HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGES IN FAMILY VALUES IN ORHAN PAMUK'S CEVDET BEY AND HIS SONS

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24271354

Abstract. This article examines how family values change across generations in Orhan Pamuk's Cevdet Bey and His Sons. Through a comparative reading of characters from different generations, the study focuses on family duty, parental authority, and the tension between collective expectations and individual aspirations. It considers how characters' attitudes toward work, marriage, and personal independence reveal different understandings of what they owe to their families. The article situates these differences within the broader context of Turkish modernization and argues that generational change involves a renegotiation of family obligations. By tracing which expectations persist and which are questioned, the study shows how Pamuk uses family relationships to depict social change in everyday life.

Keywords. Orhan Pamuk, Cevdet Bey and His Sons, family values, intergenerational change, parental authority, family obligations, Turkish modernization.

Introduction:

Orhan Pamuk's Cevdet Bey and His Sons (Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları) traces three generations of an Istanbul family from the late Ottoman period to 1970. The novel brings the social changes of this period into the household, where questions of work, marriage, and personal independence shape relationships between parents and children. Its generational structure makes it possible to examine how family values acquire different meanings as descendants respond to the expectations and circumstances they inherit.

For Cevdet Bey, commercial success and family continuity are closely connected. The business he builds provides economic security for the household and establishes a set of responsibilities that his sons inherit. Osman largely accepts these responsibilities and expands the business, while Refik seeks a sense of purpose beyond commercial life. The brothers' different responses show how members of the same generation can interpret family duty in different ways. Refik's pursuit of intellectual independence also raises a question that extends into the third generation: how can personal aspirations be reconciled with responsibilities to the family?

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In the third generation, Refik's son Ahmet encounters the family's past through diaries, photographs, and recollections. His response to his father's diaries and his wish to paint his grandfather from a photograph offer two ways of engaging with that inheritance. These episodes extend the novel's treatment of family continuity from the transmission of property and occupational roles to the interpretation of family memory.

This article examines how Pamuk represents intergenerational changes in family values through a comparative close reading of Cevdet Bey, Osman, Refik, and Ahmet. It focuses on three related questions: how paternal authority is transmitted, how family obligations shape occupational choices, and how younger characters reinterpret the family's past. Situating these questions within the context of Turkish modernization, the article argues that family continuity depends on how each generation understands and reworks the obligations and memories it inherits.

Materials and methods: This study adopts a qualitative literary research design that combines close reading, thematic analysis, and intergenerational comparison. Its primary material is Orhan Pamuk's novel Cevdet Bey and His Sons (Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları). The study examines how the novel represents changes in family values through decisions about work, relationships between fathers and sons, and the interpretation of family memories. For the purposes of the analysis, family values refers to expectations concerning authority, economic responsibility, loyalty to the household, and the obligations that family members believe they owe to one another.

The comparison focuses on Cevdet Bey, his sons Osman and Refik, and Refik's son Ahmet. These characters provide two levels of comparison. The first traces how expectations about family duty and personal independence are understood across three generations. The second compares Osman and Refik as brothers who respond differently to the responsibilities they inherit. The comparison within the second generation helps distinguish differences between individuals from patterns that become visible across generations.

Passages are selected for their relevance to three areas of inquiry: the exercise of paternal authority, the relationship between family duty and occupational choice, and the transmission of family memory. The analysis includes scenes in which characters discuss or make decisions about the family business, reflect on their responsibilities to the household, or pursue interests that alter their place within the family. It also considers episodes involving diaries, photographs, and recollections, since these materials allow later generations to encounter and interpret the lives of their predecessors.

The principal unit of analysis is the scene or episode. Individual statements are read in relation to the exchange in which they occur, the decision being made, and any consequences presented in the surrounding narrative. This approach allows the study to examine how family expectations are communicated through requests, advice, criticism, and silence, as well as through actions such as taking responsibility for the business or pursuing an independent occupation. Where a passage draws attention to a character's private reflections, those reflections are compared with the character's dialogue and conduct.

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The close reading begins by identifying the family expectation at stake in each selected passage. The analysis asks who articulates or embodies that expectation, whom it concerns, and how the other characters respond. For example, scenes concerning the family business are examined for the meanings attached to commercial work. Participation in the business may imply economic provision, loyalty to a parent, or a commitment to family continuity. Attention to these meanings helps explain why a decision about employment can also affect a character's relationship with the household.

The analysis also considers narrative perspective. A statement about duty is interpreted in light of the character who makes it and the circumstances in which it is made. When a character describes another family member's decision, the account is read alongside that family member's actions or reflections wherever the narrative provides them. Similarly, a diary entry is considered both as a record of the writer's concerns and as a text that a descendant may interpret differently. This distinction is particularly relevant to Ahmet's engagement with his father's diaries, where the act of reading becomes part of the novel's representation of intergenerational relationships.

The selected passages are then compared according to the following analytical criteria.

Analytical theme	**Focus of comparison**
Paternal authority	Who makes decisions about work and household affairs, what gives those decisions authority, and how family members respond to them
Family duty and occupational choice	How characters connect economic provision, the continuation of the family business, and the pursuit of intellectual or artistic interests with their obligations to the household
Family memory	How diaries, photographs, and recollections shape later generations' interpretations of their predecessors
Personal autonomy	How characters justify decisions about their own lives and how those decisions affect their relationships with the family

The themes may overlap within a single episode. A decision about the family business, for instance, can reveal both the authority of a parent and a son's understanding of his own responsibilities. Such passages are examined under each relevant theme so that the connection between economic choices and family relationships remains visible.

The final stage compares the meanings attached to family obligations at different points in the narrative. Cevdet Bey's understanding of economic provision and family continuity provides a starting point for examining Osman's and Refik's choices. Their responses are then read alongside Ahmet's engagement with the family's past. The comparison considers whether a value continues to be expressed through similar practices, is questioned openly, or takes on a different meaning in later generations. Particular attention is given to moments when a character seeks greater independence while continuing to engage with inherited responsibilities or memories.

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The transition from the late Ottoman period to republican Turkey provides the historical context for interpreting these patterns. Historical change is considered through its representation in the novel, especially where it enters domestic life through changing attitudes toward work, authority, and individual aspirations. The scope of the study is the literary representation of change within one fictional Istanbul family. The findings are grounded in the selected episodes, the relationships among the characters, and the narrative perspectives through which Pamuk presents them.

Results and Discussion: The comparative reading identifies three ways in which family values change across the novel's generations. Economic provision and paternal authority remain closely connected in Cevdet Bey's household. His sons, Osman and Refik, give different meanings to the responsibilities they inherit. In the third generation, Ahmet's engagement with diaries and photographs makes family memory a means of interpreting that inheritance. These patterns overlap. The commercial, personal, and symbolic dimensions of family continuity carry different weight at different points in the narrative.

In the first generation, Cevdet Bey's commercial ambitions are closely tied to his plans for the household. Building a business gives him the means to provide for his family and establishes a form of work his sons can inherit. His authority derives in part from this connection between economic provision and responsibility for the family's future. The novel places his rise as a Muslim merchant in the late Ottoman period, so the family order he establishes already reflects changing economic opportunities. This matters for the intergenerational comparison because the values inherited by his sons are themselves shaped by social change.

The clearest evidence of change within a single generation emerges in the comparison between Osman and Refik. Osman assumes responsibility for the family business and seeks to expand it. His choices preserve the link between commercial work and family continuity established by his father. Expansion also shows that preserving a family obligation can require changes in how it is fulfilled. As Osman takes on a position of authority within the household, the demands of the business limit the time he can devote to his private life. His experience reveals a tension within the inherited model of family duty, since the work that sustains the household can also reduce the time available for family relationships.

Refik's response exposes a different tension. His growing dissatisfaction with commercial life leads him toward intellectual pursuits and a search for personal purpose. His choices call into question the expectation that a son should continue his father's work. At the same time, the novel registers the consequences of his pursuit of independence for his wife and children. His absences and the uneven fulfilment of his responsibilities complicate the meaning of autonomy. Refik's experience raises a practical question about how someone who revises inherited expectations can sustain commitments to those who depend on him.

Reading the brothers together shows that generational position explains only part of the variation in family values. Both inherit the economic and domestic arrangements established by Cevdet Bey.

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Osman understands continuity largely through stewardship of the business, while Refik questions whether commercial succession should determine his life. Their divergent responses give Pamuk a way to portray modernization as a process experienced unevenly within the same household.

In the third generation, Ahmet encounters the family's past through materials that preserve different kinds of evidence. Refik's diaries give him access to his father's private reflections, which he reads from the position of a son acquainted with the consequences of his father's decisions. His disappointment illustrates how the meaning of a personal record can change when it is read by the next generation. The diary records Refik's concerns, while Ahmet's response brings the relationship between those concerns and his father's family responsibilities into view.

Ahmet's wish to paint Cevdet Bey from a photograph offers another way of engaging with the family's past. The photograph gives him a visual connection to a grandfather he never knew personally. Turning the photograph into a portrait would involve selecting and interpreting what the image conveys. This episode brings artistic independence and family memory into the same frame. Ahmet's work as a painter gives him a means of engaging with an inheritance that Cevdet Bey and Osman had expressed principally through commercial activity and economic provision.

The novel's movement from the late Ottoman period to republican Turkey gives historical depth to these differences. Cevdet Bey establishes a household around commercial enterprise and paternal responsibility. Osman and Refik confront different aspects of that arrangement, from the demands of maintaining the business to the consequences of seeking independence from it. Ahmet reconsiders the family's past through written and visual records. Pamuk thus represents historical change through ordinary decisions about work, domestic responsibility, and the meanings attached to parents' and grandparents' lives.

The intergenerational comparison suggests that family continuity in the novel depends on practices whose meanings can change over time. A business can carry forward a parent's expectations, a diary can invite a descendant to reassess those expectations, and a photograph can become the basis for a new artistic interpretation. Through these forms of inheritance, Pamuk shows how members of one fictional Istanbul family maintain ties to earlier generations while revising what they understand family duty to require.

Conclusion: In Cevdet Bey and His Sons, Orhan Pamuk portrays intergenerational change through the different meanings that members of one Istanbul family attach to duty, authority, and independence. For Cevdet Bey, commercial success provides economic security and establishes a business that his sons can inherit. Osman continues this enterprise and assumes greater responsibility within the household, while Refik seeks intellectual independence and faces tensions between his personal aspirations and his obligations to his wife and children. The brothers' divergent choices show that inherited values can be interpreted differently within the same generation.

In the third generation, Ahmet reconsiders the family's past through his father's diaries and his grandfather's photograph. His response to the diaries brings the consequences of Refik's choices into

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view, while his wish to paint Cevdet Bey connects artistic expression with family memory. These episodes widen the meaning of family inheritance to include the ways descendants interpret the lives and decisions of their predecessors.

By situating these relationships within the transition from the late Ottoman period to republican Turkey, Pamuk gives social change a domestic dimension. Across the three generations, family ties endure through changing practices of economic provision, personal responsibility, and remembrance. The novel thereby presents family continuity as an ongoing negotiation over what descendants owe to earlier generations and how they carry that inheritance into their own lives.

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