

**LANGUAGE OF BELONGING VS. LANGUAGE OF INQUIRY:
PAMUK'S *SNOW* AND ITS IDENTITIES IN FLUX****Hüseyin Ekrem ULUS*****ABSTRACT**

Snow must have a peculiar place within Orhan Pamuk's bibliography due to two obvious reasons: the first is the novel's courageous attempt to depict some of the deep and underlying socio-political problems through some deliberately provocative characters with challenging arguments. The next reason, in a strong connection with the first, is the variety of the reactions to *Snow*, most of which erroneously read the novel symbolically or allegorically. I argue that *Snow*, as a novel that questions and challenges dichotomies of identity, does not lend itself to any symbolic or allegorical reading. On the contrary, the novel first contrasts the parts of seemingly irreconcilable dichotomies, and then turns each part into its opposite through its complex plot structure. This becomes the novel's way of questioning and challenging boundaries based on any narrative of unitary collective identity.

Keywords: Identity, belonging, dichotomies, flux, language.

**AİDİYET DİLİNE KARŞI SORGULAMANIN DİLİ: PAMUK'UN
KAR ROMANI VE AKIŞ HALİNDEKİ KİMLİKLER****ÖZET**

Kar romanı hem derin sosyo-politik problemleri özellikle kışkırtıcı karakterler ve kurgular aracılığıyla anlatmasından hem de bununla bağlantılı olarak sıklıkla yanlış bir şekilde sembolik-alegorik bir metin olarak okunmasından dolayı Orhan Pamuk'un eserleri arasında özel bir konuma sahiptir. Roman, toplumsal kimliklerle ilişkili olan dikotomilere son derece eleştirel şekilde yaklaşarak, bu dikotomilerin uzlaşmaz gibi görünen parçalarını kurgu aracılığıyla birbirlerine dönüştürmektedir. Böylece *Kar* toplumsal kimliklerin sınırlarını hem sorgular hem de o sınırları edebi düzlemde yok eder, böylece roman sembolik veya alegorik bir okumaya imkân tanımaz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik, aidiyet, dikotomiler, akış, dil.

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Here, perhaps, we arrived at the heart of our story. How much can we ever know about the love and pain in another's heart? How much can we hope to understand those who have suffered deeper anguish, greater deprivation, and more crushing disappointments than we ourselves have known? Even if the world's rich and powerful were to put themselves in the shoes of the rest, how much would they really understand the wretched millions around them? So it is when Orhan the novelist peers into the dark corners of his poet friend's difficult and painful life: How much can he really see?

(Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 259)

INTRODUCTION

Following the translation of *Snow* into English in 2004, the novel soon became popular and attracted the attention of the critics all over the world. As *Snow* focuses on the problematic relationships of East and West or fundamentalism and secularism, many critics centered their criticism on the clash between "Islamists and secularists" (Von Heyking, 2006, p. 73), or on "non-democratic suppression of Islam" (Coury, 2009, p. 348), and some academics placed the novel as "the unofficial interpreter of Islam for the American public" (Seyhan, 2009), or others misleadingly claimed *Snow* "is a very personal religious experiment by an author who wishes he could hear the divine" (Pederson, 2013, p. 136). Even though this conflict of religion is one of the key themes in the work, the novel reveals more than that. I argue that Pamuk's postmodern political novel *Snow* is a cultural critique of the Turkish modernity project. As this paper will try to show, carefully placed dualities/dichotomies serve as instruments through which identities of the individuals and the country are questioned and challenged through the microcosm of Kars.

The story opens with the trip of poet Ka¹ from Istanbul to Kars, "the poorest, most overlooked corner of Turkey" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 18). During this travel, narrator Orhan informs us that Ka had lived in Germany for twelve years as a political exile following the coup d'état in Turkey, which hints that he is one of the representatives of the Turkish cultural elite with a politically leftist tendency. His reason for leaving cosmopolitan and mild Istanbul for geographically remote and meteorologically freezing Kars is to

¹ Ka is the abbreviation for Kerim Alakuşoğlu. For the allusion to Kafka.

write a report for a newspaper² on the recent consecutive suicides of several young girls in this eastern city of Turkey. While this constitutes one layer of the story, on another layer we learn about Ka's emotional plight; in fact, the underlying reason of the trip is Ka's desire to marry his old love from his college days in Istanbul, Ipek.

Even though Ka is going to fail in all of his attempts in Kars, from his arrival until his departure by force, he meets several interesting characters which embody the dichotomies this paper tries to uncover; ex-leftist-now-Islamist Muhtar, Muslim fundamentalist Blue, charismatic sheik Saadettin Efendi; Hande and Kadife whom Ka sarcastically calls "Islamic feminists" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 241) and the young naive Muslim students Necip and Fazil. However, one of the most striking characters Ka is introduced to in Kars is the actor Sunay Zaim who is on a tour with his actress wife and other friends. In his self-characterization, Sunay is a strict defender of the Republic, who had previously portrayed great revolutionary figures such as Robespierre, Lenin or Napoleon. As the embodiment of Jacobinism, Sunay makes use of the heavy snow, blocked roads and railways and acts out a revolutionary play, during which he shoots at the *ignorant* audience (Pamuk, *Snow*, p.204) and even kills some. With the support of a retired military officer and soldiers under his command, Sunay turns his stage act into reality, and seizes control of the administration of the city until the roads are cleared of heavy snow and the state's armed forces intervene.

Until being forcefully ejected from Kars, Ka witnesses the complicated and paranoid intelligence system of the state, its persecuting agents, and the state's intervention in local politics by way of its security forces. After Ka returns to Germany to spend his last five years as an alienated soul, narrator Orhan implies that Ka is killed by Islamist militants, his poems being forever lost.

DICHOTOMIES IN FLUX

The characters and the conflicts in *Snow* are all constituents of dichotomies through which Pamuk criticizes the modernity project along with its negative consequences. These dualities, which are all interconnected, might be listed as: east-west (on two levels: Germany - Istanbul; Istanbul - Kars); Turks-others (Kurdish, Armenian, etc); intellectual-philistine; male-female; individualism-collectivism; pious-atheist, fiction-fact; past-present, liberalism-Jacobinism; the ruler-the ruled and elite-people.

² Cumhuriyet (The Republican) is a newspaper associated with Kemalist ideology. The allusion is no coincidence.

With narrator Orhan, we learn that this is not Ka's first visit to Kars. Through a comparison of these two visits, he presents to the readers a vivid comparison of the old and the new; or, perhaps better said, of past and present. In this second visit, Ka finds the city "much poorer and sadder" compared to the past (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 6). Readers are frequently reminded how historically cosmopolitan and culturally rich the city of Kars used to be. The names of the societies which had left marks in the city are mentioned here and there in the novel. For instance, the *Snow Palace Hotel* where Ka resides is a Russian building erected in the previous century (Pamuk, *Snow*, p.7), or the "empty³ thousand year old Armenian church" (*Snow*, 9), or "the old stone buildings that once belonged to wealthy Russians and Armenians" have now mostly turned to the government offices (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 11). The entire cultural heritage seems to have vanished leaving only some "empty" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 9) and "decrepit" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 11) buildings behind.

Seeing that "gone now are all the Armenians, Russians, Ottomans and Early Republican Turks who made this city a modest centre of civilization; and no one had come to replace them" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 135), the narrator urges the readers to ask a couple of elementary questions: in spite of all the physical evidence of such historical richness, why can't one find any reflections of this grandeur in the cultural and intellectual domains? What happened after "Early Republican Turks"? At this point, we learn that the city somehow lost its connections to its past and some new identities ripened. In a conversation with Ka, Serdar Bey explains the reason:

In the old days, we were all brothers... he spoke as if betraying a secret. But in the last few years, everyone started saying, 'I'm an Azeri', 'I'm a Kurd', 'I'm a Terekemian'. Of course, we have people here from all nations. The Kurds, whom we prefer to think of as a tribe, in the old days didn't even know they were Kurds. And it was that way through the Ottoman period; none of the people who chose to stay went around beating their chests and crying 'We're the Ottomans' The Turkmens, the Posof Laz, the Germans who had been exiled by the Tsar—we had them all, but none took pride in proclaiming themselves different... Now everyone is prouder—and poorer" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 26).

This quotation is important because it reveals both the change in the demographic composition of the city and the understanding of identity.

³ The word is missing in the translation. I have inserted the word "empty".

According to this passage, the ethnic identities claimed by characters with a strong feeling of belonging have never been as significant as they are now. As this essay will also discuss, the gradual domains' solidifying of ethnicity is related to one of the main themes of the novel, the dichotomy of individuality-collectivism. The policies based on such a policy undermine individualism. Also, this quotation establishes a negative correlation between the rise of ethnic policies and the welfare of the city.

On the other hand, in opposition to Ka's or narrator Orhan's (who are indeed double characters) persistent investigation of the rich (but lost) history and connections to former societies/cultures in Kars, this is never an issue for any other character in *Snow*. No matter how immersed they are in politics, none of the remaining characters contemplate the past or history. In other words, the connection of the city of Kars to its history is not based on remembering, rather, in contrast, the characters are all so immersed in *now* that it is as if each of them suffers from amnesia. The metaphor of snow, among its several uses in the novel, now functions to cover, hide, close and even erase: "it was as if everything had been erased, or lost beneath the snow" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 6).

On the other hand, apart from the dichotomy of past-present, one of the strongest tensions in *Snow* stems from the dichotomy of 'east vs. west'. In fact, this term does not denote clear-cut differences between two geographical areas or political standpoints. Rather, east-west dichotomy in *Snow* is the by-product of characters' prejudices about the others or the outsiders. The identities are almost always defined in relation -and in strong opposition- to *the others*, who are perceived with either suspicion or hatred: "It was Serdar Bey who was first to ask him the question he would hear again hundreds of times during his three-day stay: Welcome to our border city sir. But why are you here?" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p.10) After narrator Orhan comes to Kars to follow the footsteps of his close friend Ka, he is told that "No one here (in Kars) likes Ka" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 432).

To be able to understand the reason for the miscommunication, suspicion and strong animosity between the parties, we need to take a closer look into the characterization style of the novel. There are several characters in *Snow* which are, in some way, representatives of certain political, cultural or social groups. Namely; fundamentalist Blue with a record of violence, moderate Islamist Muhtar pushing his way into politics, Jacobin Sunay, and naive Muslims Necip and Fazıl might be given as some examples. Some critics put forward that Pamuk's *Snow* is open to an allegorical reading (Erol, 2007, p. 419). In fact, the text contains several hints to support this idea, as it is very easy to find counterparts to these characters in the recent political and social history of Turkey. However, as we will discuss, Pamuk's style of characterization do not permit such a reading.

Ka is portrayed as a model of western man: he grows up in one of the “safe”⁴ houses in *Nişantaşı*, an elite neighborhood of Istanbul (*Snow*, 9) “in a secular, republican family” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 19) “with middle class comforts” (18); he studies western literature in his youth (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 16), his family writes poetry; he has a distance from religion and his life is never far from politics.

Having explained how Kars views Ka with suspicion and dislike, now we can take a closer look at the peculiar way Ka sees and treats the characters of eastern origin in Kars. Ever since Ka starts his trip to Kars and meets a local person complaining about the deep problems in his life, he enjoys “the fleeting pleasure of empathizing with someone weaker than himself” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 6). He even feels “pity”⁵ for this eastern man, which somehow gives him a feeling of safety (Pamuk, *Kar*, p. 12; *Snow*, p. 6). What is more, this feeling of pity of Ka is not something momentary; it comes to him very often as he meets more people in Kars and we learn this in his stream of consciousness: “If the roads had not been closed, he would have jumped on the next bus out of Kars. He felt *a pang of despair* (pity)⁶ for this failing city and its forgotten people” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 35).

⁴ Mistranslation. English translation uses the word “sturdy”, whereas the original text uses the adjective “güvenli”, meaning “safe” to describe not only the house but also the neighborhood (15). Pamuk alludes to the economic, social and political sterility of the neighborhood where Ka grew up. Translation misses it and refers only to physical strength of the building.

⁵ Maureen Freely, the successful translator of *Snow*, seems to have mistranslated a sentence which is, by chance, very influential on the overall meaning of the work. On page 12, the original work of Pamuk goes as “Böyle zamanlarda dünyaya, acıma ve sevgi duyduğu adamın gözüyle bakmaya çalışırdı.” In Freely’s translation, this sentence on page 6 is as follows: “He remembered trying to see the world through the eyes of a man who could feel love and compassion”, whereas the correct translation should have been “In those times, he would always try to see the world through the eyes of this man for whom he felt pity and love”.

The original Turkish text clearly expresses how (western) Ka feels pity for the eastern man he meets on the bus, which (in Pamuk’s view) is a classic example of the problematic way the cultural elite views and contacts the others, as he bases the relationship upon the dichotomy of superiority - inferiority. The translation (and hence the English language reader) misses the whole point. I have checked the later editions, the mistranslation is still there.

⁶ Once again, Freely’s misinterpretation of the phrase shown in italics loses the original meaning and the chain of logic. The original sentence is “Kars şehrinin akşamüstlerine ve unutulmuş insanlarına derin bir acıma duydu” (*Kar*, 40). The mot à mot translation must be “He felt a deep pity for the failings of the city and its forgotten people”. Pamuk’s *Kar* in Turkish uses the verb “acımak” (pity), which is

In his conversation with the narrator Orhan, young Muslim student Fazıl, who is one of the residents of Kars, complains about this peculiar feeling of being pitied by the people of West:

I don't want you to put me into a novel. Because you don't even know me. Even if you got into know me as I am, your Western readers would be so caught up in *pitying*⁷ me for being poor that they wouldn't have a chance to see my life (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 419).

Then, both Ka and Fazıl, the western and the eastern, are clearly self-aware about their knotty and problematic relationship. The recurrent feeling of pity is the indication of the alleged-superiority of the western subject over his *other*.

In time, this superiority complex becomes more and more visible: Ka feels "so happy that he could also admit that his peace derived in part from the easy sense of superiority he possessed from knowing he was from Istanbul and Frankfurt (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 312). Being from the west (both from Istanbul and Frankfurt) now becomes the sole reason Ka depends on to place himself in a higher position. This is one way that Pamuk criticizes the Turkish cultural elite class and the modernity project, as the project places itself above the individual citizens. Indeed, the novel foreshadows this conflict with the epigraph of Dostoevsky⁸: "Well, then, eliminate the people, curtail them, force them to be silent. Because European Enlightenment is more important than people". Pamuk poses this baffling *up-down relationship* as the main reason of miscommunication, because occupying the superior role and making the other subordinate, in Pamuk's view, is a source of problem.

In this dichotomy of east and west, if there is a relationship of superiority-inferiority between the center and the margin, it is clear that the western subject consciously places himself above the others. However, how do the characters of eastern origin respond to that? On the conscious level, most of these characters reject the values of the west: in the political statement meeting in chapter 31, Blue says "I couldn't care less about your

totally different than "despair". Novel's repetitious use of this word displays Ka's relation to the others, but the translation falls short of grabbing this significant detail.

⁷ The quotation shows that Pamuk uses this exact word deliberately. This time, translation uses the right word (pity) for the Turkish verb "acımak" (Kar 412). In the previous uses of the same word and in the same meaning, Freely translates them as "compassion" or "despair". Neither of the words can give the true meaning.

⁸ *Notebooks for the Karamazov Brothers*.

European masters... All I want to do is step out of their shadow. But the truth is, we all live under a shadow” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 280).

However, the text also shows that the characters of eastern origin in *Snow* subconsciously accept the position of inferiority. In the conversation with Ka over the completion of the political statement (which is never to be published), Fazıl smilingly tells Ka “this was the first time it ever occurred to me that our small city might one day have a role to play in world history” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 277). The inferiority complex and (sub)conscious submission are interwoven with the state of unproductivity of Kars/the east. Fazıl is not the only example; in spite of his respected background of a university education in Istanbul, Muhtar shares the same mood with Fazıl: he always feels “guilt and spiritual agony... at the misery and stupidity of his country” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 67).

Let me return to the issue I raised above. Is an allegorical reading of *Snow* possible? To do so, I will first define the allegory and allegorical reading and thus explain how Pamuk’s plot construction resists such a mode of reading. In *Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Lorna Sage defines allegory as follows: “Allegory’s distinctive feature is that it is a structural, rather than a textural symbolism” (Childs and Fowler, p. 4). Then, the first characteristic of allegory or allegorical thought lies in its potential to accommodate deep, underlying and shaping (that is, structural) forms of thought in characterization. This is in opposition to “textural symbolism,” which gives more possibility to flexibility and change (Ibid, p. 4). In addition, Sage continues that allegory “is a large-scale exposition in which problems are conceptualized,” that is, the narrative is formed via *concepts* (Ibid, p.4). Sage exemplifies typical allegorical plot and characterization through “the ‘innocent’ – Gulliver, Alice, the Lady in Milton’s ‘Comus’, K. in Kafka’s *The Castle*” who are all “‘put through’ a series of experiences (tests, traps, fantasy gratifications) which add up to an imaginative analysis of contemporary ‘reality’” (Ibid, p.4). Then, allegory and allegorical thinking, being more of a formal, structural and conceptual mode of thought, are different from textural symbolism in which qualities of characters are more of textural, not necessarily or strictly structural.

Even though one can so easily find connections between the characters/events/dichotomies in the novel and Turkey’s recent socio-political history, the literary strategy of *Snow* does not lend itself to an easy reading; therefore, a formal and allegorical reading as explained above becomes unlikely. Soon after the roads are blocked and the three-day commotion begins, before long we realize that the characters’ behavior change in the opposite direction of what is expected from them. Through such a technique, Pamuk shows that all of the dichotomies, east(ern)-west(ern), Turkish-Kurdish, pious-atheist, fact-fiction etc., are all

constructed and their borders are extremely vague. The characters oscillate between two ends or sometimes are a part of both sides.

The dichotomy of pious-atheist might be a starting point. Atheism is one of the reasons the school director Prof. Yılmaz is killed (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 38-49), so we might safely assert that life in Kars is not easy for an atheist; and the idea of atheism itself is not so welcome in Kars. However, a close reading of characters shows that the deep questions about the existence of God frequently occupy the minds of the *pious* characters, as well. Necip and Fazıl, who are students in a religious high school, are interesting examples of this kind. Their greatest fear is *turning into* an atheist; they recount horrible stories about the atheists to each other at school. However, in time, Necip and Fazıl get closer to what they fear, step by step:

Fazıl: Did Necip ever tell you that he –God Forbid– doubted God’s existence?

Ka: It was about the thoughts that came to him unbidden about what might happen, if his beloved God does not exist.

Fazıl: Now the same thing is happening to me... I have no doubt that Necip’s soul has planted these thoughts in me... Now I hear the voice of an atheist inside and this makes me very scared (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 292).

Indeed, this is not all about these two characters and their relation to religious piety. They have a dream of “writing an Islamist science fiction novel” (*Snow*, 419). Once again, Pamuk juxtaposes two opposite ends (the rigid Islamic system of reality on the one hand, and Necip/Fazıl’s desire to create some other versions of it on the other) to show that the identities are multiple and that they oscillate between the two ends of the dichotomies.

It is possible to look from the other side of the mirror: Necip and Fazıl⁹ slowly turn out to be atheists, but what about the atheists starting to turn into believers? Ka is a prominent example: after his first visit to the Sheik, he says: the Sheik “would bring me to the path I had always believed in, deep down inside, even as an atheist. Just the promise of salvation brought me joy” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 57). He has also several superstitions: he believes that his coat (that he had bought in Germany) “protects him from evil” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 224), and he does not copy his poems until every last word was in place, as this would bring “bad luck” (Pamuk, *Snow*,

⁹ Pamuk’s allusion to Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, famous Turkish writer and philosopher who extensively wrote on mysticism and religion, among other themes.

p.264). Apart from these, Kadife, the most resolute defender of her headscarf, “takes a great pleasure” from inviting Ka to a room in secret and making him undress, while searching for a microphone on him (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 225). Another religious girl wearing a headscarf, Hande, vividly depicts her fantasy of unveiling: “In my mind’s eye, I’m ... wearing stilettos, and dresses even shorter than hers. And men are staring at me. I find this pleasing-and at the same time shameful” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 124-25). Through such a characterization technique, Pamuk shows how patterns (eastern-western; pious-atheist etc) fall short in understanding and explaining human behavior.

Some part of the identity discussion in *Snow* is made through the concept of ethnicity and the duality of Turk-Kurd. Among several ethnic groups living in Kars, the Kurds are pictured as the largest sub-culture group, numbering “up to forty percent of the population” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 27). The characters gradually realize that ethnic origin alone is no more than an elucidatory criterion in defining themselves. During the discussion of the political statement, *an anonymous person* in the group asks a rhetorical question: “Who do you mean, my son, when you say ‘we’?...Do you mean the Turks, the Kurds? the Circassians? The people of Kars? To whom exactly are you referring?” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 282). In this speech, the point of comparison becomes deliberately obsolete; because now he points to another criterion through the phrase “The people of Kars”: in this example, identity is now based on space, rather than the ethnic origin.

In addition to this, social, economic and ideological backgrounds that construct an identity are so variant that –“Islamist Kurds” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 72), “Marxist Revolutionary Kurds” (72), guerilla Kurds (187), unemployed Kurds (9) etc.— it becomes almost impossible to understand, categorize and represent individuals only through the criterion of ethnic origin. As stated above, Pamuk visualizes the multiplicity of the identities. Also, the differences between Turks and Kurds, and the state policies based on such an ethnic origin are portrayed in the following sentence:

Experts drafted in from Ankara quickly lost faith in this detective, because he was himself a Kurd. Furthermore, they were able to deduce from his reports that the sherbet was poisonous to Turks but not to Kurds. However, because of the official state position that Kurds and Turks are indistinguishable, they kept the conclusion to themselves (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 208).

Thus, *Snow* approaches the state policies based on ethnic origin with keen sarcasm. This is one of the many examples which mocks the authority

in question, as well as their policies based on exclusivist world-views; that is, dichotomies.

In *Snow*, the dichotomy of fiction-fact is very significant in terms of both the fictional structure and the intertextuality of the novel. Following the blocking of the roads by heavy snow, Jacobin artist Sunay Zaim plots to stage a revolutionary play, which soon turns to the three-day coup under his lead. In fact, this is an intertextual reply of Pamuk to a modernist work using the same theme: on page 190, Pamuk refers to Cevat Fehmi Başkurt's "Buzlar Çözülmeden" ("Before the Ice Melts" 1965). In this play, a governor is assigned to the poor and forgotten town; but soon people realize that the new governor, who solves the problems of the town and changes everything for the better, is a lunatic who escaped from a mental prison. As Turkish critic Ömer Türkeş rightfully asserts, this play is the reflection of the "savior elite ideology"¹⁰ of the era. In both works, the themes are the same and the literary reference is obvious. Türkeş goes on: "But Pamuk does not take sides with the salvation coming with a coup...in fact, as a western intellectual, he is not happy with any of the colors in politics"¹¹ According to Türkeş, the most significant issue in *Snow* is Pamuk's distance from cultural and political groups. Therefore, the dichotomies of *the ruler-the ruled* and *elite-people* come to the surface in the work. But in *Snow*, Pamuk rejects taking sides with the first terms of these dichotomies.

In fact, the blocking of the roads and thus the isolation of the city is an example of an old literary device: creation of an island. Similar to other literary islands, Pamuk's figurative island enables the writer to isolate the setting, so that the reader could see the city and its people as they really are. This device also allows the writer to place the characters and events in separate slice of time. In Pamuk's use of the technique, some specific choices give him a distinctive place among other writers, because his choices function as to highlight the dichotomies in his work. For example, after the roads are blocked, the characters could have started to make self-criticism; or they could have tried to negotiate and get one step closer to each other; both of which would be reasonable responses to a natural disaster. But Pamuk deliberately does *not* use the device in that way, because his fiction is both a reply to his modernist precedents (in the example of "Before the Ice Melts") and also serves to bring the immanent clashes up to the surface.

¹⁰ Tr. "kurtarıcı elit ideolojisi" (Qtd. in Riley, 6). Translation is mine.

¹¹ Tr. Original: "Ama o Batılı bir aydın olarak darbeci bir kurtuluştan yana değil; aslında siyasi alanın hiçbir renginden memnun değil" (Qtd. in Riley, 6).

Jacobin artist Sunay Zaim's coup (Pamuk, *Snow*; p. 194, p. 316¹², p. 391¹³) is the embodiment of fiction-fact dichotomy in *Snow*. In his dithyrambic theatrical performance, Zaim figuratively and literally kills the people in the hall. The coup, which is made "to stand against Kurdish nationalism and the religious fanatics," enables Zaim to rule the city for three days (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 187). Many Kurds and Islamists are detained, beaten and some are even killed. Beneath this hyperbolic transition from a theatrical play to a real coup, or from fiction to fact, one can find Pamuk's critical perspective which reminds the readers that all identities and totalizing policies (hence, the dichotomies) are subjective and constructed.

In *Snow*, there is one last conspicuous dichotomy, which intersects with one of the main themes of the novel: the dichotomy of individualism-collectivism. As two opposing worldviews, collectivism places the individual concerns as secondary, whereas individualism emphasizes the uniqueness and autonomous way of thinking. At this point, Pamuk engages in the discussion with his snow metaphor: "Each crystal snowflake forms its own unique hexagon" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 219); "the singularity of snowflakes" makes Ka write a poem on his "distinctive attributes, his uniqueness" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 220). This connection soon becomes more concrete to Ka. After he feels convinced that "a snowflake mapped out the spiritual course of every person who had lived", he thinks to himself: "...individual existences might look identical from afar, but to understand one's own eternally mysterious uniqueness, one had only to plot the mysteries of one's own snowflake" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p.383).

Through such a metaphor, Pamuk's individualism supersedes collectivism and this replacement is a central issue in the novel. In *Snow*, individuality is continuously suppressed by two main groups. The first is the religious communities. The Sheik tells Ka: "if you want to find God by yourself, then go ahead –walk into the darkness—but don't forget that arrogant men...always end up alone" (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 100). The second systematic movement against individuality is political: "I myself was not immune to the power of that shimmering fiction that any citizen of an

¹² In the original work, Pamuk writes "Jakoben saflara katıldığı için Ka'yı kutladı" (*Kar*, 309). Freely translates the word Jacobin as "...still in revolutionary mode..." (316). Her choice of word *revolutionary* does not give the same meaning with *Jacobin*. The word *revolutionary* is rather affirmative in tone, whereas the original text is much more negative, as the word *Jacobin* in an obvious connection between Sunay and Turkish political history/modernization process.

¹³ Again, Freely translates "eline çok özel bir güç geçmiş Jakoben" (*Kar*, 384) as "a revolutionary hero" (316). To prevent the loss of meaning, the translation must be "a Jacobin with extraordinary power at hand".

oppressive and aggressively nationalistic country will understand only too well—the magical unity conjured by the word ‘we’ ” (Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 401).

Therefore, in *Snow*, whether it be through gender, ethnicity, religion or politics, all suppressive ideologies establishing hierarchical relations are challenged. When Necip asks Ka to tell him his future, Ka feels sympathy as he finds his youth in Necip; and says the following about/to Necip’s future and his past:

In twenty years time ... you will have understood at last that the evil in the world, I mean the poverty and the ignorance of the poor and the cunning and extravagance of the rich, and all the vulgarity in the word, and all the violence and all the brutality—I mean I things that make you guilty and think of suicide ... you will know that all things are the result of everyone thinking alike (Pamuk, *Snow*, p.143).

This excerpt makes it clear that the novel targets two main issues regarding identity: first is how identity patterns shape people into similar forms of lives, if not the same. In connection with this, the passage above implies, these identity patterns are repetitive, stereotypical, banal, and hence, dangerous to a certain extent.

CONCLUSION

As a postmodern political novel, *Snow* could be read as a cultural critique of the modernity project in terms of the negative consequences of the modernization process. Even though the novel covers the chief ideologies and events in Turkey’s recent political history, *Snow* can not be read as an allegory; because by playing with the *character patterns* deliberately and in a systematic way, Pamuk makes all of his characters behave contrary to their ideologies and entities (atheists visiting sheiks, unveiling of the women wearing headscarf and vice versa; a persecutor watching sentimental soap opera *Marianna*; leftists turning to Islamists; Islamist turning to atheists etc). In that way, *Snow* reminds us that all of the dichotomies are constructed.

The dichotomies –all of which Pamuk handles with sarcasm— are significant because the characters define themselves and *the others* through these opposing binaries. The direct consequence of such strict a strict approach is miscommunication, conflict and unproductivity; at the end of these three days, the poems of Ka are lost and nothing remains from his works. Blue is killed; Turgut Bey continues his *safe* life in seclusion and isolation from the others. No solution is offered to or step taken for the

young women committing suicide. The reality is continuously manipulated through newspapers and televisions. The scene of the negotiation for the production of a political statement (Chapter 31) to be published in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (when the representatives of the political groups gather for the first and the last time) is a very successful example of sarcasm in Pamuk's style: neither do the characters listen to each other, nor would/could they produce anything useful. Nobody learns a lesson from Sunay's over-exaggerated but catastrophic attempt; after these three days a few people are arrested and will be released soon; once again everything is covered with snow.

Then, what is the connection between the artificial dichotomies and the criticism of modernity? As shown in the epigraph to this article, Pamuk's greatest concern is to "understand". In this respect, he assembles three structures in *Snow*: (1) the individual model the modernity project aims to create (Turkish, with a distance to political Islam, unveiled etc.); (2) social and political groups that show active or passive resistance to this model; they also approach all other groups with prejudices and make them accept their superiority (Political Islamists, leftists, the veiled, the Kurds etc.); and lastly (3) a miniature of a state model that paranoically puts all its potentials to use, in order to keep all these groups under control. Still, it is imperative to understand that criticizing the modernity project along with its negative consequences *is not* one and the same with being against it.

In literary style, *Snow* is not a novel that set out to teach; *nor* does it present quick answers to its readers. Pamuk's distance to the aforementioned ideologies in *Snow* is what separates his work from a didactic political novel. *Snow* displays the constructed nature of dichotomies with the detriments of shaping a political system accordingly. While Pamuk sarcastically portrays the characters that create their own glass ceilings, he walks through the streets of Kars in the characters of *Ka* and *Orhan*, not only to find the values beyond the physical borders of the city, but also to explore, question and challenge the cultural and political boundaries of identities. With the simple question in the epigraph, Pamuk incites his readers to question their perspectives: "*How much can (we) really see?*"

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