

Journey of the Protagonist in Search of New Life in Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life*

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Abstract

Turkish Literature has been prominent one among the literatures of the world. The artistic creations of many writers appeal to their large numbers of readership. The Nobel-laureate Ferit Orhan Pamuk is the one among the celebrities. He has produced many works of caliber that exhibit the Turkish tradition and its culture. He is the author of many admirable literary creations including *The White Castle* (1985), *The Black Book* (1990), *My Name is Red* (2001), *The Museum of Innocence* (2009), and many more fiction. His novels are categorized as postmodern fiction. The instability and uncertainty of human nature are brought out dramatically in his novels. Pamuk's main theme is quest for identity which is a newfangled one. Pamuk's characters usually take over the identities of others in the novel. The characterization in the Pamuk's novels is elusive and exclusive. The novel *The New Life* is about probing a new life and to liberate oneself from his own past. The characters expect that their life will be changed after reading *The New Life* whose author is unknown. When the novel is read, both the characters feel that the fiction will definitely lead them to a new life. The present article purviews on the ardent search of the protagonist for a new life.

Key Words: Postmodern Fiction, Instability, Uncertainty, Liberation, Journey for New Life.

Introduction

Turkish Literature becomes prominent one among the literatures of the world by the artistic creations of many writers. The one among the celebrities is the Nobel-laureate Ferit Orhan Pamuk. He has produced many works of caliber that exhibit the Turkish tradition and its culture. He is the author of many admirable books including *The White Castle* (1985), *The Black Book* (1990), *My Name is Red* (2001), *The Museum of Innocence* (2009), and many more fiction. His novels are categorized as postmodern fiction. The instability and uncertainty of human nature is brought out dramatically in his novels. Pamuk's main theme is quest for identity that is a newfangled one. Pamuk's characters usually take over the identities of others. The characterization in the Pamuk's novels is elusive and exclusive.

Osman's Encounter with The New Life

The novel *The New Life* is about probing a new life and to liberate oneself from his own past. There are two symbolic characters Osman and Mehmet who expect their life to be changed after reading a book titled *The New Life* whose author is unknown. When the book is read by both the characters they felt the book will definitely lead them to a new life. They leave their present life and travel literally to find their desired life as it is instructed by book while they read. In the course of their journey Mehmet wants to root out from his past life and starts a new one. Osman, the narrator and the first hero of the novel wants to find a new life and ends up in normal life as every man. The novel encompasses twist and unfortunately Mehmet is killed and Osman is dead in an accident. The protagonist of the novel ardently searches for a new life.

The characters of Pamuk in *The New Life* are represented in a fragmented way. The uncertainty mind of the characters is projected through the plot of the novel. The protagonist Osman is twenty-two years old, a student of civil engineering and he is upset as he lost his father. He feels all alone that there is no one to support and guide him in his life. In such intense pain, he meets Janan, an architect student and he falls in love with her. He wants Janan's company and feels solace in her company. When he tries to meet her he sees a book titled *The New Life* and with all his effort he buys the book in a shop. He reads it and feels that the entire world gets changed from his new point of view. The narrator describes his experience after reading the book as that his life is transformed into new and strange one. The life after reading the books helps Osman to realize a different experience in him and he could vision a new distinct world and he says that he is able to see unimaginable things when he reads the book. He is enthralled by the book and his soul is fully engrossed in reading the book. He could read some signals from the book. The things he observes are in different dimension.

Osman's intense search for a new life is obvious when he reads the book again and again. He informs Janan that "My whole life was changed after reading the book" (20). Osman blindly believes the book totally and he is ready to die even if somebody kills him for reading the book. He considers Janan as an angel who is sent to him from the other world, and reaching her is his only destiny. Mehmet is the lover of Janan and she introduces Osman to Mehmet. Mehmet, one of the readers of the book, warns Osman that he will procure nothing at the end and it is just a book. Mehmet cautions him that he also searches for a new life in the world with this book but it becomes a failure one. He boards buses and travel from town to town but the book will take the readers to death. Someone will always monitor the reader of the book and finally kill them.

The character Osman gives importance to his instinct and he is not ready to accept any other's views and advice. As far as he reads the book he traces a path to move further in his journey. He listens to his inner voice in which he is able to conceptualize what he has to do next. The inner image that arises in the mind shows him a long journey which is endless and he realizes some myths, legends, trees, streets, rivers, gardens and countries.

Journey and Search for Janan

Osman witnesses a gunshot accident the very next day he meets Janan and Mehmet. He tries to trace both of them and goes to nearby hospitals but he could not find them anywhere. In a few days he noticed that Janan is not coming to the university. He starts to find her and sets his journey to find Janan for the first time. He discovers Mehmet as his rival to reach his angel Janan. He chooses a walkway to ferret his new life by searching for Janan. He boards buses aimlessly and he travels to many places. His journey is uncertain even from the beginning.

Later, Osman realizes his self. The bus journey helps him to self-introspect and he comes to know about the reality of life. He witnesses many accidents and how people are victimized by time and situations. Osman wants to take over the identity of Mehmet. In the beginning he searches Mehmet's whereabouts along with his lover Janan. Osman knows very well that Janan loves Mehmet.

Osman joins Janan to find Mehmet. The narrator says that during their journey, "We followed a young man carrying a plastic suitcase ... just because the young man's size and his slight stoop reminded her of Mehmet...(63) and he also says: "I was her "traveling companion" on her journey to that realm; we were to "support" each other in rediscovering that place" (65).

Identity, Doctor Fine, and Mehmet

There is a situation where Osman and Janan meet the father of Mehmet by changing their identity as Ali Kara and Efsun Kara. Ali Kara and Efsun Kara were actually dead in their journey to find a new life after reading the book *The New Life*. Efsun in her death-bed informs Janan about her plan of visiting Doctor Fine. As per the request of Efsun, Osman and Janan take the identity of Ali Kara and Efsun Kara respectively and introduce themselves as husband and wife to Doctor Fine. Unfortunately Doctor Fine is Mehmet's father. Mehmet is pursuing M.D degree at University of Istanbul. When he is in third year of his six year program, he comes across the book titled *The New Life* and Nahit is his real name. Dr.Fine is against the printed books and he hates people who are reading the book *The New Life*. Dr.Fine contempt the printed book as it is a tool of great conspiracy by the westerners. He says the book become enemy and it snares his son and according to him all the printed books are enemies. On the other hand he says that he is not against literature which is scripted by hands. His son after reading the book he goes against his family and fails to realize the wealth of life. He is carried away by some kind of evil and blind beliefs.

The narrator Osman assures and says that

"After reading the book, his son had lost his bearing; not only had he turned his back on his family... but he had closed his eyes to the wealth of life, that is, the 'unmanifested symmetry of time,' carried away by some kind of 'blindness' against the 'totality of

details deposited in each object,'having succumbed to some kind of 'death wish' "(132).

Dr.Fine appointed many agents for money to spy his own son. Mehmet comes to know about his father's spy and informants. Mehmet does not wish to be followed by his father's informants anymore so he himself keeps his identification card in the burnt dead man's pocket, who is a co-passenger of Mehmet. The bus in which Mehmet travels gets into an accident and he uses this situation to deceive his father. The informants informed Dr.Fine's that his son Mehmet is dead in the bus accident as the identification card of Mehmet is found in the dead man's pocket.

Dr.Fine believes that his son is dead and he asks Osman to be his son as he lost his own son Mehmet in an accident. As he laments:

You are only at the age when my son was so mercilessly and underhandedly taken from me ... our acquaintance of a single day has already shown me that a manifest destiny aborted in one individual can be reactivated through another ... And now you are becoming cognizant of our next step as you contemplate me, Doctor Fine. Become my son. Take his place. Carry on my work after me (136).

Murder of Mehmet and Failed Identity Substitution

Osman knows that Mehmet is alive somewhere and he thinks that if he kills Mehmet, he can marry Janan and by being Dr.Fine's son he could take over the place of Mehmet. Later, he murders Mehmet who lives in his own name "Osman". Osman while searching Mehmet informs others as he is Mehmet's army friend and meets many people who have their name as Mehmet. Finally, he finds the real Mehmet who lives in the name of Osman. Mehmet is writing and producing many copies of the book *The New Life*. He earns his livelihood by selling the copies of the book. Osman asks Mehmet why he chooses his name and lives in the little town. Mehmet responds: "I don't know", said the pseudo-Osman without noticing the clouds of jealousy in the eyes of the real Osman; then smiling sweetly, he added, "I had immediately liked you when I first met you perhaps that was why" (216).

Mehmet and Osman talk about their own past life for a while and Mehmet wishes to live with Osman together. Osman is displeased with Mehmet as he takes Osman's own identity. Thus the narrator in anger shouts:

You find someone of my ilk, you give him a book you make sure he will read, you cause him to slip off the course of his life"

I said, but more to myself.

To make completely sure I hit him, I fired three times at point blank range into his chest... I announced to the viewers sitting in the dark, "I killed a man" (230).

Osman kills Mehmet and he tries to replace himself in the place of Mehmet. Though he agrees to be the son of Dr. Fine he does not stay and live along with him and he leaves him as Janan leaves that place without Osman's knowledge.

Uncle Rifki and the Origins of The New Life

Finally, Osman's journey ends in vain in search of Janan and marries some other girl, soon after the death of his mother. He begets a girl child and when his daughter is three years old, he once again starts his journey to find a new life at the age of thirty-five. He discovers that the author of the book is his own Uncle Rifki. He is one who works in railways along with Osman's father. Uncle Rifki does not have child and he used to write comics for kids in his leisure time. He becomes popular by his comics and he starts to write many books. When he writes the book *The New Life* the government bans his book as it leads the readers to death. Later he is killed. Osman meets Aunt Ratibe, the wife of his Uncle Rifki and searches in the library of Uncle Rifki to find any clues about *The New Life*. As Osman starts reading the books which his Uncle used before and finds that Uncle has referred to certain books for writing the book *The New Life*. Osman finds the secret behind the creation of the book. Rifki either inspired by some fantasies and expression or just copy the text from some other books. The book contains lot of reference to other many books which Rifki reads.

He feels nostalgic when he returns from his Uncle's home with silver candy dish. The New Life Brand Caramels is the popular candy when Osman was child and candy's wrapper contains the picture of seven angels looking with smile. So he blindly believes and quickly "concludes that the figure of the angel had been appropriate from some European publication, when I focused on the manufacturer who kept signaling to me from the corner of the wrapper" (269).

Osman's Final Journey and Realization

The climax of the novel is set when Osman starts his journey again after so many years to find the manufacture of the candy called New Life Caramels. He contemplates that he could trace his new life and gets answer as mentioned in *The New Life*. He meets Sureyya, the manufacturer of New Life Caramels, with a hope that he might show the key to the secrets of Osman's life. He listens to the words of the eighty years old Sureyya who is blind now. Sureyya just boasts of his life and how he himself prepares rhymes for the chocolate wrapper and he is happy with the success which he achieved in his youth. The success gives him optimistic feeling throughout his life. Sureyya admits Osman about life as it has accident, luck, love, loneliness, sorrow, light, death, happiness and every aspects should be respected and needs to be accepted by everyone.

Osman decides to go back to meet his wife and daughter. He realizes the reality of life that one should be happy with one's own way of life and says:

If I took care of myself and managed to live as long as... I had almost another half century before me to enjoy all these things... For a moment I felt an intense longing for my home, my wife, and my daughter. I dreamed how I would play with my daughter when I got home around noon Saturday (292).

The bus which Osman travels meets with accident and Osman who sits in the front seat of bus dies. Osman's mind articulates that he wishes to go back to home. He doesn't want to die nor does he want to find the new life.

Conclusion

Thus, Osman leads his life with an unstable mind. He dreams about his future too much. He totally believes on the printed story book. The problem with Osman is that he never fixes any goal to reach and blindly believes on fate. He just boards a bus without destination. In the beginning, he wishes to meet Janan and he uses the book as a tool to interact with Janan. Then he is attracted and excited to find new life by reading the book. As Janan is missing, Osman searches for her and after that along with Janan, he searches for Mehmet to murder him. Finally, his life has totally changed as he marries another girl. From the beginning to the end, the life of Osman moves without any axis. Though he realizes the reality of life, he is unable to live his desired life till the end.

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