

ISSN:0976-8165

# THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English



Vol. 7, Issue-I February 2016

7 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## **Conflict, East Vs West and Inferiority Complex in Orhan Pamuk's *The Silent House***

**Dr. Qamar Talat**  
Professor of English  
&

**Seema Panjwani**  
Research Scholar  
Govt. V. Y. T.PG. Autonomous College, Durg.(C.G)

### **Abstract:**

Contemporary novelist Orhan Pamuk is one of most popular writer in the sphere of Turkish Literature. He has written on various ideological aspects of contemporary Turkish society and Politics. Orhan Pamuk is considered as the Istanbul writer like Joyce of Dublin, Proust of Paris, whose readers perceive the cities by the eyes of the novelist. The present paper intends to explore the conflicting aspects and inferiority complex of class, culture, ignorance in *The Silent House*. Here author reveals inferiority complex of the Turks and melancholic soul of his country under the enchantment of westernization throughout the novel. The conflict of East Vs West, Tradition Vs Modernity, Science Vs Religion and Political conflict of the 1970s in Turkey are perceptible through the characters and dialogue. Though, Pamuk's second novel *The Silent House* has been written some thirty years ago of its English translation in 2012. But, still its representing the present Turkish society.

**Keywords:** Conflicts, East Vs West, Tradition Vs Modernity, Science Vs Religion, inferiority complex, Kemalism, seclusion, Postmodernism.

### **Introduction:**

A Postmodern Turkish writer, Orhan Pamuk is well known figure today in the world. Indeed Global interest in Turkish literature has grown after his Nobel win in 2006. He has crowned his country being a first Turk who secured the prize in any field. Orhan Pamuk originally writes in Turkish and his seven novels have been translated except the first one. He has written some prose works too. He has frequently been compared to Borges and Calvino postmodern writers. Some of his famous writings are *My Name is Red* (2001), *Snow* (2004), *Museum of Innocence* (2008). The major themes of his novels are focused on Turkish identity, the tension between the East and West, westernization and adoring love for country's heritage and culture. Despite the Orient writing Pamuk has Universal appeal by re-rooting the Turkish identity.

Turkey's geographical location between Europe and Asia causes the gradual loss of Turkish eastern identity because of western influences. As the Turkey has its own wealthy Ottoman (Eastern) culture, during Ottoman Empire. But since 1923 republic of Turkey, the father of Turk: Ataturk Kemal brought many changes like adoption of Swiss civil code and the Italian penal code, the European Calendar, Surnames, western dress by replacing of the Fez (symbol of Ottoman culture) . Arabic alphabets were replaced by Latin to increase

literacy rate. These all reforms were based on western model. Though, the Reforms were needed for development. Turkey adopted secular government since republic to reduce orthodoxies. In Turkish literature steps taken by Ataturk Kemal are called “Kemalism” which is also appreciated in *The Silent House*. The pull of an Islamic past and the fascination of modern European manners create conflicts between the two different cultures. Desperate imitation of Western culture causes inferiority complex and rootlessness, which is the keynote of Pamuk’s *The Silent House*.

Postmodernism is captured in Orhan Pamuk’s style and technique in each of his novels. He mingles the East and the West which brings cultural ambivalence. As the paper argues that mingling of the two different way of life is visible in his later works not in *The Silent House*. As the Swedish Academy’s official announcement stated at the time of Nobel prize- Pamuk “in the quest for melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures”. Pamuk says

All my books are made from mixture of Eastern and Western methods, styles, habits, and histories, and if I am rich it is thanks to these legacies. My comfort, my double happiness, comes from the same source: I can, without any guilt, wander between the two worlds, and in both I am at home. (*Other Colours*, 264)

Postmodernism in Turkish context is expression of post- Kemalism, post-socialism in content and form. *The Silent House* is set in the summer of 1980s, weeks before the military coup of 12 September. Though this “is not an overtly political novel in the way of *Snow*(2002), *Silent House* uses a grotesque family saga to explore the social and political rifts created by Turkey’s drive for modernity and individual dreams and neurosis arising from it”(Maya Jaggi).

### ***The Silent House: Conflicts and Inferiority complex***

*The Silent House* published in Turkish in 1983, and has been translated in English 2012. The story is sets on the eve of military coup: the army of National Security Council in 1980. For a third time in Turkey in republic short history the democracy was snatched. The Turks live under Marshal Law for three long years. During these years the constitution was suspended and the opposition were imprisoned and executed. Here author serves the impact of the coup on his homeland or on individual person. The impact has been shown in the novel through the characters dissimilar beliefs. However politics is only one of the many prisms through which the action is viewed. The story employs the “canon of various voices” as in Bhaktinian sense it is *polyphonic*. Polyphony is “ the simultaneous presentation of two or more voices” as it is propelled by the alternative narratives of five characters. The three narrators are young people, Hasan, Metin and Faruk, and two from older generations, Recep and Fatma. Reader gets a glimpse of the lives of three generation of the Darvinoglu family (adopted surname by Selahalttin after republic) as well as historical, political, cultural changes in the country. Most of the Turks didn’t have surnames till 1934. Stream of consciousness technique is employed. The narrative starts by one summer in 1980’s when

Nilgun, Faruk and Metin Darvinoglu drive from Istanbul to their grandmother Fatma's crumbling silent house. Grandmother feels lonely among the self-centered grandchildren. The novel takes place in a fictional seaside town named, Cennethisar located on the Sea of Marmara about fifty kilometers from Istanbul. In July 1980 three young people from Istanbul come to Cennethisar to visit their grandmother Fatma, who is ninety years old and lives in an old crumbling mansion. Fatma is taken care of by dwarf Recep, who is illegitimate son of her late husband Selahattin. Selahattin was the outspoken opposition of the Young Turk movement that had seized power in the revolution of 1908, made Selahattin's banishment from Istanbul under Talat pasha. Then he moved to Cennethisar with his wife. They had a son Dogan in 1915, their son's birth Selahattin speaks to Fatma:

We will establish a brand – new world here, thinking and living things that are fresh, simple happy, and free: a world of freedom such as the East has never seen, a paradise of logic on the face of the earth, I swear, it will happen, and we'll do it better than the West, we've seen their mistakes, and we won't repeat them, and if we or even our son, don't get it to see it, our grandchildren certainly will, I swear, a paradise of logic in this earth! ..... I will never teach this child the Eastern melancholy, the weeping, pessimism, the defeat of our terrible Oriental fatalism... (97)

Selahattin Darvinoglu thinks that all of Turkey's problems were the result of ignorance and superstition; he believed that religion was the primary obstacle to Turkey's advancement. Fatma has been brought up in traditional Ottoman family, religious woman. On the contrary, Selahattin is a militant atheist, who believed in science, logic, Darwin's theory of evolution on which he chooses his family surname and as he says on European concept of death:

Foolish woman, stupid woman, they brainwashed you just like everybody else, there is no God, no hereafter, the other world is a terrible lie they made up to keep us in line in this world there is no proof of God except that scholastic nonsense, there are only phenomena, and we can know them and the relationships among them, so my duty is to explain to the whole east that there is no God... (67)

Selahattin devoted his life to writing an encyclopedia that would cure the East of its backwardness, but unfortunately failed in the project and died in 1942. Confined to bed Fatma's inner life revolves around rehashing the shortcomings of her husband. For forty years, after Selahattin's death, Fatma blames the failure of her marriage on Selahattin's passion for the ideas of the European Enlightenment. Their contradictory thoughts are conspicuous in their dialogues.

Despite having liberal views Selahattin's contempt for his wife was for only her religious faith. His hatred for Eastern culture as well as inferiority for ignorant Turks is apparent. Fatma was forced to live with her husband's mistress and his illegitimate sons,

though she refuses. Fatma watches her only son Dogan slowly succumbs to the same fatal illness, alcoholism and idealism of his father. Dogan was district administrator; Turkish politics disappointed him to relinquish the vocation and died in 1967. Fatma burns the unfinished “encyclopedia of everything” to take revenge Selahattin. Fatma narrates the part of her died husband and son in her alone years in the silent house. The all past facts situation has been revealed in interior monologues in Faulknerian style.

In *The Silent House* there is no real communication between generations, classes, political groups, or even between the brothers and their sister. Most of the narration takes the form of interior monologues; the characters are constantly planning what they want to say or do to each other, but those plans are almost never realized. Terribly alone and lonely in their silent house, they all spend most of their time talking to themselves. (McGAHA, 79)

The novel’s young generation suffers from an inferiority complex and rootlessness. As Faruk, a recently divorced historian, oldest grandchildren, lost his wife because of his impotence. He is acutely depressed because of his impractical dream of writing a completely objective history.

I had planned to write. Whatever my intention, my text would have to begin somewhere. No matter how I wrote the events, they would have to be arranged in some kind of order. Whether I intended it or not, all of this would suggest some meaning to the reader. The more I determined to avoid this, the more flummoxed I became about where to start and how to proceed. Because the human mind, bound as it is to its accustomed ways, will always infer an order from every arrangement, a symbol from every event to the degree that the reader himself will wind up stirring into the facts the story I wished to spare. then I thought in despair: there is no way to express history, or even life as it is, in words! (166)

When his impossible dream seems him not feasible he absorbed with inferiority complex, “Because I know that people can’t be anything in Turkey” (236). Faruk wrote in his notebook “*History is for slaves, stories for people who are half asleep, fables for stupid children; history is for fools, pathetic creatures, cowards!*” (325).

Two more young narrators Hasan and Metin are victim of inferiority complex. While they have different ideologies .As Hasan is against of westernization and dream of power and sadism. He has joined the Young nationalists who run a protection racket and attack their communist rivals. Hasan is Recep’s teenage nephew and he claim to love Nilgun, but she ignores him. Hasan utters“because we belong to different worlds! Still I was surprised that a person couldn’t even be bothered to say hello first, that they would look at you with such hostility for no reason at all: everything was money in this world, what a sewer, such nastiness! Damn it!” (160). There was much difference in their class, brought up, and

political dreams. He feels inferior himself to her. On the other hand Hasan was a fascist and Nilgun is communist, secular when Hasan chases her, tried to interrupt her, she calls him a dirty fascist and he beats her brutally, indeed she dies after few days. Hasan's scary contempt toward communist is symbolized on 1980s political conflict.

*The Silent House* reflects Orhan Pamuk's deep disillusionment with the Turkish politics and culture of the late 1970s. As the novel points out several times, Ataturk's program of Westernization has been accomplished – at least among Turkey's urban bourgeoisie and ruling class – yet the result is more like hell the earthly paradise Selahattin Bey envisioned.(McGAHA,80)

Inferiority complex is perceptible in another character Metin, Faruk's younger brother associates with a group of spoiled teenagers from rich families in Cennethisar. Metin is materialist and envies his friends, their imported sports cars and social status. He is infatuated with upscale girl, Ceylan. He has fantasies of wealth and dream of attending college in America after graduation. Moreover he looks down on his family as his alcoholic brother, Faruk and his leftist sister: Nilgun. He does not know to where he will get money to go to US. Even once he said at a point of despair when his grandmother refuses to sell the old mansion: "Why are you still alive when my mother and father are dead?" (303).

### **Conclusion:**

Orhan Pamuk represents incompatible Turkish political cultural identity through character's distinct ideologies, the clash between traditional values of Islam and western influences. Turks inferiority complex and rootlessness because of desperate imitation of westerners are embodied in *The Silent House*.

### **Works Cited:**

1. McGaha, Michael. *Autobiographies of Orhan Pamuk: The Writer in His Novels*. Michigan: The University of Utah Press, 2008. Print.
2. Pamuk, Orhan. *The Silent House*. Translated by Robert Finn. India: Hamis Hamiton, Penguin, 2012. Print.
3. --- *Other Colours: Writings on Life, Art, Books and Cities*. Translated by Maureen Freely. New York: Faber and Faber, 2007. Print.
4. Jaggi, Maya. *Between East & West*. Literary Review. 2012. Web. 3.12.2014. [http://www.literaryreview.co.uk/jaggi\\_10\\_12.php](http://www.literaryreview.co.uk/jaggi_10_12.php)