more than anyone with the emptiness in his soul, guilt of having killed his mother by his own birth, and the feeling of rootlessness. He becomes an enemy to Misra eventually, suspecting her of being a traitor against his country. Misra's identity is lost with the loss of the role of as Askar's protector. She is again out in the cold, helpless, weak, alienated. Despite all the unrequited love, compassion, and protection Misra gave to him for all those years, Askar gets strictly bound to his long-awaited identity, a nationalistic identity, and ignores to see the real Misra whom he knows by heart. It is the outcome of the social determinism. Nationalistic ideas block his mind and develop a denial on his relationship with Misra. As for patriarchal structure, power of social dynamics functions for Uncle Hilaal and his wife Salaado as well. As a childless married couple, they are the victims of otherization. Their reverse gender roles are perceived as a threat and disobedience to the society, so they are excluded by the patriarchal community in Mogadishu. Even a man can be oppressed and punished by society if he does not use the given male power over his wife.

Benedict Anderson explains the concept of nationalism from a different perspective in his work titled *Imagined Communities*.

*"It seems advisable to consider briefly the concept of "nation" and offer a workable definition. Theorists of nationalism have often been perplexed, not to say irritated, by these three paradoxes: (1) The objective modernity of nations to the historians' eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept - in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender - vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek' nationality is sui generis. (3) The 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence. In other words, unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes, or Webers. (...) It is characteristic that even so sympathetic a student of nationalism as Tom Nairn can nonetheless write that: "Nationalism" is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as "neurosis" in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable."* (2006, p. 5)

In addition to Anderson's analysis, it can be seen in the course of history that nationalism has been used as a tool by the imperialist powers to continue exploiting third world countries and ex-colonies. Following the destruction of empires and decolonization periods nationalism has been encouraged by the First World Countries. Because it was easier to control and exploit small pieces of countries. Ethiopia and Somalia probably have a more common history and cultural unity with each other than any of them would have any with a First World country. Britain, Italy, and France keep claiming economical rights over these lands while Ethiopia and Somalia, turn against each other. The reason for this strange consequence could be explained by the analysis of colonized-colonizer relationship made by Frantz Fanon ;

*"Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (...) When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously*

*sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality. On the unconscious plane, colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle," loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology, and its own unhappiness which is its very essence."* (1963, p. 210)

The people of the colonized country would be on a constant and futile search for an identity. They lack a true source that would connect them to their roots, their history; they lack a genuine source of identity. Their history is taken away from them, so is their identity. Therefore Misra, Askar, Hilaal and Salaado are not the only ones that have been alienated, in fact, all the people of Somalia, Ethiopia, and even whole Africa have been alienated to their own roots, own culture and own history.

### **Otherization in *Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi**

*The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi is another novel that could be analyzed within the post-colonial domain and otherization. In this novel, the protagonist Karim struggles for attaching himself to the British identity with his half British half Indian origin while living in the suburbs of London. Not only Karim but also other characters seem to be going through an identity transition. The main theme is the stumbling of the colonized people -from India- who have migrated to the colonizer Britain. The political background is set in the 1970s when a highly conservative and racist government of Margaret Thatcher was ruling the country. Under such a strict management system, Asian immigrants felt completely alienated. Immigrants are perceived as "other" because there are two races in the world, according to the conservative party in Britain's rule: The White British and all the others. Conservative Party Leader Enoch Powell's speech in Birmingham, also known as "Blood River" speech is an example of this situation. Powell's speech resulted in racist and stigmatizing attacks against immigrants which turned their lives into a nightmare. Powell stated:

*"We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependents, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre."* (Perry et al, 2011, p. 388).

Through his comments he considered immigrant people as dependents. Similarly, prime minister Margaret Thatcher established an extremely negative stance on the Asian immigrants. In a TV interview she stated:

*"If we went on as we are then by the end of the century there would be four million people of the new Commonwealth or Pakistan here. Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture and ... the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in"* (World in Action 19 January 1978).

Benedict Anderson 's views on citizenship and national identity can be useful to understand the idea of Britishness or British nationalism. As Anderson diligently argues that nationalism is built by certain protocols of fictional devices, *The Buddha of Suburbia* shows how British nationalism is built by Thatcherism. "The thing was, we were supposed to be

English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it” (Kureishi, 2009, p. 53).

In the context of Eurocentricism, stereotypes, foreignness, social exclusion, and the creation of a disoriented identity are ultimately brought on through the process of otherization. A postcolonial subject's identity development involves a variety of otherization processes. Because the other is characterized by the absences in colonial discourse, the postcolonial self must cross the boundaries of gender, race, class, and culture to reframe the self that is different in several categories.

Homi Bhabha's *The Location of the Culture* offers some important theories in explaining the situation of the colonized subjects. He suggests that the Western World has always tried to locate the origin of the culture as the Western countries. As formerly mentioned, Fanon framed this attitude as the Western World's superiority complex over the colonized countries. If they left these countries on their own, according to them, colonized people would not have known how to manage their countries and fall into a terrible ignorance. Foucault's analysis of how knowledge becomes a vessel for power is quite striking:

*“Behind knowledge there is a will, no doubt obscure, not to bring the object near to oneself or identify with it but, on the contrary, to get away from it and destroy it -a radical malice of knowledge. (...) So in knowledge there is not a congruence with the object, a relation of assimilation, but, rather, a relation of distance and domination; there is not something like happiness and love but hatred and hostility; there is not a unification but a precarious system of power. (...) If we truly wish to know knowledge, to know what it is, to apprehend it at its root, in its manufacture, we must look not to philosophers but to politicians— we need to understand what the relations of struggle and power are. One can understand what knowledge consists of only by examining these relations of struggle and power, the manner in which things and men hate one another, fight one another, and try to dominate one another, to exercise power relations over one another”* (Foucault et al, 1997, pp. 11-12)

Homi Bhabha defines the colonized's culture as the “first space” since it comes from the “origin country” and colonizer's culture as the “second space” since it exists in the “host country”. He also creates another definition as “third space” involving a mixture of both cultures which is experienced by the second-generation immigrants. In this “third space”, hybrid identities are formed, as second-generation immigrants are inclined to integrate into the host country's culture by imitating their customs, traditions and internalizing their values, which is called as “mimicry” by Homi Bhabha. However, colonized country's culture would have no intention of embracing the immigrants coming from their ex-colonies, so they are kept at the threshold and colonized people are forced to live in this restricted cultural zone which is called as “liminality” by Bhabha.

Anwar, the other immigrant character of the first generation, often suffers from racism, alienation, disaffection, relocation, loneliness, and conflicting identities. The more the white society sets him apart, the more he maintains on to his Indian identity; hence, Anwar diligently rejects the idea of trying to integrate himself into Western culture. Asian immigrants do not believe that they would belong to the English community because they are not recognized by the white community.

In this novel, suburbs have a particularly important role because immigrants live in the suburbs. The suburbs are isolated places away from the city center. Due to their color, ethnicity, culture and economic class, Asian immigrants were forced to live in London's southern suburbs as “the other”.



Surrounded by the home and host countries, the novel questions the concept of “other” which leads to racial discrimination. Karim emphasizes that there are physical assaults against Asians as well as verbal attacks. Karim's depiction of the suburbs reveals their appalling conditions:

“...full of neo-fascist groups, thugs who had their own pubs and clubs and shops. ... They also operated outside the schools and colleges and football grounds...At night they roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letterboxes. Frequently the mean, white, hating faces had public meetings and the Union Jacks were paraded through the streets, protected by the police... Jeeta kept buckets of water around her bed in case the shop was firebombed in the night. Many of Jamila's attitudes were inspired by the possibility that a white group might kill one of us one day.” (Kureishi, 2009, p. 56)

The immigrants are deliberately reminded of their place as the “other”, by being kept away from the center. The novel includes different examples of how the Asian people are othered in different ways. For example, Karim is “sick too of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings” (Kureishi, 2009, p. 62). Another example is Amir's brother Amar. “He calls himself Allie to avoid racial trouble” (Kureishi, 2009, p. 19). It is possible to see many examples of the otherization by the names throughout the novel. For example, Karim's British aunt, Jean and her husband, Ted, “never calls Haroon by his Indian name, Haroon. He was always ‘Harry’ to them, and they spoke of him as Harry to other people [as] it was bad enough his being an Indian in the first place, without having an awkward name too” (Kureishi, 2009, p. 33). In the novel, Asians experienced the stresses of ethnocentrism as they were oppressed and otherized mentally, physically, psychologically, and racially.

Haroon and Anwar, as first-generation immigrants from India, try to cling to their roots and traditions: Haroon attempts to use his exoticness as a way to blend in the British society while Anwar strictly holds to his Indian roots, so they stand in the Second Space. Karim, on the other hand, is in a desperate to struggle to be “one of them”, but the colour of his skin and stereotyping of the British society against his ethnic background prevent him from being integrated into the British society. He becomes a hybrid character, neither British nor Indian, of the Third Space, living in the liminal space. Discrimination against Asian immigrants are so overpowering that even Karim gets his share of such an attitude: Helen's father insults him by calling him and likes of him as “hairy back” and as a response, Karim keeps silent with his “learned helplessness”.

Obviously, the concept of the “other” is a prevalent theme in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Dominant white British society conducts a racist and condescending attitude against immigrants coming from their ex-colonies by stereotyping, marginalizing, excluding them and forcing them to live “in-betweenness”. As if Britain was not the one that had occupied these countries, exploited all their resources, dysfunctioned all their political and economic systems and passivated their people for years. Now that these desperate people are back in the colonizer's country, due to the lack of industrial, economic, and educational institutions in their home country, they are regarded as outsiders, invaders, and labelled as “other”.

### **Otherization in *Snow* by Orhan Pamuk**

*Snow* is a novel that gathers all the political debates of the 2000s in Turkey. The novel begins with the introduction of the poet Ka, who lived a life of a political exile in Germany for 12 years. He returns to Istanbul to attend his mother's funeral. Ka then accepts the offer of

a newspaper and goes to the city of Kars to investigate and report on the municipal elections and the women who have been committing suicides lately<sup>2</sup>.

The real name of the poet Ka is Kerim Alakuşoğlu. However, not liking his name quiet, he creates the nickname Ka from the first letters of his name and surname. He signs his poems and books as Ka. The arrival of a foreigner to Kars makes the residents of the city uneasy. Ka is continuously questioned about the reasons that brought him to that part of Turkey from the moment he arrives in the city. It is a tradition that all foreigners visiting the city would go to the police station and testify, even if they were journalists. Ka too, goes to the police, following this tradition that have been carried out since the 1940s. Ka then spends his first day in Kars visiting the families of the “suicidal girls” who live in complete poverty and misery. The suicides of the young women aged sixteen and seventeen upset Ka:

*“For example, a girl who was about to be engaged by the old teahouse owner, had dinner with her mother, father, three siblings and grandmother as she did every evening, washed dirty dishes and then shot herself with her father's shotgun”* (Pamuk, p. 16).

A religious propaganda is carried out throughout the city to prevent the suicides, stating that suicide was a sinful and a blasphemous act in Islam. Since the last girl who committed suicide was a veiled girl, the discourse of “women suicides” is replaced by the discourse of the “suicide of veiled girls”. A common perception against suicides of those women is that men are more religious than women, women commit suicide because they are impious, weak, and helpless. The fact that men applying psychological violence on women in the name of the religion and strict traditions to the extent that would suffocate them and make them feel desperate enough to commit suicide is completely ignored.

Later in the novel, a political play is staged in a theater. The audience is almost like a modelling of the Kars' political structure; political Islamic terrorists, “head scarved girls”, secular half-intellectuals, ex-communists, Kurds, sheikhs of religious orders, students from the imam hatip high school, theater artists, police chiefs, Kemalists and Ka, as a complete outsider, an atheist Western bourgeois poet. In the meantime, a heavy blizzard covers Kars by snow, causing all the roads being closed and all the communication of Kars being cut with Turkey and the rest of the world. This uncanny atmosphere invites a political turmoil. Ka on the other hand, sick of all that political matters, dreams about escaping from Kars with his beloved woman Ipek.

*“A wave of anger swept over Ka; this dated back to his first political encounters during his bourgeois days in Nişantaşı. When he was a lycée student, men like this used to turn people against each other by pinching their butts and trying to push them into the passive position. Later on, this turned into a game; the object was to get people to denounce one another, particularly their political enemies, as police informers. It was the fear of police cars and the fear of being caught in a situation in which he'd be obliged to inform - forced to tell the police which houses to raid – that had put Ka off politics for good. Now here was Muhtar, running on the Islamist fundamentalist ticket, something he would have found despicable ten years earlier, and here was Ka, still making excuses for this and so much else.”* (Pamuk, p. 52)

Ka's anger towards people and his tendency to look down on them makes him feel lonely, excluded, and unhappy all the time. Walking through the streets covered by snow, he goes to meet the Islamist terrorist called Lacivert who hides somewhere because he would be shot the moment he is caught. Lacivert asks Ka why he came to Kars, and then interrogates

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<sup>2</sup> There were many female suicide cases in Kars at that time. Women are exposed to psychological violence mainly due to the pressures exerted on them.

him about what happened in the police station, why he was not beaten while Muhtar was beaten, and tells him how the news about the girls who committed suicide should have been. He treats Ka contemptuously, despising Ka's Westernly bourgeois manners and his being an atheist, disconnected from his own cultural roots.

After such a humiliating experience with Lacivert, Ka returns to his room at Karpalas Hotel, which belongs to Ipek, her sister Kadife, and their father Turgut. He finds Ipek and tells that he wants to marry her. Meanwhile, a messenger brings a letter from Sheikh Saadettin to invite Ka to his lodge. Ka accepts the invitation and goes to see Sheikh right away. He is impressed with Sheikh and imagines himself finding peace in the integrity of Sheikh's sect. Ka seems to be searching for a sense of belonging. On his way back he comes across with Necip, an imam hatip high school student whom Ka becomes quite fond of. Ka is constantly stopped on the road by some other people too, invited somewhere, and people share some of their secrets with him. Although Ka looks as if he paid attention to them, he does not care about their problems the least. He has one objective only, to get away from Kars with İpek as soon as the roads closed by the heavy blizzard gets opened again.

The play "Homeland or Headscarf" staged by Kemalist actors and actresses reflects the fragmented social structure of Kars. A woman in hijab declares her freedom by taking off her hijab and fundamentalist Islamists react to that violently by dragging her by the hair. The play ends with young soldiers saving the woman from the fundamentalists and ensuring her freedom. The audience which is comprised of the supporters of the polarized opinions just like in the play, respond to the end differently. Some groups applaud hysterically while some groups boo the actors and actresses with outrage. In this tumultuous atmosphere Z. Demirkol and his friends stage a coup and take over the administration, killing many people. Everything that happens before, during and after the play is like a parody of the military coup that took place in Turkey. Ironically, the circumstances that had brought about Ka's exile to Germany was due to that political turmoil as well.

Ka hears the word that an article titled as "A Godless in Kars" has been published in the Serhat City Newspaper. Four years after his trip to Kars, he gets killed by unknown assailants in Germany, where he lived.

*Snow* by Orhan Pamuk unfolds the social effects of the political turmoil due to the fundamentalist Islamic movement in Turkey which began after the military coup that took place in 1980 and has shown an increase in the years to come. The resurgence of Islam as a lifestyle which pervades urban environments in Turkish politics and challenges the civil society has brought about a crisis of a divided "Turkish Identity". The story takes place in Kars, a city at the farthest east part of Turkey which accommodates many different ethnic origins, religions, and political views, despite being a small, low populated city with a highly traditional cultural texture. The protagonist of the novel is Ka, a famous poet who had been on exile in Germany due to his political views and just have come back to Turkey by the death of her mother in Istanbul. He comes to Kars to investigate the phenomenon of suicides of the young girls that have been going on for some time. Ka's trip to Kars ends up as a futile attempt to make peace with his past, to rejoin with the woman he loves, to obtain an identity that would provide him a sense of belonging. He fails in all his attempts to be integrated in the society.

This novel is patterned by many examples of the "otherization". First, the floundering of Ka is seen when he is faced with the provincial but versatile culture of Kars. Ka comes from an upper-class, secular family, has been brought up in prosperity and given a high level

of education in an elite circle in Istanbul. His cultural identity takes its roots mostly from the Western world. Occidentalization has been the dominant cultural politics following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. However, this politics has not been diffused into the rural regions of Turkey and therefore remained partial with a few big cities such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara.

The infusion of an Islamic movement is seen as a threat to the secular state by many people. However, this religious approach to government has been instantly embraced by some groups as they had not been so happy with the secular positioning of the modern state in the first place. This created a new level of separation among people in the society which had already been highly heterogeneous. When there is difference, there is "otherization". Whoever holds a dominant position in society declares the opposite party as the "other" and applies pressure on it at various levels. Pamuk introduces two opposite political ideologies clashing with each other, secular state supporters are represented by Sunay Zaim and his wife, and supporters of fundamentalist Islam supporters are represented by Lacivert and Necip primarily. These opposing parties have no tolerance to each other, they cannot exist together, therefore they have a desire to destroy one another.

Ka is completely foreign to all parties and all the cultures existing in Kars. He is an urban, he does not hold any radical political view, so he is a stranger to the local culture, he is an "other" to the supporters of both political views, subsequently, he does not belong to any of them. He wants to make genuine contact with Necip, as he loves him as a human, stripped off his ideological identity. But he cannot build a relationship with him and his community without determining a clear political identity first. On the other hand, he is perceived and labelled as a Westerner, therefore he cannot be one of them, so he is an "other" according to them. Ka wants to build relationships on the simplest level; he loves İpek and dreams of getting married to her and building a family together. But lack of political identity becomes an obstacle even to his most humane desire. The political identity is like a wall between people which blocks any humanely communication or relationship. Existence of people becomes equal to their political identities. In a way individuality of all these people disappear under the constructed identities.

Ka has a deep feeling of alienation to his culture, people of his country, the values that he was brought up with, and even to himself. Ka is disconnected from the traditions and customs of his own culture. He cannot build a relationship with the people whom he is bound under the realm of a "nation". This reminds us of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" theory where the concept of a "nation" is nothing more than an illusion. It seems that when the structure of a "nation" is fragmented, the illusion/imagination of the "nation" too, falls apart.

## Conclusion

Conceptualization of "otherization", "otherness", "power relations" and "post-colonial issues" by all the theoreticians formerly mentioned shows that the desire for domination over the weaker party is a common fact that knows no borders. When there is an imbalance of power in a certain place, it brings along domination, oppression, and otherization with it. "Otherization" process occurs on many varieties and levels in societies since there are many different examples of imbalanced power relations throughout the world. It can be explained best in the content of the Western tradition of "binary oppositions" where the concepts such as inequality, power, otherness, domination, superiority, and inferiority have all thrived within.

By polarizing social groups, dominant groups position themselves as superior upon the weaker groups and apply all kinds of political, social, economic, and psychological tools on them to despise and suppress them. Otherization process creates a sense of self-validation and a distinct identity definition for the dominant group. A counter group is almost needed for the dominant group to acknowledge itself as better. That way all the negative connotations can be attributed to the opposing group, and "the dominant group" can acquire all the positive ones, such as more civilized, more intelligent, more rational, and more ethical and therefore holds power to rule over the others. Accordingly, all the cultural, social, political, and economic institutions formed in favor of the dominant group. The institutionalization of inequality has been going on for so long that it has become almost impossible to get back to the roots of it. Thanks to the postcolonial theoreticians, these extricate connections were brought to light eventually. As we have seen in all these three novels, the nature of otherization might be different, as it was based on "nationality" on *Maps*, "ethnicity" on *The Buddha of Suburbia* and "ideology" on the *Snow*, but the outcome never changes; the "other" is always excluded and oppressed.

Although they are portrayed in different countries and in different forms of otherization, the end of the othered people in all three novels does not change. They are destined to die or have an identity crisis. In the *Maps*, Misra died. Most of the "othered" characters in *Snow* died. In the *Buddha of Suburbia*, an "other" Anwar died, and the rest of the characters became alienated in an endless identity crisis.

## Etik Beyan

"Nuruddin Farah'ın Haritalar, Hanif Kureishi'nin Varoşların Budası, Orhan Pamuk'un Kar Romanlarında Ötekileştirme" başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir.

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