



The Writing of *Hüzün* in Orhan Pamuk's *A Strangeness in My Mind*

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Abstract. *A Strangeness in My Mind* tells the story of the whole life of Mevlut (name of the person), a peddler who sells boza (a kind of beverage). This paper starts with boza in the novel, and discusses the profound historical significance of cultural memory media in the novel. Starting from the street, this paper discusses the performance of urban flaneur after the traditional break. By describing boza and the street, this paper explores the hero's *hüzün* (sorrow), and further explores the practical significance of *hüzün*.

Keywords: Pamuk's *A Strangeness in My Mind*; *hüzün*; boza; Istanbul

1 Introduction

Pamuk is an internationally renowned Turkish writer whose works focus on the history, present situation and future of the country. *A Strangeness in My Mind* is the ninth novel of the famous Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk. In this novel, Pamuk made a breakthrough in the image of urban flaneur for the first time. Let readers see the vicissitudes of Istanbul and the changes of traditional crafts from the perspective of marginal figures.

The word “*Hüzün*” comes from the Turkish word *hüzün*, which means “sorrow”. *Hüzün* is the main style of Pamuk's novels, which expresses a sense of loss in people's heart. Mevlut is the main character of “*Hüzün*” in *A Strangeness in My Mind*. As Liu Zhuo said, Istanbul will always be a puppet who is guided by western cities and has lost its soul, which will be the city's eternal “*hüzün*”[1].

1.1 Domestic Literature Review

At present, there are mainly the following five kinds of domestic studies on *A Strangeness in My Mind*.

Street Research.

Street is the place where the hero of the novel, Mevlut relaxes himself and stays alone. Zhou Xiaolan's *Memory Writing in Orhan Pamuk's Novels-Taking My Name is Red, Innocence Museum and A Strangeness in My Mind as Examples*, points out that

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the curved and narrow streets reflect a dialectical humanitarian caring spirit between people and streets. In *The City's Phantasmagoria and Hüzün :On Istanbul Streets in The Strangeness in My Mind* by Pamuk, Du Lili tries to reveal the impact of modern westernization in Turkey since the 20th century on traditional cities and their original lifestyle.

Research on Urban Memory.

In Metaphor of "Window" and Writings on Cities in *A Strangeness in My Mind*, Du Lili, taking window as the investigation perspective, analyzes "window" as the three metaphors. In *Flaneur, Urban Space and Globalization: Writings on Cities in A Strangeness in My Mind*, from the perspective of hero, Xu Weiwei reveals the meaning and problems of modernization and globalization in Istanbul's urban space reorganization. In *Study on Mevlut's Flaneuring in A Stangeness in My Mind*, Zhu Chunfa mentions that this novel reshapes various urban memories from the cultural aspect and that street peddlers are also an extremely important image of urban memory.

Image Analysis of Urban Flaneurs.

flaneur, *Urban Space and Globalization: Writings on Cities in A Strangeness in My Mind*, taking the concept of "flaneur" by German thinker Walter Benjamin as the starting point, Xu Weiwei discusses the flaneur in Istanbul derived from *A Strangeness in My Mind*, the rationality of its roaming, and the main characteristics of its identity. *Study on Mevlut's Flaneuring in A Stangeness in My Mind*, starting with the concept of "urban flaneur", Zhu Chunfa interprets the multiple meanings of street roaming of Mevlut, and analyzes the characteristics of flaneur of the protagonist in this paper, which embody Pamuk's own thoughts.

Description of Hüzün.

In Pan Huiyu's *Wandering in Eastern Cities-On the Urban Rovers in Pamuk's Novels and Its Significance*, *A Strangeness in My Mind* is mentioned as the expression of urban flaneurs' Hüzün. In *Study of Orhan Pamuk in the Perspective of Eastern and Western Civilization*, taking the love between the hero Mevlut and Samiha as an example, Liu Xiaoxiao puts forward that "Hüzün" will lead to a love tragedy in the context of dual civilizations.

Image Presentation of Turkish Traditional Culture.

In *Study on the Cultural Root-seeking Consciousness of Works Written by Orhan Pamuk*, Lu Shuli analyzes the boza sold by the hero, and explores the spiritual connotation and historical significance of Turkish traditional culture.

1.2 Foreign Literature Review

In "Kafamda bir tuhaflık" romanında mekânın sosyolojik işlevi, it is written that this book observes the individuals impacted by culture through a specific spatial structure.

Orhan Pamuk'un "kafamda bir tuhaflik" romanı'nda yerelik ve geleneksellik studies the writing and narrative skills of this book, and also analyzes the specific content of the novel. Multiperspectivism: the analysis of multiperspectival narration in Mrs. Maloney, *A Strangeness In My Mind*, and a long way down mainly studies the description of multi-perspective narration in *A Strangeness in My Mind*. Decentred Epic Hero in Orhan Pamuk's *A strangeness in My Mind* undermines the "classical" heroic traits of Mevlut, this article analyse the way the decentred epic hero is revealed to deconstruct the modern epic heroes as well. From Street Food To "Street-Level Feminism": Orhan Pamuk's *A Strangeness In My Mind* discusses feminism in Turkey during neoconservative and neoliberal capitalism. Right to the City Novels in Turkish Literature from the 1960s to the Present discusses migrant life in Istanbul in *A Strangeness In My Mind*.

2 Discussion

2.1 Boza: Protect Traditional Memories and Pin Nostalgia

Another form of memory is being memorized, that is, as the object or carrier of memory, things and images have no memories, but as special ideographic symbols, they can act as a catalyst for activating objects to memorize. [2] Boza is used as a memory symbol to trigger our memories of the past.

As the bottom-level people wandering on the edge of the city, Mevlut left the country and went to Istanbul with his father, where he lived by selling yogurt and boza. Selling boza in the streets and alleys is not only his way to make a living, but also his intermediary to integrate traditional memories into modern cities. As mentioned in *Right to the City Novels in Turkish Literature from the 1960s to the Present*, the motif of boza, a tradition from the past, inevitably brings a conscientious nostalgia to the book. [3]

Boza is a traditional drink made by fermenting millet and containing a small amount of alcohol. Every night, Mevlut shouted "Boza, the best boza"-to the dark streets. However, in twenty-five years, Istanbul has changed so much that cobblestone roads have turned to asphalt roads, and most houses in the city have turned to three-storey houses. Thus, people living on the top floor can no longer hear the peddlers' cries. Many people gradually forget this traditional drink in the life full of novel experiences. N. Buket Cengiz also points out that "The nostalgia here is for the lost traditions and ways of life that were once components of the urban life." [3] Being in the familiar city street, there is a sense of emptiness and loneliness inside. Du Lili mentioned that in the process of Turkey's transformation, modernization led to the break of tradition. The boza peddlers made people living in the city relive their original vision of the city. Theirs cries were also an emotional expression of the city's reality, a memorial to Istanbul's "hüzün", [4] and were indelible sadness and incurable hüzün in Mevlut's heart.

In Mevlut's mind, boza is a sacred thing. Although his boza shop has been open for two months without profit, Mevlut is not discouraged at all. "Because of blindly imitating the western civilization, we have forgotten many past traditions. Remembering these traditions is a sacred mission to remember our ancestors. As a civilization, if we want to adhere to the national individuality, ideals and beliefs, we must first learn to be faithful to our own diet." [5] Pamuk wrote in the book. However, with the acceleration

of urbanization and the rapid development of capitalist industry and commerce, the modern assembly line industry has promoted the batch production and standardized production of boza and yogurt, and few people favor the street peddlers of boza anymore, which has also accelerated the demise of traditional beverages in modern society.

Mevlut enjoys the freedom of peddling boza in the middle of the night. "Every time he sells boza in the streets, he feels like he is in his own world. Mevlut shouts "boza" to the infinite old times, imagining the good times in the future." [5] When selling boza on the streets every night, his thoughts on his own life and the city of Istanbul shaped his melancholy temperament. He is a flâneur in the city, a curious explorer, and a loyal guardian of the traditional drink boza.

It is also mentioned many times in the novel that Mevlut's wife Rayiha (name of the person) served this family without complaint. During the seven years when Mevlut sold meals, chickpeas and rice were boiled by Rayiha, and boza was also made by her. However, she didn't have a chance to sell these foods in the streets. Finally, Rayiha died because of abortion. Although the novel never mentioned the exploitation for his wife by Mevlut, this novel reveals how the burden of the neoliberal transformation of the Turkish political economy falls on the bodies of overworked migrant women who endure pressures of value production both at home and for the market.[6] Mevlut is also sad because of the death of Rayiha.

Boza is a traditional Turkish drink, and most people buy it for seeking solace with nostalgia. Therefore, Mevlut, a peddler who has been selling boza for 40 years, has become a metaphor for sticking to traditional culture and national memory.[7] Although the external environment is constantly changing, Mevlut always sticks to his inner simplicity and kindness, inherits his father's business of selling boza, and guards a tradition that is about to disappear. He strives to find a sense of belonging and identity in this city, observes the changes of the city with his eyes, and takes himself to explore the secrets of the city with his feet. Zhu Chunfa once mentioned that the appeal of grasping memory constitutes one of the main motivations of nostalgia in Pamuk's writing, and it is an important personal factor of his hüzün. [8] The cry of boza not only evokes a sense of ritual, an old feeling and a good memory, but also is the antidote of Mevlut walking in the streets to relieve loneliness.

2.2 Street: Walking in Istanbul's "hüzün"

Streets in Pamuk's novels are a space for people to communicate. As Zhou Xiaolan said, it is precisely because of the dredging and fragmentation of streets that streets become the place for cities to gather information and store memories. [9] In 1984, the *Practice of Daily Life* by Michel Deserto considered narrative as "the practice of daily life". He put forward the concept of "space story" as a practice of urban life, emphasizing the combination of material space and metaphorical space. The story of Mevlut broadens our understanding of the generation at that time, thus broadening our understanding of the space where Mevlut is located.

The mysterious streets always arouse the hero's infinite reverie. Mevlut often walks in the streets to observe the city and get lost in thought. For Mevlut, the nostalgic street roaming has become a way for him to keep his identity unified in the flowing time and

drastic space, because the world around him has been constantly changing in the past half century, and only roaming is the way of life that runs through his life all the time. [8] “That night, no one bought boza. The city seems to be just a memory in these places: wooden houses, alleys filled with smoke from heating stoves, and ruined walls.” [5] Being in the streets can arouse his memories of his past life, his attachment and reluctance to old things. He is here to explore the historical sites of the city and look for the past in oblivion. Du Lili also thinks that Istanbul streets are the ferry that inspires the hero of the novel to shuttle between real life and inner world, the operation field of the city’s true feelings, and the origin of the faint city “hüzün”. [10]

“Mevlut lived in Istanbul for twenty years. With the emergence of new roads, demolition, buildings, big advertisements, shops, underground streets and overpasses, Mevlut feels particularly sad.” [5] The modernization process of the city has slowly changed the appearance of the old streets. Just as Gülnur Demirci mentioned “This is an era that leave behind modernity and welcomes post-modernity”. [11] The shadow of the city is the sense of eviction brought by street reconstruction to the people of riff-raff. The urban reconstruction brings class division, and the changes of external environment bring confusion and panic. Thinking in the dead of night is a silent dialogue between Mevlut and the city. As Du Lili mentioned when interpreting Istanbul streets: “hüzün” is not personal sorrow, but the fate of the whole city. [10] The people at the bottom are squeezed, and Mevlut worked hard but couldn’t quickly integrate into this modern city. His urban experience always ran counter to the real thoughts in his heart, so he felt depressed.

As a trivial person in the modernization wave and a witness to the pain in the urban transformation, Mevlut was trapped by the torrent of the times, and suffered from the multiple attacks of tradition and modernity, eastern and western civilizations. Hüzün is the most thorough emotional catharsis of Mevlut as an urban flaneur.

3 Conclusion

As for the research of this book, domestic scholars have carried out discussions on hüzün, urban flaneur, etc, and expressed the author’s feelings of hüzün by writing things such as windows, streets and boza. However, foreign scholars have found a new perspective. They interpret it from the perspectives of urban modernization and feminism, and pay less attention to hüzün, providing new research ideas for domestic scholars.

It is of great practical significance to study this work. This book talks about the life of ordinary people from the countryside to the city, and witnesses the rapid expansion of the city, the pursuit of career and love by ordinary people, and the picture of people’s life after the city is gradually westernized. These descriptions will also resonate with Chinese readers. We can learn from it. In the future urbanization process of China, we should keep our national culture and characteristics while pursuing high-quality development.

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