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For my grandfather, Syed Ahmed.

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Abstract

The concept of 'creative minorities' was introduced by Arnold Toynbee in his multivolumed book *A Study of History*. He used this concept to explain the cycle of the rise and fall of civilizations and the emergence of new civilizations which eventually add to the growth of humanity as a whole. The 'creative minorities' are small groups of highly motivated personalities in leadership roles that create the high culture of any civilization. By taking this model of history, the Ottoman Empire at its epitome and its disintegration into a small Nation State is studied as the subject matter of Orhan Pamuk's two novels, *My Name Is Red* and *Snow*. They depict the social conditions of the late sixteenth century Ottoman Empire and late twentieth century Turkish Republic respectively. By placing the two novels in their social and historical contexts, Toynbee's theory is applied to them to determine if the insights the two novels give into their social contexts also reveal the existence of any creative personalities. By a comparative analysis of the two novels thus, in the light of Toynbee's theory of 'creative minorities', it was concluded that from the two, there existed only one creative personality, in the framework of *Snow*.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Background and Significance

The creative energy of any object is best explained by the metaphor of the pen. The pen, or calamus, called 'kalam' in Arabic is the conduit through which inspiration flows to a blank tablet, the prone and passive object of the kalam, called 'loh' in Arabic. The 'kalam' being the active principle of the two, also stands as a phallic symbol and the tablet thus becomes the female principle, both incomplete if isolated from one another. The dynamic of the pen and the tablet, or page if you will, is very potent and will always function as a matrix of creation because the spirit that grows in writing evokes an equal if not greater, spirit in the reader. It follows that the creative process is interaction between the male and the female and much more fundamentally, the active and the passive. The end product of this dynamic of pen and paper is the word, or more specifically, the *written* word.

In the Islamic tradition, the written word holds an almost sacred position, along with the pen which is also a metaphor for a sword because of its potency. The ultimate written word, inscribed on a heavenly tablet by Divine means is of course the Quran, the most powerfully evocative book in classical Arabic. Muslim poets and scientists from day one have denied the beauty of all written texts in comparison to the Quran and repeatedly have referred to it in all disciplines and sciences. But Muslim literary history is not contingent to the Quran alone, although it is in line with the principles outlined by the Quran, and social and historical forces have shaped Muslim literary works to a great

extent. The written word, or literature, has been the prerogative of high culture in almost all civilisations. I do not prefer to define the Islamic civilisations as one monolithic whole as they evolved over a period of a little less than two thousand years, if not separately then on their own volition, comprising not just the Arabs but a vast variety of races and even empires. So the literature, which is a reflection of any culture, should have been vast and varied, and so it was, but interestingly enough the two languages that dominated the literary trends of these variety of civilisations were Arabic and Persian. With the exception of the Arabs, the nomadic horde that spread Islam initially to Byzantium and Persia, all other successive nomadic hordes that conquered and ravaged the sedentary societies consolidated by the Arabs, converted to Islam and assimilated into the conquered sedentary culture. The nomadic invasions, besides the Arabs, came from the Seljuks, Turks, Berbers and Mongols, and each time the sedentary culture that had precipitated into an inflexible society was stirred up and revived by the idealistic nomadic culture that relied for spiritual survival on oral heroic tradition. And this heroic tradition always found a medium of expression in the script of the sedentary society that it had conquered, namely Persian. Hence the literature we term Islamic is actually ethnic tradition and folklore imbued with Arab and Scriptural spiritual values dating from Prophet Muhammad's life time as well as other Prophets and saints honoured by the Quran.

This conglomeration of nomadic or pastoral tradition with the written Divinely inspired literature of the Arabs and Persians is what gave shape to the extant corpus of literary works we have access to today. The value ascribed to the written script of this literature

cannot be overstated enough, and the art of calligraphy that honoured and beautified written texts was experimented with and perfected to such a degree that it gave rise to other visual art forms. Ever since Persia had been conquered by the Muslim Arabs, much of the dominant Arab culture had moved to the sidelines to give way to the much stronger Persian influences even though the Arab script was retained. To calligraphy was thus attached the art of figural representation, previously frowned upon, which served ornamental purposes in manuscripts and later became an extension of the script by illuminating poetry and bringing to life the epics on the pages of manuscripts.

Before delving into the subject of this thesis, it is crucial that we look at what the art of book making is all about and how it is linked to the civilisational forces that shape history. In order to understand the dynamic between manuscripts and the rise of a civilisation we need to first define what art is. In the traditional sense, art is not different from craft and it follows that the craft of book making was an art form and artisans involved in calligraphy, illumination (painting illustrations) and book binding all belonged to one guild. This guild of manuscript or book makers was vocationally a very respectable if not wealthy profession and were highly patronised by the Sultans and Shahs of Seljuk, Iranian and Ottoman empires. Being such a sought after art, and trade for that matter, the manuscript artisans were located at the hub of cultural activity, close to the Sultan or Shah's palace. For this reason they became the means of projecting the socio-political activities of the court to the public (*riaya*). The leadership of the Turcoman Seljuks in Anatolia and the Timurids in Persia had adopted and utilised religion as a tool to keep the multi-ethnic factions of their Empires together. But religion

was not only a political aid but also a source of spiritual zeal which appealed to the ghazi sultans and Shahs of this period who had as yet not shed off the heroic and warrior spirit of their nomadic past. In keeping with this tendency of the courts, the artisans in the book making workshops reflected this zealous spirit of their *ghazi* sultans but tempered it with religious aspirations as well. All of this together gave birth to the unique miniature paintings that accompanied the verses of poets like Firdawsi and Nizami who had actually begun the court tradition of *shahnameh*, epic poetry written in remembrance of glorious heroes dating as far back as pre-Islamic Persia. In fact the tradition of the *shahnameh* actually pre-dates Islam in Persia and the afore mentioned poets only brought it to the historiography of Islam. It is interesting to note that the predominant influence in epic poetry was Persian and the poetry that came forth from the poets of this region was an amalgamation of Persian culture and history, and Semetic religion because these poets were careful to incorporate scriptural or Quranic themes into their verses. But the visual illuminations that were added to the manuscripts of these epics were not Persian in origin but Chinese since the Mongol influence in Central Asian Persia had been too strong. The Mongols might have succumbed to the attraction of Islam but their nomadic culture that was perpetuated during the reign of the Ilkhans over Persia and much of the South-Eastern steppes of Anatolia left a lasting impression. For this reason the miniatures lent a very oriental hue to the Western Islamic content of the poetry.¹

The art of poetry and miniatures is not a religious or sacred art per se, but the transcendental spirit of these artifacts cannot be denied. It is important to discuss the

¹ Titus Burckhardt, *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning*

vision and philosophy behind this art form because it reflects the zeitgeist and motivational state of the Seljuks, the Timurids and early Ottomans. The Persian miniatures, specifically, reflected the mystical perspective of the Muslim Sufis who utilised the arts of poetry and iconography to propagate and project esoteric knowledge. Before the European Renaissance, Persian miniatures had reached the zenith of perfection of technique. A marked feature of miniatures in manuscripts is the homogeneity of human figures and faces. Another feature is the two dimensional nature of space, which should not be seen an inability or lack of skill on the part of the miniaturist to give depth to the painting. All these features are deliberate and require technique and skill. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, scholar of the perennial school of thought in philosophy, Persian miniatures made at the onset of the millennium might not have represented sacred content but the technique and principles guiding the layout were certainly not devoid of a transcendent perspective. He suggests that for miniatures, since they are a visual art form, albeit an extension of calligraphy, perspective is quintessential in manipulating space and order. The space he is referring to is not physical space but the imaginary space of metaphysical prototypes. To enforce the image of the imaginal world, this space depicted is intentionally made two dimensional so that the onlooker knows they are looking at another mode of consciousness, "this whole space is clearly distinguished by its 'non-three-dimensional' character from the space around it".²

Therefore the human figures appear flat and the scene depicted lacks depth and hermeneutics which is the 3rd dimension. The homogeneity of the human features is in

² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 178.

keeping with the Muslim concept of human imperfection in skill, artistic perfection being an attribute of God alone, and also providing a view of the scene as if from above, again reinforcing detachment and objectivity of the artist. But the treatment of space in Persian miniatures is heterogeneous and the artists felt free to depict grades of 'reality' in the painting, taking the human mind to a higher level of consciousness through a play between geometric precision, use of bright colours and Edenic settings. The picture that comes forth is that of an intermediary world between heaven and earth, what Muslim philosophers from Persia called *alam al-khayal* or the imaginal world.³ By situating the themes and characters of epic and didactic poetry in these miniatures and consequently in the *alam al-khayal*, the artisans have actually immortalised them and saved them from the ravages of temporal existence.⁴ Hence the artisans involved in the production of manuscripts were elevated to the status of artists with a sublime vocation. Because just to envision this 'objective reality' of the imaginal world, where according to Sufism, all things exist in their original form and primordial beauty, requires a contemplative mind and eye, and the artists who created the miniatures were in effect the conduits of this transcendental image to the common man. "The space of the Persian miniature is a recapitulation of this space and its forms and colours are a replica of this world. The colours, especially the gold and lapis lazuli, are not just subjective whims of 'artistic taste'. Rather they are the fruit of vision of an 'objective reality' which is that of the imaginal world".⁵

³ Ibid., p. 179.

⁴ Ibid., p. 180.

⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

It is this mystic vision that pervades over the art of Persian miniatures. At the heart of Islamic mysticism is the act of annihilation of the 'self' and dissolving into the ultimate Reality. True to this concept, the identity of the miniaturist does not show through in his work and he remains anonymous. Titus Burckhardt's piece on the relation between Persian miniatures and mysticism, in his book *The Art of Islam*, is enlightening in this regard. Where, in its interiority there is a mystic element, in its exteriority there is a resemblance with Chinese painting which undoubtedly is due to the Mongol influence. But Burckhardt differentiates between Chinese paintings and Persian miniatures where the outlines of forms are the well defined unbroken movements of the calamus used in Muslim cultures under the influence of Arabic calligraphy, whereas Chinese paintings have fluid brush strokes that disappear into space. Despite precision of technique, the real beauty of Persian miniature lies in the unique perspective behind its production which gave it an other worldly texture. At this point it is important to stress the dependency of the miniature on the written text. Burckhardt says, "The link between writing and image remains fundamental to the Persian miniature which belongs, as a whole to the art of books; all the famous miniaturists were calligraphers before becoming painters".⁶ So despite the visual richness of a miniature painting, it remains an exegesis of the text that it accompanies in a manuscript and herein lies its beauty. Gai Eaton in *Islam and the Destiny of Man* reiterates Nasr's and Burckhardt's view and adds that the inner harmony and peace is reflected in the open spaces and prototypes of all living creatures. It "is a mirror reflecting the inner harmony that is - or should be the normal state of being".⁷ The lack of perspective in the miniature makes the figures depicted seem to be at peace with

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⁷ Gai Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (State University of New York Press), p. 197

their surroundings and the sole purpose of the scene of the miniature is to bring joy to the onlooker. This perspective held strong from the rule of the Ilkhans (1256-1336), through the Timurid period (1387-1502), to the Safavid rule over Persia. But the Safavid period also turned out to witness the downfall of this art as it passed into Ottoman hands who developed this art into the production of single folios that were separate from a manuscript, and also began experimenting with European techniques.

The production of manuscripts, together with calligraphy and miniatures had become an emblem of high culture, even in the Ottoman empire. So having a brief knowledge of miniatures and the art of manuscript production helps in understanding a newfound interest in Ottoman history for contemporary scholars as well as avant garde writer Orhan Pamuk from Turkey, the two novels of whom form the subject of this thesis. Although there is a perceived distance between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires as they were not only contemporary civilisations but also arch rivals, their cultural exchanges were fluid and their borders porous. Despite the Turkic element in the Ottoman state, its high culture was markedly Persian and the intellectual elite even looked up to the Persian art and culture that developed during the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods. Turks to this day do not and cannot deny the Persian influences on their courtly culture and it comes as no surprise that Pamuk, a declared anti-Nationalist, should tap onto the very sensitive question of Turkic identity, that whether it is cultural or ethnic. This dilemma can only be tackled by tracing the root of the problem which goes back to the Ottoman period when the Osmanlis had established firm control of all the regions between Europe and the Safavid Empire of Persia towards the east. One thing is clear, the Osmanlis were not pure

Turks and had a great deal of mixing of blood, from the Mongols, to the Central Asian Turcomans, Persians and eastern Europeans. The nationalisation of the Ottoman State into the Republic of Turkey spread a blanket of homogenisation over the multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan society of this Empire. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's hard core nationalisation and coercive secularisation of Turkey was an attempt to whitewash the pluralistic colouring of Ottoman society and in order to civilise the Turks, the whole state was westernised in the name of 'civilisation'. And consequently spiritual sentiment and manifestations were also stamped out as they were deemed counter-modern.

The above developments are best portrayed in Pamuk's *My Name is Red* and *Snow*. The former is a very humanistic depiction of late sixteenth century Ottoman Empire which was also the time Europe was two hundred years well into its Renaissance (which began in the fourteenth century), by virtue of which the West was becoming more and more imperialistic as it expanded its cultural and spatial domains. This was also the time when the Ottoman and Safavid Empires had plateaued. Pamuk's novel serves as a window into that society and enables the reader to fully grasp the psychological and spiritual tensions involved in the small community of artistic craftsmen. The story is very tightly entwined around the lives of Turkish miniaturists, their struggle to reach the level of excellence of Persian miniaturists before them, and at the same time their awe at the latest European technique of portraiture. The major issue in the novel is whether the inability of artists or creative personalities to produce original works of art at that time was due to personal failure or external influences. Pamuk's second novel *Snow* would be studied as a continuation of the previous novel, as in a continuation of the concerns of the author in

depicting the contemporary state of affairs after the decline of Ottoman Turkey. Here the void left by any creative leadership is a glaring one. The political Islamists, in this novel, are trying to overcome the leftovers of Ataturk's coercive regime which has taken the shape of a dominant minority and the proletariat are endeavouring to secede from it.⁸ The novel's framework will provide a field for studying the repercussions of politicising a creative response.

Literature Review

It was only after the 1980s when the last military coup to place, that Turkish intellectuals were able to dig out their lost history and utilise it in the synthesis of an identity that was genuine and organic, but one that did not disregard any phase of its Ottoman past and also including the ongoing nationalistic phase. It goes without saying that thence began the post-modern age of Turkish intellectual life which in the Turkish context is seen as neo-Ottomanism. Erdag Goknar, also the translator of *My Name is Red*, points this out in his article on Pamuk and the 'Other' by drawing out the Ottoman theme from his works. Pamuk's first two novels, *Jevdet Bey and Sons* and *The Silent House* were based on life in the Turkish Republic, but his first novel based in the Ottoman era was *The White Castle*. Whereas previously Pamuk had used the modern realist form for his first two novels, with the third one he changed his style and content which completely bypassed the modern socialist and nationalist tradition of realism. *The White Castle* begins with a modern character Faruk Darvinoglu, literally son of Darwin, who is trying to translate an old Ottoman manuscript in Arabic script into modern Latinised Turkish. The time is right

⁸ Political Islam or Islamism refers to Islam as a political ideology which strives for an Islamic state governed by the *shariat*, or Islamic Jurisprudence.

after the 1980 coup and Darvinoglu is trying to break out of his sense of being trapped in this socio-political condition. Through the act of translation he is actually attempting to transcend nationalism because “the geographies that are crossed through translation are not just linguistic but political and social, historical and psychological”.⁹ Even the two other characters from this book, the Hoja and his Venetian slave, who are exact replicas of each other, are continuously translating their cultures for each other. Using the act of translating, Pamuk, as “a psycho historical anthropologist of national culture and identity”¹⁰, experiments with meta-historical narrative by moving his characters in time and space through the text. So texts can be seen as a portal to not only a different geographical location, but also a different time, psyche and perspective. In his other novel based in the Ottoman period, *My Name is Red*, there are no transitions and translations through time, but the whole plot hinges on the Orientalist concept of East and West. So the translations are not literal but take place between the East and the West, the text and the image, colour and speech, and miniature and portrait. Using Ottoman themes thus helps to universalise issues that existed in the past and still do in Turkey, because unlike the Safavids who remained in the eastern regions of Central Asia, the Ottomans were face to face with a very clear and present Europe looming over the horizon. And at the base of these issues are cultural, and ultimately aesthetic, concerns of style and perspective, that can only be dealt with and negotiated in the ‘imaginal’ space.¹¹

⁹ Erdag Goknar, “Orhan Pamuk and the ‘Ottoman’ Theme” in *World Literature Today* (University of Oklahoma: 2006), Vol. 80, Issue. 6, p. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37

An obvious direction, other than neo-Ottomanism, that the use of the 'Ottoman' theme leads to in the post-modern milieu is a new form of orientalism. In the late 19th century, from 1839 to 1876, during the *Tanzimat*, the Ottomans in order to counter European imperialism, viewed their own subjects, comprising Arabs, Armenians, Kurds and Bulgarians, with increasingly orientalist eyes and perceived them to be culturally backward. Ussama Makdisi is of the view that although European Orientalism was the perceived stasis of the 'orient', there was an Ottoman orientalism as well which saw the Ottoman subjects as stagnant and its 'project of power' during the *Tanzimat* was to uplift the common people of the Ottoman Empire by 'westernising' them as an act of resistance to European imperialism.¹² This state of affairs continued well into the 20th century but with variations in the kind of nationalism imposed on the masses. After the *Tanzimat* of the Ottomans, the Young Turk movement and CUP brought their versions of modernisation and attempts at 'civilisation' and thus was born the Turkish Republic as we know it. Stephen Kinzer in his article 'Grand Inquisitors' discusses Orhan Pamuk as a product of modern Turkey and also a witness to all major military coups since the 1950s. It appears that Pamuk is not the only literateur at odds with the nationalist government of Turkey, but there have been various poets and writers who had worked in much more drastic circumstances. One important literary figure was Nazim Hikmet (1902-63), a poet with communist leanings who was imprisoned several times during Ataturk's regime. Despite the fact that both Hikmet and Ataturk were staunch patriots, Hikmet had to bear the brunt of intolerance towards free-thought. Two other literary greats who could be said to be precursors of Pamuk's, were Aziz Nesin (1915-95) a caustic satirist, and novelist

¹² Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism" (Kinzer 2006) in *The American Historical Review* (American Historical Association: 2009), Vol. 107, Issue. 3, p. 772.

Yasar Kemal (b.1923). Kemal had even been nominated for the Nobel Prize but was passed over, and Turkish politicians and Newspaper columnists greatly criticised the anti-Turkish sentiment of the West. Ironically, these very people castigated Kemal for depicting the rich multi-ethnic society of Turkey as opposed to a monolithic Turkic state, and his depiction of the Turkish nation state as repressive.¹³ Like his predecessors, Pamuk had to make a name for himself in troubled waters at home, but gradually his inspiration from the Ottoman past of Turkey has found acceptance, and he has come to stand for coming to terms with embracing a heritage that was spurned as uncivilised, while looking modernity in the eye and questioning its credibility. Kinzer states that in this position and because of his 'stature', Pamuk cannot escape being a political figure as well besides being a literateur no matter how much he avoids it, because he embodies free thought and expression, and for the sake of his art he has had to join the civic campaign in Turkey to achieve this freedom.¹⁴

Coming back to Pamuk's neo-Ottomanism, which uses orientalism as resistance against nationalism, it is interesting to see what form this orientalism has taken. Pamuk can be said to have an orientalist approach since he uses the East/West allegory repeatedly, not only juxtaposing them but often reversing their positions. Ian Almond in his very illuminating book *The New Orientalists*, in which he has devoted a chapter each to nine post-modern writers including Foucault, Neitche and Pamuk, explains how the Orient is seen by these writers as a redeeming 'Other', contradicting and cancelling out the short

¹³ Stephen Kinzer, "Grand Inquisitors" in *World Literature* (University of Oklahoma: 2006), Vol. 80, Issue. 6, p. 26

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

comings of the 'self'. If the 'Other' is the Islamic orient and the 'Self' is the West, "it is the employment of the Islamic Orient - its motifs and symbols, its alterity and anachronisms, its colour but also its threat - in order to sustain an attempted critique and relocation of Western modernity".¹⁵ In the chapter on Pamuk, 'Islam and Melancholy in Orhan Pamuk's *Black Book*' Almond analyses Pamuk's employment of Islamic mysticism as an overarching motif in a futile, urban and modern Turkey. He first of all points out the dual nature of the author's personality itself, that he has a Western, pro-Enlightenment and secular side, and an 'other' alternative side that takes pleasure in emotional experiences, especially the experiences of a poetic and romantic nature while reading Sufi poetry. Almond sees this as a dualism in Pamuk himself that reflects in his work. *The Black Book* is ridden with double meanings and 'signs', which are signs that will lead the protagonist Galip to his wife Ruya, literally meaning dream, and his cousin Jelal with whom she has disappeared. The fact that Galip is never able to find Ruya and Jelal leaves the reader with a sense of disillusionment and disbelief. Almond has taken the plot as a metaphor for a mystical search for the ultimate Truth, symbolised by Ruya and Jelal, the namesake of the sufi poet Jelal ud-Din Rumi. And Galip's search for them by the 'interpretation' and hermeneutics of signs in items from the mundane, like newspapers, recalls the ayahs of the Quran exhorting the believers to see the 'signs' of God in this world. But Galip in the end finds out that there are no signs in the newspapers and his search, an exegesis so to speak, of the newspaper columns, was in vain. Almond takes this as a romanticisation of the metaphysical to escape the pain of day to day drudgery that ultimately leads nowhere; "a desire for the beyond - a new leader, a new

¹⁵ Ian Almond, *The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), p. 2.

Messiah, a new identity, a new state - springing from a profound dissatisfaction with the immediate".¹⁶ Pamuk's encyclopaedic knowledge of Islamic literature can be glimpsed through his novels where he purposefully places it in such a way that it appears alien in the novel, reminding the reader that the novel is a European literary form and subjectively adopting this European form would only objectify the more traditional Islamic literature referred to in his novels. This, in effect, completes the 'othering' of Islam. So Pamuk basically uses the metaphors of Islam as a stylistic device to compliment and contrast with the impotency of his characters, their sense of hopelessness in finding the 'Other' of their desires, the beloved of their quest. Islamic metaphors serve to supply these characters with hopes and dreams that forever escape them, hence the melancholy and nostalgia for something lost. According to Almond, this loss is of Islam itself, as a meta-narrative, and Pamuk acutely feels the absence of all the narratives that the over-arching umbrella of the Islamic tradition provided. Pamuk seems to have discovered that although we humans as social beings need narratives, but unfortunately narratives are meaningless at the end of the day. Though unlike Nietzsche, Pamuk feels no joy in this discovery, because he laments the loss of passion. Tradition, Islam, the esoteric and the search for truth at least provided pre-Cartesian man with excitement and a reason to be passionate.¹⁷ Paradoxically, the loss of faith that has incurred loneliness evokes an anxiety for identity, that renews the search for meaning, not of the 'Other' but of oneself, which leads to self-reflexivity which is exactly what Pamuk practices.

At this point we should again bring Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red* into the picture since

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 123

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 125

the Ottoman theme could not be more visible than it is in this novel. Unlike *The White Castle*, there are no transitions in time from the present to the past and the beauty of this novel lies in it being treated as a contemporary reality. The East/West paradigm is accentuated and even mocked through literal study and meditations on cultural artefacts like manuscripts, miniatures and portraits, from both the East and the West. Although the miniature has always been seen as an extension of a written text, Feride Cicekoglu in her paper "A Pedagogy of Two Ways of Seeing: A Confrontation of 'Word and Image' in *My Name is Red*", discusses the West's view of art as independent of any text and a text in itself. Islamic art is underpinned by the 'word' while Western art glorifies the image, and Pamuk's novel reflects as much. It furthermore encloses the two points of view in one framework which gives rise to professional jealousy and loss of vision, literal and otherwise. Cicekoglu affirms what was previously discussed in the background of this study, that miniatures in themselves do not represent anything unless they are treated as 'footnotes' when they become an extension of the text, serving to illuminate the mind's eye and bringing the focus to the imagery of the text that it accompanies. This stands in stark contrast to European Renaissance paintings and even the European concept of art which is considered purely representational.¹⁸ Although in the novel Pamuk does not wish to ascribe the downfall of the miniature art form to the inability of the artisans in becoming Westernised and he even endorses the traditional art as it developed through the ages in Central Asia, he uses the form of the novel, which is a Western literary form, as a tool of self-reflexivity as the reader of the novel is exposed to the outlook and

¹⁸ Feride Cicekoglu, "A Pedagogy of Two ways of Seeing: A Confrontation of 'Word and Image' in *My Name is Red*" in *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (University of Illinois Press: 2003), Vol. 37, Issue. 3, p. 10.

reflections of each and every character and object of significance in the novel, consequently subverting not only the traditional outlook but also the sensibilities of the reader. And his non-conventional approach to the European Renaissance, by placing it and the generic European existence as the 'other' for the miniaturists of the Ottoman court serves only to 'de-mystify the myth of the Renaissance', the myth being obviously that of the Enlightenment and the centralising of Man in the Universe.¹⁹ Which implies that if Man is not the centre of the Universe, it doesn't mean that the earth is flat, it could also mean that there is a possibility of an alternative point of view which sees the earth as round and at the same time accept the existence of a spiritual state as well.

Cicekoglu says that Pamuk's having chosen the late 16th century as the framework of the novel is significant because the 16th century was the time when visual representations started taking precedence over narratives as the Renaissance that had begun in 15th century Italy stormed the rest of Europe and the fronts of the Ottoman Empire as collateral. With this backdrop, Pamuk elevates and glorifies Bihzad of Herat, the greatest master of miniature painting in the late fifteenth century, through reminiscences about his style and work but also through the greatest act of loyalty that Master Osman, one of his chief characters shows, blinding himself in the manner that Bihzad was rumoured to have done.²⁰ In factual history, it was Murat III in the late sixteenth century who had commissioned three books to be made in the tradition of manuscripts, these were *The Book of Victories* in 1579, *The Book of Festivities* in 1585 and *The Book of Skills* in 1588,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁰ Kalam-uddin Bihzad was a miniaturist from Herat, Khorasan. In Herat he worked in the Royal Library of the Timurid Sultan Hussain Beyeqra and later for the Safavid Shah Ismail in Tabriz.

Nakas Osman being the Head Miniaturist who supervised the production of all three. Nakas Osman in fact was responsible for bringing innovation to the traditional art of miniatures inspired by the European Renaissance but the production lacked the finesse and imagination that the school of Bihzad had given to this art.²¹ And Pamuk in his depiction of this historical period, by demystifying the Renaissance, showed this period considered to be the epitome of Turkish miniatures, as a lapse away from originality. This is a very basic flaw in the artistic tradition of any culture, and Pamuk brings the conflict arising out of Islamic tradition coming face to face with the European Enlightenment, to the arena of visual projection through painting. Renaissance Humanism, by centralising man, gave precedence to vision over (Biblical) narrative, and when Ottoman artists tried to do the same, they had go against the grain of their deeply entrenched way of seeing the world. Pamuk toys with this contradiction within the Ottoman society, which is not exactly supposed to highlight a dichotomy, but the teleological position of word and image with respect to each other. The conflict ends with the death of the murderer who comes from Tabriz where the Heart school of Bihzad is still being followed because of the patronage of Shah Tamasp. The irony is that the murderer hails from the best school of miniature art but he wants to bring innovation in the existing tradition. Ironically he himself is unable to bring innovation in his style which gives him away and he is killed.

He question of word and image is synonymous with the incompatibility of meaning with naturalism. And the answer from ottoman tradition is that the measure of art is not the realistic representation. Images need to have a meaning because "the meaning, the

²¹ Ibid., p. 6

essence, the idea dominates the material world and nature".²² The author does not fall to the level of the reader by taking sides, but instead maintains a distance by letting the colour Red speak, which brings the argument over sight to the forefront, that whether it is a sensation or innate. The colour Red, the colour of passion, is it seen with the physical eye or is it rather felt? Never the less, the pivotal debate remains the one between text and image, and detaching the image from a story makes an idol of the image because the image will "turn into an object of belief itself"²³.

Through this debate, Pamuk is resorting to confront his own demons of having to grow up in a culture torn between the East and the West, and in a country where secular modernism has been dogmatically imposed on the pluralistic yet traditional masses and where the backlash could only be religious fundamentalism. In her other article, "Difference, Visual Narration, and 'Point of View' in *My Name is Red*", Cicekoglu points out the difference in the point of view of the Europeans and Ottomans, at the base of the East-West divide. Here she discusses Point of View as a technical maneuvering of a camera during filming in order to bring a particular point of view from a particular position into perspective so the audience can better appreciate the shot. Pamuk applies the same technique in his novel because there is no single narrator and each chapter is narrated by a different character, inanimate object and even colour. Through this technique, Cicekoglu believes authenticity can be brought to all forms of visual arts and also thereby eliminating 'otherness' and empathising with opposing points of view, be they Eastern or Western. One interesting detail she mentions under the heading of 'Sight

²² Ibid., p. 11.

²³ Ibid., p. 14.

and Blindness', that for the Muslim miniaturist, the proximity and supremacy of God's vision over his own did not allow him to be naturalistic or realistic in painting. Comparing Nakas Osman with his European contemporary Peter Bruegel, she juxtaposes their portraits where Bruegel does not only show his facial features in 3 dimensional perspective, but his expressions are emotive as well, showing a patient contempt for his rich patron. In contrast to this, Nakas Osman's self-image is a face with slanted eyes and Central Asian features, standing humbly before his patron the Sultan whose grandeur is obvious. Nakas Osman in all probability did not have Central asian features but he felt obliged to make his image in this fashion, being unable to discard a centuries old tradition and also unable to aggrandise himself.²⁴ Humility of course, being a facet of the Muslim subject and in extension of Muslim spirituality.

The effect of the Renaissance was a far reaching one as it was this phenomenon that in actuality initiated the modern age. Pamuk's other novel that can be seen as a continuation in the historical shifts of the Ottoman state is *Snow*. And Pamuk employs another art form in this political novel, an art form that hails from the Renaissance. Mary Jo Kietzman in "Speaking to all Humanity: Renaissance drama in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*", discusses the drama form as a means of asserting ideology. Her thesis is that Pamuk has utilised drama that is reminiscent of Renaissance theatre, in particular *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, which had influenced Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The employment of this revenge drama in the novel was meant to "enable them (the citizens of the town of Kars) to

²⁴ Feride Cicekoglu, "Difference, Visual Narration, and 'Point of View' in *My Name is Red*" in *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (University of Illinois Press: 2003), Vol. 37, Issue. 4, pg. 131.

disrupt the state's nationalist pedagogy with their own self-authored performances".²⁵ The idea is of a performance within a performance to turn the tables over on the inflictors of injustice. According to Kietzman, Pamuk looks at the Renaissance as a period in art history that brought change through the arts in the soci-political scenario of Europe, and he has hopes that art can do the same for his nation. Renaissance drama in England functioned as a tool to intellectually engage its audience in ideological discourse and the actors were lauded as jaunty rebels of the political system. Pamuk has openly used *The Spanish Tragedy's* theme in his novel and the last theatrical spectacle of Sunay Zaim, the lead actor and Ataturk zealot, is called *Tragedy in Kars*, where he is supposed to enact the 'liberation' of women from fundamentalist Islam.²⁶ But as in the original play, the boundaries between real life and drama are erased deliberately by Zaim, even though the whole 'liberating' act misfires, pun intended here, as he is shot dead by the leader of the head Scarf girls who wants to take revenge from him. But Pamuk again does not fall to the level of taking sides and his presentation of the leader of the Head Scarf girls, Hadife, is as that of an individual who does not wish to assert a political ideology like Islamism through her head scarf and nor can she be coerced into taking it off for another political ideology like secular nationalism. In effect, the drama liberates Hadife from two absolutist ideologies and she comes into the lime light, whatever may have been the consequences, for the first time as an individual who has no "message" and is not a

²⁵ Mary Jo Kietzman, " 'Speaking to all Humanity' : Renaissance Drama in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (University of Texas Press: 2010), Vol. 52, Issue. 3, p. 327.

²⁶ Sunay Zaim is a stage actor in *Snow* who looks up to Ataturk as an ideal modern leader, and during a stage performance he deliberately facilitates a military coup to enforce Western liberalism.

symbol of some ideology.²⁷ Again, art is a tool for self-fashioning, shaping and re-shaping society and hence intervening in history. But pseudo-artists like Sunay Zaim are just imitators of the West. Zaim is an Atatürk wannabe and he sincerely believes he is an isolated individual from the rest of the masses whose duty it is to liberate them from their backward culture and Westernise them Atatürk style. He believes in modern contemporary art almost as fanatically as the Islamists he despises, and is willing to be martyred for the cause of modernity. Contrary to this, Hadife exhibits individual interpretation of what could be deemed an orthodox religion and this is the essence of *ijtihad*, a heterodox practice of faith that is permissible in apolitical Islam.²⁸ Her decision to do as she pleases with her head scarf is a very personal one but through the artistic medium of the theatre, she makes a public audience privy to a personal and individual act. Kietzman believes that using the Renaissance drama for plot construction has propelled the novel *Snow* onto the international arena, and also made public, actions that are in essence private, and them a voice so that the international audience can give ear to them and engage critically in the discourses that emerge.

Colleen Ann Lutz Clemens takes the discussion of the Head Scarf girls to another level and sees the suicide epidemic depicted in *Snow* as a manifestation of political resistance. The tug of war between secular nationalism and political Islamism uses women's bodies as platforms of public debate as the choices available to Turkish women are limited to taking off or wearing the headscarf, with complete disregard to their humanity. Clemens's take on *Snow* is a feminist understanding of the Head Scarf girls' resorting to

²⁷ Ibid., p. 335.

²⁸ Ibid., pg. 342.

passive aggression by simply ending their lives because that is the only choice they can make without any violent impedance from State authorities patriarchal authority in the domestic sphere. The sad irony of this action is that finally when they get a sense of control over their own bodies, it is in removing themselves from the world and they can no longer contribute to their society. The 'headscarf' issue is a violation of their bodies which have become a 'battleground' for two opposing ideologies that are both essentially patriarchal, and "Because they both work with the same patriarchal assumptions, both ideological positions converge".²⁹ This makes life for the Headscarf girls 'unliveable' because they are unable to ascribe their own meaning to their headscarves, or any other aspect of their personality for that matter, and they cannot break free from the collectivism in both the public as well as the domestic space which is too stifling for them. These girls go through the worst kind of torture because they are in the midst of a society that thrives on the spirit of community yet they cannot have their voices heard and are shushed by loud male voices that herd them together with the rest of the community and drive them en masse towards their own ideological agendas.

An issue of wider political and social concern is identified by Andrew Gibson in the article "On Not Being Forgivable: Four Meditations on Europe, Islam and the New World Order". He suggests of an intellectual responsibility to formulate a language of discourse for the notion of forgiveness. He names Toni Morrison, J. M. Coetzee, W. G. Sebald and Orhan Pamuk as writers who have tried to supply this language. He elaborates on Pamuk's *Snow* and starts with one incident in the novel, making it a case in point of

²⁹ Colleen Ann Lutz Clemens, "Suicide Girls: Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary Turkey" in *Feminist Formation* (2011), Vol. 23, Issue. 1, p. 147.

our handicapped articulation of the 'Other'. The incident takes place when a political meeting takes place of some citizens of Kars, and a boy from the religious high school vocalises a collective sense of being spurned by another culture.³⁰ Gibson suggests that this boy could be a potential terrorist for the European reader because the frame of reference he is speaking from is very remote from the Western cultural references and thus not understood. In order to develop a language of forgiveness that empathises with the 'Other', he cites Levinas and his notion of the encounter with alterity in which the 'Other' overflows the frame of reference of the 'Self' and cannot be contained. And the effort to contain the 'Other' 'in one's own frame of reference of necessity exposes the structure in which I sought to ensnare him or her'.³¹ Which means that just for the 'Self' to exist, it needs to resist the 'Other', otherwise it would cease to be the 'Self'. When the 'Self' encounters the 'Other', it is 'disenchanted' by the cracks within its structure that are reflected in the 'Other', and in its second encounter, it gives in to the 'Other'. Gibson points out that the logic behind the discovery of its own finitude is theological. Thus develops Levinas's 'pious discourse' of ethics. In the post-modern language of theology, as long as there is finitude, there will remain the unattainable 'Altogether-Other, which is ethical lingo for God, and as long as God remains unattainable beyond the frame of reference of the 'Self', the 'Self' remains 'prey to nostalgia'.³² Without this Levinasian logic of ethics, there is bound to be violence. Violence comes from the self's acute desire to persist in its existence as the Self, "to claim one's right to a place in the sun", which is

³⁰ Andrew Gibson, "On Not Being Forgivable: Four Meditations on Europe, Islam and the New World Order" in *South Central Review*, (John Hopkins University Press: 2010), Vol. 27, Issue. 3, p. 82.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Europe that looks so unforgivingly at Turkey.³⁴ The reason why Pamuk holds *huzun* in the face of Europe is not because the destitution and ruin is the effect of European economic and cultural domination, but because Europe failed to fill in the void that it created when it helped remove an existing and deeply rooted culture. "It has not erased Ottoman culture, it has rather let it remain as an inchoate set of fragmented traces drifting ever further from their historical meaning, and therefore a source of torment."³⁵

Gibson also discusses at great length the concept of the 'imaginal world' that was mentioned earlier in the chapter. He affirms the existence of the 'imaginal world' as a place of fulfilment of desires and explores Christian Jambet's study of Islamic esotericism in the works of Mullah Sadra. According to Sadra, the imagination draws only from the experiential world but when liberated, as in while sleeping, unconsciousness, childhood fantasies, etc, the human soul is free to escape to this intermediary imaginal world which is a reflection of the dense material world but is an inverse of it. What's more, the object of one's desires can only be achieved if that object is not real, that is, not of this material world. This is the beauty of the imaginal world and it can be best represented through art, as only art has the capacity to translate the immaterial into a language that is comprehensible in the material realm. So art has the potential for providing a space for engagement with the desired object or the Other which has no material reality, but exists none the less.³⁶ And this, Gibson believes, is a space more forgiving of the Other than the one we are accustomed to.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 92.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 97-99.

self-assertion pure and simple.³³ When the Altogether-Other is removed from the picture, only the Self's desire to exist remains, which Spinoza calls appetite, and Gibson says the world, which is our frame of reference, becomes a manifestation of universal appetite. Coming back to Pamuk's coinage of a language that speaks of forgiveness, Gibson believes that in the contemporary literary scene, it is only Pamuk who is creating a discourse on nostalgia. In his novels like *A New Life* and *Snow*, he depicts desolated towns forgotten not only by holiday makers but by the imperial powers as well who nonchalantly stepped over them and marched on, leaving the towns at the mercy of an indifferent nation state. Although Pamuk greatly admires European art and thought, his depiction of his homeland is that of an unloved neighbour of Europe; that is not only unloved, but is also always under Europe's scrutiny. And this scrutiny is from above, looking down at Turkey, simply because the European value system elevates material success, ignoring the Turkish Other's humanity. By this the European Self strives in its persistence to be what it is, and Pamuk highlights this appetite, this unforgiving stare, that Europe subjects Turkey to. He does it in a very subtle way, using no stylistic or literary technique in particular, he just paints a very vivid picture of European influences on Turkey and the social changes that have been brought about post-Enlightenment, yet he persists in depicting at the same time *huzun*, the Turkish word for melancholy. *Huzun* arises from a profound sense of loss and for Pamuk it is reflected in ruined cityscapes. And he confronts the European Self with such cityscapes and the melancholy inhabitants of these cities in his novels, thereby countering the "cheerful, progressive ethics" of

³³ Ibid., p. 86.

John Van Heyking has a similar out look on Pamuk because his work, even his political writing, seems tightly tied up with mysticism. He examines the roles of Pamuk and Abdul Karim Soroush in providing the Islamic world with a mysticism that has nothing to do ideology, but which is at the same time serviceable to democracy. He says that Ka, the protagonist in Pamuk's political novel *Snow* "strives for personal and non-ideological existence in a globalised world".³⁷ Which means he wants to transcend Islamist as well as secularist political understanding of the world and develop his own personal understanding. In his article on mysticism in contemporary Islamic political thought, Heyking analyses and compares Ka's character and Iranian contemporary Islamic thinker Abdul Karim Soroush. The reason for bringing together a fictional and non-fictional personality in the discussion is that both look at ideology as a secondary reality. For Heyking, snow in the novel is a symbol of intellectual oblivion from which stems a secondary reality which the character Ka enters into. Kars, the small Anatolian town where the events of the novel take place, is completely enclosed by a snowstorm, and the inhabitants who display a strong collectivism become an even more compact community, which serves to exaggerate their relationships in the three days that the snowstorm lasts. And these people are unable to sustain "individual personality and agency".³⁸ In such a place, where people act en masse, there would be no room for idiosyncratic behaviour and the community prefers absolutist ideas that are intolerant of human weaknesses which they keep in check. In this scenario we have a character like Ka who is not only

³⁷ John Van Heyking, "Mysticism in Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: Orhan Pamuk and Abdul Karim Soroush" in *Humanitas* (2006), Vol. 19, Issue 1 and 2, pg. 73.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 76.

individualistic but also displays human weaknesses like a disordered erotic longing for Ipek, a constant fluctuation between hope and despair, and paranoia. The rest of the characters don't seem to go through such personal turmoil but the town as a whole is latently violent. And when the actor Sunay Zaim literally stages a coup. A feeling of unreality settles over the townspeople as they are mercilessly subjected to torture and imprisonment in the name of liberation from oppressive religion. The surreal nature of the coup enforcing secularism is symbolic of ideology as a secondary reality; it lacks reasons but has numerous causes.³⁹

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Snow also has another meaning in the novel, that of mysticism and the crystalline snowflake on which Ka maps his poems that he 'received' like a medium, stands for a human's mysterious divine origins, a short life span after which the human being just melts into eternity. The perfect geometric precision of the snow crystal indicates order in what is seemingly chaos. Ka's mysticism is individualistic and he wishes to remain a solitary figure with which Islamists like Blue cannot reconcile. He has adopted Western or modern mysticism, which does not require communal worship and which abhors ritualism. Although he manages to find happiness in Kars, which pretty much represents communal life to him, he is unable to discard his innate desire for solitude which pulls him towards the destruction of his own happiness at his own hands. The novel elevates the simple and mundane and finds beauty in the ordinary, and the characters obsessed with 'world-transforming ideologies' cannot enjoy these because of their immoderation. Pamuk considers his character Ka to be like him in many ways but Pamuk's own artistic

³⁹ Ibid., pg. 81.

medium, the novel, helps in promoting personal agency and self-knowledge.

And speaking of the artist medium of the novel, Sibel Erol makes an interesting examination of *Snow*. She refers to certain ruptures and erasures in all of Pamuk's novels that have to do with the formation of a Western country out of an Eastern Empire. These are most obvious in characters who are either physically broken or have broken spirits. They either reflect or are the cause of the ever-present *huzun*. What's more, the East-West opposition which is also ever-present in one form or the other, is used by Pamuk to toy with the idea of similarity in opposites which along with the presence of *huzun* makes the east-West duality fluid, as one transfers into the other's space, infinitely being pulled by the vacuum that is *huzun*. Besides having these thematic similarities, Pamuk's novels also contain interstitial references not only to eastern and Western canonical literature but his own novels as well. With this technique he is actually "flaunting the fact that each work is an extension of the previous ones".⁴⁰ In the case of his novel *Snow*, Erol sees Pamuk as drawing from Hegel's allusion to the theatre as a metaphor for history. Where Kietzman pointed out Renaissance drama as influence for Sunay Zaim's theatrical coup, Erol sees the whole novel as a Hegelian metaphor. She says all the characters are like actors in a play, and there is a foreground and background. The background constitutes hypertextuality, interstitial references that the characters cannot see but which the reader can beyond the two-dimensional 'stage'. The characters see each other as reduced types; atheist, religious zealot, good person, bad person, etc. But the reader has the privilege of a hermeneutic perspective because of the intertextuality and their position as an audience in

⁴⁰ Sibel Erol, "Reading Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* as Parody: Difference as Sameness" in *Comparative Critical Studies*, (Edinburgh University Press: 2007), Vol. 4, Issue. 3, pg. 409.

a theatre, and from this vantage point they can see that all the different ideological camps are run by a similar way of thinking and are therefore fundamentally the same.⁴¹ An important instance of intertextuality in the novel is the staging of the play *My Fatherland or My Headscarf* which alludes to Ottoman Young Turk, Nemik Kemal's play *Vatan yahut Silistre* (My Fatherland or Silistre). Kemal was responsible for introducing the concept of *vatan* through his plays which were completely didactic in nature.⁴² Both the plays use the female lead's clothes as a marker for secular Nationalism; in Kemal's play the female lead adorns men's clothes to be able to fight for her homeland, and in its parody in the novel, Sunay's leading lady takes off her headscarf for the country. The fact that in the novel, this play ends in a bloody military coup, is very telling of Pamuk's position on the Young Turk's movement.

Now coming to the protagonist Ka, Erol situates him between the foreground and the background, acting as mediator between the two. Keeping in mind the ideological absolutism of the flat characters in the foreground and the intertextuality and multiple layers of meaning from the background, Erol says that Ka is actually shuttling between the postmodern background and the modern foreground. But Ka is really not very different from the rest of the characters and he lacks self-awareness.⁴³ It is his relationship to the town of Kars that makes him significant because Kars for Ka is a space of redemption and his lost childhood. It is also here that his writer's block lifts and he starts writing poetry again. He meets Ipek, his childhood infatuation, and Necip, a

⁴¹ Ibid., pg. 412.

⁴² Ibid., p. 416.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 420.

younger version of himself. Erol points to another interesting fact. Necip has a close friend Fazil who is like his double and the three together who are replicas of each other, make up the name of a famous religious poet in Turkey, Necip Fazil Kısakurek, who is also referenced in *Snow* when his work *Bujuk Dogiu* (The Great East) is mentioned. Pamuk has taken this style from Franz Kafka and then deliberately made obvious his borrowing by calling his protagonist Ka, which is the letter K in Turkish, just as Kafka's protagonist in *The Castle* and *The Trial* were called K. Pamuk keeps revealing the structure of his novel by exaggerating the ways in which he has created his characters. For instance, he exaggerates the flatness of his characters like Ipek by depicting her as an unaging and unchanging woman because she looks the same as she did twelve years ago and wears the same clothes. Even Ka's poems which are outwardly so enigmatic, are just about the ordinary people and places that he has come across in Kars. This style of Pamuk is subversive in that it inverts our frames of reference and engages the reader to think out of the box.

All the work that has been done up till now is mostly based on Pamuk's style and his position in the Turkish context as a post-modern secular social critic. The present thesis will be a cultural study of the Ottoman Universal State during the 16th century. The research involved will be of an historical nature and the source texts will be Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* and Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* and *Snow*. While the former will provide the theoretical basis of examination, the two novels will provide the cultural framework and delimit the research. The events and characters of the novels, though fictional will give a micro-cosmic and in depth perspective to what will be, to a

large extent, a generic study. This study will be carried out by mapping the circumstances of the novels onto the historical model provided by Toynbee. Toynbee proved to be a very consequential figure in the early 20th century as he presented a critique of world affairs in his century from a civilisational point of view and pre-modern traditional perspectives like that of the Arab sociologist and historian Ibn-e-Khuldun and from Chinese philosophy. His theory of creative minorities was extended and incorporated in the work of continental philosophers like Jose Ortega Y Gasset, a Spanish Existentialist who propounded a traditionalist perspective in his book *The Revolt of the Masses*.⁴⁴ A separate review and introduction to Toynbee's historical theory, which is too vast to be encapsulated within the scope of this literature review, follows.

⁴⁴ J. O. Y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993).

Chapter II

An Introduction to Toynbee's Theory of Creative

Minorities

The twentieth century was a time of confusion and existential crises that nearly all peoples went through. The common masses were still reeling with the increased pace of life brought on by industrialisation when more shock waves originating in Europe went through the rest of the world. The World Wars left behind them the alien form of the Nation state and modern identities for ex-European colonies. Everyone had become an eyewitness to history unfolding especially when the First World War took place. Comparative history was at a rise because now it was not a question of a single nation but the future of the whole world was at stake. So when Oswald Spengler produced the book *The Decline of the West*, it sold like hot cakes.⁴⁵ Spengler spoke of a cycle of recurrence that societies went through and certain phases that resulted in the formation of civilisations. A civilisation according to him was the end product of a process that a culture or society undergoes, and this end product is really just a dead thing, a stone edifice which lacks the capacity to grow. For Spengler, a civilisation was an organism that went through phases of growth like any other living creature, he called these

⁴⁵ James Joll, "Two Prophets of the Twentieth Century: Spengler and Toynbee" in *Review of International Studies* Vol. 11, No. 2 (Apr., 1985), p 95.

“seasons” that inevitably ended in a cold dead winter, marked by densely populated cities and a diminishing countryside. Although Spengler advocated German victory during the 1st world war, his mood was so pessimistic that when Germany actually lost, his book became all the more famous because it confirmed the irrevocable downward course of all human societies. Men were helpless at the hands of the fates; they could redeem themselves but never their civilisation. For Spengler history “is a drama noble in its aimlessness, noble and aimless as the course of the stars, the rotation of the earth and alternation of land and sea, ice and forest upon its face. We can marvel at it or we may lament it - but it is there.”⁴⁶

Spengler’s theory of the rise and fall of human histories was not a new one. Long before him, the North African philosopher, historian and social scientist Ibn Khaldun had made an attempt at charting the course of universal history and gleaning a fixed pattern out of the cyclical nature of human societies. Although Ibn Khaldun never made any major claims about civilisations, his work still has a lot of sociological and economic value today.

In his *Muqaddima* Ibn Khaldun was the first historian and philosopher who tried to derive a universal law of history. He wrote his *Kitab ul-Ibar* in response to a plague of Black Death that had enveloped North Africa and the regions close by. His genius was such that he wrote more like a sociologist than a philosopher because he stated clearly the causes of the plague which according to him spread due to the sedentary life that is the cost of any civilisation. Unfortunately he was impeded by the relativity of his time and space but

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p 95.

never the less wrote extensively on the Arab and Berber dynasties of North Africa. Unlike modern historians, Ibn Khaldun never claimed to be writing about whole civilisations but only dynasties. He theorized the idea that nomad culture always plays an extremely important role in the development of sedentary society. His focus was the Arab invasions of North Africa in the seventh and eleventh centuries. From these two cases in point he suggested that when a nomadic horde like the Arabs invades a sedentary society, it will completely overcome that settlement as long as the nomadic horde has what Ibn Khaldun calls *assabiyya*⁴⁷. This term implies "group feeling" in Arabic which is also taken to be synonymous with *esprit de corps*⁴⁸. But this was not a rule set in stone. The Mamluks for instance were a sedentary society and they had the privilege of an artificial inculcation of what Ibn Khaldun called *asabiyya* through recruitment of nomad children.

The inspiration that Toynbee took from the above mentioned persons did not really take place in a contextual vacuum. His vocation and the events unfolding around him had much to do with his decision to develop a systematic historiography. The general feeling of a looming world changing event had popularized comparative historians especially in Britain which was a major player in the great game being played by world powers on the world map. Arnold J. Toynbee, an ardent student of history grew up studying the Western civilisation, but during his days at the Political Intelligence Department of the British foreign office, realized the narrowness and parochial nature of his field. In the September of 1921 on the Orient Express from Turkey, Toynbee first got the inspiration to write his mammoth *A Study Of History*. This massive work was to take him forty years to

⁴⁷Robert Irwin, "Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.33, no.3, (July 1997), pp. 467.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.472.

complete.

A Study of History became a sensational success after publication of the first two volumes only. Toynbee continued to grow as a public figure as his work and its implications reached the corners of the globe. Toynbee's theme was no doubt influenced by the hype of the world wars and Spengler's *The Decline of The West*, and also to a large extent by Ibn Khaldun which is evident in his dislike for settled urban life; his writing is so heavily laden with metaphorical language that the influence of Henri Bergson on Toynbee is unmistakable. Bergson was a French philosopher of Jewish descent whose *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*, *Creative Evolution*, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* became very influential in the early twentieth century. Bergson introduced the idea of the *élan vital* in *Creative Evolution* where he developed a connection between personal philosophical meditation and social revolution. Bergson's philosophy fell somewhere between the empirical and *a priori* or realistic and idealistic classifications of philosophy, it was a philosophy of action⁴⁹. He viewed life or matter as a constant flux of becoming, with the intellect as an agency for separating and classifying from the flux and instinct as an ability to be self-conscious and to reflect on an object/matter. The constant flow of becoming, which is matter, is either downward or upward. The downward motion is what causes obstacles in the way of growth and the upward motion is the life force. Bergson took much of his inspiration from Charles Darwin but he throughout advocated "creativity" because he saw evolution as a creative process, not a predetermined or pre-programmed adaptation to the environment. For him time was not a mathematical measurement of space, but it was the essence of life which

⁴⁹ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 756

he called "duration". This duration could only be approached by developed instinct or "intuition". Intuition is a first hand experience that cannot be explained or understood through an objective third party perspective and it is at the same time distinctly separate from intelligence. Intuition makes way for Bergson's famous concept of the *élan vital* which is that necessary push needed for creativity. So Bergson basically declared that in order to evolve, free will coupled with creativity was indispensable otherwise growth would not occur.

Toynbee has used a lot of Bergson's jargon while developing his model for a system of history. Like Bergson, he relies heavily on metaphors and similies from literature and religion, so proving or even disproving his theory becomes difficult because it is so abstract. Although dealing with a totally different subject matter, Toynbee makes use of Bergson's philosophy and makes it a basis for refuting Spenglar's theory of a predetermined cycle of history. He vehemently opposed Spenglar's notion that a civilisation was a living organism.⁵⁰ Toynbee believed that a civilisation was a process of which human beings were a part, but it was in no way an organism in itself and therefore was not subject to the natural stages of growth that a living creature was. In other words, it did not go through the phases of infancy, youth, middle age, etc. Moreover, a civilisation was not an end product but a phenomenon. Toynbee was also influenced by Bergson when he forwarded his theory of creative minorities in a civilisation who possessed the *élan vital*. Based on this, he developed his system as follows.

⁵⁰ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition* (Norwich: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 154,155.

A civilization is that stage of a society when there exists a small section of individuals who are not directly involved in the economic activities of that society. These people are the intelligentsia and their labour is not required by society to economically sustain itself. But they are never the less needed to meet the challenges that the society faces from time to time. It becomes a distinguishing feature of a civilisation then, that it fosters members of society who have the means and capacity to engage in intellectual and creative pursuits, and these are termed the creative minority.

Although Toynbee doesn't really give instances of creative leadership from his contemporary scenario, his theory of challenge and response has a ring of validity. This comes from the very sound logic that he gives in the beginning, a logic that lays the foundation for all that he has to say about the creative minority of a civilisation. He lays the foundation of his logic on Chinese thought.⁵¹ A civilisation is a network of social relationships and, if fitted into the framework of Chinese philosophy, is initially in the static phase of 'Yin'. Yin is the passive, female principle and is seen as an unfertilized egg. It is dark matter and in Chinese art it is represented by the dark side of the mountains. 'Yang' is the dynamic male principle that fertilizes the egg, in art symbolized by rays of the sun. Where 'Yin' is water, 'Yang' is fire. The two complement each other, never overtaking the other but as one grows, the other recedes, thus creating a harmonious rhythm in the universe.

⁵¹ Chinese thought here refers to the School of Naturalists which speaks about the concept of Yin and Yang as two opposing extremes of everything and the Five elements water, fire, earth, wood and metal. Harmony is achieved when the Yin and Yang are at equilibrium. The Chinese philosopher Confucius also integrated Yin and Yang in his philosophy.

In Chinese philosophy, inherent to the rhythm of Yin and Yang is the need of Yin to pass into Yang because once complete, Yin has become ripe and reached perfection. Building upon this concept, it follows that when any given society reaches a state of perfection so to speak, it needs to move on to the next challenge. The passage from the state of Yin into Yang comes in the shape of an internal crisis and the deliberate encounter with a difficult situation is a 'challenge' and its consequence is a 'response'. The interaction of the civilization with this challenge then generates a fresh bout of creativity which helps to further evolve the civilization. The process of challenge and response does not involve the whole civilisation but a few persons who perform a function that is similar to that of a protagonist in a three act drama. In the first stage of genesis, the human protagonist's ordeal begins as a transition from Yin to Yang. This takes place as a dynamic act performed under instigation of an adversary. This is an act of creativity. The second stage of the ordeal is the crisis in which the human protagonist realizes that his/her dynamic act is leading to death and destruction and s/he rebels against her/his fate. The crisis is only resolved when the protagonist resigns him/herself to the rhythm that has been set in motion, and this is the third stage. Now Yang passes into Yin again.

Although race and environment are associated with civilizations, as their distinguishing features, they do not really play a significant role in their growth. What actually puts that dynamic into motion is an encounter with a challenge that makes certain members of a civilization take an initiative.

The challenge and the response to that challenge are different from the logical and natural laws of cause and effect and are best understood in the language of mythology and religion. All myths have basically addressed the human spirit and therefore are highly symbolic. The fertility myths always involve a virgin, a father and a child: Europa and the bull, Isis and Osiris, Sende the stricken earth and Zeus the Sky that launches the thunderbolt, Psyche and Cupid, Gretchen and Faust, etc. These myths represent the action of a dynamic principle on a passive "stage" which causes suffering and death and results in the birth of a new order.⁵² They also represent seasonal changes and recurrences. Even the biblical 'drama' of Adam and Eve, played out as Eve's temptation to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, their fall from grace, which was basically a state of perfection and hence passivity, their sexual intercourse as an initial act of social creation and Eve's bearing of children in pain and suffering, resonate with the law of Yin and Yang⁵³.

In the drama of Dr Faust, Faust is also in a state of Yin as he has perfected his knowledge.⁵⁴ Unsatisfied with this state of stasis, he delves into the magical arts and is tempted by Mephistopheles. Faust is tempted into thinking himself an equal with God. The temptation and Faust's actions disrupt his state of Yin and throughout the period when his soul suffers as heaven and hell fight for his soul, he is in a state of Yang. Finally as he succumbs to the will of God, he is bodily defeated but his soul is won over by Heaven and the dynamic principle which comes in the shape of Mephistopheles, gives

⁵² Ibid., p. 97

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 99-101

⁵⁴ *Faust* was a drama written originally by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the plot of which centered around the temptation of the scholar Dr Faust by the devil Mephistophiles.

way to Yin again, a state of beautiful passivity, but different as in being a new creation⁵⁵. It follows that whenever met by a challenge, a soul will have to endure all manner of suffering and pain in order to give birth to a new creation. This cycle, though continuous, is not repetitive because each time the culmination is in something new, which defies the perceived deterministic cycle of history. For here, when the wheels turn, they move the caravan forward, to a new location and do not remain at the same place.

Challenges come in the form of stimuli of penalizations and hard countries. The challenge of hard countries was met by the likes of the Phoenicians who discovered the Atlantic and invented the Aramean alphabet. But more so by the desert Israelites who discovered monotheism.

After the genesis of a civilization, it needs to grow. And the criterion of growth is the promethean élan. Although the Hellenic myth of Prometheus shows him to be a rebel who defies Zeus, steals fire from the god and gives life to inanimate or intellectually dead Man. But Prometheus can be viewed as in league with God and acts as the dynamic principle. The "élan which carries the challenged party through equilibrium into an overbalance which exposes him to a fresh challenge and thereby inspires him to make a fresh response..."⁵⁶

The challenges and obstacles are not external but arise within the civilization and can be met by self-determinism. A fully mature civilization establishes itself as a regional power

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 103

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 136

to be reckoned with and enjoys the status of being a Universal State. A Universal State is called 'universal' because its inhabitants believe in the immortality of its existence and well being, visualizing it to be a dominion which touches the ends of the world. In other words, their own civilization occupies and restricts their perception of the bigger picture. This is the point when the creative minority or the group of people actually responsible for meeting challenges, has become a dominant minority and on the stage of history, this mentality plays out as the 'surfeit' of the protagonist of a drama. Surfeit or excess of material wealth inevitably leads to 'outrageous behaviour' which translates into idolization of the dominant minority, its past and its institutions. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with an institution or technique but idolizing them causes a shift away from the whole to the part and ignores other aspects of the institution. Idolatry is a symptom of a corrupt spirit and it leads to 'disaster'.

When the creative minority starts idolizing itself it becomes a dominant minority which rigidly sticks to the old institutions and techniques. It condemns itself into a closed corporation, fixing its ideals and so becomes completely institutionalized. The outdated techniques are insufficient to meet newer challenges and the unanswered challenges keep recurring and accumulating. The dominant minority refuses to hand over the reigns to anyone else because it's in denial of its own incompetence.

Despite the dominant leadership's decadence, creative spirits are born in the mass of previous followers who have become deprived of creative leadership. So the process of yin and yang comes full circle and a creative minority takes birth after the proletariats'

suffering. A few creative personalities take action and the majority of the proletarians follow the new creative minority through mimesis. Mimesis is a mechanical action, not creative and is confined to a single social class⁵⁷.

When a creative minority becomes a dominant minority, two types of schisms take place in the civilization. One is a vertical schism in which the civilization is divided into parochial states which become the cause of internecine warfare. The other type of schism is a horizontal one which divides the society into classes, creating an internal proletariat. Wars can be dealt with strategic measures but the horizontal schism effects the civilization at a microcosmic level. This means that this schism is reflected in individual lives. The internal proletarians exist in a civilization but are not "of" it, i.e. they do not have a feeling of belonging. When an individual develops a schism in his/her soul, the soul becomes culturally promiscuous. It is divided and not whole anymore⁵⁸.

The external proletariats are the barbarians that exist outside of the civilization are not aggressors but receive most of their culture from the civilization they live just outside of. They are open to the possibility of an ultimate spiritual reality and hence capable of absorbing or adopting the spiritual insights of higher religions that originate from the internal proletariat. For instance, the Arabs existed as an external proletariat of the Roman Empire which was part of the Syriac-Hellenic cultural compost. Arab poetry was developed as it was but it reached its profoundest with the Quran which reflected the

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 162

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 224-230

Syriac higher religion of Judaism.⁵⁹

When a civilization reaches the stage of becoming a Universal state, the dominant minority by this time is morally defeated. The proletariat reacts to such a leadership by transferring their action from one time frame to another. There are two sorts of such an action, archaism and futurism. In archaistic movements, the mimesis of contemporary creative personalities is replaced by a mimesis of ancestors. The result of this is nationalism. Futurism is looking forward to a utopian existence which seeks to establish an ideal society with outside help. Utopian futurism results in political revolutions which attempt to cover long periods of evolution in a short time and consequently tend to erect tyrannical regimes, tyrannical because they have to coercively maintain the state of utopia envisioned by the dominant minority. These are all basically symptoms of disintegration.

Genesis and growth, where civilizations are involved, are not necessarily an outward expansion. In fact, true growth is the shifting of the scene of action from the macrocosm to the microcosm. At the level of the microcosm, overcoming external obstacles loses importance and what becomes important is a progressive self-articulation. So the growing civilization or personality rather, becomes its own environment and its own challenge (and field of action). In Toynbee's words, "the criterion of growth is a progress towards self-determinism"⁶⁰. This means that creative personalities need to be more and more in control of their own fate by taking charge of the ship they are adrift on in the seemingly

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 240.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 140

inexplicable universe. This requires these personalities to blaze their own trail and find new directions.

The personalities through which a civilization articulates itself have the privilege of having felt the *élan vital* and they take it upon themselves to turn into 'creative effort' or Yang something which is essentially a 'halt' or Yin, an end product. The creative personality has to take society forward and convert the ranks to her/his insight. The creative personality is not necessarily the political leader, ruler or monarch. But s/he is from the internal proletariat and is someone who has acquired an insight into the transcendental truth; in short has acquired the Divine spark.

When a civilization becomes a Universal State, it has disintegrated into a dominant minority, an internal proletariat and an external proletariat. The internal proletariat creates a 'higher religion', the inspiration for which comes from a foreign source. The source is foreign in the sense that when the proletariat is divided politically into separate local communities, they share with each other a common culture, even though they are politically divided. Cultural unity between different racial communities has the benefit of providing a fertile ground for social growth and progress because there's a bigger chance for intimacy which generates innovation with the added advantage of a wider scope.

Innovation and creativity cannot stay restricted to the creative minority and diffuses into the masses through social imitation or 'mimesis'. Social imitation includes the imitation of cultural assets, abstract and tangible, of the creative minority. Mimesis that is

backward towards the past makes society static but in societies going through the process of civilization, it is toward creative personalities.

Although mimesis is helpful in uniformly distributing the process of growth, a glitch is that it produces action that is not self-determined and is therefore 'precarious'. It could backfire as negative failure when the creative leadership becomes hypnotized by its power and loses the initiative for creative evolution. In other words it becomes part of the mechanical and blind movement with which the masses follow them. Another type of failure, but a positive one, is when the leadership becomes too powerful and authoritative and starts abusing their power by not "leading" the masses but controlling them. This causes the proletariat to secede from the degenerated 'dominant' minority. This is the nemesis of mimesis.

There is a nemesis of creativity as well. This nemesis is an over-specialisation of the creative leadership in response to a particular challenge that they are unable to adapt to change or respond in any other way to a different challenge. As a civilization is breaking down, all their skill and energy is taken up in trying to preserve the previous state of ascendancy. This arrests growth because all of the civilisation's faculties are required to keep it from complete destruction. So its institutions though functional, are frozen in time, arrested, and cannot further evolve. A case in point is of the Ottoman Turks who made a leap from a nomadic pastoral existence to becoming an imperial power. They had to deal with a vast heterogeneous population and the baggage of political and cultural problems. To cope with this challenge they turned to inflexible institutions and thus

created a Universal State. The schism that appears on the macro and micro level is followed by palingenesia which is a sort of re-birth of civilization but in a completely different order. Hence the cycle takes another turn but also moves forward with each turn⁶¹.

A historical study of any context or text for that matter requires not only precision of technique but also space for musing. To muse or speculate over a period in time-space means not just an empirical study of facts but the observation of abstract phenomena. Arnold Toynbee is such an historian because he hasn't made a study of 'nations' as separate entities as such. Falling into the category of comparative history, his *Study of History* is an attempt to categorise world history on a civilisational scope. He has grouped together societies into civilisations based on common religion and culture instead of race, ethnicity or nationality, the latter being a modern concept. When studying civilisations instead of "nations", one is not only getting the facts and figures right but one has to be careful to capture the zeitgeist of that particular civilisation. Toynbee was a staunch believer in the spirit of creativity and progress that is carried like a torch by a minority and to empirically support his theory gave numerous examples from the Western, Sinic and Egyptian civilisations. Although he was much criticized for historical discrepancies and his "doomsday prophesy" attitude, he remains a prophet of the modern age. A prophet because he put his finger on the pulse of the historical ebb and flow, a cycle that is not predetermined but runs along a certain pattern if some force is not allowed to diverge it. Modernist because he spoke of a meta-reality that historians are afraid to refer to or simply chose to ignore because it alludes to phenomena that occurs beyond

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 241, 254

empirical understanding.

Although he started off as a bourgeoisie success story, I like to think of Toynbee as a spokesman for the proletariat because he speaks the language of you and me, not 'them'. By them, I mean the persons in positions of authority or simply those running the show. 'They' are truly not of us and its we, the proletarians in Toynbee's terminology, who give birth to change. Toynbee's a prophet, not in the biblical sense, but somebody who has been able to interpret the historical cycles that each civilisation has run through. And in doing so he has left us with the wisdom to determine where we stand in universal history. The mistake made in the modern age has been to make sweeping statements about everything, generalizing and declaring absolutes. Toynbee, although apparently studying historical evidences, never claims to foresee or predict any historical cycle. He only tests his hypothesis by examining certain civilisations that have already run their course and are extinct so to speak, in the light of his theory. In this respect he can be considered revolutionary because he defies modern absolutism.

Chapter III

An Analysis of *My Name is Red* in light of Toynbee's

Theory

Art, like religion, is an endeavour to give some meaning to life.⁶² The art forms referred to in *My Name Is Red* could be taken in place of the Higher Religions to which Toynbee ascribes the spiritual growth of civilizations. This is because art is a manifestation of individual as well as the collective spiritual states of members of human societies. Giving art the place of religion will also help narrow down the time scale of the Islamic civilizations to the Ottoman Empire, without having to go into the details of the spiritual origins of the whole Islamic cultures and Caliphates.

The artistic expression cultivated by the Ottomans can be considered to be the same self-articulation that Toynbee talks about in his model of creative minorities. A creative personality may not necessarily be responsible for founding a higher religion, but they can project their divine inspiration on any platform. The only criterion that needs to be fulfilled is that of 'love' for another as Toynbee suggests, not for the self. And that is

⁶² Human societies have always grown and developed with an impetus to reach some transcendental reality which gives meaning and purpose to their life. The need for this impetus is felt more so in modern and post-modern times when belief in religion as a source of knowledge for this reality is being replaced by scientific and empirical knowledge. This need is therefore fulfilled by art which has always been there in human history as an aesthetic representation of-the metaphysical.

fulfilled by the Muslim artists; poets, calligraphers and miniaturists alike.

In the Islamic culture, narratives are of the essence when it comes to art. There is no such thing as art for art's sake. In a miniature for instance, the poem is the narrative to which the miniature and illumination is an exegesis. Without the poem's narrative, the painting is meaningless and thus worthless or rather rootless. This practice of the Muslim artists came from the simple notion that the Narrative of all narratives, the Qur'an, cannot be depicted in illustrations, but it can never the less be ornamented. This gave birth to the art of calligraphy. While the Quran became inspiration for Sufi poets, calligraphy became the matrix for miniature paintings. So while the poets wrote verses aflame with love both sacred and profane, the artists took inspiration from those stories and produced paintings aflame with the colours of passion similar to that of the poets possessed with a higher calling. *My Name Is Red* is a story of personalities who belong to this world of art but who have lost their orientation.

Just like the culture that it depicts, Pamuk's novel is saturated with stories that are in no way connected to each other, but they only help to give a deeper meaning to what could have ended up being a historical novel of the detective genre. Each miniaturist in the novel stands for some aspect of this art which he makes known through the narration of a story as well as the story he himself lives. Even though the backdrop of the novel is the war of the Ottomans with the Persians, the feeling that pervades the setting of the novel is that of love which is very Persian in texture. This is the love story of Husrev and Shirin which resonates in the love of the protagonist Black for Shekure, his Enishte's beautiful

daughter. The story of Husrev and Shirin was a Persian legend rendered in a poem by the poet Nizami. The author of this novel has liberally made use of Nizami's style and content of his poetry in order to imbue the novel with a sense of quasi-erotic love which is also a superficial aspect of esoteric Sufi poetry. This way the boundaries between religion, art and love in all shapes become very flimsy.

The novel begins with Elegant's narrative and the entire 1st chapter has been spoken by him. But this narrative is rather morbid as it comes after his death and he is speaking from a well in which his body has been thrown. The name of the chapter is "I am a corpse" and more than an indictment of the murderer, it is a lamentation and meditation on life after death. It is a philosophical contemplation of the metaphysical in which the deceased realises the vanity of his earthly beliefs. He says the feeling of the continuation of his earthly life stays with him and he cannot help but think about his wife and children, contrary to the popular belief that when a person dies their ties with this world are cut off. He then says a very interesting thing: "Before my birth there was infinite time, and after my death, inexhaustible time. I never thought of it before: I'd been living luminously between two eternities of darkness."⁶³

His remark that his life had been a 'luminous' one is a pun on his profession which was to make illuminations for manuscripts. 'Infinite time' suggests a peaceful ignorance and 'inexhaustible time' suggests experience and knowledge, which he attained during his life, which was just an interval in an eternal darkness. So right in the beginning the reader is introduced to the idea of darkness as a transcendent reality beyond human existence.

⁶³ Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 3.

But that doesn't make earthly life, or the 'luminous' life any less significant. As Elegant says "You know the value of money even when you're dead", money being synonymous with material existence.⁶⁴

The dead Elegant dismisses the myths about the Afterlife and says that souls merge together in the Hereafter which is a reference to the Mystic belief in the unity of souls with the Universal spirit. Elegant, who in his life had very orthodox views on Islam, has to admit that although he is happy to find out that the infidels who disbelieve in an afterlife have been proved wrong, he cannot say that he sees the rivers of milk and honey as promised by visionary dreamers' like Ibn 'Arabi. This comes across as a mockery of the literalist interpretation of the Quran, to which Elegant ascribed in his life. He makes up for his lack of understanding of the afterlife by admitting to being a malcontent in society.⁶⁵ So could this be a radically deviant belief from mainstream Islamic belief in a collective judgment to a more personal and individual judgment, hinting the possibility that the West's humanism has valid grounds in the Metaphysical?

The dead narrator slyly reserves further discussion on the afterlife, a major concern for theological speculation and demands that his murderer be found or else he would keep "infecting the people with faithlessness". Which means that all theological debate between Orthodox Muslims and the modernists depends on discovery of the murderer. He declares that his murder is a conspiracy against Islam.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 4

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 5

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

The key to understanding the novel lies in the second last paragraph, which states that the social and theological dilemma that these people are in cannot be depicted in an illumination. It is much too complex and multilayered to be understood. And because the events of the whole novel are a description of this situation in words, this novel cannot be illuminated. Just like the Quran, which cannot be illuminated, not because it isn't allowed but because it cannot be done due to the complex nature of the book, with all its stories, narratives, and multiple layers.

Black, the protagonist of the novel arrives in the city of Istanbul after 12 years and he describes the changes that have taken place in his absence. This is the author's deliberate attempt to give voice to this change in the person of Kara or Black as well as being at the same time the personification of the bridge between Europe and Asia on the Bosphorus. Istanbul makes for the perfect cosmopolitan centre that Toynbee speaks of.⁶⁷ It was a space where cultures from two continents, two religions and multiple ethnicities diffused into a kaleidoscope of humanity. The changes in this urban landscape of the city show with what rapidity the economic condition had deteriorated and the reader is shown a picture of Istanbul that is no longer a happy place. Although people have become rich, people have also become poor. The disparity of classes indicates unequal distribution of wealth and hence economic instability. The city is crowded and the opulence of the well-to-do section reeks of Venetian influence. Ottoman currency was losing its value and there was inflation in the prices. Apparently trade with Venice had increased which resulted in a flood of counterfeit coins. And on top of that, the ceaseless wars with the

⁶⁷ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition* (Norwich: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 307

Persians further devalued money which resulted in the Jannissaries rioting and besieging the Sultan's palace.

The citizens of Istanbul were not only besought with a financial crisis but also religious discontent. Nusret Hoja, a cleric from Erzurum was preaching that the inflation, plagues, fires and the endless wars with the Safavid Kingdom was because people had strayed from the path of God as shown by the Prophet (pbuh), and they were showing tolerance to the Christians, drinking wine openly and because they played musical instruments in Dervish houses.

These two sociological conditions: economic instability and religious discontent are indicative of something bigger. Because it seems that one might be the cause of the other as poverty and excess both can distract people from religious pursuits and excessive preoccupation with religious traditions can lead to an indifference to economic well being of the state, hence the financial crisis. Because the argument can go both ways, there would be a never ending debate on which condition caused which societal dysfunction. So there must be something else that has caused both the dysfunctions simultaneously.

Another interesting thing that Black notices is a group of beggars standing near a butcher's and one of the beggars is blind and smiling as he 'watches' the falling snow. This is the first reference to blindness and the subject of blindness seems to be blissfully unaware of his dirty surroundings yet he is 'watching' the snow fall. If it hadn't been for the word 'watching' the beggar could easily have been dismissed as an object in the

scene but he is a subject of the scene and becomes the first reference to a dimension of society that the author wants to reveal. This dimension of society has nothing to do with collective discontent or even well-being but has to do with the individual's inner state of being. It is an ontological premise that will show through the cracks in the text and reveal the individual who makes or breaks the society they live in.

Black's narrative progresses in his Enishte's house, and for the first time he lays eyes on Shekure's son Orhan. And his first thought is that is that all these years he had mistakenly recalled Shekure's mouth to be wide with cherry like lips but her mouth was actually like her son's, small and narrow. And the next thought that crosses his mind is that if a beloved's face remains etched on the heart like a life like portrait, the world remains your home, otherwise you will always feel displaced wherever you are. This sentiment actually betrays the anxiety of the Islamic miniaturists that their art form is somehow inadequate and the Venetian style of portraiture better captures the human condition.⁶⁸

While Black is sitting with his Enishte (Uncle), he is told that the Sultan has commissioned a Book of Festivities in celebration of the thousandth year of the Hegira and at the same time had commissioned the production of a secret Book to Enishte. This secret book would be made in the style of the Franks, using their technique to create terror in their hearts, boasting of the expertise of the Ottomans which could beat the Franks at their own art any day. But Black seems to be unconcerned with all the politics and his mind is largely preoccupied with Shekure, Enishte's daughter. Coming back to

⁶⁸ Venetian oil paintings during the Italian Renaissance in the 15th Century, were the first of their kind, employing the interplay of light, colour and shadows to give a monochrome effect and depth to the paintings.

Istanbul meant more to him than just partaking in his Enishte's secret joy. It was something much more personal for Black. On his way back when he glimpses Shekure's face after so many years, the similarity of his situation with the legendary scene from Husrev and Shirin, instils in Black new hope and his desire for Shekure is once again kindled. The author makes it a point to mention the epic poem without which Black might not have rekindled his childhood longing for Shekure. The ability of such scenes from various Persian epics, preserved as illuminations, to inspire love and zeal, is a continuous motif in the novel. The motif is so strong that it becomes a driving force for the plot. At the climax of the novel, when Master Osman is going through the old manuscripts in the Sultan's treasury, his viewing of all the illuminations of epic Persian poetry motivates him to plunge a plume needle into his eyes, completely blinding himself.

The next day Black visits the Sultan's workshop and observes that little has changed in the demeanour of the artisans and apprentices since his childhood days. Except for one thing, and that is the absence of the Master Miniaturists. They have been allowed to work in the privacy and comfort of their homes and this absence from the workshop seems to coincide with the decline of the Sultan's wealth and renown. Although this relaxation has been made to improve the quality and workmanship of the masters, the outcome of this change has yet to be seen.

While speaking with Master Osman, Black notices that the apprentices in the room only looked up at him when Master Osman asked Black about the subjects of illumination in

the distant places that he had visited. And Black notes that this interest is an age old passion for the distant lands and history, with which miniaturists imagine epic battles being fought that inspire poets to write beautiful lyrics. Poetry at this point becomes a form of historiography and this form best captures the drama of real life with all the passions involved. But the legendary illustrators who had worked in the service of the Shahs became destitute as a result of the constant warfare and their talent was wasting away.

When a fake ceremony of the survey of the workshop is held for Black, he is extremely saddened. Saddened because this ceremony was reserved for the Sultan and now the Sultan was no longer interested in what happened at the workshop. His absence indicates his restricted movement and confinement to the royal harem. This was specifically because now the Turkish society was no longer a warring community but was an urbane and sedentary society with a specially trained military, called the Jannissares, to do the fighting for them. Their poetic form of historiography relied a great deal on the trigger-happy tendency of the Sultans and princes of the Nomadic Turco--Mongol tribes. But this was no longer the case. This was a more passive society. In terms of Yin and Yang, the Ottoman universal State had reached its stage of Yin and was ripe for the falling. The feminization of the Sultan and his court and ultimately his kingdom was a reflection of the feminine principle of Yin. In Toynbee's vision, this stage is completely unavoidable because there is no challenge for the dominant minority. And it is true that the Ottomans had established themselves so securely in the Near East that even after their civilisational decline, they lasted into the 20th century. Previously challenges for them had come in the

shape of rival Khans and Shahs, but they were not prepared for a cultural challenge. And this state of Ottoman passivity is reflected in the court workshops. The Sultans no longer needed to create fear in the hearts of rivals and hence there was no need for epic poetry celebrating their praises, and in extension no need for miniature paintings. This art had been reduced to a questionable form of expression because the scenes of love and war that fed the imagination of the miniaturists through poetry, no longer held credibility. Now a new romance was on the verge of taking place in Ottoman lands, and this was the romance of the 'self': the individual so much celebrated by humanistic Europe.

The character Black, when speaking with the old Master Osman, feels pity for him because he was an idealistic man clinging to the last vestiges of a waning culture. Master Osman still strongly believed in the anonymity of the artist/artisan. A miniaturist should not have his own style or signature and this anonymity for the old Master signified blindness which he elevated to "Allah's own blackness".⁶⁹ The motif of blindness in the novel is an ironic one because blindness might not only signify a highly elevated spiritual vision but also just simply the loss of vision. And it is true that the Ottomans were losing their vision and bearing because of the blinding success and popularity of the Renaissance.

The cultural threat faced by the Ottomans took the form of Renaissance portraiture. While talking to his Enishte Black realises his uncle's fascination with European portraiture in which the individual is at the centre of the canvas and which subliminally indicates the central position of a human in the universe. When Enishte Effendi related

⁶⁹ Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p., 73.

this phenomenon to the Sultan, the Sultan was very much aware that centralizing a human or any other object was tantamount to idolatory but he regardless wanted his portrait made in the European style. Gone was the warrior hero who had won the hearts of his people through emotional attachment. This was the period of the isolated and detached ruler who liked to propagate himself as an individual completely disconnected from a 'story'. The Sultan's 'story' being his loyal subjects whom he shepherded, his viziers, ministers and most importantly his soldiers (or the Jannissaries).

Ironically the Sultan's wish to present the Venetian Doge with a manuscript illuminated in the style of the Venetians themselves, could only make the Sultan's influence seem weak because such a manuscript would enforce the cultural and artistic inferiority of the Ottomans in Venetian eyes. It would mean that the ages old 'Islamic' perspective and style was no longer good enough. Black's *Enishte* goes deep into the philosophy behind the new Venetian style of painting, which lets light and shadow manipulate the paint brush of the artist. This blackness is not the transcendent blackness of Master Osman, but an opaque blackness of the earthly domain. It is not the consequence of years of struggle but an immediate blackness of the surrounding shadows.

The illustrations that his *Enishte* had made were half in the Venetian style and half in the Persian style. So that the figures were flat stenciled reproductions of the Persian type but were enlarged or made smaller, and positioned in such a way so as to add perspective and depth to the painting. Because the figures had been picked from legends and epics of traditional folklore and thrown together in this manner, it was to be Black's job to write

stories for these images. So for the first time in history, stories would be written to embellish and even validate miniatures. Again it is difficult to ignore how this reflects on the status quo. We can actually see the priorities shifting at this stage, from the word to the image, from the spirit to the form and (therefore) from the State to the person of the Sultan. Black says he cannot think of any stories for the Secret Book except the ones that the storyteller at the coffee house tells. In this way he is sort of made one with the author of the novel and in extension the novel becomes the collection of stories meant to accompany the illustrations of the Secret Book. The choice of a coffeehouse as a point of departure for storytelling has political significance. Historically in Ottoman Turkey, coffeehouses to a large extent served as public spaces for men. Coffee, a drink initially introduced by certain Sufi orders, became a drink popular in the common masses very soon. The authorities, especially the religious authorities kept a strict check on these coffeehouses and people were discouraged from spending time there through negative propaganda, accusing the customers of all sorts of unislamic activity.⁷⁰ The Sultan Murat III could no longer project himself as the Ghazi warrior of yester years so he tried to impose his image as an unreachable almost holy figure of a Caliph, who could easily be an equivalent or more of the new primary rival, the Safavid Shah. The Safavid Shah, who was also a self-declared Imam and Pir of the Safavid Sufi order, became a direct threat to the Ottoman Sultan.⁷¹ And this virtually was a rivalry between the Orthodox Sunni Sultan and the Shi'i Shah. Therefore any activity in a coffeehouse not only reeked of political discontent but due to the connection with Sufism, of Safavid sympathies as well. Hence

⁷⁰ Cengiz Kirli, *The Struggle Over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780-1845* (An unpublished thesis written in Binghamton University, 2000), pp. 44-46.

⁷¹ Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 160.

the notorious status of coffeehouses in Istanbul.

The Orthodox Sunni tradition was an acquired identity for the Turco-Mongol rulers and the Ottoman Sultan was a synthesis of the two cultures in person.⁷² At this stage the Sultan was going through what Toynbee terms 'the idolisation of an ephemeral self'. This is 'an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual breakdown'.⁷³ This is a moral aberration in which the idolater starts idolizing not only an institution but also the 'self'. In the context of the novel, the Sultan, the inheritor of an established institution formed through the synthesis of two different cultures, was impotent to bring the much needed innovation and changes, and this directly effected the creativity of the proletariat. Enishte Effendi is a case in point. He is trying to straddle two civilisations at once, just as his Turco-Mongol ancestors adopted the foreign Orthodox Islamic tradition and assimilated it into their own. But as they were a nomadic or barbarian horde, it was easier for them to settle in and borrow from the foreign tradition.⁷⁴ But Enishte Effendi's job is more difficult and the outcome more painful because he is trying to synthesise two opposing as well as very deeply entrenched points of view. Despite the rivalry between the Ottomans and the Safavids, the Ottoman miniaturists and poets held the Persian classics as models⁷⁵ and the Persian tradition comes from a very established and sedentary civilisation. The same could be said of the Venetian artistic tradition. The classicism of the Renaissance held

⁷² Ibid., p., 157.

⁷³ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition*, p., 171.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp., 360, 362.

⁷⁵ Cem Alptekin, *Eighteenth Century French Influences in the Development of Liberal and Secular Thought in the Ottoman State (1718-1676)*. (Unpublished thesis written in NewYork University, 1980), pp., 23-24.

ancient Roman and Greek art as model, which again is very deeply rooted in European soil. And Enishte had taken up the responsibility of uprooting both and fusing them together, which proved to be a futile endeavour.

When the Head Treasurer asks Black whether the dogs and trees depicted in the infamous Book are supposed to represent the most vital aspects of the House of Osman, he doesn't know how best to answer the question. So he just replies that the Book wasn't meant to show the Sultan's wealth but also his spiritual and moral strength "along with his hidden sorrows". The Head treasurer's question stands as a mockery of Enishte Effendi's attempt to reconcile the Persian/Islamic model with the European. European portraiture, marked by perspective and the focus on the individual, glorified paraphernalia attached to the subject of the portrait. And this was in direct contrast to the Islamic/Persian model which gave a panoramic yet timeless view of a specific event, without focusing on any individual, also keeping the picture deliberately devoid of depth and style. So when the dog and the tree are depicted with such attention, the Head Treasurer's innocuous remark becomes a mockery of what is most important to the Sultan.

While examining the illustration of a horse that the unknown murderer has made, Master Osman remarks that this illustration was made with an attempt to make the horse more lifelike just as the Venetian painters make it. In order to draw the subject matter differently, in the manner of the Venetians to be precise, one also has to see the world differently, and in this case see it like the Venetians do. But the artist of this particular painting had "rendered the horse in the manner of the old Masters". Thus pointing out the

inability of the artist to fully grasp the Venetian technique and in extension the inability to internalise the European point of view. The absence of a story is made up for by the fact that the illustrated horse not only reveals itself but the hand of the artist as well who also happens to be the murderer. And herein lies Pamuk's genius of ascribing multiplicity of meaning to a single miniature of a horse. The meaning attached to the miniature is amplified because it has been made by a murderer and at the same time it represents the struggle between two points of view, it is an archetypal horse and then also displays the qualities of a real life beautiful horse.

Except when one slight flaw shows up which Master Osman's trained eye catches at once. The nostril of the horse is different, unlike the prototype of the illustrated horse. According to Master Osman this flaw comes from a flaw in the artist but Black is quick to retort in defence of his Enishete's viewpoint that it actually comes from the depths of the artist's soul and is a style. So the war between flaw and style is magnified into a war between tradition and idiosyncrasy. While studying the Book of Victories, a manuscript illustrated by Master Osman himself and his miniaturists, it is with sorrow that Black observes that women from the harem had scribbled on the hard work of the artisans during shenanigans with the royal princes. Again the irony is unmistakable that the Book of Victories should be reduced to a mere plaything and the ridiculous scribbling on the miniatures intensifies the tragedy of the age.

The seclusion of the Sultan was in line with the Muslim class dichotomy of inner and outer. The traditional Muslim society did not classify itself into a vertical hierarchy but

rather a horizontal one. It could be seen as a circular spatial division in which the closer one was to the centre, the more sacred that space was.⁷⁶ And because the Ottoman Sultan's subjects viewed him as the Caliph, his position was at the epicenter of the circular spatial division and hence was furthest removed from all, which made the frontiers of this domain the most profane. This horizontal division, because of its close affinity with the sacred and profane greatly appealed to and was embedded in the minds of the subjects and they then willingly accepted the sacred nature of the Sultan's 'Caliphate'. So the Sultan was literally off limits and the walls he had built around himself froze into a rigid institution. Toynbee has traced from this horizontal division of a Universal State the emergence of 'cultural promiscuity'. Cultural promiscuity is the state of an individual of society torn between his/her own culture and a foreign culture. Contrary to this state is the idolization of a glorified past. This is the exact same blind following of a leadership, termed mimesis in Toynbee's books. And in both the cases the soul of the individual becomes schismatic as the individual struggles to keep him/herself together, being torn between two cultural pulls. Enishte Effendi can be said to have become the personification of cultural Promiscuity and Master Osman presents a case of mimesis.

The two characters that represent the dichotomy within the novel are Enishte Effendi and Master Osman. This is the dichotomy of idiosyncrasy and tradition. And the question raised is how far can an individual go in pursuit of a personal vision and in opposition, how far should a society go in protecting what is only a temporal institution, both putting spiritual aesthetic at stake. Enishte Effendi is Black's uncle and plays, in Toynbee's

⁷⁶ Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, p., 9

terminology, a Promethean role. After his visit to Venice, he comes back a changed man. His vision has been altered by the innovative technique of portraiture in Europe and he wants to assimilate this technique into the traditional art of illumination. He gets involved in the production of a secret book for the Sultan in which paintings will be made in the Venetian style. He basically believes that the use of perspective and shadow would better solve the existential questions that arise in the minds of the miniaturists or at least in his own mind. Enishte is a man obsessed with the idea of the mystery that life presents but not death. He is well read in the literature of death and is at peace with the concept of the afterlife that his religion has borne. The representation of life by the Venetian artists has him awestruck because it is a very human perspective and unlike the Islamic idealistic vision, it is realistic, giving importance to insignificant paraphernalia. The depiction of the ordinary as the extraordinary is very fascinating for Enishte because each item is depicted as the centre of the universe, and thus the whole image carries the potential of the existence of nebulous parallel universes. This for Enishte is a whole new possibility of existence; at once insignificant and also the locus of the universe. He is only hesitant in the beginning about the whole project of the Sultan's secret book because he is afraid of situating anything at the centre of the page and that would be like deifying that object which is theologically unthinkable. Art and religion have become intricately tied up at this point and religion, which has more and more to do with a personal spirituality, has become a root of artistic expression. According to Toynbee, seeking the Divine is a social act which inevitably brings social progress, and Enishte is a case of an individual derailed from the Universal Church of his Universal State and is therefore losing grasp of an essential social stronghold.⁷⁷ The state religion of the Ottoman Empire under whose

⁷⁷ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One-Volume Edition*. p., 319. When a

auspices the artistic form of miniature paintings was thriving had become a rigid institution demanding blind mimesis and Enishte's zealous spirit could not bear being stifled by it. His spirit cracked under pressure and instead of responding to the impulse of original creativity, he lamely clutched onto the European model. Although he has the potential of becoming a creative personality, due to the schism in his soul he resorted to futurism. He has in his mind an ideal picture that he has created with outside help, with minimal or no creativity on his part. There's no progression in the method of his dealings in his field of action, which is art, and in simpler words there's no progression in his self-articulation.

Master Osman, the other pole of the dichotomy, makes for an interesting study of the remnants of an *élan vital* that had once permeated other creative personalities. He represents the last of those miniaturists who had adopted this art inspired by Persian and Chinese originals. But at the same time he displays an archaic mimesis. Unlike Enishte, his soul is not schismatic and he has fully given in to the essence of his art, which ultimately taxes on his lucidity. Master Osman has an epiphany when in the Royal treasury he gets an opportunity to go through all the illuminated manuscripts that have survived since the inception of the art. He first of all realises the historiographic function they serve, preserving the gradual evolution of a culture that culminated in the Ottoman Universal State.⁷⁸ In doing so he also noted the unity of vision that did not change in spirit but which evolved with time in form as the eyes that saw this vision changed. This

a religious ideology that addresses the whole of Mankind is institutionalized within a Universal State, it becomes a Universal Church.

⁷⁸ Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p., 383.

unity he termed 'the memory of Allah', an exquisite experience of the world as Allah would have willed it; or rather Allah's vision when He first created the world and viewed it Himself. And it is here we learn to what great extent the art of miniatures is imbued with mysticism. Master Osman ponders over the submission the artist makes as a young apprentice to his master and then as a mature artist the submission to his own passion and the wide array of poetic images of beautiful people, fictitious and from factual history both serving as metaphors of a transcendent love and passion that drove these artists just as a mystic is driven in his quest for truth. It is not a coincidence that Pamuk has given the final verdict on the colour Red in this last narrative by Master Osman. Red is a blessing of Allah on Mirza Baba Imami of Tabriz, a miniaturist of the old Persian school who used it to represent Alevi allegiance and from then onwards it was used as a manifestation of love, martyrdom, and all intense acts of passion. Clearly Pamuk himself recognises the élan vital of the old school of miniaturists. And Master Osman's mimesis of the old masters is seen as a reverence that ultimately runs dry. His final act of passion is not any work of art that is meant to only represent a transcendent reality but it is a step over the brink of the world of representations and into the ultimate vision. By blinding himself Master Osman plunges into oblivion; not only his own vision but this act of his also becomes the final nail into the coffin of a bygone era, providing the ultimate closure. Master Osman's case is interesting because he has lived his entire life to the dictates of archaic mimesis. Yet there is a certain nobility and strength of conviction in his character which the others are deprived of. His spirit is not broken, even though he is melancholic at the prospect of change and innovation. That said, in his blind mimesis, his élan vital is misplaced. What does this really mean for the Universal State at large? It

means we have an institution, which Master Osman really is in person, that is so gargantuan and complete in itself that it refuses to look ahead, and instead keeps looking behind it for reassurance. Bihzad the legendary Master miniaturist from Herat could not bring himself to paint in the new Ottoman style and Master Osman, his spiritual heir cannot bring himself to even accept the possibility of a new, maybe hybrid, style. He does stumble upon the option of using the new methods "here and there" to save the art form but Bihzad's hold is too strong on him. So his is not a schismatic soul but a tightly fortified one that will not flex.

The Ottoman Universal state's dilemma began at this juncture when creative personalities like Enishte and Master Osman got caught in their personal and slightly askew visions. The former looking for a utopian form and the latter looking backward. But both failing to look in their proximity where the actual field of action was instead of Venice or Herat. When speaking of space, it is impossible to overlook Pamuk's obsession with the East and the West. These directions for the author actually signify juxtaposing territories identified in Herat and Venice, second person plural and first person singular, and so ultimately perception. In the novel the division of East and West is quite openly ascribed to Satan, his act of disobedience to God in that he was the first being to have the audacity to say "I".⁷⁹ Is the author trying to point to Satan's claim to individuality as the root of all social upheavals? Or is he sympathising with Satan? We know of Satan's pride and self-glorification, but does he have another side to his personality which perhaps was instrumental for human intellectual and creative effort? Toynbee has tackled the same

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 349

problem of Satan's role in Man's fall from grace and also consequent rise as an intellectual superior to all Earthly creatures. According to this viewpoint, Satan's existence acts as a catalyst in the creative process.⁸⁰ He does not have control over the society that men have made but he is an essential part of the machinery, a purely functional entity that has no more control than a cog in a clockwork. This essential evil, so to speak, performs the function of prompting Man to dissect a whole, deduce and analyse. "It was Satan who adopted style. It was Satan who separated East from West"⁸¹. Whether the consequence of this separation is evil or good is not of importance, what is important is that ultimately both the parts, East and West, belong to God. A quote from the Quran makes sure of establishing this fact before the novel even takes flight. And this is where Man comes in the picture. Should he retain the wholesome nature of this world and his vision, or cut and dissect in order to reach a better understanding of his world? This is the challenge that the likes of Enishte and Master Osman face. And only history can be the judge of the end result of whatever endeavour they choose to take.

Tied up with the characterisation of Satan as a catalyst in the creative process is the nature of human identity. But for the purpose of this analysis, it is necessary to free all agents of change, or otherwise, of religious or moralistic connotations. Therefore Satan becomes synonymous with Yin in Toynbee's philosophy. Without labeling Satan with tags based on moral judgments, Satan as a character in this social drama, serves the role of Prometheus residing in the human psyche. He presents the disruptive spirit in the human psyche that questions established norms and consequently imbues the psyche with

⁸⁰ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition*, p. 106.

⁸¹ Orhan Pamuk, *My Name Is Red*, p. 349

a dual nature; a dichotomy within one person. Does a mere dichotomy give identity to Man? Or is it rather what man 'creates' out of the raw material at his disposal. Ultimately, all of human society, all of this world complete with its ambivalences, is human artifice. And consequently, the identity that is borne out of human artifice is a self-ascribed identity. Hence in actuality, no man 'belongs' to the East or the West but rather "to God belong the East and the West"⁸². The language of the novel is entrenched in Islamic mysticism, with frequent references to Ibn 'Arabi and the Quran which might seem a mockery of the said references given the dark comic palate of the novel. But it turns out that Islamic mysticism becomes the very tool of mocking human attempts at ascribing any identity to themselves. The protagonist, Black eventually has his love requited when he finally gains Shekure's acceptance as her husband but we see that Shekure disdainfully recounts Black's pursuit of young boys to counter bouts of depression. This means that even when one gets possession of the object of one's affections, the search has actually not ended and will continue as long as one stays trapped in one's mortal coils. Enishte Effendi, a purely rational being sought to attain his objectives through a complicated creative experiment but met with a gruesome end. Master Osman, a purely emotional being sought to achieve ends that had already come to pass and failed in resurrecting his beloved art which resided only in his mind. He met with a figurative end that served only to give him dignity but left open the quest for the ultimate art object. None of the characters is able to reach the absolute object or the ultimate Beloved within their material constraints. Pamuk hints at Master Osman's senility as the closest he can get to the Divine during this life as it resonates with the blind beggar's mysterious stare into the falling snow at the beginning of the novel. So

⁸² "To God belongs the East and the West." –Koran, "The Cow," 115

that the established 'sane' human society that ridicules senility, is itself mocked at by men who, apparently senile, have reached a better understanding of the transcendental Truth, which is darkness.

Each character gave identity and direction to himself through his own creative effort. And the worth of each effort, again, can only be judged by history. So Satan, metaphorically speaking, comes through as a challenge, a deviance from the ephemeral self, both of the characters and the civilisation, and how each character responds to this challenge traces the course of the whole society. The encounter of East with West, albeit products of man's own imaginative faculties, generates a new process in the civilisational cycle, and serves to push Yin into the state of Yang. Satan, a negative force, hence becomes synonymous with Europe, the cradle of individuality, and there is an encounter with the East in the shape of traditional Ottoman collectivism. And because the arena of this encounter is man's imagination, this generative interaction⁸³ is a purely mental and spiritual activity.

⁸³ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition*, p. 109.

Chapter IV

Post-Ottoman Turkey: The Relevance of *Snow* to *My Name Is Red* in light of Toynbee's Theory

If *My Name Is Red* is Pamuk's only novel that ends on a relatively happier note, *Snow* is his only political novel. It is set in post-Ataturk era and depicts the condition of a society in the wake of a modern nationalistic regime that secularised Turkey. The element of politics is present but only as a parody of what the Turkish Nationalists stood for. According to Toynbee's vision the two novels can be juxtaposed to show the transition from a Universal state to a modern polity, the Nation State. Toynbee wrote at great length about the Universal State, whose inhabitants firmly believe in the immortality of what is in actuality an ephemeral institution. But what did he have to say about the nation state, a completely modern phenomenon. According to him "the penalty for ignoring the necessity of making this new adjustment, or for seeking to evade it, is either a revolution, in which the new-born dynamic force shatters a traditional cultural pattern that has proved too rigid to adapt to it...Unless this inexorable summons of new life is effectively met by an evolutionary adjustment of the culture-pattern's structure, the visitant, which in another context is either harmless or even creative, will actually deal deadly destruction."⁸⁴

In *My Name Is Red*, the microcosm comprises what may be called the scribal bureaucrats, not in their bureaucratic capacity, but as social individuals who had been kept insulated

⁸⁴ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition* (Norwich: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 423.

from active politics and the dynamics of the Universal State, but who bore the brunt of the Sultanate's activities never the less⁸⁵. And this brunt, as previously discussed, manifested itself as psychosis or cultural promiscuity. The transition from the social context of *My Name Is Red* to *Snow*'s social framework was not smooth and involved a difficult process of giving up old ideals of Statehood for a more modern and European inspired reformation. The elite that formed during this period was not loyal to the Sultan as had previously been the case but was loyal to the concept of the Nation itself⁸⁶. And hence the seeds for a more modern constitutional form of Statehood were sown. But this development was still in the evolutionary process until the 20th century.

This is where the scenario of the novel *Snow* comes in. It poses the question, in Turkey's case after World War II, was the intrusion of European Modern Secularism met with an evolutionary readjustment of Turkish culture and society or did it prove to be 'deadly destruction' like Toynbee says? *Snow* I believe serves the purpose of magnifying modern Turkish society and opening it up to the scrutiny of social criticism. Secularism and the Modern Political State are the antithesis of a Universal state. A modern political state is "defined by frontiers drawn without reference to traditional tribal or national units, lack(s) cohesive sense of corporate identity which is a practical precondition for the reasonable functioning of democracy".⁸⁷ Whereas a universal state is more of a state of mind, wherein the inhabitants' totality of the world is encompassed within the Empire. The fragmentation of the universal State is what resulted in the creation of the Modern

⁸⁵ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Political Culture and the Great Households*, p. 74.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 80

⁸⁷ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition*, pp. 423,424

Nation state. The modern Nation state could be said to be a burnout of the age of Industrialisation that came exclusively from the West. So Westernisation, which definitively had a hand in the disintegration of the Universal state, could be said to be the one and same as Industrialisation. Besides speeding up technological progress, industrialisation altered holistic societies to a great extent. The Ottoman Universal state is a case in point of a vast pluralistic society that fell prey to modernisation that was essentially technological and industrial in nature. Industrial progress meant the advent of capitalism and with it a new middle class that was as educated as the ruling elite. Because this bourgeoisie rose from the lower classes that comprised ethnic Turks, it tried to, very successfully, assert Turkic ethnic superiority over their Persian, Arab and Kurdish counterparts. These were the formative years for a modern nationalistic vision as opposed to the Ottoman pluralistic and more cosmopolitan outlook. The nationalism taking shape during this time, the late 19th century and early 20th century was a purely ethnic nationalism based on shaky grounds of alleged Turkic roots of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman universal state had always relied on Islam as its seal of validity and therefore 'Ottomanism' and 'Islamism' went hand in hand. The wave of modernisation came from the European side and the Turks at this juncture did not hesitate to make it a part of their identity just as they had not hesitated in assimilating Ottomanism and Islamism. The Turks had looked outward before for inspiration and innovation, first it was the Mongols, then the Persians and this time round the Europeans.

An important part of Nationalisation was a redefinition of history with emphasis on pre-Islamic history and ancestry of the Turks. So Turkish Nationalism spelled ethnic

awareness and Ottomanism was synonymous with multi-ethnism⁸⁸. This nationalising movement was started by the Young Turks Movement which eventually grew into a political force to be reckoned with for the Ottoman elite. But most importantly, what Pamuk has also tried to point out in his novel, nationalism was a byproduct of Western Industrialisation and had little relevance for the Ottoman State. In the process of Nationalisation, the creed of the Ottoman State's citizens or inhabitants was changed from a religious basis to a modern ideology of civilisation. Islam had previously been used by the Ottoman elite to assert their rule through Islamism (political Islam) which took in its fold all manner of diverse cultures and ethnicities. But this new creed of modern Nationalism that was purely propagating the Turkic ethnicity in the name of 'civilisation' was artificial, unfounded and hasty⁸⁹.

For the inhabitants of the Ottoman Universal State, the search for identity began at the onset of the modern age. All Nationalists from the late 19th century onward saw the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire as a necessary step towards Nationhood.⁹⁰ Again, paradoxically, Turkish Nationalism was an acquired identity for the Ottoman State's citizens just as being Muslim had been an acquired identity for the Turco-Mongol tribal founders of the Ottoman Empire, and which overlooked the presence of Central Asian,

⁸⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicisation of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and*

Community in the Late Ottoman State, (Oxford University Press: New York, 2001), p. 366-368

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 373

⁹⁰ The Nationalists saw the Ottoman elite as culturally, and consequently racially, different from the masses. The masses were considered to be of pure 'Turkic' stock whereas the Ottoman elite had cultural, historical and racial ties with other ethnicities of Persian, Central Asian, Eurasian and Arab origins. To become one nation they had to unite the masses under the 'Turkic' identity, and the Turkish language was elevated from being a language of low culture to being the National Language

Persian, East-European, Arab and Kurdish elements of the Universal state.

Snow is Pamuk's political work and explicitly expresses his political position as far as the Nationalistic politics in modern day Turkey is concerned. Each chapter, unlike *My Name is Red*, is named with a title that carries the thrust of the argument that each chapter presents. The first chapter, titled "The Silence of Snow" is actually a preamble to an ideological and theocratic debate that pervades over the whole novel. The preamble presents itself in the form of the protagonist Ka's wonderment at the indigenous population of Turkey. The backdrop is a journey from Istanbul to Kars, a provincial town somewhere in the North Eastern frontiers of Turkey, that has witnessed first hand the struggle between all ethnicities that make up modern Turkey, and all ideological phases that this country has passed through. In order to make a clean dive into the troubled waters of political strife in Turkey, that seems to be internally damaging it, Pamuk has cleared the canvas of his vision with an all pervasive 'snow' that hangs in the background like a universal silence, and as we later come to know, 'the silence of God'. Although snow is an allegorical motif in both the novels, of a condition that pervades perpetually, changing its mode of appearance and outward manifestation, it is quintessentially the same. In *My Name Is Red* snow is the backdrop of the novel and remains hovering in the background as an irrefutable and persistent truth, while in *Snow* it is examined in the foreground as a condition or phenomenon that has reached critical mass and is explicitly examined in a psychological frenzy by the protagonist Ka.

Ka, the protagonist, is a poet with writer's block, who has recently returned from

Germany after twelve years of exile, for his mother's funeral in Istanbul. In Kars he hopes to resurrect some semblance of his childhood happiness. He comes on the pretext of writing an article for the newspaper, The Republican, on the 'headscarf girls' who have been committing suicides for mysterious reasons, and to cover the municipal elections, in which a local Islamist Party is running. Ka's journey on a bus from Istanbul to Kars is interesting because it brings to light some fundamental differences between Ka 'the Westerner', and the local populace. One difference is in the basic outlook of the individual. As Ka is making conversation with a fellow passenger, he informs the passenger of reasons for going to Kars, and the local's response to Ka's working for a state sponsored newspaper is ambiguous. He tells Ka that all newspapers have been running the story of the 'headscarf girls' and this confuses Ka because he is unable to understand whether it is pride or shame that he hears in the man's voice. For the western heart and mind, shame is a negative feeling that springs from a very different place than that of pride. But in the Islamic culture, the difference between the two is subtle and almost non-existent because shame is a matter of pride and pride is a matter of shame or honour. This is a very fundamental difference between 'European' sensibilities and 'Islamic' sensibilities which becomes relevant in the larger political and public arena as it forms the basis for their respective world views and consequently their ideologies (political or otherwise). It indicates not only a cultural difference but also a profound variance in two types of mindsets. And in this very first encounter, we are faced with the question: can the two ever be reconciled? The European mind that compartmentalizes and deduces and the Islamic mind that induces, builds organic wholes and makes no distinction between opposites. I feel it is important to expand on this point because in the

Islamic/Turkish culture, black and white both represent blank spaces, emptiness and silence, therefore both are the same. In *My Name Is Red*, the colour black is something to be aspired to, a mystical emptiness that even a blind beggar is able to 'see' in the thick whiteness of the falling snow. A paradox where through blind 'blackness' a person can see or achieve the 'white' silence of the Divine. Similarly, unlike the Europeans, the Turkish do not or cannot differentiate between pride and shame, like black and white, for them they are one and the same. It is not surprising therefore that we find such word play in Pamuk's two novels: 'Kara' (the colour black in Turkish) can become 'Kar' (snow in Turkish) and Kar can become Ka, a personality, admittedly not a wholesome one, that is a product of the age and which holds potential of the élan vital.

The European mind would make divisions of the world into East and West, but the Islamic mind would say that "to God belong the East and the West", unifying the two categories into their common source. This inclination of the Islamic outlook to build rather than break up translates into the Muslim community's collectivism. And Ka, or at least the 'Westerner' in him is unable to understand this lack of individuality and sense of community. Hence we come to the most crucial question as posed by Toynbee and that is what happens when something that has its origins in spiritual inspiration is fossilized into a rigid establishment, and in this case, when the sense of community and wholeness is frozen into a rigid political ideology.

Ka's reaction on seeing Kars after twelve years is the same as Kara's on seeing Istanbul after twelve years, in *My Name Is Red*. After more than a decade there are bound to be

some sort of changes in the city of one's childhood, but whereas in the seventeenth century Istanbul the signs of deterioration were only just beginning, in twentieth century Kars there seemed to be a finality in the numerous signs of deterioration. Seventeenth century Istanbul had changed in outlook due to the adoption of Venetian social aspects and 20th century Kars was riddled with scars left by industrialization, the child of the European Enlightenment, and worst still a very taxing capitalistic economic system an offshoot of industrialisation, reflected through concrete, pexiglass, neon signs and political slogans. In fact Kars had become a decrepit forgotten old town and the people of Kars blamed "the nation and the state". Compared to the scenario in the former novel, where people could not even conceive of blaming the Sultan of the Universal State, the modern and democratic status quo of twentieth century Kars enabled the citizens to blame the authorities of the nation state or the secular Republic of Turkey openly.

The suicide epidemic amongst the young girls of Kars was an indication of the sense of futility that had settled over its people. Men tried to make up for this sense of futility, uselessness and impotency, so to speak, by imposing themselves on these girls, who simply ended their lives to escape from not only the Nation State's oppression but also of their families. Impotency and the nature of it is an important element of this novel as it stands in contrast to the heroic ideals of the characters in *My Name Is Red*, marked by the protagonist Ka's inability to achieve spiritual satisfaction and to even win over his beloved Ipek, whereas in the former case, Kara is relatively successful in winning over at least his earthly beloved Shekure. But the overlapping theme of a seemingly endless search for some ideal remains in both cases. In *My Name Is Red* the characters are still

temporally close to the ideals idolized in heroic epics and miniatures, but the townsfolk of Kars are too far in time-space from the ideals of their ancestors, which engenders a spiritual impotency in them. The resulting frustration is taken out on the weaker section of society, namely the young girls in their households, who find no respite from the double oppression of the state and the family, except in death. Although the locals blamed entirely the state for the suicide girls, also known as 'the headscarf girls', saying they did this in protest of the state's strict injunctions of disallowing the girls from entering any educational institute with their headscarf on, the problem also lay in the private sphere. One such girl, "who had married happily at the age of fifteen had a six-month-old-baby. Terrorised by the beatings of her depressed and unemployed husband, she locked herself in the kitchen after their daily quarrel" and hanged herself.⁹¹ This indicates the state's inability to cultivate 'civilisation' at the microscopic level and the useless yet dangerous maneuver of politicizing Islam, which is more of a cultural aspect of these people. When a cultural aspect is politicized, it is compartmentalized into an isolated 'department' as happened with Islam when the modern Turkish Republic was founded, Islam was reserved to the department of religious affairs. Culture manifests itself at the individual level but political Islam could not and cannot be engaged with the individual, rather it needs a community to manifest itself. In *Snow*, instead of dealing with the suicide issue through individual psychological treatment or counseling, the issue was dealt with collectively by putting up posters, posters similar to the political ones of the upcoming municipal elections, declaring suicide to be a blasphemy against God. When God is politicized this way, the individual is cut off from direct access to God, which means in mystical terms, the path of personal inspiration is blocked. This criticism

⁹¹ Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p., 14.

of collectivism resonates with Toynbee's view that for creativity to take place, 'the individual' needs to cut off contact with society. Collectivism inevitably leads to politicisation and although the sense of community is important for an organic society, it is of the essence to give space to the individual. The people of Kars are a case in point of a community that had absolutely no respect for individuality, even in death. "Ka found it strangely depressing that the suicide girls had found hardly any privacy or time even to kill themselves. Even after swallowing their pills, even as they lay quietly dying, they'd had to share their rooms with others."⁹² And the headscarf girls who committed suicide did it to make a statement about 'political Islam'. The girls who wore headscarves had developed a deep sense of community and sense of belonging (with each other) which ultimately gave meaning to their lives. This collectivism gave way to Islam actually becoming a political ideology, not a personal choice based on individual intelligence (or logic), and sadly this 'political ideology' started giving meaning to life. "When she saw some of her friends giving up and uncovering their heads, and others forgoing their headscarves to wear wigs instead, the girl began to tell her father that life had no meaning and that she no longer wanted to live."⁹³ Interestingly enough, it was these girls who made the headscarf a 'symbol of political Islam', not an act of individual conscientiousness, and in order to preserve this political community, suicide for them became an act of defiance as well as an act of affirmation of an ideology which had become deeply ingrained in the psyche of the individual. And of course, such an individual would have been rendered incapable of creative thought processes.

⁹² Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, p., 16.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p., 17.

In all of this creative void comes in Ka from Germany, a poet who claims to be an atheist and presumably holds all things Turkish in contempt. But this return home is a return to innocence, to his more impressionable and less cynical days. Although Turkey long ago failed to inspire him, but the West has also run dry of inspiration for him, and on his return, he feels a renewal of motivation yet he cannot put his finger on exactly what it is that has captured his spirit. And he feels a rekindling of faith, a faith that threatens to be more profound and chronic since it is unmediated and arises out of disappointment in other venues of ideological possibility. For Ka, his atheism was more to do with rejecting 'Turkishness' rather than a deep seated religious skepticism. This points to the relevance of Islam in Turkey as a necessary part of Turkish culture, and how Islam is actually tied up with a 'Turkic' identity. So if one was to reject 'Turkishness', one would also reject the religion most associated with it. Ka's return to faith could be read as a return to his 'fatherland', his 'watan', but he cannot put his finger on what aspect of his fatherland is rekindling his faith. It could also be read not as a return but rather a discovery of sorts; a discovery of sorts, a discovery of something not yet known to the artistic minority, let alone the masses.

But despite his attempts to 'Westernise' himself, and while speaking with Ipek on his return to Kars, Ka confesses that he had been able to preserve his 'purity' and his 'soul' because he did not learn the German language. The allusion here is to the power of language to create paradigms, and the reason he never really lost himself in the West was because he kept his language 'pure'. So he continued writing his poetry in Turkish, free from European influences, unlike many of his contemporaries who fell prey to mimesis

of European literary forms. Hence in *Ka* we have an artist who is free from outside influences, yet who is also unwilling to fall into step with the masses of his own Nation. This could be the beginning of original creativity. The other characters of *Snow* are two dimensional, and both European and Turkish groups of characters exhibit a restricted vision and understanding of each other. Whereas well-rounded characters like *Ka* do exist in *My Name Is Red*, but they cannot be said to be innovative. This novel actually marks the 17th century as an epoch of initial Ottoman disintegration, and *Ka*'s presence in *Snow* marks the 20th century as an epoch of a possible 'renaissance'; perhaps in the form of neo-Ottomanism. But the question is whether this renaissance would turn into a mimesis of the past Ottoman Universal State or should it be a completely different and new kind of 'Ottomanism'.

In the transition from *My Name is Red* to *Snow* the medium or means of creating a paradigm has also changed. In the former, the potential of imagery in miniatures was explored as a possible matrix of a paradigm; a rather complex and advanced medium, one that is a step ahead and an extension of the written word. But in *Snow*, the medium has reverted to the written word and poetry again becomes not only a means of artistic expression but also a matrix for a possible paradigm. And this new paradigm would depend on the novelty of expression and poetic form that *Ka*, the principal creative personality, is burdened with. Because *Ka* is unsuccessful at creating this new paradigm, and yet he does successfully point to the matrix of new possibilities in the shape of a snow crystal and squeezes out some novel, original poems, which could become the guiding light for successive artists, a model for them to follow, and the stage in *Snow* is

set for the phase of 'genesis'. Or in Toynbee's terminology, Yang has been pushed over and it is keeling over to be turned into Yin. It is this state of Yin that gives dynamism to an otherwise hopeless situation as presented in the context of the novel. The general state of sterile inertia in the framework of the novel is disturbed by Ka's moments of inspirations when he spews out poetic verses in a completely new style, which is neither Eastern or Western, and this is a manifestation of a progressive self articulation. So this novel cannot boast of providing solutions to the identity crisis that modern Turks are going through or the absence of creative leadership, but it does offer a glimpse into the personal turmoil and traumatic psychosis that a creative personality goes through simply in order to give birth to a new and original idea. Ka in this regards makes for a very interesting case study not only because he has been familiarised with the best, and worst, of both worlds, the east and the West, but he has the potential to come up with an unmitigated paradigm that belongs to neither of the two. Art, poetry to be precise, is used by Ka, not to reflect his perception of reality, but as a means to a better understanding, a guidance so to speak. Hence art in this context becomes a creator of individual reality which is a paradoxical situation in which the creation itself creates the creator. Another way of saying this is that it gives meaning to the artist. For Ka, whose inspiration from all directions has run dry, the sudden bouts of poetic outpourings in as dismal a place as Kars is an indication towards the creative impulse or *élan vital*. In Ka, Pamuk's creation, what could be the source of this impulse? Going back to the paradoxical nature of opposites, the very grief and turmoil that grips Ka's soul, is actually is the matrix for his creative outbursts. It is a very Romantic idea of poetry in which verses come to Ka pretty much the same way that poetry came to the Romantic poets in 18th century England, and

with nuances in the composition implicating Divine origins⁹⁴. A self-declared atheist, Ka feels guilt and shame at the plight of the impoverished residents of Kars, who have nothing to vindicate their existence except for faith in God. But on arrival in Kars, the snow-silenced town melts his heart and "...the desolation and remoteness of the place hit him with such force that he felt God inside him"⁹⁵. Pamuk describes this feeling pervading over a city (his own city Istanbul to be precise) as *huzn*, a word derived from Arabic, which means melancholy⁹⁶. The Muslim Sufi relies heavily on grief and sorrow to create a void in the heart which can only be filled by the Beloved, and Ka feels a chronic indefinable emptiness in his life, which, on his return to Kars, he begins attributing to the loss of his childhood and the absence of Ipek. Therefore he comes across as a dervish medium of sorts⁹⁷. But Ka's mysticism is solitary in nature, which makes him a recluse from society. But he none the less interacts with an unseen existence as he toys with the concept of a God that does not belong to any political or ethnic group, but to whom belong all groups. This interaction with an unknown impetus is that very same push needed to generate something new because genesis in a civilisational scope is a function of interaction. Toynbee refers to the recluse as a personality most prone to inspiration and creative impulses because s/he does not lean on the society for spiritual

⁹⁴ Sibel Erol, "Reading Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* as Parody: Difference as Sameness" in *Comparative Critical Studies* (Edinburgh University Press: 2007), Vol. 4, Issue. 3, p. 421.

⁹⁵ Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, p., 19.

⁹⁶ Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (New York: Vintage International, 2006), p., 125.

⁹⁷ John von Heyking, "Mysticism in Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: Orhan Pamuk and Abdolkarim Soroush" (University of Lethbridge), p. 18

sustenance and does not resort to mimesis of any other civilisational force⁹⁸. Even so, Ka's creativity diminishes when he leaves Kars, and the narrator of the novel Orhan, a probable double of the author, picks up the loose ends from where Ka disappeared into oblivion, and strives to revive and relive Ka's time spent in Kars. In order to do this, Orhan has to decipher the nineteen poems Ka wrote while in Kars. This act itself is symptomatic of the potential in successive creative personalities to see eye to eye with a personality like Ka, and thus carry his work forward. Where Ka as a creative individual is concerned, he got the ball rolling for the creation of new paradigms that did not divide the world into established constructs of the east and the west, but on the personal level he failed to establish communal relationships which proved to be undoing. Nevertheless, his 'mysticism' left behind a significant mark on the landscape of his community, in the form of his poetry.

The uniqueness of Ka's character is complimented by a character similar to his but who lacks the sensibility of tuning into the subtleties of the east and west. This is Muhtar, Ka's friend from his university days when both were bourgeois atheist zealots. While Ka has become a reclusive poet, Muhtar, also an aspiring poet, turned out to become the president of the Islamist Prosperity Party and was running in the upcoming elections. To fulfil his dreams of becoming an 'original' poet he moved to Istanbul but was met with disappointment as he realised the irony of becoming 'like' the 'original' poets from the West. Muhtar in many ways represents what Ka would have been had he not left for Germany. Taking over his father's local business after failed attempts to impress Western

⁹⁸ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition* (Norwich: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 251

inspired poets like Fazil, who themselves were unable to make a name for themselves in the Western literary world but used their poetry for the self-righteous cause of Turkish Nationalism, Muhtar then married Ipek, the object of both his and Ka's love, but failed in that too as the couple was unable to conceive a child which Ipek, his wife, could not bear. A failing marriage and a failed poetic career led Muhtar to the doorsteps of Saadettin Efendi, a Kurdish sheikh. Thus began his journey into faith, and from personal faith to embracing the collective Muslim community, and before long he was involved in politics. Characters like Fazil and Muhtar personify the age old dilemma of the Turks, Ottoman and Nationalist both, in that they get inspiration from Europe and also have a complete understanding of the Western paradigm, but they are unable to contribute to that paradigm in the Western as well as their own social context and just carry forward whatever discourse Europe is producing. This is pretty much the same dilemma that Enishte Efendi in *My Name Is Red* represented. But in the former case of the Ottoman Universal State, the modern age was on the brink of emerging and in this case, modernisation of the Ottomans has been completed into the secular Republic of Turkey. Muhtar's inability to produce any offspring points to his spiritual and hence creative impotency which led him to join an Islamist political party. The fact that Muhtar joins a political party freshly imbued with a spirit of collectivism and Ka recedes into a private existence with the spirit of self-reflexivity indicates that the processes of creativity cannot gain momentum in a political collectivism that binds the crowd with a single ideology, but it does take flight in an individual consciousness that exercises reflection on its inner and outer experiences, allowing multiple viewpoints to co-exist in that single individual's mind.

At this point I feel it is important to elaborate a little on the dilemma of collectivism as opposed to individuality that Pamuk keeps bringing up. In relation to each other, both are dichotomous and stand as opposing social positions. But when we bring in the idea of community, the two can be reconciled as the community stands on the individual as a building block of society. Collectivism refers to 'group - think', when a group of individuals think alike or have ideological commonality. In nationalistic Turkey, defining the community became very important at the onset of the 20th century as previously the Ottoman Universal State was a very cosmopolitan society and the new generation of 'modern' Turks were looking for a communal identity conforming with modern, Western nationalistic ideals. This identity was a homogenous one, which disregarded the plurality of ethnicities that had found niches in the Ottoman Universal State, and to construct this new modern Turkish identity history was reconstructed and founded on the supremacy of the Turkic identity as unique and separate from that of the Central Asian, Persian, Arab and Islamic cultural forces in the region. In order to put this modernising venture into effect, the role of language was of the essence and where previously Persian was the language of the elite and the bureaucracy for the Ottomans, in the twentieth century the primacy of 'Turkish' language was upheld and Persian and Arabic were pushed to the side as foreign languages. The concept of civilisation for the Turkish nationalists was what the West stood for. Young 'Turkic' nationalists who represented the intellectual elite took inspiration from Western literary works to develop and streamline new perspectives of 'watan' and thus a modern political ideology. The likes of Namik Kemal and Ibrahim Sinasi of the *Tanzimat* period in the early twentieth century, were basically

newspaper men who were devising a language “and even an alphabet suitable to the colloquial Turkish used by the urban, lower class readers of their newspapers”⁹⁹. The significance of language in paradigm building again springs up at this point in history because the paradigm shift taking place was from a Universal State based on Persian and Turco- Mongol origins to a completely new yet modern and European inspired Nation State based on a Western script and the language of the new bourgeois or capitalistic middle class. In the forms or media of expression of this language, the shift was from court literature to drama and finally to newspapers as the primary medium of disseminating language. The sense of melancholy that pervades over *Snow* is because of Pamuk’s own sense of nostalgia for the pre-nationalistic and cosmopolitan society of the Universal State which was reflected primarily in the script and then the miniature paintings, an extension of that script. But this new modern reality could only be projected through newspapers, the modern society’s new form of expression which replaced literature and art. He deliberately juxtaposes sensationalist newspaper prose with poetic verses as they ‘come’ to Ka. News is literally manufactured as opposed to poetic verses which require the use of creative faculties. The creativity boils down to being something intuitive and not artifice.

Pamuk seems to take interest in the role of language as a medium of transmitting culture through time and space because *My Name Is Red* is replete with references to classical literature as it is, but in *Snow* there is a very interesting meeting between Ka and Blue the notorious extremist, who reveals to Ka that his fight against the West is not over religion

⁹⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicisation of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, p. 359

but 'stories'. Blue poses the question that why is it that the world has incorporated Oedipus Rex and Hamlet in their discourse but not the legendary epic of Rustem and Suhrab¹⁰⁰. Now Rustem and Suhrab is not a Turkish epic but a Persian one from the *Book of Kings* or *Shahnameh* by Nizami. Why would Pamuk make an Islamic extremist from Turkey narrate at length this famous tale from Persia? Obviously he feels that the Ottoman identity that assimilated the multiplicity of the Central Asian and Persian geopolitical block was more assertively articulated as a civilisation than the modern Turkish identity which lacks in originality and is manufactured out of a glorified history based on a constructed notion of purity Turkic ethnicity, and as a consequence of which it cannot progress on its own volition.

¹⁰⁰ Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, p.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The creative minority is a very select and elite, yet also a very small, group of personalities that form and define the high culture of a civilisation. Creative personalities do not necessarily have to be artists and men/women of letters, but also, as in most cases they have been, they are military strategists who lead their tribes or nations not only in battle but in planning settled societies as well which evolve into full fledged civilisations. I would like to refer back to Toynbee where he defined a society as a network of human relationships, culture as a system of shared values amongst those individuals that make the network of relationships, and finally, a civilisation is that society in which a minority exists which is not involved in any economic activity.¹⁰¹ This minority is responsible for producing the emblems of their civilisations because a civilisation is as such invisible and can only be represented by persons who are articulate or through symbols, since a civilisation takes on a spiritual aspect which combines the everyday struggle of men to survive with a certain 'cosmological' outlook that guides that society on a specific

¹⁰¹ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The First Abridged One Volume Edition*, p. 44

course, whichever direction it may lead that society towards. The creative minority provides the vision behind the civilisation and gives spiritual value to the symbols of civilisation. So a civilisation's magnitude is represented by its cultural artifacts, literature and the arts that it produces. The production of art and literature cannot be included in economic activity because economic activities function to sustain the livelihood of a society. But the activities of the creative minority do not sustain the society, instead they serve to represent and push the civilisation to higher value systems.

The quality of art produced by a civilisation is also an indicator of the developmental stage of that civilisation. For the Ottoman-Universal state, which was a conglomeration of various central Asian and eastern European domains and ethnicities, their literature, visual art and architecture became a marker for their might and cultural prowess in the region. The fundamental question that this thesis addressed was that to what extent did the art of miniatures in particular, and poetry by extension, project the state of the universal State in a specific slot of time? For this purpose I took the novel *My Name Is Red* as a case study and a frame of reference for the Ottoman Universal State in the late 16th century.

When character analyses were done of the chief characters, namely Kara, Master Osman and Enishte Effendi, I found none of them to be in possession of the characteristics of a creative personality. Kara, a book binder by skill, but who belongs to the guild of book makers never the less, is only a symbolic personification of the social conditions that prevailed in Istanbul in the late 16th century Ottoman Empire. He is not an artist but

because he is a newcomer of sorts in the city, returning after twelve years of service on the Persian front, through his eyes the reader is able to appraise the city and its inhabitants. Kara also serves as a medium for reminiscence of the epic Khusruv and Shirin, as he keeps finding similarities between his love for Shekure and the legendary lovers. Kara's character is an important medium of objective narrative in a novel replete with all manner of narratives, and conveys to us many aspects of that society, but still he does not serve any creative purposes in the framework of the novel and the society that it is a window to.

The dominant personalities, that is men in leadership roles, are Master Osman and Enishte Effendi as already discussed. But both their efforts end in creative failure, not because of the Ottoman State's socio-political condition, but because they both lack the *élan vital*. Creative failure is reflected in the manuscripts both these men are trying to produce. The framework of *My Name Is Red* encapsulates a time period that saw the end of an era. We have to see the zenith of the Ottoman Universal State, which was reached in the 16th century, as a consolidation of the ultimate ephemeral institution because not only was the Ottoman Empire at its peak but it strove to freeze that state in history. Which of course was impossible as a Universal State comprises thinking individuals that can easily defect from the State, and there are external and environmental challenges to boot. So by definition, an ephemeral institution does not last into eternity, even though the members might perceive its expanse to be all-encompassing, superseding the ravages of time, see their institution to be an infallible mammoth from their microscopic situation. The characters of the novel present us with an opportunity to see and even experience

their peculiar situations, from which we learnt of the struggle against an encroachment that was not environmental nor political. It was an encroachment over their culture, or specifically their art and literature, which reflected in the said cultural objects as an influence on their perceptive, imaginal and intellectual capabilities. A master of the art of manuscript making like Master Osman recognised this foreign influence on his culture because he was so fixated on the Persian miniatures of yore and so well immersed in the classical technique, that he became sensitised to the nuances of personal styles in miniatures that developed over the years and he could easily sense the change away from his beloved traditional masters. His inability to look away from what had already been achieved in the past was his tragic flaw, which in an odd quick of fate also invested him with glory and a dignified end, but an end none the less. The passages in the novel recounting his experience in the treasury, pouring over the old manuscripts are some of the most beautiful passages in the novel, reminding us that this time period when the Ottoman Empire was at its zenith was not actually the best of times, in fact it was only the aftermath of a bygone and much more glorious era, when creative energy was at its peak. This is not the idolisation of an ephemeral self as such because Master Osman does not idolise the present status quo but the past, which understandable. He has fallen into the trap of glorification of a heroic past which is a trait of sedentary cultures that previously existed as a nomadic horde. Master Osman becomes an icon of lament over lost passion and zeal, and the glow of his melancholy illuminates all the pages of *My Name Is Red*.

Enishte Effendi is Master Osman's anti-thesis. Though even he does not idolise the

ephemeral institution, or the past, he instead looks towards Europe for inspiration because that is where he sees the future of his art form. Europe provides him with a futuristic vision, where he sees his art evolving into a more realistic and representational art of portraiture. Enishte's failure to see the Renaissance in Europe as culturally specific costs him his own cultural exclusivity of outlook because the neo-classicism of European literature and representational art that looked back on the Hellenistic model had nothing to do with the Ottomans. Through this character, Pamuk successfully subverts the importance of the European Renaissance in Ottoman history. Enishte's predicament becomes an analogy for a whole society's predicament of losing sight of its own tradition for a novel yet foreign tradition. When Enishte sees Venetian portraits in Europe, he is mesmerised by the detail given to perspective, in comparison to which his own tradition's miniature art work pales. He is so engrossed in trying to jump to a future that he sees in the burgeoning culture of Renaissance Europe that he overlooks the minor detail that that future is non-existent. Merging two art forms that not only come from two separate geographical locations, but also two distinct perspectives, only served to contaminate the traditional art of miniature. This disorientation of both Enishte Effendi and Master Osman is a symptom of creative failure because both lack the vision, the creative energy and hence the *élan vital* to steer their existing tradition towards newer arenas.

Coming back to the renaissance, Toynbee believed that renaissances have taken place and will continue to take place in all civilisations which revive an extinct institution partially due to a need and partially due to a superstitious reverence for it.¹⁰² But a ghost cannot be the replacement for the living and only causes impedances in the way of fresh creative

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 465

impulses. In order to consolidate the structure of the Ottoman Universal State, the institution of the *shari'ah* of the Sunni School of thought was revived, but bringing back from the dead a Hellenistic institution in a completely foreign environment proved to be the undoing of the Ottoman Universal State, which although lasting into the 20th century, had completely lost its cultural domination by the 19th century.

Snow on the other hand presents us with a picture of the Republic of Turkey as an aftermath of western modernisation in the 20th century. The setting in this framework is the small town of Kars which could be seen as a microcosm for the whole of Turkey. The key character Ka, is a poet who had been living in exile in Germany due to his political activities during his university days. After analysing his role and function in his society, as an exiled poet and ex-political activist, and after comparing him with certain other characters who are only stereotypes and not fully rounded personalities, Ka emerges as someone with potential of possessing the *élan vital*. The time period, the age and the circumstances of which he is a product are very instrumental in the formation of his personality. He is not only embroiled in the human relationships of Kars, but he is also, in Toynbee's words, 'a personality seeking a direct relation with an ultimate spiritual reality'.¹⁰³ Since Toynbee considers spiritual activity necessary for cultivating a sense of purpose and direction, Ka, the recluse, is more suited to creative impulses since his mental state and spiritual condition are the direct result of his social circumstances and he can relate to the public and private upheavals at home.

After analysing his personality, I have come to the conclusion that from both the novels

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

and the case studies they provided, it is Ka who fits the definition, albeit incompletely, of a creative personality. Had Pamuk not attributed the tragic flaw of not trusting in his own happiness to Ka, he could have grown into a poet with a vast scope and vision. Never the less, Pamuk's protagonist in *Snow* leaves behind a legacy of original poetry, that is fresh and free from Western influences. They are post-modern yes, but not deliberately written that way as an adoption of Western Post-modernity, again a European phenomenon, But rather they are a reflection of Turkish society's transition out of modernity into an era they can call their own, an era that has not been triggered by social upheavals in Europe. This era has been triggered by the personal turmoil of the individuals living in Turkey and the cracks and fissures of this society surface in personalities like Ka who respond accordingly to these traumas. These are all internal challenges and Ka's response to them has been fresh and original. It does not matter that he was unable to pursue his poetic aspirations to their end because the mark he leaves behind on his society through his poetry is not without consequence. It is not accidental that Ka's friend Orhan is trying to recover all his poetry written in Kars. Pamuk has intentionally made a connection with Ka and reached out to him through the narrator Orhan. Ka and Orhan are not only friends but both are literary figures as well. On coming to Kars, Orhan retraces Ka's footsteps and history repeats itself as he also falls in love with Ipek. The parallels between Ka and Orhan are too strong to overlook and we cannot dismiss the fact that this is Pamuk's attempt to incorporate the novelist's significance in picking up the pieces from where the poet left them. And that novelist, who is taking on the poet's responsibility as a creative personality is Pamuk himself.

Although written as two completely different plots, *My Name Is Red* and *Snow* present us with two eras of Ottoman and Turkish history that have been crucial in the formation of contemporary Turkey. The historical importance of the 16th century, also the setting of *My Name Is Red*, cannot be emphasised enough, because by this time not only had the Ottoman Universal State had been consolidated, it was the fruit of centuries of pastoral struggle against challenges from much more larger sedentary civilisations. But as the novel reveals to us, the inhabitants of the Universal State were showing weaknesses in their personalities that eventually led to stagnation of thought and social institutions. *Snow* on the other hand gives an insight into an important yet sad reality of the modern Republic of Turkey. The situation of the citizens of the Nation State seems to be more precarious than ever after about 400 years of modernisation and cultural onslaught from Europe. The town of Kars, which is a microcosm for the whole of Turkey, has been reduced to a decrepit and forgotten old town, populated by intellectually dead citizens, practically dysfunctional for all purposes, and on top of that ruled by a ludicrous dictator actor. Amidst this ruin arrives Ka, not a Messiah but a thinking individual who at least manages to stop some other individuals in their tracks to take notice of their precarious condition and think self-reflexively for the first time.

So when studied together, the two novels give us a reasonable account of the inside story of the Ottoman State and its culmination into a modern Nation State, which according to both Toynbee and Pamuk can only spell disaster for further growth as a civilisation. And Pamuk's art of storytelling adds richness to the historiographic nature of his novels, and because he is almost one with the protagonist, it would come as no surprise if further

study recognises Pamuk as a creative personality himself since he has not only pointed to gaps and fissures of his own cultural history, but also gives a fresh impetus to remedy these cracks.

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