

**Speech at the Sonning award ceremony, October 26. 2012. By Rector Ralf Hemmingsen.**

Dear Mr. Pamuk

It is a great honour for me to stand here before one of the greatest novelists in the world today.

You have received an awful lot of prizes, but this prize specifically honours your work as an invaluable gift to European culture. You have enriched European culture by a work that combines Eastern and Western literary legacies, thus proving that in order to fulfil the old European dream of a universal humanism one has to be able to look outside of Europe as well.

Through your depictions of a specific culture in a specific time and place you tell universal stories of human existence, including the universal story of belonging to a specific culture, or of belonging to several cultures at once, which has become a common condition of modern man.

Your themes are universal: Love, family, nostalgia, friendship, religion, politics, but through your art of the novel they become flesh and blood so that we experience them in a corporeal way, in a situated life world.

We enter minds of people that we did not know that we knew, and for a moment we share their passions, their thoughts, their memory, the smells and objects and sights that surround them, even if they live in a different time and space than ours.

You show the force of the novel to be the reader's possibility to get inside another, a different human being's mind and sensual world. This experience is not only an aesthetic pleasure, but also an aesthetic education in recognition of difference, one of the basic values of democracy.

Just as you have given, by your work, a great gift to European Culture, you show how European culture is in itself a gift if it is continuously restudied and rethought, as you for instance rethink Schiller in your brilliant essays on the naïve and the sentimental novelist. Essays like these prove that if we want to think new thoughts we cannot do without old texts. To secure the continuous study of old texts in order to develop new thoughts is one of the very important tasks of the University.

In your rethinking of Schiller you define the naïve novelist as the one who immediately visualizes the fictive world that he creates, as if it were real, where as the sentimental novelist stays conscious of the fictive world as fictive, as a construction of his writing.

To you, the art of the novel is the space where these two positions exist at the same time. It is the space where the writer as well as the reader can enter the fiction as if it were real, at the same time knowing and suspending our knowledge that this is not reality.

Referring to another famous concept of Schiller's one might say that you define the art of the novel as a space for playing. The novel is a playing ground for thoughts and ideas, and it is important that it should be given this freedom of playing in order to develop new thoughts and ideas.

The novel is a kind of research in human existence, and just like the University it should be given its freedom of research.

The legacy of European culture is also a legacy of dualities: Mind and body, Eastern and Western, man and woman, fiction and reality, vision and writing. Your way of handling the duality between naïve and sentimental that Schiller proposes seems to me to be typical of your general way of handling such dualities. Your ideal is to be both naïve and sentimental at the same time. To be naïvely absorbed by the fiction at the same time as being sentimentally conscious that it is a fiction. To be absorbed by the melodramatic, like many of your characters, as well as being endlessly reflective and philosophic, like your narrative constructions.

This way, your ideal seems to be the double, not to do away with dualities, but to be living with them. Just as we know from your childhood memories that since you were very young you have been living with "the other Orhan", your fantasy of a double. Orhan and "the other Orhan" grew up in a city that you have portrayed again and again in your writing, and that seems itself to have this character of a double: Istanbul and Constantinople, East and West, provincial and metropolitan, beautiful cityscape and site of violent historical events.

So today I want to thank both of you, Orhan and the other Orhan, for providing us with a wonderful work that teaches us that Europe is always Europe and the other Europe.