

HOW THINGS SPEAK IN ORHAN PAMUK'S *THE NEW LIFE*

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ORHAN PAMUK'UN *YENİ HAYAT*'INDA EŞYALARIN DİLİ

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5) commodity fetishism

6) totaliterlik

6) totalitarianism

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to examine how things, as significant components of Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life*, may contribute to our understanding of some sublime questions about life and art that may appear in our minds in the act of reading. Pamuk's use of detailed descriptions of objects in his novels enables the readers to visualize the scenes and hold some clues to the socio-cultural and economic frame the characters belong to. This thesis, however, aims to find out what other implications objects provide in Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life*. By following the traces of recurrently used objects in the novel, the thesis attempts to discuss two basic points: Firstly, to what extent the protagonist of the novel can reach the new life he is searching for will be questioned and secondly, how he fails to retain his advance in escape from mediocrity will be revealed. The thesis also aims at solving the mystery of the relationship between the protagonist and his belongings since this relationship is of great importance to be able to empathize with the protagonist.

Key words: thing, reification, mediocrity, truth, commodity fetishism, totalitarianism

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Orhan Pamuk'un *Yeni Hayat* adlı romanının önemli bir parçası olan eşyaları incelemek ve bu eşyaların okuma eylemi esnasında okurun aklına gelebilecek hayat ve sanatla ilgili soruları yanıtlamaya nasıl katkı sağlayabileceğini göstermektir. Orhan Pamuk'un romanlarında sıkça kullandığı eşya tasvirlerinin, okuyucunun parçadan bütüne ulaşmasına ve romandaki karakterlerin ait olduğu sosyo-kültürel ve ekonomik çerçeveyi görmesine yardım ettiği bir gerçektir. Bu çalışma eşyaların alegorik gücünü incelemenin yanısıra romanda sıkça tekrar edilen eşyaların izini sürerek romanın kahramanının aradığı yeni hayata ulaşmakta ne ölçüde başarılı olduğunu ve sıradanlıktan kaçışındaki yenilgisini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Tezin bir diğer amacı ise *Yeni Hayat*'ın kahramanının eşyalarıyla olan ilişkisinin gizemini çözmeye çalışarak onun hislerini tahayyül etmeye yardımcı olmaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: şey, eşya, şeyleşme, sıradanlık, hakikat, meta fetişizmi, totaliterlik

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BB</i>	<i>The Black Book</i>
<i>CBHS</i>	<i>Cevdet Bey and His Sons</i>
<i>MI</i>	<i>The Museum of Innocence</i>
<i>NL</i>	<i>The New Life</i>
<i>NSN</i>	<i>The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>Other Colors</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

“What if things and people, events and topography signify a different meaning?”

O. Pamuk

Orhan Pamuk, in his latest work about the art of novel, *The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist*, asserts that “novels need the willing participation of the reader’s imagination” (123). A novel reader can draw an imaginary picture of the events, characters, time, and place he/she reads about and his/her imagination can be molded by various descriptions and details in the novel. Authors often employ material goods as a means of creating a more vivid world with words and readers can also make use of the description of these goods in order to visualize the world in the novel. When we say material goods, first things that may come to our minds are dresses the characters wear, the properties they own, or the furniture with which they prefer to furnish their houses. All these commodities enable the reader to hold some vital clues to the characters’ tastes, and the social class and the cultural frame these characters belong to.

Pamuk affirms that there is an obvious “connection between the great advances in the art of novel in the mid-nineteenth century and the sudden exponential increase in Europe affluence during the same period, which resulted in a veritable flood of material goods into cities and homes” (NSN 106).

Therefore, starting with the mid-nineteenth century, readers have started to find

more details about the possessions of novel characters that have helped them read the novels as if they are looking at a painting.

One of the first writers who believed that novelists should benefit from the symbolic power of things is Honoré de Balzac. He holds that the basic difference between animals and human beings is that while different animals' ways of living are more or less the same and they keep living in similar ways for hundreds of years, human beings' possessions and manners differ according to the age and social status they belong to. "Hence", he adds in his "Introduction to *The Human Comedy*", "the work to be written needed a threefold form—men, women, and things; that is to say, persons and the material expression of their minds; man, in short, and life." Balzac, therefore, embellished his novels with description of objects allowing his readers to understand social and psychological backgrounds of the characters. Owing to this feature of his novels, Balzac is considered the prominent representative of literary realism. Interestingly, when we search for the etymology of the word "real", we see that it comes from the Latin word *rēs* meaning "thing".

Many prominent writers have made use of objects in their works after the fall of the realism as well. They utilized the functions of objects as holders of memories, transmitters of emotions, signifiers of socio-economics, tools of inspiration or substitutes of what characters lack. Orhan Pamuk emphasizes that "objects are essential parts of the countless discrete moments in novels, as well as the emblems or signs of those moments" (*NSN* 110). Objects, moreover, are

significant tools helping issues of high seriousness appear in his novels. Those who read Pamuk's novels by paying adequate attention to the use of objects will notice that objects, together with other elements of the art of novel, are inseparable parts of the narrative because they help Pamuk bring up some crucial questions about art, writing, and life itself.

In *The Black Book*, for example, the protagonist Galip's relationship with the things surrounding him reveals his struggle to reach the world of fantasy. Galip notices that words and things do not refer to each other most of the time and this disharmony between them becomes one of the main questions for him to cope with. We, most of the time, keep living by trying to maintain the illusion that what we say exactly refers to what we mean. Mostly, we assume that words refer to things and the meaning is born owing to this integrity between the signifier and the signified. However, Galip problematizes this so-called integrity since he frequently experiences moments when he cannot help seeing the gap between a word and the thing that is supposed to be referred. Owing to these very specific moments, Galip takes steps towards becoming a writer. One of these moments makes itself felt during Galip's walks around the city, just after he sees the great variety of objects laid out on a cloth in front of a junk dealer. After Galip names all the objects one by one, he feels that these names do not refer to the second meaning the objects conceal in themselves.

But they made no secret of their other meanings; that's what Galip found shocking. He'd look at the brass faucet and, thinking this was a vocabulary test, he'd tell himself it was a brass faucet, nothing more and nothing less, but when he looked at it again, he'd feel the thrill of its other meaning. He'd look at the black phone, an exact replica of every telephone he'd seen in those foreign language textbooks; marveling at its overt purpose –to link a caller with other voices- but he'd sense a second, greater, hidden purpose (*BB* 217).

This greater and hidden meaning thrills, even scares Galip since he feels that he is entering a new world where the words do not simply refer to names but to all potential meanings that a name may conceal in itself. Thus Galip begins to catch the clues and mysteries of the world of writing gradually entering the realm where language, life and fantasy touch one another. Objects, in short, function in *The Black Book* as mysterious doors to the world of writing.

In *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, on the contrary, we perceive objects as obstacles to creativity and intellectual curiosity. In fact, we observe, in *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, each prominent character's hesitation over belonging to a home and to things they own and they are surrounded by. Gürsel Aytaç, in her article holding the same title with the novel, states that Orhan Pamuk presents us a bipolar world: Cevdet Bey, his son Osman, and Osman's son Cemil represent those who go after their own benefits to lead a wealthy, comfortable life while

Cevdey Bey's brother Nusret, his other son Refik and Refik's son Ahmet go through misery, endless quest for the meaning of life and poverty (34). We can redefine this polarization by reviewing these characters' approaches to numerous commodities they are surrounded by.

Throughout the novel we constantly visualize Cevdet Bey's mansion with countless valuable furniture and goods in it and we explore either a strong or a weak bond between them and each member of the family. An unused piano, mother of pearl or velvet inlaid furniture, chandeliers, porcelains in showcases, knick-knacks, ceramic vases, gilded bedspreads are some of those possessions which incessantly remind us of Cevdet Bey's struggle to lead a bourgeois life and his wife Nigân Hanım's irreversible concern for them.

On the other hand, Refik's escape from home, his family, and all these extravagant possessions provides him with time to think and write. The remote Anatolian town, Kemah, and the room he stays after this escape contrast sharply with his life in Nişantaşı, a district in İstanbul where generally middle-class people live and go shopping. In *Ev Ödevi*, a collection of essays about four different literary works, each of which touches upon the relationship between writing and belonging to a home, Nurdan Gürbilek addresses to Oğuz Atay's famous novel *Tutunamayanlar* to assert that a person cannot contemplate grand and inspiring things while he/she is wrestling with the objects around him/her, trying to control them and eventually being controlled by them (102). However, the old room in Kemah which he shares with his ambitious friend Ömer

(identified with the nickname Rastignac¹ by his friends) consists of a small number of objects which are kept merely for their functionality: a bed, one or two mattresses, a table, a closet, a stove, cigarettes, and newspapers. This undecorated room gives Refik the needed tranquility to read, write and think about sociopolitical matters.

After Refik returns to İstanbul, he leaves his father's home and tries to continue his studies in his new home. His memoir tells us how his relationship with the things has changed and at the same time remained similar. His new home and the things he has taken from his father's home make him realize that these properties used to be owned by everyone and in fact they belonged to no one. However, now, as asserted by Refik "things are divided up into two: ours and theirs" (519). Yet they are still uninspiring and suffocating when they need to be dealt with. Refik scolds his wife when she interrupts his reading to ask some questions about curtains: "I cannot spend my whole life with bedcovers and curtains" (521). We may briefly summarize the Refik's unsolved dilemma of having or being by quoting Ömer's rhetorical questions: "You can neither be with these properties nor without them. Are you angry with them or with yourself? Are you annoyed about them or about your indecisiveness?" (501) Gürbilek's suggestion also explains why Refik has difficulty in creating a meaningful life: A person cannot contemplate grand and inspiring things while he/she is wrestling with the objects around him/her, but a person cannot contemplate grand and

¹ A fictional character by Honoré de Balzac. Rastignac is an ambitious character and known as a social climber.

inspiring things either without the simple details of everyday life because in an isolated room “a thing cannot be a real thing, and an idea cannot be a genuine idea” (102).

Although Refik fails in his attempt to bestow a consistent meaning upon his life in the end, he at least shows courage to go beyond the predetermined limits of his life. Ahmet, on the other hand, adds determination to this courage and persists in keeping art in the center of his life. He does not allow commodities to rule his life and considers selling his grandmother’s precious belongings to financially support the publication of a journal.

According to Yıldız Ecevit both Galip and Cevdet Bey dream about starting a new life (141). A new life “conjured out of words” (*BB* 218) for Galip and a new life framed by marriage, a new house and commodities in it for Cevdet Bey. For this reason, Ecevit states, the idea of “new life” has already existed in Pamuk’s previous novels until he finally writes *The New Life* (141). Basically, how Osman’s, the protagonist of the novel, life is changed by a book, which is in fact a simple object, is narrated in *The New Life*. Along with the book, other recurrently used objects shed light on the socio-cultural frame the protagonist belongs to and the strategic use of them enables the readers to follow Osman’s attempt to catch what he calls the moment of truth. The first chapter of this thesis aims to discuss how objects reveal Osman’s struggle to escape from forgetfulness, monotony and authority. In the second chapter, Osman’s victimization by the authority and how objects symbolize Osman’s fall are discussed. Both chapters

also attempt to reveal how objects help the formation of four other main characters.

II. PURGATORY: IN-BETWEEN TWO LIVES

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that
object he became,
And that object became part of him for the
day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of
years.

W. Whitman

Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life* starts with an appealing sentence: "I read a book one day and my whole life was changed" (3). Among all novels written by Pamuk, to my mind, this is the most alluring start after *The Museum of Innocence*'s captivating first sentence: "It was the happiest moment of my life, though I didn't know it" (3). This very first sentence in *The New Life* makes the reader envisage that his/her life may also be changed by the book he/she is holding in his/her hand at that moment. Not only the first sentence but also the whole first chapter emphasizes the mystery of the book and how much influence it may have on a person's life. It makes the reader believe in the greatness of that influence by some factual examples from other people's lives who have read a book and whose lives have been completely changed. Osman, the protagonist of the novel whose name readers learn at the very later pages, is not only dazzled but also scared by the book since he knows that there are many other people whose lives have fallen into pieces after reading the books like *Fundamental Principles*

of Philosophy, Islam and the New Ethos, The Betrayal of Westernization or even like *Love Sets You Free* and *Know Yourself* (13). What fundamentally changes not only Osman's but also other people's lives is, in fact, an ordinary object: a book, which actually "seem[s] similar to the other familiar objects in [Osman's] room" (NL 4).

Although Osman is aware that the book is an ordinary object like many other objects in his room, all the astounding and frightening features attributed to the book makes it a fetish in both the reader's and Osman's eyes. Roy Ellen, in his article of the same name, shortly defines the concept "fetishism" as "an ambiguous relationship of control between person and object" (213). Ellen, searching for the anthropological traces of fetishism, mainly finds out that starting with the very early ages of human thought people have searched for an object to focus upon and mostly attributed some supernatural qualities to it (214). Although this object can be a simple stone, the power ascribed to it has enabled it to have control over people's lives. Auguste Comte classified fetishism as the first stage of religious activities in human life (qtd. in Ellen 214) since people believed that certain objects had some cerebral qualities to worship. The description of the book in the first chapter of *The New Life* reminds us of this aspect of fetishism. The book, which, in fact, is a product of human mind, turns out to be an authority to control human mind and behavior. Osman, telling "Nothing besides the book could reveal to me what was my necessary course of action, what it was that I might believe in, or observe, and what path my life was to take in the new country

in which I found myself” (4), describes the book as a god in whose hands his destiny is hidden. For Osman, this new country is a place on the threshold of which he stands and his words are not enough in order to define it clearly and fit it into his world of reason. Although Osman calls himself a rational student of engineering, his reason remains insufficient to prevent the book from controlling his life. Thus starts Osman’s story in a cold December evening, when he was twenty-two.

If we are to summarize the plot of *The New Life*, the first thing we may notice will be its labyrinthine form. Osman, the narrator, first sees the book in the hands of a girl who studies architecture at the same school with him and after he buys and reads the book, he realizes that he is in love with her. The girl, Janan (Osman attracts attention to the rhyme in their names and readers may also realize the same rhyme in Orhan Pamuk’s name), also has met the book owing to her lover, Mehmet, who has gone through a road accident and an assassination attempt while searching for the mystery of the book. Osman leaves his home, the neighborhood he has lived for twenty-two years and also the school where, he complains, nobody teaches “[h]ow you must act when a phenomenally beautiful and charming girl gazes at you” (*NL* 20). He notices that Janan and the book belong to the same world since they arouse similar feelings in him and in order to reach that world, he realizes, he should follow Janan. Thus he starts his long journeys to various provinces of Turkey in quest of Janan and the light the book offers. He finds her during these journeys and accompanies her in her search for

Mehmet. Mehmet, on the other hand, changes his name to Osman since he knows he is followed by the gang founded by a mysterious man who is determined to annihilate the influence of the book by killing those who have read it. When Osman and Janan reach the town Gdl, they meet Doctor Fine. Later on, we learn that Doctor Fine is a mysterious man and Mehmet/Osman is his son, initially named Nahit. Gdl is also the town where Osman loses Janan once more and for ever and decides that he should kill Mehmet/Osman/Nahit. He realizes that purpose, although he knows Janan has got married another man and lives in Germany. After killing Mehmet/Osman/Nahit, Osman returns to his hometown, gets married and has a daughter. Years later, with the inspiration of New Life brand caramels, he restarts his bus trips around Anatolia to capture the meaning of whatever he has experienced by then and dies due to a bus accident on his way back home.

Keeping this simple and short summary of *The New Life*'s plot in mind, we may start to focus on the noteworthy divergence between the world where Osman searches for Janan and the world where Osman kills Mehmet/Osman/Nahit, in other words, the world of art and the world of commodities. As soon as Osman starts to read the book, he is disturbed by the sudden awareness of his loneliness and he realizes that he cannot share his feelings about the new life the book has introduced to him with his friends who habitually play cards at a caf or watch soccer games on TV. He confesses that he

is afraid of loneliness and being expelled from the ease of leading and sharing an ordinary life together with the majority.

I was afraid of isolation [...], being different, drowning in love, being privy to the mysteries of the universe but looking ridiculous all my life explaining the mystery to those who are not in the least interested, going to jail, being considered a crackpot, comprehending at last that the world is even crueller than I'd imagined, being unable to get pretty girls to love me (NL 13-14).

If Osman feels isolated after reading the book, what kind of world, then, do those who have not read the book live in? Why, as asked by Osman after reading the book, do people still need to go to the mosque, kill time chatting in vain at cafés, watch TV at the same time every evening although it provides nothing but monotony? (NL 14) Zeynep Ergun, in her article about *The New Life*, asserts that we are living in a world which gradually becomes so meaningless that our rational calculations remain incompetent to solve its turmoil, and the meaning we are looking for and the wisdom and insight we need to grasp it can only be endowed by art, artist, and his/her creativity (248). Therefore, it is not incomprehensible that Osman acknowledges the book as a guide to a new world where he will be able to solve the mysteries of life. It is also understandable that he is anxious about the fact that the more he gets sensitive about these mysteries the more he will be marginalized, ridiculed, or even exterminated. This dilemma keeps haunting Osman throughout the rest of his life. However, those who do not

get acquainted with the book live in a world whose borders have been firmly defined and within these borders their relationship with commodities is distorted. This is what the thesis intends to discuss by focusing on the commodities *The New Life* includes. By keeping track of the objects embedded in *The New Life*, the thesis will also analyze how people themselves eventually turn out to be commodities functioning to keep the authority alive.

Firstly, we may focus on the change in Osman's relationship with the objects surrounding him after he reads the book. He clearly defines this change by excitedly expressing "It was as if objects spoke a language which I was beginning to hear, even if just barely, in the temporal silence into which the book had lured me" (*NL* 11). This recognition of objects as speaking beings reminds us of Galip's endeavor to grasp the second, hidden meaning objects refer to in *The Black Book*. As mentioned in the introduction part of this thesis, Galip thinks, "By naming the objects in this world and peopling it with stories, Celâl had made himself a hiding place and hidden the key" (*BB* 218). Galip wants to enter this world, which "Celâl had conjured out of words".

Orhan Pamuk, who already lives in this world as a writer, offers us a thrilling moment about objects when he asks several questions in a row in his essay titled "When the Furniture is Talking, How Can You Sleep?" in *Other Colors*: "Why does that ashtray tell only me of its sadness and defeat? Why am I the confessor of the door latch in its misery? Why am I the only one who thinks that by opening the refrigerator I shall come to a world exactly like the one I knew

twenty years ago?” (27). These questions not only reveal that writing and reading is the only way to discover the mystery of hidden meanings but also scare us by emphasizing the inevitability of isolation in the end. Osman, similarly, starts to find out that everything in his life, including objects, may have a certain significance leading him to a deeper meaning about life. Like Galip, he realizes that the key opening the doors of this deeper meaning is hidden in the world of writing. Parla maintains that an artist’s growth to maturity can be possible through his perception of the relationship between art and reality (“Sanat ve Yaşam...” 265). If we read the novel as the story of an artist’s growth to maturity, as Jale Parla does, we can suggest that Osman, with the deep influence of the book, begins to notice deeper meanings in things at which he had looked before but could not see or feel in detail because they had kept their silence and had not spoken with Osman.

At the very early pages of the novel, we encounter a short and the first list of objects which were wasted or forgotten on a beach probably after a holiday season: “the tin cans, plastic balls, bottles, plastic flip-flops, clothes pins, light bulbs, plastic dolls” (NL 11). These objects are the things that Osman and his friends saw on the beach when they were children. However, Osman, through the inspiration of the book, “sense[s] that if any old object from [his] old world were to be discovered and scrutinized now, from [his] new viewpoint enlightened by the book, it could be transformed into that magical piece children are always looking for” (NL 11). With this claim and with the opened doors of his perception,

Osman resembles a child. The word “children” in the quotation above may be our key word here to understand how people gradually lose their aptitude for imagining and questioning as they become adults. Most of the people, living in the same city with Osman, obviously do not have enough time to look for the hidden meanings or to question their own ways of living. Osman describes an ordinary morning in his life with an exception that takes place owing to the impact of the book:

I walked to the station and got on the train; I got off the train and boarded the ferry; at Karaköy I leapt out on the landing; I elbowed my way up the stairs, got on the bus and arrived at Taksim Square; on my way to the university, I stopped briefly and watched some gypsies hawking flowers on the sidewalk. (*NL* 17)

Thousands of people walk, run, get on and off buses to fulfill their obligations without questioning what they do or how they behave every morning.

Automatism of their actions makes them bear a resemblance to the vehicles they use to benefit from their functionality.

Zeynep Ergun, in the same article mentioned above, asserts that kind of life does not accept people as individuals but likens them to simple arms and elbows and reduces them to the functionality of a station, a train, a ferry, stairs, and a bus (249). Osman also habitually does the same things with the crowd, but probably for the first time in his life, stops for a moment and takes his time to watch the gypsies. Although it seems trivial, this is the change the book has

brought to his life. We sense that returning to the curiosity of childhood may be possible for Osman, but those who have not read the book yet are surrounded by forgetfulness, mediocrity, and repression. The oppressive and mechanical life all people experience kills curiosity and courage to search for alternatives and to challenge the status quo. Furthermore, this oppressive and mechanical life sentences people to lifelong childish naivety and ignorance. The word “children”, therefore, may also imply this forgetfulness and naivety. In fact, Osman’s inner voice says:

“When God blew his soul into the creation, Adam’s eye beheld it. [...] We were such joyful children back then, naming what we saw and seeing what we named! Back then, time was time, hazard was hazard, and life was life. [...] words and matter, which had formerly been inseparable, now turned against each other.” (*NL* 106-107)

Osman’s naïve yearning for integrity and possibility to reach the origin, or the truth, where all meanings are clear, manifests itself when he readily believes in the alluring call of the first sentence in the book: “I read a book one day and my whole life was changed” (*NL* 3). It is also stressed by Orhan Pamuk, in *Other Colors* that our inclination to have faith in this very first sentence reveals our broken heartedness, childishness, naivety and readiness to believe in those who give us hope (148).

We cannot decide whether the impact of the book on Osman's life is good for him since he frequently feels himself trapped in the area between the mysterious, calling and promising world of the book which he, in fact, wishes to explore and his own old, safe and predictable world in which he has been living for twenty-two years. Although Osman, on the one hand, fears that he will never be able to follow the way the book leads, he feels, on the other hand, the peace and quiet when he remains in his room, being surrounded by his acquainted objects: "I was agonized to see my body here, in this other life, left dumb-struck in the silence in my room, the peace provided by my table, the stillness of my arms and hands, my belongings, my pack of cigarettes, my scissors, textbooks, curtains, my bed" (*NL* 36-37). Although Osman tries and manages to follow the way towards his new life, the things that belong to his past incessantly haunt him throughout his journey:

I would catch myself dreaming of the mother I had left behind, my room, my things, my bed; and feeling insidiously rational and commensurably guilty, I would construct fantasies of joining together what was in my dreams with Janan's dreams of the new life" (*NL* 75)

Through the impact of the book on his life and existence, however, Osman gives birth to a new man who feels true love for the first time in his life and realizes that he has to escape from everything that belongs to the times he had not read the book yet: his room, his belongings, his mother, and the city he has lived

in so far. The new man, Osman has given birth to, feels alienated towards

Osman's belongings:

“When I entered my room, I looked at my bed as if I were seeing someone else's belongings, the books that were piled on one corner of my table, the nudie magazines I had not touched since I first saw Janan, the carton of cigarettes drying on the radiator, the change I kept in a dish, my key ring, my wardrobe that didn't close right; and regarding all my stuff that bound me to my old world, I understood I had to make good my escape” (*NL* 41).

Osman's oscillations between remaining in his old, familiar life and struggling to attain the secret assured by the new life make us doubt his determination to reach that secret, that so-called mystery of life, everything that belongs to the essence, the true and single meaning. However, the nudie magazines, which have not been touched since Osman saw Janan, indicate another change in his life. As the realization of the gypsies on the sidewalk have once kept Osman out of the mechanical order of life, presence of Janan, whose “name mean[s] soul mate [...and] also God” (*NL* 39) distances him from his bodily demands and directs his attention to his mental and spiritual lack.

The first good summary of the world Osman lives in comes after he starts his journeys and arrives at the New Light Hotel in Şirinyer to stay two and a half days. Although Osman is in search of his soul mate to satisfy his spiritual lack, and through his soul mate, in pursuit of a new life, the invading objects of the

material world incessantly haunt his journey towards the truth. Away from Janan, in the hotel room he masturbates looking at the newspaper, *Hürriyet*, and on the supplement of its Sunday edition he sees a picture of the proprietress of a Nişantaşı restaurant. In the picture, the woman “had exposed parts of her anatomy for the camera, as well as both her neutered cats and all the furniture she had ordered from Milan (*NL* 52). In this short description the woman’s body, her cats and the furniture are all objectified and they reflect the values that people belonging to the middle-class attach importance. Human body (especially female body) becomes a part of the material world and can be functionalized as an object to attract attention; neutered cats also serve as inseparable objects of the middle-class life.

As emphasized by Baudrillard, pets “are not sexed (indeed, they are often neutered for their role as household pets); they are every bit as devoid of sex, even though they are alive, as objects are” (*The System of Objects* 95). However, as added by Baudrillard, “The object is in fact the finest of domestic animals” (95) since it is supposed to upgrade the social position of a person. The furniture bought from Milan serves precisely that purpose. The town Şirinyer, on the other hand, like many other towns in Turkey, consists of a handful of stores and gathering spots: the barbershop, two coffeehouses, the tobacco shop, the restaurant, and a post office. The picture of the daily life is drawn through the objects filling these shops: OP brand shaving soap (“OP shaving soap” is one of the most recurrent objects in *The New Life*, in fact repeatedly making us

remember Orhan Pamuk's initials), playing cards, Atatürk statue, tractors, television which is constantly on, the Marlboro sign, old cassettes of karate and soft porn films, National lottery and Sport Toto tickets, pulp novels, rat poison and a calendar (*NL* 52). The life Osman is struggling to leave behind is more or less made up of these objects determining how people should spend time, what they should believe in and to what extent they can daydream. For Osman, the truth the book points out and his love for Janan will enable him to escape from this life, from shallowness of those who waste time playing cards and watching TV, from mediocrity and cruelty of those who smell OP shaving soap, and from ordinariness of those who suppose life to be something that can only be organized according to the categories of the linear time that are shown on calendars. Away from Şirinyer, in the middle of İstanbul, life is not less shaped by the authority of goods as it is seen in the newspaper and Osman cannot totally escape the impact of it.

However, when Osman finds Janan just after a bus accident, she defines love and through her definition she indirectly points out the end, the new life Osman is trying to reach: "Love" she says "points the way, empties you of the stuff of life, carries you at last to the mystery of creation. I understand it now. We are on the way there" (*NL* 72). She portrays the change in her life after meeting Mehmet with these words: "It was as if everything around me had changed its color and shape –human beings, beds, lamps, ashtrays, streets, clouds, chimneys, everything but everything. It was with awe and wonder that I set out to discover

this new world” (NL 72). Through Janan’s words, we witness the description of a sudden change for the second time in the book. A similarly abrupt transformation of the meaning of everything has also been experienced by Osman just after he reads the book. Thus, we observe that knowledge provided by a work of art and feelings aroused by love bring a corresponding change in Osman’s and Janan’s lives.

Both scenes (Osman’s sense of alienation towards the objects in his room after he reads the book and Janan’s discovery of the perplexing change of everything around her after she falls in love) of realizing the possibility of the hidden, true meaning of life reminds us of “The Fall of Man” in *The Old Testament*. In the book of *Genesis*, the serpent persuades Eve to eat the forbidden fruit by telling her “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (2). After Eve and Adam eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, the unexpected realization of their nakedness surprises them. Similarly, the appearance of the possible existence of a broader, indefinable meaning of life perplexes Osman and Janan. After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve are permanently exiled from their heavenly life and punished with toil through which they have to provide their own survival. On the other hand, after reading the book and falling in love, Osman and Janan are also exiled from their mediocre lives to suffer an unending search for the meaning of life.

Janan's dual character –fleshly and spiritual- is emphasized in both Yıldız Ecevit and Zeynep Ergun's articles on *The New Life*. According to Yıldız Ecevit, Janan is a woman who is desired by Osman to have sex with and to marry one day. But, on the other hand, the sacred web spun around her through the images of angel and light renders her a component of spiritual life (96). And also as stated by Zeynep Ergun, Janan is a leader pointing the way with an enchanting influence on Osman and a symbol of wisdom and sensitivity, but at the same time she is a woman heading out to an obscure journey in pursuit of a man (254). However, the attribution of these characteristics to Janan is questionable. Osman sees and makes the reader see Janan as an angel whenever he needs a guide to the place where the sacred meaning of life is hidden. But at the same time, he emphasizes her flesh and blood side whenever he needs a lover, a woman to sleep and share life with. Therefore, it may not be wise to trust Osman's words to understand Janan's predicament, but we rather pay attention to her own words about her inclinations.

Janan's habit of collecting various objects from several different and shabby shops causes her to spend considerable time in the old life they have left behind. This may be the indicator of Janan's oscillations between two lives –the old and the new (or we shall say before falling in love and after falling in love) reminding us of Osman's remembrance of his life before he reads the book. Janan habitually collects old-fashioned, worn out things like “a can of ten-year-old food”, “children's comics”, “a broken flatiron”, or “one of those old coal-burning

stoves that are no longer made” from shops like a “mice-invested grocery”, “market stalls”, or “dry-goods stores” (NL 62-69). She justifies her habit by telling Osman that “I am making my way to Metmet’s other life, yet he was not Mehmet but someone else in that other life” (NL 74). Moreover, when she refers to the periodical *Children’s Weekly*, she gives more clues about why she collects these objects and where they will reach at the end of their quest for the new life: “The reason why I collect these is because Mehmet claimed that everybody would eventually return to a place within these pages. These pages constitute his childhood. They are what make up the book” (NL 74).

In fact, we see a similar but more obsessive habit of collecting things in *The Museum of Innocence*. While the woman, Janan, is searching for objects that will enable her to grasp how Mehmet’s childhood was in *The New Life*, the man, Kemal, strives to gather Füsün’s belongings to recollect the times he has spent with her in *The Museum of Innocence*. Thus, for both Janan and Kemal, objects belonging to their beloved ones’ lives becomes a means to suspend the flowing time. The difference between them, though, while Janan searches, finds, spends some time together with the objects and then forgets or leaves them somewhere during her journey, Kemal mostly steals Füsün’s belongings, keeps them and develops a more intimate and recurrent relationship with them.

Thus, we understand the new life has been born out of, or at least through things Janan and Osman have already seen, touched, felt or read about. Osman considers these things as clues pointing the way and he believes that they leave

them behind (after Janan caresses them) as traces for the potential followers.

Janan, on the other hand, not only collects these things as the mediators of their old and new lives but she also prefers to spend considerable time with those who have probably not even heard the title of the book and are wandering around bus stations not because they are searching for a meaning but because they have to be there. In marked contrast to Osman's complaints of loneliness and fear of isolation after reading the book, Janan never breaks away from the crowd around them. Osman confesses that

Many a time [he] found her chatting away intimately with some people in the crowd; she'd be in deep conversation with some elderly woman wearing a kerchief, or repeatedly kissing the little duck-faced girl on her lap, or expending her surprising knowledge concerning bus lines and terminals to help out ill-willed strangers who reeked of OP shaving soap. (*NL* 70).

The kerchief the woman is wearing or OP shaving soap almost all ill-willed strangers smell remain as the signs of the old, mediocre life most people belong to. Although Osman and Janan are aware of the fact that there is a certain relationship between the clothes people wear and who they are or whom they look like, they do not utilize this to prove their distinctiveness. On the contrary, they prefer to wear clothes that make them similar to most of the people around them. Osman accepts that their appearance makes them similar to most of the people around them and evokes the memories belonging to their former lives: "Janan

would buy herself some of those long poplin skirts that made her look like some well-meaning provincial school teacher, and I would get the sort of shirts worn by pale imitations of former selves” (NL 73). Janan puts forward a more realistic view about, and in fact a good summary of the life they have left behind and the life they are searching for. She also implies that they will never be able to reach a new life but just disconsolately wander around the life they think they have left behind:

“Many times one does exactly the opposite of what one thinks, or thinks one is doing. 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. When you imagine you are helping, you inflict harm. Most people want neither a new life nor a new world. So they kill the book’s author” (NL 68).

The murdered author of the book, the passionate advocate of the construction of railroads throughout his country and Osman’s father’s close friend: Uncle Railman Rıfki. He persistently maintains that “[he] will not draw any illustrated adventure that does not include at least one frame sporting the picture of a train” although he is repeatedly rejected by publishers (NL 253). Orhan Pamuk introduces Uncle Rıfki in *Other Colors* as follows: “Due to his awareness of the spiritual lack in his life, he goes through a deep feeling of unease but nevertheless he endeavors to combine the dream of reconstruction and modernization of his country with his own personal belongings such as his

sideboard, mirror, closet, comb, socks, and shoes” (152). We come across the list of these belongings twice in *The New Life*: firstly, just after Osman reads the book for the first time since he wants to see the objects again which he once saw at Uncle Railman Rıfki’s house when he had paid a visit to him together with his father, and secondly years later when Osman remembers the day he first read the book and suddenly realizes that “the secret of the book and [his] life [lies] there” in Uncle Rıfki’s house. During both visits Osman pays an undivided attention to the objects in the house. Nevertheless, these objects are quite different from the goods he came across on the beach. The objects in Uncle Rıfki’s house compose the second and longer object list in *The New Life*:

“[t]he canaries in the cage, the barometer on the wall, the meticulously framed pictures of railroad trains, the breakfront in which cordial sets, miniature railway cars, a silver candy dish, a conductor’s punch, the railroad service medals were placed in one half of the showcase and maybe forty or fifty books in the other half, the unused samovar standing on top of it, the playing cards on the table...” (14).

The only thing that we cannot call inanimate in the list above is the canaries. However, as claimed by Jean Baudrillard, “pets are indeed an intermediate category between human beings and objects” and “a testimonial to a failure of the inter-human relationship and an attendant recourse to a narcissistic domestic

universe where subjectivity finds fulfillment in the most quietistic way” (*The System of Objects*, 95).

“A failure of inter-human relationship” may well summarize Uncle Rıfkı’s life since he faces threat, defeat, and death in the end due to his idealism. Yıldız Ecevit, in her book *Orhan Pamuk’u Okumak*, asserts that intimidation and death is an inevitable end for Rıfkı Hat since the socio-economic system he lives in neutralizes each person who has individual dreams and initiative (263). While the canaries remain single as object-like beings in the list, the plurality of other objects follows and attracts our attention. Baudrillard asserts that “objects are the only entities in existence that can genuinely coexist, because the differences between them do not set them against one another, as happens in the case of living beings (95). The objects in Uncle Rıfkı’s house “genuinely coexist” reflecting his faith in the significance of railway construction as a conveyor of civilization and at the same time his fixed ideals and rigid outlook. (His rigidity is also revealed through his last name “Hat” which means “Line” in English. Uncle Rıfkı follows a straight line of values and beliefs throughout his life which, he believes, will lead his country and people to welfare in the end.) However, since living beings cannot “genuinely coexist” as objects can, Uncle Rıfkı is murdered due to his attempts to realize his ideals. The canaries and the other objects in the room, on the other hand, indicate another hesitation similar to Osman’s fears and continuous recalls of his previous life. The canaries can be read as a symbol of Uncle Rıfkı’s yearning for freedom through which he can fearlessly write his

books and voice his ideals since he lives in a world where he has to publish his book under a pseudonym and moreover, has to reject his book and promise that he will never write that sort of things again. The barometer on the wall, the meticulously framed pictures of railroad trains and all other objects in Uncle Rıfki's house, in contrast to canaries, reveal his inflexible, restrained outlook on life.

Thus, we observe the things that keep pulling Osman's enthusiasm for finding a way to the new life apart but it is also wrong to claim that a moment of truth is totally unreachable. On the contrary, existence of a moment of truth continuously reminds itself in *The New Life* especially just after the moments of bus accidents when Osman feels closest to the real, the indefinable, the death. Accident scenes in *The New Life* depict body organs as objects of an alienated world. These organs, along with the objects lying around them, are separated from the whole they originally belong to and they stand as isolated objects in a new, unidentifiable world:

“I saw heads that had been ripped to pieces, bodies that were rent, hands sundered; I saw drivers who had tenderly taken the wheel into their guts, brains that had exploded like heads of cabbage, bloody ears that still wore earrings, eyeglasses both broken and intact, mirrors, flacid bowels carefully laid out on newspapers, combs, squashed fruit, coins, broken teeth, baby bottles, shoes –all

manner of matter and spirit that had been eagerly sacrificed to the moment of truth” (*NL* 57)

Not only are the heads, hands, brains, ears, bowels are pulled out of the integrity of a human body where they can properly function to keep a person alive, but also the objects like earrings, eyeglasses or baby bottles are separated from their owners who can render these objects meaningful in their own world by creating and naming them, attributing some memories to them.

Thus, objects can escape from their familiar definitions at the moments of death. Our usual way of relationship with the objects is reversed when Osman says “feeling the warmth of the blood that trickled from my forehead down on my hands, I felt the happiness of discovering, once again, the tactual, olfactory, and visual properties of things” (*NL* 48). Osman does not touch them but they touch him as if they have the capacity to do this. At this point our regular definition of objects is challenged; they are not inanimate, only functional objects any more; they depart our definable, reasonable world. Even at that moment, though, when Osman feels closest to the truth, he recalls his previous life, his mother and the things in his room:

The book I had left behind on my table came to my mind, and I imagined the book staring at the ceiling like the dead staring open-mouthed at the sky. I imagined my mother keeping the book on my table among all the things left over from my previous life which had been interrupted. I was imagining myself say, Look, Mom,

what I am searching for among shards of glass, drops of blood, and the dead is the threshold of another kind of life (*NL* 57).

This instant recall, however, for the first time comes as a challenge to his previous life rather than as an uncertainty between surrender and perseverance.

Bülent Somay, in his article “Ten, Ben ve Gen” asks a crucial question: “Is it exceedingly necessary to die to be able to see the eternity which is beyond the borders of life and body?” (167). Death, for Osman, is a threshold: behind this threshold he recalls his previous life and beyond it he catches a glimpse of the new life. In Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea*, when Roquentin, the protagonist of the novel, remembers everything disgusting him, he accepts that they, and also his own existence, are free from language, definitions, and attributions. He realizes that there is another world away from the definable, symbolic world and senses the mystery of existence. All definitions, referring to his senses, colors and shapes remain on the surface when he touches things (a seat, for example) and he finds out that the real existence is free from them. He asserts, “Things are divorced from their names. They are there, grotesque, headstrong, gigantic and it seems ridiculous to call them seats or say anything at all about them. I am in the midst of things, nameless things. Alone, without words, defenseless, they surround me, are beneath me, behind me, above me.” (118). For Osman, similarly, all the things are all banished from their definable shapes, functions and meanings at the moments of accident, hence the appearance of the moment of truth. Death literally shatters

the unity and borders of the body removing it from our perceptible and definable world.

However, there is another way of opening the limits of the self to reach the new, the unknown, the other. As added by Bülent Somay, sexual activity temporarily makes “*I*” open to the other and gives an opportunity of renewal to “*I*” (173). A similar possibility of reaching the truth, accordingly, makes itself felt at the moments of remembrance of love Osman feels for Janan, or Janan feels for Mehmet. Neither death nor love can be easily described by people. That’s why Osman cannot give only one but a list of various descriptions of love at the end of his story. And that’s why Janan claims, “everything around [her] had changed its color and shape” after she met Mehmet. Also, Osman confesses that after meeting Janan, he has felt something that cannot be simply expressed with words: “I was not taught it at school, and I did not read it in any book, but how sweet, O Angel, to watch the beloved sleep!” (*NL* 66). Thus, we can say, death and love remain as the agent through which the limits of life and body can be exceeded. The book, on the other hand, is the single means leading Osman’s way towards love and death because only a work of art can synthesize things that can be rationally put into words and things that are beyond the limits of our utterances. Despite acknowledging all these, Osman cannot escape dreaming about the possibility of combining the promises of the new life with his previous life: “I would catch myself dreaming of the mother I had left behind, my room, my things, my bed; and feeling insidiously rational and commensurably guilty, I would construct

fantasies of joining together what was in my dreams with Janan's dreams of the new life" (*NL 75*).

III. BACK TO THE WORLD OF MATERIALS

“A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”

K. Marx

While a bus accident enables Osman to reunite with Janan and to catch a glimpse of the truth he is searching for, another one causes him to return to the old, deficient and limited world of materials and to lose Janan forever. We hear the name of Doctor Fine from the girl in blue jeans who is about to die just after a bus accident in *The New Life*. Together with his name, we hear about his “all manner of timepieces, and antique objects, canary cages, hand grinders, windlasses” (NL 84) and we learn that Doctor Fine struggles “against the book, against foreign cultures that annihilate us, against the newfangled stuff that comes from the West, and [...] against printed matter” (NL 83). The girl in blue jeans and her lover had also traveled from town to town to search for the mystery the book implies but having been disappointed by this endless search, the girl’s lover decides to join Doctor Fine’s struggle against the book. Although the girl is not in favor of this struggle, she accompanies her beloved one during his journey to the dealers’ secret convention held in the town Güdül. The girl dies after telling her story to Janan and Osman and they decide to attend the meeting as stove dealers

in place of the girl and her lover whose names (Efsun and Ali) we learn afterwards.

This is the story of how we, as readers, together with Janan and Osman enter the new (or shall we say “old”?) world of Doctor Fine, who will be introduced as “privy to abstruse matters” (*NL* 91). The first thing Osman and Janan do before entering this world is “[... going] in a store and b[uying] a plastic suitcase and nylon shirts, hoping to pass [them]selves off as two proper young dealers” (*NL* 86). Plastic bags and suitcases are one of the most recurrent objects in *The New Life*. We see plastic bags in the hands of almost everybody regardless of the value of the thing carried in them. Even the gun with which Mehmet is shot is carried in a pink plastic bag or the description of crowded bus terminals always include those who are waiting for something with plastic bags in their hands. Thus, carrying something plastic may be the first sign of being like everyone else and the first step towards the world of Doctor Fine.

Doctor Fine is not actually a doctor but this title is given to him by his soldier friends while he was doing his military service because “he was cognizant of details that came in handy for small repairs” (*NL* 123) and he willingly accepts this title because “he loved equipment and enjoyed taking care of it, and because he had recognized that discovering the unique properties of each object constitutes the highest good” (*NL* 123). Doctor Fine is not only interested in living among things he likes or values, or collecting them for his own store in the province Güdül but also he uses them as a means of struggle against what he calls

“the great conspiracy”. To him, all printed material, including the book, all factory-made goods are the parts of this conspiracy, which is planned and practiced by foreign (especially Western) cultures. Therefore, he endeavors to keep the traditional, labor-intensive way of production alive by collecting, buying and exhibiting hand-made, authentic artifacts.

Before beginning to discuss Doctor Fine’s relationship with the objects in detail, we shall first remember both Jale Parla’s and Zeynep Ergun’s emphasis on the name of the town Doctor Fine lives in. “Güdölmek” is a verb in Turkish which is in fact used for animals. It means “to be herded”. Figuratively speaking, it means to be directed, ruled, or instructed in accordance with one’s ideas and/or purposes. For Parla, when Osman consents to be led by Doctor Fine, he loses the chance of attaining whatever the new life promises to grant him (“Sanat ve Yaşam...” 268). Similarly, for Ergun, a new life is not even a dream any more for those who join the crowds being herded in the town Güdöl (“*Yeni Hayat Üzerine...*” 256). So what kind of authority does Doctor Fine have over the people around him?

To understand how Doctor Fine utilizes the things to solidify his authority, we may start with examining the inventions we encounter in the dealers’ convention. After the information provided by the girl in blue jeans, we learn more about Doctor Fine owing to the gossips among the dealers before meeting him in person. Not only do the inventions in the convention grant us the first clues about the dealers’ viewpoint but also the sarcastic and humorous tone of the

dealers' narration make us feel the futility of this national, economic, and religious struggle against the new, devouring, modern world. Some of the inventions are: "a clock that cloaks time", "the first Turkish-made gizmo that detects pork in any given product", "an unscented shaving lotion", "scissors that automatically clip newspaper coupons", and most importantly a clock which "automatically settled the Westernization-versus-Islamization question through a modern device" (*NL* 87-88). Owing to this new device,

"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'" (*NL* 88).

All these things serve as symbols and protectors of firstly national and republican values and then religious beliefs. While the pork detector, the unscented shaving lotion and the clock with an imam are devices serving religious purposes, the toy gentleman wearing a tie (which is one of the symbols of Kemalist reforms) without mustache prevails at an upper position than the imam, who stands for Islam. In accordance with Doctor Fine's struggle against the invasion of the goods of foreign cultures, dealers also claim that "[they] are digging up the things [they] have buried", things like "a bicycle that fits [their] size perfectly" or "a bottle of liquid [that] works like toothpaste" (*NL* 91). However, they are also aware to a certain point that it is almost impossible to

isolate and preserve their things and values from gradually rising influence of “the others”. A man, who is not a native of the town Gūdül, for example, criticizes Doctor Fine by asking: “What’s this business of collecting old stoves, compasses, children magazines, clothespins? Why is the angel supposedly against books and print? We all try to live meaningful lives, but we are all stymied at some point. Who among us can be himself? Who’s the lucky person that hears the angels whisper?” (NL 95). He also supports his idea that “There is no way that we can be ourselves any longer” by claiming that even the columnist Celâl Salik has accepted this fact (NL 94-95). (In fact, in *The Black Book*, Celâl Salik refers to the matter of being ourselves many times in his columns. Especially in his article about Bedii Usta’s children, he deals with more or less the same issue: Can we remain as ourselves or shall we eventually surrender to the others? In his column Celâl reveals that Bedii Usta’s handmade mannequins, which reflect the physical appearance and feelings of Turks, are not favored by shopkeepers anymore because “his mannequins d[oes] not look like the European models” and a customer wants, for example, “a coat worn by a new beautiful creature from a distant unknown land, so he can convince himself that he, too, can change, become someone new, just by putting on this coat” (BB 61)). Therefore, although the broken-hearted dealers are struggling against the thing they call “the international conspiracy”, we sense that their resistance is more inclined to surrender at a certain point when compared to Doctor Fine’s organized and violent fight.

Osman and Janan are taken to Doctor Fine's house by a chauffeur smelling OP shaving soap in a Chevrolet. As soon as they arrive at the house, the organized dominance of the things makes itself felt and this feeling does not cease to control Osman even after he leaves the house. The first thing that is sharply heard, "a grandfather clock", reminds Osman that "time and life are transitory" (*NL* 111). However, the clock, like many other objects in the room, ironically symbolizes not the flowing time but the frozen time. We encounter a similar clock in Füsün's house in *The Museum of Innocence*. Kemal believes that the clock "was not there to remind [them] of the time, or to warn [them] that things were changing" but "it was there to persuade [them] that nothing whatsoever had changed" (*MI* 284). While this clock evokes timelessness for Kemal, the description of the objects in Doctor Fine's house arouses uncanny feelings in Osman. He gradually realizes that "the room and the objects, the people and the food [...] were signs and traces [...] of some dream or else of a deeply felt life and memories" (*NL* 112). Moreover, the order of these deceased objects causes a fear of a skeleton in the closet for Osman. He confesses that

"The signs of a certain patriarchal refinement and a logical order that could not easily be named were infused in all the objects that graced the room, such as curtains which had borders embroidered with carnations and tulips, old-fashioned kerosene stoves and kerosene lamps which were as moribund as the light they cast" (*NL* 112-113).

This fear rises when Osman encounters Mehmet/Nahit's personal belongings, which are placed in a certain order like the objects in a museum. These things cause fear not because they look abandoned but because Osman finds something close to himself and his own childhood among these objects. His heart "speed[s] up under a strange compulsion and it beat[s] wildly" when he sees the framed photographs of Mehmet's and the objects like his bed, curtains, school report cards, soccer shoes, or short pants gives him shivers since he finds correspondences to his own childhood (*NL* 115). Sigmund Freud defines that "the uncanny is that the species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124) and he adds that the "uncanny applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into open" (132). What comes into open when Osman sees Mehmet/Nahit's objects is that he can either be like Mehmet, who in fact has rebelled against his father and followed the way the book leads, and shot like Mehmet in the end, or he can remain in Doctor Fine's home and become his son to follow the way he leads. What is uncanny for Osman is, on the other hand, the familiarity of the things that originally belong to Nahit and that the possibility of becoming Doctor Fine's son is strange but not quite.

In the ninth chapter of *The New Life*, while Doctor Fine is introducing his house and its surroundings to Osman, we encounter two paragraphs, which are of utmost importance for our understanding of what the basic difference between a "thing", and an "artifact" is for Doctor Fine.

Doctor Fine divulged to me that objects had the capacity to remember. Just like ourselves, objects also had the faculty to record what happened to them and preserve their memories, but most of us were not even aware of it. ‘Substances inquire after each other, come to an agreement, whisper to one another, and strike up a harmony, constituting the music we call the world,’ said Doctor Fine. ‘Those who are attentive hear it, see it, and comprehend it.’ He could tell fieldfares had been nesting around the area by looking at the limy stains on the dried branch he had picked up; and having studied the signs in the mud, he explained to me how the branch had been broken two weeks ago by a certain storm (123).

Karl Marx, in the first chapter of *Capital*, asserts that “The physical bodies of commodities are combinations of two elements, the material provided by nature, and labor. If we subtract the total amount of useful labor [...], a material substratum is always left” (133). This material substratum already exists in nature, on the hills through which Doctor Fine likes walking and to be able to exist, it does not need the existence of Doctor Fine and his contemplations. The harmony in nature, Doctor Fine mentions, can create itself and survive without the help and awareness of human beings. Thus a thing belonging to nature does not require human labor. However, what makes a commodity a thing meaningful for a person is the human labor that it includes and saves. The list of commodities in the

following paragraph can be obviously distinguished from the things like the branch, the mud, or the storm in the former paragraph.

It seems that he sold merchandise he bought not only from İstanbul and Ankara but from all manufacturers all over Anatolia, such as whetting stones that never wore down, hand-woven rugs, locks made of out of hammered iron, sweet-smelling wicks for kerosene stoves, simple versions of refrigeration, beanies made of fine grade felt, RONSON trademark flint stones, door handles, stoves made out of recycled gasoline barrels, small aquariums –anything at all that made sense to him, or anything that was sensible. The years he spent in the store where all sorts of basic human needs were supplied in a humane way had been the happiest years of his life.
(*NL 123-124*)

Two features of these objects are striking: They satisfy basic human needs and they are supplied in a humane way. According to Marx commodities are “only commodities because they have a dual nature, because they are at the same time objects of utility and bearers of value. Therefore they only appear as commodities, or have the form of commodities, in so far as they possess a double form, i.e. natural form and value form” (138). The resources for commodities in the paragraph above are obtained from nature and they contain certain amount of human labor. Moreover, since they are produced only to satisfy basic human needs, neither nature nor human labor is used in vain. This kind of relationship

with the nature and labor is what makes Dr. Fine happy. However, the important question that is to be asked is what spoils Dr. Fine's happiness, or in other words, what kind of relationship with the nature and human labor ruins Dr. Fine's ideals. What makes Dr. Fine a desperate dissenter is the ceaseless exploitation of the nature and labor due to the rapid and careless conditions of production and consumption, which have come along with the "new" age. This mode of production and consumption reminds us of the first short list of objects we have encountered at the very early pages of *The New Life*: "the tin cans, plastic balls, bottles, plastic flip-flops, clothes pins, light bulbs, plastic dolls" (11). These are the things that have been used and thrown away by the seasonal visitors of a beach. They are very different from "the hand-woven rugs" or "the hammered iron locks" Dr. Fine keeps in his store since they absolutely do not remind the users of how much human labor they embody as Dr. Fine's artifacts do and since they have been used for much shorter time.

Jean Baudrillard, in *The Consumer Society*, defines the age of rapid production and consumption by asserting that "Today, it is we who watch [objects] as they are born, grow to maturity and die, whereas in all previous civilizations it was timeless objects, instruments or monuments which outlived the generations of human beings" (25). In this case, the objects in Doctor Fine's store belong to the second group with their long-lasting lifespan. The value of the labor and substance embodied in these artifacts can be kept alive for generations and this value increases as the artifacts are used and saved for longer time because the

users' memories also become buried in them. The objects on the beach, however, are produced in masses in factories out of the cheapest material and by using more machine power than human labor and are probably used for just one summer holiday and then thrown away. The following paragraph summarizes Dr. Fine's feelings about the time when people's relationships with the objects have started to change.

It was around the time that their humdrum sidewalks had been besieged by vendors who sold the sort of dull and flat stuff that was displayed in the odorless, colorless stores. At first he had paid scant attention to either the CRESCENT GAS dealer who sold the bottled gas that powered those gas burners, those thingamajigs with knobs, or the AEG dealer who sold refrigerators that were white as synthetic snow. But when, instead of the nice creamy yogurt that we are all familiar with, vendors began to bring around some sort of yogurt called PERT (he said it as if he were saying DIRT), or instead of the traditional cool yogurt drinks or sour cherry sherbets, drivers wearing open-neck shirts brought, on trim and spanking-clean trucks, the imitation stuff called Mr. Turk Cola which was soon replaced by the real Coca-Cola being sold by honest-to-goodness gentlemen with ties around their necks, out of some stupid impulse he had thought of getting a dealership himself, such as for that UHU glue licensed under the German

trademark of a darling little owl that promised it could stick together anything you wanted, rather than our glues that are made out of pine resin, or else something to take the place of our clay soap like Lux hand soap, which had a scent as polluting as its box.
(NL 127)

As this long sentence leaves the reader breathless, the change mentioned in it makes Doctor Fine desperate. After witnessing the invasion of the stores by international companies, although Doctor Fine takes becoming a part of them into consideration, he immediately abandons this idea since he thinks this will be a betrayal of the handmade, authentic, and unique objects in his store. The replacement of the authentic with the synthetic and of the traditional with the international has become what Doctor Fine calls “the Great Conspiracy”. Not only the devices we use in our homes but also the food and beverages we are used to consuming everyday have become synthetic. More importantly, however, this long sentence is a good summary of how our relationship with commodities is determined in the modern age we belong to. Whilst Doctor Fine’s commodities like “hand-woven rugs” or “glues that are made out of pine resin” belong to the age when people are aware of the amount and value of the human labor embodied in them, the “yogurt called PERT” or “UHU glue” suddenly enters people’s home without telling much about how and where they have been produced.

At this point we can start to discuss Karl Marx’s concept of “commodity fetishism”. Marx starts the first volume of his famous work *Capital* with a

discussion on commodity. For him, “The commodity is, first of all, an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind” (125) and it is absolutely understandable that man produces different kinds of goods to satisfy his certain needs and he makes use of raw material provided by nature to create these tools. There is nothing mysterious about these products as far as their value is determined by different kinds of human labor embodied in it (164). However, a product turns out to be a commodity when it abandons the individual relationship with its producer and its value is determined by money or in comparison with other commodities. Once this happens, the producer leaves the world where he can have control over his own labor and product and he starts to live in the world of commodities where commodities themselves rule social relationships. Marx calls this situation fetishism and explains it by finding an analogy in the realm of religion:

There the products of human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labor as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (165).

Doctor Fine, however, never considers objects as separated from the hands through which they are produced. On the contrary, he “request[s] that all his

friends preserve the products that were real to them, products which were like the extensions of their hands and arms which like poetry made their souls complete” (NL 130).

Commodity fetishism, for Michael Billig, “is based upon a forgetfulness which [...] can be seen as a form of shared repression” (313). Doctor Fine, in contrast, summons a shared remembering of the details and features of the products. Billig, in his article “Commodity Fetishism and Repression” mentions a simple table to give an example of products whose production process can easily be imagined. He asserts, “The hand of the carpenter would have been as visible as the grain of the wood. The workshop –its smells, routines and tools- could easily be brought to mind” (318). Similarly, the objects Doctor Fine collects, preserves and exhibits in his store reveal their processes of production. Like “the ‘modest’ invention” of the farmer in *The New Life* (93) which is a pocket watch adjusting the speed of time by making blissful moments longer and enabling the moments of despair to pass rapidly, they also hide happy and sad memories in themselves and play with our linear understanding of time.

Why, then, is Doctor Fine the antagonist of *The New Life*? Why does Osman’s journey towards the new life irreversibly alter its course after meeting him? First of all, Doctor Fine strives to construct his own totalitarian utopia (or shall we say a dystopia?) in which the limits of “essential” needs are strictly drawn and no space is left for fantastic needs. Accordingly, the construction of this utopia is sustained with the help of agents who do not hesitate to engage in

violence when necessary. Secondly, Doctor Fine believes that in any condition of binary oppositions, the only way to the solution is the absolute victory of the one over the other, in other words, replacement of the one with the other without any actual progress or betterment.

For Doctor Fine, books and literature, like other mass-produced things, are an effective means of the Great Conspiracy through which “the conspirators” obliterate the past, values and beliefs of a society and confuse the mind of the youth. However, Doctor Fine does not neglect to favor one kind of literature while totally censoring others. Osman recognizes that “He was not against literature that was scripted by hand, which was an integral part of the hand holding the pen –the kind of literature that moved the hand, and in expressing the sorrows, the curiosity and affections of the soul, pleased and enlightened the mind” (*NL* 131). The books he strictly opposes are the books “that had lost their glow, clarity, and truth but pretended to be glowing, clear, and true. These were the books that promised us 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. (*NL* 131-132). The book which has been “mass-produced and disseminated” because of “one of the pawns of the Great Conspiracy [...] named Gutenberg” (*NL* 107) has caused Doctor Fine’s son to leave home in a vain attempt to find out the truth. Thus, Doctor Fine has set the limits of what is

acceptable and essential for the welfare and continuity of the order and what is treacherous and fantastic.

The objects, collected and exhibited in Doctor Fine's house and store, are in fact divested of their primary functions and they seem to serve as indicators of his ambition of founding a new state. When he defeats the conspirators, Doctor Fine claims, "no quarter shall be given to public opinion, to newspapers, or to current ideas, none to pretty 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" (NL 137-38). While the products like Coca-Cola and Marlboro, which generate their own demands as ideal commodities of capitalism, symbolize the cultural and economic invasion of the West, Doctor Fine's objects like hand-woven rugs, door handles, or stoves turn out to be symbols of his totalitarian state. Jean Baudrillard, in his article "The System of Collecting", asserts that

"the objects in our lives, as distinct from the way we make use of them at a given moment, represent something much more, something profoundly related to subjectivity: for while the object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone. It is all my own, the object of my passion" (7).

In his book, *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard also adds that "A utensil is never possessed [...] what is possessed is always an object abstracted from its function

and thus brought into relationship with the subject. [...] Such objects together make up the system through which the subject strives to construct a world, a private totality” (91-92). The world Doctor Fine conjures out of objects becomes his private totality functioning as a microcosm of the state he is struggling to found. In this microcosm, he can choose and systematize the objects as he wishes and objects offer no resistance to his regulations. Similarly, in the state he will found, people and their ideas will operate as objects to be owned, standardized and governed. When Doctor Fine begs Osman to become his son and take Nahit’s place by telling him that “I didn’t get a male heir for years on end, I suffered; when they took him away from me, I suffered even more; but nothing can be more painful than leaving behind my inheritance without someone to inherit it” (*NL* 136), we understand he has buried his own existence and all his faith in his world conjured out of objects.

Osman’s irreversible fall starts with his approval of Doctor Fine’s offer to show his clock and gun collection. For Doctor Fine, clocks and guns are “two venues that lead to God. Armaments are the vehicles of Jihad; timepieces are the vehicles for prayer” (*NL* 159). How he utilizes them, however, make them rather seem like means of constructing and preserving his own state where he will be the God-figure. He names his agents after international watch trademarks like Zenith, Movado, Omega, Serkisof, and Seiko. He also introduces various guns to Osman by specifying their trademarks and qualities one by one. The mission of these

agents is to detect and annihilate those who write, publish, distribute and read “treacherous” literature.

However, one point attracts our attention: while totally rejecting everything that is produced out of the borders of his country, Doctor Fine willingly embraces these internationally mass-produced watches and guns. Osman clarifies why Doctor Fine favors the watches by asserting that “Although most of these watches were made in the West, Doctor Fine considered them ‘ours’, given that they had been keeping our time for over a century” (*NL* 139). A similar explanation about the privileged position of watches in Turkey is offered by Orhan Pamuk in *Other Colors*. He affirms that a watch is the most common and highly appreciated gift in our culture, maybe because it is a consolation that by wearing a watch we can feel close to the precision and punctuality of the Western culture which we cannot attain otherwise (*OC* 146-47). Doctor Fine, on the other hand, excuses the internationally produced guns by asserting that “they [are] both part of our bodies as well as our souls” (*NL* 168) Therefore, he accepts, “clocks are the only things other than guns that cannot be classified as foreign or domestic” (*NL* 159). After paying attention to what Doctor Fine teaches about the watches and guns and reading some reports sent by his agents, Osman consents to carry “a Walther 9-millimeter with a hammer, a gun that could be easily concealed” (*NL* 168), although he learns from the reports that Uncle Rıfkı and at least five readers of his book have been murdered by Doctor Fine’s agents. Thus, his advance in escape from mediocrity stops and Osman becomes one of the

agents of Doctor Fine. As those agents, who are named after international watch trademarks, Osman turns out to be an object, an instrument, a simple watch that should be set and used by its owner and that functions to keep the authority alive.

CONCLUSION

“Writing a novel involves combining the emotions and thoughts of each protagonist with the objects that surround him, and then blending them, with a single deft stroke, in one sentence”

O. Pamuk

When Osman returns to Janan’s room, he tries to remember the times when he felt fullness and asks himself:

When two people have shared great dreams, when they’ve been comrades from morning to night for months on end, when they’ve covered such great distances together, what could possibly be the impediment to their forgetting the world in an embrace, O Angel? And most of all, what could stop them from becoming their authentic selves and finding that unique moment of truth? (*NL* 169).

Jale Parla calls this “unique moment of truth” “the moment of crystallization” and adds that it has one single enemy: time and this enemy is symbolized by Doctor Fine’s agents in *The New Life* (“Sanat ve Yaşam...” 268). Thus, having become one of his agents, Osman not only kills Mehmet but his own chance of keeping these moments of crystallization alive. Together with his murder of Mehmet,

Osman also kills the closeness to Mehmet/Nahit, who has rebelled against his father and followed the way the book leads, and completely becomes Doctor Fine's long-expected son. Jale Parla defines this end as the ruin of the charm. She asserts, "When Osman accepts Doctor Fine as his father in order to own Janan and kills the author in himself (Nahit/Mehmet/Osman), the charm is ruined and Osman dies as an ordinary passenger in a bus accident ("Sanat ve Yaşam..." 271-72).

It is also not surprising that Janan gets sick in Doctor Fine's house. Osman's hopeless kisses do not hinder him from doubting whether Janan felt the hard form of the Walther on him. The gun, as an obvious phallic symbol, not only takes Osman away from Janan but also it becomes the only thing Osman can hold on. From then on, Osman turns out to be an ordinary passenger heading to various towns not to find out his inner self but to "chide the town pigeons for dropping on the Atatürk statue, consult [his] watch, [and] check [his] Walther" (*NL* 193). In fact, he returns to the shallowness of those who waste time playing cards and watching TV and to mediocrity and cruelty of those who smell OP shaving soap from which he tried hard to escape. Jale Parla, in her article "'From Allegory to Parable: Inscriptions of Anatolia in the Turkish Novel'", offers a concise summary of Osman's fall: "In the Kafkaesque entanglements of his wanderings, the protagonist Osman's true self-betrayal happens when he gives up his quest – illusory as it is – for a life of mediocre conformity, tempted by the false promise of

home and shelter by the novel's patriarch, Doctor Narin. Having failed to kill the father, all Osman can do is to kill the brother" (25).

Orhan Pamuk combines each character with various objects in *The New Life*, as he claims in the epigraph above. We may remember the book or buses when we think of Osman; purple objects, like a pen or a coat, may remind us of Janan and the spiritual frame drawn around her; while children magazines and trains directly evokes Uncle Rifki, guns and clocks refer to Doctor Fine's aggression and rigidity. Objects in the novel not only reveal emotions and thoughts of the characters, they also place them in a certain socio-economic and cultural frame. Keeping track of the objects embedded in *The New Life*, in fact, allows us to keep track of the characters' dreams, intentions, their relationships with one another, their achievements and failures, and the psychological situations they are in.

The following list indicates the most recurrent objects *The New Life* includes:

1. the book
2. bus
3. train
4. children's weekly magazines
5. barometer
6. coat (Osman's dead father's coat and Janan's purple coat)
7. television

8. playing cards
9. plastic bags
10. OP brand shaving soap
11. Atatürk statue
12. glossy plastic billboards
13. neon signs
14. New Life brand caramel
15. watch
16. clock
17. gun

The first item in the list is a work of art leading the protagonist to a search for a new life and making him start a journey, he believes, towards the truth. If we read the novel as the story of an artist's growth to maturity, as Jale Parla does, then, we can consider buses as the vehicles of Osman's journey to his inner self. Buses are also vehicles enabling Osman to sense the moment of truth. In the short while after the bus accidents, Osman feels closest to what he is searching for. The third, fourth, and the fifth items in the list are associated with the book's author Rıfkı. They are important because they help Osman learn more about the author's ideals, dreams, and personality and this urges him to start his journey. While the purple (purple is generally associated with spirituality) coat symbolizes Janan whose love is another way to follow towards the moment of fullness, Osman's dead father's coat stands for Osman's search for a father to lead him to the new life.

The rest of the objects in the list indicate by what kind of reality and environment Osman is encircled, from where he struggles to escape, and to where he eventually returns. Shortly, this list, in fact, provides a summary of the points discussed in this thesis and holds some vital clues to the plot of *The New Life*, which starts with the hope of finding a new life and ends with the totalitarian system established by Doctor Fine and with the death of the protagonist. The list of objects, similarly, starts with a work of art, the book, which is the prime motive leading the protagonist to a search for a new life and the truth and ends with watch, clock and gun, the means and symbols of totalitarianism, violence and death.

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