

## Conclusion

This thesis has then divided the Bakhtinian heteroglossia of voices in the novel My Name is Red into conflicting, postmodern and authorial voices. The conflicting voices help to underline the author's dualistic themes, above all the East-West theme; the postmodern voices enable the author to go "outside himself" and create a very open narrative space; the authorial voices are the means by which the author intrudes in "classic" postmodernist fashion, disrupting and thus opening up the novelistic space more directly, in a sense bringing it more fully "alive."

In fact, these three kinds of voices are closely interrelated and mutually dependent. The intensity of the conflicting voices is reinforced by that of the postmodern voices: in other words the basic conflict of the novel, the quarrel between westernization and Turkish tradition in the art of painting, is fundamentally reinforced by Pamuk's narrative strategy here. To be more specific, the opposition between characters belonging to two different belief systems and the inner struggle of each character can be clearly and immediately perceived by the reader because of the author's narrative design. All the character-narrators are first-person narrators while the reader plays or fills the role of the second person, the "you" of the novel. The multiple narrators express what they believe and what they feel at any given time directly to the reader, and therefore the narration of each first-person narrator is far more persuasive than would be a normal narration delivered by a third-person narrator in a conventional novel, in which a character's thought must be recounted by a third-person narrator indirectly, so that the intensity and authenticity of a character's thought or sentiment gets diminished. However, in My Name is Red, characters are able to actively play by themselves the role of "addressor."

Moreover, Pamuk's postmodern narrative also lays bare the thinking of the

characters, their “contemplations”; it makes their thoughts transparent to the eye and mind of the reader. In sum, Pamuk’s postmodern narrative design, employing as it does multiple first-person narrators, effectively sets in the foreground the East-West conflict and genuinely depicts every emotion of every character in the story. This is again a sign that Bakhtinian heteroglossia is here at work (or play):

The language used by characters in the novel, how they speak, is verbally and semantically autonomous; each character’s speech possesses its own belief system, since each is the speech of another in another’s language; thus it may also refract authorial intentions and consequently may to a certain degree constitute a second language for the author. (315)

With Pamuk we could go a little further and say that the novel’s postmodern voices also induce its authorial voices, because here one can easily sense the author’s presence through his deliberate manipulation of the narrative. It is after all the author who gives voices to the multiple narrators, even to the unexpected narrators, and it is also the author who allows these characters to “speak out” their beliefs, eventually making these beliefs collide with one another and thus creating intense conflict within the novel. Besides, there is actually a character whose name is exactly the first name of the author himself: this too is part of the author’s postmodern game. In short, Pamuk’s story explores the relation between East and West through a peculiarly postmodern narrative technique; or, we could also say that he makes an ordinary story with a somehow hackneyed subject (the East-West conflict) extraordinary.

At the end of the novel, the conflicting voices subside as the murderer of Enishte and Elegant is accidentally killed by Hasan. The ultimate death of the murderer might very well suggest that the last tie to the tradition of Turkish painting is broken,

and that westernization is too compelling to be resisted by Istanbul's intellectuals and scholars. In other words, the murderer's death marks the irrevocable devastation of pure local culture as well as a failed attempt to recuperate the true essence of Turkish painting: even though the murderer succeeds in killing Enishte, who can be regarded as the source of westernization in the territory of Turkey, the tradition of Turkish painting is nonetheless finally overwhelmed by westernization, and the murderer's attempt to forestall the trend of westernization is in vain. Westernization is after all depicted as an inexorable trend in this novel.

In this sense, the death of the murderer can also be perceived as a collective death for all those people who struggle desperately to regain their lost selves within the chaos of cultural conflict. His death is to a certain degree lamentable even though he is portrayed as the sole villain of the story. One can thus conclude that, in this novel, there is no absolute criterion of right or wrong; instead, the author lets the reader make the judgment. As McHale suggests, the reader is someone outside of the narrated world who is therefore capable of reflecting on it. Schwartz reminds us that neither Pamuk nor his novel takes sides with regard to the duality of Eastern and Western attitudes; clearly the author recognizes the need for both, for a mingling of Eastern and Western values. In other words, throughout My Name is Red the author persists in maintaining a rather neutral stand; he does not endorse westernization, nor does he embrace the Turkish cultural and aesthetic tradition. What he does instead is to honestly represent both the cruelty and the inevitability of cultural and aesthetic mingling, and to stress man's powerlessness to bring about any real change.

Nonetheless one can still sense that Pamuk feels westernization, or cultural "coalition," would not necessarily have a negative impact on a country. It is true that the novel's dénouement implies the irrevocable death of the *originality* of Turkish

culture; however, Pamuk also tries to tell the reader that there has never been such a thing as true originality in any culture, because “Nothing is pure” (MNR 160). In this novel, according to Enishte, the so-called tradition or the inherent style of Turkish painting is itself initially a mixture of Persian, Arabic and Mongol-Chinese styles; that is, the so-called tradition of a pure Turkish painting style that all those conservative characters strive to preserve has never really existed; rather, every style of painting or even every culture as a whole is merely a hybrid product of human history. Thus before westernization there might already have been numerous cultural fusions taking place in the history of humanity.

One of these fusions was the mixing or at least co-presence of two religions within one country or one region, for example, the co-presence of Christianity and Islamism in the Middle East and more specifically in Turkey. The perceived incompatibility of these two quite different, and yet also fundamentally quite similar (both are monotheistic), religions in one country was historically an important cause of Turkey’s intense turmoil, its cultural conflicts. Indeed, the most important reason for the radical opposition to westernization that we see in My Name is Red is precisely this religious conflict. This is then one of the most fundamental motifs lying behind the complex patter of conflicting voices. Pamuk indeed suggests that religion is extremely divisive, pushing more people apart than it brings together: “It was Satan who first said ‘I’! It was Satan who adopted a style. It was Satan who separates East from West” (MNR 287); “To God belongs the East and West” (MNR 400). Said argues:

“Orient” and “Occident” are man made. Therefore as much as the West itself the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for

the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other. (1994)

Truly, as Said suggests, it is human beings who first divided the world into East and West, each a reflection of the other, just as, in a sense, Christianity and Islam mutually reflect one another, are one another's counterparts. And though human beings actually write all the religious dogmas, these are taken as the literal word of God, and people will fight and kill to defend their (mutually reflecting) beliefs. In this novel Pamuk attempts to overturn the absurd prejudice of those who devote themselves to different (yet closely related) religions; not really endorsing either the "East" or westernization, the author chooses rather to point out the fundamental sense of in-betweenness that lies behind all of the cultural conflicts. And as a very "local" writer Pamuk knows well the essential in-betweenness of that Europe-Asia crossroads, the city of Istanbul; he has often seen the cultural and religious arguments taking place in his complex and cosmopolitan native city. Thus "[h]e does not see Turkey as an Eastern nation losing its soul to mistaken West-focused aspiration and identification. His understanding, on the contrary, puts forward an Istanbulite valorization of in-betweenness and East-West mixture" (Bayrakceken and Randall 202). In fact, with this extremely "open" postmodern novel, this novel that is really a vast open-ended mixture of heterogeneous voices—voices of both the East and the West—Pamuk is really calling for a more open-minded attitude on the part of both Easterners and Westerners, a greater acceptance of different beliefs and values.

Although My Name is Red is set in Istanbul in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, it therefore is very relevant to the currently hot issue of globalization, the current conflict between local and global views or "voices." E. Gökner claims that "MNR is set in the sixteenth century, yet still informed by a multivalent gesture that recalls present-day

Turkey. In its multiplicity of narrators and aesthetic self-consciousness, the novel becomes Pamuk's 'large canvas'" (37). In fact, it is not only Turkey that is facing the cultural impact of the "outside," but almost every other country in the world; for while many non-western countries are being impacted by globalizing forces of the West, the West is also being impacted, in perhaps mutually reflecting or reflected ways, by Oriental culture(s). Therefore the novel can also be read as a cultural text that honestly reflects the true circumstances of the world today, and it is above all for this reason that Pamuk and his novels have aroused so much attention around the world. In My Name is Red, where we see westernization and cultural mingling eventually gaining the upper hand in the Ottoman Empire (now known as Turkey), Pamuk seems to imply that the boundaries between different cultures are disappearing; perhaps then he is suggesting that all the countries of the world are becoming increasingly alike, that this is after all an inevitable and even irresistible trend. Even the religious rift, the novel seems to say, is not deep enough to prevent a country from accepting "alien" cultures: in the novel "God" proudly announces that "East and West belong to me" (MNR 230).

The plot of this novel is then actually not as complicated as one might assume, given its length. It is about a culture confronting the threat of an intrusive alien culture: some people die to defend their traditions while others get killed because they support the newly imported culture. However, the multifarious narrative techniques of the novel are, as we have seen, not simple at all. Its narrative design is very experimental, very postmodern. Unlike a traditional novel, in which there will normally be one narrator, My Name is Red has multiple narrators who are themselves also characters of the story. Thus while it is true that the novel's heteroglossia reflects, in "miniature" form, the actual heteroglossia of the complex, even if

increasingly globalizing, world in which we live. All the narrators of this novel adopt a first-person tone. This means that, apart from narrating the story, the character-narrators of My Name is Red constantly recognize the presence of the reader and sporadically address the reader in the second-person, as “you,” directly. This feature of the narrative thus creates a sense of participation for the reader.

In other words, by conjecturing the possible reaction of the reader and asking him or her direct questions, the character-narrators in this novel actually cross the boundary of the fictive world composed of words and make direct contact with the reader; this is a boldly creative narrative feature of My Name is Red. Furthermore, the tense adopted by the narrators is always the present continuous. This creates a sense of immediacy, as if events are happening at the same time the narrators speak of them; the present continuous narration also enhances the tension and sense of mystery of the story, because it creates a strong feeling of urgency. For instance readers will directly feel the horror of the murder while a narrator is expressing his or her fear of the murderer, and will also sense the same anxiety experienced by Black and Master Osman as they are cluelessly going through bulky shelves of artworks, trying to figure out the true identity of the murderer within the given time limit. In sum, as soon as the character-narrators commence their speeches, the various subplots of the novel are set into motion, as if the story is happening at this exact moment right in front of the reader while he/she is reading it.

Thus Margaret Atwood says of Pamuk’s narrators: “Instead of I think, therefore I am, a Pamuk character might say, ‘I am because I narrate’” (3). Pamuk’s postmodern fantasy also adds the effects of contingency and surprise to the novel by allowing unexpected narrators to narrate. Even the lifeless, the dead, can “speak” in this bizarre novel. In other words, within Pamuk’s postmodern world of words very

unusual things can happen, and this is typically postmodern because, as Abrams says, it challenges the reader's accepted logic and way of thinking. To some extent, My Name is Red can be seen as Pamuk's experimental *game*; Brian McHale says that "[t]he word-game generates a world" (30), and Pamuk's world is there to challenge and tease the reader. Yet the idiosyncratic narrative game played by Pamuk makes the novel more exciting by effectively enhancing the tension in/of this detective novel: if the story were narrated by one third-person narrator, all the subplots would be less engaging, less engrossing. It is also this sense of urgency created by the multiple narrators that fundamentally strengthens the novel's central East-West conflict, which is again an important theme or motif of the author.

Nevertheless, the more numerous and complex the postmodern narrative techniques, the greater the number of confusions left to be resolved: an essential feature of postmodern narrative is, after all, uncertainty. A crucial question left unanswered by Pamuk is this: Who *is* this "you" addressed by all the first-person character-narrators? Is the "you" a projected reader, as Hutcheon suggests, or is it only an impersonal "you" referring to nobody, as McHale believes? Also, in a first-person narration the limited credibility of certain narrators may be a crucial problem, and in this novel a particular narrator's "uncertain" credibility may lead to immense doubts about the genuineness of the whole story. As McHale puts it, "We are left in a state of anxious uncertainty about how much of the story 'really happened'; how much was hallucination or self-aggrandizing lie" (30). Indeed, the same uncertainty may gnaw at every reader of Pamuk, since the novel actually includes a great many fantasized elements. Pictures and corpses certainly cannot "talk" in the conventional sense, but they do so in Pamuk's fantasized world: therefore, the "speech" of unexpected narrators somehow resembles that of a dream, or even (as



McHale says) of a hallucination or self-aggrandizing lie.

However, this postmodern uncertainty can also be taken as “freedom of interpretation.” Instead of explaining everything to the reader, Pamuk craftily leaves an open space so that the reader may explore the possibilities of the text. Thus for example the novel does not clearly indicate who the murderer really is in the end of the story; it has a mysterious yet open ending. We might think such an open ending will only infuriate the reader by leaving the major conflict “unresolved,” yet this can also delight the reader by stimulating his/her imagination. It can also force the reader to more seriously confront the author’s major themes. The internationally acclaimed director and playwright Maria Irene Fornés argues:

In my work people are always trying to find a way out . . . Some people complain that my work doesn’t offer the solution. But the reason for that is I feel that the characters don’t have to get out, it’s you who has to get out. Characters are not real people. If characters were real people, I would have opened the door for them at the top of it—there would be no play. The play is there as a lesson, because I feel that art ultimately is a teacher. (Fornés)

Fictional narratives, whether in novels, plays or films, are after all (to a large degree) “fictional” or “imaginary”: it is only the reader who exists in a “real” world outside of the author’s plot, a position which allows him/her to genuinely reflect on this plot and perhaps draw an important lesson or “moral” from it.

My Name is Red then has, in a sense, two sides. On the one hand it deals with cultural and religious themes and above all with the theme of westernization (or globalization) of the East and (therefore) East-West conflict; as such it is open to cultural, postcolonial, feminist and (Neo-) Marxist interpretations. On the other

hand it is a delightfully playful, extremely creative postmodern novel, a romance, murder story and detective story which creates for the reader a new and totally unexpected reading experience. By combining these two sides—partly through the strategies of comic (socio-political) satire as well as postmodern self-reflection and self-parody—Pamuk has written a postmodernist masterpiece. It is a work whose multifold interpretive possibilities, threads, pathways this thesis has been able to only partially pursue, explore, illuminate.

