

## Cultural Melancholy as represented in Orhan Pamuk's *White Castle*

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### Abstract

This research paper is meant to explore the use of melancholy as an explanatory model to understand the individual and the collective psyche in dealing with the historical and cultural dilemmas. It will further explore individual and collective melancholy and their effects, whether destructive or constructive within Orhan Pamuk's novel *The White Castle*, belonging to the modern Turkish literature.

**Keywords:** Melancholy, Pamuk, Turkish Literature, Freud, Ottoman Empire

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*“My melancholy is the most faithful mistress I have known, what wonder, then, that I love her in return” (Kierkegaard 44)*

This research paper is meant to use melancholy as an explanatory model to understand the individual and the collective psyche in dealing with the historical and cultural dilemmas. It will further explore individual and collective melancholy and their effects, whether destructive or constructive within Orhan Pamuk's novel *The White Castle*, belonging to the modern Turkish literature.

Throughout history, the concept of ‘Melancholia’ has been the subject of diverse analytical efforts. The origin of the term “Melancholy” goes back to the ancient Greek times. *Melan Khole* is the Greek word for “Black Bile”, a body fluid thought to affect mental and physical health (Hippocrates 460-370 BC). Melancholy was considered then as a form of mental illness caused by a bio-functional problem. A person who has an excess of black bile was described as melancholic. Around 350 BC, Aristotle's *Problemata* XXX.1 presented the melancholic as capable of greatness: “the humour of heroes and great men”. Later, Plato (424-347 BC) linked melancholy with “frenzy, through which

divine inspiration could be achieved" (Marin 1). Aristotle's and Plato's definitions associate melancholy with creativity and giftedness.

It was Galen (AD 129-200) who developed Aristotle's concept into the "Theory of Four Temperaments" (Stelmack and Stalikas 255). Galen linked anxiety and depression to black bile. The melancholic within Galen's theory is described as serious, suspicious, susceptible to depression and moodiness, not sociable, preoccupied with tragedy and cruelty of the world, and full of sympathy for others' suffering (258-260). Melancholy continued to be considered as a mental illness or as evil in the Medieval times until the fifteenth century when Marsilio Ficino, father of Renaissance Neo-Platonism, introduced the concept of melancholy "as a gift and a medium through which man was brought nearer to the divine" (Marin 1), bringing Aristotle's and Plato's definitions to life.

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton introduced different kinds of love that cause melancholy when immoderate or excessive. Love, for Burton, is "a species of melancholy" (8). He used the term "love-melancholy" to describe the confusion, pain and torture of a love-sick person (28). Burton crossed the medical boundaries to position melancholy in the social context.

It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century when the concept of melancholy started to gain new dimensions. In an essay titled *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Sigmund Freud defines melancholia as one's reaction to the loss of a valued beloved object. The lost object continues to exist in the unconsciousness and the melancholic person shows lack of interest in the outside world with a loss in his self-regard and ego (243-244). Melancholy for Freud is "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). He argues that the melancholic might be aware of the loss but cannot perceive what has been lost inside him (245).

Freud highlights the difference between melancholy and mourning. In melancholy, the lost object continues to exist in the patient's unconsciousness in contradiction to mourning, which makes the latter easily recoverable with time (244). According to Freud, "mourning" is the successful integration of loss into consciousness. In "melancholia," Freud maintains, a loss that is unmourned and barred from recognition is displaced discretely onto the subject's ego, enacting an unconscionable loss of self. Mourning is considered healthy because "we rest assured that after a lapse of time it will be overcome" (*Mourning and Melancholia* 240).

The lowered self-regard and the loss in ego are suggested by Freud as part of the melancholic process. According to Freud: “The melancholic displays ... an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale” (*Mourning and Melancholia* 245). Freud’s description of melancholia pointed out, as mentioned earlier, that it is not the world which has become poor and empty. It is the ego who has been invaded by this gloomy emptiness.

The gravity of the loss is directly related to the likelihood of developing a melancholic state. Not every person would mechanically turn into melancholic in response to a loss however traumatic. The more the person is attached to the lost object, the more likely he will sink into melancholy. The melancholic attachment to the lost object supersedes any need to recover from the loss. Hence, melancholia turns into a persistent state motivated by a desire to melancholize.

The initiation of the melancholic process depends also on one’s susceptibility to melancholy. Galen’s theory describes the melancholic personality as preoccupied with tragedy and cruelty of the world, and full of sympathy for others. Only a person with melancholic traits of personality experiences the public suffering as a source of great worry or stress.

Another important melancholic trait of personality is seeking perfection. This trait is related to the early definitions of melancholy brought by Aristotle and Plato who linked melancholy to creativity. Melancholy, for them, is the gloom brought by intellectual talent. The melancholic gets to know he is not perfect, neither is the world. This is represented within the melancholic process by the gradual loss in one’s ego that the process generates. Hence, seeking perfection seems to be a normal defensive reaction to compensate the loss in ego. Therefore, a melancholic person turns eager to learn and to understand. He also becomes over analytical of the world around him.

Once the perfect settings for the initiation of the melancholic process are there, melancholic reactions and influences take place. The melancholic attachment to the lost object usually triggers a need to blame someone for the loss. The act of blaming oneself or the others for unpleasant happenings is not restricted to melancholy. Still, it is an inevitable outcome of melancholy which justifies other aspects of melancholy such as lowered self-regard and withdrawal tendencies. As noted above, the melancholic is a perfectionist who seeks high standards which sometimes are not realistic. When these standards are not met, the melancholic gets distressed. Therefore, he tends to be critical.

This need-to-blame acts in two directions, externally and internally. In other words, the melancholic usually blames the others and himself for the loss.

Blaming others involves embarking on a quest to explore the possible reasons behind the loss: an action which is related to the over-analytical melancholic trait of personality. On the other hand, blaming one-self is related to the melancholic person's awareness of his own weakness. The melancholic spends his days waiting for punishment for the fact of loss. For him, the loss is so big that it cannot be left unpunished. This punishment should fall upon him, to release his pain.

One key to understanding melancholy is to realize that it fluctuates between destructive and constructive modes. For Freud, the negative aspects include painful depression, world-weariness, incapacity to love, inhibition of all activity, a lowering of self-regard accompanied with self-blame and "a delusional expectation of punishment" (*Mourning* 244). Freud claims that "the same traits are met with in mourning, [except that] the disturbance of self-regard is absent" (244).

On the other hand, Freud's definition is not devoid of melancholia's positive sides. He claims that the melancholic "has a keener eye for the truth", and by lowering his self-regard and ego, "he has come pretty near to understanding himself" (246). Melancholia hereby appears as an enabling mode for self-exploration and better understanding of the world. It is a journey of wisdom. In her book *Affective Mapping*, Jonathan Flatley sheds some spotlights on the presence of anti-depressive melancholia. Flatley argues that "within the discourse of melancholia we find a dialectic between emotional withdrawal and its apparent opposite, the most intense or exceptional devotion of affective energy" (Flatley 1). For Flatley, melancholia has the power of enhancing one's engagement with the world in a positive manner.

Another positive aspect of melancholia is that it may be considered as a source of knowledge. In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton affirms that knowledge might be produced by the creative contemplation which is triggered, fed and facilitated by the state of melancholia. Burton states: "they get their knowledge by books, I mine by melancholizing"<sup>4</sup> (Flatley 2). This statement from Burton turns the concept for the Freudian unconscious reaction to a loss to a conscious practice based on the acts of contemplation and retrieval of memories. According to Flatley, Burton suggests that melancholizing is not an accidental practice that we fall in due to an external provocation such as a bad weather:

Instead, melancholizing is something one does: longing for lost loves, brooding over absent objects and changed environments, reflecting on unmet desires, and lingering on events from the past. It is a practice that might, in fact, produce its own kind of knowledge. (Flatley 2)

An important concept of melancholy is provided by Emily Brady and Arto Haapala where melancholy is defined as an aesthetic emotion with a dual nature that involves negative and positive aspects, thus “creating contrasts and rhythms of pleasure” besides the mood of sadness it involves (1). Unlike depression, melancholy comprises “the pleasure of reflection and contemplation” of the lost object/person through memories, thoughts or imagination. The hope of having the lost object/person back “adds a touch of sweetness” (1). Memories hereby play an important role in the melancholic process as a narrative for melancholy. The relationship between melancholia and memory extends to the level of increasing awareness of the loss. Such awareness impacts the way one feels about his present and the way he acts further.

In some cases, melancholy arises without retrieving a memory or an object of reflection. For Brady and Haapala, melancholy seems to “come over us without reason, and have the quality of being settled, all-pervasive, and drawn out” (3). The melancholic mood descends upon us and is caused by being in a place that easily invites reflection such as sitting on a wooden bench watching the ocean.

Moreover, solitude, for Brady and Haapala, is both a cause and effect of melancholy which facilitates the retrieval of memories. Solitude clarifies how melancholy is associated with nature which is used “as a retreat from people and problems... [which evokes] a melancholy mood” (1). One type of melancholic self-punishment is the withdrawal from worldly activities and the disengagement from social space. This normally pushes the melancholic subject into feelings of loneliness. Loneliness, in the melancholic process, is a negative loop. The melancholic person finds himself pushed to loneliness by melancholy and within loneliness melancholy grows further.

In addition, Brady and Haapala describe the role of imagination in melancholy by “associating between a present and past experience... [and fantasizing] around the memories of melancholy... Through fancy, imagination extends memories in a way that deepens reflection, and in turn deepens the feeling... It also enables us to prolong the emotion, creating new scenarios as sources of pleasure and meditation” (1). Burton appraises melancholic

imagination as an “incomparable delight”; to melancholize is more alike to “build[ing] castles in the air” (14).

As much as Freud's definition is considered a basis for modern conceptualization of melancholy, the complexity of the term and its multidisciplinary nature has attracted many theorists and researchers to position it as an explanatory frame for artistic, social, cultural, and historical formulas. The abstraction of Freud's lost object has allowed for further interpretations of and applications for the melancholic process within many disciplines. Judith Butler argues that “when certain kinds of losses are compelled by a set of culturally prevalent prohibitions, we might expect a culturally prevalent form of melancholia” (139). In light of Butler's argument, the lost object could be defined within a cultural context as one's freedom, cultural legacy, or sense of home. Butler hereby introduces another dimension in understanding the concept of melancholy by shifting it from individual to communal melancholy.

Furthermore, it can be argued that collective melancholy can take place when a group of people share the same loss. The relation between individual and collective melancholy takes the form of reciprocal exchange rather than merely bearing similarities. This line of reasoning is based on Paul Ricoeur's argument for the legitimacy of the transposition of psychological categories from the individual to the collective (Mathy 12). This reciprocal exchange of melancholy between the individual and the collective reinforces the influence of the melancholic process within today's society.

An interesting point of debate is how melancholy is different from trauma. Trauma has been defined, in the early twentieth century, as an acute psychological response caused by a traumatic event which is too powerful to deal with in the normal way. The symptoms of trauma vary between hallucinations, repetitive flashbacks, memory loss and dreams about the traumatic experience. It is to note that many scholars understand melancholy and mania as the pre-modern trauma due to apparent similarities in symptoms.

However, this paper supports the argument that melancholy is different than trauma based on three main aspects. First, melancholy can be initiated due to a loss of an abstraction such as a love relationship or one's sense of home. In such case, the case is far from being described as a traumatic event. In addition, the melancholic reaction intensifies with time rather than instantly after the occurrence of loss. Secondly, melancholy has its positive aspects. For example, the repetitive flashbacks of the traumatic event are mostly horrifying. In the case of melancholy, memorizing the lost object involves recollection of both the sweet and sad memories in addition to imagining new scenarios with the lost object in purpose of pleasure. Finally, the way that nature and some places stir

feelings of melancholy such as the melancholy of ruins is not something explainable in the context of trauma.

Melancholy should not be considered an ancient or pre-modern term. According to Sanja Bahun in her *Modernism and Melancholia*, the term “modernity” is derived from the Greek word *modernus* which means “now” or “of today”. Such definition suggests that “the past is lost and gone” (28). It further implies that something or someone has been lost across time which provides a perfect setting for the melancholic process to take place. In addition, our inability to achieve our utopian dreams of modernity ends by triggering melancholy further. As Bahun puts it, “the utopian promises of modernity put the modern subject in a precariously depressive position. This is because the promises of modernity are never fulfilled” (30-32). Accordingly, it is quite acceptable to argue that a form of collective cultural melancholy inevitably emerges from within our modern world dilemmas.

It, therefore, seems legitimate to use the melancholic process as an explanatory model to understand the individual and the collective psyche in dealing with the historical and cultural dilemmas in the modern world. At the core of the conceptual framework of this paper lies the Freudian melancholic process which comprises the following elements: lost object and its value, melancholic attachment to the lost object, melancholic memory, reflection, imagination, self-regard, destructive and constructive modes.

The term ‘melancholic process’ is meant hereby to refer to the series of actions, factors and settings that initiate and promote melancholy further in addition to the various melancholic reactions generated in result. The term ‘melancholic process’ also includes both the constructive and destructives modes of melancholy in addition to the consequent alteration in individual and collective behavior.

In this paper, a detailed analysis of the concept of melancholia and its novelistic representation is provided for Orhan Pamuk’s novel: *The White Castle* (1985). The novel has been translated into English from the Turkish language, the mother tongue of its author. The main purpose of this analysis is to reveal the implicit melancholic mood in the novel under study and to explain how the melancholic process is present and active. It is a specific objective of this paper, as well, to validate the use of the melancholic process as an explanatory model to understand the individual and the collective psyche in dealing with historical and cultural dilemmas.

*The White Castle* was written in Turkish language by Pamuk under the title *Beyaz Kale* in 1985 and later translated to English in 1990. The novel explores the signs of illness within the Ottoman society amid the seventeenth century which eventually led to its complete downfall. It fictionally portrays the battle over Western-Eastern identity amid the seventeenth century near the fall of the Ottoman Empire. An Italian scientist is enslaved during a Turkish fleet attack and put in prison. Hoja, a Turkish astrologist who exactly looked like the Italian, took him into his own custody. Throughout a long journey of mutual hatred, jealousy, curiosity and friendship, the unofficial twins tried to figure out their true identities. The confrontation between Hoja and the Italian puts their feelings of superiority at stake. Digging deep in their own fears and memories, they lost their own perception of self. They ended up switching their own identities and each one of them embraced the life of the other as if it was his own.

The analysis of the melancholic process within any novel is better to start by identifying the occurred melancholic losses. When the loss is of a collective type, an investigation should take place for the political and cultural conflicts within the literary text. In the case of *The White Castle*, the Western-Eastern conflict gets a considerable attention from Pamuk, which in turns brings up postcolonialism into the context. However, the Turkish lands have not been colonized. Hence, the novel cannot be classified as a postcolonial text which reacts to the discourse of colonization. Having said that, the fact that the novel is dominated by the confrontation between the West and the East and their battle over domination cannot be ignored. The novel also shares the same purpose of postcolonial narratives which is to reject western domination.

In this battle, each of the cultural identities of both civilizations tries to dominate and impose itself as the norm, suppress the other identity and push it to disintegrate. Previous to the fall of the Ottoman empire, the Turkish house was already full of cracks. The Turkish identity had lost the war long before the Ottoman armies were defeated. Signs and Symptoms of an inevitable submission could not be ignored. The Ottomans' feeling of superiority over the West had started to dissolve, and nothing was in their hands to stop it. The collapse of the Turkish empire is asserted hereby to be responsible of the formation of cultural melancholic subjects suffering from the loss of cultural identity.

Our main thematic concern, in the novel in hand, is the melancholic reaction to the encountered losses of identity on the individual and collective levels triggered by the fact that the nation goes through a phase of decline. The lost object is the origin and the center around which everything revolves.



Following Freud's and Butler's assertions, it is assumed hereby that the nature of the lost object can be an abstraction in a social or cultural context. The lost object, within *The White Castle*, is assumed hereby to be the fading of an era of greatness on the collective scale. This collective loss casts a shadow on individual losses. The analysis of Hoja's character shows that he suffers losses in his sense of superiority as a consequence. Accordingly, the lost object in *The White Castle* can be identified as a person's sense of superiority.

For Hoja, the Turkish astrologist, the Ottoman empire stands as the legend of superiority of one's kind. Near the downfall of the Ottoman empire, Hoja felt the irrelevance of such supremacy over the west. According to the Italian, Hoja felt that "he was doomed to failure as they were" (*The White Castle* 107). Such a feeling unsettled his confidence at the core and questioned his belief in himself. The narrator describes Hoja's gradual degradation of confidence: "He believed in himself even less than he had the day before" (*The White Castle* 69). As a melancholic subject, Hoja has a sense of loss but seems unable to share it with others. It is a loss that is kept unmourned. This could be easily related to his failure in interpreting the origin of his pain and the melancholic disorder of identity that overtook him.

The Italian, simultaneously, has his own individual losses of melancholic type. The fact that he has been enslaved in foreign lands causes him severe losses on his sense of home. His displaced and exilic condition initiates another case of cultural melancholy. The Italian explains the pain he feels: "Perhaps I was prompted by the longing I must have felt for the happiness of that life I'd lost" (*The White Castle* 61). Longing appears hereby as an indication for attachment to the lost object. This melancholic attachment is strengthened further by both longing and pleasant memories. The melancholic attachment to the lost object supersedes any need to recover from the loss. Hence, melancholia turns into a persistent state motivated by a desire to melancholize. Melancholizing takes place by either the repetitive retrieval of memories of the lost object, or by the imagination of new scenarios as a source of pleasure and meditation. This desire to melancholize is not only triggered by the pleasure of retrieval of memories and contemplation, but sometimes by the pleasure of torturing one's self to relieve feelings of guilt.

Hoja's personality showed noticeable susceptibility to melancholy. The lost object in *The White Castle* is based on the facts that the protagonist carries the burden of the nation. Only a person with melancholic traits of personality experiences the public suffering as a source of great worry or stress. Watching the decay of the Ottoman empire is a source of mental torment for Hoja across Pamuk's novel. He couldn't feel such a pain unless he, as a melancholic, gives

much attention to the collective welfare. In fact, not every collective type of loss such as the decay of a nation turns into a melancholic type of loss unless the person already demonstrates this trait of personality. It has a role in magnifying the loss and the pain it brings within that the person chooses to escape the pressure by refusing to mourn that loss.

Pursuing perfection is another highlighted trait of personality in the novel under study. Being a scientist that works on developing astrological theories and inventing a new destruction weapon, Hoja has the melancholic profile of a knowledgeable intellectual with an investigative mind. This helps further explaining how Hoja perceives himself eventually as a savior or a guiding prophet for the world around him.

The need-to-blame is one of the most expected melancholic reactions. Hoja has obvious melancholic tendency to blame the others, an inevitable outcome of melancholy. In one scene, Hoja accuses the others of imperfection: "It was the others who were evil; not everyone, certainly, but it was because most people were imperfect and negative that everything was wrong in the world" (*The White Castle* 66). Moreover, blaming others involves embarking on a quest to explore the possible reasons behind the loss. *The White Castle* shows Hoja's need to explore the reasons behind the loss and further put the blame. For Hoja, the Ottoman empire's negligence of science is a main reason of its decrepitude. The Sultan is first to blame for not providing guidance in this matter. Hoja describes the Sultan as "a pathetic child-king who was impaled at the stake because he paid no heed to science" (*The White Castle* 53). Secondly, the Turkish people are criticized for not sharing Hoja his dreams of scientific evolution (*The White Castle* 38).

Hoja, the Turkish astrologist, kept describing his own people "the fools" along the novel. According to Hoja, "the fools here cared as little for the stars as the stars for fools" (*The White Castle* 51). In another scene, the Italian says: "Like those fools who are content with their lives, the world, themselves, there was a crude smugness in my glance" (*The White Castle* 125). Both Hoja and the Italian accused others of being careless and ignorant. This implies that, for them, the others are not perceived to understand the true value of the lost object. The melancholic feels deep pain for the loss of a beloved object for which he is seriously attached. Hence, he keeps stressing in his acts on honoring the value of the lost object. He also makes sure that the occurrence of the loss is not washed out from others' memory.

The melancholic person simultaneously blames himself for the loss. Hoja's tendency to blame someone for the occurred loss, hereby defined as the era of Ottoman greatness and the correspondent sense of superiority, is not only

directed to others. He starts to blame himself, being aware of his own imperfection. In Pamuk's novel, the Italian convinces Hoja that "he had his negative sides like everyone else, and if he delved into them he would find his true self" (*The White Castle* 65). This statement explains the relation between the melancholic's eagerness for truth and his awareness of his own imperfection. When he gets to recognize his weakness, he gets obsessed with the exploration of his own self.

The melancholic need-to-blame eventually turns into an eagerness for punishment. This can be explained that the act of punishment confirms and exposes the occurrence of shortfalls or deficiencies, and further admits the occurrence of loss. Punishment is anticipated to fall on the melancholic own self and on others. In *The White Castle*, Hoja kept waiting for the punishment of the Turkish people over the loss of their superiority over the West due to their incompetence:

These [Turkish victories] were the last of merely fleeting successes, the pathetic wriggings of a cripple soon to be buried in the slime of idiocy and incompetence: he seemed to be waiting for some disaster to change the monotony of these days that exhausted us all the more as they repeated one another. (*The White Castle* 57)

Another important melancholic reaction is the disengagement from worldly activities which makes the melancholic less sociable. Neither Hoja nor the Italian showed interest in marriage or even engaging in any kind of love affairs. This typical melancholic reaction, by withdrawal from social space and seeking loneliness, is an explicit type of melancholic self-punishment. The Italian reports: "The pasha asked if I'd been to a whorehouse since I arrived, and hearing my answer, said if I had no desire for a woman what good would freedom be to me?" (*The White Castle* 23).

Moreover, the novel sheds some light on losses from which the melancholic suffers in terms of self-regard and identity. In a winter night, the Italian convinced Hoja to write down about his weaknesses and sins in purpose of self-exploration. The Italian says:

I watched him slowly unravel: he'd write something critical about himself then tear it up without showing it to me, each time losing more of his self-confidence and self-respect, but then he'd begin again, hoping to recover what he'd lost. (*The White Castle* 68)

In this scene, Pamuk gives the reader an opportunity to observe how a melancholic person practices self-punishment by criticizing himself and his

self-regard is lowered in result. Hence, the melancholic disorder of identity is directly caused by the melancholic self-punishment.

These melancholic damages in one's identity is stressed upon in Pamuk's novel in many scenes. Pamuk uses stream of consciousness technique where the Italian slave is the narrator. Throughout the novel, the name of the Italian is not mentioned. Having an unnamed character is hereby suggested to refer to the erosion of identity throughout the novel as part of the melancholic process. When the Italian remembers in his dreams his previous life in Venice, he recognizes how different he has become:

In those days I was a different person, even called a different name by mother, fiancée and friends. Once in a while I will see in my dreams that person who used to be me, or who I now believe was me, and wake up drenched in sweat. (*The White Castle* 14)

For the Italian, the past has not only turned hazy and blurred but almost lost. Such a loss brings up pain into his mind and soul:

It pains me to think, when I have to invent a past for myself, that this youth who talked with his beloved about his passions, his plans, about the world and science, who found it natural that his fiancée adored him, was actually me. (*The White Castle* 15)

The Italian's reaction to his loss shows hereby gradual dilution in his identity. By not naming the Italian throughout the novel, Pamuk is stressing upon this dilution.

Pamuk treats the melancholic reaction of lowering self-regard in a unique way. In order to inform the reader of the internal struggle in terms of identity, he presents Hoja and the Italian as an identical twin. Hence, the confrontation between them can reflect upon the struggle between the melancholic and his own self. The resemblance between the Turkish and the Italian was unbelievable: "It was *me* there... I seemed to have forgotten what my own face looked like. As he sat down facing me, I realized that it had been a year since I last looked in a mirror" (*The White Castle* 22).

This resemblance, been repetitively stressed upon throughout the novel, has another function than revealing the internal struggle. It attracts the reader's mind to identify the true difference between them. It gives an opportunity to focus on their identities and explore the way they perceive themselves and the way they are perceived in this melancholic setting. The fact that they mirror each other in the physical sense offers exciting outlook of how other factors interfere with the way one perceives himself in the mirror. Moreover, the

meaning of this statement could be extended to include how other factors impact one's perception of himself and his perception of others.

A different line of analysis can be provided if the focus is shifted to one's relation with his own self. For example, if one can look in the mirror to see his own image, like the Italian does when looking at Hoja or vice versa, it doesn't mean he knows her or that he is able to harmonize or deal with her. This could be explained by the following Italian's thoughts: "Just as a person could view his external self in the mirror, he should be able to observe the interior of his mind in his thoughts" (*The White Castle* 66). For the mirror stands hereby as the magic door to the world of intangibles where one could have access to explore his own self.

*The White Castle* can be considered as a complex structure of mirrors that helps us to understand the influence between the collective melancholy and the individual one. These mirrors reflect streams of fear, unachieved dreams and different types of melancholic losses in specific. The Turkish world is reflected through Hoja, while the Western world is reflected through the Italian slave. Hence, confrontations on the collective scale initiate confrontations on the individual one. When Hoja and the Italian found themselves in front of each other wherein between them lies this virtual mirror, a whole set of perceptions is brought up: the way Hoja perceives himself and the Italian, and the way the Italian perceives himself and Hoja.

The occurred damages on the level of identity, due to the fact of loss, can be repaired by the melancholic self-indulgence. In Pamuk's novel, Hoja's journey turns to be a continuous effort to recuperate his identity loss. Trying to define his true identity, Hoja starts to put his thought on papers with the title "Why I Am What I Am?"; instead, he finds himself writing about the reasons the Turkish people were so inferior and stupid (*The White Castle* 64). Hoja's identity confusion is shown to be interrelated with the collective loss in identity that the Turkish people suffer from. Such interrelation is an evidence of how the individual and the collective have reciprocal exchange of melancholy. As previously mentioned, the melancholic person carries the burden of the people. This main trait of melancholic personality is responsible for this continuing melancholic influence between the collective and the individual.

On the collective level, the Western-Turkish battle over domination hovers over Pamuk's novel. The battle is fed by each side's belief in his own superiority. Such belief is a source of pride. The novel sheds light in many scenes on this battle of pride and submission. In one scene, we encounter the Italian slave kissing the skirt of a pasha to please him in an act of submission:

“After letting me kiss the hem of his skirt, the pasha treated me gently” (*The White Castle* 31). This battle of pride and submission influences the battle over identity between Hoja and the Italian. The high sense of pride they felt pushed them into exchanging feelings of contempt at the early stages: “In those days it was perhaps only in this way we understood each other: each of us looked down on the other” (*The White Castle* 25). The Italian relates these mutual feelings of contempt to feelings of the other's superiority and difference:

The more he realized that I was indifferent to these problems, the more contemptuous he became, but I thought at the time that he discerned my ‘superiority and difference’, and perhaps he was irritated because he believed that I, too, was aware of it. (*The White Castle* 35)

The battle over superiority between the West and the East casts its shadows on Hoja's relation with the Italian slave. It seems apparent through the novel, that Hoja's main reason of taking the Italian slave into his own custody is his curiosity to find out what makes the West getting superior. The Italian states:

What he [Hoja] really wanted was to learn what ‘they’ thought, those like me, the ‘others’ who had taught me all that science, placed those compartments, those drawers full of learning inside my head. What would they think were they in his situation? It was this he was dying to ask, but couldn't bring himself to do so. (*The White Castle* 54)

Hoja's pride in his Turkish identity did not allow him to ask the Italian directly why they are getting superior. So, pride comes next to superiority in the battle between the West and the East. This pride of one's identity is also explicit in the Italian's slave perception of his Western world. In one scene, the Italian states:

He was mocking my country and what I had left behind. Angrily, I searched for something to say to hurt him, and suddenly, without thinking, without believing it, I declared that only he could discover who he was, but he wasn't man enough to try. It gave me pleasure to see his face contort with pain. (*The White Castle* 60)

In addition, the battle of pride and submission between two melancholic subjects suffering from lowering self-regard, shows what can be called offensive and defensive melancholic attitudes. In such a battle between two loose identities, each one capitalizes on the shortfalls of the other to gain confidence in his own self. The Italian admits: “True, I gained some confidence from his hesitation” (*The White Castle* 24). It is similar to a wild confrontation

between two starving beasts, each one wants to feed upon the other or at least deepens his wounds. This picture is part of a greater picture describing the nature of humankind's endless competition.

This wild confrontation also can be understood in light of Georg Hegel, the German Philosopher, who discussed this life-and-death struggle in description of his master-slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807). For Hegel, the condition of master and slave is the outcome of what could be called "life-and-death struggle" (Hegel 114). The master and slave force each other to the "extremes" to gain "an existence of their own" (Hegel 114). In this deadly contest, both parties discover the significance and value of their existence. In other words, according to Hegel, each of the master and slave recognizes his own identity and purpose of life only in confrontation with the other. There is a mutual dependence between master and slave rather than dominance and submission.

Moreover, by switching identities and embracing each other's life, the novel suggests that equality is a universal value. When the Italian slave was given to Hoja by a pasha at the beginning of the novel, it was suggested that he would be able to assist him. As the Italian puts it: "The pasha thought I would be able to assist him – we would complement one another" (*The White Castle* 23). The pasha's statement turned to be a prophecy that is revealed eventually to be true. Not only equality is suggested but also collaboration between mankind is an appraised value.

Pamuk seems to have purposefully chosen "The White Castle" as a title for his novel. In an important scene, the Turkish army had mobilized all its troops to attack a white castle where the western enemy had sheltered. The Sultan, as a symbol of the Ottoman empire, was on head of the Turkish army. Realizing that the white castle was well fortified, the Sultan decided to push a destruction machine to the front lines. The weapon was the highest invention of Hoja. It was the last hope for the Turks to put an end for their successive defeats. Instead, the weapon sank in the mud and gave an opportunity for the enemy to crush the Turks in an embarrassing way. In fear of Sultan's revenge, Hoja fled to Italy after switching his identity with his non-official twin, the Italian.

The "White Castle" is a materialization of the Western-Eastern battle over identity. It refers to how the Western identity has been perceived by the Turks, a strong and fortified identity that cannot be beaten. The "White Castle" is the announcement of defeat and the end of an era of greatness for the Ottoman empire. It is the collapse of all the Turkish dreams of superiority. The

nation has lost its historical privileged position and this type of loss has turned to a collective melancholic loss.

An important point of analysis is the identification of the used mediums of exchange of melancholy through the literary text. Nature has been used by Pamuk as a medium of melancholic exchange between melancholic subjects. In *The White Castle*, every aspect of life turns into a reflective element where the mind perceives the shadows of one's griefs. All that the eyes can visualize and the ears can hear reveal the true agony of the loss. The Italian describes:

...those paupers with heads bowed, muddy roads, buildings left half-finished, dark, strange streets, people pleading..., grieving mothers and fathers, ... machines left idle, souls whose eyes were moist from lamenting for the good old days, stray dogs reduced to skins and bones, villagers without any land. (*The White Castle* 109-110)

It is this complex combination of elements that diffuse the pain and sadness without any sign of a way out, that together weave the collective melancholic mood. And this mood is transferable. The melancholic mood hereby is spreading all over the city like a noisy song devoid of beauty. In many scenes, the novel presents the melancholic mood as contagious. The Italian describes the spread of the melancholic mood, contagious it is, as black sparrows flying around the city, moving from branch to branch: "There was no movement outside other than that of the sparrows chirping and fluttering from branch to branch among the linden trees" (*The White Castle* 86).

Finally, *The White Castle* successfully reflects upon the fading Ottoman identity near the fall of the empire within a vivid melancholic setting. Pamuk tackles professionally the mutual influence between the individual and collective identity. The melancholic reactions of withdrawal, the need-to-blame, self-punishment and the lowered self-regard are present and active across the novel. With its beautiful imagery and highly descriptive technique, the melancholic mood spread all the novel is easily transferrable to the reader's mind.



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