

Orhan Pamuk'un Beyaz Kale Adlı Eserine Yeni Tarihselci Bir Yaklaşım

A New Historicist Approach to Orhan Pamuk's White Castle

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Öz

Yeni Tarihselcilik, aynı tarihsel döneme ait edebi ve edebi olmayan metinlerin yorumlanmasına odaklanan modern bir eleştirel yaklaşımdır. Bir edebi eserin içinde bulunduğu dönemi yansıttığını göstermek için kendisini sınırlayan önceki tarihsel eleştirilerden farklı olarak, Yeni Tarihselcilik, eserin üretildiği dönemden nasıl etkilendiğini dikkate alır. On yedinci yüzyılda İstanbul'da geçen *Beyaz Kale*, bir Osmanlı bilim adamı ve Venedikli bir kölenin hikayelerini anlatan tarihi bir romandır. İlk bakışta, roman bu iki kişi arasındaki ilişkiyi anlatıyormuş gibi görünse de özenli bir irdeleme sonrasında, romanın aslında alternatif bir tarih sunduğunu görmekteyiz. Bu alternatif tarih, geleneksel tarihten çok farklıdır, örneğin, Sultan güçlü bir insan değil, zayıf yönleri olan bir kişidir. Örneğin paşalar ve Sultan, sahte bilime ve mantıksız rüya analizine sıkı sıkıya bağlıdır. Buna ek olarak, romanın kahramanı bir Sultan ya da saraydan bir kişi değildir. Bu bağlamda, romanın karakterlerinin geleneksel tarihsel romanlarda okumaya alışık olduğumuz karakterlerden çok farklı olduğu görülmektedir. Roman, hem anlatı teknikleri hem de karakterler açısından geleneksel tarihi romanlardan çok farklıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beyaz Kale, Yeni Tarihselcilik, Alternatif Tarih.

Abstract

New Historicism is a modern critical approach focused on the interpretation of literary and non-literary texts which belong to same historical period. Unlike previous historical criticism which limits itself to basically showing how a literary work reflects its time, New Historicism takes into consideration how the work is affected by the time it was produced. Set in İstanbul in the seventeenth century *The White Castle* is a historical novel which tells the story of an Ottoman scientist and a Venetian slave. At first glance, the novel seems to describe the relationship between these two people, but a careful examination shows that the novel offers an alternative history. This alternative history is quite different from the usual history, for example, the Sultan is not a powerful person, but rather a person with weaknesses. For example, pashas and Sultan depend on the pseudoscience and illogical dream analysis. In addition, the protagonist in the novel is not a Sultan or a person from the palace. In this context, it seems that the characters of the novel are very different from the characters we are used to reading in traditional historical novels. The novel is quite different from the traditional historical novels in terms of both narrative techniques and the characters.

Keywords: White Castle, New Historicism, Alternative History.

Introduction

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and, the novel became an important tool in the creation of the idea of Turkish nationalism. The nation building process was embraced by writers because, it was primarily focused on national and secularist concepts that form Turkish culture. Many fiction writers at that time questioned the social and religious dimensions of life. As Professor Jale Parla (2009, s. vii) puts it:

The novel form was not only seen as a supplement for social and political historiography, but it was also used as an educational tool for social reform. This continued into the 1980s when a paradigm shift occurred and the Turkish novelists started seeing the major thrust of their practice not in the acculturation of the genre but in the reverse direction; in its globalization. The preoccupation with the question of national modernization was displaced by nationalist interrogations. Nevertheless, the Turkish novelists continued to shape their narratives around the same tropes: the house, the father, history as memory and identity, writing and writer. Beginning with the 80s, however, they tended to foreground the last three as the expense of the first two.

Orhan Pamuk explicitly uses Turkish Ottoman history in his novels. However, history is closely intertwined with 'today' in Pamuk novels. In other words, Pamuk questions the past with a modern perspective and approaches the history with suspicion. As Nilgün Anadolu-Okur (2009, s. 6) puts it:

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Pamuk moulds his characters from his observations of his people in his daily life; however, the plots of his novels are either inspired by or closely related to historical incidents which have actually taken place in Turkish history. For instance in Ottoman Istanbul there may have lived a Hoja, a spiritual teacher, who had once enrolled a foreign apprentice to his service and trusted his loyalty as the two were busily engaged in scientific inventions, experimenting with the technical aspects of fireworks production for the pleasure of their Sultan.

When it comes to view history in Pamuk's novels, it can be observed that Pamuk approaches to history differently than his contemporaries. A descriptive history may exist, but many contemporary reflections are given to the main characters and incidents. Like Umberto Eco's historical novels, Pamuk rewrites history to reflect social realities. The process of producing realities also address to the issue of historical representation of these novels. Although *The White Castle* is set in the past time, it deals with the social life of the Turkish society. Past and present are intertwined in *The White Castle*. Nagihan Haliloğlu (2008, s. 112) refers to Orhan Pamuk and states that:

I would first like to place Pamuk's writing, especially *The White Castle*, within the current wave of historical novels in Turkey. After looking at some of the reception of his work in the domestic and international arena, I will investigate the narrative modes through which Pamuk conjures up history in *The White Castle*. I will look particularly at his use of embedded narrative, especially with respect to its implications of inaccessibility of the past. Lastly, I will suggest a link to a wider field of discussion of how certain modes of remembering the past may serve to forge a lineage in a literary tradition of one's choice.

A critical point of debate among literary theorists of the last century has always been the relationship between history and literature. History has also given fiction writers the chances to view modern times As Hayden White (2005, s. 147) puts it:

In a well-known essay on history and fiction, Michel de Certeau maintained that fiction is the repressed other of historical discourse. 'Why? Because historical discourse wages everything on the true, while fictional discourse is interested in the real—which it approaches by way of an effort to fill out the domain of the possible or imaginable. A simply true account of the world based on what the documentary record permits one to talk about what happened in it at particular times, and places can provide knowledge of only a very small portion of what 'reality' consists of. However, the rest of the real, after we have said what we can assert to be true about it, would not be everything and anything we could imagine about it. The real would consist of everything that can be truthfully said about its actuality plus everything that can be truthfully said about what it could possibly be. Something like this may have been what Aristotle had in mind when, instead of opposing history to poetry, he suggested their complementarity, joining both of them to philosophy in the human effort to represent, imagine and think the world in its totality, both actual and possible, both real and imagined, both known and only experienced.

Even in modern times, the historical novel is a quite common type of writing. For historical novels, the mixture of reality and imagination offers great narrative options. This genre was introduced in England in the eighteenth century, through the gothic novels and has undergone several changes and differences in style and strategy. It also brought in serious discussions on time, reality, and partiality. The writers of this genre often addressed topics of war, social and political problems and used all sorts of literary styles, such as realism, modernism, and post-modernism.

History-fiction relationships have always been a key discussion for literary theorists. Fictional representation of history, particularly with writers like Orhan Pamuk, becomes both an artistic and a political practice. Changing historical details in fiction or nonfiction is an important point of discussion. As Lawrence Raw (2012, s. 9) puts it: "despite their claims to the contrary, the majority of historians of the medieval period draw on the kind of evidence that might be termed 'disputable' or 'circumstantial', and have to create their own narratives to make sense of it". The historical novel has always been a favorite subject for literary critics. As Nishevita J. Murthy (2014, s. x) puts it:

The historical novel has expanded in scope to encompass descriptions of the past, war narratives, counterfactuals, and microhistories, romance and children's fiction, metafictional narratives and pastiche, detective novels and novels of intrigue, magical realism, and historical fantasy. Literary conventions like realism, modernism, and then postmodernism, have left their indelible marks on the genre, introducing innovative techniques that influence thematic approaches to the past.

New Historicism is the theory that examines history from a postmodern perspective through literary texts. According to New Historicism, history is not a transfer of facts, but a textual narrative. Therefore, the past may not be real, even if it is based on various concrete documents. The phenomenon of history cannot be considered independent of the person and/or people who convey history. Consequently, the reality of history works and progresses alongside the reality of the text. In this context, "history" consists of interpretable texts. History cannot be abstracted from the historian's point of view and never settles on objective ground. No historical transfer is independent of the period in which it happened. No literary text can be separated from the dominant force of its own period.

New historicists investigate the transitions between cultural documents and their transformation into literature; they ask of a text or part of it not what it means, but how it was integrated. In other words, literary texts do not originate above history, transcending it; they are part of the political, religious and social institutions that form, control, the political, religious and social institutions that form, control, and limit them; they do not exist outside of but within the discourses of power (...) Although they (New historicists) stylize their archaeological work in the past as a dialogue with the dead (Greenblatt), it is not clear how this dialogue is possible without reflecting on the hermeneutical dialectic between past and present (Berghahn, 1992, s. 144-145)

The period in which historical texts were written is also important for the transfer of history. Therefore, whether history is simply based on facts is a matter of debate. The postmodern understanding of history, in this sense, considers history to not fully reflect reality. History is born from one-to-one interactions with language. History develops and progresses through the ages.

Literary language occupies an important place in historical texts. This indicates that history is a textual narrative. In postmodern literature, the expression of history develops from a new theory of historicism focus. According to postmodern theory, both literature and history are narratives. Postmodern literature re-interprets and develops the literature while addressing the historical material. In fact, both historiography and historical novels offer a story into the past to better understand the past.

The understanding of literature that changes with postmodernism deconstructs the historical narrative. It establishes a completely different narrative, apart from the traditional historical narrative. Postmodern historical novels reveal a new story by placing texts that bear the trail of history in the background. What is important here is not the process in the traditional historical narrative. With postmodern theory, states, big names, and places in history lose their meaning. The novelist (or storyteller) modifies the historical figures and reinterprets them. In the postmodern historical narrative, important historical figures have changed, and new fictional figures have been invented.

In the new theory of historicism, "history" is based on the reconstruction of realism. A skeptical perspective lies at the heart of the theory. As Keith Jenkins puts it (2015, s. 23)

Historians have devised ways of working to cut down the influence of the interpreting historian by developing rigorous methods which they have then tried variously to universalise, so that if everyone practised them then a heartland of skills, concepts, routines and procedures could reach towards objectivity. But there are many methodologies; the so-called heartland concepts are of recent and partial construction, and I have argued that the differences that we see are there because history is basically a contested discourse, an embattled terrain wherein people(s), classes and groups autobiographically construct interpretations of the past literally to please themselves.

The realism of novels following the New Historicist approach is open to question, and there is no exact clarity in those novels. Everything may be corrupt, altered and/or renewed. Events in the novel may not develop in a logical framework. It proceeds in its own fiction, perhaps with a phenomenon that can be called absurd. In such novels, history is divided into smaller time periods and is described as such. Postmodernism destroys both traditional novel and the historical narrative. It combines the two to create a completely different form/genre.

According to the New Historicism, history is a narrative. The transfer of historical realities takes place through the texts, and we reach these realities only through the texts. The New Historians emphasize the textuality of history based on the fact that the most powerful source of historians is text. Derrida's claim, "There is nothing other than text" is the focus of this theory. New Historians see historical narratives as a series of verbal constructs:

Because history is written by historians, it is best understood as a cultural product existing within society, and as a part of the historical process, rather than an objective methodology and commentary outside of society. This brings us to the fourth key question – posed by White along with Collingwood, and more recently by Louis Mink and Arthur Danto – what is the significance of narrative in generating historical knowledge, and what is its relationship to the previous three questions? But, first of all, what do we mean when we talk of historical narrative? The modernist empiricist historical method handed down from the nineteenth century requires and assumes historical explanation will emerge in a naturalistic fashion from the archival raw data, its meaning offered as interpretation in the form of a story related explicitly, impersonally, transparently, and without resort to any of the devices used by writers of literary narratives, viz., imagery or figurative language. Style is deliberately expunged as an issue, or relegated to a minor problem of presentation. This vision of the history as a practice fails to acknowledge the difficulties in reading the pre-existing narrative constituted as evidence, or the problems of writing up the past. (Munslow, 2006: 12)

Due to the nature of written texts, historical documents are subject to a number of interventions, whether involuntary or involuntary, by their author. In addition to seeing history as a text, the new historians also mention the need to consider and examine non-historical texts written in a certain period together with historical texts. Literature, according to the New Historicism, is exactly the representation of history. This perspective clarifies the dynamic relationship between literature and history and sees literary texts as documents that contribute to the establishment of history. They see literary texts as vivid testimonies of the period they dealt with. These texts not only mirror the cultural atmosphere of the era but also affect the readers' world after many years. In addition to seeing literature as a concept that exchanges with culture, it is underlined that literature should be seen as a key to analyze the culture. From this point of view, literature is considered a social focus of power. For the new historicist researcher, there is no difference between a deed record, a covenant, an edict, a novel and a diary.

About the Novel

The White Castle is a historical novel in which Orhan Pamuk used postmodernist techniques. *The White Castle* is one of the most important examples of postmodern Turkish literature. Pamuk constructed *The White Castle* using features such as metafiction, parody, pastiche, and intertextuality, which are important literary forms used in postmodern novels. The novel begins in the second half of the 1600s during the reign of IV. Mehmet. Meanwhile, a Venetian ship was captured by the Turks and the people inside the ship were taken captive. One of the Venetian slaves had a knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and engineering. This slave then became a doctor in the dungeon where he was kept and was thus noticed by a pasha. He healed the pasha's disease and then the pasha introduced him to Hoja. At that time pasha was planning a wedding and asked the Venetian slave to make fireworks for this wedding. This event leads to the crossing of the paths of the two main protagonists who lead the course of the novel.

A month later when I was called for, again in the middle of the night, the pasha was up on his feet in good spirits. I was relieved to hear him draw breath easily as he scolded a few people. He was glad to see me, said his illness was cured, that I was a good doctor. What favor did I ask of him? I knew he would not immediately free me and send me home. So I complained of my cell, of the prison; explained I was being worn out pointlessly with heavy labor when I could be more useful if I were occupied with astronomy and medicine. I don't know how much of it he listened to. The guards took a lion's share of the purse full of money he gave me. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 19)

The pasha asked the Venetian slave to change his religion, but he refused to change it at the cost of his life. Then the Venetian slave, who refused to become a Muslim despite all the difficulties, was given to Hoja as a gift. The Hoja is also engaged in science and astronomy.

Three days later, the pasha called for me again. This time he was in a good mood. I had reached no decision, being unable to decide whether changing my religion would help me to escape or not. The pasha asked for my thoughts and said he himself would arrange for me to marry a beautiful girl here. In a sudden moment of courage, I said I would not change my religion, and the pasha, surprised, called me a fool. After all, there was no one around me whom I would be ashamed to tell I had become a Muslim. Then he talked for a while about the precepts of Islam. When he had finished, he sent me back to my cell. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 29)

He now became Hoja's slave. The aim of Hoja is to benefit from the knowledge of his slave. They mainly talked about western science and astronomy. They told the pasha that they were working in the field of astronomy. Pasha welcomed this situation and promised that he would bring the Hoja to the Sultan one day. The Sultan is still a child, so the Hoja organized his astronomical research in a way that a child could understand. The child Sultan starts to ask questions about his beloved animals, especially his lion, after listening to what the Hoja tells him. Hoja answers these questions with the idea of influencing him.

One day, Hoja brought the news that the plague spread in the city. Although the Venetian slave did not want to believe this news, he started to get scared when he found out that there was plague in the city. One day, the Hoja showed the Venetian slave a boil in his belly. The Venetian slave was terrified. Hoja was anxious of this boil but acted as if he was not afraid. He asked the Venetian slave if the boil was a sign of plague. But he could not touch the boil out of fear, nor could he give any answer. For the Venetian slave, the days after that would be a nightmare. Then he thought that he had to run away from this house and flee to Heybeliada. Here he worked with a fisherman and started to make a living.

Plague had broken out in the city! Since he said this as if speaking of some other, far away place, not of Istanbul, I didn't believe it at first; I asked how he'd heard the news, I wanted to know everything. The number of sudden death was rising for no apparent reason, presumably caused by some disease. I asked what the signs of illness were-perhaps it wasn't plague after all. Hoja laughed at me: I shouldn't worry, if I caught it I'd know beyond any doubt, a person had only three days of fever in which to find out. Some had swellings behind their ears, some under their armpits, on their bellies, buboes developed, then a fever took over; sometimes the boils burst, sometimes blood spewed from the lungs, there were those who died coughing violently like consumptives .. He added that people from every district were dying in threes and fives. Anxious, I asked about our own neighbourhood. Hadn't I heard? A bricklayer who quarreled with all the neighbours because their chickens were getting in through his wall, had died screaming with fever just one week ago. Only now did everyone realize that he'd died of the plague. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 71)

One day, while lying in the vineyard, the Venetian slave saw the Hoja, but the Hoja was not angry with him. The Sultan asked them to stop the plague in the city, so the Hoja needed the help of The Venetian slave. The Venetian slave returned home, and they quickly started working. As a result of their statistics and various measures they took, they gave the Sultan an estimate of when the plague would leave the city. Despite all the opposing views, the death toll decreased every day and the plague epidemic lost its effect on the date they claimed. The Hoja and the Venetian Slave now gained the Sultan's trust.

The Sultan then asked Hoja to make a weapon that would bring the enemies to their knees. Venetian slave reported this situation with the following words: “the Sultan ordered us to start work on that incredible weapon. We were bewildered by his command and could never decide how far our success was due to this book” (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 110). Meanwhile, the Hoja rarely visited the palace. Instead, the Venetian slave went to the palace. From time to time, he chatted with the Sultan and said strange and confusing words, such as the fact that he had many similarities with the Hoja. Four years went by like this. The Venetian slave often took part in the festivities at the palace. Hoja made his weapon during this time and waited for the Sultan to return from his expedition to present this weapon. The Sultan returned and ordered the use of the weapon made by Hoja in preparation for a new expedition. In the expedition, many people thought that this great machine was slowing down the army. When Hoja arrived in one of the Christian villages, he forced an old man to confess his sins accompanied by an interpreter. The old man confessed because of the pressure, but the Hoja thought that it was a lie, he was not satisfied. The Hoja forced whoever he found to confess his sins in the following days. He tortured some of them for not telling the truth, but later regretted his actions and felt remorse at night. This went on for days and they were now approaching the place where they would take the castle, which was the purpose of the expedition.

It was time to test this weapon. Men were placed in the gun and the gun was directed towards the target. That evening, they called Hoja to the Sultan's tent. Hoja did not come for a long time, and during this period, the Venetian slave thought that they had already killed Hoja and that soon they would come to take his life. In the morning, the teacher came and told the Venetian slave about his old life. These two people, who were very similar to each other, decided to replace each other. First, they exchanged their clothes. The Venetian slave gave Hoja his ring and the medallion he managed to hide from him for years. Then he went out of the tent, quietly, slowly disappeared. Years later, the Venetian slave fled to Gebze long before the Sultan was deposed. He then had a lot of money, a house like in Italy, his wife and four children, now he is seventy years old.

One day an old man came to the house of the Venetian slave. The man said that he was writing imaginary things. This man awoke strange feelings in the Venetian slave. This man slept in his house and during the night, they told each other about their experiences and after sharing these memories, the old man left the house. After the old man left, the Venetian slave decided to finish his book. Then he saw a rider and realized that this man was coming to his home. This man spoke Italian first, but then spoke Turkish. This rider told that Hoja wrote a lot of books, became rich, and even married the ex-fiancé of the Venetian slave and moved to his home. He said that his new book is entitled "A Turk of My Acquaintance". Upon this, the slave said that he wrote a book about Hoja, and this rider started to read this book. While reading, the man got confused.

The White Castle: A New Historicist Approach

In *The White Castle*, history is used as a background motif. Although a bridge has been established between fiction and traditional historical narration, the narrated story does not correspond exactly to historical facts. The readers do not question the reality of the narrated history in these novels. The fact that it is unclear what is real and what is fiction is one of the important features of the novels written with the New Historicist approach.

In the novel, Faruk Darvinoğlu describes how he rewrites the story called “quilter’s stepson” and how he links the story with current events, and in a way, he problematizes the extent to which the story overlaps with historical realism. The reader doubts whether the text is based on a historical document or on events constructed by Faruk, shaking the perception of reality in the reader's mind. In *Other Colours*, Pamuk refers to *The White Castle* and says:

I am still not sure if it was the Italian slave or the Ottoman master who wrote the manuscript of *The White Castle*. When writing it, I decided to use the closeness I felt to Faruk, the historian in *The Silent House*, to safeguard against certain technical problems (Pamuk, *Other Colours*: 371-372).

Thus, the author once again states that he places more importance on fiction than historical reality. New Historicists argue that historical objectivity can never be possible, as they see history as a product of man's actions. Because they approach history in this way, they doubt its authenticity. Darvinoğlu's words "because my suspicion of history still lingers" reflect the New Historicists' view of history. As a historian, Faruk Darvinoğlu, by focusing on the historical dimension of the story called "Quilter's Step Son" in the archive of the Gebze District Governorate, discovers the history of the story that does not match the reality.

In postmodern historical novels, there is an understanding based on a factual historical reality and re-establishing it with phony elements. Acting according to this understanding, authors play with historical realities and create a fictional realm. The novelist, who deals with historical reality, deals with the uncertain and hidden aspect of history, not the apparent issues of history. Orhan Pamuk re-blended current issues, historical events, and people from different periods in *The White Castle*. By using his imagination, the author synthesizes historical space, events and fictional space and people, and reproduces historical reality.

The White Castle is about the encounter of Western and Eastern cultures. *The White Castle* begins with the collision of the West and the East. As an example of the concrete conflict of the two cultures in the work, we can talk about the collision of warships. Thus, it is possible to talk about collisions in three different dimensions: West-East, Venetian-Hoja and warships. This collision trilogy is a reflection of Orhan Pamuk's imaginative style, which dominates the whole of the work. Initially, the collision of Warships symbolizes the collision of two cultures. Later on, the death-survival race of the ships is the race to determine which culture will dominate one another. In other words, it symbolizes a life taking place in the concrete world, such as the race of ships, but also an abstract concept such as sovereignty.

The White Castle consists of an introduction, the eleven chapters that follow, and an epilogue. It is noticeable from the introduction that history is used as a motif in *The White Castle*. Orhan Pamuk expresses his ideas about history through the words of his character Faruk Darvinoğlu, who says he found the manuscripts of an Italian slave. The phenomenon of "looking at history with suspicion" underlying the new historicalist approach is also at the center of *The White Castle*. Faruk Darvinoğlu's approach to history, finding the manuscript texts of the Italian slave and revealing them, is conveyed as follows:

At first I didn't quite know what I would do with the book, other than to read it over and over again. My distrust of history then was still strong, and I wanted to concentrate on the story for its own sake, rather than on the manuscript's scientific, cultural, anthropological, or 'historical' value. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 9)

This skeptical approach of Faruk Darvinoğlu regarding history also leads the reader to ask various questions. Are the manuscripts found by Faruk Darvinoğlu real or fake? The reader does not know this, but he becomes interested in the story itself. Faruk Darvinoğlu also notices the unreal history in the manuscripts he finds. The historical events quoted in the manuscripts do not match the actual historical events. However, the important questions to be asked here are: What is the truth? Can it be fully known and transferred? As can be understood from Darvinoğlu's skeptical approach, this is not possible. Darvinoğlu, who does not refrain from thinking about the problem of how to write history, nevertheless cannot break with the line of the traditional narrative of history:

When I consulted the basic sources for the period, I saw right away that some events described in the story bore little resemblance to fact: for example, I confirmed that at one point during the five years Koprulu served as Grand Vizier a great fire had ravaged Istanbul, but there was no evidence at all of an

outbreak of disease worth recording, let alone of a widespread plague like the one in the book. Some of the names of viziers of the period had been misspelled, some were confused with one another, some had even been changed. The names of imperial astrologers did not match those in the palace records, but since I thought this discrepancy had a special place in the story I didn't dwell upon it. On the other hand, our 'knowledge' of history generally verified the events in the book. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 10).

It is understood from these sentences that Faruk Darvinoğlu quoted in the preface of the novel that there may be two different histories. These are, as we have said all along, the first is “the history that happened,” that is, the events that actually happened that we do not know about, and the second is “the history that was transmitted,” that is, the history that actually happened, which is recorded but cannot be isolated from the subjective attitude of the person who went on the record. The accuracy of our knowledge of history is as much as it was written in the sources we read that period. This is the starting point of the questions asked by the new historicist approach on truth. *The White Castle* is a novel in which an understanding of historical reality is broken and/or lost. The story of the novel, as can be understood from the Sultan's special interest in hunting, passes during the reign of IV. Mehmet. The general events of that period are partly described in the manuscripts of the Italian slave. Some of the narratives do not coincide with that period. Within the novel's fiction, some periods intertwine and mingle. The fact that the plague epidemic that took place in Istanbul did not occur in the same period, but the fact that these events were mixed together in manuscripts, hinders the reality of the historical narrative. All these reasons show that the place where the *White Castle*'s showdown with “history” is seen most clearly is the first part of the book with the title “Introduction”.

In *The White Castle*, one of the important events that broke the traditional narrative of history is the author's approach to the Sultan of the period. Mehmet IV did not play an active role in state politics during the first period of his Sultanate, as he was a child at the throne. Orhan Pamuk is obviously aware of this situation, and uses the term “child Sultan” for the Sultan of that period. The approach of the Hoja character toward the Sultan does not fit the traditional understanding of history. In the traditional narrative of history, Sultans are often described as strong, intelligent and brave, but for the Sultan mentioned in the *White Castle*, the Italian slave says:

He listened with obvious pleasure to the stories I remembered about frogs and when I came to the part about the princess kissing the frog, he gagged and made a sour face, but still did not resemble the foolish adolescent Hoja had described. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*: 114)

These words show how Hoja saw the Sultan. Many other examples also show us the weaknesses of the Sultan. The Sultan in the novel is a person who can easily be influenced by others, someone who does not realize the events that are going on around him. The writer does not hesitate to show such weaknesses of the Sultan. From time to time, the Sultan who speaks publicly and uses simple sentences. “Let us see this incredible weapon that will ruin our enemies” (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 111). This contradicts the Sultan's powerful and intelligent image in traditional historical narratives. This situation sometimes goes so far that the Sultan is even portrayed as a stupid character:

Things had gone well. The story we invented had affected the Sultan deeply. His mind accepted the idea that the plague was like a devil trying to deceive him by taking on human form; he decided not to allow strangers into the palace; comings and goings were kept under strict supervision (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 92).

One of the important features of the New Historicist theory is that it deals with the invisible side of history. This invisible aspect of history goes beyond the major heroes and the great wars and struggles, and instead focuses on ordinary people and their lives.

The story of *The White Castle* is actually the story of the Italian slave and the Hoja he met afterwards. These are two people who have a relationship with pashas and the Sultan, but

apart from this high-level bureaucratic relationship network, they also have their own personal lives. In *The White Castle*, the Sultan and the palace surroundings are found only as a motif in the background of the novel. The first observations after the Italian slave was taken captive go beyond the traditional narrative of history. Ottoman historians talk about their tolerant attitude towards non-Muslim people in the lands religion of the people conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Supposedly, conquered people were free to live their beliefs as they wished. However, the story of the Italian slave contradicts this historical narrative in two ways. The first is the Ottoman attitude towards the prisoners. As the slave puts it:

Before bringing us before Sultan they put us in chains, made our soldiers wear their armour back to front in ridicule, put iron hoops around the necks of our officers, and blasting away on the horns and trumpets they have taken from our ship, raucously, triumphantly, brought us to the palace. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 16).

The Ottoman attitude described by the slave here is too harsh and intolerant to be included in any of the official historical narratives. This example, where the dichotomy in the transfer of history can be seen, it is similar to the difference of viewpoint between "occupation-conquest" and the historical events cannot be conveyed independently from the views of those living and transmitting the event. History is never objective, as every historian interprets history through his own experience. This understanding is the basis of the postmodern theory of history.

The second point is the attitude of the Ottomans on religion. In traditional historical narratives, the Ottomans did not interfere with the religious beliefs of the people. In the novel, however, there is pressure on the Italian slave. The pasha, constantly tries to persuade the slave to change religion. This situation sometimes exceeds the persuasion dimension and includes pressure and threats:

The pasha asked for my thoughts and said he himself would arrange for me to marry a beautiful girl here. In a sudden moment of courage, I said I would not change my religion, and the pasha, surprised, called me a fool. After all, there was no one around me whom I would be ashamed to tell I had become a Muslim. Then he talked for a while about the precepts of Islam. When he had finished, he sent me back to my cell. (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 29).

As seen in the above quotation, the slave was forced to change religion in some way by the pasha. However, he does not accept it. At least he hesitates to accept it. Changing religion for the slave, whose freedom was taken away, can also be a door to the old days. The understanding of tolerance policy applied against non-Muslims in Ottoman history is contradicted by this statement by the slave. Here, another aspect of history, the invisible face, is revealed.

We can say that there are people in different spatial and temporal dimensions in *The White Castle*. Orhan Pamuk emphasized Venetian slave and Hoja, who are fictional heroes rather than historical figures. We can evaluate this attitude of Pamuk in accordance with postmodern historical novel writing that he attaches importance to fiction rather than historical reality.

Looking on the Characters in the Novel in Terms of New Historicism

The Venetian slave, a Western character, who is one of the leading figures of the novel, acquires the characteristics of Eastern culture with his relationship with Hoja and ultimately his replacement with him, although he has only a physical resemblance to Hoja at the beginning of the story, and turns into a hero carrying the West-East synthesis.

In the novel, when it is mentioned about the Venetian slave's family in Empoli and his happy childhood days there, there are more fictional stories than historical facts. He told: "I imagined and relived the good and the bad experiences I'd had before I became a slave, and in the end I realized I had enjoyed the exercise" (Pamuk, *The White Castle*, s. 61). This sentence

is an indication that what the Venetian slave tells is fiction rather than reality. In this context, the author has left it unclear what is real and what is fictional. *The White Castle* is a novel that overlaps with postmodern literature that problematizes the perception of reality.

In the novel, the hero referred to as the ‘child Sultan’ is actually one of the Ottoman Sultans who ruled in the seventeenth century. He is IV. Mehmet. In this novel, IV. Mehmet is given a different dimension by the author in a fictional realm. Accordingly, a portrait suitable for the postmodern historical novel, in which historical facts and fictional elements are blended, emerges. In the novel, the inexperience of the child Sultan is described ironically. We see that the child Sultan perceives political and scientific issues as a game due to his age. In the novel, the Sultan's inability to use the administrative power and the curiosity of hunting were highlighted, and the political issues of the 17th century of the Ottoman were also addressed and the panorama of the period was drawn in a humorous style. In accordance with the postmodern historical novel understanding, *The White Castle* described the weaknesses and passions of the Sultan in an exaggerated and ironic way.

One of the historical heroes of *The White Castle* is Evliya Çelebi, who lived in the 17th century and wrote the famous work named *Seyahatname*. While writing the novel, the author both benefited from the work of Evliya Çelebi and also included Evliya Çelebi in his novel. Evliya Çelebi wants to include Italy in his ten-volume *Seyahatname* that he is about to finish so he comes to visit the Venetian slave and asks for help from the Venetian Slave, whom he knows as Hoja. Evliya Çelebi writes a fictional Italy trip based on the Italian stories told by the Venetian Slave, whom he thought was Hoja. According to various sources, Evliya Çelebi wrote his *Seyahatname* by including the places he had visited and seen, as well as places where he had hearsay information. Pamuk carried this known reality to the fictional world of the novel. Postmodern literature and New Historians are skeptical of the reality of all written texts. The writer problematizes the criterion of reflecting the truth of written texts by referring to *Seyahatname* whose objectivity and validity are discussed.

Conclusion

The new historicism, a movement that has existed since the 1980s, fundamentally undermines the traditional meaning of the concept of history with its arguments and gives history a different dimension. This change in the perception of history also manifests itself in the field of literature. In the writing of historical novels, the way in which history is handled in contexts such as event, character, time, place and narrative technique changed, and the historical novel has gained a different impetus.

New Historians do not see "history" as the only fact that must be accepted by everyone. Historical events also create “historical texts” open to interpretation since different explanations can be made as a result of subjective interpretations. Historical novels written with the understanding of history, which consists of a chain of events that explain each other in a cause-and-effect relation of the Modernist perspective, have a difference in postmodern literature. Postmodern historical novels are texts written in the new world reality with an understanding of history that describes changing circumstances, facts and events by coding them together with related elements within its system, in short by redesigning itself. Orhan Pamuk's novel *The White Castle* is also a novel written within the framework of this understanding.

New Historicism is a theory that examines literary texts, especially postmodern novels, as an extension of postmodernism and postmodern historical theory. There are many novels in literary history that have the same "history" narrative. Some of these novels convey history as it is, while others touch upon invisible aspects of history. On the other hand, the theory that history is a fictional story like literary texts has been accepted by many authorities working in

this field. New Historicism allows novels to be examined from this perspective. Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The White Castle*, is a work written from this perspective, approaching history with suspicion, and focusing on the question of what is real and true. Orhan Pamuk has displaced the traditional historical narrative in *The White Castle* and presented a different narrative by reinterpreting it.

In *The White Castle*, built with postmodern narrative techniques, the problematization of historical realism in terms of both content and form is similar to the way New historicists evaluate historical reality.

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