

A Social Background of Turkish Culture and a Mythical View of Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-Haired Woman*

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Abstract

This paper aims to bring the concept of 'Myth' and the historical view of Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-Haired Woman*. This research is based on 'New Historicism' and given prominence to textual aspects. For two decades, readers have been inspired not only by the distant past in symbols but also by colors hardly seen in previous texts. It could not be a surprise to learn that the themes of his *The Red-Haired Woman* are repression and amnesia. The researcher has tried to focus on 'collective unconsciousness' through the protagonist's mythical background. This fiction gives a daring approach to reading canonical works such as Oedipus Rex, Rostam and Sohrab, and its discussion of patricide and paternal filicide, i.e., re-reading the myth to uncover the hidden fact behind the historical text through historical aspects. Furthermore, in the novel *The Red-Haired Woman* many archetypal images are discussed as history served as torch for this research paper.

Keywords: Myth, Oedipus complex, Symbolism, Collective unconsciousness, Archetypal

1. Introduction

In the study of mythology, an effort is made to provide spiritual explanations for unexplained phenomena, such as the beginning of the cosmos and the development of humanity. Jensen (2014) has defined the term 'myth' as a false belief. There always needs to be clarity with myth; Pamuk presented that the characters were based on the myth, which could be possible with historical accordance, even though hope in myth has become unavoidable in every human being. "There is an excellent reason why myth could not simply be treated as language if its specific problems are to be solved; myth is language: to be known, it has to be told; it is a part of human speech." (Strauss, 1955, p.429). There is always cultural clashes between East and West ideologies. Two mythical tales represent the East and the West through the protagonist. He does this by focusing on the underlying yearning for just a father figure to develop one's individuality and sense of self. Mullahy (1948) has stated that a man gets gratification from his partner, a mother, wife or lover. On the other hand, females become surrogates for him. She has to transfer "the original mother libido" to the father; it is a matter for a girl to give her feelings and stand with a male. "Freud's apostate disciple Jung advocated for Electra complex when Freud rejected it." (Leavy, 1936, p.40).

2. Literature Review

The Red Haired Woman depicted the myth character with symbols and portrayed the local color of the novel. Arnold (1900) wrote about the Sohrab and Rostum. It is found in the Persian poem "Shah Nameh," by Firdusi at the end of the nineteenth century, about Sohrab, who killed his son Rostum. The research has given validation for the concept of myth in the beginning. "Turkey became a firm supporter of territorial integrity and status quo in South Asia, yet without remaining neutral in conflicts as it habitually supported its CENTO-ally Pakistan." (Aslan, 2022, p.2).

In the novel, Cem's experiences are connected with two mythical and canonical storylines from the two continents, specifically Rostam and Sohrab by Ferdowsi and King Oedipus by Sophocles. Pamuk uses myth to weave the primary theme of a father's relationship with his son and portrays Cem's experiences as mythical repetition of some first happenings and feelings. Legend has spoken the tale of all kinds of people in society. For instance, "The proletarian myth also serves as constructing the Scottish ethos and collective spirit" (Gildea, 2002, p.222). Identity crisis analyzed from all characters "In Orhan Pamuk's works, colours added new taste in human life, and it is fascinating through picture, if only dye" (Mohammed et al., 2020, p.2754). Further, colour impacts all lives, and literature is considered one of them.

3. New Historicism

The researcher has adopted the historical study method. Greenblatt's (1982) "New Historicism" theory is a tool to analyze Orhan Pamuk's novel. It is a literary theory that re-reads the literary text in the light of history. A literary work can be a novel, a short story, a play, or a poem. Work can be studied in detail and interpreted with historical background. Parker (1953) stated that most storytellers never begin

with the beginning or end at the end; telling leaves something gap that is 'Ellipses or Lacunae. Historicism tries to fill the gap with contextual reading. It is also essential to know the author's background to understand the context of a text. Nealon (1996) stated that when Derrida founded textual deconstructive criticism, Foucault was the founder of worldly new historicism.

New Historicism is a concept of renewal of historical events from antiquity to the present. It focuses on comparing the past historical events contained within the text. The term was coined by Stephen J. Greenblatt and defined new historicism as a move away from criticism centered on verbal icons towards criticism centered on cultural artifacts. Starting with Stephen J. Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980) and his other works were also focused New Historicism, such as *Learning to Curse* (1990) and *The Power of Forms in the Renaissance* (1982). Frantzen (1990) stated that Foucault's archaeological assistant destructs disabling the historical fact progress, so history is not a stable tool for text reading and needs new formation from a new perspective. D.H.Lawrence's poems were controverted when he tried distinguishing between a snake and a human. He said that the snake is snakiest and man is mannish, so to look at the two notions, research requires textual and contextual meaning for the text. Foucault's New Historicism is a technique based on the similar reading of two works, such as literary and non-literary texts. For instance, the history behind *Red Haired Woman* is a historical and symbolic representation of the ancient myth Oedipus complex. Robson (1968) believes that the idea of literary works 'Reflecting' the history of the fact and history as an 'Explanation' for the text "Metafiction as blended with reality in fiction" (Pandeewaril et al, 2022, p. 1348). Likewise, historicism also focuses on the same ideology.

4. Myth

Cem is a student at a high school in Istanbul who, throughout the novel, grows up to become a successful businessman yet is killed by his son. Cem's bonding with his parents, the titular character, the red-haired woman, and then Master Mahmut have turned the backbone of the plot. In contrast, the correlation of his experiences with mythical happenings and characters serves as the subtext and enriches the story. *The Red-Haired woman* is a legendary figure who is said to have red hair. It is said that a red-haired woman suffers from pain compared to a red-haired man. Moreover, there is no systematic identification for the female associated with red-haired. It is a medical view and sufferings of a red-haired woman without any hindrance of myth. Through the lens of Jungian theory, Pamuk's novel, especially Jung's archetype ideas, do show how vital myth is in controlling the main character and making the novel's plot.

Slusser (1986) stated that in the Christian allegorical view, the life and death of Jesus Christ is a fixed destiny for him, and the exact parallel is found in other Gods, such as Lord Krishna. *The Red-Haired Woman*, translated by Ekin Oklap, brings together what Pamuk has considered the crowning myths of the East and the West. One of the fascinating aspects of *The Red-Haired Woman* is how characters were introduced to match up to pre-existing mythical tales and personalities. Master Mahmut, Cem and the wife of Cem are key protagonists. They each make the reader aware of their understanding of what happens to them, revealing a deep tie between the past and the present. New historicism is used to depict the history and myth behind the text. Thomas (1991) said that New Historicism is indebted to Clifford Geertz for the term 'Local Knowledge.' Based on the term, many historical details of Turkey were depicted by Pamuk. Humans never get satisfaction from what they possess. Socrates called the dissatisfied human beast; this concern connects humans with the beast.

Pamuk presented the past culture of the East and the present ideologies wrought by his characters. East–West clashes in Turkey are as old as the Turkish novel itself. Still, it is in the hands of Turkish novelists in the nineteenth century who established modern ideas from the older ones. The immediate reaction with context indicated the new historical reading. Milner (2002) stated that the term 'Historicism' means the immediate context of the occurrence. When the story opens, Cem's father is abducted for political reasons. He is a left-leaning pharmacist. He was in danger due to his political engagement. The circumstances surrounding his disappearance are unknown. In order to reside with the protagonist's aunt, Cem and his mother move to the province of Gebze, located on the outskirts of Istanbul. There, Cem crosses paths with Master Mahmut, a skilled individual in well-digging.

Carl Jung related them to his writing; he knows that everything happens for a reason. It was done after the approval of Master; Cem joined in digging a well in Ongoren town, where he encountered a fiery hair lady and embraced her beauty both day and night; she might be ten years older, met accidentally. "I would lie down in its shade and start dozing off as the Red–Haired woman appeared in my mind" (Pamuk, 2017, p. 35).

The research spoke about the writer's obsession with myth through the reference, particularly in connection with a past theory of the collective unconscious. Cem and the red-haired woman, her name is revealed to be Gülcihan. She spoke with Cem after the performance on the day when both watched dramas at the theatre. His Master used to tell mythical stories to Cem. "Master Mahmud's stories were derived from the Koran" (Pamuk, 2017, p. 35). Cem and Gülcihan had a lengthy conversation after the performance. Cem becomes extremely envious of Master Mahmut. Cem and Gülcihan's relationship progresses to the point where they can have a sexual encounter. Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's ideas are inevitable for psychological reading texts. Malcolm (1992) mentions that the father's name in the early fifties was incest taboo which sent forbidden desire; it is an imperious metaphysical force. Cem's life comes in this way. He has understood everything at the end of novel. The next day, Cem, unable to sleep, so he exhausted, accidentally threw a heavy soil bucket into the well on top of Master Mahmut. Cem flees the scene, convinced that he may have been responsible for the death of the Master, and travels back to Istanbul by train. Cem can control his inner anguish, guilt and remorse and attempts to live life as if nothing happened even though Cem is trying to cover up what he did to the Master and carry on as if nothing had happened. Later in adulthood, Cem wanted to become a writer, "I have penned the volume entitled *The Geology of Turkey*" (Pamuk, 2017, p. 58).

Sigmund Freud's works planned to solve the problems of the sexual theory of hysteria and neurosis defense mechanism. He takes

Ferdowsi’s epic and begins reading it, becoming quite interested when reading the story of Rostam and Sohrab. Cem developed tremendous interest in red-haired woman and related it to the legend of King Oedipus, who felt that his experiences and life were, on a grand scale, repetitions of stories similar to those he read. He established “Sohrab Construction,” which experienced rapid growth and ultimately contributed to his financial success. Schultz and Green (2014) cited Freud’s idea of the unconscious thinking of a child in the phallic stage. “All the histories of Sexual liberation whiggish,” so Cem’s case is also the same.”(Michale, 1854, p.55). When he was with his Master, he was allowed to acquire a parcel of property in the places Master Mahmut and Cem dug the well, and he decided to do so.

Mcghee (1986) uses the term “Fantasy Assimilation” to refer to a child’s mental state of adopting the event of incongruous thinking as if it is real even though it is not real. The child is happened to lead their life with the thought of illusion. Likewise, Cem is used to imagining his life in this way. He does not know that red-haired woman’s connection with his father. In addition, to his utter disbelief, he finds out that the woman with the fiery hair was once his father’s mistress. After nearly thirty years have passed since the well-digging, as he is making his way to the well, he is accompanied by a guide who turns out to be his biological son through the connection with Red-haired woman whom he has never seen. While there, his son accidentally shoots him in the eye. The final portion of the tale is relayed by the woman with red hair; her son is imprisoned. The plot of *The Red-Haired Woman* is full of references from King Oedipus and parallels to Rostam and Sohrab. The research has explained that he killed Cem’s father, and in conclusion, Cem was killed by his son. “Social-cultural representations include not just norms of conduct but also patriarchal clan notions, religious and philosophical tenets, culinary and political practices, and more.”(Cheng and Goh, 2022, p.313).

4.1 Mythical Background

As a young man, Cem has an affair with his father’s ex-mistress. He comes dangerously close to murdering a man he considers his father, which is similar to the terrible fate that King Oedipus suffered. In contrast to this, his mother deserts him, and his father makes an effort to kill him as a way to remind him of Rostam and Sohrab. The admission of myth into one’s life and its active and controlling presence are the fundamental themes and topics of the novel, besides does not associate with fabled tales. Cem has the feeling that what he experienced would be valid throughout the entirety of the narrative. In particular, while interacting with the well, he feels love, grief, and envy in their purest and most basic form. Snyder (1980) used the term ‘Hebephrenia’ to indicate that mental illness began in puberty and led to mental disorders. Cem has undergone a mental disorder for a certain period and does not want to be a writer in his career. Sharpe (1984) explained that it is difficult to explain ‘Supernatural’ and ‘God’ without contraction and inaccuracy, but both were interconnected. It is almost as if he picked up these emotions from humans themselves. As a result, the narrative primarily focuses on myths from the past. Teichman (1998) stated that Western nations usually carry surnames with their name that comes from their father or mother, indicating their family. Their clan and identification indicate this. Europeans have not obtained a few cultural ideologies. "They did not recognize the worthiness of other cultures in the past” (Vijay, 2022.p.130). Pamuk feels a solid connection to the ideas that "cultural frameworks" mold the characters in *The Red-Haired Woman* and define how they influenced Cem’s actions, feelings, and ideas.

5. Collective Unconscious

Benjafield (1996) pointed out a definition by James G. Frazer that events are in the way of regularly followed two theories: the law of regularity and the law of contagion.*The Red-Haired Woman* symbolize digging down to the primitive in other characters. After putting in a full day’s work, by the end of the day, he feels as follows: Cem’s love and affair with red hair woman, he refers to as "my primitive love," on the other hand; it was another illustration of how the impact of the collective unconscious has shown itself in his brain. Cem’s Red-haired woman, Gülcihan, represents a mother figure to him; he immediately falls in love with her. The events surrounding Cem’s case are similar to those surrounding Rostam and Sohrab to a certain extent. Later in the book, when Cem is reading Ferdowsi’s story, he feels he is reliving a memory he had long since forgotten.

Regarding the inevitability of realizing such an archetypal scenario, Jung offers the following suggestion: Cem’s role is to kill his father and killed by his son at the place where Cem killed Master, so they are all archetypal references. In the beginning, he takes the role of King Oedipus, and in the end, Cem becomes Rostam at the end of the story. So, the archetype that governs Cem’s destiny is associated with Western civilization. This is suggested by the fact that he met his end near Ongoren, situated on the European side of Istanbul. The East-West duality is revealed toward the end of the book in a conversation between Cem, and his wife, Ayşe. According to Jung’s view, "They depend on the culture in which they are embedded for their particular meaning. That meaning is determined by the scientific practice, knowledge, belief, and explicit and implicit of the surrounding culture in that time and place" (Colin & Deyoung, 1998, p. 46).

6. Discussion

Table 1. Problems and Relationship

Character	Problem stated	Relationship
Cem	Obsession with a red-haired woman	Red-haired woman is a lover of Cem
Cem’s father	Affair with a red-haired woman	The red-haired woman is the mistress of Cem’s father

The above table shows that Cem is obsessed with a red-haired woman; she is supposed to be the mistress of Cem’s father.

This collective is inherited. Jung’s concept of a predefined myth gives added value to Cem in *The Red-Haired Woman* a unique perspective. Pamuk’s myth is connected with symbols. “Greek myth for their framework, which the reader was supposed to detect, like finding the faces in the clouds in old newspaper puzzle contests; those which had modern symbolic figures.” (Beebe, 1960, p.48). Moreover, imageries such as wells and water acquire a more profound meaning from a Jungian perspective.

All over the world symbolism had its glorification. "The major significance of the 'Symbolist school' about the study of symbolism in its vaster context is that it created a particular climate in which those poets and critics of England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United States" (Balakian, 1967, p.9). Later it served as inspiration for Pamuk to create characters in historical aspects. Cem's initial encounter with Master Mahmut is crucial for comprehending the nature of the protagonist's impression of the master well-digger. Symbolism is one of the parts of myth criticism. "Symbolism is the emotional or spiritual heightening of an object, graphic form or ritual action that may be simple in it" (Tresidder, 2000, p.6). Therefore, the taster represents an emotional figure in this novel. Janine (2006) pointed out that the mother symbolizes a constellation, which is a natural force. Freud described their life in that he escaped from his father's freedom and walked into the wildest forest. He was acutely aware of his emotions and the influence of myth on his actions. Science is an entity that differs from myth; the world never settles with it without the fact of evidence. Christopher Schon, born Cardinal of Archbishop Vienna, bitterly accepted Darwin's survival fittest comparing the economic crisis. In parallel, Cem, who is very aware of the story of Oedipus and related it to his fatherly figure Master, suspects he may be pursuing the same sad path: Thus, Cem's encounter with an archetypal and mythical father figure, Cem's subsequent animosity toward Master and his disputed effort to murder Master all have mythological counterparts. In a sense, Cem echoes from the depths of human history. Through the new historical reading of the text, Pick & Roper (2004) mentioned that 35% of men in Greece had incipient arising erotic dreams concerned with psychological depletion, later Christians tried to eradicate moral values and thoughts, but the point is whether it is moral or aesthetic when it is strict or against that lead to anxiety and neurosis, so the dream of men is compared with Cem's fantasy.

In addition, the 'father archetype' appears in the novel's conclusion in the guise of Eastern society's supreme authority. Cem's son is suspected of murder, even though his father pointed his revolver at him and shot him during a struggle. However, the court, the press, and society do act to support and honor the deceased father while cursing the living son, suggesting that patriarchy is preferable to individualism. Ogilvie (2004) pointed out that Hermeneutics means the art of interpreting the text. It is used to interpret the activities of priests in a minstrel way to decipher the meaning of the religion. The story of 'Lot' explicated incest when her daughters slept with Lot's husband for the clan's sake, but later, God punished them. Likewise, Enver tries to kill his father for property and money, so all state and social systems disregard that the son acted in self-defense. Through this approach, Pamuk portrayed Western individualism.

7. Conclusion.

The Red-Haired Woman, written by Orhan Pamuk, depicts a relationship between the past and the present that is both legendary and mystical. His concepts of Jung on the collective unconscious and archetype significantly contribute to understanding his writing. Cem's story represents Rostam and Sohrab and Oedipus complex through a historical approach. This novel speaks in detail about the elements of myth, archetypal and the idea of unconsciousness. Furthermore, the novel hints at Turkey's in-between position through myths and tales. Even though he did not murder his father or have sex with his biological mother, he is not the same as Oedipus in every respect from a textual point of view. On the contrary, when the researcher used a new historical approach; it was proved that Cem carries the shadow of fantastical elements. He embodies the characteristics of mythical beings that originated in both the East and the West. His destiny did not permit him to select and abandon one camp. Hence, the research paper concludes by analyzing all the historical elements through historicism.

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