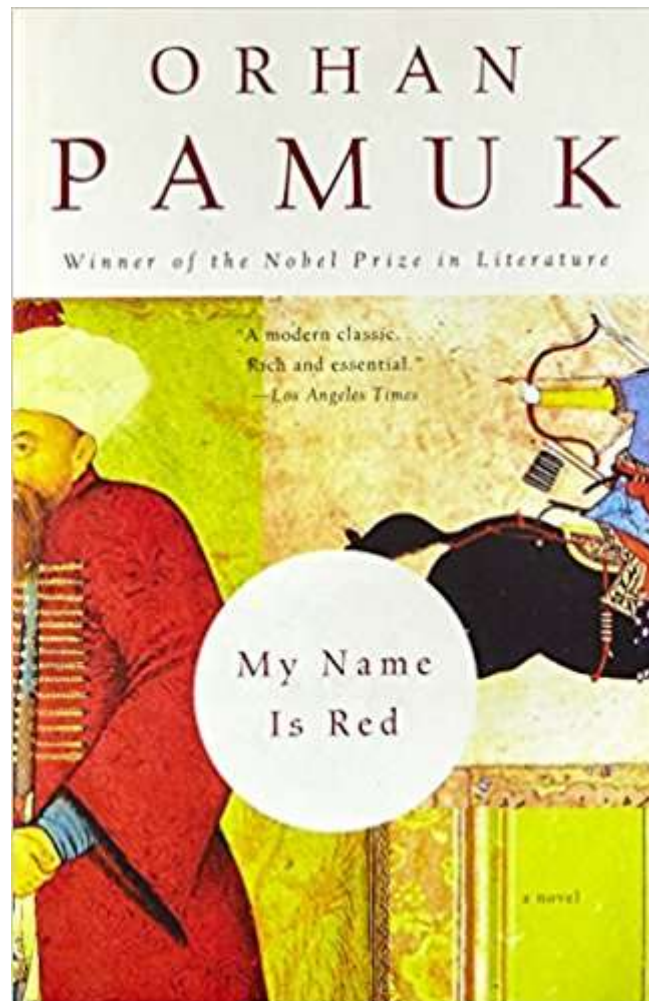


Relocating the Narrative Voice of Orhan Pamuk on History and Tradition in *My Name Is Red*

N. Rema, M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Jour. & Mass Comm.), B.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D.
Scholar and Dr. P. Ilamaran



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Abstract

Narrative is numberless and is omnipresent. Human beings find it natural to employ the narrative to present a story in the life of an individual. The perpetual interest of the story teller irrespective of a common man or a writer employs the medium of narrative to express his profound zeal for the actual events that have occurred in and around him. Pamuk, the most distinguished Turkish novelist, picks up the narrative voice of his self to deeply mourn the lost remembrances and the neglect of the people, to commemorate on their past ideals, traditional ventures, cultural documents and the historical accomplishments. He tries to retrieve some of his experiences, also alluding historical murder, adding fact to the imaginative love story as a way of echoing his longing for Istanbul, Turkey, his native land. The characters are a perfect illustration of the

writer's original voice, who stay smooth and flexible in weaving the multiple narration, linearly constructing the storyline. The multiple narrators always remember to move the narration along with literary ingredients such as drawings, paintings, codes of ancient Turkish models, images manifesting the richness of Istanbul just to proliferate the wonders. History and imaginative fragments are woven to authenticate the inevitability of the past and history.

Keywords: Narrative story, imaginative fragments, historical allusions, past traditions, retrieval, Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*

Orhan Pamuk

Orhan Pamuk is the most cherished novelist of 20th century who often delights the readers with his sharp and insightful narration. His characters serve well in expressing the real thought process forcefully clashing in the mind of Pamuk. Pamuk's early life contributes much of the raw material for all his literary endeavours. His happy yet revolutionary life style, combining antiqueness and moving towards another dimension of their tradition, moving towards a western life has created an imbalance in his mind. Though he dwells most of the time in a foreign land, his natural inclination for his native land has made him switch over to his motherland where he could find immense pleasure than the sophistication that the western nation and culture has provided him with. He could sense the essentiality of the recollection of the past, undue veneration to be given to the past, not as a way of attributing gratitude, but so as to possess an identity both personal and historical. This sense of longing for the past compels him to accept the fact that the entire Ottoman Empire has turned down from its natural native values slowly with the deterioration of the empire. The writer pens down his novels completely relying on the traditional monuments and historical redemptive images to rebuild on the broken past of valid ideals. The growth of Turkey, its vast richness, its loss of treasures from the scene compelling the writer to at least write about the past as a means of remembering the past is clearly evinced.

My Name is Red

My Name is Red traces the narrative identity of Pamuk attributing significance to the past values to cherish the past memories of the personal life and his empire, its lost beauties, its forgotten grandeur, feeding raw materials for his longing heart. Turkey has been the centre of the Ottoman Empire for nearly two centuries, with the people leading a healthy life style. With the transformation of Turkey into a democratic nation, it begins evincing a new rule under newly woven western phenomena. Though this cross-cultural encounter is a need of the times, it has created some complications. A sense of Turkishness that has bound the people slowly begins vanishing tending towards a completely alien dominion. This transparent inclination towards western doctrines devastates the mind of the Turkish people and they crave for themselves a decorative western style. As a result, the rivers, valleys, alleys, the rich Bosphorus, buildings of antiquity, are all replaced by huge apartments, loss of the shining Bosphorus and the miniature painting that has long withstood centuries.

Turkey Background

Pamuk who possess the power of narrating the people and the incidents into being, though very much comfortable with the alien life, some sense of longing for the originality instils in him the vigour to point out the social and cultural upheavals prevailing in Turkey which are the sole reason for the communal, historical and cultural imbalances. The western prototypes serve as the icons whereas the Turkishness is marginalised which is picturised in the novels of Pamuk. Sibel Erol quotes from his "Reading Orhan Pamuk's Snow as Parody: Differences as Sameness" that the characters of Pamuk are strong embodiment of Turkishness, its historical antiquities, the erasures being wrought by the westernization. The characters always in search for their identity with the profound paranoia of the loss of the self in a world of the west.

Turkish Characters

The characters of Pamuk are a representation of the Turks who rely on enriching their culture and being, for fear of being inferior and for which they strive towards an imitation of the western way. They find the new culture they were following to be completely deviant from the native one, neither favourable nor

original and hence are pushed towards a sense of shame, displacement and confusion. Pamuk establishes his characters becoming resolved to not let other cultures replace the Turkish culture and history at any circumstance.

Traditional Values Marginalized

Pamuk identifies that the main reason for the fear among the natives who incline towards the west is due to the local traditional values, cultural norms and the religious ideals being marginalised in Turkey. As a result, people of Turkey try to pick up a handful of the alien values because of which they forget their roots. This not only leads to rootlessness though sophisticated, but also forms a spiritual vacuum and loss of identity, both personal and historical. In addition to this is the confrontation between tradition and modernity that puts people in a chaotic state. They lack the proper manner to exhibit themselves both internally and externally. The constant shift from the native to the alien culture and the dilemma to stick on to a proper culture, thrusts upon people unknown and ambiguous ideologies. This is the reason for the confusion over the accumulation and adherence of values.

Further Pamuk is not against the adoption of westernisation, rather he advocates for any culture if it is informative and sociable. Both the stereotype way of the westerners in instilling the values among the natives and the way in which the already confused natives take up another culture and tradition, has all resulted in an utter vain neither imparting knowledge nor providing them with a balanced life.

Pamuk exhibits his lamentation in his novel *My Name is Red* on the fluctuations of the Turkish people over the adoption of the west and in framing their identity. He deeply sympathises with the monotonous attitude of the Turkish towards the adherence of western ideologies though not antagonistic of the west. The characters later realise the longingness for the past and seek for a truly native tradition.

Multiple Narrations by Multiple Characters

My Name is Red originally entitled as *Benim Adim Kirmizi* is considered to be a noteworthy piece with its multiple narrations being rendered by multiple characters. An overview of the novel expatiates the imbalance between the native Islamic and the western values on art forms especially the miniature paintings, the constant duel among various Muslim religious orders with their specific doctrines and the western thoughts of modernity, the prolonging clash between the east and the west and the general groupism. The novel is also a profound portrayal of the fissure between the two great civilization the native and the west, their artistic upbringings. It also talks on the present Turkey, how it has been a pawn in the hands of the west, moving somewhere in the name of attaining sovereignty. Turkey in the process of modernising and equipping itself with advanced technologies and developed knowledge becomes immobile in enriching its past ideals rather utterly depending on the new culture. It specifically narrates on the loss of Turkish identity and the individual identity finally commemorating on the lost self and the past.

Harmonious Narration

The novel unfolds at the outset of 16th century in Istanbul, Turkey with the murder of one of the miniaturists, Elegant Effendi and with the return of the protagonist, another miniaturist Black. The real motive behind the murder and the reason for Black's return are narrated in the due course of the novel. The multiple narration of the characters in *My Name is Red* bring unique stories all of which revealing some enigmatic revelations. Each character sets out his story as if he is aware of all the other characters or the incidents. At the end of the story of each character's narration begins harmoniously the others' narration, just like the murderer admitting his guilt to Enishte following the narration of Enishte. The narrative voice of Pamuk also stays unique in attributing his agony and pain over the loss of his self and the traditional views that he quotes,

“When you love a city and have explored it frequently on foot, your body, not to mention your soul, gets to know the streets so well after a number of years that in a fit of melancholy, perhaps stirred by a light snow falling ever so sorrowfully, you'll discover your legs carrying you of their own accord toward one of your favourite promontories” (Pamuk, 2001, pg 14)

Narrators and the Narratives

The omnipresence of the narrative voice accounts the identity of each character providing Black as an illustrator who tends to win back his lady love Shekure, the daughter of another master miniaturist Enishte Effendi. The narrative fold shows that she is already married and has two sons awaiting for her never traced husband who is missing for years. It is again the narrative string that visualizes the love of Black who still desires to win her love with the result of which he eagerly visits the native land. The smooth narrative flow of the writer snatches the characters, showing them how to swiftly pass on to the next step. It is the elegant stepping of the narrative preview that shows how Enishte making the opportunity of Black's return to be favourable, assigns him on the working of a secret book for the Sultan Murat III. Actually speaking, the Islamics are profound worshippers of art forms and Enishte in no way is an exception and is excited by the Venetian art forms during his visit to the city of Venice as the Sultan's ambassador. He visualises an idea to draw on the sultan, expresses his idea to the sultan, who later commissions Black to work on the book as a testimony of the glory of Hegira by using the western artistic technique. At this point, the grip of the narrative draws innumerable pictures over the Venetian images and their craze for their art forms. The narration also illustrates the invincible thirst of Master Enishte who would like to reproduce similar art forms. The narrative steps down gradually over the sincere secrecy to be maintained during the reproduction of such an art form. Since the book demands secrecy over the preparation, Enishte engages a crew including Black, master miniaturists such as Butterfly, Olive and Stork who will keep up the secret. His narrative voice is a blending of both love for the art forms and also in successively undertaking it. But it is here where the narrative takes up a rather gloomy note as one of the miniaturists turns out to be the culprit murdering Elegant Effendi and later Enishte after finding out the secrecy on the commissioned work. At this point the narrative raises a question for the main motive behind the murder and the name of the murderer.

The narrative enthusiastically moves from the issue of murder to the love of Black. Black rushes to marry Shekure after the death of her father against the wrath of her brother-in-law Hasan who already has an eye on her and later he attempts to capture her son Shevket. The way Hasan reacts to Shekure draws the evil side of Hasan. Meanwhile Shevket while rescuing his life from Hasan, takes over the dagger of Hasan. The dagger is then replaced in the hands of Black. Black while stepping forward to find out the murderer carries the dagger of Hasan. While encountering Olive, he escapes his life by wounding Black when Black traces Olive to be the guilt. The narration of the encounter between Black and Olive resolves the true motive behind the murder. Meanwhile Hasan mistakes Olive to be the guy who messes up his house, freeing Shekure and later has carried away his dagger, in a fit of fury kills Olive. It is further narrated that due to the overwhelming antagonism towards the western artistic forms and techniques, Olive murders Elegant and Enishte and no more reason could be the base. When Hasan flees for escape of punishment, Black totally keeps himself away from the working on miniatures begins his career as a clerk.

Art Forms in Conflict

The novel is a perfect illustration of the constant clash between the Islamic art forms and the western as it is the common ground of dispute among the miniaturists who work on the secret book as assigned by sultan Murat- III. Actually, the assignment of miniature painting is to be done for the Venetian Doge as a gift to demonstrate the sovereignty of the east over the west (Europe) turns out to be a rather disgusting and deadly experience for the miniaturists. Another instance that lacks sense is the head miniaturist Osman being fed up with copying the image of the sultan in their native art form that has been already sketched by the Venetian artist in Venetian art form. The head miniaturist is crumbled with the manner of the sultan, as "he did with disgust, referring the experience as torture" (Pamuk, 2001, p.112).

When the Turkish art form possesses certain unique code to draw the portraits which will take long time for a complete painting, the western has advanced technology that could make easy the art forms. These technological advancements are the sole reason for the natives being captivated towards the west. An example to show the annoyance of the western intrusion is the clock as a gift from the Queen of England which then is broken into pieces by the king himself for its loud ding of noise. Thus, the blind imitation of the western has always been a deadly disturbance. The captivation of the western art forms cost the life of Enishte who tries to apply the same which he has learned in Italy during his venture to paint a book in the style of Venetian form.

Moreover, the venture ends fiasco.

Though this miniature painting assigned by the sultan holds deep veneration as it is a highly traditional challenge on Islamic art forms, an intrusion of western art forms is sensed to be contagious by miniaturists such as Olive, who actually in a strange fit of anger is infuriated while discovering the welcoming of western art forms. It is this sense of native feeling and a fear of loss of a traditional identity that compels him to commit the murder.

Moreover, idolatry is a sin in Islamic tradition, so Olive hesitates to work upon the portraiture of the sultan and thus kills Elegant and Enishte without any consideration. He is the true representative of Islamic tradition who does not bother about the consequences and tries to abolish a crime that brings disgrace to the tradition. He adheres to the Islamic law of paying tribute to the divinity not to individuals. The west sees the art forms as the direct gift of humans, attaching importance to the mortals who create it but the real Islamic tradition esteems God to be the sole creator of any form either an art or a life. Therefore, Olive is not just a murderer but the real preserver of Islamic tradition by imbibing the native forms excluding the view of the western via Venetian code of artistic forms in the segregation of the secret book assigned by the sultan.

Mood of the Turkish

The history of Turkey with its traditional artistic forms stand unique against the western world and the narration opens up the incorrigible mood of the native Turkish who scorn the intrusion of the western art forms into their culture. The first-person narration of all the characters in the novel explicitly gives the story of how the history of a nation gets not assimilated into other culture but is rather been uprooted with the natives clinging on to other culture. The narration also points out that the imbalances among the native has been the main reason for their absorbing the alien tradition. One such instance occurs where Pamuk through the voice of one of the narrators, the dog writes on the nature of preserving the words of the traditional antiquity and thus quotes,

“The drinking of coffee is an absolute sin! Our Glorious Prophet did not partake of coffee because he knew it dulled the intellect, caused ulcers, hernia and sterility; he understood that coffee was nothing but the Devil's ruse”. (Pamuk, 2001, pg 18)

Alien Culture

Hence the narrative voice focuses on the evil nature of an alien culture that will completely ruin the natives' culture. This will naturally result in forgetting of own tradition which in course of time will experience an entirely new ray of lights deviating from the original tradition. This tendency is viewed as blasphemous by a few natives who try to wipe out the deadly intrusion and is narrated as Olive's murdering Elegant and Enishte. Both of them are seen to be the internal agents inviting the western phenomena of artistic forms which is curbed in the beginning before the completion of the assigned work to stop the entry of alien power. The historical episode of murder scene and the sultan commissioning an assignment is tied along with the imaginative love story of Black and Shekure which provides insight into the truth that historical truth is blended with the imaginative love story to give life to historiographic metafiction.

Enriching Fiction

The narrative tendency further works as a tool enhancing the historiographic metafiction with its linear flow organizing the fragmented stories of the different characters. The fragmented imaginative narration of all the characters is then inserted with a truth of how a tradition gets collapsed when alien culture steps in to it. Though advocacy of other culture and tradition is favourable in enriching and enhancing the native values depending upon the alien forsaking the primitive one is quite destructive. Pamuk views that observing handful of other tradition is quite constructive but the more inferior the native tradition becomes the more devastating condition will be for the native culture and tradition. The more a history is preserved, the more an identity will be asserted for both an individual and the history.

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N. Rema, M.A., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.
Ph.D. Scholar
Department of English
P.S.G. College of Arts and Science
Coimbatore
Tamilnadu
India
remawinenglit@gmail.com

Dr. P. Ilamaran
Associate Professor & Head
Department of English
P.S.G. College of Arts and Science
Coimbatore
Tamilnadu
India
dr.ilamaran@gmail.com