

Deconstructing The Oedipal Complex in Orhan Pamuk's The Red-Haired Woman: A Redefinition

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Abstract



In this research paper, Orhan Pamuk's book will be analyzed critically within the scope of psychoanalytic literary criticism. Addressing the research gap in analyzing Pamuk's works, this study explores how The Red-Haired Woman challenges and deconstructs the traditional Oedipal Complex. Drawing on thematic coding and textual analysis, this paper uncovers how the novel's narrative differs from the established psychoanalytic norms. Additionally, it investigates the importance of Eastern myths in reshaping familial relationships.

Through readers' interpretations and quality insights, this research paper contributes to a sensitive approach to literary criticism, shedding light on the complex interplay of family dynamics. Furthermore, examining Orhan Pamuk's novel through the lens of psychoanalytic literary criticism delves into the intricacies of the characters' psyches, unraveling hidden layers of their motivations and desires. The study explores the challenges posed by "The Red-Haired Woman" to the traditional Oedipal Complex and scrutinizes the protagonist's journey in a broader cultural and societal context. Lastly, this study goes beyond dominant constructions. It provides an illuminative examination of how familial dynamics are enacted within Orhan Pamuk's "The Red-Haired Woman" and thereby enhances the scholarly discourse.

Keywords: Oedipal Complex, Deconstruction, Family Dynamics, Myths

Introduction

Oedipal complex is one of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic terms.. The Greek mythical character Oedipus, who unintentionally murders his father and marries his mother, is the inspiration for the name. The Oedipal complex, which usually occurs during the phallic period (approximately ages 3 to 6), is a critical stage in psychosexual development according to Freud's hypothesis. According to Freud, children maintain sentiments of hatred or rivalry against the same-sex parent and develop unconscious sexual desires for the parent of the opposite sex. The complex is a collection of feelings and tensions that a youngster goes through while figuring out how to interact with different family members. This research paper will dissect the conventional Oedipal complex using the text "The Red-Haired Woman by Orhan Pamuk." The fields of philosophy and literary criticism have been significantly impacted by deconstruction. It challenges fixed beliefs about language and meaning and promotes a critical reading attitude. It has significantly impacted dismantling rigid ideas and encouraging a more open and inquiring attitude toward interpretation. "The RedHaired Woman," a book by Orhan Pamuk, delves deeply and intricately into the exploration and deconstruction of the oedipal complex. The storyline of the book explores issues of destiny, identity, and storytelling while questioning conventional family relationships. This book emphasizes the lack of a typical mother figure, introduces unusual family dynamics, and uses symbolic components that go beyond Freudian interpretations to confront and dismantle the Oedipal complex.

The book offers a deep and complex story that resists easy classification under psychoanalytic frameworks because of its investigation of myth, destiny, and psychology, which adds layers of complexity to the connections between the characters. This research hopes to provide new light on psychoanalytic themes and family relations by critically analyzing and dissecting the book's Oedipal complex. This research aims to add to the body of literature by analyzing "The RedHaired Woman" in great detail and showing how it redefines and challenges the Oedipal complex.

This study attempts to reveal levels of meaning beyond Freudian psychoanalysis by examining the complex interactions among characters, the red-haired woman's symbolic meaning, and the inclusion of Eastern mythologies. The thesis ultimately seeks to further the current conversation in

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literary research by providing a reinterpretation of the Oedipal complex within the particular context of "The Red-Haired Woman." Through an analysis of this engrossing book, we want to deepen our knowledge of how literature reflects and influences our understanding of psychoanalytic issues in a modern, multicultural setting. Furthermore, redefining the Oedipal complex within the framework of Pamuk's book becomes both academically and culturally crucial in light of modern literary criticism and changing views on gender, identity, and heritage. The research is in line with the larger body of scholarly discussion about analyzing various and complex literary representations and deconstructing traditional narratives.

This research aims to examine the representation of family dynamics in the light of the Oedipal complex and to investigate Eastern and Western mythical elements.

Research Objectives

1. Explore how "The Red-Haired Woman" challenges Freudian structures and dynamics within the nuclear family.
2. Investigate how Orhan Pamuk advocates for the recognition of Eastern myths and folktales through the novel.

Research Questions:

How does The Red Haired Woman challenge the Freudian structure and dynamics of a nuclear family?

How does Orhan Pamuk call for recognition of Eastern myths and folktales through The Red Haired Woman?

Review of the Literature

The general name for the Oedipus and Electra complexes is the Oedipal complex, which Sigmund Freud utilized in his theory of psychosexual phases of development. The Oedipal complex develops in children between the ages of three and six during the Phallic stage of development, when the child's erogenous zones serve as the source of libido (life energy). Children go through this period when they feel envy and jealousy toward their same-sex parent and an underlying longing for their opposite-sex parent. When the youngster starts to identify with his father as a covert means of obtaining the mother, the Oedipus complex is effectively addressed (McLeod, 2023). To understand the underlying meaning of the text —The Red-Haired Woman— this study uses the ideas of Derrida. Deconstruction may be used to understand the link between text and meaning, institution and nature, contrasts, and the hierarchies produced by language. It is a literary and philosophical analysis style based on the writings of philosopher Jacques Derrida, a post-structuralist.

According to his research, meaning is dynamic and constantly changes throughout time and location. In addition, he believes that language is derived, meaning that words get their sense from other words rather than from a universal reality. In clarifying the dynamic nature of meaning in language, Derrida discusses binary oppositions and the inherent instability of meaning (Kalive, 2021). Without question, psychoanalysis's understanding of relationships and human evolution throughout history has relied heavily on the Oedipus complex. This essay makes the case that the Oedipus complex is still relevant today, whether intentionally followed or not, since it serves as a prism through which we see gender roles, sexuality, and societal structures, whether on purpose or not.

The four ways the Oedipus complex has been addressed are examined after outlining the reasons for doubting it. In particular, the research focuses on what may be a "deconstruction" of the Oedipus complex, implying that this method requires psychotherapists to work hard in the consultation room (Izzard, 2002). The study explores the father-son relationship in Orhan Pamuk's novel "Woman with Red Hair" from a Freudian perspective. Pamuk delves into Sophocles' father-son myths of the West and the East with modern versions of fathers and sons as Akin, Cem, and Enver. The novel's modern adaptations involve the father's abandonment of Cem and his son Enver, leading to greed and a need for the father's image. The red-haired woman, a modern version of Jocasta in the Western mythical tradition and Tahmina in the Eastern mythological tradition, meaningfully influences the father-son relationship.

The study also explores the concepts of authority and individuality and their differences in understanding in the West and the East (Erkan, 2018). This chapter focuses primarily on Pamuk's treatment of masculinity about father-son issues in The Red-Haired Woman, matching "a narratological analysis of culture" with "a cultural analysis of narratives." It does this by using the "guardianship of the military" as a crucial background issue to elaborate on the controversial

modernization process of Turkey. In the book, the father and the replacement father serve as both oppressors and victims, providing Pamuk with a chance to talk about a variety of masculine patterns and styles.

The Red-Haired Woman, a book written by Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk, blends Western and Eastern mythology into a story about contemporary Turkey. The protagonist and narrator, Cem, greets the reader and explains the central idea in the first paragraph. Cem writes, "The more I remember, the deeper I fall into it." It is the story of his life. You'll follow too, drawn in by the mystery surrounding fathers and sons (p. 3). The fight between fathers and sons dates back to the beginning of history, as the three epigraphs—from Nietzsche, Oedipus Rex, and Shahnameh, a Persian epic poem that tells the narrative of Rostam and Sohrab—illustrate. Tragic destiny may also be unavoidable in the current world. As the novel progresses, Cem's narrative gets entwined with the figures from antiquity, as he develops an obsession with their mythology and observes how his own life begins to resemble theirs (East Meets West: The Mythology Behind Orhan Pamuk's The Red-Haired Woman).

Despite the abundance of literary works that address psychoanalysis and familial relationships in literature, there is a noticeable lack of literary analyses that specifically examine Orhan Pamuk's "The Red-Haired Woman" with an emphasis on breaking down the Oedipal complex. Prior research has employed chiefly conventional Freudian literature readings, largely ignoring the complex ways modern writers—especially those from non-Western cultural backgrounds—may question, reinterpret, or subvert established psychoanalytic frameworks. While the body of literature already in existence sheds light on broad psychoanalytic interpretations of literary works, it cannot fully address the distinctive contributions of "The Red-Haired Woman" to the deconstruction of the Oedipal complex.

These analyses ignore the novel's rich Eastern cultural context and its potential to provide an original perspective on gender dynamics, familial relationships, and the intersection of myth and reality within the framework of psychoanalytic theory by focusing only on Western-centric psychoanalytic theories. By exploring the precise ways in which Orhan Pamuk's work redefines and confronts the Oedipal complex, this study aims to close this research gap. By providing a thorough examination that considers postmodern and postcolonial viewpoints, it seeks to further our knowledge of the complex relationship between Eastern cultural influences and psychoanalytic themes. By recognizing how writers negotiate and modify well-established psychoanalytic notions within their artistic and literary settings, the study hopes to open the door for a more inclusive and culturally aware approach to psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Significance of the Study

This research study has significant implications for the literary analysis and the understanding of the novel. One traditional and fundamental aspect of psychoanalytic literary criticism focuses on Oedipal considerations within texts. The Oedipal complex is rooted in Sigmund Freud's revolutionary ideas and has been used as a framework to analyze conflicts, desires, and family ties in literary works. But as literary discourse has developed, modern writers have interacted with and questioned these long-standing psychoanalytic frameworks, providing fresh viewpoints that challenge and reinterpret accepted readings. Using this theoretical framework or this research study will help in a deeper understanding of the novel's themes, characters, and narrative structure.

This study is significant as it challenges and redefines the traditional interpretations of the Oedipal complex. This study discusses the complexity of familial relationships, Eastern myths, and folktales in the narrative by studying how the novel deviates from or reinterprets Freudian concepts. This study may affect the reader's involvement and perception of how "The Red-Haired Woman" breaks down the Oedipal complex. It could inspire readers to view literary works more critically and receptively, appreciating the variety of story possibilities.

Deconstructing the Oedipal complex in the novel challenges the traditional narrative about family dynamics. By differing from the original Oedipal framework, this study gives a fresh perspective that encourages questioning the established psychoanalytical concepts. The deconstruction suggests that the characters are not bound to have the specific psychoanalytic patterns but should be able to shape their familial relationships based on personal choices. This study also deconstructs the established psychoanalytic concepts in literature and contributes to literary innovation. It allows for exploring new possibilities and engagement in a thought-provoking manner. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse in literature, particularly in psychoanalytical theory. It

adds to the knowledge and contributes to the broader discourse between psychology and literature. Overall, the significance of this study lies in its capacity to challenge the traditional narratives.

Limitation

Regarding the limitation in the analysis, its sole dependency on a Freudian lens for interpreting "The Red-Haired Woman " can be considered. Although the exploration unveils dimensions about the psychological and mythological elements, eliminating alternative critical perspectives poses a probable constraint. Further approaches about a spectrum of essential frameworks, for instance, feminist theory and post-colonialism, would act as a catalyst to enhance the general interpretation, paving the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's intricacies.

Theoretical Framework

The topic under research has many complex layers, which can be explored using theories given by one of the most prominent theorists, i.e., Sigmund Freud and Jacques Derrida. Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of the Oedipal Complex, which typically involves a child's feelings of desire for the opposite sex parent and feelings of rivalry or hatred for the same sex parent. This relationship between the child and the parents forms a traditional Oedipal triangle. The novel *The Red-Haired Woman* repeatedly explores the Oedipal complex and mentions the story of Oedipus Rex through the element of storytelling. However, after analyzing this novel, it is evident that it deviates from the traditional Freudian narrative. Instead of a straightforward Oedipal dynamic where the son is rivaled with the father for the mother's fondness, this novel lacks a father and a mother figure. It shows the strained relationship between the protagonist, Cem, and his father, who is not present in his life for the most part. However, the character Master Mahmut, who is a well digger and becomes a predecessor to the protagonist. But the absence of a biological father from the protagonist's life challenges traditional notions of rivalry and paternal authority.

The maternal figure is also absent in the absence of the father. Unlike Freudian expectations, where the mother is the central figure, Cem's mother is both emotionally and psychologically distant. In the novel, when the red-haired woman (around thirty years old) comes into the protagonist's life, she acts as a symbolic and enigmatic figure who complicates the conventional role of motherhood. She acts like a mother figure in Cem's life, in whom he finds comfort and loses his virginity. As this novel —*The Red-Haired Woman* challenges the traditional Oedipal complex by introducing complex father-son dynamics and exploring guilt, it contributes to the deconstruction of conventional psychoanalytic interpretations.

Derrida introduced the Deconstruction theory, which talks about dismantling a concept and rearranging it into a new one. It includes the reading of a text without any fixed binaries. Therefore, with the use of the deconstruction theory, the readers can reconsider the complexities of familial relationships and personal development. Hence, to conduct this research on Orhan Pamuk's novel, these theories are essential as they provide a rich framework for analyzing the story.

Textual Analysis

The Freudian notion of the nuclear family is based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories, mainly the Oedipus complex. In Freudian terms, the nuclear family classically discusses a family unit containing parents and their children. The chief figures in this family structure are the father, mother, and children. Central to Freud's theory is the Oedipus complex, which explains a child's psychosexual progress. According to Freud, at the phallic stage (roughly around 3 to 6 years of age), a boy will form unconscious attachments with his mother and consider his father as a rival. The resolution of the Oedipus complex contains the identification with the same-sex parent, leading to the development of the superego. Expanding upon Freud's psychoanalytic framework, Orhan Pamuk's novel, "The Red-Haired Woman," intricately challenges the conventional understanding of the nuclear family and the Oedipus complex. Pamuk's narrative disrupts Freudian norms, exploring familial relationships beyond the typical father-mother-child dynamic. In contrast to Freud's emphasis on identification with the same-sex parent, the novel introduces complexities that redefine traditional psychosexual progress.

In the nuclear family configuration, the mother is the chief objective of the child's yearning during the Oedipal stage. The child's connection to the mother is fundamental to early psychosexual development. The resolution of the Oedipus complex includes the child renouncing these desires and recognizing the father's rule. The father in the nuclear family is often ideal in Freudian theory. This figure signifies authority, rules, and the enforcer of external law. The Oedipal conflict encompasses

the son's core tussle to overcome his desire for his mother and his terror of the father's retribution. The father plays a crucial role in the child's ethical and psychological development.

Freud's nuclear family model contains a trilateral dynamic with the offspring caught between the cravings for the mother and the fear of the father. The determination of this tripartite relationship holds significance for the psychological maturation of the young, as well as superego development, which presupposes societal norms. Superego presupposes societal norms. In "The Red-Haired Woman," Orhan Pamuk discovers subjects that can be inferred as challenging traditional Freudian constructions and dynamics of the nuclear family. The protagonist, Cem, materializes a bothersome relationship with his father, challenging the Freudian theory of the ideal father figure. Cem's relationship with his father is tainted with tension and a sense of discontent, negating and forgoing the typical Oedipal dynamics whereby the son admires and contends with the father for the mother's affection.

Therefore, the red-haired woman can be viewed as a representation of yearning and rebellion, unsettling traditional Oedipal dynamics. Her character presents a multifaceted layer to Cem's spirit, stimulating the conventional Freudian basis of family dynamics. The novel explores how peripheral stimuli can contour and modify familial associations. Pamuk's narrative probes into the notion of fate, confounding the Freudian emphasis on individual agency, autonomy, and choice. Cem's journey is entangled with destiny, and events of the narrative reveal in a way that probes the deterministic nature of Freudian psychoanalysis, where individual selections are viewed as the principal driving force. Further, the novel is rooted in Turkish culture, presenting fundamentals that may contest the universality of Freudian theory. The fact that Pamuk employs rich symbolism and references to Eastern mythology, literature, and history adds meaning to the narrative, challenging one-dimensional Freudian interpretations and engaging readers to reflect upon broader cultural and mythological scopes in understanding family dynamics.

Pamuk's intentional employment of a nonlinear narrative and Cem's subjective perspective contribute to an intricate investigation of his internal mind. These experiments with the objective and deterministic method are often connected with Freudian exploration, accentuating the subjective and manifold nature of psychosomatic experiences. Pamuk emphasizes constructing fictional worlds. In Pamuk's words, a novel is not intended to offer any resolution or teach. Instead, it can be viewed as a site whereby he can bring a minimum of two opposing texts together to shatter stereotypes and prevalent beliefs (Pamuk 1999: 103).

Literary taste is an outcome of the complexity of literature. I never wished to make a single fold, unadorned book... I devote all my life to writing and do not want to be read by great multitudes. Finally, the fact that many people have read them will be forgotten. At the end, let's say I want to create such a feeling in the reader that they will see: _what a complex thing he has done, how they are just fond of reading it, 'the book indeed is so affluent,' and that he should have slaved a lot at it' (Pamuk in *Kırmızı Koltuk (Red Armchair)*).

Thus, Pamuk produces his novels as an amalgamation of Eastern and Western literature. Therefore, the stimulus of other narratives on his work seems predictable. Pamuk derives texts produced previously by different authors. He acknowledges the inter-textuality marked in his work: I make collage. I borrow many things from books, but this does not make me feel bad... However, as James Joyce states, this functions only as a bridge...I create art with my free will...I do not worry about whether I borrowed (Pamuk as quoted in *Kırmızı Koltuk (Red Armchair)*).

The Red-Haired Woman (2016) by Orhan Pamuk reflects the East-West contrast by putting forth a father-son connection. He intertwines Oedipus, Rostam, and Sohrab narratives within the storyline and Cem's journey. He offers a twofold methodology to the quest to form an individual. Also, he establishes the inescapability of fate through myths whirling into reality. Cem Çelik, the protagonist of *The Red-Haired Woman*, acts as a catalyst to display this all-inclusive stimulus predominantly in terms of the father-son relationship. Essentially, his experiences are offered as repetitions of historical/mythical conditions and manifestations that have repeatedly appeared throughout human history, complete with their cultural changes established within myths.

Cem's approval of the Master's offer to work with him and his approval to stay with him despite knowing the bleak and hopeless nature of his work can be interpreted as a consequence of his internal and suppressed desire to be associated with a father character of conventional quality which he is deprived due to his biological father's tolerant and uninterested attitude coupled with a mysterious and

uninformed departure. Master Mahmut, in diverse ways, embodies the prototype of a father figure. As acknowledged by Freud, the father prototype signifies authority, rule, and the state's law. Master Mahmut, though showing instances of affection at times, with his instructions, reprimands, teachings, and forbidding method, becomes the lone figure of power reigning over the protagonist, but functions as an auxiliary for his father's disappearance. The master's typical presence paves the way for the imitation of myth and arrival of shared comatose because, as will be seen, Cem will partake in a deed of practically killing his master. This episode resonates with the Oedipus complex.

In the case of Cem's, this 'universal' disposition is triggered by his subjugation to the master's influential and superior assertiveness, coupled with his master's vague connection with the red-haired woman as presented in the novel. Therefore, Cem's feelings of bitterness and wariness against the master, which are brought to the limelight sporadically, turn his association with the master into an apparent Oedipal conflict. Being fully aligned with his strongest emotions and impulses as well as with the unexplainable hold of myths upon his actions within the story, Cem questions himself about letting go of the bucket, and whether it was a mere accident or an act carried out intentionally: —had the bucket fallen entirely by accident? (Pamuk, 2017a: ch. 22, para. 17). Such a considerate and well-informed consideration of his behavior and motivation predisposes the accident to be interpreted as a Freudian slip. In contrast, being previously acquainted with the tale of Oedipus and purposefully retelling the story to his master, Cem can undeniably sense that he may be pursuing the similar disastrous trail: —in turn, I had told him the story of Prince Oedipus only to upset him, but then somehow I had ended up retracing the actions of the protagonist whose story I'd chosen. That was why Master Mahmut wound up stuck at the bottom of a well: it was all owing to a story, a myth (Pamuk, 2017a: ch. 23, para. 13). Hence, Cem's meeting with an typical father figure, his later development of an enmity against his master and his questionable endeavor to kill him are all occurrences which contain mythical counterparts. It can be argued that, in a way, Cem Çelik's course of action mirrors and echoes coming out of the pits of all manhood's account. Father archetypes are also brought forth in the concluding part of the novel. This is evident in the form of 'state' as the absolute authority unusual to Eastern society.

As informed by the red-haired woman in true spirit, Enver, Cem's son, is indicted of the murder of his father. Nonetheless, it was his father, Cem, who was the one to bring his gun to the scene purposefully and ultimately got shot during the final moments of grappling with the well. However, the court, newspapers, and society appear to behave in a way that supports and venerates the dead father, Cem, and curses the son,

The coroner's verdict was splashed across the next day's front pages: "he shot his father in the eye!" But no one wrote about their tussle by the well or mentioned my son's court statement, in which he explained that he'd acted only to defend himself and that the gun had gone off by accident while he was trying to disarm his father" (Pamuk, Red-Haired Woman, Part 3)

This proposes the dominance of patriarchy in place of individualism. In the media, Enver is alleged to have killed his father, Cem, for his assets as well as his property, cunningly achieved by planning a sinister plot with his mother. Henceforth, all the devices of the state and society disregard the truth that the son, Enver, had, in reality, operated in self-defense.

Conclusion

Orhan Pamuk's novel, "The Red-Haired Woman," encounters Freudian notions of the nuclear family through a comprehensive investigation of domestic associations, cultural dynamics, tradition, and individual autonomy. In this analysis, a departure from the traditional Freudian framework is visible as Pamuk intertwines a multifaceted tale that challenges basic readings by presenting a character that has a troubled relationship with his father, with the addition of the red-haired woman who symbolizes a substitute object of desire, coupled with a fate that surpasses individual choices, Pamuk experiments with the simplistic and universal assumptions of Freudian psychoanalysis as well as the aspects of a traditional nuclear family. Further, he integrates features of Turkish culture, tradition, and imagery to supplement his tale, thereby offering an opportunity to the readers to ponder upon the multifaceted and intricate influences that form familial dynamics and psychological experiences.

The Freudian nuclear family, rotating stereotypically around the notions of the Oedipus complex, romanticizes the father as a figure of authority and rule of law. However, Pamuk's protagonist, Cem, unsettles this idealization by revealing a disturbed relationship with the father figure. This brings forth a feeling of tension and incompleteness rather than the traditional anticipated Oedipal dynamics. The

red-haired woman stands as an enigma of craving and revolution, perplexing conservative family structures and building upon Cem's consciousness. Cultural and religious undercurrents in Turkish society are a catalyst to highlight each significant role, contributing to a context-specific analysis of Freudian ideas. Pamuk introduces elements that question the universality of Freudian theory, emphasizing the impact of cultural and religious influences, such as the influence of the Eastern myth of *Rostam and Sohrab* and the Western myth of *Oedipus Rex*, on the actual tale of Cem.

Pamuk's exploration is enhanced by his employment of Mythology, symbolism, and a nonlinear narrative, which pave the way for a nuanced understanding of the tale. Rich imagery encounters basic Freudian interpretations, encouraging readers to reflect upon the comprehensive cultural scopes in understanding nuclear family dynamics. The non-linear narrative and subjective perspective confront the objective and deterministic approach associated with Freudian analysis, emphasizing the multilayered nature of psychological experiences. The incorporation of Eastern and Western works in Pamuk's novels, coupled with the fact that he borrows from other texts, strengthens the inter-textual aspect of his work.

Thus, Orhan Pamuk's "The Red-Haired Woman" emerges as an intricately layered account that contests the traditional Freudian nuclear family concept. Through complex plot, cultural insights, and a diverse blend of Eastern and Western influences, Pamuk encourages the masses to question and reconsider the already present beliefs about family, fate, and personal autonomy. The novel's functionality primarily delves into the richness of literature, where complexity and depth prevail over simplistic understandings.

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