

Self-Orientalization in Postmodern Non-Western Fiction: A Critical Assessment of the Representation of Female Characters in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*

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### Abstract

The main critical objective of this study is to examine the representation of women in Orhan Pamuk's masterpiece, *Snow*, as a case study of self-orientalization of female characters in the postmodern non-western literature written under the influence of western secularism. Through a descriptive analysis, the novel is critically examined to expose the orientalist-hidden agenda behind the stereotypical image of female Muslim characters. Within the theoretical framework of Said's Orientalism, the study attempts to expose the reality of Pamuk's self-orientalizing tendency in representing Muslim women as oppressed, subhuman, submissive, sensual and even recently as violent and terrorist. A special focus is put on their crisis of identity and how they are double oppressed as they are torn apart between the new waves of western modernity enforced by the State and the restrictions of cultural conventions enforced by society and political Islam.

**Key Terms:** self-orientalizing, Stereotyping, Muslim women, (post)modernist

Fiction, headscarf, political Islam

الملخص

1

**ملخص البحث بالعربية:**

النظرة الإستشراقية للذات في رواية مابعد الحداثة في الاداب غير الغربية

دراسة نقدية لصورة الشخصيات النسائية في رواية "الثلج" للكاتب أورهان باموك

يهدف هذا البحث الى تقديم دراسة نقدية لتجسيد صورة المرأة الشرقية في الأدب المتأثر بالغرب كدراسة حالة لمفهوم نظرة الروائيين الإستشراقية (الدونية) للذات في روايات ما بعد الحداثة في الادب المتأثر بالغرب. وطبقت الدراسة على رواية "الثلج" للكاتب التركي اورهان باموك. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة في التحليل النقدي للرواية على المنهج الوصفي وذلك لإلقاء الضوء على الهدف الكامن وراء التجسيد النمطي للمرأة المسلمة في الأدب الحديث في القرن الواحد والعشرين. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى إعطاء تحليل متعمق لطريقة الطرح الإستشراقية المتجذرة في الفكر الغربي والتي تتخذ نموذجاً نمطياً لتجسيد صورة المرأة المسلمة. ومن خلال تطبيق مبادئ نظرية الاستشراق لإدوارد سعيد في دراسة وتحليل رواية "الثلج" للكاتب التركي اورهان باموك، يظهر البحث كيف أن تجسيد صورة المرأة الشرقية/المسلمة في الاداب الغربية الحديثة والاداب الاخرى المتأثرة بالغرب كشخصية مضطهدة ، مهمشة ، منقادة، شهوانية لم يتغير على مر العصور بل اصبحت مؤخرا تصور كرمزاً للعنف والإرهاب. وركز البحث على دراسة ازمة الهوية التي تعاني منها المرأة التركية بين مطرقة التراث وسندان الدولة العلمانية في رواية "الثلج" لأورهان باموك.

## **Self-Orientalization in Postmodern Non-Western Fiction: A Critical Assessment of the Representation of Female Characters in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow***

### **Introduction: Orhan Pamuk as a Novelist**

Many of the third world westernized writers tend to be self-orientalizing in the representation of their own cultures as exotic, seeking primarily the Western audience satisfaction, and feeding male fantasies about women of their societies. These writers are located amongst western writers whose works mainly contribute to reinforcing the systematic attack on the Other. Anouar Majid states that, "The West's crusade against Islam has been joined by westernized Muslim writers ...

who have all attempted to depict Islam as a reactionary force that has set back or destroyed the freedoms of women and writers and eclipsed the traditions of non-Arab peoples" (325). Western and westernized writers are two sides of the same coin, and their literary works reflect their internalized Orientalist discourse. Constantly, issues of sexuality and oppression of Muslim women take center stage in their work.

One of the salient yet controversial literary figures of this type of literature is the 2006 Nobel laureate, Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish novelist, screenwriter and academic who was born in 1952 in Istanbul into a wealthy, secular middle-class family and recently settled in the United States. *Snow*, Pamuk's 'first and last political novel', deals with some of the common themes of Turkey and the Middle East today such as, the conflict between a secular state and Islamic trends, poverty, unemployment, political corruption, social maladies, the veil, and 'suicide epidemic' among young women due to suppression of freedom to wear the Headscarf. The novel, which incorporates both the theme of modern love and political satire, was published in Turkish in 2002, and translated into English by Maureen Freely in 2004. It is set in the eastern Turkish city of Kars and presents a story of a Turkish poet, Ka, after his return from a twelve-year political exile in Germany. He visits the city as a journalist to investigate the issue of suicide girls, cover the news of the local elections and hopes to meet his former ladylove, Ipek. It is said that Pamuk's self-orientalizing in *Snow* earned him the prestigious Nobel Prize as it is not free from exoticizing and orientalizing his own people. The depiction of women in the novel reflects, in one way or another, a westernized assumption about gender.

### **Orientalism and the Issue of Women**

The word 'Orientalism' derives from a Latin word 'orient' which means "East" literally "rising sun." This is the opposite of the term Occident. In terms of the Old World, Europe was considered to be "The West" or Occidental. Despite the westerners' distorted vision of the East in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the word "Orientalism" carried no negative connotations. "Oriental" was simply understood as the opposite of "occidental". The word began to develop negative connotations following the publication of the work *Orientalism* in 1978, by the Palestinian scholar Edward Said ("The New World Encyclopedia"). Said

identifies Orientalism and Orientalist as “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist— either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism” (Said 2). He highlights the European's perspective that views the Middle East as inferior. Said argued that Orient and Occident worked as oppositional terms, so that the “Orient” was constructed as a negative inversion of Western culture. He analyzed many works of European scholars and writers specialized in the peoples of the Middle East in order to clarify the relations of power between the colonizer and the colonized in their texts.

The Colonizers’ Orientalist discourse draws a false and negative picture of eastern men. Rana Kabbani in her book *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (1986) confirms this view. She points out that, the Orientalist discourse represents eastern men as “traders in female bodies. They are the cruel captors who hold women in their avaricious grasp, who use them as chattels, as trading-goods, with little reverence for them as human beings.” (qtd. in Hasan 30). Such a negative representation aims to highlight a false contrasting image of eastern men as barbaric and of western men as civilized. Orientalist representations of women, on the other hand, have all along been intended to convey a particular impression of them as passive, incapable of raising their voice, and always waiting for westerners to save them from the tyranny of the eastern man. (Hasan 30)

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is a critical analysis of the imperial discourse. As Ensieh Shabanirad and Seyyed Marandi in *Edward Said's Orientalism and the Representation of Oriental Women in George Orwell's Burmese Days* (2015) assert that, “Edward Said’s groundbreaking text, *Orientalism* is a contrapuntal reading of imperial discourse about the non-Western Other. It indicates that the Western intellectual is in the service of the hegemonic culture. In this influential text, Said shows how imperial and colonial hegemony is implicated in discursive and textual production” (22). Shabanirad and Marandi further argue that Orientalism is a critique of Western texts that have represented the East as an exotic and inferior other and construct the Orient by a set of recurring stereotypical images and clichés (ibid). They add, Said’s analysis of Orientalism

shows the negative stereotypes or images of native women as well. As a result, Orientalism has engendered feminist scholarship and debate in Middle East studies. For Said, many Western scholars, orientalist, colonial authorities and writers systematically created the orientalist discourse and the misrepresentation of the Orient (ibid).

Maryam Khalid in her article, “*Gendering Orientalism’: Gender, Sexuality, and Race in Post-9/11 Global Politics*” (2014), illustrates that the Bush Administration’s ‘War on Terror’ discourse constructs and deploys a range of (hierarchically organized) binaries that situate the ‘West’ in opposition to the ‘East’ (good/evil, civilized/barbaric, rational/irrational, progressive/backward) and involve the (re)production of mainstream understandings of ‘race’, ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ (1). She asserts that, Said’s Orientalism, although written 34 years ago, remains relevant to understanding the ways in which the world is constructed along binaries of ‘East’ and ‘West’. Its relevance to global politics is particularly relevant to the ‘War on Terror’. According to her, this is one of the most significant contemporary examples of state-inflicted violence in pursuit of political objectives. (ibid) She further comments that feminist and postcolonial scholars have demonstrated that the practices of contemporary global politics are fundamentally gendered and racialized. Said’s work allows us to uncover the practices of ‘gendered orientalism’ that inform mainstream ‘Western’ analyses of ‘the Middle East’ (ibid). She concludes that:

Understanding orientalism as a gendered discourse gives very particular insights into ‘War on Terror’ (and other) discourses that cannot be achieved if we only look for orientalist logics. Reading official ‘War on Terror’ discourse as orientalist and gendered allows us to see that the ways in which civilizational binaries are ascribed to ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ rely on racial stereotypes as much as an anxiety around ‘appropriate’ performances of masculinities and femininities. Harnessing the insights of Said’s work is essential for research that intends to unravel the power relations that shape our understandings of the world, and specifically the relationship between the desire to represent the ‘Orient’ and to wield power over it that remains central to global politics. (13-14)

Other research of Orientalism includes Md. Mahmudul Hasan's "The Orientalization of Gender" (2005) that examines how Orientalist representations of Muslim women further calcified and institutionalized their subhuman identity and subalternized them to both local patriarchy and their western sisters. It also analyzes how a section of mainstream western feminism itself maintains an unholy complicity with the Orientalist, imperialist project of depicting and fantasizing non-western cultures, especially Muslim societies (27). Hasan also, examines western feminist descriptions of the Islamic world, which feminist Orientalism represents as having a lack and an absence. Its demonizing of Muslim societies as repressive to women and its portrayal of Muslim women as passive victims (who are veiled, shackled, and secluded) maintain clear links with the "Orientalist descriptions" of Eastern societies. (ibid) He further argues that, the intricacy of exposing native patriarchy by modern feminism lies in its colonial affiliation, as it provides a way for Orientalists and imperialists to propagate their theory of globalization and of ruling distant lands. Otherwise, there is no harm in writing about eastern women or describing their plight under patriarchal subjugation (52).

### **Muslim Women as Sensual Licentious Creatures**

Westernized ideology is a typical reflection of Orientalism, where there is a constant and inseparable association between the Orient and sensuality. Westernized writers tend to routinely represent the Orient as "feminine, its riches as fertile, its main symbols the sensual woman, the harem, and the despotic – but curiously attractive – ruler" (Said 103). Being raised in a Muslim culture, but later settled in the West, Pamuk has refashioned himself by distancing himself from his Muslim roots and orientalizing his characters in his novels. His depiction of Turkish women confirms almost exactly with the Orientalist discourse that represents Oriental women as objects of sexual desire who are situated beyond the restrictions of their religious and traditional beliefs. Kadife, who has become the leader of the headscarf girls, valorizes everything that is Western and denigrates everything that is Islamic. Out of her faith, she avoids shaking hands with Ka, showing a deeper awareness of Islamic faith and quoting the Quran and the Prophet's *Sunna* tradition when arguing with him about Islam and secularism. When she unexpectedly met Ka at the hotel, she "hastened to cover her hair"

(243). However, it becomes clear that all these conservative attitudes are fashionably adopted at a superficial level in order to pragmatically come to achieve her goal in winning the heart of Blue, the very handsome Islamist terrorist who has settled in the city. In spite of her pious attitudes and conservative clothes, Kadife appears happy to make love with Blue out of wedlock, giving no attention to the established tradition of her Islamic society. Thus, Pamuk adopts an Orientalist discourse showing his readers how Kadife as a conservative Muslim, does not regret her illicit love with Blue and this indicates her lustfulness and incapability to control her sexual desire that goes beyond the restrictions of her religious and conventional traditions. Strikingly, she shows no hesitation to cheat her sister and falls in love with her sister's lover, Blue. Later, she also attempts to infatuate and seduce Ka, the new lover of her sister. She apparently refuses to talk with Ka about Islam as she absolutely believes that religion is not to be discussed with an atheist, but she permits herself to be alone with a stranger in a separate room in the hotel which is absolutely prohibited in Islam. Obviously, Kadife's shameful deeds and carnal pleasures reveal the writer's westernized ideology.

The worst form of sensuality is embodied in the betrayal character of Ipek, who is represented as a shamelessly lustful and selfish woman with no commitment to any religious, social or moral values. As a westernized secularist, Pamuk shows no hesitation to represent Ipek as almost licentious unfaithful woman who would cheat in her husband with his friend, Blue. Later, she emerges with an animal sexual desire, welcoming Ka's sexual advances and showing no resistance to him as long as her father is not around in the hotel, telling "I can't kiss anyone when my father is under the same roof" (126). Finally, she surrenders to his sexual advances although she realizes that he is attracted sexually to her with no emotions. Later, Z. Demirkol reveals that Ipek was once Blue's mistress at the time when she "was still married to Muhtar Bey" (356-357). This supposedly Muslim character does not appear to have any problem in having an illicit love affair – a major sin that is strictly prohibited and severely punishable in Islam. Ipek's image is a striking example of the distorted image of oriental Muslim women in the novel. Her illicit love affairs stand as a revolt against her religious traditions and show her lack of faith as she attempts to free herself from its restrictions. Pamuk's exclusion of religious and traditional arrangements between

women and men reinforces the westernized stereotypes involving gender and sexuality.

Another female character who is depicted as sensual and morally unscrupulous woman in the novel is the young student, Hande, a member of the headscarf girls and Kadife's close friend. This supposedly pious character, who could not even “concentrate” or “imagine herself without a headscarf” (123) easily offers up herself to Blue, the Islamist terrorist. Such a distorted and stereotypical representation of Muslim women is exaggerated, contradictory and logically baseless. Earlier, she strongly refuses to take off her headscarf because she is a strict religious woman. However, when Ka visits Blue, Hande proudly attempts to draw attention “to her intimacy with Blue” (349). By highlighting such details, Pamuk creates a negative image showing his reader how far Muslim women wanted to be willingly exploited and abused sexually.

Teslime is a young student who is forbidden to join the college because of her headscarf. She is described by her friends as “the one most dedicated to the struggle for her religion and the word of God. For her, the headscarf did not just stand for God’s love, it also proclaimed her faith and preserved her honor” (119). This devout girl “gives herself to a policeman twenty-five years her senior . . . [who] was married and had no intention of marrying her” (44). Blue supports what the director of the Institute of Education claims about the reason behind Teslime's suicide that she did not kill herself for the headscarf, but only “over a love affair” (75). In this way, Pamuk questions Muslim women's semi-practicing of their religion with specific reference to their uncontrolled sexual desire.

### **Female Masochism in *Snow*:**

One of the most common stereotypes attributed to oriental women is masochism. They are represented in *Snow* as masochist victims clinging willingly to harmful hegemony of male-domination. Pamuk adopts the Orientalist discourse that often represents Oriental female as oppressed creature who is addicted to be physically and emotionally humiliated. Fatima Mernissi points out:

The absence of active sexuality moulds the woman into a masochistic passive being. It is therefore no surprise that in the actively sexual Muslim female, aggressiveness is seen as turned outward. The nature of her aggression is precisely sexual. The Muslim woman is endowed with a fatal

attraction which erodes the male's will to resist her and reduces him to a passive acquiescent role. He has no choice; he can only give in to her attraction, whence her identification with *fitna*, chaos, and with the anti-divine and antisocial forces of the universe. (qtd. in Lukmanjee 8)

In fact, the seemingly masochist Oriental woman who is humiliated by the sadistic oriental man stimulates the sexual fantasies of the Western audience, and romanticizes Oriental beauty.

In the novel, Ipek enjoys Ka's violent acts in the hotel scene of love-making where he treated her so roughly "When he saw that she enjoyed his being rough, his triumph gave way to brotherly affection" (249). The violence during their love-making takes the form of a sadomasochistic relationship which highlights the degree of Ipek's enslavement to her masochistic nature.

Another example of masochism can be seen in the ambiguous relationship between Kadife and Blue. In the presence of Ka, Blue emotionally humiliates Kadife accusing her father of being a pander: who "likes to pretend that his daughter is not the secret mistress of a radical Islamist" (234). Being hurt and deeply humiliated by these dismissive comments about her father, she "picked up the ashtray and shot it at Blue" (233). The quarrel ends with Kadife subjected by her masochistic nature and starts crying and "talking like a spoiled little girl" (234). Here, Blue is adopting the role of a sadist, who inflicts humiliation on a willing consenting victim. Kadife, on the other hand, willingly adopts the role of a masochist who locates herself in an inferior state. The narrator emphasizes the exotic relationship between this couple when "Ka imagined that as soon as he was gone, these lovers would quarrel and make love" (235). Suggesting a quarrel before love-making indicates a sadomasochistic relationship that solidifies the Orientalist discourse on Muslim females.

### **Muslim Woman and Politics: a Typical Emotionless Traitor**

In orientalist discourse, an oriental woman's political role is mostly associated with traitorous characteristics as she is seen to be a traitor who betrays the trust of her family, friend, country and principle. As Kahf asserts that:

The basic plot of the story of the Muslim woman in medieval texts runs like this: A high-ranking noblewoman becomes attracted to a Christian man imprisoned by her father or husband and aids him in a battle between

Christians and Muslims. At the end of the battle, the lady converts, transfers the father's or husband's treasures to the Christians, embraces a more passive femininity, and becomes part of the European world. (10)

Similarly, in *Snow*, we can trace the transformation in Kadife's character once she joins the political Islamist movement from an 'infidel' modern girl to a religious one. Previously, "she'd go on television and bare her bottom, and flaunt her legs" (110). Kadife, the daughter of an 'atheist father', once felt ashamed to say Islam as "our religion" (110) when she was a model; she did even encourage girls from the religious high school to remove the scarves to become modern. Now she is involved in leading the "headscarf" movement very actively that she does not like to talk about her 'faith' with an atheist. She cannot trouble herself "trying to convince secularists that Islam can be a secular religion" (114). Contrarily, Kadife has taken a decision to uncover her head in exchange of Blue's release from the jail and propagates the secular character of the country through her performance of baring her head at the National Theatre. Thus, Kadife, the leader of the headscarf girls, is represented as a typical emotionless traitor whose lack of empathy is a key indicator of a poor leadership. Ipek asserts that Kadife's, "only real motivation for associating with the head-scarf girls was to get closer to Blue" (161). As a typical oriental Cleopatrian character, Kadife's goal is the quest for a trivial desire that makes of her a self-centered and egotistical leader. When Ka asked her to "sign as the representative of the Muslim feminists" (236), she declares that, "If I'm going to stand up to the Europeans, it will be on my own, to tell my own story" (236). This shows Kadife as a traitorous egotistic character.

### **From Modesty to Politics: The Transformation of Headscarf in Pamuk's *Snow***

Headscarf/veil or as it is called in Arabic *hijab/ purdah/nikab/burqa* are words that refer to a piece of clothing Muslim women put on when leaving outside their houses and in the presence of adult males other than their immediate family. This Islamic dress code is adopted as a symbol for modesty (Kaita 78) or affirmation of identity, but for orientalists, it has come to be seen as an intense indicator of Muslim women's oppression and subordinate status. On the other hand, it is seen as a sign of political Islam that, according to Hirschkind, refers to "Islam used to a political end" (qtd. in Knudsen 2). The association of the

headscarf with political Islam transforms its meaning from being a private question of piety to a public question of passive expression of a political viewpoint. Nilufer Gole, too, asserts that political Islam has made itself visible through the veiling of women, who serve as “the emblem of politicized Islam” (qtd. in Vojdik 679). This stereotypical representation of the headscarf enhances the claim that Muslim women are putting Islam to use for political purposes.

In *Snow*, Pamuk claims that before its supposedly political adaptation, the headscarf was particularly and only worn by women, “who had come in from the suburbs—from the Kartal vineyards, say, to sell grapes. Or the milkman’s wife or someone else from the lower classes” (22). Kadife is one of the main characters who exemplify the allegedly radical transformation of the headscarf from a traditional/religious symbol of modesty to a political symbol. She acknowledges that her adoption of the headscarf was outside of the religious or traditional domains, it was just to “make a political statement” (113). To prove her instrumental relation to religion, Kadife bases her appeal on political goals and wears the headscarf “as a defiance of the state” (114) and keeps wearing it to avoid losing her political status in the society. She describes her father's point of view that the headscarf is “a special new form of rebellion” against the state (114). Similarly, Hande's adoption of the headscarf opens up to reveal her support to the Islamist, Blue. The suicide cases committed by the covered girls are also interpreted as acts of resistance against the state or the social injustice, not for spiritual purposes. Teslime is said to have “killed herself over a love affair” (75) and other suicide cases were as a result of the social injustice such as honor killing and violence against women. Thus, Pamuk seems to align himself with orientalist by stereotyping his female Muslim characters and their motives behind wearing the headscarf.

### **Veiled Muslim Women as Masqueraded Terrorists**

Traditionally, writers on terrorism portray women to be far from the submissive, backward, and oppressed image that is common in other stories. Others focus on the role of women as victims, or hailed them as “mothers of revolution,” who have sacrificed their sons to terrorist causes, with little reference to their own participation (Gonzalez-Perez 1). In *Snow*, however, Muslim women

are portrayed as fearless, foolhardy and almost brutal in their acts. Driss Ridouani states that “Hidden behind their scarf and veil, Muslim women are thus equated to masqueraded terrorists and evil doers” (Rahman 3). Pamuk’s depiction of Muslim women confirms almost exactly with what Ridouani stated. Kadife works as an agent of Blue and once Ka was terrified to see “a gun in Kadife’s hand” (223). She shows a professional skill and alertness in handling the tasks assigned to her by Blue and acts violently as a terrorist. She carefully manages to smuggle Ka to the secret place of Blue and gives him clear instructions on how to behave in the presence of the Master. Kadife here is represented as a member of a terrorist group linked with a highly organized network of terrorism at the local level. This is clear from the narrator’s use of the pronoun “we” instead of “I” when she talks threateningly to Ka.

Similarly, Pamuk introduces Hande as a terrorist mindless creature who willingly joins Blue’s terrorist group, proudly asserting her belonging to such a group as a sort of personal freedom: “What makes me happy is being here and doing what I want” (348). The characterization of Kadife and Hande as irresponsible Muslim female terrorists exemplifies Pamuk’s deliberate orientaling conceptualization of Muslim women.

### **The Double Jeopardy of female characters in *Snow*: Death as a Source of Relief**

Orientalist's stereotypical portrayal of veiled Muslim women is usually outlining their oppression and misery under the supposedly masculine-dominated Islamic culture. They are represented as coercively silenced and violently oppressed victims. Such a colonial representation of Muslim women “as oppressed and victims of the alleged Islamic rule goes back to the medieval times and continues to the present” (Marandi 18). In *Snow*, the issue of the suicide girls represents Muslim women's oppression where every girl had to suffer a level of oppression before her suicide from both her family and society, on one hand, and the westernized secular state, on the other.

The first story is about a nameless oppressed woman who had suffered the agony of infertility and consequently experienced physical and emotional abuse. She had been “forced to do housework from morning till night, she had also endured the incessant scolding of her mother-in-law for failing to conceive a

child” (15). Readers here are left with a stereotypical image of an oppressed, desperate, motherless Muslim wife who is victimized by her male-dominated patriarchal society. This supposes Muslim women to be passive, inhumanely oppressed and fit only to deliver children. In fact, the stereotypical status of this woman shows how far Muslim woman is worthless and absented from any role in her society, and “prone to divorce, social isolation, family pressure and feeling of guilt” (Tahiri 268). Pamuk, here, is orientalizing Muslim women through this childless and nameless character, who ends up her life as a result of social oppression.

The second female suicide case is that of a sixteen-year-old girl who “had been driven to suicide after her teacher accused her of not being a virgin” (15). Accordingly, her fiancé called off the engagement, and the suitors stopped coming too. She had suffered indirect social ostracism and was insulted also by her family. Pamuk highlights the importance of marriage for a Muslim woman, who by losing the chance of being married, has to face an unbearable oppressive society that is predicated on patriarchal subjugation and dominance. In the novel, fearing spinsterhood is a curse and a peculiar problem that always preoccupies the minds of Muslim women and their families; they are looked down upon as weak human creatures who cannot live a normal life without marriage. Pamuk extravagantly highlights the father's fears as he weeps and gets drunk just for seeing a wedding on the TV thinking that his daughter may not get married. These stereotypical representations of Muslim woman show how she is ostracized by her family and society if she aspires to have a role in society beyond her conventional role as a silent housewife.

Another suicide case is that of a young Muslim female who had killed herself to avoid a forced arranged marriage to an elderly teahouse owner. This nameless girl, who had suffered a grave abuse and injustice at the hands of an oppressive father, ends up her life as the only alternative before her. Pamuk’s main purpose, here, is to explore the supposedly desperate status of Muslim woman in patriarchal Islamic society. Although one cannot deny that some Muslim women face forced marriage, this cannot be generalized about Islamic culture in which pure religious traditions had discouraged forced marriage and preconditioned marriage with the approval of the girl. Quite significantly, the

novelist advocates the Orientalist approach that tends to marginalize Muslim women and represents them as tyrannized women who cannot make any decision except for that of suicide.

The fourth story is that of another sixteen-year-old girl who, as usual fights with her two siblings over what to watch on television and who might hold the remote control. After her father came and gave her two hard whacks, she “went straight to her room and, finding a big bottle of a veterinary medicine, Mortalin, knocked it back like a bottle of soda” (13). The narrator, here, attempts to draw a vivid image of the frustrated and persecuted Muslim woman who is being maltreated on a daily basis by her father. This suggests that Muslim men are cruel and generally treat women savagely even if she is a daughter. Pamuk radically adopts the Orientalist discourse that has “a long history of viewing Muslim women as someone who needs saving from the savage Muslim man by the civilized white man” (Sjolin 33). Another story is that of a girl who had experienced spousal violence as she is terrorized by the beatings given her by her depressed and unemployed husband” (13) .

The most notable suicide case in the novel is probably that committed by Teslime, the head-scarf girl, who refused to comply with the ban and was consequently expelled from the Institute of Education. One day the police told her father to send his daughter to school scarfless, otherwise they would close down his grocery store and run him out of Kars” (119). At that point, Teslime's father threatened to expel her out of the house, and when this strategy failed, he started planning to marry her off to a forty-five-year-old policeman who had lost his wife. Under these pressures, Teslime committed suicide. The first impression the reader acquires from Teslime's story is that a Muslim woman is victimized by both her society and the state which had violated her rights to practice religion freely. Surprisingly, the story takes another turn, when we are told that, Teslime “didn't kill herself because they threw her out of school, she killed herself over a love affair” (75), as she over up herself to a policeman who is married and does not intend to marry her. Interestingly, she used her headscarf as a means of suicide; her headscarf symbolizes the oppression and slavery of Muslim women.

### **Female Identity Crisis in *Snow*:**

Orhan Pamuk, in *Snow*, entwines the loss of identity with adoption of the headscarf. Despite the fact that a dress code or clothing works as a “kind of visual metaphor for identity,” (Davis 25), it works in the novel as a cause for the loss identity. For instance, Hande's reason behind the strong adoption of the headscarf was her enormous fear of losing her identity and turning into, “an evil stranger like the ‘agent of persuasion’ or . . . turn into a woman who can’t stop thinking about sex” (123). Ironically, Hande's adherence to the headscarf leads her to become what she was afraid to be. By joining and offering up herself to Blue, the Islamist terrorist, she became even worse than an evil stranger or the sensual woman whom she was afraid to turn into. Moreover, Hande expresses her fear of losing her identity and becoming “someone else,” . . . “What scares me is the thought of never being able to return to the person I am now—and even forgetting who that person is” (123-124). Although, clothing is a part of the concept of the individual's identity, in the novel the headscarf, which is an identification of Muslim women, leads Hande to lose her identity, her dignity and even ultimately her life. Her Loss of identity as a woman occurs at social and religious levels in the novel. Religiously, Hande’s identity, swaying from a Muslim identity to another, as she willingly offers up herself to a terrorist showing no regret about a deed she must have known she was not supposed to do. Contradictorily, she claims that she refuses to take off her headscarf because she will never be able to concentrate on things she does not believe in, things like baring her head (348). Her loss of religious identity appears in her contradictory actions where she refuses to take of her headscarf, but she seems to have no problem to have an illicit love affair. At the social level, she lost her identity as a member of a family and good effective citizen by joining a terrorist group in an irresponsible attempt of preserving her sense of identity. She declares that, “Right now I’m happy to share a cause with Blue. . . I’m refusing to cut myself off from the girl I really am” (348). Here, the reader may ask: who is she? Is she a Muslim, a terrorist, or a mindless woman? The answer of this question is that she is a Muslim woman who lost her identity while attempting to preserve a false one.

Kadife is another character who seemed fairly stable and content with her identity and personal life before her adoption of the headscarf. Her story from the start to the end portrays this woman to be a victim of the headscarf. In fact, the

novelist puts focal significance on her feeling of individual self or identity that she lost by adopting the headscarf. Kadife intends to wear a headscarf only for one day to make a political statement as she clarifies that, “. . . I put on a headscarf one day to make a political statement. . . . I’m very sure I intended to wear it for only one day” (113). Eventually, her act of egotism ends up as a trap for herself, as her society indirectly forces her to keep on wearing the headscarf. Explaining her supposedly tragic situation she said, “I had painted myself into a corner and couldn’t get out. . . . if I had said, ‘Forget the scarf; I never really meant it anyway,’ the whole of Kars would have spat in my face” (114). Obviously, the novelist's main question is focused on how the headscarf has transformed Kadife's identity from a free normal person to an oppressed terrorist who has left her old life behind in which she could realize her individuality, and now she has no life of her own. A tremendous sense of loss appears, when Kadife at last gets disillusioned with the headscarf and clearly expresses her eagerness to regain her real individual life and personal freedom, “I want to be like everyone else. If it weren’t for the coup, who knows? I might even decide to be like everyone else and pull off my scarf” (235). This indicates that, beyond the call for a feeling of control, Kadife is profoundly driven by her feeling of identity, of who she is. In this way, Pamuk highlights how Kadife's adoption of the headscarf deprives her from the type of life she aspires to live, and she cannot return to a life that no longer exists. She has reached to the point of no return where she must continue on her current course of action. As Blue informs her that, “You’ve thrown away your chance for a normal life” (235). Quite significantly, one of Kadife's motivations to wear the headscarf is to be close to Blue who enjoys the newfound identity that he creates in Kadife: “This is what makes you such an exceptional person, . . . All the women here wear scarves” (235). The statement indicates that, patriarchal domination is entwined with the headscarf. Under the patriarchal domination, Kadife has actually lost her identity completely in a useless irrational relationship which has led her to a tragic end. Her life ends up revolving around an indifferent other.

Although, the case of the suicide girls seems to be a major focus in the novel, we can notice that almost all the suicide girls are nameless. Focusing on the case and ignoring the character's personal identity, the novelist tries to shed light

on the loss of identity women suffer from in Muslim societies. In fact, Pamuk's nameless women serve his purpose very well. The nameless suicide girls in the novel represent the loss of identity, where “leaving a character unnamed is a way to show that he or she is experiencing a personal crisis of identity (Writer's Relief, n. p). Significantly, readers identify characters by their names. Kyallo Wadi Wamitila confirms the importance of names in identifying characters in literature by saying:

In reading creative works, we tend to identify characters basically by the names given to them. It is on this basic premise that some character analysis methods tend to define characters by taking recourse to their names and sometimes identifying them in metaphorical terms or as speaking names. Names play a very central and important role in any reading exercise and so would certainly the names given to characters be of importance to us. (35)

Although names as mentioned in the statement are very important to identify characters, the novelist gives his reader nameless female characters with significant actions. Therefore, Muslim women were identified as the headscarf girls who had committed suicides. Inevitably, the reader can only identify the suicide girls by their religion and actions. In this way, by ignoring the personal identity and highlighting the religious one, Islam and Islamic society seems as the main driver of their actions and the main motivational factor.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

By way of conclusion, we can generally observe that Modern fictions often reiterate and perpetuate the image of Muslim women as oppressed subhuman living in the state of abject slavery imposed allegedly by Islamic rules. While Oriental women in general and Muslim women in particular are represented as the oppressed ones, they are also regarded as being seductive, submissive and often an epitome of immorality and transgressive sexuality. Based on a critical re-assessment of Pamuk's masterpiece, *Snow*, one can conclude that contemporary literature written by either western or westernized writers retains stereotypical representations of the Oriental particularly Muslim women. Images of women who are deprived of their most basic human rights have been entwined with

Muslim women character as they have been portrayed as sensual, terrorist, betrayal, oppressed and downgraded. These views are to large extent built on well-established stereotypes under the spell of the orientalist discourse. Although Pamuk has touched some of the severe realities of Muslim women in modern Turkey, he, in his quest to fame, chooses to orientalize his female characters.

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