



Investigation of Linguistic Aspects and Sufi Motifs in the Novel *The New Life* by Orhan Pamuk

Alsu H. Vafina¹, Elena A. Gruzdeva², & Natalia G. Sharapenkova³

¹Department of Russian and Foreign Literature, Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Kazan Federal University;
alsu_vafina@mail.ru

²Preparatory Department for foreign students, Kazan State University; reemyvera24@mail.ru

³Department of Germanic Philology and Scandinavistics, Petrozavodsk State University; natshar@mail.ru

Abstract

The article investigates the relationship between East and West, which is a part of an essential area in literary criticism – the study of national, cultural, political self-identification, and language of the person and people as a whole. In this work, the influence of Sufism on Orhan Pamuk's work, as well as its linguistic features, are investigated. The material is O. Pamuk's novel *The New Life*. The work of a modern writer is related to the genre of a family-household chronicle and a detective novel. The transformation of one of the prominent motifs of Sufism – the motive of search – into the detective motive in modern, postmodern literature is studied. The article reveals the complexity of the ideological and aesthetic worldview of the author, formed under the influence of East and West. Allusions and reminiscences associated with Western culture are revealed in the work of the Turkish writer. The authors analyse the central plot motifs, postmodern artistic techniques in the context of the whole artistic works of the writer.

Keywords: Turkish Literature; Post-Modernism; Sufi Motifs; Self-Identification; Orhan Pamuk.

1. Introduction

Orhan Pamuk (1952) is a contemporary Turkish writer, the winner of the Nobel prize in literature in 2006 (Fisk, 2018; Millington & Rizov, 2019; Prayogo, 2017; Yalkin & Yanık, 2018). In 1974, he began writing daily. *Karanlık ve Işık (Darkness and Light)*, his first book, was a co-winner of the 1979 Milliyet Press Novel Contest (the other winner was Mehmet Eroğlu). This novel was published in 1982, and received the Orhan Kemal Novel Prize in 1983, under the title *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları (Mr. Cevdet and His Sons)*. It tells the tale of three generations of a wealthy Istanbul family living in Nişantaşı, where Pamuk grew up in the Istanbul district. For his early work Pamuk received a number of critical prizes, including the 1991 Sessiz Ev Novel Prize in 1984 and the 1991 Prix de la Découverte Européenne in French for his second novel. He received the 1990 Independent Award for Foreign Fiction for his historical novel *Beyaz Kale (The White Castle)*, published in Turkish in 1985, and spread his popularity abroad. The *New York Times Book Review* reported on 19 May 1991, "A new star has risen in the east—Orhan Pamuk." In his novels he began to experiment with postmodern techniques, a change from the strict naturalism of his early works. It took a little longer for popular success to arrive in Pamuk, but his 1990 novel *Kara kitap (The Black Book)*, because of its complexity and richness, is among the most controversial and popular Turkish literature books. In 1992, he writes the screenplay for the *Kara Kitap*-based film *Gizli Yüz (The Secret Face)*, directed by a leading Turkish director, Ömer Kavur. Pamuk's fifth novel, *Yeni Hayat (New Life)*, was a sensation in Turkey when it was published in 1994 and it became Turkish history's fastest selling book. At that time thanks to his support for Kurdish political rights, Pamuk was also becoming a leader in Turkey. In 1995, Pamuk belonged to a group of writers who were attempting to write essays criticizing Turkey's Kurdish treatment. Pamuk released his essay book *Öteki Renkler (Other Colors)* in 1999 (Abshavi & Moayed, 2020; Gürle, 2019; Rawal, 2020).

In 2019, the 66-year-old Nobel Laureate held an exhibit called "Balkon: Photos by Orhan Pamuk" that highlighted a range of photos of Istanbul taken from his own balcony. The exhibition consists of photos taken by Pamuk



from his balcony in late 2012 and early 2013 of the "subtle and ever-changing view of Istanbul" according to Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts Publishing. The exhibit, curated by Gerhard Steidl, the German publisher of his picture book *Balkon*, will run until 27 April at the Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts building on the teeming İstiklal Street in Istanbul. According to the release, the show features over 600 images selected from over 8,500 taken by Pamuk using a telephoto lens over a five-month time, "a period of intense creativity,". When he published *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (My Name is Red) in 1998, the international prestige of Pamuk continued to increase. In the 16th century setting of Istanbul, the novel combines suspense, romance, and metaphysical puzzles. On nine snowy winter days in 1591, it opens a window into the reign of Ottoman Sultan Murat III, welcoming the reader from a breathlessly urgent viewpoint to witness the conflict between East and West. *My Name Is Red* was translated into 24 languages and won the world's most lucrative literary prize, the International Dublin Literary Award, in 2003. Asked what impact this last award (currently \$127,000) had on his life and work, Pamuk answered: since I work all the time, nothing has changed in my life. I spent 30 years doing fiction writing. I was worried about money for the first 10 years and no one asked how much money I made. I spent money in the second decade, and no one asked about it. And I've spent the last 10 years wanting everyone to hear how I'm investing the money I'm not going to spend. This was followed by his novel *Kar* (English translation: *Snow*, 2004). Set in the border city of Kars, it discusses modern Turkey's struggle between Islamism and Westernism. In the middle of aimless Islamists, MPs, headscarf supporters, secularists, and a variety of groups who die and kill in the name of highly conflicting values, *Snow* follows *Kar*, an expatriate Turkish poet, as he wanders around the snowy Kars and gets caught up (Erdoğan, 2018; Gökner, 2013; Hile, 2009).

Snow was listed by The New York Times as one of the Ten Best Books of 2004. In a discussion on the development of sympathetic characters in the political novel with Carol Becker on the Brooklyn Rail, Pamuk said: I firmly believe that the art of the novel is focused on the human ability, although it is a restricted capacity, to be able to identify with the other. This can be achieved only by human beings. It takes creativity, a kind of morality, a self-imposed aim of understanding this person who is different from us, which is a rare thing. In May 2007, Pamuk was one of the jury members, led by British director Stephen Frears, at the Cannes Film Festival (Holloway, 2007). In the summer of 2008, he finished his next book, *Masumiyet Müzesi* (The Museum of Innocence), the first novel he published since being awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature. In an Istanbul house he bought, Pamuk created an actual Museum of Innocence, consisting of everyday objects tied to the story, and housed them. Pamuk worked on a documentary that built on his Museum of Innocence, "The Innocence of Memories" Pamuk said, "(Museum of Dreams will) tell a different version of the love story set in Istanbul through objects and Grant Gee's wonderful new film". Pamuk portrays tragic love-stories in both *Snow* and the Museum of Innocence, where men fall in love with pretty women at first sight. It was noted... by whom?] that the portrayals of women by Pamuk and the reasons why men fall in love with them are strong in their strength, but simplistic in the way these love stories originate. The protagonists of Pamuk seem to be educated men who fall in love with beauty tragically, but who appear doomed to decrepit loneliness (Allmer, 2009; Laschinger, 2009).

In 2013, Grazia Toderi, whose work he admired, was invited by Pamuk to design a work for the Istanbul Museum of Innocence. Their partnership resulted in the Words and Stars show. Words and Stars opened at the MART (Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto) on 2 April 2017 and explores 'man's ability to explore space and inherent vocation to challenge the stars.' Gianfranco Maraniello curated the exhibition. It was also seen by invitation at the Palazzo Madama, Piazza Castello, Turin, and at Infiniti-to, the Planetarium of Turin, from 4 November 2016 to 29 March 2017, from 5-6 November 2016. The *Red-Haired Woman* (2016), Pamuk's tenth book, is the tale of a well-digger and his apprentice searching for water on barren ground. In the French tradition of conte philosophique, it is also a novel of ideas. Master Mahmut and his apprentice used ancient methods to dig new wells in Istanbul in the mid-1980s; this is the tale of their back-breaking struggle, but it is also an exploration of ideas about fathers and sons, authoritarianism and individuality, state and liberty, reading and seeing through stories and pictures. This short, convincing novel is at once a historical text investigating a murder that took place near Istanbul thirty years ago, and a fictional investigation into the literary foundations of civilizations, contrasting two fundamental myths of the West and the East, respectively: the Oedipus Rex (a patricide story) of Sophocles and the Rostam and Sohrabic tale of Ferdowsi (a story of filicide). The demonic voice of the eponymous red-haired woman runs across it (Pamuk, 2017).

In 2003, Pamuk published the *Istanbul-Hatıralar ve Şehir* memoir/travelogue (English edition, *Istanbul-Memories and the City*, 2005). In September 2007, Pamuk's *Other Colours*, a collection of non-fictions and a story, was published in the UK. Asked how personal his book *Istanbul: Memories and the City* was, Pamuk answered: in six months,



I thought I'd write *Memories and the City*, but it took me a year to finish it. And I worked twelve hours a day just working and reading. My life was in a crisis because of so many things; I don't want to go into those details: divorce, dying father, professional problems, problems with that, problems with that, everything was terrible. I figured I was going to have depression if I were to be weak. But I would wake up and have a cold shower every day and sit back and remember and compose, always paying attention to the book's beauty. Honestly, maybe I was hurting my mother and my family. My dad's gone, but my mom's still alive. But that doesn't matter to me; I need to think about the beauty of the novel (Alpyağıl, 2010).

The novel *The New Life* (1994) continues the main theme in the author's creativity – the image of Turkey in the context of East-West relations (Galimullina, Galimullin, Meliksetyan, & Kayumova, 2019; Khabibullina, Nagumanova, & Shemshurenko, 2019; Mattar, 2014; Türkkkan, 2012). The peculiarity of this Book by O. Pamuk is concluded in its philosophical and cultural component (which is traditional for the eastern culture (Bednarz & Hage, 2005)) – Sufi teaching. O. Pamuk turns to the leading aspect for representing the cultural distinction defining the feature of the author's worldview as well as the general focus of a view standard for the eastern culture.

The New Life is a postmodern work, representing a kind of "postmodern" continuation of the stories from the previous novels by O. Pamuk. Within the author's creativity, these stories are joined and make up a single artistic world. So, it is no surprise for the reader when in the given novel, he observes the adventures of the heroes from the *Black Book* (1990) – journalists Jelyal Salik and Neshati.

1.1. Research Objective

The paper discusses the relationship between East and West, which is part of an important field of literary criticism: the study of the individual and people as a whole's national, cultural, political self-identification, and language.

2. Material and Methods

Comparative is utilized as the dominant approach to studying Sufi motifs in work by Orhan Pamuk (Deriu, 2020; Shamla, 2019; Thasneem, 2019). Predominantly, theoretical and methodological statements are based on the concepts by M. Tekin. In this article, Sufi motifs are taken into consideration from the perspective of oriental culture (Alver, 2013; Yılmaz, 2019). The structural, semantic method (text is a multifaceted phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the formal features of sentences as units of the text, as well as their semantic originality) is used as an auxiliary technique for examining a literary text, and a biographical analysis is applied to develop a connection between the biographical facts and some features in the literary work (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Naji Meidani, & Derakhshan, 2020; Rinatovna Eremeeva, Vladimirovna Martynova, Aidarovna Khakimova, & Ernstovna Ilikova, 2019; Vladimirovich Spiridonov & Sheykhi, 2019).

3. Results and Discussion

The plot of the Book, *The New Life*, looks like a mysterious story. It contains some elements common for the detective story; this story helps the author to combine the line of the main heroes with the other characters of the novel. The story begins in Istanbul, then is transferred to a remote region of Turkey – to the cities of Anatolia. The main heroes are young people; they are university students. The essence of the plot builds upon the next key moment in the story: the main character – a student of the architectural faculty – gets by chance the unusual Book. He starts reading it; this Book becomes an emotional shock for the hero; it fascinates him; he becomes obsessed with the idea of getting into the artistic world of the Book.

It is evident that the story described by the author should represent the hero who understands the value of culture and spirituality of any country in the world; however, Orhan Pamuk has a specific context here, peculiar only for the eastern culture. The starting point in the plot and the mystery concluded in this event have specific features connected with Sufi ideology.

To analyse the essence of eastern ideological theory in the text, it is essential to actualize what Sufism is. Sufism is a religious philosophy that has left a bright imprint on the entire spiritual order of the East (Vafina, Strukova, & Shtygasheva, 2017). Defining the basic postulates of this philosophy, we can turn to the saying by Hazrat Inayat Khan:



"Sufism is a religious philosophy of love, harmony, and beauty" (Murata, 2000; Schuon, 2006). The images associated with love, harmony, and beauty indicate the author's attitude to the story and organize the motif structure of the novel.

At the very beginning of the novel, Orhan Pamuk enters one of the main images of Sufism. It is the image of light, glow, enlightenment. The author draws attention to the intensity of light and stresses out its importance: this light comes from a book read by the protagonist; it is so strong that it will blind his eyes (Pamuk, 1997). This intensity of light exposure is further transformed into enlightenment. Under the influence of this intensity, the hero himself is modified. The Book alters his personality: "he as sick, locked himself in a room and began reading the book without interruption, from morning to evening, was definitely in some religious ecstasy" (Pamuk, 1997).

The light from the Book improves the dominative function of it. The Book becomes the linking centre of all storylines. With its help, one more character – Janan – becomes involved in the described events. This hero also has a symbolic impact on the plot. She might be called as the embodiment of love. It becomes evident if the reader pays attention to her name. Her name is translated as "beloved." This word also has a religious significance: Janan is one of Allah's names, so she, as Beatrice at Dante, is the embodiment not of earthly love, but of divine and heaven love. In the story told in the novel, all these symbolic meanings of the name are essential; all of the characters are bound by love in its different forms. The love for the woman is presented in the Sufi tradition. It is a disease, an obsession that takes possession of a man and deprives him of his mind and will, but does not bring any happiness or peace.

Taking into account the fact that the author mentions Beatrice's image, it should be said that the title of the novel *The New Life* has had cultural, narrative, symbolic interpretations. The name also evokes a specific cultural associative series. First of all, it relates to the title of Dante's Book *The New Life* (as it was mentioned earlier): the Turkish writer presents the image of the beloved and tells the story of the spiritual evolution of the hero.

In terms of the plot development, the new life is the life of heroes with the new names and with the new biography. This biography is given to them by the young people who died in bus accidents. This is the standard detail that combines all stories connected with the Book. Everyone who has read the Book goes to search for a new life after having been caught in through death (in a bus accident). However, this new route in their life is the endless and useless one. This meaning could be found in the statement of the dying girl who, as if passing the baton of the search, said to Janan: "We were looking for the truth, but we did not find it" (Pamuk, 1997). Within the narrative structure of the text, the importance of this search leads to the dominative status of the endless movement as the primary touch in the novel

However, for one of the characters, this search becomes fruitful. This productive movement actualizes one of the traditional Sufi motives – a journey in search of the beloved during which the hero overcomes many obstacles and finds himself. In the novel by Orhan Pamuk, the hero finds Janan in the city of Konya – the centre of the dervish order of the Mevlevi (one of the directions of Sufism). Having met, the heroes go together in search of a new life.

Furthermore, a new life (in the tradition of Sufism) is a new stage of spiritual improvement of a man, it is knowledge of the world, which in Sufism is commonly called deaths (there is white, green, black death). Death in Sufism is not the end of existence, but the transition to a new level.

In this novel, the motif of spiritual improvement is impossible without the motif of converting one to another (Amineva, Ibragimov, Nagumanova, & Khabibullina, 2014). At Orhan Pamuk's novel, it is embodied in the topic of ambivalence. Heroes change their names, passports and eventually live. The hero recalls: "Once I was someone else, and this other wanted to become me" (Khan, 2011). Subjects and phenomena also alter their traditional functions: "In the dream counted kilometres, and in java saw greats" (Pamuk, 1997).

The Book in the novel *The New Life* is a symbol of universal knowledge (Hayes, 2020). The young students are under the influence of the Book; they are open to everything new; they are heroes for whom intellectual life is important. The Book is opposed by a hero – Dr Narin, who leads a secret association of West-abused merchants – the Great Conspiracy. The members of this group had to compete with international companies, and therefore, they opposed Western influence in all areas of life.

Among Doctor Narin's like-minded people, there is a character who is called Mr Filin. This gentleman, in his concern about the influence of the West on Turkey, says: "Now it is impossible to remain yourself <...> wherever you go,



these Americans" (Pamuk, 1997). This quote contains the negative connotation of the issue. The existence of the Great Conspiracy explains the importance of East-West relations as well as shows the dominative part of the first one.

Dr Narin vehemently defends the idea of Turkey's own path. He points to the differences between Western and Eastern life, which are manifested in the symbolic interpretation of the same objects. So, for example, the clock in the West is a symbol of the rapidly current time, "an attempt to keep up with the rest of the world" (Pamuk, 1997), in the East, the clock – "the sound of harmony with the inner world – like the splashing of water in the fountain, <...> a mechanism that helps to get closer to Allah". The author tells the reader about two ways of approaching Allah: These are jihad and prayer. These two possible ways are also shown with the adverse hue: Dr Narin believes that Western civilization is fighting the eastern traditions (with prayer).

The irreconcilable contradictions between East and West inevitably led to the spread of terrorism. The protagonist (Osman), as a representative of the East, argues: "It is clear that we, unfortunate defeatists, lost in a gambling game called history. Moreover, all that remains for us now is to throw bombs at each other for centuries to convince ourselves that we managed to win at least something" (Pamuk, 2009).

The supporters of the Great Conspiracy believe that Guttenberg's invention (the book printer) should be considered as an act of the devil (station) since it contributed to the spread and implementation of Western culture (Shevchenko, Nesmelova, & Morozova, 2018).

Dr Narin warns that, first of all, it is necessary to protect children from the influence of the West and any books. In this case, Orhan Pamuk mentally conducts a dialogue with the representative of the West represented in the image of W. Golding, who writes: "After all, when civilizations collapse and the memory of generations is erased, children are the first to lose their morality." (Pamuk, 1997). Therefore, he hires spies at his own expense and organizes surveillance of his son, who reads the Book, and then all the other young people, thereby linking them into a single community.

Turkish children were inspired by Sufism from an early age via comics that tell about the adventures of two children – Turkish and American boys. This relationship reveals the relationship between the USA and Turkey (Pamuk, 1997) and helps the author to indicate some similarities and differences in them. In children's Turkish comics, the moral of the East is mixed with the rationalism of the West (Pamuk, 1997). It is noteworthy that in the comics of Russia, the role of an international enemy is given.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The postmodern images created in work are complex, ambiguous. First of all, this concerns the image of the Book. From the very beginning of the postmodern narrative, the writer has been playing with the reader. It is unclear what kind of Book we are talking about (Quran, Bible, etc.). The author reveals the history of the creation of the Book (Pamuk, 1997). The Book has a special function – this is the Book in the Book: The Book *The New Life* read by the reader is written by Ryfki Khat (Pamuk, 1997); the Book explains the true, not external, connections between the characters, as well as the motives of their behaviour. So, for example, it becomes known that Mehmed was familiar with Uncle Ryfky – a friend of Osman's father (this became known according to the investigation conducted by Mezmed's father).

Thus, in the novel *New Life*, Orhan Pamuk combines the artistic techniques of postmodernism with the traditional for Eastern literature Sufi motifs. The writer himself explains his own interest in this layer of culture as follows: "I did not belong to the Sufi sect, and therefore I had no religious motivation <...> I needed an original slice of the so-called traditional literature, which Sufi poetry is certainly <...> So I decided to beat this layer. Open the eyes of our pseudo-modernist society to Sufis" (Pamuk, 2012).

Sufi philosophy and motifs allowed Orhan Pamuk to portray the national identity of modern Turkish literature, rooted in the medieval past. The Turkish novelist interprets Sufi ideology not only as a set of specific rules of this closed community, but also as teaching containing universal human values – love, harmony, and beauty.

The author recognizes Sufi virtues as unique values – Peace, Humility, Patience. So, in Sufi teaching, a person's true existence is not realized in one specific space; it is connected with the man's ability to feel himself as a part of a world nature, to live in peace, and not to be the citizen of just any particular city or a country. This idea realizes via the travelling motif (Osman travels a lot in the text (Pamuk, 1997)).

In the light of one of the main problems of Orhan Pamuk's – the relationship between East and West – Sufi philosophy becomes a tool for uniting the views by any representatives of Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism (Gilazetdinova, Edikhanov, & Aminova, 2014). For the author himself, Sufism is an ideology uniting the West and the East.

4.1. Contribution

The paper shows the depth of the author's ideological and aesthetic worldview, created under the influence of the East and West. In the work of the Turkish writer, allusions and reminiscences associated with Western culture are exposed.

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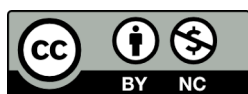
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