

## Chapter 2

### Postmodern Voices

This chapter will explore the postmodern elements employed by the author in My Name is Red. In the first place, since the novel is composed entirely of first-person narratives, its “postmodern voices” are its most obvious and striking postmodern element or technique. There are several ways in which one might set out to examine Pamuk’s postmodernism in this novel, several paths one might follow, or directions one might take. One might first notice the novel’s first-person narrator changes in every chapter while still conforming perfectly with the movement of the plot, so that the novel can proceed smoothly. In other words, the change of narrator in each chapter does not interrupt the flow of the narration, and the storyline maintains its sense of wholeness, instead of breaking into fragments due to the changing narrators.

And there are a total of ten narrators who by turns and together report all the happenings of the story to the readers, therefore, as the narrator changes, the point of view shifts as well. And readers, by following the narration of each character-narrator, will arguably obtain ten different ways of seeing the world inside My Name is Red. In fact, the technique that Pamuk utilizes to tell a detective story, endowing different voices to his multiple narrators, as well as his multiple personae, is quite an experimental and innovative method of narrative and therefore is to some extent also quite postmodern. Secondly, the tone adopted by all the character-narrators in this novel is also extremely postmodern. Generally, the narrators’ tone in this novel, while addressing the readers directly, is playful, teasing and sometimes even absurd. It may also be taken as the author’s own intention, not only to play with the readers while narrating the story, but also to invite the readers to

participate in this detective novel, mostly to identify the true identity of the murderer in this novel, which is certainly the most intricate riddle foreshadowed in the very beginning of this novel. And unlike a conventional novel told in third-person narrative, the narrators in My Name is Red, or say the author also, recognize the existence of the readers and recognize the readers as a third party of this novel, though this third party may not be completely objective. Sometimes, a narrator would appear to be honest to the readers, other times, a narrator would also be suspicious of the readers' presence and therefore seem to conceal something from the readers, yet other times, a narrator would also boldly challenge the readers' intellect. All in all, the narrators' tone addressing the readers directly can be seen as the author's own intention to make the experience of reading this novel even more like a game played between the readers and all of its characters. Also, there is an unstable relation between the readers and the narrators; the author, by subtly changing the tone of a certain narrator in different occasions, successfully creates an grotesque effect that sometimes deliberately estranges the readers, yet sometimes on the other hand makes intimacy with the readers. In addition to the considerably capricious character-narrators, the readers will also find yet another postmodern design of this novel, that is, the bizarre emergence of the unexpected narrators as well as the unexpected voices. There are two sorts of unexpected voices, first, the voices of the dead, the voices of the murdered gilder, Elegant, and also Enishte, both character-narrators are able to speak after they are killed; and the second kind of unexpected voices is contributed by the lifeless objects, a tree speaks, a coin speaks, and the color red also speaks in this novel. All these voices uttered by the unexpected character-narrators are beyond readers' common sense, and in a way, challenging the readers' conventional way of reviewing a novel. In sum, the

technique that the author utilizes to narrate this novel, the change of narrators, the tone adopted by the characters, and the unexpected voices which subvert the traditional fictional narrative, altogether make this novel an admittedly postmodern masterpiece.

M. H. Abrams has quite neatly offered a brief explication of postmodernism, “An understanding in some postmodernist writings . . . is to subvert the foundation of our accepted modes of thought and experience . . .” (168-69). Certainly, My Name is Red can be regarded as a perfect example of postmodernism due to its narrative technique which constantly challenges the readers’ accepted modes of thought and experience. Instead of being narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator, My Name is Red is told by ten different speakers, who possess equally limited knowledge of the oncoming happening of the novel; instead of distancing the readers outside of the story as a sheer observer, My Name is Red involves all readers in the happenings of this novel, by sporadically asking the readers direct question and by making direct interaction with the readers; and instead of complying with a commonly accepted cognition of death, the author of My Name is Red endows corpses and lifeless objects with voices. All these idiosyncratic features of this novel, quite opposite to conventional writings, undermine the formerly established knowledge about the writing of novels, and make this novel distinguishable from other novels, and eventually induce an effect of defamiliarization in reading this novel. Although this novel depicts a story that takes place in the ancient times, 1591 in Istanbul, the techniques that have been employed in rendering this novel is however quite postmodern. And because Pamuk’s ample use of postmodern techniques, he has been broadly recognized as a postmodern novelist and also a postmodernist. In Bayrakceken and Randall’s essay, it is clearly indicated that:

Pamuk while gaining ever-increasing reputation and popularity in the English-speaking world, particularly in the United States, has received quite ample consideration as a postmodernist. Indeed, the main thrust of Anglophone-world commentary, and of criticism produced in Turkey, has been characterization and evaluation of Pamuk's postmodernism. (192)

No doubt, Pamuk is a postmodernist, and he will continue to be a postmodernist as long as he keeps writing to amaze and challenge the readers with his narrative skills and with his consistent and continual quest of the East-West opposition. Therefore, the vintage Pamuk's works, not only My Name is Red, have become suitable targets for research of the universal postmodernist critics in the modern days. Similarly, according to Wikipedia, an encyclopedia on the internet, it is quite straightforwardly indicated that:

The main characters in the novel are miniaturists in the Ottoman Empire, and the events revolve around the murder of one of the painters, as related in the first chapter. From then on Pamuk—in a postmodern style reminiscent of Borges—plays with and teases the reader and literature in general. (Wikipedia)

However, unlike Borges who tends to play with and tease the reader with the content of his works, innovative and grotesque concepts generally, such as his several short stories in his famous postmodern fiction, Labyrinth, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” (Labyrinth 3) “The Garden of Forking Path” (Labyrinth 19) and “Borges and I” (Labyrinth 246), often employing the idea of parallel universe; Pamuk's postmodernism is often fulfilled in his work's form and narrative technique. In other words, the underlying idea or subject matter in Pamuk's novel may appear to be ordinary and down-to-earth, but the way Pamuk deals with his novel makes an

ordinary story become extraordinary and somehow absurd and postmodern in general. Likewise, a scholarly journal named World Literature Today, introduces Pamuk to its readers by arguing Pamuk is certainly a postmodernist, “Pamuk has his finger on the pulse of world literature. While his compatriots are still tinkering with the secrets of the well-made modern novel, Pamuk has already graduated into postmodernism” (Author Profile).

### Multiple Narrators

The unusual arrangement of multiple narrators in this novel, to some extent, resembles the game of relay, a narrator will be responsible for narrating a part of the story, and the next narrator will soon replace the former narrator and continue the narration of the story, one after one. All these multiple narrators together create various and different voices of this novel, because of their different personality and their different background respectively, and the phenomenon composed of multi-faceted and heterogeneous voices in this novel once again echo to Bakhtin’s manifestation, heteroglossia. There are basically two kinds of narrator in this novel, first kind is the human being narrators, they are the corpse(Elegant), Black, the murderer, Enishte, Orhan, Esther, Shekure, Butterfly, Stork, Olive and Master Osman; and one of the three young masters, Butterfly, Stork and Olive is actually the murderer, so there are two narrators’ identities that are overlapped, which can also be perceived as the dual personality or ambiversion of the murderer’s well concealed identity; and the second kind of narrators are in reality hung pictures in the coffee house, given voices by a storyteller, and interestingly, most of this kind of narrators are lifeless objects or simply abstract concepts or animals also, they served as the unexpected voices of this novel, such as a dog, a tree, a gold coin, Death, the color red, a horse, Satan, two dervishes and a woman; no matter what kind of species they belong to,

they are all in reality lifeless pictures accompanying with the voice of a storyteller in the coffee house. Along with the shifts of all these narrators, the points of view also changes frequently, as E. Göknar puts it, “MNR exhibits its historiographic metafiction through visual expression of Ottoman history, autobiographical self-reflexivity, fragmented points of view . . .” (36) Indeed by following each narrator’s description, readers are able to gain a vivid pictures of every corner of the life in Istanbul, especially when a narrator is describing a particular painting in detail, which not only adds visual effect to this novel but also imaginative effect. Although the points of view in this novel, like Göknar says, may appear to be fragmented, because of the shift of narrators, the storyline and the logic of understanding this novel however maintain their wholeness. Therefore, like a traditional novel, the ongoing chapter is taken for granted a continuation of the preceding chapter no matter how many times the change of narrators occurs. In sum, Pamuk’s postmodern narrative arrangement gives way to the multiplicity of the narration and can be seen as an act of resisting uniformity; therefore, to a more or lesser degree, the narrative of My Name is Red is rather objective, since there is no single, omniscient narrator in the novel who makes the readers have no choice but believe everything that this omniscient narrators says. Linda Hutcheon quite shrewdly asserts that, “Typically postmodernist, the text refuses the omniscience and omnipresence of the third person and engages instead in a dialogue between a narrative voice . . . and a projected reader” (250). It is also to affirm that the lack of an omniscient and omnipresent third person as the sole narrative voice makes My Name is Red avowedly a postmodern writing.

In contrast with a conventional narrative, in which a narrator merely describe all the happenings of a story without paying attention to a fact that there is actually a reader who is attentively reading what he says, and simply omits the presence of the

reader and keeps the reader in a fixed position completely outside of the story itself as a sheer and silent observer; My Name is Red allows the readers to participate the development of the story metaphorically by asking the readers direct questions and by constantly addressing the reader as the second person, you. In other words, while a narrator in My Name is Red is not narrating the story itself, he or she occasionally speaks directly to the readers and therefore invite the readers to spiritually enter the narrated world, though the reader are not capable of changing anything of the novel, much like the way Robert Browning composes his poem, “My Last Duchess,” in which Browning’s persona also directly speaks to the reader, addressing the reader as “sir”, “Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt whenever I passed her,” and “Nay, we’ll go together down sir”(1353). Both My Name is Red and “My Last Duchess” recognize the presence of the readers and address them directly, regardless whether the readers are capable of replying their requests; of course, no reader can literally enter the novel My Name is Red, nor can he go down together with Browning’s persona in that poem; however, the feature of first-person narrative, addressing the readers directly, produces a whole new experience of reading. Brian McHale has referred to this relation between addressor and addressee in the novel as “communicative circuits” (91), he argues:

When readers and critics speak casually of author addressing the reader directly, what they usually have in mind is communicative circuits of the first type, in which (2a) an extra-diegetic narrator addresses an extra-diegetic narratee . . . just as the narrator’s opposite number, the narratee, approximates most closely the function of the empirical reader.

(91)

Within the communicative circuits of My Name is Red, the reader, the addressee and

the narratee, always remains silent without being capable of answering any question asked by the character-narrator or replying to any request demanded by the character-narrator. McHale goes on to comment, “Characters are ruled out as plausible recipient of such communications, for they existed within the narrated world, and only someone outside of it, capable of reflecting on the narrative and its reception, could fill the role of addressee appropriately” (91). Therefore, in the case of My Name is Red, apart from the “interior dialogue” (McHale 92), that is the dialogue between a character and another character, which occurs only within the narrated world, the only one outside of the narrated world that can fill the role of addressee appropriately of course is the reader. In other words, it is evident that only the reader can fill the role of “you” addressed by all the character-narrators in My Name is Red. And it is only through the participation and involvement of the reader that this novel is able to proceed smoothly.

As one can plainly tell, My Name is Red apparently starts in medias res, beginning at the time where Elegant has already been killed and emerged as a corpse. Surprisingly, Elegant’s dead body speaks after he is murdered, like a ghost, he speaks:

After hearing the miracle of my voice, you might think “Who cares what you earned when you were alive? Tell us what you see. Is there life after death? Where is your soul? What about Heaven and Hell? What’s death like? Are you in pain?” You are right, the living are extremely curious about the Afterlife. (MNR 4)

With this description of a corpse, the author accurately captures the reader’s amazement, knowing that, by reading a dead man’s talk, any rational reader will be justified to feel confused and wondering why a corpse is able to speak. Therefore, the author ingeniously plays with the reader’s curiosity. Truly, a dead man’s voice



can be miraculous in any common sense, but since this is a postmodern novel in essence, therefore, anything can happen without an adequate reason. The author is shrewdly aware of a reader's psyche while seeing Elegant's posthumous speech and sort of predicting the reader's wonderment and confusion that one as a reader may want to resolve. Moreover, the author also quite cleverly captures the reader's rationality and plays with the reader's curiosity, asking all the questions that a reader is most likely to ask about death out of human nature. And while the readers are still wondering why a dead man can talk, measuring the possibility of a corpse's speech with the maximum of their intelligence, the dead body of Elegant soon offer the answer of death by announcing, "there is indeed another world, thank God, and the proof is that I'm speaking to you from here" (MNR 4). Here, a reader may be forced to accept this irrational and sort of ironic truth that a dead man is indeed speaking to him/her, and a dead man really can talk in this novel. And finally, one might assure himself/herself by witnessing this unbelievable scene of the opening chapter that, the novel he/she is reading is actually a postmodern work which is beyond the reach of any ordinary logic.

In the eighteenth chapter of this novel, the narrator is the murderer. He narrates a plot where he attends the funeral of Elegant just like every other innocent participant in this funeral. And this chapter is filled with the murderer's interior monologue, in the middle of his narration, he says, "If I do have style and character. It's not only in my artwork, but in my crime and in my words as well! Yes, try to discover who I am from the color of my words" (MNR 97). The narrator here openly provokes the reader. The murderer knows, the author knows, throughout this novel, every reader must be extremely cautious in finding every clue and every trace left unconsciously by the murderer in order to identify who precisely is the murderer among all the

characters. One can perceive this sentence of the narrator as the author's own invitation for the reader to participate in this detective game, as the author fully understands that, while a reader is reading this novel, one of the biggest mysteries he might attempt to resolve is to figure out the true identity of the murderer. Also, this sentence can also be perceived as a behavior that the narrator is actually teasing the reader, because he is quite confident that, by far, every reader will have difficulty identifying who he truly is. Again, this also firmly proves that, while the author is writing this novel, he is always concerning about how a reader will respond to certain events following his description, and he successfully grasps the reader's mentality.

Actually, this murderer portrayed by the author is a pretty cautious character, he says:

[i]n no wise do I want you to figure out whether I am Butterfly, Olive or Stork. For if you do you won't hesitate to turn me over to the tortures of the Sultan's Commander of Imperial Guard. And I must mind what I think about and say. Actually, I know you are listening to me even when I'm mulling over matters in private. I can't afford careless contemplation of my frustration or the incriminating details of my life. Even when recounting the "Alif," "Ba," and "Djim" stories. I was always mindful of your gaze. (MNR 98)

Interestingly, through this narration of the murderer, one can sense such a strong self-reflexivity of the character, the narrator is narrating the story while also at the same time never forgetting that he is merely a character of a story. And this self-reflexivity of the narrator creates a surreal effect, unlike an ordinary novel, in which a narrator can comfortably and freely narrate everything, the narrators of My Name is Red acknowledge the omnipresence of the readers and react in their narrations. The criminal narrator is fully aware of a fact that the readers are

continuously eavesdropping on him, both his speech and his interior monologue. And this particular feature of this novel makes this novel even interesting to read for it creates a sense of participation for the readers. Even though, the author knows it is impossible that a reader is capable of turning over the murderer to the tortures, he still portrays the murderer as a squeamish man who constantly suffers a persecutory delusion, and this makes this character even vivid and true to life, and also makes this novel rather absurd to some extent.

Similarly, in the nineteenth chapter of the novel, a personified gold coin's monologue, addressing the reader directly, and this gold coin, supposedly belongs to Stork, is about to confess a secret. But, actually, the secret that the gold coin wants to reveal is a trivia and has nothing to do with the story itself. The coin's secret is that, it is "not a genuine twenty-two-carat Ottoman Sultan gold coin minted at the Chamberlitash Mint" (MNR 103). But the coin confesses this secret with a whispering tone, it says directly to the reader, "as long as you promise not to tell anyone, and as long as Stork Effendi won't take offense, I'll tell you a secret. Do you swear not to tell?" (MNR 103) There are two simple problems manifest along with this illogical request demanded by this coin, first of all, an ordinary reader would pay no mind to whether this coin is a genuine gold coin or a counterfeit, since it basically is not an immediate concern of the story itself; secondly, there is no reader who has the ability to tell this coin's secret to anyone else, since the reader is only a silent listener of the novel, so the question "Do you swear not to tell" is in fact a vain question. However, despite the meaninglessness of this coin's secret and question, a reader here once again will sense that his presence is being noticed by the character-narrator of the novel, as if the reader plays an important part of the novel.

And in one plot of the novel, it is Shekure's turn of speech, she comes home late

in the evening and appallingly discovers that her father is murdered, and she says to the reader with a rather calm tone, unlike the normal reaction one will expect when a woman witness her own father's dead body and fall in hysteria:

Listen, I can tell by your tight-lipped and cold-blooded reaction that you've known for some time what's happened in this room. If not every thing, then quite a lot. What you're wondering about now is my reaction to what I've seen, what I feel. As readers sometimes do when studying a picture, you're trying to discern the pain of the hero and thinking about the events in the story leading up to this agonizing moment. And then, having considered my reaction, you'll take pleasure in trying to imagine, not my pain, but what you'd feel in my place, had it been your father murdered like this. I know this is what you're so craftily trying to do. (MNR 178-79)

Once again, what a reader finds here is that, the narrator disrupts her own narration of the happening in this particular plot and turns to a conversation with the reader. And this is again in effect the author's own trick, he knows quite clearly what the reader is expecting is to see how Shekure will react to the scene of her father's being murdered, so the author simply let Shekure conjecture the reader's possible mentality. In doing so, the author also creates different layers of reality in reading this novel. While a reader is indulging himself/herself in a normal narration of this novel, suddenly, an inopportune and unexpected disruption of the narrator drags him/her back to the reality, outside the narrated world, and makes the reader aware that his/her thought is captured by the author while he/she is reading this particular part of the story. And this specific trick of the author also effectively teases the reader and which reminds the reader that his/her thought cannot escape the grasp of the author. Indeed, a

reader might be wondering those things that Shekure brings up, and therefore a reader might feel that he/she is being caught even if he/she is actually outside of the narrated world.

There is yet another similar disruption of narration of the narrator in the chapter narrated by Esther. In this chapter, Black assembles an armed gang to raid the house of Hasan, Shekure's former husband's brother, in order to take Shekure back by force. After Black succeeds in taking back Shekure and her two children, he hides them in a house of his relative. After quite a long period of chaos, Esther abruptly says to the reader, "There was no telling what Hasan would do if angered, and I knew Black had found another place to hide his family from him—and from that devil of murderer. If I could've made out where that place was, I would tell you" (MNR 350). This "you" in Esther's description probably is the reader again. And this description of Esther once again demonstrates that the author's peculiar design of multiple narrators, lacking an omniscient narrator, allows him to foreshadow more complexity and unresolved riddles of the story by the narration of his multiple narrators who all have only limited knowledge of the whole happening. Unlike a traditional third-person narrative novel, in which the narrator will usually reveal everything to the reader; in Pamuk's novel, a narrator will only say what he or she knows.

And in the fifty-fourth chapter of the novel, entitled "I am a Woman" (MNR 352), one of the chapters that belongs to the category of the unexpected narrator, since the woman narrator is in fact a picture. And the true narrator here is supposedly the storyteller of the coffee house. In the late part of this chapter, when the storyteller is giving an address about the picture of a woman to the audience in the coffee house, Nusret Hoja, a fundamentalist of Islamism, leads a crowd of his loyal followers to raid the coffee house. At the end of this chapter, the narration is forced to pause due to

the unpredictable attack of this Hoja and his followers. Interestingly, the narrator of this chapter at this very moment says the following as his last sentence, “Now then, who are those strangers bursting through the door?” (MNR 356) The narration here is interrupted along with the sudden attack of the Hoja and his crowd. This chapter does not end in a conventional way, describing every detail of the chaos that has taken place in the coffee house; instead, it simply stops the narration and makes the situation more like reality by asking who are bursting through the door. And this would make the reader probably mistake as if he/she is one of the guests sitting in the coffee house, listening attentively to the storyteller, and is too forced to be interrupted by the attack. In short, the way Pamuk deals with sudden events in this novel makes every plot more like reality by constantly recognizing the existence of an ever-observing reader.

Although the sudden interruption of narration, recognizing the presence of the reader and addressing the reader directly as “you,” may fundamentally make the reading of this novel more like reality, more like happening before one’s eye, and ultimately make this novel even enjoyable as a whole, there is still one essential problem derived from the postmodern narrative of this novel remaining to be solved. As the narrators so frequently mention “you” in their respective chapters, a reader might rightfully doubt that, is he/she really the one that the “you” refers to, because sometimes the narrators while addressing the reader directly, the questions they ask or the conjecture about the possible reaction of the reader appear to be somehow arbitrary and one-sided. In fact, as a reader, not everyone necessarily wants to know what death is like or is there life after death or the existence of Heaven and Hell, like Elegant’s corpse suggests; and not every reader is carefully and painstakingly trying to discover who the murderer really is, like the murderer assumes, moreover, even if a

reader does figure out the true identity of the murderer, he/she will absolutely have no power to turn him over to the tortures; and no one really cares about the secret of the gold coin, and still, the reader will not have the ability to reveal this secret to others; furthermore, not every reader, after reading the part of Enishte's murder, is tight-lipped and cold-blooded expecting a possible reaction from Shekure, in other words, the reader may not be as callous as Shekure supposes. All these one-sided conjecture of the narrators and all the words addressing "you" directly by the narrator do not completely make sense. The more times the narrators mention "you," the more confusion emerges. Is this "you" really like Hutcheon says, a projected reader, or is there someone else that the narrators address as "you"? A reader might rightfully wonder, am I really filling the role of addressee and narratee in this novel? Therefore, to whom does the narrator address as "you" becomes a crucial question of this postmodern game of Pamuk. Actually, Brian McHale has raised a similar problem for the reader, when he comments on Pynchon's Gravity Rainbow, by asking, "With passages like this one in mind, 'is in part a second-person novel which periodically addresses you.' Indeed—but who is you?" (89) Needless to say, the reader has absolutely no power whatsoever to change any bit of the story, he/she is not able to turn the murderer over to the tortures, neither can he/she divulge the coin's secret to others. McHale further explains the function of this "you" in postmodern novel:

You, in modern English the only pronoun of direct address, always implies an act of communication. The most reliable sign of narratorial "voice," it compels the reader, by its very presence in a text, to hypothesize a circuit of communication joining an addressor and addressee. (89)

By far, the reader is most likely the person who can fill the role of “you” in My Name is Red, but what if it is not the author’s original intention to involve the reader as “you” of the novel, if the reader is not the addressee in this circuit of communication, who else could it be? McHale offers a possible alternative here:

A special case of a communicative circuit . . . In this situation, the character has in effect split himself or herself into two, one part acting as the addressor, the other the addressee . . . the communicative circuit has been internalized creating an interior dialogue. (92)

According to McHale, it is to say, in the case of My Name is Red, while all the narrator speak directly to the “you,” they are actually talking to themselves, or in Hutcheon’s words, “autolingu—*the inner language of the storyteller*” (251). In this regard, all the narrators while narrating the story, they simultaneously imagine an outsider who is constantly eavesdropping on them, thus address this outsider as “you,” an imaginative “you” of the narrators precisely. However, there is still another possibility, that is, the “you” in My Name is Red is actually an “impersonal you” (McHale 100). The “you” means nobody, it is nothing but a tool used by Orhan Pamuk as part of his postmodern game. In other words, the reader does not necessarily have to take the “you” in this novel as himself/herself.

Although, the addressee and narratee might not necessarily be the reader in the first-person narrative My Name is Red, and the “you” might not utterly refer to the reader, Pamuk actually designs a perfect postmodern game of narrative, and prepares a position for any reader who is willing to play the role of “you” automatically. If a reader is willing to abandon all rationality, logic, objective factor and common sense for just one moment and enter the novel as the “you” in the mouths of all the narrators, it means quite significantly that the reader is willing to participate Pamuk’s



postmodern game and play with the author as well as his multiple narrators through reading this novel. After all, all narrator needs a narratee, all addressor needs an addressee, and if a reader fills the role of narratee and addressee, it would make this novel more enjoyable and interesting, despite the fact that the communication between the reader and the narrators of the novel might not all make perfect sense, but in a postmodern work, anything can happen. In sum, a postmodern novel might require cooperation between the reader and the author, and this cooperation will help this novel functioning smoothly.

#### Unexpected Narrators: Pictures and Ghosts

Other than the first-person narrators speaking directly to the reader, there are also versatile voices of the unexpected narrators, as part of Pamuk's postmodernism. In other words, Pamuk not only teases the reader with his first-person narrators who constantly recognize the presence of the reader, but also amazes the reader with numerous unexpected narrators, making the seemingly unspeakable speak. Normally, the improbable speakers, such as animals or objects, only exist in fairytale or children literature, but in Pamuk's postmodern novel, these lifeless, animal speakers do speak, supposedly borrowing the voice of the storyteller in the coffee house in this novel. According to this novel, one might reasonably assume that, a storyteller who makes up an improvisatory description to accompany a certain illustrated manuscript in a public place, is a common entertainment of the people in the ancient Turkey; Pamuk, by infusing this old Turkish custom in his novel, creates an absurdity of unexpected voices of the novel. There are totally nine chapters devoted to these unexpected narrators which periodically appear in this novel as interludes, moreover, these interludes are completely irrelevant from the main development of the happenings of this novel. They can be therefore seen as the

stories within a story. While reading these chapters of unexpected narrators, readers are like entering a second world of the novel which is kept outside of the main happening of the novel, and readers are also temporarily interrupted by these chapters. And these chapters also function as relievers of the tense atmosphere in this mysterious detective novel, which make the readers for a while forget about the complication of the search of the murderer's identity and the complex romance between Black and Shekure. Interestingly, one can also compare the intermittent interruption of the chapters of unexpected voices to the experience of watching a soap opera, which is similarly often interrupted by TV commercials every once a while. And therefore, this design of narrative of the novel also effectively makes reading this novel like watching a drama, when the storyteller starts to broach a story with a picture, the scene changes, and the reader become one of those attendants in the coffee house, listening eagerly to everything that the storyteller says.

The first unexpected narrator to appear in this novel is a dog, an Istanbulite dog precisely. By reading the dog's narration, the reader first encounters the absurdity and the improbable reality that a dog is capable of speaking in this novel. Even in Jack London's famous novel, The Call of the Wild, in which a dog is the sole protagonist who does not even spit a word throughout that novel; however, in My Name is Red this dog is only an unknown, wandering street dog and a minor character of the novel who speaks in a whole chapter, this reflects a truth that this novel is everything but an ordinary or conventional novel. While the readers are still wondering why a dog can speak out of their rationality, this canine narrator affirms that:

I'm a dog, and because you humans are less rational beasts than I, you're telling yourselves, "Dogs don't talk." Nevertheless, you seem to believe

a story in which corpse speak and characters use words they couldn't possibly know. Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen. (MNR 11)

Here, the readers are once again challenged and teased, according to what the dog says, human beings would not tend to believe that a dog can speak because they rarely consider a dog as an equal being as themselves, and moreover, if the readers accept the fact that a corpse can speak, as it happens in the first chapter of the novel, then why cannot they too accept that a dog can speak. Pamuk's postmodern fantasy is once again realized along with the incredible speech of a dog, and of course any reader who reads this novel and knows a corpse can speak previously will also be those who know how to listen to a dog. Moreover, in the dog's narration, one is reminded that, a dog is ill-treated, disliked and despised in the Islamic society. And by introducing a dog's monologue, which is basically complaining about the ill treatment it has received, as the first unexpected voice, the author also try to convey that, this novel aims to challenge and question the stereotype of the Islamic tradition, because the dog's being ill-treated also reflects the main theme of the novel, the dissimilarity between East and West. All in all, the author's allowing the seemingly ridiculous emergence of a speaking dog, and the controversial status of a dog in the particular context, Istanbul, both imply a rebellion toward the Islamic religion.

In chapter ten, readers will find a sorrowful and sentimental narrator who is actually a tree, a tree that has "been hastily sketched onto nonsized, rough paper so the picture of a tree might hang behind the master storyteller" (MNR 47). In the tree's self-narration, one can sense such a strong solitude and a sense of loss, as it says, "I am a tree and I am quite alone. I weep in the rain" (MNR 47) as its opening sentence. Interestingly, the tree knows quite well about its own fate and knows also

the truth that it is not a genuine tree, but merely a painting, as it later also says, “I was supposed to be part of a story, but I fell from there like a leaf in autumn” (MNR 47). Readers may lament for the tree’s solitude and for the tree’s being lost from where it is supposed to be. And in this chapter, it is obvious that the author utilizes the technique of self-reflexivity, while the tree is narrating its own story, it simultaneously sees itself with a rather objective point of view. In fact, this similar self-reflexivity of narrator also occurs on many of the chapters in this novel, in a chapter narrated by a gold coin, it proudly says, “I take pride in being recognized as a measure of talent among artist and in putting an end to unnecessary disagreement” (MNR 102). It is interesting to read such chapters, while the lifeless narrators are talking about their own affair, they do not forget that they are simply personified and not forget their “thinghood” (Hegel 633). And this self-reflexivity of the unexpected narrator can also be found in the chapter of Death, as he says, “I am Death, as you can plainly see, but you needn’t be afraid, I am just an illustration” (MNR 125). Apparently, Death’s sentence is quite paradoxical and self-mocking, unlike a fearsome religious figure, he encourages people not to be afraid, because he is a fake, and he himself quite understands that. Also, in the chapter narrated by a horse, it also recognizes itself not as a real horse but merely a painting, instead:

Ignore the fact that I’m standing here placid and still, if truth be told, I’ve been galloping for centuries, I have passed over plains, fought in battles, carried off the melancholy daughters of shas to be wed; I’ve galloped tirelessly page by page from story to history, from history to legend and from book to book; I’ve appeared in countless stories, fables, books and battles. (MNR 216)

Certainly, horse is one of the most frequently painted subjects as a demonstration

which shows a ruler's military strength, in any historical painting. And this horse's self-narration can be perceived as a collective memory of the animal horse. And this horse's memory once again manifests the characteristic of self-reflexivity of the unexpected narrator. All the unexpected narrators, dog, tree, gold coin, Death and horse, mentioned above, while being endowed with human trait and being endowed with the ability of speaking, they do not refuse to admit that they are all in reality pictures.

Among all the unexpected narrators, the chapter narrated by the color red is arguably the most notable one, first, because it is the name of the novel, readers will naturally be curious about what red will say about itself, second, unlike other narrators, who are mostly animals, objects, religious symbols and also human beings, red is more like an abstract concept. Surely, everyone will have a hard time defining what exactly is red, it is also hard to "explain red to somebody who has never known red" (MNR 187). And the color red also predicts readers' wonderment and says quite confidently, "I hear the question from your lips: What is it to be a color" (MNR 186). But the color red soon offers an answer in a quite poetic way, "Color is the touch of the eye, music to the deaf, a word out of darkness" (MNR 186). According to the explanation of red, it means color is simply an idea which does not even exist substantially, because eye certainly cannot touch, the deaf cannot hear the music, and in the darkness, a word cannot present itself. And this ambiguous explanation of color somehow leads the readers to a conclusion that, by nominating this novel as My Name is Red the author may try to imply a symbolic attribute of this novel, mystery. And indeed, this is without a doubt a mysterious novel. Also, the meaning of red can also be symbolically taken as violence, as red itself quite clearly says, "I love engaging in scenes of war where blood blooms like poppies" (MNR 186). And this

novel does bear the attribute of violence because of the callous murders of Elegant and Enishte. In the end of red's chapter, it foretells all readers that in this novel, "the truth is I can be found everywhere" (MNR 188).

Most critics tend to argue that, the true voice behind all these unexpected narrators is actually belonging to a storyteller of the coffee house in this novel, and the proof is, while the storyteller acts a woman in chapter fifty-four, saying, "I can hear your objections already: 'My dear storyteller Effendi, you might be able to imitate anyone or anything, but never a woman!'" (MNR 352), and his performance is eventually forced to end, because he is interrupted by the intrusion of the followers of Nusret Hoja. It is also the finale of this storyteller's performance, because the coffee house finally becomes rubbles out of the fundamentalists' attack, and the unexpected voices of unexpected narrators never appear again in this novel. Therefore, Lynne Sharon Schwartz quite assuredly asserts that:

The mystery moves along in first-person chapters narrated by the eight or so major characters, with intervening chapters contributed by a dog, a tree, Satan, Death and similarly unexpected voices. We soon learn these voices are improvisational riffs of a storyteller who entertains in a freewheeling coffee shop frequented by the illustrators and targeted by repressive fundamentalists. (23)

The unexpectedness could be resolved if all these unusual voices can be attributed to the improvisational performance of an understandable figure, the storyteller. But if the mystery of this novel is so easily dissipated, it would not be qualified as a postmodern masterpiece; therefore the storyteller cannot and will not be the only answer to this unexpectedness of the novel.

There are two reasonable doubts pertaining to the storyteller in this novel. First

of all, one must refuse to believe the superficial truth that the storyteller of this novel utters for all the unexpected narrators and must presume that, the storyteller is only a fabricated figure. The first evidence is that, all the unexpected narrators' narrations are seemingly irrelevant from the main structure of the novel, and these unexpected narrators are essentially pictures; however, these pictures which contribute as chapters of unexpected narrators in this novel happen to be all the same pictures required by Enishte for his secret book imitating the European skills. In other words, these pictures are all drawn by Butterfly, Olive and Stork; Butterfly paints figures in the book of Death, which is the chapter narrated by Death, the melancholy woman, which is the chapter entitled, "I am a Woman;" Stork paints the tree, the chapter of tree and the dog, the chapter of dog; and Olive paints Satan, which becomes the unexpected narrator, Satan, the horse, chapter thirty-five, "I am a Horse," and two dervishes, chapter fifty entitled, "We Two Dervishes" ([Wikipedia](#)). And if Enishte's secret book, demanded directly by the Sultan, is really an extremely secret task, how could an ordinary storyteller in an ordinary coffee house possibly know all the contents of this secret book? And during the process of the making of this secret book, the three of Stork, Olive and Butterfly are assigned to draw pictures respectively and separately; in other words, each of them does not know who draws which pictures. In this sense, it is impossible that a storyteller would know all the pictures belonging to this secret book, because even the people who are in charge of making this secret book do not fully understand every detail of this book. Moreover, in the chapter of Death, Death narrates:

One year ago, a tall, thin and mysterious old man invited to his house the young master miniaturist who would soon enough illustrate me. In the half-dark workroom of the two-story house, the old man served an

exquisite cup of silky, amber scented coffee to the young master, which cleared the youth's mind. Next in the shadowy room with the blue door, the old man excited the master miniaturist by flaunting the best paper from Hindustan, brushes made of squirrel hair, varieties of gold leaf, all manner of reed pens and coral handled penknives, indicating that he would be able to pay handsomely. (MNR 125)

According to Death's very detailed narration of how he is being created, there is a shadowy room with "blue door." In fact, the blue door has repeatedly been mentioned in this novel, it is the very door of Enishte's workhouse; therefore, undoubtedly, the tall, thin and mysterious old man is of course Enishte himself. This evidence quoted above shows that there is a slim chance that this storyteller is able to render every detail of how Death is portrayed if he really is the one who gives voice to Death, because, first, it is a secret book, and second the storyteller could never be able to participate in the painting of Death. Therefore, the narration of Death sounds more like Death's own memory, the picture's own memory; instead of being recounted by a person who has nothing to do with this secret task, the storyteller. Furthermore, in the chapter where the narrator is the gold coin, the coin openly announces that it belongs to Stork, as it says, "yet I myself can found in the money purse of your dear young brother Stork" (MNR 102) and in the end of this chapter, it also says, "If you think you're better than Stork, then by all means, get hold of me" (MNR 106). Again, the description of the gold coin sounds more like from the gold coin itself, because, it is not likely that the storyteller in the coffee house would be acquainted with Stork, and even if he does know Stork, the coin is merely a picture, it cannot be a property that rests in Stork's purse. All these evidences manifested above lead to a conclusion, that is, it is possible that, all the unexpected narrators, no



matter how unexpected they are, are actually speaking by themselves and for themselves, not the storyteller who speaks for them. Walter G. Andrews argues:

In Orhan's novels, the illusion of truth—of reality, of facts—are constantly unmasked and revealed for the manipulative tools they too often are. He empowers us to constitute our own memories, to listen to the objects of memory as they tell their own stories and take confidence in our own abilities to remember actively. If a coin, or a picture of a horse or a dog, or the color red can find a storyteller's voice . . . all of us can speak for our own memories and take a hand in shaping our world in which we live. (29)

In this regard, Andrews tends to believe that, it is those unexpected narrators that find the voice of a storyteller actively, instead of being given voice passively by the storyteller; and quite clearly also, the storyteller can be seen as a manipulative tool of Pamuk. And indeed, the stories told by all the unexpected narrators can be considered their own objects of memory and these do appear to be like their own memory. In this sense, one can rightfully assume that the character of the storyteller in this novel is in fact an imaginative figure. And by using this imaginative figure to rationalize the unexpectedness of unexpected narrator, Pamuk ultimately still wants to make the unspeakable speak, as part of his postmodern mystery. Again, in a postmodern work, anything can happen, anything absurd can become reasonable. Still, one can maintain that there is really a storyteller, but this storyteller is only a bridge that connects illusion and reality. In fact, it is more likely that, all the narrators in this novel, no matter how ridiculous and unexpected they may appear to be, speak of their own accord, and speak for their own sake. Every narrator does and is able to speak in this particular novel; yes, I narrate, therefore I am.

The second doubt about the storyteller is that, if the storyteller is believed to be able to give his voice to the unexpected narrators, can he too give his voice to other relatively ordinary narrator, Black, Shekure Stork, Butterfly and so on? In other words, is it possible that the storyteller is the sole narrator who utters behind all these multiple narrators? Of course, it is possible that this assumption can be realized as part of Pamuk's postmodernism. But so far, there is no indication that shows the storyteller has a hand in a character-narrator's narration, since each narrator has his or her own very vivid personality because of their different background and different knowledge and reveals them in his or her own speech; heteroglossia still can be very easily detected in this novel. Moreover, the raid of the coffee house by the fundamentalists of Islamic religion has taken the storyteller out of the scene and terminated his speech when the storyteller says, "Now then, who are those strangers bursting through the door" (MNR 356), but the story still goes on without the storyteller, the possibility that the storyteller is the actual narrator of the whole novel is thus eliminated. It is therefore more likely that, this novel is virtually composed of various voices; otherwise the novel will lose its effect of jigsaw-like structure, and the novel will turn out to be less mysterious and less exciting.

Apart from the pictorial subjects that function as unexpected narrators in this novel, dog, tree, gold coin, the author also craftily implants another kind of unexpectedness in his novel by manipulating the concept of death. In fact, one will be utterly astonished while opening the first page of My Name is Red. In this novel, not only lifeless objects, animals and pictures talk, but also dead characters, in other words, the ghosts. In fact, the opening chapter of this novel is surprisingly contributed by the wandering spirit of Elegant, as the name of this chapter suggests, "I am a Corpse" (MNR 3). Without a doubt, I am a corpse, is an extremely illogical

sentence which would not have been spoken in any language at any given time, and would not conform to any common sense. Therefore, in the very beginning of this novel, readers will immediately experience the absurdity of a speaking dead man, as Elegant's ghost speaks in the opening sentence of the first chapter, "I am nothing but a corpse now, a body at the bottom of a well" (MNR 3). To some extent, this sentence is full of irony, because according to normal common sense about death, a body certainly cannot speak, but it does in Pamuk's fantasized world. And later, after Enishte is murdered, his ghost speaks, too. The author by endowing voices to the supposedly unspeakable dead body, challenges the readers' commonly accepted way of thinking as a trick of his postmodernism. And Pamuk's speaking dead man also fundamentally overthrows the commonly accepted attitude toward death.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the improbability of speaking ghost in literature, the most remarkable example one can call to mind might very well be the ghost in Hamlet, probably the prototype of the absurd emergence of the speaking ghost in literature. In Hamlet the ghost is important because his demand for revenge sets the plot into motion; similarly, in My Name is Red, with the exhortation uttered by Elegant's body, "Enough find my body without delay, pray for me and have me buried. Above all, find my murderer" (MNR 5), the novel too foretells its multi-layered and mysterious plots of a detective novel that are waiting ahead to be discovered by the reader. And most importantly, Elegant's posthumous voice in the first chapter also foreshadows a hidden conspiracy derived from a conflict of East and West, which is the main theme of the novel and arouses the reader's interest to uncover all the mysteries underlying in this novel. Both Hamlet's father's ghost and Elegant's ghost appear before the reader's eye as wandering and lost spirits because of their obstinate wrath for revenge, and they therefore are not able to enter Heaven or Hell, loitering in

purgatory. In Hamlet the ghost speaks to his son:

GHOST. I am thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. (Hamlet 20)

Similarly, Elegant's ghost tells the reader:

Any believer with even a little knowledge of life after death would know that a malcontent in my state would be hard-pressed to see the river of Heaven . . . In short, I who am known as Master Elegant Effendi, am dead, but I have not been buried and therefore my soul has not completely left my body. (MNR 4)

As one can plainly see, both Elegant's ghost and Hamlet's father's ghost do not utterly cease to be though they are physically dead, because they are both in a malcontent state, and because they are both killed unjustly, their souls cannot rest in peace. And for this reason, both Shakespeare and Pamuk are able to dispose the improbable emergence of speaking ghosts in their stories justifiably.

However, the ghost in Hamlet is generally believed to be more illusory rather than a real ghost in the late part of that story, many critics tend to believe that the ghost is partially out of Hamlet's own hallucination, or in Shakespeare's own words, it is a ghost in Hamlet's "mind's eye" (Hamlet 12), because in Act III of Hamlet, Hamlet claims that he sees the ghost, whereas his mother Queen Gertrude is not able to sense the same ghost at that moment; on the contrary however, the ghost in My Name is Red appears to be more factual and true to life, because it actively stands before every reader's eye and speaks directly to every reader. In other words, Pamuk's ghost is

visible to all readers while Shakespeare's ghost can be only witnessed by Hamlet alone sometimes. And this dissimilarity of two different kinds of ghost in Hamlet and My Name is Red also differs a postmodern work from a traditional literary work; no critic can assuredly argue that the ghosts in Pamuk's novel are fake, because everyone sees them, and they belong to nobody's hallucination. In Hamlet the perceiver of ghost may be Hamlet alone, however, in My Name is Red the perceiver of ghost is everyone who reads this novel.

Unlike Elegant's miserable afterlife, Enishte's description of what he sees after he becomes a ghost is obviously a delightful one. Enishte says as an ascending spirit, "my soul is quite at peace, having returned to its former glory after years of suffering on Earth" (MNR 228). Readers will soon realize that Enishte's spirit is taken to a blissful destination, Heaven, as he himself describes the sight of his ascension in detail:

We ascended through the seven Heaven, passing varieties of gatherings, peculiar creatures, marshes and clouds swarming with an infinite variety of insects and birds. At each level of Heaven, the angel who led the way would knock on a portal, and when the question, "Who goes there?" came from beyond, the angel would describe me including all my names and attributes, summing up by saying, "An obedient servant of Exalted Allah!" (MNR 229)

In contrast with Elegant's misery, a body being totally forgotten by the world, lying in the deep bottom of an unknown well, Enishte's ascension to Heaven marks a "cheerful death" (Bakhtin 198). Ironically, despite that death is commonly regarded as a dreadful and ominous thing, this chapter of death described by Enishte himself is filled with merriness. One may rightfully assume that the unfairness of death

between Elegant and Enishte is resulted from their very opposite characters, in this novel, unlike the irresolute Elegant, Enishte appears to be a firm advocate to his belief; and unlike the hysterically emotional Elegant, Enishte has no hatred whatsoever toward the cause of his death.

In sum, Pamuk's postmodern technique of narrative has quite significantly revolutionized the writing of novel, and also the reading of novel. There is no omnipresent and omniscient narrator in this novel; instead, there are multiple narrators who in turn narrate the whole story. And in conformity with the principle of postmodernism, the narrative in this novel often appears to be playful, teasing and experimental, addressing the reader directly as the second person, you. And finally, there are also postmodern unexpectedness being deployed in this particular novel, the pictures speak and the ghosts speak as well. However, there is a strong postmodern perplexity comes with Pamuk's brave and revolutionary use of postmodern techniques

In other words, in a postmodern work like this one, readers are allowed the latitude to question the novel and to interpret the novel freely, since one of the major characteristics of a postmodern work is that, there is no ultimate and immutable reality. This fact must qualify any attempt to answer questions as to the nature or identity of that "you" whom the narrators address directly, or as to the credibility or ontological status of the "storyteller" or the "unexpected narrators." That is to say, there can be no certain and unchallengeable answer to all such questions, such mysteries. For again, in a postmodern work, anything can happen, and any interpretation can be substantiated.