

REJECTION OF FINALITY AND INDIVIDUALISM: ORHAN PAMUK'S

MY NAME IS RED AS A DISCUSSION ON OTTOMAN ART

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ABSTRACT

Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*, the provocative and yet whimsical exploration of the nature and role of art in Islamic Turkey, has the themes of individual crisis arising from the sense of doubles and conflicts of the eternal East-West enigma of Turkish life. As John Updike writes, "Pamuk's ingenuity is yoked to a profound sense of enigma and doubleness. The doubleness, he has said, derives from that of Turkey itself." (New Yorker). Though similar to *The White Castle*, *My Name is Red*, published in 1998 in Turkey is different from its previous novel, *The New Life*, which was published four years earlier. *The New Life* is full of pessimism and melancholy, but in contrast, *My Name is Red* has the beauty and joy and colorful world of the miniature paintings of the Ottoman era. Orhan Pamuk himself says that he enjoyed writing this novel that was fun. At the same time, the intellectual and postmodernist elements dominate the narrative. *The New Life* is supposedly the least successful novel by Orhan Pamuk in terms of public reception and reviews, whereas *My Name is Red* is his most popular and successful one. It is as if Pamuk had perfected the art of the novel with this book. Compared to the previous five novels, *My Name is Red* can easily be termed as a classic for its full exploration of artistic techniques, its narrative strategies, and its beautifully poetic use of language and the display of a wide range of characters, even unusual and strange ones which readers normally do not see in a novel. As in *The Silent House*. Pamuk uses multiple narrative voices here. The eleven narrators are presented sequentially, unlike in *The Silent House*. So the readers are not confused here, as each chapter's heading tells who the narrator is. As in *The White Castle*, Pamuk also explores the questions of the East-West dilemma and its tensions, this time in relation to artistic techniques and conceptualizations of artistic realities from the point of view of Ottoman miniature painters. The poetic evocation of the historic Istanbul is also presented in a beautiful way. As noted by many critics, the architectural quality that is aesthetically distributed throughout the chapters is quite visible in this novel, more than in any other previous novels. The influence of Pamuk's initial years of engineering education is obviously evident in the construction of this novel.

KEYWORDS: Turkish Life, Relation to Artistic, Techniques and Conceptualizations