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Betül C. Czerkawski
University of Arizona
bcozkan@arizona.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4189-4042

A CONVOLUTION OF EAST AND WEST: INTERTWINING MULTICULTURAL WORLDS

Abstract

Many Eastern European countries, especially Russia and Turkey, share a common characterization of the so-called "torn countries", a term first used by Samuel Huntington in 1993. Torn countries are those territories situated on the boundary of two different civilizations, West and East, sharing characteristics of both worlds while struggling to identify with either of them completely.[1] While the individuals in these societies may choose one civilization over the other, their societies suffer from a significant socio-cultural difference within the civilizations, reflecting the individual as a major confusion over their identity. The best expressions of such identity struggles can be seen in the literary masterpieces of torn countries. This paper's primary purpose is to compare Orhan Pamuk and Fyodor Dostoevsky's selected works to identify some common themes between the two authors. *Snow*, *İstanbul*, *Other Colors* and *Nights of Plague* by Pamuk and *Demons*, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky form the basis of this comparison. Pamuk and Dostoevsky's novels function as testimonials that Russian and Turkish cultural histories share many commonalities as torn countries. Comparing these authors' selected works would allow readers to

[1] W. Strielkowski, Y. Bilan, "Migration Aspirations & Decisions: A Comparative Study of Turkey and Ukraine", *Intellectual Economics*, vol. 10, 2016, pp. 18–27.

glimpse some of the themes cross-cutting Russian and Turkish cultures and show them how the two countries fared in the past two centuries against dominant political and social movements.

Keywords: Orhan Pamuk, Dostoevsky, comparative literature

The term "torn countries" is commonly used to characterize countries like Turkey and Russia, which are situated on the border of West and East. These "torn" countries carry characteristics of two major civilizations in their language, religion, political system, and way of living. Many literary works expressed the experiences of these two "torn" societies, including those of Orhan Pamuk and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Orhan Pamuk, the only Nobel laureate in literature from Turkey, was born in 1952 in Istanbul. He is the most popular Turkish novelist both in Turkey and abroad. He wrote more than ten novels, screenplays, and non-fiction books. Pamuk is known for his complicated story plots, love for history and fascination with creative arts such as photography, painting, and calligraphy. The most common theme[2] in his novels is the deeply rooted confusion over the loss of identity. This feeling of confusion[3] is because of the tension and turmoil that stems from living on the border of Western and Eastern civilizations. Although Pamuk's first novels are influenced by literary realism, most of his works are considered examples of post-modern literature.

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) is one of the greatest Russian authors of the 19th century. His deep understanding of human conditions and psychological analyses are well known, as well as his descriptions of poverty, morality, emotions, and human misery. His writing style is complex, like his characters, vacillating between satire, literary realism, gothic, and romanticism. According to Mikhail Bakthin, Dostoevsky created a new form of artistic form – the *polyphonic* novel, which contains "a plurality of

[2] For more on common themes in Orhan Pamuk's novels, see M.P. Moreno, "No Center Other Than Ourselves: Istanbul, Hüzün, and the Heterotopic Portal Between Civilizations and Time in the Works of Orhan Pamuk", [in:] *Time, the City, and the Literary Imagination*, A.-M. Evans, K. Kramer (eds), Cham, 2020 (Series: Literary Urban Studies), pp. 223–41.

[3] For more on the confusion that stems from East and West, see C. Yalkin, L.K. Yanik, "Entrenching Geopolitical Imaginations: Brand(ing) Turkey through Orhan Pamuk", *Journal of International Relationship Development*, vol. 23, 2020, pp. 339–58.

independent and ideological forces and consciousness"[4] to represent the variety of characters and fates living in their own worlds rather than a single, objective world. As Bakhtin notes, "Therefore, his work does not fit any of the preconceived frameworks or historico-literary schemes that we usually apply to various species of the European novel".[5]

Although Pamuk and Dostoevsky lived in different centuries, the turmoil of 19th-century Russia and late-20th-century Turkey are strikingly similar; therefore, their writings have many common traits. For instance, Pamuk says, "when as a young leftist I read *Demons*, it seemed to me that the story was not about Russia a hundred years earlier but about Turkey, which has succumbed to radical politics deeply rooted in violence",[6] showing the parallel struggle of religion, and individual and national identity in their respective societies is almost the same. For Pamuk, *Demons* is "the greatest political novel of all time",[7] and in *Snow*, his purpose is "to affix something of a Turkish understanding, in its own way adding to Dostoevsky's Russian-Slavic brand of non-Westernism".[8]

Orhan Pamuk is an author whose work is deeply influenced by Dostoevsky. Cornwell states that a surprising amount of common ground exists in some of the things Pamuk said and in many of the details that interested him in the literary career of Dostoevsky.[9] Wachtel argues that "*Snow* is a more 'Russian' novel than anything a contemporary author writing in Russian might be likely to produce",[10] because contemporary Russian authors associate 19th-century Russian literature and its leading figures with many of the things they want to leave in the past: inequalities between men and women, socio-economic injustices, and political extremism. However, that being so, Pamuk's admiration of Dostoevsky's work should not be confused with literary imitation. Pamuk says that he has learned many life

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[4] M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. by C. Emerson, Minneapolis, 1984, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt22727z1, p. 6 [Accessed: 6 Aug. 2021].

[5] Ibid., p. 7.

[6] O. Pamuk, *Other Colors: Essays and a Story*, New York, 2007, p. 144.

[7] Ibid., p. 143.

[8] N. Cornwell, *Orhan Pamuk and Vladimir Nabokov on Dostoevsky*, [in:] *The Goalkeeper. The Nabokov Almanac*, ed. by Y. Leving, Boston, 2019, p. 17.

[9] Ibid., p. 26.

[10] A. Wachtel, "Orhan Pamuk's Snow as a Russian Novel", *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2012, p. 105.

lessons from Dostoevsky, but as an author, he tried not to be influenced by this literary giant and instead found ways to get inspiration from him.[11]

There is an important reason Pamuk is deeply interested in Dostoevsky. In an interview on Dostoevsky's work, Pamuk says that the Western and Russian worlds studied Dostoevsky for many decades, and there is almost nothing left for them to add to the existing knowledgebase. However, countries like Turkey that live on the edges of Europe still have original ideas and their own interpretations of Dostoevsky, so reading him in Paris or St Petersburg is quite different than reading him in İstanbul. Moreover, Pamuk notes that when he talks about Dostoevsky, he talks about Turkey because Turks clearly see themselves in Dostoevsky's books. Even in 21st-century Turkey, Pamuk's comments seem to be true.

Pamuk frequently mentions Dostoevsky and various other Russian authors in his fiction and non-fiction work. For instance, echoes of works by Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Nabokov resonate throughout Pamuk's works. The repeated mention of Russian authors in Pamuk's work is due to the 'intertextuality' of narrative common to post-modern literature, a movement of which Pamuk is a member. Intertextuality is defined as "a basic text-creating and semantic category, assuming the process of dialogical interaction of texts in the planes of content and expression, carried out both at the level of the whole text and at the level of certain semantic and formal elements".[12] Intertextuality is a common technique used by many post-modern authors: by referring to other texts and authors' works, meaning-making becomes subjective rather than objective. Thus, the meaning becomes a participatory activity by inviting the reader to interpret the narrative. From *Black Book* (1990) onward, Pamuk writes using many elements of post-modern literature, so his frequent mention of Russian writers does not come as a surprise.

In the following sections, three interconnected themes that are common in Dostoevsky and Pamuk's books are discussed in detail: the question of God and religion, *hüzün* and alienation, and the "Russian soul" and Turkishness.

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[11] Orhan Pamuk interviewed by Deniz Yüce Başarır, 2000, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHAuwWCf8zw [Accessed 13 July 2021].

[12] A. Bezrukov, "Intertextuality Reception in Postmodern Discourse", *Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2017, p. 265.

Question of God and Religion

One of the main themes in both Pamuk and Dostoevsky's works is the question of God.[13] Both authors believed that religious beliefs are the basis of human existence. Pamuk comes from a non-practising Muslim family but spent his youth as a liberal atheist. His re-discovery of Islam serves as a bridge between centuries-long Turkish history and culture and the new modern Turkey.[14] Similarly, Dostoevsky "experienced a re-conversion to Russian Orthodoxy"[15] during his exile in Siberia. In Dostoevsky's novels, characters face a religious-ethical dilemma and those who have belief in God, find ways to solve their problems. Those who shun away from God or turn their back to spirituality, suffer tremendously.[16] Although Dostoevsky lived a religious life since his early childhood, his conceptualization of religion reflects a more universal and humanitarian approach than a nationalistic and exclusive one.[17] No matter what the conditions, ethnic background or social status of the individuals in Dostoevsky's novels, as soon as they trust in God, they find peace in their lives.

In Pamuk's *Snow*, the main character of the novel, Ka, a poet, who was not able to write anything during his 12 years of exile in Europe, starts writing again when visiting Kars (Kars, a city situated on the border of Turkey and Russia, was part of the Russian Empire between 1878 and 1917). The force behind this change is almost due to the snow, which is a magical force sent by God. One similarity between *Demons* and *Snow* is that both novels are told by an unreliable narrator: a minor character tells the story in *Demons*, while Orhan Pamuk himself is the narrator in *Snow* as a friend of Ka. The narrator (Pamuk) states in *Snow*: "A careful reading reveals that Ka did not believe himself to be the true author of

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[13] For more on the religion and Orhan Pamuk, see J. Pederson, "The writer as a Dervish: Sufism and poetry in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*", *Religion & Literature*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2013, pp. 133–54.

[14] To read more about how Orhan Pamuk's views on past's influence on present Turkey, see M. Gürle, "*Orhan Pamuk and the Good of World Literature*, by Gloria Fisk", *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 65, no. 3, 2019, pp. 299–305.

[15] C. Emerson, *Introduction to Russian Literature*, Cambridge (Mass.), 2008, p. 129.

[16] See, for instance, Alyosha character from the *Brothers Karamazov*.

[17] For more on Dostoevsky and his thoughts on religion, see S. Cassedy, *Dostoevsky's Religion*, Stanford (CA), 2005.

any of the poems that came to him in Kars. Rather, he believed himself to be but the medium…".[18] It is the love he feels for İpek, her beauty, and the effects of the snowstorm that cause him to feel the existence of God in Kars. Ka also uses the snow metaphor to explain the relationship between God and human beings: "Ka was convinced that everyone has his own snowflake; individual existences might look identical from afar, but to understand one's own eternally mysterious uniqueness one had only to plot the mysteries of his or her own snowflake".[19]

For Pamuk, the question of God is also central to the process of Westernization.[20] When the modernization of Russia and Turkey took place, the traditional cultures of both societies were put on the back burner, putting social norms and structures into chaos. Religion had occupied the centre stage, but at the same time, modernization efforts had an emptying effect on the faith. In other words, when people do not believe in God, their respective cultures lose their authenticity. In the *Nights of Plague*, Pamuk tells the story of the plague on a fictional Minger Island where half the population is Muslim and the other half – Orthodox and Catholic Christians. Throughout the novel, Christians follow the rational and logical mind to fight the disease. The Muslims, on the other hand, refuse all the quarantine policies and only find solace in their religious beliefs:

> Although not as much as in the first days, many people stubbornly continued to use the belongings of the deceased, despite the extensive warnings of the Quarantine Directorate. There was a challenge and defiance to the state, westernization, modern medical science, the international community, a mockery, an opposition, and even a nonsense in this wrong behavior. (p. 250)

Like Pamuk, Dostoevsky sees religion as a building block and a defining characteristic of Russian society. In *Demons*, all the chaos created by the so-called revolutionaries is because of the Westernization efforts: "Demons, then, are ideas, that legion of -isms that came to Russia from the West: idealism, rationalism, empiricism, materialism, utilitarianism, positivism, socialism, anarchism, nihilism, and underlying them all, atheism" (p. xvii). At some point, Shatov, one of the main characters in the novel,

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[18] O. Pamuk, *Snow*, New York, 2005, p. 377.

[19] Ibid., p. 376.

[20] Orhan Pamuk interviewed by Deniz Yüce Başarır…, op. cit.

says: "[…] to start a rebellion in Russia one must inevitably begin with atheism".[21] The same Shatov later reminds Stavrogin, who has no beliefs, for or against God, therefore lost his way in nihilism: "He who is not Orthodox cannot be Russian".[22] Stavrogin, on the other hand, sees nothingness everywhere he looks, and this nothingness or *existential disbelief* results from a spiritual choice he has made. Disbelief eventually leads individuals to *acedia*, a state of listlessness and spiritual sloth. In his last letter before his suicide, Stavrogin says: "Everything is always shallow and listless".[23] For Mazurek "Acedia, in the unanimous opinion of Russian thinkers, is the deepest state of existential disbelief, for it always consists in isolation, in the 'severing of the bond of love', in the rejection of the Other".[24] Therefore, Stavrogin's main issue is his disbelief and listlessness in religion.

In *Demons*, God and religion are seen as the antidote to the chaos forced by foreign ideas. As nations define their own God, this, in return, facilitates nation-building efforts:

> Reason and science always, now, and from the beginning of the ages, have performed only a secondary and auxiliary task in life of nations; and so, they will to the end of the ages. […] The aim of all movements of nations, of every nation and in every period of its existence, is solely the seeking for God, its own God, entirely its own, and faith in him as the only true one.[25]

For Dostoevsky, a Russian is Orthodox, and the Russian nation is the only nation that built its national identity around his religion. If not for religion, the demise and decline of the nation is inevitable. For instance, one of Dostoevsky's most religious characters in *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin, symbolizes the perfect human being, a holy fool.[26] However, as the novel progresses, he loses this ideal form and becomes helpless, failing to save anyone, including himself, from their tragic ending. Due to modern society's spiritual and moral decline and dominance of materialism,

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[21] F. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, trans. R. Pevear, L. Volokhonsky, New York, 1995, p. 226.

[22] Ibid., p. 249.

[23] S. Mazurek, "The individual and nothingness (Stavrogin: A Russian interpretation)", *Studies in East European Thought*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2010, p. 676.

[24] Ibid., p. 49.

[25] F. Dostoevsky, *Demons*…, op. cit., p. 250.

[26] F. Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. R. Pevear, L. Volokhonsky, New York, 2003.

Christian values and Christ's divinity result in failure. In other words, if Russian society cannot reclaim its Christian values, there is no hope for its future because religious and secular Russia are incompatible.

Snow by Pamuk is a novel that represents the tension and turmoil of modernist and secular as well as religious Turkey of the late twentieth century: "The concepts of secularism, nationalism, and the Islamic Revival, including experiences of poverty that have been felt, unemployment, and suicide are all inscribed within the plot of this provocative novel".[27] The feeling of turmoil is something all modern Turks experience with no available solution. Both secular and religious sides criticize each other harshly, as no one believes the other's sincerity. According to Göncüoğlu, the main character's anxiety in *Snow* is all about finding a middle way so that he could be both provincial and urban and modern/secular and faithful all at the same time. However, this effort seems to be in vain. For instance, a religious militant, Blue, tells Ka: "I don't want to destroy your illusions, but your love for God comes out of Western romantic novels. In a place like this if you worship God as a European, you're bound to be a laughingstock. You don't belong to this country: you're not even a Turk anymore. First try to be like everyone else. Then try to believe in God" (p. 327). Blue's words show that religious Turkey does not trust secular Turkey, because seculars try to conceptualize God using Western worldview.

Both Pamuk and Dostoevsky make an issue with the liberal intelligentsia, which in their view, ignores the religious values of the ordinary people. In Russia and Turkey, the gap between educated liberals and common people tests the success of the Westernization efforts and are doomed to fail because both groups categorically disagree with the direction the county must take. For instance, in *Snow*, the narrator says: "Ka loved Turgenev and his elegant novels; and, like the Russian writer, Ka too had tired of his own country's never-ending troubles and had come to despise its backwardness, only to find himself gazing back with love and longing after a move to Europe".[28] Similarly, in *Demons*, the writer Karmazinov tells Pyotor Stepanovich:

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[27] M.Ö. Göncüoğlu, "A Narrative of Controversy: Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*", *Humanitas*, vol. 6, no. 11, 2018, p. 53.

[28] O. Pamuk, *Snow*…, op. cit., p. 31.

> […] here in Russia, there is nothing to collapse, comparatively speaking. We will not have stones tumbling down, everything will dissolve into mud. Holy Russia is least capable in all the world of resisting anything. Simple people still hang on somehow by the Russian God: but the Russian God, according to the latest reports, is rather unreliable and even barely managed to withstand the peasant reform.[29]

Both Pamuk and Dostoevsky see intellectuals as non-reliable, sentimental, and non-trustworthy characters who are lost in their admiration of European ways while having no clue about their own people. In another section of *Snow*, the head of the revolution committee, a former military officer, tells Ka:

> No one who is even slightly westernized can breathe free in this country unless they have a secular army protecting them, and no one needs this protection more than intellectuals who think they are better than everyone else and look down on people. […] But what do these upstarts do in return? They cling to their little European ways and turn up their affected little noses at the very soldiers who guarantee them their freedom.[30]

Hüzün and alienation

The other theme common to both Pamuk and Dostoevsky is the *hüzün* or the 'deep sadness' that results in characters' alienation because they have no power to realize their goals and desires in modern society. *Hüzün* comes into the Turkish language from Arabic, and Pamuk further expands its meaning in his memoir *İstanbul* to "the feeling of deep spiritual loss" (p. 90). Pamuk describes his childhood in forgotten İstanbul, no longer the capital city of the country, where remnants of the fallen Ottoman Empire were seen as decrepit anomalies:

> […] the melancholy of this dying culture was all around us. Great as the desire to westernize and modernize may have been, the more desperate wish was probably to be rid of all the bitter memories of the fallen empire, rather as a spurned lover throws away his lost beloved's clothes, possessions, and photographs. But

[29] F. Dostoevsky, *Demons*…, op. cit., p. 370.
[30] O. Pamuk, *Snow*…, op. cit., p. 203.

> as nothing, western or local, came to fill the void, the great drive to westernize amounted mostly to the erasure of the past: the effect on culture was reductive and stunting, leading families like mine, otherwise glad of republican progress, to furnish their houses like museums. That which I would later know as pervasive melancholy and mystery (*hüzün*), I felt in childhood as boredom as gloom, a deadening tedium I identified with the "alaturka" music to which my grandmother tapped her slippered feet. (pp. 29–30)

The main characters, such as Ka in *Snow* or Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, are young men who spend idle lives because their sadness and loneliness paralyze and alienate them from their environment. In *Snow*, when the city struggles with the violent coup, jailing, and tortures, Ka says: "I was very happy yesterday, you know. For the first time in years, I was writing poems. But I can't bear to hear these stories now" (p. 176).[31] According to Pamuk and Dostoevsky, the source of this alienation can be found in the materialistic modern society and the decline of traditional values. For Pamuk, İstanbul of the 21st century "speaks of defeat, destruction, deprivation, melancholy and poverty";[32] he sees İstanbul as "a city of ruins and end-of-empire melancholy".[33] Westernization promised a secular Turkey free of the laws of Islam but "no one was quite sure what else Westernization was good for".[34] In *Nights of Plague*, when the plague spread, it was mentioned that the sense of abandonment and loneliness came not only from the island, but from the whole Eastern Mediterranean (p. 454).

It should be noted that in Pamuk's writing, the melancholy of the Turkish people is not a private matter, but it is mostly communal (p. 89). This communal feeling is related to *hüzün*'s second meaning in the Sufi tradition, which is the spiritual anguish of not being close enough to Allah (p. 90). In this sense, *hüzün* is not necessarily a negative feeling, but it is the state of mind and mood many Turks had carried with them after the country's modernization efforts. Pamuk thinks that the failure of the Turkish Republic lies in the fact that Ottoman history and traditions were ignored when creating the new republic. In *İstanbul* he says:

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[31] More on the theme of *hüzün*, see I. Vanwesenbeeck, "Is Strangeness the New Hüzün in Orhan Pamuk?", *Review of Middle East Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2019, pp. 357–62.

[32] O. Pamuk, *İstanbul: Memories and the City*, New York, 2006, p. 47.

[33] Ibid., p. 6.

[34] Ibid., p. 10.

> By neglecting the past and severing their connection with it, the *hüzün* they feel in their mean and hollow efforts is all the greater. *Hüzün* rises out of the pain they feel for everything that has been lost, but it is also what compels them to invent new defeats and new ways to express their impoverishment.[35]

For Pamuk, instead of finding an original way to modernize their country without forgetting their national identity, modern Turks preferred to live within the ruins of their cities. For instance, the Ottoman Empire's capital, İstanbul, stripped away all the remnants of its past in the name of modernization, but in the end, the city does not look any more Western or Eastern.

Pamuk is careful not to put the sole blame for the country's spiritual decline on Atatürk and his reforms. The real decline of the country indeed started in the late-19th-century Ottoman Empire. Pamuk's latest novel, *Nights of Plague*, is a story that begins in 1901, in the years of the Ottoman Empire's sharp decline and then collapse. The West labeled the country as the 'sick man' of Europe due to its bankrupt economy. During this period, the dangerous ideas of West did not infest East, but the impoverished Eastern nations of China and India spread diseases to the West. In the middle of these two worlds, the Ottoman Empire served as a transitionary place. However, the Turks of the era were so weak that they could not stop spreading the disease. For instance, in the *Nights of Plague*, for a long time, the island of Minger rejects the existence of any disease and ignores the quarantine measures imposed by the Christian doctors of the Ottoman Empire. In their mind, "to accept quarantine equals westernization" (p. 23). The disease was able to spread quickly and tragically because no solution was found to resolve the city's existing social conflicts: "If there was no anger and envy between the Greek Orthodox and Turkish Muslims, state and citizens, educated rich and poor immigrants on the island, and a common national spirit had been created, quarantine efforts could have been successful" (p. 167).

In *Crime and Punishment*, a similar sadness and loneliness capture the main character, Raskolnikov, a former university student who moved to Petersburg to study but lost his way in the city. For instance, when describing Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky says: "Gloomy feelings of tormenting, unending loneliness and alienation suddenly and consciously took possession of his

[35] Ibid., p. 103.

soul".[36] Due to his alienation, Raskolnikov ends up murdering a moneylender because he is against the 'idea' that the lady represents. Later in the novel, Svidrigaylov says: "Common people get drunk, educated young people have nothing to do but burn with unrealizable dreams and fantasies and deform themselves with theories".[37] Raskolnikov tries to find a meaning to his existence in Petersburg by producing a theory about killing but fails terribly.

In Pamuk's novels, the Western way of living is both the cause and result of loneliness, individual or communal, felt by the people, leading to their further isolation in society. In the *Nights of Plague*, when the disaster captures the small island through a highly contagious disease, the Ottoman sultan is more interested in satisfying Western demands than helping his own people. The island was surrounded by Western ships to enforce quarantine measures so the disease would not expand to their countries. The island people have no one to trust, and their feeling of abandonment is enhanced by their lack of education, disconnection from the rest of the world, and poverty. The novel takes a critical stance towards the Ottoman sultan, who encourages religious dogmatic behaviors in its people while losing land after land from the once mighty Ottoman Empire. No matter how disconnected people are from the world, even the little children are aware of the fast-approaching end of the empire. The regime's collapse increases people's helplessness and loneliness, while they lack the tools to solve their problems. Everything they do results in more death, more pain, and further disconnection from life. The narrator in the novel says: "This feeling is the story of the traditional heartbreak of the lonely servant who was forgotten by his father in the traditional Ottoman world and was not loved enough by the higher-ups" (p. 235).

In *Demons*, Stavrogin's loneliness does not only stem from his atheism or lack of religious beliefs but also from his indifference towards life. During his meeting with Tikhon, a local monk, Tikhon tells Stavrogin that "total atheism is more respectable than worldly indifference".[38] What is more: "In sinning, each man sins against all, each man is at least partly guilty for another's sin. There is no isolated sin. And perhaps I am a great

[36] F. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. M. Katz, New York, 2019, p. 73.
[37] Ibid., p. 333.
[38] F. Dostoevsky, *Demons*…, op. cit., p. 688.

sinner, perhaps more than you".[39] Just like in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, in late 19th-century Russia, when the events of *Demons* occur, individuals are left behind by their governments, and their societies are in turmoil, while very few ideas hold individuals together. Half-hearted Westernization efforts, increased materialism, confusion about one's identity, lack of resources, and declined moral values push individuals to various demonic actions while offering no way out of their misery.

Russian Soul and Turkishness

The Westernization of Russian and Turkish societies shows many parallels. When editing new translations of Dostoevsky's works into Turkish, Orhan Pamuk notes these parallels.[40] He states that both Russia and Turkey's Westernization process followed a top-down approach (Peter the Great and Catherine II in Russia, 19th-century Ottoman sultans, and the 20th-century Atatürk in Turkey), which resulted in deep resentment and rejection by much of the society. Pamuk thinks that major reason for the clash between westernization and conservatism derives from the disappearance of local values and culture in favor of Western ways that do not align with the local customs.

Both Orhan Pamuk and Fyodor Dostoevsky come from countries that are located on the border of West and East. Their work profoundly reflects the tension between being unable to belong to either culture fully. The Western or 'outside' influences creep into Russian and Turkish lives as 'ideas', so much so that both countries struggle to claim their own identity and uniqueness in the face of Westernization that forces people to act and live in a similar fashion dictated by the Eurocentric worldview. In Russia, much of the 19th century witnessed the tension between Slavophiles that supported the traditions of Russia while Europhiles supported modernization by adopting the European way of living. The capital city of Russia, St Petersburg, is seen as the symbol of Russia's modernization efforts, while Moscow is the center of traditional Russian culture. For instance, in *Crime and Punishment*, Svidrigaylov tells Raskolnikov: "[Petersburg is]

[39] Ibid., p. 708.

[40] Orhan Pamuk interviewed by Deniz Yüce Başarır…, op. cit.

a city full of half-crazy people […]. There are few places where you can find so many gloomy, harsh, and strange influences on man's soul as you can in Petersburg".[41] Changes brought into society by modernization efforts are synthetic and run against centuries-long Russian traditions. Petersburg represents Russia's Westernization efforts for Russians, while Moscow is the center of Russian religion and tradition. Similarly, İstanbul lost its reputation after Ottoman Empire fell, and Ankara was selected as the capital of the Turkish nation, representing *Turkishness*, which for Pamuk is the reflection of the country's 'inwardness'.

When the modern Turkish Republic was founded, the idea of *Turkishness* was introduced to solve the country's identity problem. After living in a multicultural society for many centuries and being let down by each of the ethnic groups that formed the Ottoman Empire during the national awakening of the late 19th century, the new Turkey Republic valued its own ethnicity, language, and cultural heritage over all others. The penal codes became law to enforce 'Turkish values'. To this day, anyone not respectable of this heritage can be fined, trialed, and sentenced to jail. Ironically, Pamuk himself was prosecuted under the same penal code after his statements about the Armenian and Kurdish ethnic minorities in 2005 (the charge was later dropped). However, the question about what constitutes a Turkish value is subjective and interpreted differently by different groups.

Regarding preserving their country's identity in the face of social and political turmoil, Pamuk and Dostoevsky offer similar ideas in *Snow* and *Demons*, both of which share some interesting commonalities. First, both works are considered the most political novel of their authors. Second, they share a similar plot: members of the revolutionist younger generations first create chaos in their respective provincial cities and then orchestrate a coup. Reed says that "Dostoevsky intended *Demons* to be a kaleidoscopic examination of the forces and ideas which he saw pushing the younger generation towards extremism, madness and suicide".[42] Pamuk also portrays in *Snow* a group of modernizers who stage a coup during a public event to support the westernization efforts of Ankara, but they go into such extreme measures that their efforts quickly become violent. Third, both

[41] F. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*…, op. cit., p. 324.

[42] S.J. Reed, "Ideological Infection in Dostoevsky's *Demons*", *Senior Projects Spring 2017. 359*, https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2017/359, p. 6 [Accessed: 13 July 2021].

authors present a collection of contemporary ideologies of their era and sharply criticize those ideologies. What represents the 'Russian soul' or 'Turkishness' of a citizen is not the ever-changing ideologies of the West, but their centuries-long local culture, traditions, language and unique mannerisms. European ideas taken up by Russians and Turks that neglect these characteristics are destined to fail. Indeed, *The Idiot* ends with Lizaveta Prokofevna's following prophecy: "Enough of these passions, it's time to serve the reason. And all this, and all these foreign lands, and all this Europe of yours, it is all one big fantasy, and all of us abroad are one big fantasy […] remember my words, you'll see for yourself".[43]

It should be noted that neither Pamuk nor Dostoevsky is particularly against the Westernization of their countries. Pamuk comes from a wealthy family who adopted Turkey's modernization efforts, so he is not entirely against all Eurocentric ideas. Similarly, Dostoevsky maintained both liberal and conservative views during his lifetime:[44] he was against serfdom, and during his youth, he became a member of a secret revolutionist group, which resulted in a mock execution and then his exile in Siberia. Not the Western values, but how modernization has been done in their countries bothers them the most. In *Other Colors*, Pamuk says for Dostoevsky:

> […] his anger was not a simple expression of anti-Westernism or hostility to European thinking: What Dostoevsky resented was that European thought came to his country at second hand. What angered him was not its brilliance, its originality, or its utopian leanings but the facile pleasure it afforded to those who embraced it. He hated seeing Russian intellectuals seize upon an idea just arrived from Europe and believe themselves privy to all the secrets of the world and -more important- of their own country.[45]

Both Dostoevsky and Pamuk sympathize with the characters who represent religious traditionalism, for which they were highly criticized in their respective countries. However, the authors are also careful to illustrate multiple points of view entirely, so, for instance, the dialogs in *Demons* and *Snow* are dynamic, showing the tension between various groups while providing all aspects of their thought processes. Emerson believes that the

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[43] F. Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*…, op. cit., p. 615.

[44] S.J. Reed, "Ideological Infection"…, op. cit.

[45] O. Pamuk, *Other Colors*…, op. cit., p. 138.

double meanings of the characters in Dostoevsky come from his strong emphasis on freedom. Therefore, he "allows truths to be multiple, a high priority in his prose is always to increase the number of available perspectives and to complicate all possible resonances of the spoken word".[46] In other words, to consider him a dogmatic conservative or a modernizer would be a mistake. The same is true for Pamuk.

While Russians and Turks defined their national identity compared to the European West, the West also saw the Russian soul or Turkishness differently as the 'other'. In *Snow*, when various factions come together to write a letter against the coup in their city, one participant says: "When they write poems or sing songs in the West, they speak for all humanity. They're human beings -but we're just Muslims. When *we* write something, it's just called ethnic poetry".[47] In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said states that the conflict between West and East is only a reductionist and stereotypical approach, but in reality, "each age and society re-create its "others". This is because "the development and maintenance of every culture require existence of another, different and competing alter ego".[48] Therefore, it should be noted that by comparing themselves to Westerners and their way of living, both Russian and Turkish societies wanted to define their national identity; but the same is true for the West. In the *Nights of Plague*, the quarantine measures do not work because no one trusts each other. Westerners disrespect Muslim beliefs about their daily prayers, prayer rugs, or even the burial of their dead. This results in Muslims not following their directions, and the plague continues to spread. If each side acknowledges and respects each other's national, ethnic, and religious identity, solutions to problems may be found, but societies insist on enforcing their own way of living.

Conclusions

This paper reviewed the two major figures of Russian and Turkish literature, Orhan Pamuk and Fyodor Dostoevsky, to provide a picture of the

[46] C. Emerson, *Introduction to Russian Literature*…, op. cit., p. 137.
[47] O. Pamuk, *Snow*…, op. cit., p. 279.
[48] E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1994, pp. 231–32.

common literary themes in their respective cultures. These authors lived in different countries and time periods, but their literary works show that Russia and Turkey, as examples of torn countries between West and East, underwent a similar process in their Westernization efforts. Therefore, much of 19th-century Russian and Ottoman history runs parallel to each other, but in the 20th century, they diverge. Russia chose a socialist route, while modern Turkey became a democratic republic. In the 21st century, their histories strangely merge again as authoritarianism takes hold in their political sphere. However, the struggle of Russian and Turkish people continues as their national identities are still defined through 'the other' or 'the West'.

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