

**A DEGRADED QUEST IN TRANSCENDENTAL HOMELESSNESS:**

**A LUKÁCSIAN READING OF ORHAN PAMUK'S  
*THE BLACK BOOK AND THE NEW LIFE***

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**Aşkın Yurtsuzlukta Hiçliğe İndirgenmiş Bir Arayış:  
Orhan Pamuk'un *Kara Kitap* ve *Yeni Hayat*'ının  
Lukács'çı Bir Okuması**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to link some aspects of Orhan Pamuk's work with the classical novel by relying on Lukács's theory of the classical novel. However postmodern they look, both *The Black Book* and *The New Life* have deeper associations with the foundations of the novel form. In this thesis, the nature of the quest motif has been analyzed in classical and modernist paradigms, utilizing the concepts of melancholy, nostalgia and individuation. The quest in both novels typifies a degraded quest of a problematic hero in transcendental homelessness as in Lukácsian literary theory. The thesis investigates the state of the protagonists who are equally trapped between the mundane and the transcendental in the wasteland of the God-forsaken modern world. The aim is to study how the novels present a significant criticism about the possibility of emancipation and individual salvation as well as the chances of a meaningful search in any modern odyssey.

## ÖZET

Bu tez, Lukács'ın klasik roman teorisine dayanarak, Orhan Pamuk'un eserlerinin bazı yönlerini klasik romanla ilişkilendirme çabasıdır. Postmodern görünmelerine rağmen, *Kara Kitap*'ın da *Yeni Hayat*'ın da roman türünün kökenleriyle derin ilişkileri mevcuttur. Bu tezde, melankoli, nostalji ve bireyleşme kavramları kullanılarak, arayış motifi klasik ve modernist paradigmalara incelenmiştir. İki romandaki arayış da Lukács'ın edebi teorisindeki gibi problemlili bir kahramanın aşkın yurtsuzlukta hiçliğe indirgenmiş bir arayışıdır. Tez, dünyevi ve aşkın olan arasında aynı oranda sıkışmış kahramanların Tanrı'nın çoktan terkettiği modern dünyanın çorak ülkesindeki durumlarını inceler. Amaç, bu romanların hem özgürlüğün ve bireysel kurtuluşun olasılığı hem de modern bir serüvende anlamlı bir arayışın mümkünatıyla ilgili nasıl ciddi bir eleştiri sunduğunu incelemektir.

*“The novel is an epic of a world that has been  
abandoned by God”*

*- Lukács*

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## ***I. INTRODUCTION***

So far, Pamuk's novels have been read and interpreted in post modernist terms, most of which make sense in relation to Pamuk's literary stance<sup>1</sup>. The author's relations with the traditional novel, however, have been mostly ignored. As a matter of fact, Pamuk draws deeply from the wells of the foundation of the novel form. This thesis is an attempt to link certain aspects of Pamuk's work with the classical novel by relying on Lukács's theory of the classical novel<sup>2</sup>.

The plots of the author's so-called post-modernist novels, namely *The Black Book* and *The New Life*, have indeed deep relations with Lukácsian literary theory. Lukács states that the novel form is a degraded quest of a problematic hero in transcendental homelessness, and accordingly, the journey motif present in both novels may be claimed to typify the Lukácsian quest. The protagonists in these novels set out on a quest for a transcendental home within the boundaries of their contingent world. The chaotic modern world as a spiritual wasteland, however, gives no clues. The melancholic mood of both novels lies in the rupture between the characters' individuated state and reified world. While these protagonists look for totality and meaning in a God-forsaken modern world, they ultimately find themselves trapped in transcendental homelessness in degraded quests, which suggest not only the impossibility of emancipation and individual salvation, but also the inevitable desperation of any modern odyssey. The circularity and futility of the quests lead to the hopelessness of the struggle and the final victory of unredeemed homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> Readings of Pamuk in the post-modernist and deconstructivist paradigms include frame-tale, self-reflexivity (metafictional strategies and *mise en abyme*) and proliferation and fluidity of selves (mnemonics / memory, narrativity where selves become narratives and doubling, tripling of the selves).

<sup>2</sup> "In his teens and early twenties, Pamuk steeped himself in French and Russian nineteenth-century fiction, and became a devotee of Georg Lukács" (Altinel 1088).



Both *The Black Book* and *The New Life* are based on the quest motif, which is the search for a material or spiritual object that would provide salvation for the quester. They depart from the familiar, safe world for a goal<sup>3</sup>; that is, while the protagonist of *The Black Book* looks for the traces of his lost wife within the hectic city, the protagonist of *The New Life* is in search of the promise of a new life in the depths of the provinces. We see the neurotic heroes traveling not only within the space with the ambivalence of their unpredictable wanderings, but also within their psyche in order to realize themselves. Yet, the irony is that they are bound to be lost in a modern world that has no clearly mapped roads, and every attempt of maturation is merely a failed maturation. In their quests, they aim to reach a spiritual ‘home’ in a land where the transcendental has long been disappeared, so their search is bound to end in a void of nothingness.

In the chapters called “problematic, neurotic and melancholic hero”, “transcendental homelessness” and “degraded quest”, I aim to interpret the specific nature of the degraded quests in both *The Black Book* and *The New Life* within the Lukácsian framework of the predicament of the heroes, or better still anti-heroes, of the modern novel.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Campbell, the scheme of the hero’s journey begins with a departure from the familiar world in search for a goal, and goes on with an encounter with an alien reality and grappling with death (1972: 24). Pamuk’s quests also partly refer to the old epic quests, as they progress from the familiar to the unfamiliar. What is more, in all quest journeys, the hero proves himself in action, trying to be worthy of his name. “The courage to face the trials and to bring a whole new body of possibilities into the field of interpreted experience for other people to experience – that is the hero’s deed” (Campbell: 1988, 41). As opposed to the epic heroes, however, both Galip and Osman make use of this experience for their own salvation, rather than for a communal one.

***II. THE PROBLEMATIC, NEUROTIC  
&  
MELANCHOLIC HERO***

“Idle men, chasing after fairy tales...”  
(Rumi)<sup>4</sup>

## ***The Black Book:***

### **A Melancholic Hero in Search of Narratives**

In *The Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukács compares the historical conditions that gave rise to the formation of the epic with those of the novel. Probably, one of the basic distinctions between the two forms is that the former “gives form to a totality of life that is rounded from within; [while] the novel seeks, by giving form, to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life” (60). So, it can easily be said that the primary matter of the novel form displays a constant crisis, an elegy to the long-lost notion of the totality of life that was present in ancient Greeks. The novel form is based on the characters’ search for this lost totality. Accordingly, Lukács states that “the fundamental form-determining intention of the novel is objectivised as the psychology of the novel’s heroes: they are seekers” (60). It seems that no matter what they seek, whether it is a material or a spiritual object that would promise ultimate salvation, the novel characters are sure to experience the rupture between their individual states and the clueless outside world to go through a process of self questioning during their long, risky journeys:

The inner form of the novel has been understood as the process of the problematic individual’s journeying towards himself, the road from

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<sup>4</sup> qtd in *BB* 160. “İşsiz güçsüz adamlarla masal, hikaye arayanlar” (*KK* 159).

dull captivity within a merely present reality – a reality that is heterogonous in itself and meaningless to the individual – towards clear self-recognition. After such self-recognition has been attained, the ideal thus formed irradiates the individual's life as its immanent meaning; but the conflict between what is and what should be has not been abolished and cannot be abolished in the sphere wherein these events take place – the life sphere of the novel; only a maximum conciliation – the profound and intensive irradiation of a man by his life's meaning – is unattainable. The immanence of meaning which the form of the novel requires lies in the hero's finding out through experience that a mere glimpse of meaning is the highest that life has to offer, and that this glimpse is the only thing worth the commitment of a entire life, the only thing by which the struggle will have been justified. The process of finding out extends over a lifetime, and its direction and scope are given with its normative content, the way towards a man's recognition of himself. (Lukács 80)

The problematic individual's inner journey makes up the basic structure of Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book* and *The New Life*. In *The Black Book*, we witness an ironic quest of a lawyer into the depths of love, mystery, selfhood, and authorship. The novel starts in Galip and Rüyâ's blue, dreamy bedroom accompanied with Galip's reminiscences of their good old days. Galip is portrayed as a decent husband, leading an eventless life. After his wife Rüyâ suddenly disappears leaving an ambiguous note of 19 words that day, however, the protagonist's life is totally devastated; that is, he devotes himself to a novel-long journey of quest. Rüyâ's loss may be claimed to be the driving force of his journey which transforms the protagonist from a dull husband into a seeker of mystery. This is also the time when he becomes a melancholic, neurotic hero now that he has a problematic in his life. According to Lukács, "the contingent world and the problematic individual are realities which mutually determine one another. If the

individual is unproblematic, then his aims are given to him with immediate obviousness, and the realization of the world constructed by these given aims may involve hindrances and difficulties but never any serious threat to his interior life” (78). However, now that he is problematic, Galip is bound to experience the rupture between him and the alien world.

Above all else, Galip is a deeply melancholic and a desperately lonely quester; and accordingly, Pamuk talks about “Galip’s essential loneliness, the melancholy that has seeped into him like an illness, and the mournful darkness of his life” while describing the protagonist (*Other Colors* 256). As in all quest journeys, the problematic and neurotic quester in *The Black Book* is alone, wholly detached from the people around him; because, “the hero of the novel is the product of estrangement from the outside world” (Lukács 66). The case of loneliness is further emphasized by the fact that the journey here is for the sake of the affirmation of individuality, rather than being linked to a community as in old epics. Moreover, he has to be *solitary*, since after Kant, any solitary wanderer’s path is bound to be dark, and “to be a man in the new world is to be solitary” (Lukács 36). Telling no one about his wife’s loss, all Galip’s attempts symbolize a total estrangement from people: leaving his work for a time, hiding alone in Celal’s flat in the City-of-Hearts Apartments, and last but not least, walking ghost-like around Istanbul. The deep notes of sorrow are felt in each image; for, what can be more melancholic than the lone figure of Galip in a black coat in dark streets of the city, searching Rüya with tears? The character’s thoughts in the film theater truly reflect such primordial loneliness of human lives:

[T]heir lives were full of woe. [Galip] was not just guessing, he *knew*: Life was an endless string of miseries; if one came to an end there was another waiting around the corner, and if that misfortune became easier to bear, the next would strike harder, leaving creases on our faces that made us look alike. Even if misfortune came suddenly, we knew it had

been there all along, lying in wait on the road in front of us, so we were always ready for it; when the new cloud of trouble descended on us we felt alone, hopelessly alone, inescapably alone (...). (BB 110-1)<sup>5</sup>

This heavy melancholic mood is not only the general atmosphere of *The Black Book*, but it also summarizes the main state of almost all Pamuk's novels<sup>6</sup>.

Solitude is a state of melancholy. Reading becomes the only cure Galip resorts to in his solitary and melancholic state as he is a devotee of Celal's columns. Alienated from all people to take shelter in Celal's deserted house, the protagonist is deeply engaged in reading more and more to get the memory of the columnist. The reading process is highly significant, as Pamuk puts forward reading as a way of getting out of the chaos of life. For instance, in the chapter "The Discovery of Mystery"<sup>7</sup>, the author juxtaposes ordinary readers with the readers that are conversant of the mystery of the letters, pointing out that Mehdi's (Messiah's) words can only be transmitted by a columnist and be interpreted by a careful reader. Rather than the commonplace readers, the latter will get the second meaning underneath the surface and will start a new life. Similarly, in *The New Life*, only some special *readers* who can read the book and praise the underneath meaning are worthy of setting off to trace the promise of a new life. Both Osman's and Galip's

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<sup>5</sup> "Yüzlerinden hayatlarının dertlerle dolu olduğunu anlıyordu Galip. Anlamaktan öte, biliyordu. Hayat dertlerle doluydu, acılarla, biri bitince öbürü gelen, öbürüne alışırken bir yenisi bastıran ve yüzlerimizi birbirine benzeten derin acılarla. Birdenbire de gelseler, bu acıların çoktan beri yolda olduğunu biliyorduk biz, onlara kendimizi hazırlamıştık, ama gene de dert, bir kabus gibi üzerimize çökünce bir tür yalnızlığa kapılıyorduk; başka insanlarla paylaştığımızı sandığımız zaman mutlu olacağımız umutsuz ve vazgeçilmez bir yalnızlık" (KK 112).

<sup>6</sup> According to some critics, in creating the melancholic atmosphere, Pamuk's play with light is quite significant. The leaden sky that girdles the city in freezing winter afternoons and the darkness of these winter nights give the impression of a sheer gloomy dimness that is hard to penetrate. The grey tone that dominates the city reflects the sorrow of Istanbul, caused by poverty, loss and defeat (*Istanbul* 103). Apparently, in almost none of his novels does Pamuk set his characters in sunny and shiny summer days (with the exception of *The Silent House*). Pamuk's intentional preference of the dark winter afternoons and cold snowy nights as necessary time and setting for his novels seems to be an attempt of conveying the same sense of melancholy he feels when he looks at the Turkish scenery.

<sup>7</sup> "Keşf-ül Esrar"

journeys start with reading -the book or Celal's writings- to give a full scope to their identities. Therefore, the key for salvation is nothing but reading and interpreting. The ones who re-read the texts may re-read their own lives.

While re-reading their lives, the quest of salvation in love dictates their journeys and turns them into truly neurotic heroes. The promise of a happy ending in love seems to be the only hope that both Galip and Osman keep alive throughout their journeys, so Janan and Rya become the objects of their quests. Both Galip and Osman are obsessive lovers in search of their objects of desire. Different from Galip's solitary quest, Osman's is accompanied by Janan who travels with him for a while.

On the way to maturity, the protagonist of *The Black Book* may be said to take advantage of the painful mourning state inflicted by Rya's loss. Later, Pamuk himself will talk about the incurable melancholy of love, as he witnesses in Istanbul: "It is *hzn* which ordains that no love will end peacefully. Just as in the old black-and-white films – even in the most affecting and authentic love stories- if the setting in Istanbul, it is clear from the start that the *hzn* the boy carried with him since birth will lead the story into melodrama," says Pamuk in *Istanbul* (105-6).<sup>8</sup> The entire melancholic atmosphere may be associated with the melancholy and desperation the heroes come across in the limited and clueless world in Lukácsian sense.

The novel-long quest of Galip declares the impossibility of happy endings. Galip's transference from a happy husband to a woeful hero is quite striking as it symbolizes a transition from a comfort zone to a danger zone. Evidently, every step Galip takes is

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<sup>8</sup> "Aşk hzn yznden, huzurla sonulanmaz. Siyah-beyaz İstanbul filmlerinde, en ie ileyen ve hakiki gzken ak hikayesi, esas ođlanın daha batan verili, dođutan 'hzn' yznden, melodramla sonulanır". (*İstanbul* 106).

totally marked with a profound sorrow akin to mourning<sup>9</sup>. The initial shock brought about by Rya's desertion turns into melancholy as Galip ponders on the mystery of human relations. With Rya's loss, Galip suffers a loss of his own identity. Rya then becomes the instigator of Galip's self-quest.

Even before his wife's desertion, Galip is already an obsessive and introverted lover who deeply suffers from his unrequited passion for Rya. The novel explains the hero's constant yearning to get his object of desire, and the impossibility of his endeavor leads to a total lack of self-confidence: "Galip counted the defects that had plunged him into lonely defeat (my face is asymmetrical, my arm is crooked, I have no color in my face, my voice is too rough!)" (BB 52)<sup>10</sup>. As a matter of fact, the protagonist's position in his relations with Rya and Celal may be clearly inferred from the quotation below:

As they wandered together in the garden of memory, admiring the stories and recollections and legends blooming at their feet, which of these blossoms had told Rya and Celal that they should shut Galip out? Had they done so because Galip had no idea of how to tell a story? Was it because he wasn't as lively and vibrant as they were? Or because he couldn't just understand some stories at all? Had he been too admiring of Celal, and had they found his idol worship tiresome? Had they wanted to escape from the heavy melancholy he carried with him everywhere, like a contagious disease? (BB 449)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Previously pointed out by Seneca, the distinction between mourning and melancholy that was formulated by Freud in *Mourning and Melancholy* in 1917 is relevant here. According to Freud, in mourning, there is a missing of the other and this causes intense grief.

<sup>10</sup> "Yzm asimetrik, elim sakar, aırı siliđim, sesim g çıkar" (KK 57).

<sup>11</sup> "Hangi hikayeler, hangi anılar, hangi masallar hafıza bahesinde aan hangi ieklerdi ki onlar, tadına, kokusuna, keyfine iyice varabilmek iin Celal'le Rya, Galip'i dıarda bırakma zorunluluđunu duymulardı? Galip, hikaye anlatmayı bilmediđi iin mi? Onlar kadar renkli ve neeli olmadıđı iin mi? Bazı hikayeleri hi anlayamadıđı iin mi? Aırı hayranlıđıyla neelerini kaırdıđı iin mi? Bulaıcı bir hastalık gibi evresine yaydıđı iflah olmaz hznden katıkları iin mi?" (KK 431).



This is ironically the *Künstlerroman* of a melancholic hero who does not narrate stories. Because, telling stories is the only way to get Rüya, as she believes in a world full of stories and heroes. Thus, the nature of the quest is determined as the problematic hero's quest for narratives.

Galip's discovery of his self as a writer probably requires as much attention as his so-called self-fulfillment, since many critics have read *The Black Book* as the story of the attempts of an amateur writer in the process of becoming. While Berna Moran regards the novel as a *metafiction*, in other words "a novel that focuses on narrating rather than the story itself", he alleges the passion of Galip on his journey is "for the sake of writing, creating" (83-84). Jale Parla likewise regards the novel as "an allegorical frame tale of authorial begetting", pointing out Celal as the master writer, Galip as the apprentice writer and Rüya as creativity (1991: 450). Also, in her article called "Three Authors in Search of a Body", Joan Smith considers the book is written by a trinity of writers who are Galip, Celal and Pamuk (1995). The shift of the object of his quest from Rüya to Celal, his columns, letters, stories and 'the secret' suggests that the protagonist's journey is above all else in the name of finding his authorial voice.

In his double quest for identity and creativity, Galip's story unites the elements of the classical Bildungsroman with those of its modernist derivative, the *Künstlerroman*. As Galip stands half way between abstract idealism and romanticism of disillusionment, he fits Lukács's definition of the Bildungsroman hero who attains maturity through a struggle that culminates in "enriching resignation" (133). And although he remains the embodiment of a tortured hero in a degraded quest, by composing *The Black Book* in the end, Galip crosses the threshold that separates the life of an ordinary lawyer from that of a writer.

”I was the one on the sidewalk,  
his eyes fixed on his own lighted windows  
as if he were contemplating with tears and pathos  
someone else’s fragile and depleted life” (NL 42)<sup>12</sup>.

“Because of the leaden ache in the pit of my stomach,  
the miserable loneliness and jealousy I felt  
had severed me so thoroughly from humanity  
and rendered me so totally without hope” (NL 39)<sup>13</sup>.

### *The New Life:*

#### **A Quixotic Hero in Search of a ‘New Life’**

The novel narrates the story of a young engineering student whose life is totally devastated by a particular book he has read. Whispering him the possibility of a new life, the book urges Osman to take action. His passion, coupled with his inability to ‘contain’ himself, makes him a hero with exalted romantic sensibility. Although both young men are optimistic about finding what they seek, Osman’s passion is opposed to the calm melancholy of the protagonist of *The Black Book*. While Osman is a figure who goes wherever his sensations lead him, preferring his own instincts to the standard norms of society, Galip is a calculating youth who takes cautious steps into the undiscovered realm of melancholy and creativity.

Although his ‘over-intensified desire for an ideal life’ suggests that Osman embodies the hero of romanticism of disillusionment in Lukácsian sense, he is not a passive hero who has limited contact with the reified world. On the contrary, he throws

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<sup>12</sup> “Bendim kaldırımdan kendi odasının aydınlık pencelerine bir başkasının kırılğan ve tükenmiş hayatına gözyaşları ve yalnızlık duygusuyla bakar gibi bakan” (YH 45).

<sup>13</sup> “Çünkü karnımdaki demir külçenin ağrısı yüzünden, duyduğum sefil yalnızlık ve kıskançlık beni insanlardan öylesine koparmış ve öylesine umutsuz kılmıştı (...)” (YH 43).

himself into action, as in the category of abstract idealism, where the hero has too narrow a vision to understand his complex world. Lukács describes this kind of hero as an adventurer, because his soul is “at rest within its essential existence, every one of its impulses becomes an action aimed at the outside. The life of a person with such a soul becomes an uninterrupted series of adventures which he himself has chosen. He throws himself into them because life means nothing more than the successful passing of tests” (99). So, unlike Galip of *The Black Book*, Osman of *The New Life* is a quixotic hero. Estranged from everyday incidents and places because of his exalted sensations to “venture out into the precincts of [his] childhood (...) as if [he] were in the danger zone in some strange realm” (NL 9)<sup>14</sup>, Osman gains a new perception of the familiar world in which he wants to prove himself in action. Moreover, the promise of a new life makes his old life meaningless and unbearable. The reasons that bring about such a tumultuous change in Osman’s life leading him into a vain search are the following:

The reason is love. In a sense, the book may also simply be read as the transformation of the hero with love. The quest for love as a painful and unrequited experience of passion deepens the melancholy of the novel. Among various aspects of melancholy, unattainability of love and the impossibility of happiness create the bleak atmosphere of Pamuk’s works.

The protagonist of the novel, Osman first has a glimpse of the book in the hands of an architecture student in the canteen. This life-changing coincidence sets the plot of *The New Life*; in that, Osman’s fascination with the book directly corresponds to his falling in love with this architecture student, named Janan. It is rather vague whether he falls in love before or after he reads the book. Ahmet Oktay argues that he falls in love with Janan

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<sup>14</sup> “yabancı bir ülkenin tehlikeli sokaklarına çıkar gibi (...) kendi çocukluğumun sokaklarına çıktım” (YH 13).

after he has read the book since “it is the book that brings them together and makes them go on fatal trips” (232). Not only does the magic of the book but also the intensity of first love urge him to go beyond the experiences of everyday life to look for alien lands. “The radiance of her face was as quite as powerful as the light that the book emanated, but ever so gentle. I was in this world, breathing at the threshold of the new life. The longer I beheld her radiance, the more I understood my heart would no longer heed me” (NL 19)<sup>15</sup>. The radiance of her face has got to do with the almost blinding, dazzling light reflected from the book. It can be said that the desire to approach the fantastic world in the book is in keeping with his desire to approach her; that is, both the new life and Janan are idealized in a sense that they could only be realized as integral parts of the one and the same quest. The moment Osman stares at Janan’s beautiful face, listening to his heartbeats, he has “an image of long journeys that seem[s] endless, the deluges of myth and legend, labyrinthine streets that vanish, sad trees, muddy rivers, gardens, countries” (NL 21)<sup>16</sup>.

According to Rilke, love is a good possibility for one to exceed himself to reach more and to improve himself (qtd in Ever:1995, 290). Similarly, the power of the first love helps Osman to make a new person out of him. So, the intensity and the transcendence of love urge him to set off, to escape from the banality of his daily routine. Moreover, in another sense, his wish to be worthy of his beloved may be claimed to motivate him to go on a journey and prove himself entitled to some heroic deeds. The quotation below clearly points out the promise of a heroic journey into death.

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<sup>15</sup> “ (...) yüzüne bir an yakından bakınca kitaptan fişkıran ışık gibi güçlü, ama yumuşacık bir ışık vurdu yüzüme. Bu dünyadaydım ve yeni hayatın eşiğindeydim. Orada kirli merdivenlerin başındaydım ve kitaptaki hayatın içindeydim. Bu ışığa baktıkça yüreğimin beni hiç mi hiç dinlemeyeceğini anladım” (YH 23).

<sup>16</sup> “ (...) uzun upuzun, hiç bitmeyecek kadar uzun yolculuklar belirdi aklımda, hiç durmadan yağın efsanevi yağmurlar, hepsi birbirine açılan kayıp sokaklar, kederli ağaçlar, çamurlu ırmaklar, bahçeler, ülkeler” (YH 25).

“What would you be willing to do to reach the world in the book?” she asked.

(...) “I would do anything,” I said.

(...) “What do you mean by anything?” she asked me.

“Everything,” I said.

(...) “Would you be willing to face death, for example?”

“I would” (...) “I would truly not be afraid of death”. (NL 20-1)<sup>17</sup>

The concept of idealized love, for the sake of which even death is welcomed, lies at the very center of both *The New Life* and *The Black Book*. The impossibility of attaining the love of the beloved further emphasizes the sadness of both characters. It can be maintained that their quest for Janan and Rya designates the desire of approaching ‘the ideal’; so, the female characters are highly idealized. Having decided that Janan is his ‘guiding spirit’, Osman leaves his family and friends behind, and sets out on “a quest to discover his new identity somewhere on the evanescent horizon” (Morrow: 1997). Accordingly, while Janan is utterly mystical as the word ‘guiding spirit’ suggests, she also stands for the radiant light that leads Osman in his journey. The further connotations of Janan and luminosity are also evident in the frequent parallelisms of Janan with the Angel. In the dreamy atmosphere of a bus crash, a dying girl in blue jeans, thus addresses Janan as in the form of an invocation, as “keep smiling at me (...) smile at me so that I may see in your face for once the radiance of that other world” (NL 80)<sup>18</sup>. Wholly angelic, she is assigned to the transcendence a world beyond. The dying girl is apparently not the only one to idealize her; for, our protagonist declares that he “discarded friends who weren’t

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<sup>17</sup> “ ‘Kitaptaki dnyaya girebilmek iin ne yapardın?’ diye sordu. / (...) ‘Kitaptaki dnyayı bulabilmek iin her Őeyi yapardım,’ dedim. / (...) ‘Yapabileceğın her Őey nadir?’ diye sordu, bana. / ‘Her Őey...’ dedim. / (...) ‘lm gze alır mıydın mesela?’ / ‘Alırdım’ (...) ‘[]lmden de korkmazdım doğrusu’ “ (YH 24-5).

<sup>18</sup> “Gl bana (...) bana gl ki o dnyanın ıŐıđını bir kere olsun grebileyim yznde” (YH 81).

aware that not only did her name mean *soulmate* but it also signified *God* (NL 39)<sup>19</sup>. Symbolizing a transcendental power, Janan devastates his previous life, making him a neurotic hero.

Besides the life-changing intensity of the first love, the mysterious book Osman reads designates his quest more than anything. There probably lies the famous sentence of the novel in the centre of consciousness of *The New Life*: “I read a book one day, and my whole life was changed” (NL 3)<sup>20</sup>. While Galip’s existential quest arises from the loss of his wife, it is this very book by the words of which the doors of a new life open out that alienates Osman from his everyday habits. The light seeping from the threshold of another life makes his current life darker and duller than ever:

But a while later, when I sensed that the familiar old world was intolerably hopeless, my heart began to beat fast, my head began to swim as if a drug were coursing through my veins, and I was thrilled with power that surged from the book, spreading gradually from its locus in my neck throughout my entire body. The new world had already annulled all existence and transformed the present into the past. Things I saw, things I touched were all pathetically old. (NL 17)<sup>21</sup>

Thus, his old life becomes intolerably wretched on reading the book. It is probably at this reading process that Osman starts his inner journey even before his bus journeys. Once on the buses, however, the tiresome, labyrinthine Anatolian roads run parallel to the

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<sup>19</sup> “Adının hem sevgili hem Allah anlamına geldiğini bilmeyenlerle dostluğu kestim” (YH 43).

<sup>20</sup> “Bir gün bir kitap okudum ve bütün hayatım değişti” (YH 7).

<sup>21</sup> “Bir süre sonra o eski dünyanın, bildik dünyanın dayanılmayacak kadar umutsuz olduğunu hissedince, yüreğim hızlı hızlı atmaya başladı, damarlarımda ilaçlı bir kan geziniyormuş gibi başım döndü ve kitaptan yüzüme fıskarn ışığın gücünün ensemden bütün gövdeme ağır ağır yayılışını zevkle hissettim. Yeni bir dünya varolan her şeyi çoktan iptal edip şimdiki zamanı geçmiş zamana çevirmişti bile. Gördüğüm, dokunduğum herşey acınacak kadar eskiydi” (YH 21).

complicated mental landscape that Osman explores. The escape from the familiar to the unfamiliar, then, marks Osman's textual journey. As Parla maintains,

Another form of journey is the one into the psyche, a fictional journey as in Baudelaire's poem that starts as 'anywhere out of the world'. Its beginnings date back to childhood yearnings: 'I used to come here (...) to look through the piles of stuff the sea deposited along the shore – the tin cans, plastic balls, bottles, plastic flip-flops, clothes pins, light bulbs, plastic dolls – searching for something, a magic talisman from some treasury, a shiny new article the use of which we couldn't begin to fathom.' (p.11) So, the journey Osman sets off by the order of the book is such an imaginary journey; it is the escape from banality to dream" (1995: 270, my translation).

Escape from the familiar to an inspirational world refers to the wish to exist in an elusive, dreamy dimension. Accordingly, Osman deserts his familiar city for the alien Anatolia. The process of reading the book takes him to the limits of his own existence, as it is clear from the following lines: "After all, the book revealed, so it seemed to me, the meaning of my existence" (NL 12)<sup>22</sup>. He challenges his own boundaries with this journey where he searches the essence of love, life, chance, accident, fate, death and writing.

Although the content is slightly hinted, the book that seduces Osman in *The New Life* is a powerful, luminous text that descends upon the elect. The life-changing book can be related to many books. Arguing "the enigmatic book within the book stirs up a flock of ghosts from 'foreign centuries'", Ronald Wright speculates whether it can be "the Bible, the Koran, The Tales of Amadis, Alice in Wonderland, The Origin of Species, The

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<sup>22</sup> "Çünkü kitap, bana öyle geliyordu ki, benim bu dünyada ne için varolduğumu anlatıyordu" (YH 16).

Communist Manifesto” (23). It may be inferred from the descriptions of it that it is like a holy book that hides a secret recipe regarding life and existence.

Osman’s life prior to reading the book is also significant in terms of revealing the underlying reasons of his quest. His pre-book life indeed lacks a real inner problematic except that he has always been prone to depression. An introvert who lives with his widowed mother, our hero is depicted as a “pale, (...) pensive, preoccupied, wan” young man (*NL 24*)<sup>23</sup>. Even when the book presents a possibility of an ideal order, the promise of it does not provide salvation for him. His extensive degraded journey likewise accentuates his desperation, as he is “the unfortunate traveler who [is] able to reach merely the frontiers of his own misery rather than reaching the heart of life (...)” (*NL 216*)<sup>24</sup>. All he encounters in this journey is a bunch of franchise holders, secret agents bearing the names of watch brands, ugly and depressing Anatolian towns. Even years after the journey, he displays melancholic attributes like “the desire for a soul other than the one which coiled inside [him] at the hour of dusk” (*NL 237*)<sup>25</sup>. However, towards the end of the book, the problematic hero seems to be resigned to this inevitable sorrow; for he “never attempt[s] to assign some deep meaning to [his] broken life, or to look for some sort of consolation” (*NL 242*)<sup>26</sup>.

Still, Osman the quixotic, melancholic hero is bound to set out on his adventurous course in order to attain the promise of ‘a new life’. As I have already said, he is quite determined to reach there by continuous action. Lukács alleges that “it is the mentality which chooses the direct, straight path towards the realization of the ideal; which, dazzled

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<sup>23</sup> “Yüzü soluk (...) düşünceli, dalgın, yorgun” (*YH 27*).

<sup>24</sup> “gide gide hayatın kalbine değil, ancak kendi sefalaetinin sınırlarına varabilen talihsiz yolcu (...)” (*YH 203*).

<sup>25</sup> “akşamüstleri içimde çöreklenen başka bir ruha sahip olma isteği” (*YH 222*).

<sup>26</sup> “kırık hayatıma derin bir anlam vermeye, bir teselli aramaya (...) kalkışmadım hiç” (*YH 226*).



by the demon, forgets the existence of any distance between ideal and idea (...) because it *should be*, necessarily *must be* (...)" (97). While Osman tries to realize 'the ideal' or 'the transcendental', the irony is that he is more and more stuck within the mundane. While Galip's more cerebral and unconscious quest is for the sake of the ultimate interpretation of the hidden meaning, Osman's is mostly in the name of sensual experience of the world. As both are equally trapped between the mundane and the transcendental, both resign themselves to make the best of whatever fate will deal to their share.

### ***III. TRANSCENDENTAL HOMELESSNESS***

“In the midst of life,  
wandering through the muddy concrete forest that is our city,  
in a dark street swarming with darker faces:  
my dream, my Rüya” (BB 367)<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Black Book:***

#### **A Solitary Wanderer’s Path within the Labyrinthine Istanbul**

The moment Galip leaves home in search of Rüya, he indeed becomes homeless. While wandering alone, the problematic protagonist seeks desperately for a mere glimpse of meaning. He ironically devotes his life to a quest of the imminence of meaning and mystery within the limitations of this world. His endeavor reflects Lukácsian hero’s struggle to find utopian perfection, or in other words, a transcendental home in a contingent world. Whether the protagonist will be able to achieve this or not makes up the argument of this chapter.

The hero’s spatial journey in *The Black Book* takes place in Istanbul, a metropolitan modern city in Turkey. While the specific position of the city as a bridge between the East and The West fits perfectly well in the author’s main themes, the city also determines the urban nature of the search. The object of the quest is directed to a specific place where Rüya may be hiding. Looking for Rüya turns Galip into a careful detective. Since he thinks Rüya is probably hiding with Celal, a famous columnist and also Rüya’s half-brother, his search is oriented to find Celal’s whereabouts. The protagonist concludes that the columnist, Celal Salik must be somewhere in the city, as he

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<sup>27</sup> “‘Rüya’ denen hayatın tam orta yerinde, çamurlu şehrin apartman ormanı içinde, karanlık sokaklarla daha karanlık suratlar arasında bir yerde” (KK 353).

never goes out of Istanbul<sup>28</sup>. In his urban search, the city signs, Celal's columns and last but not least, his own memories will lead him, as the answers "reside somewhere in his past" (BB 101)<sup>29</sup>. Thus, as lawyer turned detective, Galip takes an initial step into detection – to detect what he had let go unnoticed in his former eye.

The plot rests on the sights, signs of the city that Galip witnesses in his wanderings after Rya. Tracing the steps of Galip, the reader is led to the dark streets and secret corners of Istanbul. Because of the abundance of descriptions and imagery throughout his wanderings, we are not only able to move forward and around in a vertiginous pace, but also function as the eye constantly gazing at him. Pamuk never stops enriching his text with the inexhaustible photographic images of the city. Making his hero tramp thoroughly in Istanbul, the author also attempts to put the city at the very heart of his narrative as a main character. The melancholic Istanbul as the city of contradiction, caught between its glamorous past and ruinous present fits perfectly well to this novel of homelessness.

The pessimistic nature of the protagonist's quest, above all, lies in the irony of his optimistic delusion of deciphering the hidden 'secret' meaning that he believes the city hides from him. He reads and rereads Celal's columns with that object in mind: "All he had to do was hold on to that conviction as he read the column. As his eyes traveled from word to word, he told himself that, while his first object was to locate Celal and Rya's hiding place (and also make sense of it), these lines would also reveal to him all the secrets of the city, all the secrets of life itself" (BB 211)<sup>30</sup>. Now that his quest for meaning

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<sup>28</sup> The parallelism between Celal Salik and the author may be pointed out here, as "here we come to the heart of the matter," Pamuk says, "I've never left Istanbul, never left the houses, streets, and neighborhoods of my childhood" (*Istanbul* 14)<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> "kendi gemişinde bir yerde olması gerektiğini düşünüyormuş" (KK 103).

<sup>30</sup> "Göz bir kelimededen ötekine sıçrarken, Rya'yla Celal'in gizlendiđi köşenin yeri ve anlamı kadar, Galip, hayatın ve şehrin bütün sırlarını okuyacağıma inanıyordu" (KK 208).

is already an extensive search towards solving the riddle of life, the protagonist becomes a detective quester who tries to find out an order among the chaos of objects. Investigating the *unrelated objects* such as a black phone, a broken pair of pliers or some bedsprings in a junk dealer with utmost care, Galip figures as the absurd hero of a fragmented world. Thus, the novel not only parodies the structure of detective novels, but it also lurks in an individuated and fragmented world. Being a studious detective in the world of clues, he searches “signs and meanings in a shabby city, as he looks for omens in the activities of the pimps and the vendors of sesame rings, in the posters advertising Bruce Lee films, in the dusty clutter of shop windows and in the pattern of the narrow, twisted streets” (Irwin 21)<sup>31</sup>.

While exploring Istanbul in a fresh perspective, Galip comes to regard the world as an encyclopedia of signs, images, and writings to be deciphered. The specific dependence of his journey on ‘strolling’ as opposed to *The New Life* protagonist’s bus journeys undoubtedly refers to the idea of *flâneur*. Being only an anonymous one in the crowds, the *flâneur* is a modern hero who searches his surroundings for clues that may go unnoticed by the others. “Exiled from the apartment Sehri-kalp (which means the City-of-Hearts ...), expelled from that happy garden of communal life into a divided, anonymous, individuated, urban existence”, Galip embodies this modern city experience well enough (Parla: 1991, 451). He may be said to be one of the heroes of modernity like Baudelaire “who seeks to give voice to its paradoxes and illusions, who participates in, while yet still

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<sup>31</sup> If we are to have a look at the post-modernist account of these, in her article called “The Personified, Textualized, Erased Cities in Literature”, Sibel Irzik points out that detective genre is already historically and structurally the product of city life and it serves to make sense of the apparent city as a city of signs and as a shadow of another higher reality, in short to textualize it (1995: 267). She goes on to claim that the continuity of existences of both *The Black Book* and Istanbul which has been re-produced as a city of signs depend on the promise of mystery as well as the insolvable aspect of this mystery (268). That’s why, this mock-detective novel is full of “red herrings” which refer to a perfect nothingness (Brendemoen 5). According to Almond, “if *The Black Book* really is a detective novel, then it is the story of a failed detective, of a failed hermeneutics. Our hero fails to reach the scene of the murder in time, he fails to find out the location of Rüya and Celal – all his powers of interpretation cannot prevent the death of his wife” (80).

retaining the capacity to give form to, the fragmented, fleeting experiences of the modern” (Gilloch 134).<sup>32</sup>

According to Benjamin, a flaneur exists within the chaos of the city: “The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flaneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense job to set up house in the middle of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite” (1986: 9). In the same way, our protagonist is an urban exile who walks among the crowds, being inspired by the clutter of the city. Even when he is home, he keeps a keen eye on the chaotic metropolis: “The first sounds of the winter morning seeped in from outside: the rumble of a passing car, the clatter of an old bus, the rattle of the copper kettles that the salep maker shared with the pastry cook, the whistle of the parking attendant at the *dolmuş* stop” (BB 3)<sup>33</sup>. The contrast between the huddle of the city and the solitude of his own life gives a full scope to his individual status; for, although he walks as one among the crowd, he bears the tragic hero’s elegiac sorrow of “travel[ing] the road alone” (Lukács 48). Even when he takes shelter in Celal’s apartment in an attempt to hide from everything, the sounds of night like “the rattle of descending shutters from a shop at the far end of the street, a peal of laughter near Alaaddin’s shop (...) high heels clicking down the pavement” accompany him (BB

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<sup>32</sup> It is clear that the concept directly refers to Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin’s writings on Baudelaire, especially to *Les Arcades*. Also, although the early novelists such as Charles Dickens and Dostoyevsky portrayed the cities as places of disillusionment, the reflections of the mechanized city as a result of industrial society and modernity may be felt in Pamuk. T. Belge maintains that “while Dostoyevsky perceives the demise of the individual for the sake of the civilization in a hallucination psychology, Pamuk is at a point where any relation between the city and the individual is not even to be dreamed of”, so, the hallucination of Dostoyevsky is transformed into a nightmare in Pamuk (207).

<sup>33</sup> “Dışardan kış sabahının ilk sesleri geliyordu: Tek tük geçen arabalar ve eski otobüsler, poğaçacıyla işbirliği eden salepçinin kaldırırma konup kalkan güğümleri ve dolmuş durağının değnekçisinin düdüğü” (KK 11).

293)<sup>34</sup>. So, the clamor of the city penetrates into his consciousness, distracting him, calling him.

Constantly being called by Istanbul, in Pamuk's words, as "a place that can never exhaust its mystery", Galip acts as a true quester with his wanderings. In his acclaimed book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau reserves a whole chapter to the spatial practices in the city. In this chapter called "Walking in the City", he claims that "to walk is to lack a place. (...) The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place (...) and intersections of these exoduses [displacements and walks] intertwine and create an urban fabric" (103). Galip's wanderings likewise lack a place, as each of his steps seems to accentuate his desperate search for home in every sense.

Moreover, readers are also voyeurs, trying to find their way, to make sense within the text or within the world: "So a reader who set out to solve the mystery in his own way, following his own logic, was no different from a traveler who finds the mystery of a city slowly unfurling before him" (*BB* 318)<sup>35</sup>. The quester looking for the mystery through city streets will discover it more and more until he finds it in his own journey and in his own life; since solving the mystery is also a matter of interpretation; mystery is multiple and relative. In *The Black Book*, "there is no secret message to decode – and certainly no hidden treasure to stumble on – we are the meaning of our own interpretations", argues Ian Almond (81). The efforts of reaching "the idea of a center hidden from the world" by interpretation will be subverted; in that, after a while, the protagonist begins to observe

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<sup>34</sup> " (...) sokağın ta öbür ucunda indirilen bir dükkan kepengini, Alaaddin'in oradan gelen bir kahkaha. (...) kaldırımlarda hızlı hızlı ilerleyen bir topuklu ayakkabının sesi (...)" (*KK* 285).

<sup>35</sup> "Demek ki esrarı kendi bildiğince ve elindeki cetvelle çözmeye girişen okurun, haritanın sokaklarında yürüdükçe esrarı keşfeden, ama esrarı keşfettikçe daha da yayılan ve yayıldıkça da esrarı kendi yürüdüğü sokaklarda, seçtiği yollarda, çıktığı yokuşlarda, kendi yolculuk ve hayatında bulan yolcudan hiçbir farkı yoktu" (*KK* 309).

letters and words, rather than their inner meanings. Galip reads Celal's column "over so many times that the words los[e] their meaning and turn into shapes" (BB 213)<sup>36</sup>. Here, we see that the reading process is reversed, because he looks at the signifiers, rather than the signified. This situation probably reached its peak in the sections about Hurufism - the science of the secret meaning of the Arabic letters. The quest for meaning is doomed to remain unfulfilled as insistence on perfect interpretation only leads to estrangement and eludes the eager interpreter.

The modern metropolis has long exhausted any form of mysteries referring to an ordered universe, and what is left for us is nothing but an area of a total disintegration. The nihilistic nightmare of Pamuk's Istanbul is evident in Rya's ex-husband's words: "(...) Istanbul, the very place where this disintegration had begun. Istanbul was the touchstone; forget about living there. Even setting one foot in Istanbul was to surrender, or admit defeat" (BB 130)<sup>37</sup>. Actually, almost all images of the city are full of abundance of objects; in other words, Pamuk portrays Istanbul as a chaos of things, crowds, colors, signs, writings, images, noises, textures, and smells. Full of commercial artifacts, Aladdin's shop, then becomes a microcosm of the city. In the same way, while many other details such as the dusty boxes in Celal's house, drawers, photographs, residues under the Bosphorus, albums, and even Rya's messy bedroom may be attributed to this random accumulation. Still, all these separate entities by no means form an ordered whole, instead they refer to an absolute disorder. So, Galip "is bombarded by a plethora of unassimilable stimuli" (Gilloch 143). Taking the place of Galip at times, the reader pays

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<sup>36</sup> "kelimeler anlamlarını kaybedip yalnızca harflerden yapılmış bazı şekillere dönüştüler" (KK 210).

<sup>37</sup> "bu çöküşün başladığı İstanbul (...) İstanbul bir mihenk taşıydı: Değil orada yaşamak, oraya adım atmak bile bir teslimiyet, bir yenilgiydi" (KK 131).



attention to each sign, each street name, eventually getting lost among the extravagance of details.

The *frightful* city was now awash with the images of *decay*: *hopeless* crowds, *old* cars, bridges sinking slowly into the sea, piles of tin cans, roads riddled with potholes, billboards with giant letters that no one stopped to read, *ripped* wall panels signifying nothing, graffiti that made *no sense* because half the paint had washed away, advertisements for bottled drinks and cigarettes, minarets devoid of calls to prayer, piles of rubble, *dust*, *mud*, et cetera, et cetera. Nothing would come of this decay. (*BB* 130-1, italics mine)<sup>38</sup>

The images of decay permeate through the depictions of the city as may well be seen in the italicized words above. “City novels appear to be the texts which are invaded by the fossilized objects that are disposed, huddled, re-cycled, and that form piles of rubbish within and around the city, in the underground, under the water” (Irzık: 1995, 262, my translation). Modern city, in short, is viewed as a wasteland.

Walter Benjamin likens the function of a poet to that of a ragpicker who collects urban detrius to turn it into poetry (1997: 80). Just like the poet, it would not be wrong to claim that Pamuk frequently resorts to the wastes in the city to form his text. As Irzık observes, “the long sentences of the novel accumulate the details, specifically the cheap, artificial objects, and the remains that the lost people have left behind like epic catalogues. In these sentences again, the subjects are lost among the countless telescopic clauses just like the individuals wandering on the city streets, losing their ways” (1995, 269, my translation).

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<sup>38</sup> “Korkunç şehir, ilk başlarda yalnızca karanlık sinemalarda gördüğümüz o çürümüş görüntülerle kaynaşıyordu şimdi. Umutsuz kalabalıklar, eski arabalar, ağır ağır suya gömülen köprüler, teneke yığınları, delik deşik asfalt, anlaşılmasız iri iri harfler, okunmayan afişler, anlamsız yırtık panolar, boyları akmış duvar yazıları, şişe ve sigara resimleri, ezansız minareler, taş yığınları, toz çamur vs vs. Bu çöküntüden beklenebilecek hiçbir şey yoktu” (*KK* 131).

The theme of waste is memorably employed in one of the most striking chapters of *The Black Book* - "When the Bosphorus Dries Up". The chapter expresses a dystopic vision of Istanbul, setting off from a story in a French geological journal. The story, based on a so-called factual report, explains the transformation of "the heavenly place we once knew as Bosphorus" into "a pitch-black bog, glistening with muddy shipwrecks baring their shiny teeth like ghosts" with the water's drying up (*BB* 16)<sup>39</sup>. The sheer contrast between the romanticized past and the present nightmare of the city serves to acknowledge the fate of the metropolitans. In the new district, amid the rotting corpses and old Byzantine coins, there emerges a new civilization where nightclubs and brothels exist side by side with the mosques and dervish lodges, marking the striking coexistence of the holy with the unholy (*BB* 17).

While our hero strolls on the surface of the city; his mind wanders in the underground. Although the hero indeed descends into his own unconscious since verticalities of space signify descent into unconscious, he also "penetrates into the subconsciousness of the city" (Batur: 1990, 34). Therefore, Pamuk often refers to the wells and the dark air shafts as the leftovers of the concretization of the metropolis. The dark air shafts between the tall apartment blocks serve as modern versions of old wells, filled with dark, mysterious, terrifying rubbish. Full of seagull filths and rat corpses, these areas are like "a fear people [are] desperate to escape and forget forevermore", like an "ugly and contagious disease" (*BB* 208)<sup>40</sup>. The back garden of city civilization, these air shafts stand for every evil that needs to be forgotten by the city dwellers. They are the city dwellers' collective subconscious where the unpleasant memories are stored.

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<sup>39</sup> " (...) bir zamanlar boğaz dediğimiz o cennet yer, kara bir çamurla sıvalı kalyon leşlerinin, parlak dişlerini gösteren hayaletler gibi parladığı bir zifiri bataklığa dönüşecek" (*KK* 23).

<sup>40</sup> "Orası, kaçmak isteyip de kaçamadıkları, unutmak isteyip de unutamadıkları bir korku gibiydi; bulaşıcı ve çirkin bir hastalıktan sözeder gibi sözederlerdi oradan" (*KK* 205).

The protagonist's descending underground to a mannequin workshop near the Galata Tower is another example of vertical journeys. The passages and corridors in the underground of the city have obviously got to do with the urban legends about Istanbul, with the idea that there indeed exists another reality under the city, as "since the beginning of its history, Istanbul [has] been an underground city" (BB 189)<sup>41</sup>. Interestingly, the mannequins underground are even more genuine than their originals; since, a sort of Western imitation and artificiality has penetrated the attitudes and expressions of the city dwellers. Galip's descending into the galleries of the Mars Mannequin Atelier alludes to Dante's descending to the Inferno, and Cebbar Bey here is the embodiment of Dante's guide Virgilius (Moran 86). Moreover, Cebbar Bey is not only the protagonist's guide in his underground trip, but also an envoy of a vague guide of his entire journey. That is to say, quite unusually, he approaches Galip and utters "You'll find what you are looking for here, don't worry! (...) I'm here at His behest. He doesn't want you wandering into cul-de-sacs and getting lost" (BB 187)<sup>42</sup>. The guide's ambiguous words may suggest that Galip's journey is monitored by an unknown person, as "he" here may symbolize many people or things such as Bedii Usta, Celal Salik, the Messiah or the Eye. Brendemoen, however, claims that "he" most probably refers to Celal: "When the bewildered Galip wanders around Istanbul in the first part of the book, he speaks of a 'hand' directing him; this could be – as is hinted at several times – the hand of Celal, who has planned everything (5). So, Galip would discover 'the secret' that he was able to infer neither from the city signs nor from the people's faces only here, in that true area of authenticity: In their return, "the higher they climbed, the closer they came to the surface, the harder it

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<sup>41</sup> "İstanbul bütün tarihi boyunca, her zaman bir yeraltı şehri [olmuştu]" (KK 187).

<sup>42</sup> "Aradığımı burada bulacaksın, korkma! (...) 'Beni O yolladı, yanlış yollarda dolanmanı, kaybolmanı hiç istemiyor'" (KK 185).

was for Galip to recall the secret” that he witnessed in the underworld (*BB* 194)<sup>43</sup>. If the underground refers to the subconscious of the city, the closer Galip moves to the surface – to the consciousness of the city-, the weaker the memory gets. As opposed to the depths, the heights are dominated by a bleak ignorance. That is why, authenticity is to be found in the underground. While the surface of the city is portrayed as a dull wasteland, the underworld is an exciting area of transgression of all laws:

[O]n a warm summer day, when all of over-ground Istanbul was roasting in the sun, dozing amid flies, piles of garbage, and clouds of dust, the skeletons that had been waiting so patiently in these dark and mildewed passages would start to twitch and come to life, and there would follow a great celebration, a blessing of life and death that took them beyond time, history, and the rule of law (...) the mannequins and the skeletons dancing, and the music fading into silence giving way to the clacking of copulating bones (...). (*BB* 193)<sup>44</sup>

It may be inferred that a sort of Dionysian fest is going on amid the skeletons of the dead and the mannequins; whereas, the living are only the living dead<sup>45</sup>. So, Pamuk’s portrayal of the modern man as decayed in soul, dark and melancholic goes hand in hand with his description of the modern city. According to Irzık, modern novels deal greatly with the objects and the wastes not primarily because of the facts of consumption and

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<sup>43</sup> “ (...) yeryüzüne yaklaştıkça, yukarılara çıktıkça, derindeki sırlardan daha da uzaklaştı” (*KK* 192).

<sup>44</sup> “ (...) sıcak bir yaz günü, yukarıda bütün İstanbul ağır bir öğle sığının içinde sinekler, çöpler ve toz bulutları içersinde uyuklarken, aşağıda, yeraltının soğuk, nemli ve karanlık dehlizlerinde sabırlı iskeletlerle, bizim insanlarımızın hayatıyla kıpır kıpır yaşayan mankenlerin, hep birlikte bir şölen, büyük bir eğlence, yaşamı ve ölümü kutsayan ve zamanın tarihin ve yasaların ve yasakların ötesine geçen bir şenlik düzenleyeceklerini anlattıktan ve bu şenlikte mutlulukla dans eden iskeletlerle mankenlerin kırılan şarap kaseleriyle fincanların, müziğin ve sessizliğin ve çiftleşme takırtılarının dehşeti ve çöşküsü (...)” (*KK* 191).

<sup>45</sup> This directly reminds us of T.S.Eliot’s two brilliant poems, “The Wasteland” and “The Hollow Men”. “Grop[ing] together and avoid[ing] speech”, ‘the hollow men’ in Istanbul wait impatiently to be in “death's twilight kingdom” (T.S.Eliot, “The Hollow Men”).

environmental pollution, but the elements that are consumed and wasted by modern life are also human beings, history, language and meaning (1995: 262). In this sense, the parallelism between the degeneration of the modern city and the decay of the soul of modern man is indeed remarkable.

All sorts of desperation regarding authenticity and meaning are not only manifest in the city dwellers, but in everything that makes up our existence. Seeking desperately what it means to be, or “a secret recipe offering liberation to those who found the key”<sup>46</sup>, the protagonist gradually loses faith and confesses that there are neither clues nor hidden meanings, but all are “the products of his hungry and inquiring mind [that] had wanted to see them” (*BB* 194, 282)<sup>47</sup>. The melancholy of the modern man’s own need for narratives and meaning, “the sadness of our own weakness—hermeneutics not just as a consequence of our own unhappiness, but also as a symbol of our inability to take the sign at face value” (Almond 84) defines the nature of Galip’s quest: “He just could not bear to live without stories but he hated himself for it (...) he decided then and there that there was no room in this world for signs, clues, second and third meanings, secrets, or mysteries (...) A desire rose up in him to live in a world where things meant themselves and nothing else” (*BB* 282)<sup>48</sup>. Almond further asserts that “the activity of hermeneutics, with all its religious and metaphysical overtones” enjoys a certain ambiguity of status in the novel, as “it is revealed to be a delusion, motivated by a sense of boredom, impotence or unhappiness, a desire for the beyond—a new leader, a new Messiah, a new identity, a new state—springing from a profound dissatisfaction with the immediate” (85). “The desire for the

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<sup>46</sup> “reçetesi bulunursa insanı özgürleştirecek bir esrar” (*KK* 192).

<sup>47</sup> “Bütün işaretler anlamak ve bulmak isteyen kendi aklının ve hayallerinin kuruntularıyla” (*KK* 275).

<sup>48</sup> “(...) Hikayesiz yaşayamayan aklından nefret etti. Bir anda, dünyada işaretlerin, ipuçlarının, ikinci ve üçüncü anlamların, gizlerin, sırların yeri olmadığına karar verdi (...) Her eşyanın yalnızca o eşya olarak varolduğu bir dünyada huzurla yaşayabilme isteği yükseldi içinde” (*KK* 275).

beyond’, the wish for emancipation out of this wasteland is perfectly crystallized in the rising expectation of the Second Coming, explained in the chapter “We’re All Waiting For Him”<sup>49</sup>.

The Messiah: A person who is believed to emerge by The Doom’s Day and to lead people to goodness by destroying the evil. There have indeed been a number of people who were engaged in political rebellion by gathering the others with allegations of being the Messiah and those who believed in them in history (There was such an incident in South Arabia about ten or fifteen years ago and television channels broadcast it. Also, on the diary of The Sultan Abdülhamit, there writes Cemaleddin Efgani’s proposal of arousing all Middle Eastern Muslims to revolt with a claim of being a Messiah. But, being a Messiah in *The Black Book* is used in a different sense. This time, it is used as ‘finding ourselves’, ‘re-discovering the lost mystery’ against Westernization. (Ever: 1991, 118-9, my translation)

What is explained in the book is the myth of the return of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer to restore the world. This bleak hope – the longing for centuries – emerges like opium for the city dwellers, for the possibility of this sacred coming is the only thing that gives meaning to the current wretched existence of them: “Like the Koran, hope underpins our success in the real world as much as it does our spiritual happiness” (*BB* 158)<sup>50</sup>. Celal’s column gives a panorama of what would happen on the condition that the long-awaited “He” finally comes. The Grand Pasha – a mysterious figure of power – logically explains to him that even a great anticipation of a holy miracle cannot restore or redeem

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<sup>49</sup> “Hepimiz O’nu Bekliyoruz”

<sup>50</sup> “Kuran gibi, umut da, yalnız vicdani hayatımızı değil, bizim dünyevi hayatımızı da ayakta tutuyor” (*KK* 157).

the world; and the Messiah will be thrown into a dungeon and eventually murdered<sup>51</sup>. In *The Black Book*, in spite of being the real Messiah, “He” not only is unable to be a remedy for us but also kills the remaining bits of hope for people like Yeats’s beast. “The safe, rounded irrationality of the entire cosmos, as reflected in the novels, makes the glimpsed shadow of God appear demonic”, says Lukács (102). Just like the Messiah -the symbol of divinity and anticipation- is bound to fade away here, such a shade of God “cannot be comprehended and fitted into some kind of order from the perspective of earthly life, and therefore he cannot reveal himself as God” (Lukács 102). In the end, the Messiah’s being found dead on the filthy pavements, on the muddy streets is as tragic as Rüya’s beautiful dead body among the dolls in Alâaddin’s shop because it marks the death of the symbol of the sacred in a degrading way.

The images of death are so abundant that almost every line seems to accentuate the suddenness and commonness of death in this wasteland. Moreover, almost every action seems to lead to death as the only possible destination to reach. The death of identity, the death of nations, of hope, and of meaning are systematically handled. As for the death of mystery, Almond claims a sort of faint *Godot*-like air is present in the book, that is, “*The Black Book* represents the simultaneous incarnation and deconstruction of a mystery. In other words, we have the irony of a book which detranscendentalizes the secret, but at the same time employs hidden meanings, clues, and narrative suspense as its core technique” (85-6). So, the novel is full of instances where hope and meaning momentarily blink and then fade away. Meaning and reality, as other objects of quest, are likewise to disappear, as Parla maintains: “Reality is on Kaf Mountain (a place that does not exist), and meaning

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<sup>51</sup> The Second Coming here may be connoted to William Butler Yeats’s famous poem, “The Second Coming”. Written at the time of the First World War in 1919, the poem depicts the world as an area where “mere anarchy is loosed upon (...) [where] things fall apart / the centre cannot hold / (...) the ceremony of innocence is drowned” (187). When people anticipate some revelation, on the other hand, what emerges as Messiah is not Christ, but a beast which is an ultimate symbol of evil.

is a Borgesian possibility, hidden in the letters of the alphabet (which mean nothing unless combined and bear the potential of infinite combinations” (1991: 452). Everything refers to a lack, and all these impossibilities give way to the demise of all flickers of hope as the only truth. We may argue that all forms of death in the modern cities are indeed the reflections of the death of God, hence the impossibility of the transcendental ground on Earth.

Therefore, it may be argued that the emergence of modern cities is achieved at the cost of giving up spirituality. So, the protagonist’s quest for a spiritual meaning is futile and tragic. In Lukácsian sense, “estrangement from nature, the modern sentimental attitude to nature, is a projection of man’s experience of his self-made environment as a prison instead of as a parental home” (64). Unable to see the big irony, Galip goes on looking for a secret code of salvation, or a ‘transcendental home’ in the prison of the modern city. Moreover, he attempts to walk faster and faster, and strives to read the city signs with a deep fear of getting lost: “Thinking he might have read the signs wrong, Galip paused. If he began to believe that his feelings could mislead him, the city would soon swallow him up” (*BB* 221)<sup>52</sup>. So, Galip’s melancholy throughout his quest is symptomatic of his condemnation to the here and now.<sup>53</sup> It may be concluded, therefore, that he is an embodiment of the disoriented modern hero in transcendental homelessness.

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<sup>52</sup> “Galip işaretleri yanlış da yorumlayabileceğini düşünerek durakladı. Sezgilerinin kendisini yanıltabileceğine inanmaya başlarsa şehirde kaybolacağından kuşkusu yoktu hiç” (*KK* 219).

<sup>53</sup> In “A Preface to Transgression”, Foucault has talked about the limits of modernity. He demonstrates the loss of divine law and transcendental ground by the death of God, long announced by Nietzsche, which marks the finitude of being and meaning as well: “(...) we announced to ourselves that God is dead. (...) [We are lifted into] the night where God is absent, and where all of our actions are addressed to this absence in a profanation which at once identifies it, dissipates it, exhausts itself in it, and restores it to the empty purity of its transgression” (31).



“A journey was involved;  
it was always about a journey”  
(NL 5)<sup>54</sup>

“Why buses, towns, nights?  
Why all these roads, bridges, faces?”  
(NL 48)<sup>55</sup>

“Philosophy is really homesickness,  
it is the urge to be at home  
everywhere” (Novalis)<sup>56</sup>

### ***The New Life:***

### **A Romantic Quest to the Depths of the Provinces**

“If *The Black Book* is the symbolical, metaphorical, allegorical epic of the metropolis, then *The New Life* is a lyric, breezy, speedy, poetic journey of adventure in the provinces”, argues Kılıç in his compilation of articles, called *Understanding Orhan Pamuk*<sup>57</sup> (225). The main difference between the two novels apparently lies in the dissimilarity of their settings, as the former takes place in a busy city while the latter mostly occurs in the depths of rural Turkey. In the spatial quest in *The New Life*, the protagonist is once more in search of reaching home.

“The world of man that matters is the one where the soul, as man, god or demon, is at home: then the soul finds everything it needs, it does not have to create or animate anything out of its own self, for its existence is filled to overbrimming with the finding,

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<sup>54</sup> “Bir yolculuk vardı, hep vardı, her şey bir yolculuktu” (YH 9).

<sup>55</sup> “Neden otobüsler, geceler, şehirler?  
Neden bütün bu yollar, köprüler, yüzler?” (YH 51).

<sup>56</sup> Qtd in Lukács 29.

<sup>57</sup> *Orhan Pamuk’u Anlamak*

gathering and moulding of all that is given as cognate to the soul”, says Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel* (65-66). The protagonist of *The New Life*, however, does by no means feel at home after reading a book. His conception of home ultimately alters, and he devotes the rest of his life in finding a ‘threshold’ where his soul is in peace. So, with a strong urge to realize the new life in the book, or to reach a spiritual ‘home’ within this world, the protagonist starts walking, since he has believed if he always walks “like this, walking fast, without stopping, if only [he can] go on journeys, it seems [he can] reach the universe in the book” (*NL* 11)<sup>58</sup>. Thus, in order to realize the idea of the book, he is required to take spatial journeys rather than merely reading and interpreting. So, the utopia is out there in the world and it may only be reached by action, by walking, by going on journeys. Like Galip, Osman starts his wandering in the city to search the signs of this utopic land as well as the traces of his beloved Janan. As a matter of fact, Pamuk’s objects of quest are rarely specific and singular. Because of an impatient drive to move and live faster, he wants to be everywhere; he psychically desires to wander in that ‘illuminating country’ which he has formerly mentally perceived during his reading of the book. Perhaps, the vain endeavor to find a fictional world that the book offers within the reality of this world is the main delusion that marks the futility of Osman’s quest.

So, believing in the power of a book, Osman sets out on a journey to find a transcendental home. Although its content is vague, the radiant book seems to be an influential text that affects some special people. “The luminous book” is claimed to be “every book that ever changed a world” (Wright 23). It promises happiness and redemption to its disciples around. So, it refers to the modern wretched people’s need to believe in the existence of another possible life outside this pathetic one. Dr. Fine’s words

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<sup>58</sup> “hep böyle yürürsem, hızla yürürsem, hiç durmazsam, yolculuklara çıkarsam, sanki kitaptaki dünyaya varacaktım” (*YH* 15).

are highly significant: “Tell me, is this possible in this day and age? Can a book change someone’s whole life? (...) By what power can such a strong spell be cast in this day and age?” (NL 129).<sup>59</sup> His words elucidate the impossibility of miracles in our lives. Even holy books and religions as ‘opium of masses’ may have long lost their power and modern people are left unguided. As Foucault claims, “the death of God does not restore us to a limited and positivistic world, but to a world exposed by the experience of its limits, made and unmade by that excess which transgresses it” (32). We do not experience the death of God but the effects of it as the loss of transcendental meanings in our lives.

The sadness further lies in the fact that although the book is supposed to remedy the God-forsaken world, it is a fiction itself. Moreover, its author is murdered: “Most people want neither a new life nor a new world. So they kill the book’s author” (NL 68)<sup>60</sup>. This reminds us Bahti’s epigraph of the first chapter of *The Black Book* that says “if that’s how it has to die, go ahead and kill it; then kill the false prophet who sold you on the mystery in the first place” (BB 3)<sup>61</sup>. In addition to this, the death of the writer of ‘holy word’, namely Uncle Rıfki, is just like the death of the Messiah in *The Black Book*. So, every attempt of creating the mystery by preserving one’s faith in the possibility of transcendence, even giving hope is like a sin hard to be forgiven in a world which is sure to breathe in this desperation and Dr.Fine stands for the harsh authority that opposed to any promise of ‘the serenity and enchantment of paradise within the limitations set by the world’.

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<sup>59</sup> “ (...) söyleyin bana: İnsanın bütün dünyasını değiştirecek bir kitap, bugün mümkün müdür böyle bir şey? (...) Böyle kuvvetli büyü, günümüzde hangi reçeteyle gerçekleştirilebilir?” (YH 124-5).

<sup>60</sup> “İnsanların çoğu aslında ne yeni bir hayat isterler, ne de yeni bir dünya. Bu yüzden kitabın yazarını öldürdüler” (YH 70).

<sup>61</sup> “Böyle ölecekse, öldür o zaman sen de esrarı, esrar satan yalancı peygamberi öldür” – Bahti (KK 11).

Since this paradise is not immediately reachable, our hero leaves his room, and all his past behind to find a new life, hardly aware that he has already started a new life by his departure. So, his journey begins in the buses where he can be in a state of continuous motion<sup>62</sup>. The duality of the symbols of trains and buses in *The New Life* inspires a series of comparisons. For instance, Uncle Railman Rıfki –the mysterious writer of ‘the book’- who has to include at least one train in his comic strips truly hates the buses. Dr. Fine, on the other hand, admires the buses because he believes that the enemy of the timetable for prayers is the timetable for trains (*NL* 158)<sup>63</sup>. According to Steinfeld, “buses are not like trains. Juggling, they transport small communities of people to a specific destination, and indeed they connect the unrelated places without a huge plan” (342, my translation). In addition to this, the necessary linearity of the railways may be contrasted with the buses that can freely move in space. “Railways are the metaphors of the fictional order; being ordered, planned, and geometric routes, the railways are the emblems of art versus life as opposed to the buses that travel in villages and towns, in mountains and steppes like a ship without a rudder” (Parla: 1995, 273, my translation). Since he first and foremost believes in the necessity of experience, Osman will take the buses that stand for the contingency of life:

I got on buses, I got off buses; I loitered in bus terminals only to board more buses, sleeping in my seat, turning my days into nights, embarking and disembarking in small towns, traveling for days in the dark, and I said to myself: the young traveler was so determined to find

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<sup>62</sup> The process of transformation from the railways at the end of Oğuz Atay’s *The Disconnected [Tutunamayanlar]* (1971) to the highways in Orhan Pamuk’s *The New Life* (1994) also refers to Turkey’s shift of transportation from trains to buses in time. Hence, Pamuk goes on bus journeys that Atay has started with the trains. The author has previously talked about the railways as the ways to civilization in his first book, *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*. The railroads, which continued to be constructed in Kemah in the novel, have made the journeys into the far depths of Anatolia possible and connected the East and the West of the country.

<sup>63</sup> “Ezan vaktinin en büyük düşmanının tren vakti olduğunu herkes bilir” (*YH* 151).

the unknown realm, he let himself be transported without respite on roads that would take him to the threshold. (NL 44)<sup>64</sup>

The bus journeys form the overall structure of the spatial journeys. While the images of the city accompany Galip's search, the quest of the protagonist in *The New Life* takes place among the multiple visions seen from the window of the buses. The author adds a sort of cinematographic aspect to the novel by these fast moving rural scenes, as he describes the colors, and textures of the inland Anatolia. According to Pamuk, "the book conveys the terror of living in a country where everything is shaky, fast-moving, as if you are in one of those creaky old buses trying to watch B movies" (qtd in Stone: 1994). Apparently, there is a parallelism between the visions seen from the bus windows and the running scenes of the movies; for, the protagonist, alone or with Janan, is accompanied by a television, 'a sort of light, a sort of God' during their bus rides. It is quite ironic that the modern hero is accompanied by television instead of the guidance of gods as in the old epics. Besides the faint fluorescent lamps and rare headlights of the cars, the twinkling radiance of the television is probably the only light in their dark journeys. The literal and metaphorical dimness of the journeys together with the poverty and desperation of the fellow travelers in the deprived country create an atmosphere of absolute melancholy.

The function of the bus in the context of the novel is highly significant; because the novel we are reading is a vehicle of observance and crash just like a bus (Oktay 239). It may well be claimed that buses are among the least safe places to be in Turkey considering the frequency of bus accidents, so to be in a bus refers to be in a continuous risk. A bus traveler is always on the brink of life, where the intensity of experience

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<sup>64</sup> "Otobüslere bindim, otobüslerden indim, garajlarda gezindim; otobüslere bindim, otobüslerde uyudum, günlere gecelere yetiştirdim; otobüslere bindim, kasabalarda indim, günler boyu karanlığın içine gittim ve dedim ki kendi kendime, nasıl da kararlıymış bu genç yolcu kendisini o bilinmeyen ülkenin eşğine götürececek yollarda sürüklenmeye" (YH 48).

becomes most acute. What is more, bus journeys stand for constant motion and spatial dislocation. The capitalized and ironic names of the bus companies serve to make fun of the proliferating local bus companies with more or less similar names: “SAFEWAY, TRUE SAFEWAY, EXPRESS SAFEWAY, FLYING SAFEWAY, GREASED LIGHTNING” (*NL* 55)<sup>65</sup>. Although in English translation, there is an emphasis on the ‘safety’ of the buses, in original Turkish, there is a particular focus on ‘Varan’, which aside from designating a famous bus company also means ‘arriving’. However, the buses are neither safe nor do they arrive anywhere. So, the over emphasis on the name “Varan” ironizes the quest of the protagonist who seems to arrive nowhere. “I had been traveling for days (...) not knowing where I departed from, where I was destined, or how fast I was going”, says Osman (*NL* 45)<sup>66</sup>. It may be asserted then that he goes on bus journeys not to reach a specific destination, but to be in the state of constant motion, and to travel among the speedy images in a God-forsaken wasteland for the sake of dislocation itself.

Osman’s journey is from Istanbul to Anatolia. The book has invited him to take long journeys “that [seem] endless, the deluges of myth and legend, labyrinthine streets that vanish, sad trees, muddy rivers, gardens, countries” (*NL* 21)<sup>67</sup>. It is ironic that while he has imagined some dreamy and magical lands, what he encounters on his way is nothing but old buses, dusty cafes, and desolate people in poor towns. For the protagonist in search of authenticity and identity, the Turkish rural setting is full of Western artifacts like Marlboro, Coke, etc. According to Cryer, “what we witness on this quest is a Turkey poised uneasily between East and West. Every bus is a rattletrap nonetheless equipped

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<sup>65</sup> “Hızırdan Hızlı, Uçan Varan, Hakiki Varan, Ekspres Varan” (*YH* 58).

<sup>66</sup> “Nereden geldiğimi bilmeden, nerede olduğumu bilmeden, nereye gittiğimi bilmeden, ne kadar hızla, fark etmeden gidiyordum, günlerdir gidiyordum” (*YH* 49).

<sup>67</sup> “(...) Hiç bitmeyecek kadar uzun yolculuklar belirdi aklımda, hiç durmadan yağın efsanevi yağmurlar, hepsi birbirine açılan kayıp sokaklar, kederli ağaçlar, çamurlu ırmaklar, bahçeler, ülkeler” (*YH* 25).

with the latest movie videos featuring sex and violence, courtesy of the USA. Rest-stop food is fast food — Coca-Cola and an odd, porkless sandwich called a ‘hamburger’” (1997). These can be read within the framework of Lukácsian theory of commodity fetishism as a specific problem of the age of modern capitalism, the reifying effects of consumerism and the invasion of Western capital as Lukács formulated them in his book *History and Class Consciousness*. The abundance of the consumer products is especially manifest in Güdül town, where the State Monopolies, sport Toto dealer, OP shaving soap, and Micheal Jackson mimics are present. Ahmet Oktay designates the novel’s criticism on the negative effects of modernization attempts, maintaining that among the crucial problematics this multi-layered novel deals with there are the destruction of the environment and nature, and the fast-foodization of life (236). Almost all rural settings are the places where the brand new Western artifacts do not properly fit in. These awkwardly coexist with unique Turkish products, such as Arçelik fridges, Aygaz cookers, modern stoves, national lottery dealers, and even “the first Turkish-made gizmo that detects pork in any given product, (...) scissors that automatically clip newspaper coupons, a heater that lights whenever the owner steps into the house” (NL 87-8)<sup>68</sup>. These distinct Turkish artifacts are also abundant in the mansion of Dr.Fine - a figure who despises Western culture - thus he stands for the attempts of conservation of the old Turkish culture just like Rüya’s ex-husband in *The Black Book*. Yet, they gradually give way to their more modern counterparts; as Osman gets older and weary years after he starts his journeys, the buses and bus stops get more and more luxurious:

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<sup>68</sup> “ilk Türk domuz eti dedektörü, (...) gazeteden şipinişi kupon kesen makas, ev sahibi eve girer girmez kendi kendine yanan soba” (YH 87).

I has ascertained on these trips over the years that the buses gradually became larger and larger, that they took on an antiseptic smell inside, that the hydraulic systems installed in the doors automatically opened and closed them at the touch of a button, that the drivers had peeled off their faded and sweaty shirtsleeves and were now clad in pilot garb with epaulettes, that the tough-guy bus attendants were now so gentrified they shaved every day, that the rest stops were better lighted and fancier and yet they were monotonously all the same, that the highways were now wider and all were paved with asphalt. (NL 239)<sup>69</sup>

His journey goes hand in hand with the transformation –or rather westernization- of Turkey in time. Therefore, above all else, *The New Life* may be read as a sort of elegy for the lost culture (Kılıç 226).

It is evident that he sets off so as to be freed from the constraints of limits of time and space of his surroundings, to be everywhere and to be above time: “I was nowhere and everywhere; and that is why it seemed to me I was in the nonexistent center of the world” (NL 209)<sup>70</sup>. In this sense, buses not only refer to a perennial present time with their constant motion, but they are also beyond space, because the accident prone journey is on the precarious line between death and life. They also promise the sudden sight of the Angel at the moment of the accidents, whispering all the secrets regarding life, and existence. The novel-long expectation of the sight of the Angel refers to the high anticipation of spirituality. So, Osman’s decision to head for the scenes of accidents rather

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<sup>69</sup> “Otobüslerin ağır ağır irileştiğini ve içlerini antiseptik bir kokunun sardığını, kapılarının otomatik ve hidrolik sistemlerle donatıldığı için bir düğmeye dokunmakla sessizce açılıp kapandığını, şoförlerin kendi soluk ceketlerinden, terli gömleklerinden sıyrılıp omuzları apoletli pilot kıyafetlerine büründüğünü, kabadayı muavinlerin artık her gün tıraş olduklarını ve kibarlaştıklarını, mola yerlerinin daha ışıklı daha şenlikli, ama birörnek mekanlara dönüştüğünü, asfaltlanan yolların genişlediğini yıllar boyunca bu yolculuklarda saptıyordum” (YH 223).

<sup>70</sup> “Hiçbir yerdeydim ve her yerdeydim ve bu yüzden de, bana öyle geliyordu ki dünyanın varolmayan merkezindeydim”(YH 196).



than bus terminals may be explained with the shift of the quest from a specific destination within this world to the boundaries of life and death, where a transcendental home is possible: “(...) [Mehmet] had actually achieved the freedom to move toward his new life by virtue of a traffic accident. True: accidents are departures, and departures are accidents. The angel becomes visible at the magical moment of departure, and it is then that we perceive the real meaning of the turmoil called life. Only then can we ever go back home” (*NL* 75)<sup>71</sup>. So, the uprooted protagonist embodies the aim of all journeys as a transcendental homecoming. Furthermore, the unreal details in the dreamy scenes of the crash moments add a sort of fantastic sense to his journey. Wright argues that terrible road accidents throughout the book “act as tilts in the Cervantean quest” and maintains that “in the land of plenty, things must be smashed and broken” (23). However, it may be suggested that they are not only the tools of action, but they specifically enable the protagonist to stand on the threshold of an alternative life beyond this one. So, the timeless, moving buses where horrible deaths take place may be suggested as the very land the protagonist has long been seeking.

As Osman is not alone in this quest, *The New Life* may be read as the story of some young people who have perceived the world as limited and imperfect, and their desperate search for totality and perfection (Akten 308). Mustafa Ever argues that ‘the book’ promises a new paradise as an alternative of the old pathetic world, and leads the characters to find it out (1995: 288). So, Osman’s delusion to find the fictitious paradise within this world designates the basic problematic of the novel. It also marks his quest as an ultimately transcendental quest. His life is totally devastated because he was naïve and romantic enough to be led by a book, because he has believed in ‘a book’ in a land that is

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<sup>71</sup> “bana asıl kurtuluşun, yeni hayata doğru ilk çıkışın trafik kazasıyla gerçekleştiğini söylemişti (...) Doğru: Kazalar çıkıştır; çıkıştır kazalar (...) Melek o çıkış zamanındaki sihrin içinde görülür ve o zaman hayat dediğimiz kargaşanın asıl anlamı gözlerimizin önünde belirir. O zaman döneriz evimize (...)” (*YH* 76).

dominated by disbelief, or rather misbelief. Although he looks for the traces of heaven, every desperate move Osman takes serves to reinforce the defective, incomplete state of this world. His entire journey reminds us the impossibility of discovering a totality or an imminent meaning in modern times. That is, the more the hero attempts to find a transcendental home to take shelter, the more his “soul is imprisoned and destroyed in a world which is alien to its essence” (Lukács 102). It may be claimed that he will only exist in transcendental homelessness in such a world. Then, it is probably no surprise he concludes in the end that “after all, the world [is] at least as limitless, flawed, and incomplete” (NL 217)<sup>72</sup>.

“A hero is free when, proud as Lucifer, he has achieved perfection in himself and out of himself”, says Lukács (90). Although Osman searches freedom and totality in this limited world, at the final moment of crash he discovers that such emancipation is impossible. So, he will be trapped more and more by the limits of human experience<sup>73</sup>. Our protagonist devotes his whole life to a faint hope of emancipation from the constraints of this world by looking for ‘a new life’; and only towards the end does he start questioning his endeavor: “‘If life is a journey,’ I said, ‘I have been on the road for six months,’ (...) I had read a book, and I had lost my whole world. I had set out on the road to find a new world. What had I found?” (NL 93)<sup>74</sup>. On his way, he meets some voyagers like him who express the futility of their quests as follows: “ (...) we embarked on the

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<sup>72</sup> “Çünkü dünya da, (...) sınırsız, kusurlu ve eksikti” (YH 203).

<sup>73</sup> What Marshall Berman says about Foucault may be referred here. According to Berman, a lot of intellectuals are highly interested in Foucaultian philosophy because he presents a world-historical reason for the sense of passivity and desperation people were surrounded in 1970s (qtd in Ever 1995: 295). On the desperation of modernity, he argues that “it is no use trying to resist against the oppression and injustice of the modern world; since, even our dreams of freedom can merely imprison us by the chains more and more. However, once we understand it is absolutely pointless, we may at least feel at ease” (qtd in Ever 1995: 295, my translation).

<sup>74</sup> “‘Hayat, dedim, bir yolculuksa eğer, altı aydır ben de yoldayım (...) bir kitap okumuştum, bütün dünyamı kaybetmiştim, yenisini bulmak için yollara düşmüştüm! Ne buldum?’” (YH 92).

road, traveling from town to town, touching life's appearances, looking for what is hidden under its colors, searching for reality but not finding it" (NL 83)<sup>75</sup>. It is also possible to infer the loss of hope on the quest from the following conversation between the protagonist and Janan:

- "How long will this go on?"
- 'Do you mean the road?' (...) 'I don't know,' said Janan. 'But I want to go as far as it goes. Isn't that better than sitting around waiting?'
- (...) 'We will never get there,' I said" (NL 96)<sup>76</sup>.

So, the acceptance that they will never be able to reach anywhere refers to an inevitable disappointment as well as a sort of homelessness. In Lukácsian sense, the novel form is already "an expression of transcendental homelessness" (41). "There is a nostalgia of the soul when the longing for home is so violent that the soul must, with blind impetuosity, take the first path that seems to lead there; and so powerful is this yearning that it can always pursue its road to the end. For such as soul, every road leads to the essence – leads home –" (87). In the same way, Osman is ultimately alienated from his old familiar life, and being homeless and uprooted, he starts searching a more authentic "home" which is a glimpse of hope of ever finding the glittering world of fiction in the real world. The final scene is the moment when fiction and reality overlap, when he sees the Angel that has been the aim of all his journeys. Ironically, he grieves that he wants to go back home although he reaches the ultimate end, having found 'the home' (the appearance of the Angel, the moment of death) he has long sought for. Although it is clear that the 'new life'

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<sup>75</sup> "Yollara düştük, şehir şehir gezdik, hayatın yüzeylerine dokunduk, renklerin gizlediklerinin içine girdik, esas olanı aradık, ama bulamadık" (YH 84).

<sup>76</sup> "Daha nereye gider bu?" / 'yol mu?' (...) 'Bilmiyorum,' dedi Canan. 'Ama gideceği yere kadar gitmek istiyorum, bir de oturup beklemekten iyi değil mi?' / (...) 'Oraya hiç varamayacağız,' dedim ben" (YH 95).

he has been looking for is the very adventure of his entire journey, the end of the novel presents a significant criticism about the possibility of emancipation and individual salvation as well as the chances of a meaningful search in any modern odyssey. Hence, the modern hero is bound to be lost without any signs and clues in the chaotic unintelligible world; and it is inevitable not to hear the reflections of sad steps in a circular abyss of nothingness, which epitomizes the state of an individual in the wasteland of the God-forsaken modern world.

#### ***IV. DEGRADED QUEST***

“Je, est un autre”  
Rimbaud

Be[ing] yourself (...)  
It was like returning from a long journey  
crowded with adventure (...)  
like coming home (*BB* 184)<sup>77</sup>

### ***The Black Book:***

#### ***The Vain Search for Identity, Salvation and Meaning***

What confuses the reader in *The Black Book* must probably be the astounding variety of places, things and ways of the protagonist’s search. Setting off in order to look for his beloved Rüya in the first place, Galip gradually turns out to be tracing many other things and people such as Celal’s columns, the signs of the city, various pieces of writing, a secret prevailing all our lives, or the mystery of letters and faces. The spatial journey is always a background for the character’s quest for maturity, as in the Bildungsroman (Parla 1995: 265, 269). According to Lukács’s conception of quest, “every road leads to the essence – leads home – for to this soul its selfhood is its home” (87). Similarly, Galip’s quest becomes a search for selfhood or identity.

Although Pamuk regards the novel as a “newfangled plaything”, “which is the greatest invention of Western culture” and claims that he still has not “quite figured out how to inhabit this foreign toy”, the fundamental relations of his novels with the Western

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<sup>77</sup> “kendi[n] olabilmek, yıllar süren uzun ve maceralı bir yolculuktan sonra yolcunun kendi evine dönmesine benziyor” (*KK* 182).

novel form is incontestable (NL 243)<sup>78</sup>. Lukács states in *The Theory of the Novel* that the novel already “tells of the adventure of interiority: the content of the novel is the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and by proving itself, to find its own essence” (89). So, all of Galip’s adventures are in fact for the sake of making a brave new person out of his old identity. However, will he be able to realize his selfhood with this existential quest or is it a degraded quest that would end up with a total failure?

In Galip’s quest, the concept of love plays a fundamental part, as it devastates his entire life. Because *The Black Book* may well be read as a book about unfulfilled love, it is then no surprise that in his quest for Rüyâ, Galip keeps the famous story of *Hüsn-ü Aşk* (*Beauty and Love*) in mind. Influenced greatly by the beautiful descriptions of love in Sheikh Galip’s book, Galip the child often wished that he could be the hero. Thus, Galip may be repeating the perilous journey of Love, as articulated below:

The girl’s name was beauty, the boy’s name was Love; born on the same day, they had taken their lessons from the same teacher, wandered along the edges of the same pool, and fallen in love. Years later, when the boy asked for the girl’s hand, the elders set him a task: If he wished to marry Beauty, he was to travel to the land of the Hearts and return with a certain alchemical formula. So the boy set out on his journey, which was long and arduous: he fell down a well and enslaved by a painted witch; the thousands of faces and images he found swirling inside a second well reduced him to a strange drunkenness; he became infatuated with the daughter of the emperor of China, because he looked like his true love; he climbed out of the wells to be locked in castles; he followed and was followed; he struggled through bitter

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<sup>78</sup> “roman denen modern oyuncak”, “Batı medeniyetinin bu en büyük buluşu”, “bu yabancı oyuncuğun içinde nasıl gezineceğimi hala bir türlü çıkaramadığım için” (YH 227).

winters, traveled great distances, seizing upon every sign and clue he found along the way; he immersed himself in the mystery of letters; he listened to other people's stories and told others his own. (BB 369)<sup>79</sup>

As Sheikh Galip's namesake, our protagonist Galip goes through almost the same adventures and faces the same perils along the way. Celal's apartment block which is also called 'the land of the Hearts' stands for the land of the Hearts that Love has to travel. In this sense, it may make sense to assert that the alchemical formula in the original story that would turn some materials into gold becomes a sort of prescription that turns a collection of notes and photos into good writing. The cases of following and being followed (following Rüya / being followed by an Eye), the images and faces in a well (mannequins in the underground workshop), reading all signs and clues along the way (from the writings on the plastic bags to the curious expressions on the dwellers' faces), being preoccupied with the mystery of letters (the chapters on Hurufism), and finally listening and telling stories (in the bar in the chapter "Love Stories on a Snowy Evening"), all these indicate the parallelism between *Hüsn-ü Aşk* and *The Black Book*.

The quest in *Hüsn-ü Aşk* is quite similar to chivalric quests in the medieval ages in Europe. In order to be worthy of his beloved, the lover has to prove himself worthy of some adventures. The course Galip's adventures take leads to narrativity. Galip has to blend Celal's old writings and the remnants of his memory into a successful piece of writing so as to be worthy of Rüya. A decent but a dull husband, he has believed in an ordinary world with ordinary people unlike Rüya who always dreamed of a world full of

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<sup>79</sup> "Bir çöl kıyısında yaşayan kızla oğlan, Hüsn ile Aşk, aynı gece doğmuşlar, aynı hocadan ders almışlar, aynı havuzun kenarında gezinmişler ve birbirlerine aşık olmuşlar. Yıllar sonra, oğlan kızını istediğinde kabile büyükleri oğlandan Kalpler Ülkesi'ne gidip oradaki kimya'yı getirmesini şart koşmuşlar. Yola çıkan oğlan, ne dertlerle karşılaşmış: Bir kuyuya düşüp boyalı cadının esiri olmuş, bir başka kuyuda gördüğü binlerce suretten ve surattan sarhoş olmuş, sevgilisine benziyor diye Çin padişahının kızına kapılmış, kuyulardan çıkmış, kalelere hapsedilmiş, takip edilmiş, takip etmiş, kışla boğuşmuş, yollar almış, izler, işaretler peşinden gitmiş, harflerin sırrına gömülmüş ve hikayeler anlatmış, hikayeler dinlemiş" (KK 355).



heroes and stories in the books. Galip, satisfied with a common marriage, fails to perceive that his wife has indeed been fantasizing other lives. Yet, long after the loss of his wife, he writes as follows: “I could never convince you that I believed in a world without heroes (...) I could never convince you to be content with an ordinary life” (BB 337)<sup>80</sup>. Obviously Galip has changed from a dull husband into a woeful traveler and desperate lover: “I was the sad resourceful hero of the book you are reading; I was the traveler who, with his guide, went slipping around the marble stones, giant columns, and black rocks among the fretful souls banished to the underground” (BB 335)<sup>81</sup>.

As opposed to Osman who champions the present time with Janan in their bus journeys and in Dr. Nice’s house, Galip is a character whose mind constantly wanders in the labyrinths of past memories. The end of both novels also marks nostalgia for the past, for brief happy moments with their beloved. Aside from the common meaning of a deep and bittersweet longing for and dwelling in the past, the term nostalgia originally comes from Greek *nostos* "homeward journey, return home" and *algos* "pain". So, the protagonist’s referring to his memories in his journey makes sense here. Accordingly, the first thing Galip applies in his nostalgic search would be the depths of his memory, as the frequent flashbacks throughout the novel suggest. Foreshadowing all Galip’s quest, the old columnist in *Milliyet* states as follows: “When he looks at these clues, this man sees his own past (...) [the answer of Rya’s whereabouts] reside somewhere in his history” (BB 101)<sup>82</sup>. So, while wandering in the devastated city and grieving for the long lost

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<sup>80</sup> “Hiçbir zaman inandıramadım seni kahramansız bir dnyaya neden inandıđıma. (...) Hiçbir zaman inandıramadım seni sıradan bir hayata razı olman gerektiđine” (KK 326).

<sup>81</sup> “Okuduđun kitaptaki becerikli ve kederli kahraman bendim; mermer tařlar, iri stunlar ve karanlık kayalar arasından rehberimle birlikte yeraltındaki kıpır kıpr hayatın mahkumlarına kořan ve yıldızlarla kaplı yedi kat gđn merdivenlerinden çıkan yolcu bendim” (KK 325).

<sup>82</sup> “gittiđi her yerde karısıyla kendi geçmiřinin izlerine rastladıkça, karısının kaçtıđı yerin (...), kendi geçmiřinde bir yerde olması gerektiđini dřnyormuř” (KK 103).

grandeur of the previous ages of Constantinople (Istanbul 107), the protagonist of *The Black Book*, in fact, undergoes a nostalgic journey into his own personal history. In this sense, not only the specific places (Alâaddin's shop, many places in Nişantaşı, their apartment block etc.), but also the specific objects related to his past are carefully interrogated by Galip. Pamuk confirms the significance of these objects as he later comments on *The Black Book*:

The things that happen in *The Black Book* are pulled out from the dark corners of memory and arranged together. The broken arm of an old and used doll means nothing by itself; its footprint in memory is what counts. Through that point I could walk into a garden and point to the reader the things I want to show them. Just like a second-hand dealer's store, memory full of stuff which evoke a sense of all times, is an indispensable treasure for every writer who wants to avoid a 'horizontal' storyline. (*The Other Colors* 140, my translation)<sup>83</sup>

Galip regards his own memory as the only possible 'home' to take shelter, and the objects are the signposts that will lead him to that mnemonic dwelling. However, he finds it difficult to get there for "every time [he] tried to recover that meaning, every time [he] ventured into that spider-infested labyrinth of memory, [he] got lost" (*BB* 194)<sup>84</sup>. Even when he takes a journey to the underworld, that journey remains a poor parody of the epic descent. There, among Bedri Usta's mannequins, Galip is just another mannequin. Totally

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<sup>83</sup> "Kara Kitap'ta 'olup bitenler' hafızanın karanlık köşelerinden bir bir çıkartılıp yan yana getiriliyor. Eski ve kırık bir oyuncak bebeğin kolu, kendi başına hiçbir şey değildir; onun hafızamızda tutmuş olduğu yerdir ilginç olan. O noktadan bir bahçeye girebilir ve okuyucuya göstermek istediğim şeyleri keyifle işaret edebilirim. Tıpkı bir eskici dükkanında olduğu gibi, bütün zamanları çağrıştıran eşyalarla kıpır kıpır dolu olduğu için hafıza 'dümdüz' bir hikayeden kaçınmak isteyen her yazar için vazgeçilmez bir hazinedir" (*Öteki Renkler* 140).

<sup>84</sup> "Bu anlamı yeniden bulmaya her kalkıştı[ğ]ında, hafıza[sı]nın örümcekli dehlizlerine her girişinde kaybol[ur]" (*KK* 192).

lost among the meaningless signs, the mannequins are trapped in that twilight region of oblivion underground like Galip.

[A]s they wandered about the blind alleys of their minds, searching in vain for a way back, the key to their new life fell into the bottomless well of their memories; knowing it was lost to them forever, they felt the helpless pain known only by those who have lost their homes, their countries, their past, their history. The pain they felt at being lost and far from home was so intense, and so hard to bear, that their only hope was to stop trying to remember the secret, the lost meaning they'd come here to seek, and, instead, hand themselves over to God, to wait in patient silence for the hour of eternity. (*BB* 194)<sup>85</sup>

The negotiation and the subsequent exchange of identities between Galip and Celal is carried out in the scopic confrontation of the master (Celal) and the novice (Galip) represented by the metaphor of the pursuing eye. Even in the very beginning of his journey, Galip feels that he has been followed by Celal's eye on the photo in the newspaper wrap: "I understand you perfectly, the picture told him. I'm watching your every move! Galip put his thumb over the picture, hoping to save himself from this eye that could read his soul, but throughout that long bus journey he still felt its presence and its all-seeing gaze" (*BB* 67)<sup>86</sup>. The idea of being gazed and traced has got to do with a sort of self-consciousness in the sense that it is Galip himself who invites this gaze by staring

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<sup>85</sup> " (...) akıllarının kör karanlık sokaklarında dönüş yolunu bulamadıkları için, hafızalarının dipsiz kuyusuna düşmüş yeni hayatın anahtarını hiçbir zaman bulamadıkları için evlerini, yurtlarını, geçmişlerini, tarihlerini kaybeden o çaresiz acılarına kapılıyorlardı. Bu evden uzak kalma, yolunu kaybetme acısı öyle şiddetli, öyle dayanılmazdı ki, artık kayıp anlamı, ya da esrarı, hatırlamaya bile kalkmadan yalnızca sabretmek, sessizce, sonsuzluk zamanının dolmasını tevekkülle beklemek en iyisiydi" (*KK* 192).

<sup>86</sup> " 'Seni biliyorum ve hep gözetliyorum' diyen bir bakışla bakıyordu Celal. Galip, ruhunu okuyan bu 'göz'ün üzerine parmağını koydu, ama varlığını, uzun otobüs yolculuğu boyunca sanki parmağının altında da hep hissetti" (*KK* 72).

at the photo<sup>87</sup>. Caught up at each end of the gaze, the gazer and the gazed are positioned at an equal footing, thereby blurring the line that separates them from each other. This blurring of identities has been already experienced by Celal as we learn from his column called “The Eye”. It is now Galip’s turn to realize that experience which is the prerequisite of his initiation into writing and adopt the master’s voice as the shift from the first person narration of Celal to the third person narration of Galip indicates.

Furthermore, guiding Celal with its “warm glow”, the eye opens new doors through which he soon “[finds] [him]self falling into a new world” (*BB* 115)<sup>88</sup>. In this sense, the ‘all-knowing’, ‘all-seeing’ illuminating eye may be related to the surging and guiding light of ‘the book’ in *The New Life*<sup>89</sup>. Just as the visions Celal sees under the ‘eye’, the guidance of the ‘eye’ “follow[s] [him] on the journey, one that seem[s] to appear in the least expected places only to disappear, making itself sought all the more because it [is] so elusive” (*NL* 5)<sup>90</sup>.

Aside from offering an identity exchange through a scopic encounter, ‘the eye’ promises a vision of a realm beyond. “I longed to become that gaze. I longed to exist in a world beheld by that gaze. I wanted it so much that I almost believed in my existence in that world”, says the protagonist of *The New Life* (5, 6)<sup>91</sup>. While the gaze here creates a new world of desire, in *The Black Book*, Celal is “enchanted by the brilliant landscape the

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<sup>87</sup> In Lacanian sense, gaze always objectifies the gazer, so the intention of our character is not to see, but to be seen.

<sup>88</sup> “(...) ben de düşüncenin açtığı kapıdan (...) yeni bir aleme girdim” (*KK* 116).

<sup>89</sup> We often see the book “gazing” at the protagonist, rather than “being gazed”, and it makes Osman a passive object. Moreover, both the book and the eye serve as a mirror, and the characters may be said to ‘see themselves seeing themselves’ in the sense of Lacan.

<sup>90</sup> “Bu yolculukta benim hep izleyen, en olmadık yerde karşıma çıkıverecekmiş gibi yapan, sonra kaybolan, kaybolduğu için de kendini aratan bir bakış gördüm” (*YH* 9-10).

<sup>91</sup> “Ben o bakış olabilmek isterdim. O bakışın gördüğü dünyada olmak isterdim. O kadar çok istedim ki bunları, o dünyada yaşadığıma inanasım geldi” (*YH* 10).

eye spread before [him]” (*BB* 117)<sup>92</sup>. Since ‘the eye’ has probably emerged out of their imagination (Celal has created the eye; it is Osman who has seen it in the book), so is this metaphysical world. This may be read as a cry for help to escape from the harsh reality of the turbulent world, which has been abandoned by God. According to Foucault “we experience finitude and being. In its dark domain, we now encounter the absence of God, our death, limits and their transgression” (51). Relating it to the historico-philosophical conditioning of the novel in Lukácsian sense, we may assert that the characters’ wish betrays their longing for totality in a God-forsaken world. In this sense, the eye may be replacing the absent gaze of a watching, protecting, and judging God.

The melancholy of the adult state arises from our dual, conflicting experience that, on the one hand, our absolute, youthful confidence in an inner voice has diminished or died, and, on the other hand, that the outside world to which we now devote ourselves in our desire to learn its ways and dominate it will never speak to us in a voice that will clearly tell us our way and determine our goal. The heroes of youth are guided by the gods: whether what awaits them at the end of the road are the embers of annihilation or the joys of success, or both at once, they never walk alone, they are always led. Hence the deep certainty with which they proceed: they may weep and mourn, forsaken by everyone, on a desert island, they may stumble to the very gates of hell in a desperate blindness, yet an atmosphere of security always surrounds them; a god always plots the hero’s paths and always walks ahead of him. (Lukács 86)

Still, Pamuk’s characters do not relinquish the hope of self-realization, or self-actualization (Brendemoen 3). Not only Galip, but also Celal repeats the same desire: “I

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<sup>92</sup> “ ‘Göz’ ün bana sunduğu pırıl pırıl manzaradan hoşnuttum” (*KK* 117).

must be myself, I said over and over. I must forget these people buzzing inside my head, I must forget their voices, their smells, their demands, their love, their hate, and be myself” (BB 181)<sup>93</sup>. Underlining the impossibility of achieving self-fulfillment in society where ‘to be is to be somebody else’, he continues as follows: “I must be myself, because if I failed to be myself, I became the person they wanted me to be, and I can’t bear the person they want me to be; if I had to be that insufferable person, I’d rather be nothing at all” (BB 181)<sup>94</sup>.

The conformism required by living in society leads the characters to different ways of being, one of which is to imitate somebody else<sup>95</sup>. Thus, in *The Black Book*, we glimpse at the fragmented identities of Galip’s self-quest. Throughout the novel, Pamuk talks about the mannequins that imitate Turkish citizens, the Turkish movie stars who try to be like their foreign counterparts, the prostitutes mimicking film stars, the miserable who dream to be somebody else and Ottoman sultans who wander incognito. That is, the wish to be somebody else is almost an inescapable fate in our country, doubtless a consequence of Westernization. Probably the most curious passages in the book is “The Story of the Crown Prince”, in which the self-quest of an Ottoman prince is narrated. This story has close parallels to Galip’s story. Trying to find a way to realize his own identity, the prince chooses seclusion and shuts himself up in a bare place, with his scribe as his sole company. He attempts to forget all the authors and books he has read to go back to his pure, untainted, unique state of mind, because he has ultimately believed ““all peoples

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<sup>93</sup> “Kendim olmalıyım, diye tekrarlıyordum, onlara hiç aldırmadan onların seslerine, kokularına, isteklerine, sevgilerine ve nefretlerine aldırmadan kendim olmalıyım ben” (KK 180).

<sup>94</sup> “Kendim olmalıyım diye tekrarlıyordum, çünkü kendim olmazsam onların olmamı istedikleri biri oluyorum ve onların olmamı istedikleri o insana hiç katlanamıyorum ve onların olmamı istedikleri o dayanılmaz kişi olacağıma hiçbir şey olmayayım ya da hiç olmayayım daha iyi, diye düşünüyorum (...)” (KK 180).

<sup>95</sup> Actually, this embodies a lot of problematic of postmodern fiction, which marks the disruption of man-centered view of the world to give way to fragmented and non-unique subjectivity. According to humanism, though, “man is at the centre of meaning and action; the world is oriented around the individual; [and] each individual is different, each possesses a unique subjectivity” (Rice and Waugh 123).

who are unable to be themselves, all civilizations that imitate other civilizations, all those nations who find happiness in other people's stories' were doomed to be crushed, destroyed, and forgotten" (BB 429)<sup>96</sup>. His personal singularist challenge undoubtedly refers to the vital political and social issues of late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic.

Although Galip's "intoxicating existential quest" – as Eder calls it – (1994) is quite in parallel to the prince's, the so-called moments of his fulfillment ironically overlaps with the moments when he perfectly imitates Celal<sup>97</sup>. Unlike the gradual ambiguity of identities within the context of combinations of different cultures, the identity crisis and imitation here are totally pointless, thus pathetic. In this sense, Galip is by no means different from the other pitiable mimics in the book such as Belkis who has emulated Rüyâ and Belkis's husband who has pretended to be Galip. Bill Marx claims that "Pamuk shares with Borges what Harold Bloom in *The Western Canon* calls 'a rueful consistency': 'in the labyrinth of his universe we are confronted by our images in the mirror, not just of nature but also of the self'" (qtd in Marx: 1994). Then, it is no coincidence that the protagonist is confronted with various "I"s throughout the book (Parla: 1991, 450). Among many possibilities of identification, however, Celal clearly stands out: "By mirroring Jelal, Galip assimilates him until it is impossible to tell the difference between the lawyer and the writer, the reality and the dream" (Marx: 1994). So, previously only a *means* to find Rüyâ, Celal then becomes an *end* in the protagonist's journey. Alienated from everything due to an existential crisis and problematizing his

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<sup>96</sup> "Kendileri olamayan bütün kavimler, bir ötekini taklit eden bütün uygarlıklar, başkalarının hikayeleriyle mutlu olabilen tüm milletler' yıkılmaya, yok olmaya, unutulmaya mahkumdular çünkü" (KK 412).

<sup>97</sup> Pamuk has formerly employed the *Doppelgänger* in his previous novel *The White Castle*. Among the incessant inquires of the Hoja that goes as "why am I what I am", the swapping of identities between a Venetian slave and its Turkish counterpart, Hoja takes place.

prior identity, Galip is required to undergo a process of identification with *the other*, namely with Celal<sup>98</sup>. Interestingly, the first encounter with his shadow takes place in the mannequin workshop, when Galip stares at the columnist's even 'more authentic' mannequin: "It's thanks to you I can't be myself! he felt like saying. It's because of you that I believed all those stories that turned me into you" (BB 190)<sup>99</sup>. The stance of him towards his shadow is evident in the following quotation: "Galip loved and feared this man: He wanted to be in Celal's place and also to escape him; he wanted to find him and he wanted to forget him" (BB 190)<sup>100</sup>.

Looking desperately for "his other, the double who might move him and light up his heart, the mirror who might reflect his face and his very soul", Rumi searches Shams, (BB 255)<sup>101</sup> asking "how much longer do I seek you, house by house, door to door? / how much longer, corner to corner, street by street" (qtd in BB 251)<sup>102</sup>. Rumi's story is parallel to Galip's not only in the futility of the quest but also in his exploration of his self. Even though Rumi knows in advance that he will never be able to find Shams who is most probably dead, he goes on looking for him for the search has now become self-search. In the end, however, he concludes that he is indeed 'his other', marking the pointlessness of

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<sup>98</sup> This relationship may well be interpreted within the context of psychoanalytic connotations, as well. Since the reader can in no way perceive Celal objectively, his embodiment may be referred to Galip's *shadow* in Jungian sense. *The shadow* is the dark self that arises from the self to stand for everything that opposes the self, and it includes both creativity and emancipation.

<sup>99</sup> "Senin yüzünden kendim olamadım hiç' demek gelir Galip'in içinden, 'senin yüzünden beni sen yapan bütün o hikayelere inandım'" (KK 188).

<sup>100</sup> "Onu seviyordu ve ondan korkuyordu: Celal'in yerinde olmak istiyor ve ondan kaçıyor: Onu arıyordu ve unutmak istiyordu" (KK 188).

<sup>101</sup> "Mevlâna bütün hayatı boyunca kendisini harekete geçirecek, kendisini alevlendirecek bir 'öteki'ni, kendi yüzünü ve ruhunu yansıtacak bir aynayı aramıştı" (KK 250).

<sup>102</sup> "Ne kadar zaman arayacağım seni ev ev, kapı kapı? / Ne kadar zaman köşeden köşeye, sokak sokak?" Mevlâna (KK 246).



any further quest. It is also the case with another *sufi* tale mentioned in the novel from *Mantik-ut-tayr*, "The Conference of the Birds". According to the story, thirty birds have set off to find a bird called Simurgh, and after a long, perilous journey, what the birds find is a mirror which reflects themselves. The word "Simurg" means thirty birds, and so all the time they were only looking for themselves. Though Galip likewise goes through a process of merging with Celal, he will not experience salvation as in these Oriental tales, but rather an ultimate dissolution of his identity. Therefore, "the secular Western hero of the text" goes on journeys "not to find his identity but ultimately to *lose* it" (Almond 84), or rather to build it again through a process of self-in-becoming.

Since every journey Galip takes through the depths of his soul is in and through being someone else, specifically being Celal, his self-fulfillment is to be realized not only by appropriating the columnist's memory to perceive life in the same way, but also by being able to write just like him. Actually, it would not be wrong to claim that Galip's entire quest is based on the apprentice-writer's search for integration with the master-writer, Celal (Parla: 1991, 450). Having looked at hundreds of portraits in Celal's flat, Galip stares at his own face in the mirror trying to *make sense* of it. Only then does the secret slowly unfold and he manages to read his own face with a truly different perspective. This 'moment of terror' coincides with the time when he is fully conscious that he can write like Celal. This intense moment of awareness and meaning is also the climax of the novel as it seems to end the continuous yearning for being oneself by negating the novel-long idea of the impossibility of the attainment of self-realization. A sort of experience of creativity and inspiration is crystallized at this instant of horror when he looks at his face in the mirror. Like every moment of true creativity, this one is also painful; for, "drenched in terror, hardly able to breathe, longing to put a great distance between himself and the dark mirror, with cold beads of sweat forming on his forehead",

Galip “wanted to cry but no tears came; he was still having trouble breathing; a moan of pain rose unwilling from his throat” (BB 324)<sup>103</sup>. It is also interesting that then he endeavors to look at the darkness of the air-shaft, to the depths of this dream-like abyss of dust, garbage and hopelessness among the apartment blocks. So, the emergence of his creativity goes hand in hand with his discovery of the darkness within himself, for we have previously asserted that the air shaft also stands for the depths of the memory, the subconscious. Attributing the darkness to himself, as if merging with his shadow, he ultimately realizes the utopia of being Celal: “If you want to turn your world upside down, all you have to do is somehow convince yourself you might be someone else” (BB 327)<sup>104</sup>. What may be argued here, however, is that despite the seeming triumph of personal salvation in the case of Galip, it is hard to ignore the fact that here self-fulfillment is bound to exist in and through being someone else. There is indeed a vague line between finding and losing, and the moment Galip thinks he has found his own self is indeed the demise of his real self over imitation. According to Brendemoen, “on the whole, the ‘message’ ‘one cannot become oneself unless one becomes somebody else’ is perhaps so contradictory that it should be interpreted to the effect that searching for oneself is actually futile because ‘the pure self’ is liberated from all exterior influence simply cannot be found” (4). Yet, the constant struggle to find it reveals the inevitable melancholy of the individuals’ degraded quests, which will only highlight the limitations of the modern world. Thus, “the inherent sadness in the book is not due to defeat -the melancholic loss of identity (whether personal or national)-, but rather because of “the impossibility of having

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<sup>103</sup> “ ‘Dehşet’in içine girdikten sonra, nefes almakta güçlük çekerken, karanlıkta bıraktığı aynadan uzaklaşmak isterken, alnında soğuk ter damlacıkları birikirken (...) Ağlamak istiyormuş da ağlayamıyormuş, nefes almakta güçlük çekiyormuş gibiydi; boğazından denetleyemediği bir acı inleyişi çıktı” (KK 314).

<sup>104</sup> "Dünyanın tepeden tırnağa değiştiğine inanıvermesi için insanın, kendisinin bir başka biri olduğunu anlayıvermesi demek ki yetiyormuş" (KK 318).

an authentic identity at all” (Almond 82). Galip’s delusion here is a symbol of not merely modern man’s death as a subject, but rather of nonexistence of the subject positions of any kind.

One way out of this dilemma of the ever-elusive selfhood (the more one tries to approach it, the more it distances itself) is becoming a writer – or so Galip believes. Actually, the relations of his journey with that of writing are hinted from the very beginning when he visits the old column writer in *Milliyet*. The columnist, probably because he is jealous, argues that anyone can write like Celal, urging Galip to tell him a story. Galip starts narrating a story that is the very story of his own quest journey. What is more, the moment he begins enunciating a story coincides with the moment he starts his journey. The old writer guides him with clues regarding the form, saying “the memory trick: adorn your stories with bitter sweet recollections of a man-about-town. Style: adorn your memories in a pretentious language, adding clues that point to a void” (102)<sup>105</sup>. So, the columnist in fact foreshadows not only how Galip’s journey will turn out but also how he will write his own story.

Galip has always been a devotee of Celal’s columns, and the shift from the reader position to the writer position is highly significant, because it determines the nature of the quest in the novel. Like many a metafictional novel in the post-modern vein, Galip’s quest makes the novel we are reading. One of the most over laden and recurrent symbols of the book, the green ballpoint pen stands for writing and creativity as the color ‘green’ hints. The pen accompanies Galip in his quest, and it is insistently present in many details in the book: For instance, Rya writes her departure note with the green ball point pen; Celal jots down the advice on how to be a good columnist and he edits his columns with it;

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<sup>105</sup> “Hatıralar: Şehir adamın tatlı anılarıyla kaynaşsın. Üslup: Süsl sözlerin içine gömlen bu anılardaki ipuçları boşluęa işaret etsin” (KK 103).

Rüya's ex-husband's maps showing conspiracy theories as well as Celal's maps of Damascus and Cairo are marked with the green pen. Scraping the moss off the glass of the car under the wreckage in the Bosphorus when it dries up, this very pen reveals the mystery of our lives just like it scrapes the ambiguity off the mossy windows. It is not a coincidence that among the three identical green pens owned by Celal, Rüya and Galip, the one that belongs to Galip gets lost. What is more, he has dropped it into the waters of the Bosphorus on a boat tour. After having learned where exactly he has dropped the pen in the Bosphorus, Celal's comment is interesting: "At least we know where it is, so it is not lost" (*BB* 112)<sup>106</sup>. If the green ball point pen is the symbol of writing, then the pen Galip has lost signifies his lack of creativity which he must acquire with hard labor. As Celal says, however, creativity is hiding somewhere – buried in the collective and individual unconscious. How it will emerge out of depths to the surface to turn into writing is the underlying question of the entire text. That is, Galip is to penetrate into the depths of his unconscious before he can become a real artist.

It is also possible to attribute the dominating melancholic mood of the novel to the pains of an amateur writer striving to create<sup>107</sup>. Galip not only takes advantage of the poetical inspiration due to the melancholy of her loss in his quest, he also has to lose Rüya to find her again as creativity. Thus, Galip devotes himself to stories, which would later become the *raison d'être* of his existence:

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<sup>106</sup> "En azından nerde olduğunu biliyoruz, kaybolmuş sayılmaz" (*KK* 115).

<sup>107</sup> The writer's block because of the lack of inspiration and the sad expectation periods for it may be likened to Pamuk's another 'artist' hero, namely Ka in his famous novel *Snow*. Traveling to the mysterious east of Turkey, to a real 'heart of darkness', the poet Ka endeavors to get rid of the sorrow that has prevailed all his life. In this secluded and alien land, Ka will go through the sorrows of unrequited love, the transcendental secrets of life and existence, and above all, the ebbs and flows of the reflections of inspiration. While the idea of God and the intensity of his love for Ipek are the sources of inspiration for the poet, what inspires Galip is Rüya as a metaphysical entity.

It was stories that kept him going, and he found these stories by feeling his way through the darkness, searching for familiar objects like a blind man. He was still on his feet because, after three days of wandering bereft through the streets of the city, he had been able to construct a story out of all the [signs] he had passed along the way. He was sure it was the same for all these other faces he could see around him: It was stories that kept them going. (*BB* 221)<sup>108</sup>

The idea of telling stories to survive refers to the reign of writing in a world where everything is shaky, where no subject positions are possible, and where “the outside world gives us no clues” (Lukács 88). In the chapter “Love Stories on a Snowy Evening”<sup>109</sup>, people gather in a bar to tell stories, and they exist only as long as their stories go on. In a way, running out of stories marks the death of individuals. Probably Celal dies not merely because his function as a literary father to give birth to the amateur writer – to Galip – ends, but also because he has lost his memory, thus his ability to write further (Parla: 1991, 450). His death is both eminent -since we can clearly see his corpse on the street as opposed to Rüya’s dead body- and allegorical –there is green ink all over his dead body rather than blood. So, it may be said that what killed him is the metaphorical bullet of his incapability to write because of the drying up of his memory<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> “Hikayelerdi kendisini ayakta tutan, bir körün el yordamıyla bulup tanıdığı nesnelere gibi sezgileriyle bulup çıkardığı hikayeler. Üç gündür şehirde yüzeyleme burnunu sürte sürte dolaşırken işaretlerden bir hikaye kurabildiği için ayakta kalabilmişti. Çevresindeki dünyanın ve insanların da hikayeler yüzünden ayakta durabildiğinden hiç kuşkusu yoktu” (*KK* 219).

<sup>109</sup> “Karlı Gecenin Aşk Hikayeleri”

<sup>110</sup> The death of Rüya, on the other hand, may well be referred to the myth of Orpheus. According to the myth, Orpheus descends to the underworld in order to bring her dead wife back from the land of death. The only way to get her is to bring her back without *looking at her*. But, due to a male impatience, when Orpheus turns around to look at Eurydice, she disappears for good since he has attempted to behold the forbidden area of meaning. “[F]or him, Eurydice is the limit of what art can attain; concealed behind a name and covered by a veil, she is profoundly dark point towards which art, desire, death, and the night all seem to lead” (Blanchot 99). Being both a taboo and a means of inspiration just like Eurydice, the world Rüya belongs to is the one with the mystery; it the area of disintegration that cannot be articulated: “Rüya was in this other world. Galip stood on its threshold” (*BB* 298)<sup>110</sup>. Our protagonist will be able to enter this world, of which he stands at the threshold, only when he

Going through a novel long soul journey to encounter and compromise with his dark self, Galip struggles to narrate more and more. In Eder's words, "[Galip] wants above all to have the power that Jelal wields: to control the universe by writing about it" (1994). I have stated that the moment he declares "I am myself" is actually the very moment he truly merges with the other. In the same way, the moment he is able to write with ease overlaps the moment when he is ultimately able to imitate Celal's writing, when he writes like Celal. So, Pamuk implies that imitation includes both the acquisition of identity by mimicry and the imitation of other artists' writing<sup>111</sup>. Therefore, suggested as the only reality to cling to, writing is far from being authentic and unique, as well. As a matter of fact, although it is Galip who writes the novel *The Black Book*, in his quest for 'authenticity', all his endeavors end up with a total futility. He fails in realizing an 'authentic' selfhood, as well as in becoming an 'authentic' writer; for, the whole quest is marked with the impossibility of authenticity and salvation.

I believe that the search for an absolute meaning may be suggested as the real problematic of *The Black Book*; yet, as Lukács says, "the profound and intensive irradiation of a man by his life's meaning is unattainable" (80). The constant hope of making sense, thus, is totally unrealized. The quest journey here is ironically neither like the Homeric nor the chivalric quests at all; that is, it is nothing but a continuous dislocation, moving around and drawing circles both literally and metaphorically. Trying to reach a spiritual 'home' in vain, Galip is as unguided as any modern hero<sup>112</sup>. So, our

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gazes Rūya to lose her forever, reminding Orpheus's myth. He, however, has to sacrifice Rūya in order to create the work of art, as "one cannot create a work unless the enormous experience of the depths (...) is not pursued for its own sake" (Blanchot 99).

<sup>111</sup> In post-modernist sense, not only the pure self exterior of influences is unattainable, but this is also true for the texts which are bound to be copies in a crazy world of intertextuality.

<sup>112</sup> According to Lukács, "Achilles or Odysseus, Dante or Arjuna – precisely because they are guided along their paths by gods- realize that if they lacked this guidance, if they were without divine help, they would be powerless and helpless in the face of mighty enemies" (98).

protagonist embodies the fate of the modern man who is doomed to be lost in a quest degraded by the worldliness of existence.

“You are on the road to that realm,  
but you are turning inwards” (NL 68)<sup>113</sup>

### ***The New Life:***

**“No matter where! As long as it's out of the world!”<sup>114</sup>**

After the seemingly endless and tedious coach journeys of the protagonist in *The New Life*, through the land of degeneration, it is evident that what he is searching for is not to be found within the boundaries of this world. The thing he looks for in the threshold between life and death, in the continuous action on the buses, and particularly in-between the lines of a magical ‘life changing’ book is nothing but his own lost soul. He is in search of the traits of a transcendental home in this world; yet, “the inability of the outside world, which is a stranger to ideals and an enemy of interiority” (Lukács 79), signifies a clash that would reduce his entire quest to absurdity. *The New Life* is basically the novel of an inner journey; it is also a circular journey of failed maturation. Besides, the journey in the book refers to a timeless and spaceless realm, to the inner depths of the psyche: “There was nothing there, in that distant place. The beginning and the end of our journey was wherever we happened to be”, says the protagonist (NL 173)<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> “O ülkeye giderken kendine dönersin” (YH 70).

<sup>114</sup> qtd in “Anywhere Out of the World”, Baudelaire.

<sup>115</sup> “Ötede, uzakta bir yerde hiçbir şey yoktu. Yolculuğumuzun başı da sonu da biz neredeysek orasıydı” (YH 163).



At the outset, Osman's journey is a fictional one. Clearly, the voyage that starts with reading the book is first and foremost a reading journey, and once again, only the ones who are able to 'read' texts are worthy of so-called heroic journeys. Reading and writing go along hand in hand again, and we encounter the transformation of a reader to a writer, which is a typical Pamuk motif. In the beginning, the protagonist ardently begins copying the book. It is also the case with Mehmet who makes a career of re-writing the same book with a meticulous eagerness. Neither, however, could create anything unique since they only copy the already written text<sup>116</sup>. "You are on the road to that realm, but you are turning inwards. You think you are reading the book, yet you are rewriting it", says Janan (*NL* 68)<sup>117</sup>. That is, the journey is an inner one and both Osman's journey and the book – it would probably not be wrong to claim both are indeed one – are shaped by his wandering in the text and in space. Accordingly, Ahmet Oktay alleges that "above all else, the quest is in the name of how *The New Life* should be written" (232). Not only the correlation between the name of the book and of what we are reading but also Uncle Rıfki's words that he would write a book, the main hero of which would be Osman, reinforce the idea that the very book is the one in our hands. The parallelism of the journey and writing is also articulated as follows:

The symbols representing the journeys obsessively recur throughout the book. Dislocation and being in motion, as the essential elements of journeying, hold some connotative meanings. The pages filled while writing refer to moving along the white, empty sheet; while writing

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<sup>116</sup> In this sense, they may be likened to the miniaturists in *My Name is Red* or the calligraphers of the Koran. As opposed to Western art, within Eastern art, you have no other option but to transcribe the creation and enunciation of Allah in order to celebrate the Creator. The main theme of *My Name is Red* is also the duality of creation - the virtue of diminishing the importance of the artist for the sake of the work of art. So, both Osman and Mehmet embody Eastern art as neither of them demands originality in their endeavor.

<sup>117</sup> "O ülkeye giderken kendine dönersin, kitabı okuyorum sanırken yeniden yazarsın" (*YH* 70).

progresses, the writer is also transformed, “when I was reviewing the pages I had filled like a traveler satisfied with the progress he had made, I could see with clarity the new human being into whom I was in the process of being transformed” (p.41). There is a triple transformation in the quotation; the alteration provided by the progress of writing that is supported with a simile of ‘a traveler satisfied with the progress he has made’ results in someone becoming a new person. It may be inferred from this simile that the real objective of motion is a change in identity. Both writing and roads connote spatial change, thus a parallel change exists in the sense of identity. (Akten 301, my translation)

The quest in writing obviously refers to the quest for creativity as in *The Black Book*. Osman is led by some inspirational poetic force into a fictitious journey. His steps and wanderings actually lead him to the heart of a work of art. Parla interprets the entire book as the portrait of an artist as a young man in the paradox of art and life, and she points out the connotations of *The New Life* with both Bildungsroman – a novel of growth and maturity – and Künstlerroman – it expresses the growth of an artist who realizes the relation between art and reality (1995: 265). An amateur writer like Galip, Osman also travels through the realm of meaning: “Well, then, was there not a place beyond, a new realm to be seen after all that travel? If there was a place beyond, it was within the text; but he had determined that it was futile to search for what he discovered in the text outside of the text, in actual life” (NL 217)<sup>118</sup>. Therefore, he comes to realize that what he seeks is found solely in fiction. In this sense, the reign of writing is once again presented as the only true reality and this reminds us of the last words of *The Black Book*: “Because nothing is as surprising as life. Except for writing. Except for writing. Yes, of course,

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<sup>118</sup> “Peki ötede bir yerde, onca yolculuktan sonra gördüğü yeni bir ülke yok muydu? Ötede bir yer varsa, yazının içindeydi bu, ama yazıda bulduğunu yazının dışında, hayatta aramanın boşuna olduğuna karar vermişti (NL 203).

except for writing, the only consolation” (*BB* 461)<sup>119</sup>. The juxtaposition of life and fiction, and fiction as an alternative to life are suggested here. This may remind us of the author’s biographical details in many of his interviews; that is, Pamuk often talked about taking revenge on ‘life’ by writing.

Alongside with the quest for authorship, the book may also simply be read as the transformation of the hero by love as the catalyst. In the novel, after the book takes Osman’s life off its course, by pointing to the plurality, and the complexity of possibilities, it urges him to set out to pursue that never-never land. According to Ergun, the grounds for his delusion lie in the protagonist’s forgetting both the content of the book and to where it leads, and searching for a human being, instead [Janan] (251). Here, love may be considered as a unifying force, as a romantic refuge from all desperation governing the world. Therefore, our protagonist feels that the only piece of heaven is the bed where he is lying next to Janan, even after all his traveling (*NL* 172). The continuous present time of the journeys is juxtaposed to the timelessness of the happiness that love engenders. “(...) [T]he most horrible thing was time itself; without knowing it, we had embarked on this journey to escape time. That was the reason why we were in constant motion, looking for the moment when time stood still. This was the unique moment of fulfillment (...) the beginning and the end of our journey was wherever we happened to be” (*NL* 172-3)<sup>120</sup>.

This very moment of ‘reaching home’, on the other hand, is highly delusional, because this moment of bliss is as elusive as the transitory moment of meaning. Although

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<sup>119</sup> “Çünkü hiçbir şey hayat kadar şaşırtıcı olamaz. Yazı hariç. Yazı hariç. Evet, tabii, tek teselli yazı hariç” (*KK* 442).

<sup>120</sup> “ (...) [Z]amanın en korkunç şey olduğunu söyledim Canan’a; biz bu yolculuğa ondan kurtulmak için çıkmışız da haberimiz yokmuş. Bu yüzden hareket ediyorduk, bu yüzden onun hiç kıpırdamadığı bir anı arıyorduk. Eşsiz an bu doluluktu işte. (...) Yolculuğumuzun başı da sonu da, biz neredeysek orasıydı” (*YH* 163).

love – a blessed agony - refers to the tenderest wishes of the character, he is bound to be imprisoned between the hope of salvation and the captivity love brings. Furthermore, the presence of a third person, namely Mehmet, further complicates the protagonist's moment of reunion with his beloved. Osman's traveling companion Janan is actually on her own quest for her lost lover, Mehmet. Mehmet embodies a figure of attraction as well as repulsion for the protagonist; for, he not only symbolizes an idealized other, but he also stands for the only obstacle to his ultimate salvation. The love triangle among Janan, Osman and Mehmet is a counterpart of the love triangle among Galip, Rüya and Celal in *The Black Book*, and even the one among İpek, Lacivert and Ka in *Snow*. So, the concept of love in Pamuk is initially obscured, and unrequited love is only another aspect of the characters' melancholy and desperation.

Ironically, the idea of happy wedlock is offered as a key to end all sufferings in these novels. It signifies not only a moment of an eternal union with the beloved, but also the final aim of all adventures: “[I] had a haircut and a shave, so that I might present myself to my Janan in the guise of the good-natured and dauntless young man who for the sake of building a happy family nest had gone through many an ordeal successfully and come face to face with death” (*NL* 231)<sup>121</sup>. “I kissed Janan on the lips like some young husband back from a long trip. Here we were at last, after all the unforeseen dangers, at home in our room” (*NL* 169)<sup>122</sup>. These are only two of the several sentences marking Osman's wish for a blissful home with Janan<sup>123</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> “[S]aç ve sakal traşı oldum ki, Cananım'ın karşısına mutlu bir aile yuvası kurabilme için ölümle göz göze gelmiş ve nice serüvenlerden başarıyla geçmiş pervasız ve iyimser bir delikanlı gibi çıkabileyim” (*YH* 216).

<sup>122</sup> “Uzun bir yolculuktan sonra eve dönen genç koca gibi Canan'ı dudaklarından öptüm” (*YH* 159).

<sup>123</sup> The main character of *Snow*, namely Ka may also be mentioned here as one among the obsessive and insecure protagonists of Pamuk. Having arrived at the city of Kars in the far east corner of Turkey in an attempt to get rid of the sorrow prevailing his soul, Ka is also a figure who regards marrying the beautiful İpek as nothing less than the salvation of his soul.

As the title *The New Life* suggests, there is a parallelism of content between Dante's *La Vita Nuova* and Pamuk's novel. It may well be claimed that Janan is quite as transcendental as Beatrice in Dante. The protagonist requires an idol, a source of faith like Dante's 'saint' Beatrice who functions as a symbol of spiritual salvation for the poet (Ergun 253). That is to say, she is as elusive, idealized and inaccessible as Beatrice (Ergun 253). Here, we witness an instance of Platonic love as the elevation of love to the degree that would be the nearest that humans can approach to immortality. Despite the anticipation of a physical reunion on the side of the protagonist, the journey is to remain wholly chaste. According to Parla, the concept of love in *The New Life* is a moment of crystallization; it is limited, suppressed and introverted in the presence of the beloved, yet has "its full violence in his imagination in the absence of her" (1995: 268, my translation). That is, "only when Janan is absent or asleep does he realize her perfection, which signifies the platonic aspect of this very crystallization" (268, my translation). While Parla associates the violence of love with creativity, another critic Zeynep Ergun argues that Janan is the embodiment of pure spirituality as she is made to be ultimately dysfunctional in any attempt at sensuality (256). "When the main character kisses Janan with the strength of his sexual drives", denying her angelic aspect, the mysticism regarding her disappears; she gets sick as in Dr. Fine's house and her existence in the novel ends (Ergun 256). So, like the Angel that constantly flickers and fades, Janan is bound to refer to negativity. In order to give a full scope to Osman's melancholic self, she has to fade away.

Although the suppression of sexuality marks the nature of love in the book just like in Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, Pamuk compares Janan and Beatrice in a symposium at Berkeley after agreeing that his female character is a counterpart to Dante's Beatrice: "Janan is less naïve, less idealized. She is not an imaginary being in the vision of the lover. She is sitting next to him in long bus runs. They have fun together" (qtd in Stone:

1994). Unlike dead Beatrice as a holy entity, Janan physically exists right next to our hero. While the platonic aspect of love affirms despair, there is not the real satisfaction that may be gotten from sensual love. Although they watch numerous, consecutive over-acted kissing scenes, even while the distance between them continues to narrow, they do not become lovers. Even in the same room in Dr. Fine's mansion, a sort of reunion does not take place, so Janan remains a taboo during the journey. Because of her elusiveness and unattainability, her essence is quite ambiguous even from the very beginning. Osman cannot get her essence. When they first talked, "she was wearing a dress that was pale but not white, it was the lightest of shades to which [he] could assign no color" (NL 19)<sup>124</sup>. Evidently, for Osman, she is the embodiment of a domain that is beyond definition and meaning. Therefore, the end of his quest for happiness in love is just as ambiguous as the essence of his beloved.

According to Ever, "[*The New Life*] can be read as a love story, a novel with a critical point of view or as a mystical novel. Yet, it will remain something more than that" (1995: 44, my translation). In this fictional and existential quest, what is explored in depth is undoubtedly one's identity, besides happiness in love and creativity. Accordingly, many critics have designated the end of the quest in *The New Life* as being above all else the discovery of a new identity. For instance, while Morrow states that he "sets out on a quest to discover his new identity" (1997), Spurling believes that it is for revelation and redemption, and particularly for "spiritual renewal". The idea of 'being yourself' is alluded to not only in the parts involving Dr. Fine, but the columnist of *The Black Book*, Celal Salik, who preaches on the authenticity and identity, is mentioned in three different parts of the novel. In order to question his identity, he initiates his quest first and foremost

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<sup>124</sup> "Beyaz gibi soluk renkte, ama beyaz olmayan ve başka hiçbir renk de olmayan bir elbise vardı üzerinde" (YH 23).

with a problematization of all existence as in Rilke's *The Duino Elegies*. He reads a book, he falls in love, and he goes on journeys, so he is totally estranged from his previous identity and surroundings. The intensity of his emotions brings about a variety of experiences. He actually gets into a bus that functions as a womb and waits to be re-born again, as Ergun maintains (253). In the state of inertia between sleep and wakefulness, the protagonist tries to make a new person out of himself, someone who is able to get the secret meaning behind everything. Hence, it may be stated that he is in a desperate search for "salvation without disintegration" (Ever: 1995, 289). The novel, however, reveals the signs of his gradual disintegration.

In his journey where everything becomes meaningless and meaning slowly dissolves, the dissolution of his identity is inevitable. The metaphor of twins here appears between Osman and Mehmet. Being Canan's lover and an apostle of the book, Mehmet starts looking for the promised heaven of the book in the buses long before Osman. When Osman finds him in a desolate town years later, Mehmet introduces himself as 'Osman'. Just like former Nahit, Mehmet changes his name, thus his identity and who Osman really is becomes more and more blurred towards the end. It might be interesting to note that both Osman and Mehmet are among the most common Turkish male names; as, the former refers to the founder of The Ottoman Republic, and the latter is the Turkish version of the Prophet Mohammed's name. So, their quest for meaning is the existential quest of any young man in this country. While Mehmet finds peace in copying the book alone in an isolated place, Osman - tired of the journeying- becomes an outcast and an ordinary family man towards the end. It might make sense to claim that there is an absolute blurring of identities; for, according to Oktay, the novel heroes can in no way appear as individuals here. For example, in *The Black Book*, "we encounter figures that have names yet no individualities, who are crushed under descriptions, quotations, delusions,

comparisons, who do not even believe in themselves” (Oktay 241, 243). The absurdity of their identities is reminiscent of the impossibility of attaining an authentic and independent individuality<sup>125</sup>. A further relation between the two may be found in the character of Dr. Fine. Originally Mehmet’s father, he symbolically adopts Osman as his own son. Perhaps, the protagonist’s killing of Mehmet is highly metaphorical in the sense he tries to murder the ‘ideal other’, thus a part of his own identity. Actually, it had formerly been hinted that Osman himself was the metaphorical murderer of Mehmet. In the beginning of the novel, when Osman thinks Mehmet is stabbed by someone, he follows the so-called murderer’s trail only to notice his footprints are inextricably intertwined with those of his. This is a foreshadowing of Osman’s forthcoming murder. So, “prodigally squandered and lost the core of his soul on the road” (NL 217)<sup>126</sup>, he becomes aware of his capabilities, of who he really is towards the end of his so-called heroic quest. Throughout his travels, he becomes a reader, a lover, a wanderer, an exile, a writer, and last but not least, a murderer and finally a victim. In accepting his role as a replacement of Dr. Fine’s son, however, he betrays the quest in which no idealism is left any more. Thus, his quest is doomed to end up with defeat, as “the individual, the vehicle of the utopian challenge to reality, [is] crushed by the brute force of reality” (Lukács 117). Above all else, because he is overcome by the inevitability of reality, this novel is the story of failed maturation, of a degraded quest. In *The New Life*, it can be maintained that there is “(...) the mood of disillusioned romanticism, an over-intensified, over-determined desire for an ideal life as opposed to the real one, a desperate recognition of the fact that

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<sup>125</sup> Also, the novel narrates “the search for totality of the disintegrated I’s” (Ever: 1995, 293).

<sup>126</sup> “[A]ştığım yollarda çünkü, kendi ruhumun merkezini savurup kaybetmişim” (YH 204).



this desire is doomed to remain unsatisfied, a utopia based from the start on an uneasy conscience and the certainty of defeat” (Lukács 116).

In many ways, the protagonist’s quest also systematically leads to the realm of death, as is evident in a variety of connotations that are brought to mind regarding fatality. Firstly, he encounters the shades of death in the book, and then, he looks for the moment of death in the bus crashes. His preoccupation with death may be explained in and through an attempt to get the real meaning behind everything<sup>127</sup>. Osman is the embodiment of a long list of novel heroes who have problematized mortality. He may be claimed as a hero who tries not only to conquer death by clinging to a hope of a kingdom after death where redemption is possible, but also to gain knowledge of it in this life. If his entire journey is only towards death, in the end of the novel he may be claimed to realize the aim of his quest, which is the moment of absolute meaning at the time of death: “True: accidents are departures, and departures are accidents. The angel becomes visible at the magical moment of departure, and it is then that we perceive the real meaning of the turmoil called life. Only then can we ever go back home” (NL 75)<sup>128</sup>. That is, at last, Osman encounters death, so he steps into the territory of a new life for the sake of which he traveled

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<sup>127</sup> Defined as “the unnamable” and “outside the thinkable” by Certeau (“The Unnamable”, 190), death is *the other* that is outside meaning, language and of course, articulation. Death cannot be experienced, so the field of death is impossible to convey with our own means to form meaning. It cannot be revealed, it is always in the form of hiding. Because, there is no way of opening it and bringing it back with language after going through the experience. What the book shows him may also be related to Lacanian idea of the momentarily glimpses from the cracks in our symbolic order. A field of beyond meaning and impossibility of articulation, the Real is the unexplored territory of death. Yet, there is no possibility of facing death and enunciating it in our symbolic order. It is real even without language, as Certeau claims “nothing therefore defines more exactly than my death what *speaking* is” (1984: 194).

Also defined by ‘forbidden death’ by Ariès, death in modernity is more complex than in previous periods. Religious focus decentralized in modern era, and caused the practice of it in the form of disintegration rather than as a whole. The dominance of science and the metaphorical death of God - the loss of transcendental ground - as Nietzsche asserts, caused a sort of estrangement towards death. Religion that bound society together, that made a collective belief possible, now has given way to collective disbelief, as Certeau mentions concerning the believing crisis in his article called “Believing and Making People Believe”.

<sup>128</sup> “Doğru: Kazalar çıktı; çıktı kazalar (...) Melek o çıkış zamanındaki sihrin içinde görülür ve o zaman hayat dediğimiz kargaşanın asıl anlamı gözlerimizin önünde belirir. O zaman döneriz evimize” (YH 76).

unfathomable distances. It is quite ironic, however, that he finally utters the following lines: “I knew it was the end of my life. And yet I had only wanted to return home; I absolutely had no wish for death, nor for crossing over into the new life” (NL 296)<sup>129</sup>. Although it seems he is able to realize the end of his quest by entering the new life, his words disclose the fact that he does not actually wish for an ultimate end. This may well be read as a modern man’s tragic whimper against mortality. The possibility of the lack of a ‘brave new world’, the nonexistence of a promised heaven after death also makes sense. Death, in other words, is presented as a pointless ending. Ever argues that because the protagonist has been transformed, there is nothing left for him but to die (1995: 290). However, I do not agree with this, as there is not self-discovery in this quest, but only the affirmation of nothingness as it is clear from the last lines. Death does not take place as a consequence of a sort of self-realization, but the idea of the desired moment of death has also to be deconstructed to refer to a perfect futility. Ecevit, on the other hand, regards the novel as a journey of enlightenment and asserts as follows:

The end of the journey is its beginning; it discloses the return to the ‘essence’ after having developed a new consciousness, after being ‘enlightened’. It is the path of wise men; it is the path of the travelers of *The New Life*. There is ‘freedom’ at the end of the path; it is the freedom of people who are emancipated from social desires and material addictions. (Ecevit 323-4, my translation)

The travelers of *The New Life* have evidently been searching for a way out of the constraints of the world. What Ecevit puts forward as ‘emancipation’, however, does not take place; for, the protagonist yearns to go back to the material world in the end,

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<sup>129</sup> “Bunun hayatımın sonu olduğunu anladım. Oysa ben evime dönmek istiyor, yeni bir hayata geçmeyi, ölmeyi hiç mi hiç istemiyordum” (YH 275).

probably after having seen the unfulfilled promise of a new world. Therefore, the protagonist is neither content in life nor satisfied with death. Just as Ögüt says, he is bound to be trapped in the ‘threshold’ between life and death, in order to eternalize existence in the very threshold (2007). This is the state of Pamuk’s character as well as the stance of a modern man towards human existence, in which the boundaries of life are blurred.

The basic problem of the novel form is that “the soul is bound to be imprisoned and ultimately destroyed in a world which is alien to its essence: that every refusal to seize a conquered piece of reality is really a victory” (Lukács 111). The protagonists of both *The New Life* and *The Black Book*, on the other hand, are crushed under the triumph of reality over their idealistic quests. Thus, their quests are ultimately futile, and the sense of desperation each time a human encounters the limit, is integrated into every sentence of the novels. The journey into the psyche is not only a journey into the questions of identity, writing, death and meaning, but it may be also defined in and through a constant wish to make sense of the hope of salvation in a world abandoned by God. “As the world becomes more and more prosaic, as the active demons withdraw from the world leaving the arena free to the dull opposition of an inchoate mass of interiority” (Lukács 105), the heroes’ endeavors are sure to be ultimately futile. Therefore, their search is rendered an absolutely ‘degraded quest’ that alienates them further from meaning, underscoring the inevitable melancholy of modernity.

## ***V. CONCLUSION***

So far, relying on Lukácsian quest, I have aimed to point out some relations of Pamuk's quest novels, namely *The Black Book* and *The New Life* with the classical novel so as to assert that the novels of the so-called 'post-modernist' author have actually deeper associations with the foundations of the novel form. The nature of the quest motif has been analyzed in classical and modernist paradigms in this thesis. Reading Pamuk's novels in this perspective might add new dimensions in further understanding his work.

In *The Black Book* and *The New Life*, the searching process has been represented as the mere way to challenge the world which is designated by the already constructed meanings and various modes of limitations. The heroes struggle to realize personal salvation in this contingent world, rather than attempting to change it. While they try to 'find their way' in a chaotic land, they represent the inevitable destiny of modern man, who is imprisoned within the limits and by no means transgresses them. Then, the anti-quests in Pamuk's novels ridicule the search as well as leading to an irreversible point in the characters' lives.

The quests here are ultimately reduced to aimless wanderings, or dislocations and the circular cycle of maturation. That is, in the problematic heroes' spatial journey to reach a spiritual 'home', they end up with being transcendently dispossessed. What is more, in their fictional journeys to achieve salvation and emancipation, they encounter the final victory of reality in a futile quest. So, the quest forms in both novels are quite parallel to Lukács's idea of the novel form, as all novels narrate a degraded quest in transcendental homelessness. The very melancholy of these novels, therefore, lies in the irony of the characters' inability to see the futility of their endeavor, and what is left for us is to hear the reflections of their sad steps in a circular abyss of nothingness.

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