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## THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY IN ORWEL'S 1984 AND PAMUK'S SNOW

Betül ENSARİ\*

### Abstract

This paper examines the close relation between power and knowledge in the construction of identity by analyzing in what ways the characters in *1984* and *Snow* deal with the obligations of ideology imposed on them by the state in the framework of comparative literature. The methodology of comparative literature enables us to compare *1984* and *Snow* regardless of their authors' different historical and cultural backgrounds. In doing so, it makes us realize that the struggle for freedom is a cross-cultural issue. Borrowing various methods from different disciplines such as sociology and gender studies comparative literature helps us to read the novels from different perspectives. Concerning this, it is necessary to analyze the fight of the main characters against the hegemonic power over the bodies of individuals in the novels, even though they are aware of the punishment and torture they will face as a result of their resistance in relation to Stuart Hall's definition of identity and culture. Additionally, in the light of Foucault's methodology, this paper discusses which strategies the authorities use to standardize societies and constitute 'imaginative communities' that share similar values and thoughts. Besides, the relation between gender and power in the construction of identity is also explored. Applying Judith Butler's ideas, a special emphasis is given on the female struggle against the masculine hegemony over the fragmentation of female identities portrayed in Pamuk's *Snow* where some Muslim female students are subjected to double-discriminated by laiciest ideology because of their gender and religious identity. Finally this article points out that in comparison to the female character in *1984* the female characters in *Snow* defeat masculine discourses that try to control female bodies by creating 'a third space' for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Identity Politics, Power, Knowledge, Discipline, Female Body, Masculine Discourse.

### Introduction

In *1984*, Orwell explores in what ways our consciousness are shaped by modern technology used by the totalitarian state. As Foucault states "the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces." (Foucault, 1980: 73-4). In comparison to George Orwell, who lived in Europe between 1903 and 1950, Orhan Pamuk comes from a different geographical, cultural and historical background. However; both writers show an interest in the relation between authority and individual. In the novels, both Orwell's and Pamuk's characters display similar attitudes toward the hegemonic authorities that aim to create a society according to their own interest and ideology.

George Orwell portrays a dystopia where people live in a world dominated by the nations called Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia in 1984. These three nations are in a constant war with each other; nevertheless none of them wins the war. In fact, war is only a tool for the leaders of the nations to create an instable and insecure atmosphere so that they can rule their countries as they wish. Like in other countries, people in Oceania are constantly observed, watched, and directed by telescreens. The Party set all the rules about social life and destroy individual dreams by robbing their members of feelings and human instincts. In such an oppressed community Winston Smith starts thinking about the meaning of life. The monotonous life he leads, the need for love he strives for, and the merciless relation among family members who betray each other to the Thought Police lead him to question Big Brother and the Party. Thus, Winston illegally buys a diary where he expresses his criminal thoughts about Party's discourse over freedom, strength and war: "Freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength, War is peace" (Orwell, 2003: 3). These slogans written in massive letters on the white pyramid of the Ministry of Truth is a pure manifestation of the Party's power to reproduce knowledge. As Michel Foucault expresses, those who produce knowledge have the power to make it real and enforce its validity and scientific status.<sup>2</sup> The Party converts the meanings of freedom, knowledge and peace by creating doublethink. Similarly, the Ministry of Truth fabricates lies whereas

<sup>1</sup> Shahnaz Khan uses the term "the third space" in her article "Muslim Women: Negotiations in the Third Space" in order to show the fight of Muslim women for creating a space outside the discourses of Orientalism and male-dominated Islam.

<sup>2</sup> See Foucault, 1995, 26-28.

people are punished in the Ministry of Love. The functions of the Ministry of Truth and the Ministry of Love in the construction reality will be dealt with later on.

### **Construction of Collective Identities through Memory and History**

In order to illustrate in what ways the Party creates collective identities and weakens individuality, it is crucial to stress the importance of history and memory in the construction of identity. Stuart Hall underlines the role of history in the construction of identity as follows: "identities are about questions of using resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from' [...] so much as how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves" (Hall and Gay, 1996: 4) In this sense, Orwell shows in what ways the Party changes history and rewrites it according to its interest. The reason why the Party breaks the link between the past and the present is clear. As in the Party's slogan expressed, "Who controls the past controls the future and who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell, 2003: 20). In this way the Party disables the citizens to compare the past with the present. Therefore most of the citizens fail to realize that their lives are far worse than before. However, Winston, who works for the Ministry of Truth, notices that historical records are altered to fit the needs of the Party. He notices that the Party demolishes the past and controls 'reality'. All of the history books impose Party's ideology and individuals are banned from keeping momentous from their own past such as photos and documents. In this way, the Party can control the way the citizens think and feel. For instance, the Party claims that before the revolution people led miserable lives and the Party liberated them from the capitalist system that turned them into slaves. Additionally, claiming that they are at war with Eurasia, the Party motivates them to work toward the Party's goals. In doing so, collective identities are empowered whereas any expression of individuality is suppressed. In this regard, keeping a diary is a crucial attempt to reveal one's identity.

Orwell uses the diary as a symbol for individual freedom. The ban of keeping a diary also represents how the Party can dominate individual sphere. In the diary Winston writes that "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four" (Orwell, 2003: 46). Winston is going to be arrested for his criminal thoughts asserted in the diary. As a result of the torture he has been subjected to, in the end of the book he writes that FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE, and GOD IS POWER (Orwell, 2003: 300). It is interesting enough that after releasing Winston, the Party allows him to keep the diary. Why? It is because the Party is sure that Winston has understood that swimming against a current that sweeps you backward, however hard you struggle only exhausts you. In the end he learns to go with the current. Thus keeping a diary is no longer a threat to the construction of collective identities.

### **Control over the Body through Gaze and Punishment**

Another strategy the Party uses to shape the identities of citizens is the gaze. As Foucault puts it, sovereign power applies panoptic mechanisms to maintain its disciplinary power over individuals. Schools, prisons, and factories serve as means of transforming apparatuses where individuals are under constant control. They are highly visible whereas they communicate neither with their observers nor with their fellow inmates. They turn into subject. In the novel Orwell describes the panoptic design used in the buildings and city centers. There are telescreens that penetrate citizens in order to prevent individuals from sharing their ideas with each other and revolt against the party just as Foucault mentions in Discipline and Punish.

If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, bad reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time; if they are workers, there are no disorders, no theft, no coalitions, none of those distractions that slow down the rate of work, make it less perfect or cause accidents. (Foucault, 1995: 198)

Like many other citizens in Oceania, Winston and Julia are being observed and they are aware of it. Both of them look for a space to reveal their own identities and express their thoughts. However, both of them know that one day they will be caught because it is impossible to hide from the panoptic mechanisms. In fact the Party turns Oceania into an open prison where people cannot talk to each other because of telescreens and hidden microphones. Even your own child may betray you because at school they are taught to obey the ideology of the Party. As Winston guesses, one day Winston and Julia are arrested for committing thought crimes and they are punished to be cured. How are they cured? \_ Through physical and psychological punishment\_. They are put into a prison cell without a window where they are watched by the monitor. When prisoners are put together they want to talk to each other, but they are warned not to talk by the telescreen. After severe punishments Winston makes some progress and then he is put in a cell where he recovers and gains some weight. Nevertheless, one day he cannot control his feelings and asserts that he has not betrayed Julia and he still hates Big Brother. Even though Winston accepts Party's principles, this is not enough for O'Brien. He does not allow anyone to die hating the Party. He wants to control the mind and

the heart of individuals. Thus, Winston is brought Room 101 that he has heard of many times. He has even witnessed the fear of a prisoner of entering that room. Now, he is in it where he will face his nightmare, "rats". In that room an individual is faced with his/her nightmare. For Winston it is "rats", which he cannot endure. He is threatened to be eaten by rats if he still loves Julia and hates Big Brothers. For fear of being eaten by rats, he betrays Julia screaming "Do it to Julia!" "Do it to Julia!" "to Julia!" "not to me" (Orwell, 2003: 289). Winston does not pretend to say these statements, he actually means it. He feels that this is the only way to escape from the punishment. The authority humiliates its citizens and makes them feel that they are powerless and weak. In this way, they project an idea that the Party is the most powerful and immortal. In doing so, individuals lose self-esteem and hate themselves. As a result, they also hate each other, whereas they adore Big Brother, the mighty one. Obtaining all kinds of information about its citizens, the Party gains power over the citizens. The Party uses the information against the citizens to transform them in the way they want. While Winston and Julia are discussing what they would do if they were caught and whether confession is betrayal or not, Julia states that the Party can make one say anything but they cannot make one believe it. She claims that they cannot get inside one and change his/her feelings. Thus, the condemned ones can beat the Party by dying with their hatred against Big Brother. Unfortunately, the Party is not interested only in changing their ideas but their feelings. They do not kill any convict without converting his/her feelings. The Party squeezes the prisoner empty. Thus s/he can no longer love, laugh and enjoy life. This happens both to Julia and Winston. When they happen to meet, they feel nothing against each other. The transformation in Julia and Winston hints at the psychological outcome of physical torture.

Orwell also plays with the concepts of sanity and insanity in the novel, which manifests that these concepts can be easily constructed and deconstructed by the expert discourse. Being aware of the fact that the past is abolished by the Party frustrates Winston a great deal. He wonders if he is a lunatic. He questions what madness is and states that "At one time it had been a sign of madness to believe that the earth goes around the sun; today, to believe that the past is inalterable" (Orwell, 2003: 45). In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault examines madness, deviancy, and sexuality and he draws our attention to the notions of reason and unreason, integration and exclusion, power and knowledge. According to him, the self is constructed in relation to expert discourses that define normal and pathological. It is discourse that combines "both language and practice and refers to the production of knowledge through language which gives meaning to material objects and social practices" (Barker, 202: 224). In this sense, the Party that has all kinds of power produces knowledge that regulates society. The education system and the legislation are based on the discourse the Party has established. Who is sane and who is insane, what crime is and what is not are all set by the knowledge created by the discourse. Winston, who tries to construct his own identity outside Party's discourse, suffers from being the only one who knows the truth about the Party. Winston keeps a diary so that he can stay sane. However, according to O'Brien, keeping a diary and expressing ideas contradictory to Party ideology is a sign of insanity. Therefore, Winston is supposed to reconcile himself to the Party's ideology so that he can become sane again. The following dialogue between O'Brien and Winston illustrates how the Party sets norms about sanity and insanity:

Shall I tell you why we have brought you here? To cure you! To make you sane! Will you understand, Winston, that no one whom we bring to this place ever leaves our uncured? We are not interested in those stupid crimes that you have committed. The Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about. We do not merely destroy our enemies, we change them. Do you understand what I mean by that? (Orwell, 2003: 147).

Similar to *1984*, penetration and violence are the main issues that recur throughout *Snow*. In *Snow*, Pamuk tells the story of an exiled Turkish poet, Kerim Alakusoğlu known as Ka, who works for *Cumhuriyet*, a secularist newspaper. Through the eyes of Ka, a secular elite, who was once exiled for twenty years in the wake of the military coup of 1980 because of his political article. *Snow* reflects two contesting discourses that have been clashing to form 'Turkish identity': secularity and Islam. With the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the secularist Kemalist ideology aims to cut the bond between the Turkish Republic and the Ottoman Empire. Enforcing a modern Turkish identity, the state wants to westernize its citizens. Westernization of a nation with strong religious identity is not easy for the secularist state. As in the novel indicated, the state and secularist elites and officers attempt to achieve their aims through military coups and police force. For instance, Ka is regarded as a threat for secularists in Kars because of his investigation and his close relation with Necip, a student at a religious school, and he is closely observed by the police. Similarly, Muhtar and Blue are seen as enemies and followed by the police. Additionally, like in *1984*, secret police knows everything about citizens. They know the relation between Kadife and Blue. They know that Ka has visited Blue. Using Ka's weakness, they plot against Blue and arrest him. In the end of the novel Blue and Hande are killed by the secret police.

### **Construction of Collective Body through Media in *Snow***

Pamuk reveals in what ways the secular elites and police officers establish their hegemony over minorities in Kars and attempt to create one-dimensional Turkish identity. Ka comes to Kars in order to investigate why headscarf girls commit suicide. During his stay in Kars, the roads are blocked by the snow storm; the contact of the city with the rest of the world is cut off. This enables some secularist artists and members of the National Intelligence Organ to exercise their power over minorities including Islamists, Armenians and Kurds. Employing sketches, newspaper articles, television, and military force, they aim to empower the secularist Kemalist ideology of the state. Regarding the influence of modern power structure on human body, Foucault underlines that in modern societies "power circulate[s] through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily action." (Foucault, 1980: 151-152). Pamuk displays throughout the novel in what ways the discourse about the headscarf and modernity is produced by means of the radio, TV and the newspaper. Serhat Şehir Gazetesi plays a crucial role in dictating the state's Kemalist and secularist ideology. Interestingly enough, Serhat Bey, the owner of the newspaper, is used to make a news about events which has not happened. In his visit to the newspaper Ka reads a news about A Victory Celebration at the National Theatre. The news calls that Ka will read his poem named "Snow". Taken aback at the news, Ka states that he is not going to attend to the event, adding that he has not written a poem titled "Snow". Serhat Bey's reply displays the influence of modern media on the future events: "Many events come into true because of our news." Thus, secular authority imagines a world and creates it by means of modern media.

Additionally, Pamuk shows the didactic role of theatre in the construction of modern Turkish identity. Irritated at the raise of Islamist Party in Kars, Sunay Zaim, passionate supporter of the secular state ideology, decides to stage a short play called "My Father and My Headscarf". The play, written in the early years of the Republic, imposes the idea of imprisonment of women by headscarf and any other forms of the religious practices. In the play a headscarf girl removes her scarf in the street and a group of Islamists attack her. Then she is rescued by Turkish soldiers. Creating the dichotomy between modernity and religion, the play evokes the idea that women are liberated by secularist ideology. In this sense, it can be said that theatre carries an important role in producing discourse on headscarf and Islamist movement in Pamuk's *Snow*.

### **Female Body as a Battlefield**

In the novel Pamuk also illustrates the struggle of some headscarf girls, students of a religious school and Islamists for constructing their own identities in a secularist-Kemalist environment. Butler states that the core of identity is based on gender. Before understanding the power relation between males and females, it is hard to analyze the construction of identity. Regarding the resistance of female characters against male-dominated hegemony, Pamuk illustrates the fact that female characters are subjected to double-discrimination firstly because of their gender, then because of their religious identity. The headscarf both symbolizes their feminine identity and their religious identity. The secular male-dominated ideology targets at both of their identities.

The issue of headscarf is an important cultural marker that reflects power struggle between the secularists and Islamists over the body of Muslim women. Headscarf is represented as a crucial identifier that constitutes both feminine and masculine identities. In this sense, the ongoing debate on headscarf since the beginning of the Turkish Republic is a battlefield for secularist and Islamist masculinity. While the laiciest state regards headscarf as a symbol of 'backwardness' and a threat to modern Turkish identity, headscarf is represented as a flag by the Islamist Party. However, for the female characters in the novel it signifies their rejection of any kind of oppression either secularist or Islamist. I argue that in the novel headscarf girls fight against both the suppression of the masculine state and traditional understanding of Islam by committing suicide. In the novel suicide is represented as a revolt against the Kemalist ideology. As Foucault suggests, "discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile bodies'" (Foucault, 1995: 138). Those docile bodies are ready to be culturally and ideologically inscribed. In this sense, Teslime, Hande and Kadife refuse to be culturally and ideologically conditioned. Teslime commits suicide to express her identity as a free person by rejecting state-imposed laicism that orders her to take her scarf off. Similarly, she cannot endure her family's pressure. Her suicide including other suicides is first ignored by the state and Turkish newspapers until when some foreign newspapers make news about them. The Turkish newspaper claims that the suicides are not related to headscarf ban. The state officers reduce their reaction against to secularist ideology to familial oppression and a love affair. Ka's investigation displays the identity crisis Teslime suffers from. In order to prevent further suicides, the state makes Presidency of Religious Affairs announce a fetva about the evil of committing suicide. This attempt shows perfectly the state's aim to control the bodies of women in different ways. Like in 1984, individuals are not allowed to die with their hatred against the ideology; rather they are wanted to be transformed.

Hande is another important character that deals with the identity crisis and suffers from not being able to embody the state-imposed identity. She describes her dilemma as follows:

The true reason is that I can't concentrate; I can't image myself without a head scarf. [...]If I could close my eyes just once and imagine myself going bareheaded through the doors into school, walking down the corridor, and going into class, I'd find the strength to go through with this, and then, God willing, I'd be free. I would have removed the head scarf of my own free will, and not because the police have forced me. But for now I just can't concentrate, I just can't bring myself to imagine that moment. (Pamuk, 2005: 132)

Hande does not want to cause any trouble to her parents. On the other hand, she does not want to lose her identity. She has constituted an identity and she imagines herself as a headscarf girl. Now, she is forced to be transformed by the familial and governmental pressure. She is afraid of losing herself and never becoming the same person again. Removing her headscarf is associated with betrayal. Like Winston and Julia, Hande is forced to betray. The state wants to change her feelings about headscarf and break her identity down. She realizes why people commit suicide: to protect their identities. This is what she senses. She never gives up headscarf and falls in love with Blue. She is killed by the secret police with him.

Another important female figure is Kadife. With her controversial attitudes and secret love affair with Blue, an Islamist militant hiding from the police, she deconstructs the image of Muslim women. In contrast to the conventional image of headscarf women presented by the state as backward and illiterate, Kadife is a well-educated and intelligent woman. Kadife first wears headscarf to protest the state's interference in individual freedom. Then she cannot remove it, because to her, headscarf signifies liberation from the oppressive and dehumanizing ideology of the state. As such, the main motif behind her attitude is to show that she does not fear the state's obligations: punishment and torture.

Kadife is the best example for the demonstration of the battle between masculine secularist discourse and Islamist masculine discourse over the body of Muslim women. Both Sunay and Blue try to win her: Sunay Zaim offers Kadife to play the role of a headscarf girl who will remove her scarf and commit suicide. He states that if she accepts that offer the police officers will release Blue. When this deal is also presented to Blue, he strongly disapproves of Kadife's removal of her scarf on the stage before the male audience. According to masculine power, either secularist or Islamist, the body of women belongs to men and penetrating it means capturing the female body. With the removal of the scarf, the masculine secular ideology attempts to gain Kadife's body. In doing so, the secularist ideology intends to win the battle and defeat Blue. Surprisingly enough, Kadife accepts to act the role and to remove her headscarf, not because Sunay Zaim wants it but because it is her intention to do so. She suggests that women commit suicide in order to preserve their honor in contrast to men who commit suicide because they are deprived of it. When Kadife removes her scarf, Sunay Zaim including the audience are stunned at her beauty. Sunay says that if he were Blue he would also envy her beauty. Sunay's last statement proves the idea that women's body is a territory and phallogocentric secularist ideology conquers it through the gaze. In fact, neither Blue, the representative of Islam, nor Sunay, the representative of Kemalist ideology, succeeds to control Kadife's body. Removing her scarf she denies the authority of Blue over her body. Likewise, killing Sunay and claiming her religious faith she protects her identity.

### **Conclusion**

Thanks to the wide scope of Comparative Literature study that transgresses the boundaries of other disciplines and sees non-European literature as a cultural production as worthy as European canons to explore, this paper has compared an American novel with a Turkish novel that both handle the questions of the relation between individual and the state in different perspectives. In the Foucauldian framework, this paper has manifested in what ways modern power structures create psychological, mental, social, and physical impacts upon human bodies in order to control individuals and frame their identities. It is also displayed that a diary or a headscarf may turn into a threat to any ideology imposed by any kind of authority because of their associations with individual identity. Ideologies produced by any expert power reduce differences and form one-dimensional identities by means of violent repression. Orwell illustrates the methods the Party applies to transform its citizens and the ways how individuals are dehumanized by means of physical and psychological torture. Likewise, Pamuk displays the disastrous effects of the official homogenizing identity strategy of the Turkish Republic. Creating fictional worlds where people are dominated by ideologies and suppressed by police forces, the authors indicate that any authority that celebrates multiplicity of identities and tolerates differences will enable its citizens lead a happy life. The novels prove the fact that imposing any kind of ideology on citizens by force creates enemies. Instead, improving individual freedom in any society will create harmony and peace.

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