

## **Critique of Western Modernity in Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life***

*The present thesis undertakes the study of liminal space of the writer Orhan Pamuk and Turkey, the country under the influence of modern west and dogmatic east as exposed in his novel The New Life. From this 'in-between-space' the writer successfully makes the critique of western type of monolithic modernization in Turkey. The foundation of the Turkish modernization project in the twentieth century has been relegating religion to the private sphere. To this end, traditions associated with Islamic civilization were banned from Turkish public life and Western imposition became the only acceptable mode in public life. Traditional laws with religious character gave way to modern legal codes and the Arabic script was replaced by its European counterpart. The formation of modern Turkey led the country in to the abyss of contradiction and conflict as the protagonist of the novel has to face during the journey of life. The reigning intellectual climate in Turkey and the West has changed drastically since then. The westernization movement in Turkey, which conflates modernization with secularization, failed to develop a strong philosophical grounding for the masses. So, from the 'in-between- space' Orhan Pamuk rejects the extremes of Western modernity and eastern religious fundamentalism as well.*

Key Words: Identity Crisis, Liminal Space, Modernity, Westernization, Fundamentalism,

Hegemony, Culture.

This research presents the critique of western hegemonic modernity as portrayed in *The New Life* by Orhan Pamuk, a Turkish writer, who has written from in-between space. The foundation of the Turkish modernization project in the twentieth century has been relegating religion to the private sphere. To this end, traditions associated with Islamic civilization were banned from Turkish public life: women gained a degree of public presence and the semblance

of equality. Western style clothing became the only acceptable mode in public life; traditional laws with religious character gave way to modern legal codes and above all the Arabic script was replaced by its European counterpart. With all due respect to modern Turkey's founder Kemal Ataturk, especially his vision for a new Turkey and statesman like tact in laying its grounds, the political and intellectual climate of the 1920s was more suitable for carrying out such a radical program of cultural change than that of our time.

The reigning intellectual climate in Turkey and the West has changed drastically since then. The success of postmodernist critiques of reason and Enlightenment in the West gradually undercut the intellectual supports of secularization in Turkey, and the westernized Turkish intelligentsia came to be divided within itself. Orhan Pamuk has been skeptical of Turkey's state-led modernization project from early in his career. At its current and most mature state of evolution, his perspective seems to be in tune with that of contemporary critics of the Enlightenment in the West who claim that there is not a binary opposition between modernity and religion.

Orhan Pamuk, a western educated Turkish writer, tries to present the modern Turkey under the influence of western hegemonic influence of modernization. While presenting the contemporary Turkey he makes the critique of western modernity and the traditional dogmatic Turkish practices through his liminal location. While doing so, he can't find himself in the traditional Turkey as he had got western education. On the other hand he can't accept western uniform kind of modernity in Turkey too. He finds himself in the 'in-between-space' of western and eastern civilizations. This liminal space has been the surest weapon to make the critique of western Christening modernity as well as to defy the dogmatic practices of Muslim culture of Turkey. Referring to 'inbetweenness' or 'transitory gap' suggests, this concept is used to

challenge against the conventional type of reading of a text too. It makes radical readings possible by freeing the words from their fixated meanings. Therefore, , liminality is employed in order to explain the Pamukian approach to the problem of liminal identity crisis of Turkey and the writer himself in order to defy the dogmatism and western form of modernity.

However, if Islamic individuality in Turkey is simply rooted in a social or historical context, such as the influence of globalization or the advent of modern times, then its claim to modernity is as shaky as that of the secularists who are exposed to exactly the same external environment and can easily be turned against it. If the state-led model of secular modernity failed to take root in society or to re-define itself since its heyday in the early twentieth century because it failed to develop a guiding theoretical framework. Then how is it possible to expect a more progressive outcome from an alleged sense of Islamic individuality? Even if Islamic modernity is an inevitable consequence of sociological change, there is a need for a theoretical response to the tension between a defacto sense of modern individuality and a religio-cultural sense of communitarianism

At the heart of the novel there is a book. Like most self-referential texts, this is a book about another, and both with the same title: *The New Life*. The protagonist is a young engineering student, Osman, who becomes obsessed with a book, his reading of which completely transforms him, rendering him incapable of continuing his present existence. To assuage his restlessness, Osman leaves his hometown and goes on a long journey lasting many months and passing numerous small Turkish towns on different buses. Other than to discover the secret of the book through his journey, part of Osman's quest also involves a beautiful young woman Janan. She is a fellow student and the one who initially caught his eye with the book she carried: *The New Life*. Osman is inexplicably drawn to the book. Through a series of co-

incidences and accidents, he manages to secure a copy for himself and thereupon begins his intellectual and soul-searching quest.

On the surface, Pamuk's novel appears starkly simple. It is a story of a search, a mystery encased in a book that is similarly mysterious because its contents are only alluded to, never revealed. It is a puzzle within a puzzle, a story within a story within another story and another, ad infinitum. To understand Osman is to understand the connectivity of the stories, and to follow the trail of literary clues left behind. But more than just a personal quest, *The New Life* is also a well-crafted allegory of Turkey. On the outskirts of secular, modern Istanbul, lives the rural, poor periphery who struggles to make ends meet in the onslaught of globalization. As foreign consumer products invade the country, local goods and small businesses die out, unable to compete with the cash cow of Western capitalism. The despondency and subsequent rage of the people seeking out a meager living are manifest in their religious fundamentalism and retrograde conservatism.

Turkey is a nation rife with contradictions—on the one hand, it desires to be part of the European Union and to partake in the attendant financial and political profits; on the other hand, it still represses freedom of expression and curtails opinion critical of the government and its policies. Caught in the cusp between religion and secularism, parochial and globalized modernity, this is a country that has been unable to reconcile its many strands and sects of Islam. Kemal Ataturk's republic instead preached a different identity: secularism without tradition and largely disconnected from the rich history of Turkish Islam and Ottoman culture.

The genius of Pamuk lies in his ability to disturb our novel-reading conventions. Osman's quest in the book is our quest as we read *The New Life*: our journey of self, life, death, love. Pamuk never delivers clichés, even though the ideas he abstracts may appear to be so. Instead, he

writes a book that invites us in, changes us and by so doing, changes the meaning of the book for us. As Osman puts it: “So it was that as I read my point of view was transformed by the book” (Orhan 33). Pamuk as a writer, who draws his identity from tradition as well as from modernity; from the ruins and memories of a fallen empire as well as from a young republic; from his Western education as well as his Eastern roots; his admiration both to West and to East as well as his critical eye on both cultures, is himself a living example of the past-present and the East-West clashes, and therefore he stands for the problem of liminal identity crisis despite making the critique of western form of modernity.

The present analysis takes Bhabha’s reinterpretation of liminality in the context of postcolonial studies. Bhabha interprets liminality within the borders of the Third Space of Enunciation which makes negotiation between cultures possible. It provides the opportunity for the emergence of new meanings and identities consequently new form of modernity. Considering the Third Space as an interspaced passageway which frees the notion of identity from the yoke of binary oppositions, stereotyped antagonisms and other determining labels sealed on the concept of identity. In this discussion Bhabhian liminality aims for openness, transformation and dissolution of fixed identities. It is a free zone which celebrates the dialogue, *mélange* and transition between cultures. It is pointed out that the dwellers of the liminal zone go through a “moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity” (Bhabha 2) and subjects who dare to interrogate the dominant national narratives in order to write their own personal story. The quests of these characters indicate that the act of identity-seeking and -forming is actually the depiction of identity as a never-ending process. As a concept, liminality refers to a challenge against mainstream stories, predetermined and given identities.

This research project characterizes both Pamuk and Bhabha as writers of the Third Space who are themselves situated in this nebulous and ambivalent zone. Bhabha and Pamuk conceptualize the act of writing as a performance and as a tool for projecting the problems of identity. However, so far the approaches of Bhabha and Pamuk to the concept of liminality are different from each other. This analysis points out that Bhabha's approach to liminality is positive considering the fact that liminal zone makes negotiation of cultural differences and the emergence of hybrid identities possible. On the contrary, the manifestations of liminality, depicted in Pamuk's writings, make it clear that Pamuk considers the perplexity and the in-between-ness that liminality suggests negatively. Pamuk's protagonists are haunted by the traumatic experience of transition from the Islam-oriented Ottoman Empire to secular Republic of Turkey and they are unable to transcend their take-over selves. Hence, I argued that Turkey's liminal identity, stuck in the liminoid zone, turned into a permanent and institutionalized problem. In *Other Colors* Pamuk wrote that

all my books are made from a mixture of Eastern and Western methods, styles, habits, and histories, and if I am rich it is thanks to these legacies. My comfort and my double happiness comes from the same source, I can, without any guilt, wander between the two worlds, and in both I am at home.(70)

However, in this same book, he also adds that he wishes to pull away from his characters such as Kara ('Black', from *My Name is Red*) and Galip (from *Black Book*); yet he cannot avoid observing the world "with the light of the oil lamp which these characters hold in their hands" (71). As one can see, these sentences suggest a paradox. While he tries to 'wander between two worlds' and benefit from both of them, Pamuk actually straddles between two worlds. He hopes to free himself from this in-between color of twilight that haunts his prose; yet as he stated, he is

not able to transcend his obsessions about haunting memories of the repressed past that dominate his writings.

This analysis has tried to demonstrate that *The New Life* functions as liminal zones (third spaces) where protagonist is confronted with his incapability of negotiating his past and present identities. As I argued, Pamuk's protagonist Osman suffers from "schizophrenic placelessness" (Stokes 225). I suggested that the protagonist of Pamuk is wandering in in-between spaces. In other words, he is hovering in Bhabha's third space. Pamuk tells stories of people who walk out of lines, straddle between two edges and go through the feeling of non-belongingness. The man, Osman has started his journey – whether it is physical or metaphysical —with a prosaic search for a beloved woman. Yet, the journey has turned into metaphysical quests in which the protagonist's search for his selves.

However, at the end of the story the protagonist could not "emerge as the others" (Bhabha 56) of himself. The problem of liminal identity crisis happens in accordance with two motifs; the uncanny and the journey-quest. It is claimed that the uncanny represented the repressed (Ottoman cultural heritage) past of Turkey, which was discarded by the new nation-state, Turkey. In *The New Life*, the protagonist Osman is disappointed with his quest. After he discovered the book within the novel, which impressed him, he hit the roads in order to find a new life. At the end of the book, he faced the bitter truth that the new life was a lie and it was doubtful whether it has ever existed. I tried to describe Pamuk's obsession with the half-lit places, while I present the juxtaposition of these murky places (repressed past) with light (present).

In that sense, the concept of liminality will be also representative for the writer's identity of Pamuk who both confronts and mediates the past and the present, and East and West.

Announcing the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy

Horace Engdahl described Pamuk as:

A writer, who in the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures . . . [and who] has renewed the heart of the novel, has enlarged the roots of the contemporary novel by using not only his roots in Western culture but also in Eastern culture . . . [and] has stolen the novel from the Westerners and transformed it into something partly different from what we have ever seen before by including marvelous stories, tales, myths and mystical symbols in his web of prose. (1)

Liminality helps to portray the problem of fragmented, split and also stuck nature of identity in Pamuk's novel *The New Life*. In that respect, at first it is worthy to explain liminality according to the theoretical framework of Bhabha and to illustrate the previous usages of the concept by other scholars. This helps to present a practical analysis of liminality by appropriating and adapting it in the aforementioned book of Orhan Pamuk.

It is said that liminality is associated both with hybrid and split identities and it has been the surest weapon to make the critique of western imposition. I want to make it clear that the use of liminality is reasonably apt to analyze the problem of identity within postcolonial discourses as Pamuk's setting of Turkey is at the juncture of west and east. In its Bhabhian framework this term is utilized in order to deconstruct the authoritarian and the biased voice of the colonizer and to make the colonized's existence and response apparent. Bhabha does this by juxtaposing historical events – the suppression of the colonized by the colonizer while placing them in an imaginary zone which he calls 'liminal space' or 'the Third Space of Enunciation'. One of the concerns in this dissertation is to make clear that liminality as it is reflected in Pamuk's writings



portrays the “incidents of a fictional world”, yet it simultaneously echoes “actually happened history” (Bhabha 3). The in-between realm of liminality, in this context, is represented both in literal and figurative dimensions. The literal dimension is that Turkey as a country is situated between Asia Minor and (Eastern) Europe and has territory both in the continents of Asia and Europe. Turkey is literally inherited from and owned by both Eastern and Western cultures. On a smaller scale, the major city, Istanbul, where almost all of Pamuk’s stories start from or take place, is a city literally divided.

The cultural liminality from which Pamuk and his protagonists suffer emanates from a foundational historical transformation – from the Islamic imperial state to the secular republican nation-state happened almost a century ago. In that respect, Martin Stokes observes:

In a society in which the state of being modern is cast so insistently in terms of forgetting, and in which the modern is so organically connected to the institutions of the nation-state, remembering becomes both a problem and a matter of cultural elaboration . . . The politics of forgetting paradoxically demands the preservation of a variety of things to demonstrate the necessity of their having been forgotten. When one of these objects in the repertoire of the “forgotten” is an entire city, . . . the city itself is likely to occupy a large and significant problem in the national imaginary – a problem that springs out of the experience of modern nationalism itself. (6)

Since the protagonists of Pamuk are the inhabitants of Istanbul, this traumatic memory of transition becomes a part of their unconscious. Pamuk brings this traumatic experience to the present day mainly through his use of specific motifs. In this respect, it helps to analyze the problem of liminal identity crisis by the way of drawing attention to certain motifs created by

Pamuk. The two key motifs, which are the 'uncanny' and the 'journey-quest,' will be focused when explaining the betwixt and in-between identity of Turkey which is stuck between past and present as well as East and West.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha asserts that the language has a slippery and ambivalent character; therefore, it is open for interpretation which makes it ambiguous and unstable. However it should not be forgotten that the concept would not deliver any meaning unless it is not used in a certain discourse. It should be noted that liminality, in this dissertation, is borrowed from postcolonial discourse and applied within a postmodernist context. In order to fully access the concept's hybrid meaning, one should stand both inside and outside the text; one should also permit the creative readings and reinterpretations which brings reader to the performed meanings of Bhabha and Pamuk. In other words, just as Bhabha and Pamuk, must become an implicit reader wandering amid the slippery world of meanings. Liminality has been usually understood as a rather negative concept within postcolonial discourse. It evokes the idea of insecurity and uncertainty. In that respect, it is argued that Pamuk reverses such negative reception of liminality. His reception of the concept is more positive. For, Bhabha rediscovers liminality as an in-between zone that makes the emergence of new meanings and hybrid identities possible. This zone, Bhabha claims, also works as a space where the repressed can remake and recreate himself against the dominant. It is crucial to note that Bhabhian understanding of liminality needs to be slightly reversed before being appropriated and applied into the work of Pamuk. Liminality, at first sight, does not represent a positive attitude in the narratives of Pamuk.

In *The New Life*, university student Osman encounters the new life for the first time in the hands of Janan, the girl he is deeply in love with. In the novel, the quest is structured by means

of the bus journeys that Osman makes to different cities of Turkey. The life of the young protagonist turns completely upside down after he has read a random book which is presented almost as a sacred text: "I told her I'd read the book after seeing it in her hand. I had my own world before reading the book, I said, but after reading the book, I now had another world" (Pamuk 19). Osman becomes obsessed with this book and yearns to know its writer. He starts believing that the book is about him and that it is his story which is told in there. Correspondingly, this assumption is confirmed at the end of the book: "So Uncle Rifki had addressed me directly. I am going to write a book someday, and I will give the hero your name." "one where I will tell your story" (Pamuk 267). Towards the end of the book the readers realize that Uncle Rifki Hat, who is also a colleague and friend of Osman's father, and who is also portrayed as a person that "infect[s] us [Turkish people] with the plague of forgetfulness that blows here on the winds from the West, erasing our collective memory" (132), is really the author of the book within the novel.

Osman's love for Janan is unrequited. Janan loves Nahit/Mehmet, the person who discovers the book earlier and got even killed in the sake of the book and of Janan. After the unexpected disappearance of Janan, Osman immediately leaves Istanbul and starts his bus journeys to look for her. He takes buses randomly and has more than a few severe bus accidents. In one of these journeys Osman eventually comes across Janan. Realizing that Nahit/Mehmet is also lost, they decide to visit the father of Nahit/Mehmet, Dr. Fine. Dr. Fine detests the book in question. He is convinced that it caused his son to run away from home. For that reason, Dr. Fine tries to destroy whatever copies of the book he comes across. He also hires agents to kill the writer of the book, Uncle Rifki, who works for the railway constructions and represents in some way the 'Westernization-modernization' project that Turkey undergoes. The anti-Western

sentiments of Dr. Fine make him believe that killing Uncle Rifkî will expurgate Turkey from the evils of Westernization. Dr. Fine calls his agents the name of 'watch brands' such as Zenith, Omega, Movado, Serkisof. Referring to the issues of Westernization and the adaptation of international hour, Dr. Fine regards the watch as "ours," given that they had been keeping our time for over a century" (139).

Dr. Fine believes that watches and clocks are the only things that Turkish people succeeded to internalize. He utters his obsession about 'time' as follows: For our people, the ticking of clocks is not just a means of apprising the mundane, but the resonance that brings us in line with our inner world, like the "Hat" means "railway" in Turkish. The real name of the character is Nahit. He is the son of the conservative Dr. Fine. He changes his name first to Mehmet and then, oddly enough, to Osman. He is one of many Pamuk characters who constantly switch identities without being able to transcend any of them. Pamuk here refers to another reform of Atatürk which is the adoption of international calendar, hours and measurements as he further states:

Sound of splashing water in fountains in the courtyards of our mosques, . . . "We pray five times a day; then in Ramadan we have the time for iftar, the breaking of fast at sundown, and the time for sour . . . Our timetables and timepieces are our vehicles to reach God, not the means of rushing to keep up with the world as they are in the West. There never was a nation on earth as devoted to timepieces as we have been; we were the greatest patrons of European clock makers. Timepieces are the only product of theirs that has been acceptable to our souls. (159)

The novel ends with the murder of Nahit/Mehmet by Osman and Osman's own death later on a bus accident. During his journeys, Osman interrogates his identity. When he is searching for

Janan, Nahit/Mehmet, the writer of the book or the manufacturer of the new life caramels, he is at the same time looking for his own identity. This can be compared to Turkey's identity problem which was constantly put into question ever since the detachment of Turkey from the Ottoman Empire. Turkish literary critic Yildiz Ecevit states that "contemporary novelist has to seek 'reality' in different platforms: maybe in the bends of fantasy, maybe in the dreams of Freud, maybe in the unconscious images of Jung or in the labyrinths of the consciousness" (20). In the novel, Pamuk makes his protagonist start a quest in order to confront their uncanny past, which lies dormant both in the streets of Istanbul as well as in the unconscious of its inhabitants. In terms of identity switch, double identities and the juxtaposition of real and surreal. First, the protagonist Osman is in love with a woman and they both start their quests for the sake of this woman. Second, his life completely changes at a random day without his awareness of the coming of this change.

For Osman, the change comes at the very beginning of the book: "I read a book one day and my whole life was changed. Even on the first page I was so affected by the book's intensity I felt my body sever itself and pull away from the chair I sat reading the book . . ." (Pamuk 3). In this case there is the issue of abandonment after leaving a piece of paper or a whole book behind. The content of the note or the book is never revealed to the reader. It is explicit that the book in *The New Life* works as symbol of the limited past that Turkish people can no longer access. The immediacy of change in the life of Osman refers also to the immediate transition from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey.

In *The New Life*, one book is presented as having power enough to make Osman (and many others) change his life. Osman's journeys to Turkey's different towns make us witness the suffering of Anatolian people from this repressed and (increasingly) lost memory caused by the

Westernization/modernization reforms. A third feature Osman shares is that he ends his quest with a defeat. He could neither come together with the women he loves nor could he reach the illuminating and promising meaning of life he was looking for. A full recreation of self can also not be mentioned. The novel ends in a dark and pessimistic way. Osman explains the last moment of his life:

I remembered the anticipation of peace following the accidents I had lived through years ago . . . the feeling of transition after an accident which seemed filmed in slow motion. I remembered the passengers who were neither here nor there stirring blissfully, as if sharing together time that had come out of paradise. Shortly all the sleepy travelers would be awake, and the stillness of the morning would be broken with happy screams and thoughtless cries; and on the threshold between two worlds, as if discovering the eternal jokes existent in a space without gravity, we would collectively discover with confusion and excitement the presence of bloody internal organs, spilled fruits, sundered bodies, and all those combs, shoes, children's books that spilled out of torn suitcases. (295)

If the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was an accident than the first fifteen-year of the young republic was the period of transition after this accident. The citizens, who suddenly became members of another country which profiled itself in a complete different way, were the passengers who are neither here nor there. They were sleepy travelers who stand on the threshold between two worlds and who collectively experienced the confusion and the perplexity that this transition brought. Their suitcases were torn, because they were full of old, repressed, unwanted memories. In *The New Life*, the multilayered plotlines develop as a love story. Inspired from the thrilling soul of the detective novel, Pamuk makes his protagonist pursue the tracks of his self.

Pamuk's "distancing and convoluted" (Stokes 233) plotlines should be thought of nested boxes. The outmost box is the superficial reading of the novel which tells the love story of a helpless male protagonist to a woman and his thorny and intricate search after her. What follows, the issue of the schizophrenic fragmentation of the self in relation to past-present and East-West dichotomies. In the same way there is link of Pamuk's motif to the repressed past and its manifestations in novel. In addition to this, the negative reception of the Westernization-modernization project conducted by the Turkish republican intelligentsia, the consequences of this imposed ideology and quest for 'self'.

The identity problem in the novel, which I want to characterize as 'the schizophrenic fragmentation of the self', appears more in the form of a past-present clash; between the memories of an Islam-oriented decadent empire belonging to the past and the fabricated dictated history of the secular republican nation-state belonging to a closer past and the trauma of transition in the form of disrupted identity. In that respect, the main aim of the quest can be regarded as coming to terms with this clash. Stressing the themes of 'embedded unconscious' and 'loss' which dominate the novel of Pamuk, Ulker Gokberk argues, "It is the consciousness of this irrevocable loss that reverberates in Pamuk's construction of individual and collective selfhood" (55). The reality of the character is constructed through the relation between the repudiated past inherited from the Ottomans and the dictated identity manufactured by the Westernization-modernization project of the state as part of nation building.

Pondering on Pamuk's approach to the stance of Turkey and its problems in terms of definition of identity and designating its position in the contemporary world, Turkish literary critic Erdag Goknar argues that the problem of in-between identity can best be explained as a follow-up of four phases: "Ottoman history in a European context, the transition from Ottoman

Empire to modern Middle East, the early-twentieth-century Kemalist cultural revolution, and the legacy of all three on present-day Turkey” (57). Goknar points out that Pamuk construes his narratives as juxtapositions of past and present. In other words, he reflects contemporary events with its past doppelgangers. According to Goknar, it is not Pamuk’s priority to make use of the Ottoman past “as a repository of historical source texts, but rather as an intertextual model of literary form” (58). In other words, Pamuk employs the Ottoman themes to be able to scrutinize “identity subversion or new understandings of selfhood” (Goknar 37). Martin Stokes also claims that “Pamuk considers it necessary to benefit from the past; yet there is no such claim of looking for closure with the past” (231). Pamuk uses the past in order to give meaning to the present and to find answers for today’s trauma. This pursuit for a united and fixed identity could better be explained as “not the so-called return to roots but as coming-in-to-terms-with our ‘routes’” (Hall 4). Pamuk’s protagonists are looking for the lost meaning, yet they also doubt its existence.

*The New Life*, the textual framework of Pamuk is equipped with temporal juxtapositions, futile quests and the deconstructed postmodernist and post-Orientalist binary oppositions. Goknar accordingly claims that Pamuk has made it a characteristic of his novel to “destabilize fixed identities” (34) which also recalls the concept of “postulated identity” (Bauman 19) meaning that the structure of identity is convertible and substitutable. Pamuk, in a similar vein to Bhabha, leads through a “life lived precariously on the cultural and political margins of modern society” (112). Locating Pamuk on the margins of the two cultures, the East and the West, it can be claimed that Osman’s identity is also placed in the margins. Osman suffers from the sentiments of insecurity, perplexity, hopelessness, which is emanated from the need of the ontological questioning.



The problem of liminal identity crisis of Turkey emanates from the incapability and the impossibility of 'killing' the past. As the Ottoman heritage could not be entirely effaced, Turkey cannot possibly be reborn. Turkish sociologists Zeliha Etoz and Nuran Erol Isik claim:

When modernity, idealized as being 'civilized', has itself become a target; the burden and the severity of the act of remembering -- which has an ideological facet - increases. Moreover, when the relationship between the modern and the past wears oriental colors; history turns into a burden which is even more difficult to bear. Therefore, the past functions as the frame of reference [...] and accordingly becomes a hindrance [...] when interpreting today's identities, mentalities, and conflicts. (173)

In the case of Turkey, we witness the antagonism between a repressed unconscious and imported identity. If the past functions as the frame of reference as mentioned above and if the past is an unwanted repressed one, then it turns into a hindrance when the nation aims to create a new image. Bhabha promotes the 'Third Space' as a vague space which functions as an uncanny zone, which he uses in order to psychoanalyze postcolonial identity. In the novel, the uncanny stands for what Bhabha explains in relation to Freud's 'repetition compulsion'. This is the feeling one gets when he has a problematic past which he avoids, yet has to confront. This refers also to the "[...] repressions of a 'cultural' unconscious; a liminal, uncertain state of cultural belief when the archaic emerges in the midst of margins of modernity as a result of some psychic ambivalence or intellectual uncertainty" (206). In that respect, that the representation of liminal identity in the novel should be brought in relation with Bhabha's understanding of the uncanny. Bhabha once said in his article "Dissemination" that people in exile live "retroactively" (199). They gather "the past in a ritual of revival" (ibid). The new culture that they have to adopt and adapt is a

“half-life, half-light” (ibid). According to Bhabha, “denial is always a retroactive process; a half acknowledgement of that [historical]otherness has left its traumatic mark. [...] Remembering is [...] a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (88-90).

In other words, who we are now (our identity) is reformed by what we have undergone in the past. Turkey has generated a new identity which was truly reformed (or fabricated), yet disrupted under the ideological shadow of the Ottoman Empire. An indicator of the past, the uncanny is “not locked in the past, but is instead located firmly in the present” (33). We witness the existence of uncanny Turkish towns in the novel. The past strikes back and disturbs the present. That is why the protagonist tends towards interrogation of his present-day identities. His memory is not kept in the unconscious, yet they retaliate in their present mind. Osman suffers from “the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history” (15).

In the case of Turkey, the shadow of the past, which is in this context the period of post-World War I and the Ottoman identity: “splits [nation’s] presence, the battle of the Dardanelles was one the uppermost important battles of the Word War I. It occurred in 1915-1916 between the Ottoman Empire and The Allies. The military forces under the command of Ataturk won the battle in this front distorts his outline . . . [and] disturbs and divides the very time of his [subjects’] being[s]” (62). The impossibility of becoming your-self, as depicted in *The New Life*, also emanates from the fact that the subject is continuously exposed to different identities. On the one hand, there is this fabricated identity which the subject takes over through imposition; on the other hand there is this urge to come to terms with the past and the memories related to it. Following each bus accident, with the urge to become someone else, Osman steals a random passenger’s identification card. This, for instance, refers to the abandonment of his

former self. It also reminds the reader of the previously mentioned 'coat' image which makes people believe that they will transform into a new person, a Western one, when they put it on. Thanks to such symbols, Pamuk also proves that the Westernization-modernization process was completely not internalized. Instead it turns into material fad, and could not go further than being an obsession for objects and appearances which would make the person feel 'another'.

This clock automatically settles the Westernization-versus-Islamization question through a modern device: Instead of the usual cuckoo bird, two other figures had been employed, a tiny imam who appeared on the lower balcony at the proper time for prayer to announce three times that "God is Great!" and a minute toy gentleman wearing a tie but no mustache who showed up in the upper balcony on the hour, asserting that "Happiness is being a Turk, a Turk, a Turk". (88)

Turkish sociologist Emre Gokalp discusses national pride in Turkey and the negative and positive reactions that Orhan Pamuk received in the Turkish media after he had received the Nobel Prize for literature (2006).

Regarding his successfulness in literature, Gokalp argues:

The historical paradox of Turkish national identity stems from the tension between the emulation of the West/Europe that is regarded as the unique address of civilization, modernization, wealth and prosperity, and the hostility towards the same West/Europe that is, at the same time, considered as the cultural/political 'other', or at times the 'enemy'. In other words, the sentiments for Europe oscillate between two extremes: on the one hand the West/Europe is admired as the ideal or level of contemporary civilization which is in the core of Republican

ideology; on the other hand resentment is nourished against the West/Europe as an insidious political enemy. (65)

For Turkish people, the West is white, positive and ideal as well as it is black, negative and alien. For that reason, the West has become Turkey's both negative and positive other with which Turks compare and identify themselves. In her book *National Identity Reconsidered: Images of Self and Other in a "United" Europe*, Triandafyllidou makes use of two notions in order to define the construction of identity from within and outside. She calls them 'internal significant other' and 'external significant other'. Concerning Turkey's relation to West Triandafyllidou argues that "the external significant other may switch its position as inspiring and threatening significant other in the eye of a nation". She further asserts that this inscription of the external significant other as threatening or inspiring is mostly determined "during the periods of social, political or economic crisis. The positive significant other may . . . be seen as a model to follow for resolving the crisis, while the threatening other may serve to overcome the crisis. Because it unites the people before a common enemy, it reminds them 'who we are'" (44). The post-World War I period was still not the end of war for contemporary Turkey. The Independence War lasted till 1923. The country was then an amalgam of the leftovers of a decadent empire and the springs of a newborn nation-state. Suffering from instability and also a geographical in-betweenness, the republican intelligentsia of Turkey had decided to follow Europe as their inspiring significant other which was during the World War I the threatening significant other. The main problem emanates from the immediacy of the revolution (supported by the republican elites) and the incapability of Turkish citizens to internalize it.

In this context, *The New Life* should be read as a book which illustrates Turkey's negative experience in the course of the Westernization process, regarding the effects of this forced

change in Anatolian towns. It also deals with the arrival of capitalism to these towns and it portrays how local brands (Cola Cola, Pepsi and Schweppes instead of Branch soda pop) were replaced by their Western (mostly American) equals. The protagonist, Osman, is worried about this increasing popularity of Western brands. That is why he became happy to see that a local drink, Branch soda pop, is still popular in this small Anatolian town called Viranbag: "I observed without too much concern that Branch soda pop still persisted here against all sorts of assaults from Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and Schweppes" (Pamuk 287). The existence of Branch soda pop is inspiring for Osman. This drink, just as the new life caramels, represents the last traces of the indigenous culture. The indigenous culture of Turkish people living in these Anatolian towns is getting slowly assimilated to Westernization. Besides, Pamuk juxtaposes an Islamic figure, Sheikh, with Pepsi-Cola, the drink which is strongly identified with West.

In a mountain town called Alacaelli, Osman visits the Sheikh and tells about his so-called miracles in a sarcastic way: "the miracles of the Sheikh performed, such as curing the sick or bestowing fecundity on barren women, his real talent was . . . opening a Pepsi-Cola bottle by simply touching the cap"(Pamuk 181). Osman also mentions people who try to turn their backs to their roots in an attempt to escape from the plague of Westernization under the name of globalization in big cities of Turkey: "Like people who used to flee the plague once upon a time . . . they were trying to escape from the gaudy consumer products with foreign names which, thanks to the support of advertisements and TV, arrived from the West and infected the whole country like a deadly contagious disease" (272). Osman's dialogue with the manufacturer of the new life caramels, Sureyya Bey, about the chess game reflects again the confusing relation of the East with the West from a sarcastic perspective:

He stirred in his chair, his face turned to the gray light that came in through the shady garden, and he asked me out of the blue if I knew German. Without waiting for an answer, he said “Schachmatt.” Then he explained that the word “check-mate” was a European hybrid made of the Persian word for king, “shah,” and the Arabic word for killed, “mat.” We were the ones who had taught the West the game of chess. In the worldly arena of war, the black and white armies fought out of good and evil in our souls. And what had they done? They had made a queen out of our vizier and a bishop out of our elephant; but this was not important in itself. What was important, they had presented chess back to us as a victory of their own brand of intellect and the notions of rationalism in their world. Today we were struggling to understand our own sensitivities through their rational methods, assuming this is what becoming civilized means. (Pamuk 281)

Moreover, in another chapter, Pamuk tells the story of a man who had showed him “the face cards on which he had drawn with his own hand, changing the king into “sheikh” and the jack into “disciple,” (91). This is an example of Islamization of a Western object. It is meant to be a sort of defense mechanism and reaction against Westernization.

After the exNahit/Mehmet’s father, Dr. Fine, and some other people that Osman met in different Anatolian towns are all convinced of the existence of such conspiracy against Turkey. An old man in an Anatolian town says to Osman that:

Today we are all defeated,. . . The West has swallowed us up, trampled on us in passing. They have invaded us down to our soup, our candy, our underpants; they have finished us of. But someday, someday perhaps a thousand years from now,

we will avenge ourselves; we will bring an end to this conspiracy by taking them out of our soap, our chewing gum, our souls . . . (Pamuk 290-291).

In the novel, *The New Life*, the manifestation of journey-quest is depicted through bus journeys. Pamuk portrays these voyages as the main metaphor of transition. During his random bus journeys, Osman always wishes for an accident to happen through which he can pass to a new life. He travels mostly at night which makes this journey more mysterious and causes him to feel melancholic. The half-lit interiors of these buses remind the reader of the image of 'twilight' that dominates *The New Life*. During his journeys, Pamuk writes, Osman goes into a world of twilight where the "faint light inside the bus" (Pamuk 293) is lit up by the headlights of other buses passing by. This "half-life half-light" (69) is always existent in Pamuk's fiction. If the issue turns to Victor Turner's argument that liminaries (liminal beings or passengers) are in-between subjects who go through a "religious or quasi-religious state" (Turner 167), it will become obvious that Osman's quests do operate as a quasi-religious journey including several mystical, mythical symbols. In addition to that, elucidating the idea of Van Gennep about liminality and the position of liminal personae, Turner describes liminality as a state which is ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude and slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there

they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. . . . liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in a womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun and the moon. (Turner 95)

After one of many bus accidents, Osman confesses that he is stuck in an in-between state of being: "Peace, sleep, death, time! I was both here and there, in peace and waging a bloody war,

insomniac as a restless ghost and also interminably somnolent, present in an eternal light and also in time that flowed away inexorably” (Pamuk 47). Turner’s association of liminality with the abovementioned concepts makes clear that the process of quest is a blurred and nebulous period. During the experience of quest, happening in the form of a transition, the protagonist feels unclaimed and unpossessed. The quest of the protagonist Osman shows experience of the life in both physical and metaphysical dimensions. We witness one of the most striking cataleptic experiences of Osman, when he first encounters with “the book” within the novel:

This was the kind of light within which I could recast myself; I could lose my way in this light; I already sensed in the light, the shadows of an existence I had yet to know and embrace [ . . . ] as if I had been stranded in a country where I knew neither the lay of the land nor the language and the customs[ . . . ] In the light that surged from the book into my face, I was terrified to see shabby rooms, frenetic buses, bedraggled people, faint letters, lost towns, lost lives, phantoms. A journey was involved; it was always about a journey. (Pamuk 3)

We witness this “moment of in and out of time” (Turner 96) already at the very beginning of the novel foreshadowing the other metaphysical moments that we will come across in the rest of the book. In that respect, it can be claimed that if bus journeys of Osman are the indicators of his physical quest, the moments of accidents are the “moment[s] in and out of time” (Turner 96) or “momentary death[s]” (Van Gennep 110) during which Osman experiences a trance in its literal sense. He experiences the suspension of life in August every moment of accident during which he goes through the temporary absence of the physical realm and the temporary presence of the metaphysical world. Van Gennep points out that “a man at home . . . lives in the secular realm; he moves into the realm of the sacred when he goes on a journey and find himself a foreigner near a



camp of strangers” (12) In the novel, Osman starts his successive journeys right after he plans to find the writer of the book. In the course of time, Osman’s physical journey transforms to a metaphysical pilgrimage. In Van Gennep’s terms, Osman moves from ‘the secular realm’ to ‘the realm of the sacred’. The more he travels, the more alienated he becomes from himself. This alienation is physical in the sense that he is far from his family and friends during his journeys. It is also metaphysical, as he becomes estranged from his inner world. At this point, Osman chases double meanings and existences of every person and object. Janan exists as a woman (and a desired sexual object) in the real world and also impersonates a superhuman and an angel. She supersedes God in the imaginary world of Osman.

In other words, Janan operates both as a physical (profane) and as a metaphysical (sacred) character in the novel. As a consequence, we witness that the physical journeys of the protagonist Osman in *The New Life* turn into a metaphysical allegory. Osman wavers between physical and metaphysical realms. Following every accident that he experiences as a moment of trance, he switches his identity which is symbolized by stolen identification cards. At the very end of novel, in the very moment of the accident, an eventual chance for transition to a new life, Osman confesses to himself that he “absolutely had no wish for death, nor for crossing over into the new life” (296). It can be concluded that on the way to Westernization and modernization; elimination and repression of the fundamental values of the native (parent, indigenous) culture and adaptation of an artificial, imported bunch of values from “other” did not really work out for Turkey. Located in the margins, Turkey holds an everlasting liminal position.

The protagonist is on a quest of self-discovery; physically he is searching for a book of answers. ‘The book’ is the journey to find things that everyone expects to find in life, and why people feel disappointed. Some people believe it poses a dangerous threat to the Turkish way of

life that it is part of some grand Western conspiracy to impose Coca-Cola and burgers on a Sherbet and Borek loving nation who find them as their cultural logos. These people, in turn, have organized their own diffident pawn plan against the great conspiracy. Pamuk introduces the theme of identity in both personal and national scales. The novel is a search for personal identity: "As in secret societies, the creation of an identity—a Sense of "us"—is of the utmost importance, so you will see the name of the company emblazoned on key chains, fancy notebooks, envelopes, pencils, and lighters they give out as gifts to the rank and file. Those gifts also bear the symbols and logos that create the identity, that sense of 'us'" (Pamuk 260).

In Pamuk's conception, conversations and the sharing of dreams and memories is identity. Osman follows his own dreams and memories. Also *The New Life* may have been a reaction to the universal question of identity, "But today what unifies Turkey is not language, history, or culture. It is the Arçelik and Aygaz distributors, the football pools, the post offices, and the Butterfly Furniture Stores. These centralized concerns have networks that spread all across the country, and the unity it struggles is far stronger" (Pamuk 259). It is the psychological exploration of the West and how it differs from the East consists of something deeper than scientific or technical facts, probably a different sense of identity and self-knowledge of the Eastern type. Reproduction of Turkish political developments conveys the nationwide cultural conflict that Pamuk captures in *The New Life*. The artistic modes of expression of a nation are in an endless dialogue with those of other nations. Historical experiences and a shared cultural memory undoubtedly appear in artistic production within the geographical boundaries of a nation, thus amplifying the idea of national identity.

*The New Life* forms and informs the narrator's relationship to the author, the co-readers, and the non-reading enemies of the book. Pamuk uses this way to parody his reader's relationship

to the text before he can create a geographical and cultural divide between the East and the West, only to disintegrate it slowly by the end of the novel. *The New Life* desires its readers to examine their existing relationship with texts in general and, through a complicated parallel move, upsets the reified binary of the East and West. Pamuk mocks the culturally sanctioned ignorance of the readers as they read a novel from the other side of Europe. From Chapter six on, Pamuk narrates a parodied struggle between East and West. 'The book' leaves the promise of the new life behind and surfaces as the object confused in a national and international conflict of political economy marked by cultural difference. Pamuk mentions a character's "struggle against the book against foreign cultures that annihilate us, against the newfangled stuff that comes from the West, and his all-out battle against printed matter" (Pamuk 83). Pamuk is decisively against those "that promised us [the Turks] the serenity and enchantment of paradise within the limitations set by the world, those which the pawns of the Great Conspiracy mass-produced and disseminated...in their concerted effort to make us forget the poetry of our lives" (Pamuk 132).

He shows them responsible for "the Plague of forgetfulness that blows here on the winds from the West, easing our collective memory" (ibid.). Concluding his theories against foreign goods, a character believes the great day when history gets rewritten "no quarter shall be given to public opinion, to newspapers, or to current ideas, none to petty morality and insignificant consumer products, like their bottled gas and Lux soap, their Coca-Cola and Marlboros with which the West has duped our pitiful compatriots" (Pamuk 138). He ends his rant, "I am a genius" (ibid.). Pamuk's writing exhibits his thoughtful awareness of the Turkish Islamic heritage combined with his engagement with Western thought, and symptomatic culturally unclear transitional period of these changes. The significance of Turkishness and its conflict with Western identity follows an old discussion about the ideal adoption of Western ideas of

democracy, secularism, and political sovereignty in the Turkish cultural identity. Pamuk's works acknowledged Westernization as an essential factor to measure development, but do not turn their back on the Islamic heritage of Turkey. Turkification, Islamization and contemporization identifies Pamuk's questioning a universal human identity and of his privileging of Turkish Islamic and nationalist difference.

Pamuk's writings accepted both Islamic and nationalistic views as integral parts of the Turkish cultural heritage, and the anxiety of the loss of the old culture that might occur with their absolutism. Pamuk tries to state Turkish people are interrogate or suggestive at a historical moment of transition. They tend to be rather directive, prescriptive, and authoritative, to the extent of being almost logically radical. Hulya Yagcioglu in *A Lukacsian Reading of Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life** describes how Osman goes to discover his identity:

He gets into a bus that functions as a womb and waits to be re-born again [ . . . ]. In a state of inertia between sleep and wakefulness throughout his journey, he is in a desperate search for 'salvation without disintegration'. Osman becomes aware of his capabilities and of whom 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, finally, both a murderer and victim [ . . . ]. Above all else, because Osman is overcome by the inevitability of reality, this novel is a story of failed maturation, of a degraded quest. (92)

Osman goes for a bus journey. It is his question of his identity. He is caught between reality and fantasy. The degraded quest makes him frustrated. Casting the light on the same issue Andrew Mangu in "Orhan Pamuk at the Turkish sadness and Frustration" argues that *The New Life*:

is about the meaning of life, about finding oneself. It is about uncertainty and unconsummated desires. It reflects the material, intellectual, sexual and aesthetic frustrations of young people eager for the good things of life—as shown on the screen, in the first place. Hence its success. By lighting up the shoddiness in which most of its readers move, it responds to the current mood of self-questioning, not to say, downright pessimism in Turkey. It is the novel of depression, of disappointed hopes. (359)

‘The book’ becomes a new reliance, the promise of a new existential plenitude, not momentary and non-fragile as everyday modern life. The symbolism of the work, the search for lost paradise, and the collusion of Western modernity through the traditional values, main theme the novel.

Orhan Pamuk identifies the words of a homogenizing, unifying, and absolutist text of a nation. He shows original identities in a paradoxical critique of globalization and multinational corporate expansion at the end of the twentieth century. The achievement of Pamuk's novel is not a simple portrayal of Turkey's catastrophe of identity between East and West. Pamuk succeeds in seeing a highly sophisticated and harsh but also pleasing and entertaining critique of anti-global economic nationalism.

Orhan Pamuk presents the contemporary Turkey in liminal space under the influence of western hegemonic influence of modernization and traditional eastern Islamic cultural practices. Being within the juncture of west and east, Pamuk as a writer finds himself of none of the either but in the in-between space of both. The liminal position has been the fertile ground for the writer to defy western and eastern extremism. The novel has been the manifesto of search for an independent identity of both Pamuk, the writer and Turkey, the country. This is all the more

remarkable in that it is a novel self-conscious to an extreme, with shadowy non-realist characters and tiny threads of plot that constantly evade recognizable design in traditional sense.

From the carnage of headless bodies and severed limbs, the protagonists Osman and Janan emerge with new wallets and identities, resembling the attempt of new identity of the writer and the country. Beyond this point nothing is as it seems, no one is as he seems. A host of false Mehmetts are encountered. A shady terrorist figure called Dr. Fine, Mehmet's father, wish Osman to take his place. Janan herself vanishes and Osman must go on more surreal and violent bus journeys, seeking his love, resembling the search for his own identity from the liminal space. In one final narrative twist, it appears a deceased friend of Osman's father, Uncle Rifki, a railway enthusiast and writer for children, may actually be the author of the momentous book, or indeed of *The New Life* which is possibly one and the same. This very final scene resembles with the in-between space of the writer and the country.

Orhan Pamuk's descriptions of violence are powerful; and a long coda -- in which an older Osman still seeks Janan on long-distance journeys and elegizes his country's corrupted culture -- is gravely eloquent. But the characters do not breathe, the narrative does not grip and there is not enough grain of reality. In *The New Life* there is frequent mention of new life caramels; but even they seem abstract and unchewable. Perhaps Mr. Pamuk, like Turkey, doesn't quite translate into the West. What emerges into English is a skillful play of illusions.

More than just a personal quest, the novel is also a well-crafted allegory of Turkey, the nation. On the outskirts of secular, modern Turkey, lives the bucolic, margin who struggles to make ends meet in the assault of globalization. As foreign consumer products occupy the country, local goods and small businesses pass away out, being unable to compete with the cash flow of Western capitalism. The hopelessness and subsequent rage of the people seeking out a

scanty living are manifest in their religious fundamentalism and retrograde conservatism. Turkey is a nation rife with contradictions—on the one hand, it desires to be part of the European Union and to partake in the attendant financial and political profits and on the other hand, it still represses freedom of expression and curtails opinion critical of the government and its policies. Caught in the cusp between religion and secularism, provincial and globalized modernity, this is a country that has been unable to reconcile its many strands and sects of Islam. New Turkey's republic instead preached a different identity. Secularism sans tradition and largely disconnected from the rich history of Turkish Islam and Ottoman culture.

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