



Negation of Negation: Father as a Vanishing Mediator in Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-Haired Woman*

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Abstract

The Red-Haired Woman is an atypical addition to the oeuvre of Orhan Pamuk as it deviates from the usual politico-historical thematic and puts myth at the forefront. The novel intersperses ancient myths and legends with personal history to weave a complex narrative in which characters are individuals as well as types. In this essay, the argument is built on the premise that the 'father figure' in Orhan Pamuk's novel *The Red-Haired Woman* acts as a 'vanishing mediator' for the actualisation of the son as a 'fully constituted capitalist individual.' Cem, the protagonist, works as an apprentice to a well digger and in the process is transformed into something that is the very negation of his father's ideals and, in turn, his own son has to go through the same transformation to return to the first movement of the dialectic. Frederic Jameson, apropos Max Weber, puts forward the notion of a 'mediator' that brings about a certain transformation and after that "it has no further reason for being and disappears from the historical scene" (78). In Weber's view, the pervasiveness of Protestant ethic ushered in an ascetic attitude that perceived work as something sacred. This sanctity of labour led to surplus capital and thus a religious outlook brought in its antagonistic ideology. The movement is dialectical as the mediator is not an 'other' but an element of 'pure difference' arising out of the term itself (Žižek 181). The article uses textual analysis as a method to read the selected text.

Keywords: Vanishing Mediator, Negation of Negation, Oedipus, Shahnameh, Myth

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The Red-haired Woman by Orhan Pamuk is described by McDowell a “personal odyssey,” “a mystery story,” “a mythological tale” (133) narrated with “arresting honesty” by a youth named Cem (133). According to Erdağ Gökner, “Pamuk repeatedly returns to history as a leitmotif (34) but Gökner’s frame of reference is his earlier works in which he focuses on Ottoman history and its transition to the modern Turkish state. In *The Red-haired Woman*, it is the myth that takes precedence over history as the narrative intersperses ancient myths with the history (his-story) of the protagonist. The relationship between myth and history has always been contested by Heesch: “Since the time of the Greeks, mythos (the word as decisive, final pronouncement) has been contrasted to logos (the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated)” (3). This distinction is simplistic, to say the least as it is grounded on the assumption that only empirically demonstrated events are real. A myth is true “not because it relates a particular historical event; but because it exhibits universally true features” and most importantly this myth as a story has a “universal fascination” that any particular event lacks (Munz 3). In the novel, this universal fascination is particularized in the contemporary story of fathers and sons. In the words of Vanwesenbeeck, “*The Red-Haired Woman* is fearless in its reading of canonical texts like Oedipus Rex and Rostam and Sohrab and in tackling the question of patricide and paternal filicide” (67) but the question arises what role the father plays before he ‘vanishes’ and how does this negation usher in its own negation in the contemporary story of Cem?

Frederic Jameson’s reading of Max Weber dispels the “vulgar Marxist narrative” (75) that states that the mediation between agrarian to capitalist mode of production “would take the rather banal form of transitional state in which life is made less religious by a new theological doctrine (Protestantism) which systematically dismantles the traditional medieval religious structures and allows wholly secular ones to take their place” (75). The paradox that lies at the heart of Weber’s thesis is more radical as it is grounded on the notion that the movement from medieval to the modern is affected “not by making life less religious but making it more so” (76). In other words, Protestantism did not create the conditions for capitalism by restricting religious ideology but by making it so pervasive that it permeated all forms of life as Lord Calvin’s’ protestant ethics “turned the entire world into a monastery” (76). It preached discipline and work as the path to God’s Grace and in so doing, it furthered an asceticism grounded in the accumulation of wealth, temperance and modesty. Paradoxically, “it opens the way to the devaluation of religion, to its confinement to the intimacy of a private sphere separated from state and public affairs” (Žižek 183). The universalization of religious ideology served the opposite purpose as it reduced religion to a ‘means.’ In this dialectical movement, Protestantism served as a “vanishing mediator”. After it has rationalized the innerworldly life of the believers, it has no further use and, in time, it vanishes from the historical scene. It only serves as a catalytic agent:

...the whole institution of religion itself (or in other words what is here designated as "Protestantism") serves in its turn as a kind of overall bracket or framework

within which change takes place and which can be dismantled and removed when its usefulness is over. (Jameson 78)

The very act of sanctification of labour by Protestantism turned it into something godly and work itself became a form of worship and an end in itself and, eventually, rendering religious practice redundant. Protestantism, as a vanishing mediator, brings about its disappearance through its own doctrine. Secular capitalism did not come into being because of the suppression of religious ideology but, on the contrary, through its very insistence on it. Extending this formulation, this article reads Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-haired Woman* by positing the figure of the Father in the novel as a 'vanishing mediator' by putting forward this thesis that the father figure serves a kind of 'bracket or framework' and it gets 'dismantled and removed when its usefulness is over', ultimately making way for something that it negates (Jameson 78).

The Red-haired Woman is an intertext and as Barthes has mentioned the literal meaning of the word 'text' is "a tissue, a woven fabric" (159) implying that the meaning of every text is constructed out of the texts already 'written' and already 'read.' Julia Kristeva also conceives that "a text is a permutation of texts" (36) in which other texts intersect and collude to create new meanings. In the novel, the story of Cem, the protagonist, is contextualized through the narratives of the mythical and fictional fathers and sons. For Pamuk, the nature of the father-son relationship is very complex and it is "marked by deeply ambivalent feelings of mutual admiration, affection and antipathy" (Thasneem 156). At a very young age, Cem is abandoned by his leftist father Akin and the reason, this time, is not his activism or arrest by the authorities, but another woman. Akin has a pharmacy called 'Hayat' where Cem would take his dinner and he tells us that "I liked to spend time there, breathing in the medicinal smells while my father, a tall, slim, handsome figure, had his meal by the cash register" (Pamuk 1). The disappearance of his father leaves a great mark on Cem's young mind and the ensuing financial pressure makes the matters even worse. Despite the fact that his father did not have any aspirations for his son nor he force him to follow a designated path, Cem always wanted to be a writer. At the very onset, he states: "I had wanted to be a writer. But after the events I am about to describe, studied engineering geology and became a building contractor" (Pamuk 1). This research paper explicates the nature of those events that brought this change of mind on his part and through which process he becomes the very negation of his father's ideals.

After his father is gone, in order to pay for his preparation exam, Cem has to take different odd jobs and one of these jobs takes him to work as an apprentice to a well-digger Master Mahmut in a town called Öngören. In those days, well-digging was done manually and laborers would dig out earth and then it would be lifted to the surface with the help of a windlass. During his stay at Ongoren, Cem develops a unique bond with two people that changes his life's itinerary forever. One was Master Mahmut, his employer, and the other a red-haired theatre actress Gulichen. Master Mahmut, a forty-three-year-old man, as Cem tells us, is "tall, slender, and handsome, like my father" (Pamuk 6) who is his master but "Only I saw in him a father" (Pamuk 13) and of him, he expects "he would look out for me as a father" (Pamuk 14). This iteration suggests that Cem, at this point in his life, after the

loss of his biological father, is in search of a father figure and Master Mahmut seems to be that signifier. Cem, in his mind, repeatedly compares his father and Master Mahmut but this comparison is ambivalent, with a tinge of resentment in it too and its Oedipal undertone can't be missed. A clear indication of this ambivalence is seen when he utters: "That's when I first became aware of the sway Master Mahmut now held over me, and so even as I enjoyed the affection and intimacy, he showed me (such as I'd never felt from my father), I began resenting him for it" (Pamuk 13). When Master Mahmut would scold him, he would inadvertently make this comparison:

Was this why it made me so angry to be dressed down by him? For had my father done the same, I would have taken his point, felt suitably contrite, and then forgotten the whole thing. But for some reason, Master Mahmut's scolding seemed to leave a scar, and I would nurse a rage against him even as I deferred to his instructions. (Pamuk, 22-23).

As Freud, in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, has taught us, "It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulses towards our mother and our first hatred and murderous wish against our father (364) and, thus, in order to complete this Oedipal triangle, Cem, in the town of Öngören, comes across his Jocasta — a red-haired theatre actress Gulichen. "There was something unusual, and very alluring, about this woman" and, "For a moment, she looked at me as if she already knew me, as if to ask what I was doing there. In that moment when we caught each other's eye, it was as if we were both trying to summon, perhaps even to question, an ancient memory" (Pamuk 17).

Later in the narrative, it is revealed that she was the woman because of whom his biological father left Cem. Cem's physical resemblance to his father is the reason that she finds him familiar. She and Akin were members of the Socialist party and both fell in love but owing to jealousy and politics, they could not get married. She married another party member and after his death was now married to his younger brother. She is part of a travelling theatre and it is through the performance of one of her plays that Cem comes to know about another story involving father and son — Rostam and Sohrab. It is telling that despite knowing the fact that Cem is the son of her former lover, she takes him to her room and makes love to him and just before doing that she says: "Don't be scared, I'm old enough to be your mother" (Pamuk 73). The very next day, Cem kills his symbolic father or at least he thinks so.

In "The Ego and the Id," Freud formulates that the desire towards the mother becomes more intense if the child perceives the father as an obstacle. The next morning, while climbing back to the plateau where the well is being dug, Cem gives voice to his fear, "I was gripped with fear of Master Mahmut. I felt I had to protect this blissful thing within me from his anger" (Pamuk 74). Desire of the mother leads to hatred and fear of the father and can it be inferred that Cem's accidental killing of Master Mahmut is an outcome of his unconscious Oedipal jealousy? Before their lovemaking, the previous night, while talking of Master Mahmut and his aversion to theatre, the red-haired woman told him that Master Mahmut had visited her theatre too. Cem could not picture Master

Mahmut visiting theatre and enjoying theatrical performances based upon Greek plays. When the red-haired woman had reassured him that she would talk to Master Mahmut about him, Cem says, "I was so jealous I could scarcely speak. Had Master Mahmut and the Red-Haired Woman become friends?" (69). Coupled with these feelings of jealousy, from day one, there had been a sense of foreboding. The well, being dug on the "plateau at the top of the slope" (17), uncannily resembles Thebes built on a hill in Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex*. Master Mahmut narrates to Cem the Quranic story of Joseph in which he was pushed into a well and left to die by his own brothers and this grieves his father Jacob so much that he weeps himself blind. Blindness is a motif in *Oedipus* too. Master Mahmut also talks forebodingly about an apprentice killing his master through negligence: "Unless he has his wits about him, a well digger's apprentice can risk maiming his master, and if he's careless, he could even end up killing him" (Pamuk 24). Then again, "To survive, a well digger must be able to trust his apprentice as he would his own son" (Pamuk 30). Vanwesenbeeck comments upon this sense of foreboding and predestination in the novel in these words: "The murders in the book are sketched against a background of ancient epics and stories that create for the reader the illusion of a closed system, where one feels the weight of predestination and trauma in any troubled father-son relationship" (68). The novel has set the stage to play out another patricide and this is what happens the next day.

The next day when Cem is at the windlass and Master Mahmut digging inside the well, "suddenly the bucket came off the hook and fell down the well" (85). Cem is frozen with horror. He shouts "Master! Master!" but there is no response, "The whole world now was as quiet as the well itself. My knees were shaking. I couldn't decide what to do" (Pamuk 85). Cem gets panicked and rushes to the town to seek help. At that moment, he thinks that only the red-haired woman and men from her troupe can help him but when he comes to know that they have already left, he does not tell anybody else about this and rushes back to the well. In this state of desperation and bewilderment, Cem cannot make a decision and the only solution he eventually comes up with is to stuff his belongings in a bag and take the train back to Istanbul. Just like the guilt of *Oedipus*, Cem's act is also a moral conundrum. It can be argued that the hook's coming off was an accident but how can his act of forsaking his master in that well be justified? He comes up with a very selfish explanation that he would be arrested for causing the death of his master by negligence and his career would be destroyed and, "...my whole life would be thrown off course, I'd go to juvenile prison, and my mother would die of heartache" (Pamuk 88). Kürşad Ertuğrul's comment on the fiction of Pamuk may throw some light on the matter at hand: "In Pamuk's novels we finally see the fully constituted self, but this becomes possible only through becoming "someone else," a self-centred, rational individual of the West" (642). Does this imply that in order to become a self-centred, rational individual, Cem has to go through a transformation in which he becomes "someone else"? This seems to be the case because in Ertuğrul's opinion Pamuk, in his novels, "has created "individuals" rather than "men of community" (642) and Cem, in this moment of crisis, proves himself this fully constituted rational individual by deciding not to think of moral or communal right and wrong and only considering his future. The question is how does this transformation take place? In

particular, how does the ‘father figure’ act as a ‘vanishing mediator’ to bring this about? To answer this, we turn to Žižek’s re-theorizing of Hegelian dialectics.

In his book *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, Žižek explicates Hegelian dialectical movement thus: “...the excess of the pure nothingness of self-relating negativity which vanishes, becomes invisible, in the final Result” (179). In other words, when we conceive an ‘antithesis of a thesis, this antithesis is not its external ‘other’ rather it emerges out of the thesis itself. The negation of the seed i.e. its sapling, is not something that comes from without. It resides in the seed and ultimately the sapling goes through the process of negation again to revert back to a seed. The seed returns to its ‘being’ again but the process is mediated by the ‘sapling’ that vanishes in the final result. In *The Red-haired Woman*, Cem’s biological father Akin is an idealist and when Cem is living under his shadow, he wants to become a writer. After his biological father disappears, he replaces him with another father i.e. Master Mahmut. Master Mahmut is a man of the world, a complete opposite to his biological father who teaches him the value of money and material success (Master Mahmut always thinks about money and gifts he would receive from his employer). When Cem leaves Master Mahmut at the bottom of the well, he has been transformed into a practical man who only has his future in his mind. “It was standing up to Master Mahmut, despite having spent only a month with him, that made me the person I now was” (Pamuk 102). Master Mahmut has to ‘vanish’ so that Cem can be transformed into a fully constituted capitalist individual and shed the skin of his idealist biological father. Cem cannot be a writer now as the ensuing guilt overwhelms him: “But could someone heartless enough to leave his master to die at the bottom of a well ever aspire to be a writer?” (93). Moreover, Master Mahmut’s utilitarian outlook has taken its seeds in the young mind of Cem. When it comes to choosing a discipline for his university studies, his mother also wanted him to choose something practical like medicine as “She was terrified that my literary aspirations were a road to poverty or, even worse, to the kind of political activity that had gotten my father in such trouble” (96). Cem decides to be rather an engineer and writes engineering geology on his admission form. For Cem’s transformation, both his fathers have served as ‘vanishing mediators.’

In his book, *Totem and Taboo*, Freud avers that the primitive family was characterized by a violent, unrelenting father who would keep access to all females to himself and drive out his sons when they grow up. The sons, one day, come together and kill their father, thus, putting an end to the patriarchal dominance. Despite the fact that patricide was liberating, the brothers were consumed by the guilt complex as, deep down, they loved and admired their father too:

After they had got rid of him, had satisfied their hatred and had put into effect their wish to identify themselves with him, the affection which had all this time been pushed under was bound to make itself felt. It did so in the form of remorse. A sense of guilt made its appearance, which in this instance coincided with the remorse felt by the whole group. (166)

Cem's killing of Master Mahmut spawned a similar guilt-complex and this guilt-complex conditions all his decisions and ventures afterwards. His decision to study geology instead of being a writer or opting for medicine is affected by the 'well episode.' He finds himself unable to erase from his memory that one month that he spent in Ongoren. When he meets his future wife Ayse, he feels attracted to her because, "something about her was nevertheless reminiscent of the Red-Haired Woman, (Pamuk 99). Unlike Oedipus who is unaware of the deeds he has done and lives a guilt-free life for seventeen years, Cem is too conscious of it. Initially, he falls back upon denial as a defence mechanism and attempts to disregard the elephant in the room: "If you act as if nothing has happened, and if nothing more comes of it, you will indeed find that nothing has happened after all" (Pamuk 91). But he himself admits that it is impossible to pretend that nothing has happened as in his mind "there was a well where, pickax in hand, Master Mahmut was still hacking away at the earth (Pamuk 91). Cem thinks that he can just suppress his guilt and pretend everything is normal and he should do the opposite of what Oedipus did i.e., not to pursue the matter any further because "Sophocles' whole play was built not around the evil acts themselves but around the probing of his inquiring protagonist." (Pamuk 98). Ironically, Cem's predicament is different from that of Oedipus as the inquiry into the matter would have revealed that Master Mahmut had not died and he could have been spared all that guilt and remorse. Here, we come across another question: Is it that Cem reads too much in these myths and his over-thinking leads him to exaggerate their influence on his personal life? This angle needs further probe as this overemphasis on the myth is what makes Cem the architect of his own downfall and also turns himself into a father who serves as a 'vanishing mediator' for his son.

Cem believes that the chain of events that unfolded and the resulting transformation in his 'self' have its origin in him telling the tale of Oedipus to Master Mahmut. Master Mahmut used to tell him different stories from the Koran but those stories would upset Cem. In order to unsettle him in turn, Cem told him the story of Oedipus and now he believes "I had ended up retracing the actions of the protagonist whose story I'd chosen. That was why Master Mahmut wound up stuck at the bottom of a well: it was all owing to a story, a myth" (Pamuk 98). The bucket's hook coming off was just an accident and as Cem comes to know later, Master Mahmut did not die that day but the bucket fell on his shoulder and maimed him. Cem can only be blamed for his callous act of not rescuing his master and leaving the town without even informing anybody. His guilt is unfounded and an outcome of his obsession with ancient myths and legends. After he marries Ayse, Cem gets a lucrative job and has to travel a lot. Their marriage is a happy one though they miss not having a baby. He is a successful professional, the one he always dreamed to be though he admits that "Every now and then it would occur to me how successfully I was managing to pretend nothing had happened. I still thought about Master Mahmut and my crime" (Pamuk 104). After twenty years, Cem is in Tehran on a business trip and while attending a party there, he finds himself unexpectedly thinking about his "evening walks to Öngören with Master Mahmut" and "An uncanny yearning, a furious feeling that I had somehow been orphaned, overcame me, and my mind was thrown into disarray. (Pamuk 108). This 'return of the repressed' is perhaps caused by a picture on the wall. "The image, obviously

taken from an old book,” (108) was of a man crying while holding the body of his dead son in his hands: “It seemed based on a story like the one I’d seen enacted years ago in the yellow theatre tent at Öngören” (108). He comes to know that this is a depiction of the legend of Rostom and Sohrab, a story in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* in which Rostom kills Sohrab not knowing the fact that he is his son. The story is an eerie reversal of the Oedipus myth as it is about filicide and it gets a hold of Cem’s mind and rekindles his guilt: “As I read, I kept remembering my father and reluctantly became more and more convinced that I’d probably killed Master Mahmut after all (111). The mixture of myth and history so haunts him that he begins to believe that if he continues “exploring this boundless sea of stories” (111), he might solve the riddle of his own life.

Instead of visiting Ongoren and settling the matter once and for all, Cem continues to read different versions of the stories of Oedipus and Rostom and Sohrab. Whenever he witnesses an altercation between an older man and a youth, he compares them with the mythical fathers and sons. He reads newspaper stories about sons killing their fathers and vice versa. Without ever disclosing the real cause, he has also shared his fascination with these legends with his wife. Together they would visit museums, archives, and libraries to find any artwork depicting these legends and myths. In the meantime, Cem’s transformation into a ‘fully constituted capitalist self’ is complete. As his company has “close ties to the municipal authorities and the national ruling party,” he uses insider information to buy real estate in areas slated for urban redevelopment and “take advantage of government subsidies for residential projects” and not surprisingly, he “never thought there was anything unethical about this practice” (Pamuk 118). Though sometimes he wonders what his “father would say if he knew that his son’s business interests involved rubbing elbows with the ruling party leaders, attending their ostentatious cultural events and fund-raisers, and listening to the pompous speeches they gave at the ceremonies” (Pamuk 118). This is an indication that the transformation of Cem’s ‘self’ would not have been possible if his biological father had not left his family. In fact, now, he thinks it was for the best that his father left him: “For years, I had nursed an abiding anger at my father for walking out on us. But now I didn’t mind so much anymore, because I knew that he wouldn’t approve of what I was doing.” (Pamuk 118). Owing to his socialist father’s unworldliness, Cem had to work as an apprentice of a well-digger and that, in turn, transformed him into an opportunistic, worldly-minded individual, the very kind his father hated. In the words of Jameson, a vanishing mediator, “serves as a bearer of change and social transformation, only to be forgotten once that change has ratified the reality of the institution” (80) and we see that Cem when he gets married, does reconcile with his father but, despite being there, his father does not hold any sway over him now. After he has served as a mediator in the transformation of his son, he has vanished.

In his forties, Cem decides to start a construction company and he proposes that his wife Ayse runs it. It is the time when both of them have lost hope to have children and, ironically, they name this company Sohrab without realizing the fact that they are again inviting the intervention of myth into their day-to-day reality. Ayse takes control of the company “Sohrab, whose rapid growth astonished us both” (129). One day, Ayse tells Cem

that she has found an area to invest in and she opens Google Maps to zoom it in. The name ‘Ongoren’ appears on the screen and Cem’s gaze is transfixed. At that moment, Cem makes an excuse and advises his wife not to invest in this town but some days later, when he receives an email about prospects in that area, he decides to invest. Cem is concerned that, “We’d dedicated all our energies to the firm, but whenever I considered our lack of children, I lost heart: Who would inherit all this once I was gone? (137). The irony of it all is that he is not aware of the fact that like Rostom in *Shahnameh*, he also had a son and as “Rostom’s real sin was not killing his own child” but “siring a son during a night of passion and then failing to fulfil his paternal duties” (115) and the time has come that he too should be held accountable. It was for the sake of their company Sohrab that Cem and Ayse decide to appear in a TV commercial and it is when Cem receives an email:

Mr. Cem,

I wish I could respect you; you’re my father. Sohrab has crossed the line in Öngören. As your son, I wanted to warn you. Write to me at this address and I’ll explain everything. Don’t be afraid of your son.

Enver. (Pamuk 147)

Initially, Cem thinks that it might be an extortion attempt but further investigation reveals that Enver is, in fact, his son who he sired during that one night of passion with the red-haired woman. The case is filed in the court and a few months later, through a paternity test, it is proved beyond doubt that Cem is the father. The myth has come back to haunt him.

The company officials want Cem to attend the opening ceremony of their project in Ongoren but “I was still hesitant to go to Öngören. Perhaps I’d spent so many years brooding over the stories of Oedipus and Sohrab that my soul was permanently beset with foreboding” (Pamuk 149). At the last minute, without consulting his wife, Cem decides to travel to Ongoren by train. Perhaps, this last moment change of mind is a manifestation of a deep down desire to meet his son. It is unsettling that on his way out, he grabs his “Kırıkkale pistol and the gun license that the government issued on request to oil barons and construction magnates” (Pamuk 156). The question is why does he do that? Is it that he is so under the spell of myths that he anticipates a Rostom and Sohrab-like confrontation between him and his son? It proves to be the case. Cem, through his lawyer, comes to know that Enver is “involved with nationalist youth organizations, hates Kurds and leftists. He has a real chip on his shoulder about his father and life.” (Pamuk 151). Here it is obvious that Enver is the second ‘negation’ in the dialectics of fathers and sons. While Cem’s father Akin was a socialist, Cem himself was a liberal capitalist and now his son Enver was a religious nationalist. “I wondered what my father would have thought of a grandson of his writing poetry for religious magazines” (Pamuk 156). Enver’s accountancy skills are nominal and he does not have any bright prospects. The narrative has reached the point where Cem has to act as a ‘vanishing mediator’ for his son.

Cem's introduction to his son is unusual as the red-haired woman introduces him as Serhat, a friend of Enver. Initially, Cem does not suspect that he might be Enver and accompanies him to see that well of Master Mahmut. On the way there, Serhat/Enver says that Master Mahmut used to tell him stories when he was young and "The one I remember most vividly was about a warrior called Rostam, who killed his son by mistake..." (Pamuk 164). When they are close to the well, for the first time, Cem becomes suspicious that Serhat is in fact Enver. At that very moment, Ayşe calls him and she also is apprehensive about him and asks Cem to leave as soon as possible. She tells him: "Get away from that boy and make sure he doesn't follow you" and also reminds him "Have you simply forgotten the stories we've been reading all these years?" (Pamuk 172). Then again, "Listen to me," said Ayşe. "If it's true, everything we've always believed about Oedipus and his father, and Rostam and Sohrab...then if that young man is your son, he is going to kill you!" (Pamuk 173). This is a clear indication that Cem and Ayşe are so obsessed with the myth that they always anticipate its intrusion into the reality of their life. It was this obsession that made Cem bring his pistol to this meeting. Just beside the well, Enver breaks his charade and confronts Cem. He is angry and full of resentment. He blames him for leaving Master Mahmut in the well and impregnating his mother. During their heated confrontation, Enver also blames Cem for being a non-believer. He tells Cem that "Religion is the haven and the consolation of the meek" (Pamuk 179). Here, it is evident that Enver is the 'negation of negation' — the last movement of the dialectical triad. Akin was a socialist idealist, Cem became the negation of him and turned out to be a liberal capitalist while Enver is again his negation and he is a religious nationalist. When Cem expresses the wish to go back, Enver asks him whether he is afraid that his son would push him into the well, "Why would you do something like that to your father?" Cem asks. To this, Enver responds:

"To avenge Master Mahmut..." he began. "To make you pay for abandoning me, for seducing my married mother, for not even bothering to write back to your own son after all those years...Or perhaps just to be the Westernized individual you want me to be. Oh, and of course to inherit your fortune..." (Pamuk 180)

Enver says that if he kills his father, he might "finally become my own self; I'll have written my own story and created my own legend" (Pamuk 181) and in this way, he may become the 'fully constituted capitalist individual' that his father is. There might be a negation of this negation too. In a panicked state, Cem takes out his pistol and threatens Enver, there is a scuffle, a shot gets fired and Cem dies. Enver throws his body into the same well where Cem had left Master Mahmut thirty years back.

The final part of the novel is narrated by the red-haired woman who she presents her own perspective of the events. She talks about her relationship with her son and there is enough to suggest that the nature of their relationship was also Oedipal as she describes how she loved running her fingers over his smooth skin and how the development of his sexual organ also gratified her (Pamuk 193). She also discloses that his fits of rage started after she stopped giving him baths. After he left Master Mahmut in the well, Cem always

thought that he was Oedipus, the killer of his own father. Later, when he comes to know about *Shahnameh* and the legend of Rostom and Sohrab, he starts to fancy himself as Rostom — the one who killed his own son. This is the reason that he named his company ‘Sohrab.’ In the end, it is not he who kills his son but, like Luis, he is killed by his own son. Enver is sent to jail but there is hope that he will be out soon and as per law, he is entitled to inherit his father’s company ‘Sohrab.’ Ayse, being a practical-minded businesswoman, decides to sit with the red-haired woman so that the company may not suffer. The red-haired woman tells us that she tried to reassure Ayse that she and her son Enver had no “intention of dismantling the construction empire” (Pamuk 200) built by Cem. Rather, “we wanted Sohrab to reach even greater heights. I told her I believed Sohrab was born on that day in 1986—thirty years ago—when my son’s late father began to dig that well with Master Mahmut” (Pamuk 200).

When Enver comes out of prison he, “might end up owning most of the company they had surely worked so hard to build” (Pamuk 201). Cem has served as a ‘vanishing mediator’ to make Enver a ‘fully constituted individual.’ The one final twist is that Enver, inspired by his mother, decides to write a novel while in prison to express his own version of events. His mother tells him, “Remember: your father had always wanted to be a writer, too” (Pamuk 205). The dialectics of the thesis into an antithesis and finally a synthesis is complete. The negation of negation has come full circle.

Conclusion

Vanwesenbeeck summarizes the development of narrative in *The Red-Haired Woman* by saying that Cem, “inspired by his apprenticeship digging well, studies geology and becomes a construction mogul” (360) but this personal itinerary is marred by guilt and he can only find solace by “collecting artwork and stories about fathers and sons” (360). The interspersal of the personal development of the protagonist and the guilt associated with patricide and filicide in the ancient myths and legends posits the ‘father figure’ as a ‘vanishing mediator.’ The novel “plays on dominant myths of Oedipus (from Oedipus Rex) and Rostum (from the Shahnameh) as master plots of intersecting Eastern and Western patriarchy and patrimony” (Gorkner and Kivrak, xv). The father plays a certain role in bringing about a particular transformation in the son and then vanishes. Cem’s transformation into a liberal capitalist could only take place if his father Akin vanishes as his socialist idealism would have hampered it. Cem’s apprenticeship with Master Mahmut and its traumatic outcome serves as the first movement of ‘negation’ as he decides to give up his passion for becoming a writer, studies geology and ultimately starts a successful construction company. In the second movement of negation, his son Enver, whom he has sired during a night of passion, kills him accidentally by the same well he dug with Master Mahmut. Cem ‘vanishes’ for the same reason that his two fathers had vanished before him — for the transformation of his son into a fully constituted capitalist individual. Sohrab, the company named after the son who is killed by his father Rostom, ironically, causes the death of Cem and, in a final twist, is inherited by Enver. The myth intervenes in the history of the characters to complete the cycle of negation of negation.

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