Individuation and Integration in Orhan Pamuk’s
*The White Castle*

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Abstract

This paper offers a reading of Orhan Pamuk’s novel *The White Castle*. It demonstrates that *The White Castle* treats the theme of East-West encounter from a rather optimistic perspective. The novel raises the issues of individuation and integration/identity on the micro level of personal exchange and interaction between individuals, but such issues could be cast in the macro level of cultural encounter between East and West.

Close examination of the text of the novel reveals that its author uses the technique of the doppelganger, the twin, or the double, to explore the relationship between the two main characters, Hoja, the Turkish master (representing the East) and his young Italian slave (representing the West). Through their mutual self-disclosure and long association each begins to know the other and assume the identity of the other the boundaries between master and slave ebb and flow.

Contrary to Edward Said’s argument that the encounter between East and West has created opposing identities that cannot meet, Pamuk seems to argue that through the continuing dynamic of interaction individuals and cultures change, grow, and come closer to each other.

What happens when two people encounter each other? What experiences do they have? What do they learn about themselves and about the other? Does this set the stage for a mutual understanding of each other? Is there a dialectic of loss and gain? Is there confirmation or disconfirmation of our beliefs about self and other? Symbolic Interaction theorists such as George Mead in (1934) and Charles Cooley (1922) believe that we develop our concept of self through our
interaction with others in society. Each interchange mirrors back to us information about us as others see us. The novel, *The White Castle*, first titled *Beyaz Kale* (1979), written by Turkish author Orhan Pamuk and translated by Victoria Holbrook in 1990, is the tale of such an interchange.

*The White Castle* is the story of reciprocity and exchange between two individuals. They embody dissimilar life histories and come from different times and cultures, but share a common goal to understand Self and the Other in the context of the physical world, as they perceive it. In order to survive in that world, they also need to resolve issues of hegemony within their established hierarchy of slave and master. The encounters between Hoja and his young Venetian slave develop into a relationship that spans over a quarter of a century and deals with the concept of identity. The ontological questions are: Who are you? Who am I? Are you me? Am I You? These are not the initial questions that bring the characters together. The two men need to solve practical tasks such as how to treat a disease, how to create a grand fireworks display for a ten-day wedding celebration planned by the Pasha and to answer empirical questions such as does a planet exist between the earth and the moon. Later they spend long days discussing and writing about their childhoods and seeking answers to the statement, 'Why I Am What I Am'.

When Hoja had become completely fed up with writing about the past, he paced up and down the house for a while. Then he came to me again and said it was thought itself that we must write down: just as a man could view his appearance in a mirror, he could examine his essence within his own thoughts. (Pamuk, 1990: 65)

Pamuk uses the technique of the doppelgänger, the twin, or the double, to explore the relationship between the two characters. At the end they appear to exchange places, so successfully that one reviewer could not tell which one at the end of the story had died (Finkel, 1999: 38). Upon the first encounter with his new master, the Hoja, the slave notes an uncanny resemblance between himself and the Hoja.
The resemblance between myself and the man who entered the room was incredible! It was me there . . . for that first instant this was what I thought. It was as if someone wanted to play a trick on me and had brought me in again by a door directly opposite the one I had first come through, saying, look, you really should have been like this, you should have come in the door like this, should have gestured with your hands like this, the other man sitting in the room should have looked at you like this. (Pamuk, 1990: 22)

Doubles in literature may or may not share physical characteristics. The two often are engaged in an antagonistic struggle that may represent conflicts between a character's two selves, the good and the evil, the ordinary and the flamboyant, the andros and the gyne, or drawing upon the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, the master and the slave.

The author's use of the double and its appeal to the reader may be because of the disruption of causality and control. We enjoy seeing tricksters prevail. Folklore across cultures is full of Brer Rabbits who entice their enemies to stretch out their hands and become stuck to that tar baby. The audience is momentarily confused and an element of mystery enters into the story. Who is the agent and who is the object? Are people and events really what they appear to be? Is there a syllogism here? Is the master Hoja a man? Is the slave, our Italian youth, also a man? If so, is the slave, a man, then not also the Master? The roles of master and slave portend conflict. Hoja attempts to control the Youth through beatings, and the slave responds by trying to "humiliate him, then he would be the sinner and the slave of the house, not I." Their mutual survival, however, depends upon their ability to work together on the Sultan's projects (Pamuk, 1990: 69).

Studies of the role of the double in literature have been strongly influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud. The double functions within the individual by taking the roles of the childlike, rebellious id and/or the controlling, rule-enforcing ego. Carl Jung further amplifies upon the realm of Freud's unconscious to explain that it is a struggle between the forces of the evil shadow, the wise old man, and the freewheeling,
sometimes irrational anima (von Franz, 177; Jung, 1959: 22). Keppler (1970) investigates the use of the double in myth and modern fiction correlating the shadow to the pursuer in Poe’s The Black Cat and Guy de Maupassant’s The Horla, and the tempter in the form of Mephistopheles’ offer to Faust. The wise old man is likened to the Savior in the relationship between Leggatt and the Captain in Conrad’s The Secret Sharer and the animus as the beloved in the torment between Cathy and Heathcliff in Brontë’s Wuthering Heights.

An examination of the double could also focus upon the interdependence of the parts of the self. Both Freud and Jung sought the integration of the personality, the knowing and the accepting of the disparate parts. Otto Rank, one of Freud’s inner circle and heir apparent until he challenged Freud’s belief that one’s locus of control was centered outside in the fear of the Father figure, suggests that the internal controls upon behavior derived from tradition, the environment, and genetics. Lieberman, the translator of Rank (1998) summarizes their contributions. "Freud’s is an ideology of conflict: id and superego, biology and society, father and son, wish and fear. Rank thinks in dichotomies... but reconciles the difference, the conflict, with an ideology of meaning, a strong, flexible bridge between the rational and irrational" (Rank xiv). In The Myth of the Birth of the Hero, Rank suggests that the hero, in order to produce creative work, must rely upon a Muse to help him in "his inward struggle between life and production or, psychologically speaking between impulse and will" (152-153). Pamuk’s novel focuses upon the similarities, rather than the differing factors that divide the two; albeit these differences are present. The Master sometimes beats the youth and hopes to enhance his career by using the scientific information that the slave has taught him. The slave hopes to regain his freedom and return to his waiting fiancée after the Hoja has used this information to become the Imperial Astrologer. While they collaborate on a book chapter about ants, Hoja explains, "even the most ordinary ant patiently carries his shadow around on his back like a twin" (Pamuk, 1990: 49).

Rank opens the way to object relations theory in his final work Beyond Psychology, completed shortly before his death in 1939, when he
returns to the concept of the double from his earlier work on the Hero and concludes that the psychology of the Self is to be found in the Other. "The ego needs the Thou in order to become a Self, be it on the individual plane of human relationship, or on the social plane of a foreign group-ideology, or on the broadest basis of one civilization needing another one for its development and maintenance" (Rank, 1958: 290).

Keppler also concludes that the double can lead to integration and interdependence, that the question of Who Am I can be answered not only through Jung's investigations into the collective unconsciousness, but also in the examination of the I-Thou relationship as articulated by Martin Buber (Keppler, 1972: 204-205; Buber, 1953: 63) "conscious of himself as sharing in being, as co-existing and thus as being," finds the self within relationships and shared reality with other people.

Phenomenologists, perhaps the forerunners of postmodern theory, continue to look at object relations theory and make actual lived experience, rather than the scientific reports of experience, the basic data of reality. Thus, it becomes important to examine the way in which humans come to understand events and objects through their conscious experience and interaction with them. Meaning is created from what we perceive through our senses. Verstehen (understanding) is an act of interpretation, of searching for and assigning meaning to an experience. Our experience as a decoder, as a perceiver, creates a meaning, which is then assigned to that phenomenon or event. Merleau-Ponty, (1945: viii) from the Phenomenological tradition, states that knowledge derives from experience. "All of my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless". He elaborates that this can be a reciprocal event:

As soon as my glance falls on a living body about to act, the objects, which surround him, obtain new significance. They are not only what I myself can do with them; they are also what the other can do with them. Around the perceived body a whirl forms which attracts and, as if it were, sucks in my world... my
world is not any more exclusively my own, it is not only present to me, it is also present to X, to this other behavior which begins to appear in him. Already, the other body is not only a simple fragment of the world but the place of a certain elaboration and of a certain view of the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 406)

Thus, we come to understand ourselves through our encounters with others in our environment. This process of encounter and feedback is not a simple stimulus-response event. Meaning is assigned to this experience. Meaning is not an objective process, an essence waiting to be discovered, but comes through the interface of an encounter with objects in our environment.

Social psychologist Solomon Asch (1952: 286-287) describes that process: "The role of others is of transcendent importance in forming the self. Just as the bodily self is in large part a function of our relation to things, so the self of motives and feelings is in large part a function of our relation to the human element. We do not know the kind of self we would find in a man who has grown up alone. It is in encounters with persons that we discover our selves and how different we are." Asch (1952: 142) compares human knowing to that of a paramecium. He notes that we interact with others; we do not just surround the other person chemically. We are capable of taking into account the emotions and thoughts of others and to internalize that "generalized other". We are then able to differentiate from or to identify with that other.

It is not just the experience of another, but also our orientation to it that creates meaning. Based upon the work of Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Kohler and studies of the process of perception, we know that what we see depends upon how we organize the information which we encounter. The classic example is the figure, which contains the image of the young girl and the old woman. Depending upon how we organize the information, and to a lesser extent our expectations, we see the young girl or the old woman. Generally, we expect the figure and ground to be different and to remain so. But do figure and ground remain separate and distinct or are there situations where they exchange places and the figure
becomes the ground and vice versa? Can there be a perception of the other based upon similarities rather than differences? Can the gestalt be completed if the roles of figure and ground, object and agent, are interchangeable? Can self be known through assimilating processes rather than from differentiation and individuating of boundaries? This assimilation and exchange of Other is critical in *The White Castle*, because it enables the men to trade identities and to protect the slave, the foreigner, from death at the hand of the Turkish soldiers.

Pamuk's novel is set in the latter part of the seventeenth century in Istanbul against the backdrop of the Ottoman Empire and its final expansion into Europe, but it is not historically accurate. The Italian slave, who has little knowledge of Turkish history and culture, tells the story in first person. Some of the events recounted in the narrative have actually happened, such as the reference to a great fire that broke out among the wooden houses in Istanbul. Other events such as the great plague in Istanbul have no referent in history. The reference to the bringing in of cats of every color by ship from Trabzon to control the rats, which brought the plague, would seem to be reflected in their numerous descendants, who currently inhabit the streets of Istanbul. Mehmed IV reigned as the sultan from 1648-1687 and his love of hunting expeditions is accurately depicted. Other individuals, such as the names of imperial astrologers, in the story do not match the historical records.

The story opens with an event that changes the life of a young student who is sailing in a flotilla of three ships from Venice to Naples. When he is captured by Turkish sailors, he saves himself and a few of his books by telling the lie that he is a medical doctor. On the basis that he is a doctor, he is taken to Istanbul. In the prison where he is held, he has ample opportunity to practice his new profession. After being called to treat the Pasha, where the youth's success depended more upon luck and time than upon his actual knowledge of medicine, he was released from prison by the now recovered Pasha. Our student hopes to gain his freedom and return to Italy, but his reward is to be given by the Pasha as a slave to Hoja, a teacher and astronomer. The story and the relationship between the master and the slave unfold when the slave becomes the teacher of the
master and as they vie for favor with the sultan through their efforts to educate his son and to create a weapon of mass destruction, an atomic bomb, for a final assault by the Ottoman army upon Poland.

Through their mutual self-disclosure and long association each begins to know the other and to assume the identity of the other. The boundaries between master and slave ebb and flow. The distinctions between Turkey and Italy, between the past, present, and future begin to blur and merge into the projection of one person. Images and experiences from the past are remembered and recreated in the present. Such experiences as looking through a window and seeing peaches and cherries piled upon a tray and a child's swing tied to the branch of a walnut tree and swaying slightly in the breeze are experienced simultaneously, in both the present and the past, and are seen by both men. One remembers these objects from his childhood in Italy and the other sees them through their recreation in stories by the first observer. Later that other travels to Italy and views for himself that summer fruit on the inlaid tray and the child's swing. Which man owns this experience is no longer clear. It no longer matters whether their knowledge of an event comes from the actual experience or from participating in the retelling of that experience. The boundaries in this gestalt figure are not stable"...while I followed his movements, his daily actions, I was sometimes overcome by the feeling that I was watching myself. Looking at a child, a youth, a man will sometimes see his own childhood and youth and observe him with love and curiosity: the fear and curiosity I felt was of that kind: it often came back to me how he had grasped the nape of my neck and said,'I have become you' (Pamuk, 1990: 103).

An encounter, a look, a smile and even a collaboration on a project with an exchange of angry words are all events that have the potential to change a person's life or at least to occupy his or her thoughts and actions for a period of time. The process of mutual perception can also create a bond between persons. Georg Simmel (1969: 358) observes that the process of mutual glances is the most direct and purest form of reciprocity: "This mutual glance between persons, in distinction from the simple sight or observation of the other, signifies a wholly new and
unique union between them . . . By the glance which reveals the other, one discloses himself. By the same act in which the observer seeks to know the observed, he surrenders himself to be understood by the observer. The eye cannot take unless at the same time it gives"

Not all of their memories and encounters are idyllic. The two men bond through participation in power games and mutual self-criticism. Each needs the other and tries to intersect on a dimension other than that of master and slave. They share their dreams; they harass each other into telling about their faults and sins. The bulk of contempt for the other had been held by the Master for his slave. The slave sees in the ritual of confession the opportunity to equalize the relationship. He recalls: "I felt that if I could make Hoja doubt himself just a little more, if I could read a few of those confessions he carefully kept from me and subtly humiliate him, then he would be the slave and the sinner of the house, not I" (Pamuk, 1990:69). During these manipulations he anticipates gaining his freedom. At one point when Hoja is ill from what he thinks is the plague, the slave runs away to one of the islands in the Sea of Marmara. Before his departure the issue of their separate identities reappears when they examine their bodies in the mirror for plague pustules. From the reflections in the glass they perceive that the two of them have become one person. Eager to establish himself as a separate person the slave recounts: "I quickly ran my hands through my hair. But he imitated my gesture and did it perfectly, without disturbing the symmetry of the mirror image at all" (Pamuk, 1990: 82). He becomes aware that the two of them had become one person, that the incident of noting their resemblance on the first day of their meeting, many years ago, was an obvious truth." Hoja finally tries to affirm that he knows him and his fears. He says, "I have become you "(Pamuk, 1990: 83). Despite their long years of association and the times when they sat at the table, like brothers, at first the one learning from the other and then learning from each other, Hoja has come to the moment of truly being alone. He attempts to transfer that fear to his slave, so they can share this most terrible moment of existence, death.
After this emotionally exhausting experience and the respite on the island in the company of fishermen, the slave plans to return to Italy, but he realizes that he is not free from this relationship. He resolves to forget Hoja, but he is unable to do so and misses him. "I longed for him passionately; did he actually resemble me as much as he did in memory or was I fooling myself? ...I felt the urge to go to Istanbul and see his corpse one last time" (Pamuk, 1990: 89). Before he can return to check the uncanny resemblance, Hoja comes to take him back to Istanbul.

Initially the two men looked down upon each other, but to survive they had to cooperate and work together. Despite their successful pyrotechnics for the Pasha, the youth is not free to return to Italy; he is the Hoja's slave. Each has something, which the other wants. The youth possesses knowledge of science and technology, which is unknown in Turkey. The youth desires his freedom. Hoja has the power to give or deny that freedom, but he wants the youth to teach him everything that he knows as a condition of that freedom. They develop a symbiotic relationship. In the end each gets what he wants; only it is tempered by circumstance. The Youth gets his freedom, but he must stay in Turkey and assume the identity of his master. Hoja assumes the identity of the youth and is able to pursue knowledge and new experiences in Italy. They are able to accomplish this exchange of identity, when it is mandated by the failure of their doomsday machine which remains stuck in the mud during the battle to capture the White Castle. There is no opportunity for either of them to escape the wrath of the soldiers, who want a place to lay the blame for the failure of the campaign against the Poles. Both men are aware that their lives are in jeopardy:

Hoja no longer talked about sharing in the victory; although he didn't say so, I knew that he was thinking about the death of the former imperial astrologer; and when I dreamed of scenes from my childhood or the animals on our estate, I knew the same things were passing through his mind; I knew that he, too, was thinking that news of a victory at the castle would be our last chance, that he didn't really believe in this chance, didn't want it. I knew that there was a little church with its bell-tower ablaze in a village
destroyed in a rage against the castle that just could not be taken, and in that church the prayer intoned by a brave priest was summoning us to new life; that as we moved north the sun setting behind the hills of the forest awakened in him, as it did in me, a feeling of the perfection of something being silently, carefully, brought to completion. (Pamuk, 1990: 142-143).

The two men check their facts about each other's lives, exchange clothing and slip away into the fog of the night.

The slave returns to Istanbul, and now as Hoja, assumes the position of Imperial Astrologer. In order to establish his legitimacy with the Sultan, the new Hoja must continue the old Hoja's persona. Locked in a *Thousand and One Nights* scenario with the sultan he is forced to recreate the stories that he, as an Italian youth, had told Hoja. The slave declares his love for Hoja. He misses his Master. Their separation results from necessity, not from choice. Like Gilgamesh, who grieves the death of his double Enkidu in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Italian moves outside the boundaries of slave and master. Later he hears from a mysterious traveler who is on a journey to Mecca that Hoja was able to travel to Italy, write books and give lectures about the exotic Orient. Hoja had assumed the life of his slave, married his fiancée, now a widow, purchased back the old family home and restored its gardens. Each has assumed the life and identity of the other. Each has begun a new life.

Issues of individuation and identity occur for the master Hoja and his Italian slave on a micro level, but they could also be considered on a macro level. What happens when East encounters West? Postcolonial theorist Edward Said in *Orientalism* casts these issues in relation to political, rather than personal, relationships. Said finds that those interactions between West and East serve to strengthen and to set off or highlight the differences between the two. Said (1979: 3) describes how the East encounters the hegemonic West and becomes dominated and redefined by the West. He explains: "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even
underground self". Said argues that the encounter between East and West has created opposing identities that cannot be reconciled.

Orhan Pamuk is more optimistic than Said about this encounter. In an interview with Judy Stone (1994: 36) from Publisher's Weekly, Pamuk reveals his intent as a writer and notes that "What I am trying here is to make a game of it and to show that it doesn't matter whether you are an easterner or a westerner . . . The problem of east and west has been a huge weight for Turkish intellectuals". He further elaborates in New Perspectives Quarterly: "My instinct is that I should always try to put together things that previously had been thought to be incommensurate such as modernity, experimentalism and political Islam". New combinations are needed, a "hybridization" of the disparate parts. The theme of East-West encounter in The White Castle is continued in Pamuk's next two books, The Black Book (1994) and The New Life (1997). Turkey has changed through its contact with the West; albeit, this encounter has led to a type of schizophrenia that is exacerbated by Turkey's location between the two continents of Europe and Asia. Istanbul in effect is a bridge between two continents and two civilizations. Tanil Bora (1999: 47-48) in Istanbul between the Global and the Local points out that by virtue of its location in Europe and Asia the city faces the problems of being global and modern or local and Islamic. Pamuk seeks a new identity for Turkey, "a new life" that draws upon the experiences of both the East and the West (Stone, 1994: 21).

In The White Castle the East is unable to militarily prevail against the West to take it over or to displace its identity. The Hoja is unable to convince the slave to convert to Islam. The East encounters the West as Other and is fascinated by its knowledge and power. The West also encounters the East as Other, but at the end of the story has scorned it for being in decline, as having minds like "dirty cupboards filled with old junk" (Pamuk, 1990: 159). Nevertheless, in the mind of each of the main characters in The White Castle, one representing the East, the other the West, there is the thought that something valuable will be gained from the mutual encounter. This encounter consumes their waking hours, but in the end each man survives because he can assume the persona of the Other.
The new Hoja fools the Sultan and the old Hoja is accepted as the long lost son by the Italian slave's family. Can a sense of separate and interdependent identities be created through these interactions? Perhaps the self can be known through both individuating and integrating. For Pamuk the old dualities of East and West are no longer rigid containers. The gestalt is only completed when the roles of figure and ground, of object and agent, are interchangeable.

Jurgen, Ruesch (1968) attempts to deal with the question of individuation and integration by placing it into the context of the changing roles and expectations of psychiatrists. He writes that therapy is not just an agent-object relationship, but rather a reflexive process "in which they [therapists] are not only manipulators but participants - both active and passive" (Ruesch and Bateson, 1968: 255). The training of the therapist continues through interaction with patients; it is not completed once the diploma is hung upon the wall of an office. Formal reason and its legislative extension may define the roles of therapists and patients and of slaves and masters, but these individuals through their interactions also change and grow.

The examination of the continuing dynamic of interaction between master and slave in The White Castle reveals a changing relationship that does not neatly fit into the established boundaries and expectations of master and slave. By trading places each begins a new life, but they are not separated. In their memories they remain united. They both saw the fortified White Castle behind the dank swamp, which had swallowed up their siege engine, and know that this failure, which reveals the imperfectness of all of the knowledge and technology they have attained, will be paid for by their deaths, unless they can exchange identities. At the end of the story, both men have lived in Italy, and have seen the peaches and cherries on the tray, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, on the table near the divan with the green feather pillows. They observe the common sparrow perched on the edge of a well and the "swing tied with long ropes to a high branch of a walnut-tree" that "swayed slightly in a barely perceptible breeze" (Pamuk, 1990: 30, 165).
التفوق والتكامل في رواية أورهان باموك
الكلمة البيضاء

ملخص
تقدم هذه الرواية قراءة جديدة لرواية الكاتب التركي أورهان باموك على أنها معالجة تتسم بالتفاوت لموضوع المواجهة الحضارية بين الشرق والغرب. فالأديان تتعالج التحالف الناشئ عن ديناميكية العلاقة بين الشخصيتين الرئيستين فيها: السيد التركي جما (ممثلًا للحضارة الشرقية) وخادمه الإيطالي الشاب (ممثلًا للحضارة الغربية).

تبين القراءة الفاحصة لنص الرواية أن الكاتب يستخدم شخصية الظل أداة رواية ليفضح كيف يؤدي التفاعل المتبادل في العلاقات الإنسانية (The double) سواء بين الأفراد أو الحضارات، إلى تداخل في الصفات والطبيعة وتبادل للأدوار يقلص الفوارق إلى حد بعيد إن لم يلغها.

خلاصةً، لما يقوله أورهان باموك في كتابه الاستشراق من أن المواجهة بين الشرق والغرب انتهت بتشكل هويتين حضاريةتين غير قابلتين للإنتقال. يحاول باموك أن يدال على أن لقاء الحضارات وتصادمها، تماماً كما هو الحال مع الأشخاص، يشكل فرصة للتفاعل الدينيمائي ويؤدي في نهاية المطاف إلى النمو والتغيير والتقارب.
Works Cited


