
Orhan Pamuk

Meu Nome é Vermelho



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Description

'Meu nome é Vermelho' alia narrativa policial, uma história de amor proibida e reflexões sobre as culturas do Ocidente e do Oriente. A trama se passa em Istambul, no fim do século XVI. Para comemorar o primeiro milênio da Hégira (a fuga de Maomé para Meca), o sultão encomenda um livro para demonstrar a riqueza do Império Otomano. Para provar a superioridade do mundo islâmico, porém, as imagens devem ser feitas com técnicas de perspectiva da Itália renascentista. As intenções secretas do sultão logo dão margem a especulações, desencadeando uma onda de intrigas, fortalecida pelo assassinato de um dos artistas que trabalhava no livro.

Insightful reviews

Jeremy Allan: At first look, Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* bears many resemblances to Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*: both take place in a period when manuscript illumination was a prestigious art, both deal in worlds where the licitness of books commanded great spiritual (and thus physical) importance, and both tell the story of a series of murders born out of the struggle for control of these things. Deeper consideration, though, shows that these two novels differ by more than the fact that the former is set in 16th century Istanbul, and the latter in 14th century Italy. Whereas Eco's book centers on a group of clerics wrestling amongst each other (albeit in ways that represent much broader power struggles) over issues of faith, *My Name is Red* centers on secular artists, and though religion forms a thick blue vein through the story, Pamuk's book is, before anything else, about art. In fact, to be even more precise, it is about perspective.

First, we have the historical context of the events of the story, where the Ottoman Empire was in frequent contact and competition with various European powers, notably Venice. This fraught contact led to the tentative exchange of ideas, in artistic techniques, for example. Thus, we come upon a major conflict in the background of this story: the arrival of European perspectival techniques in painting. Perspective in the visual arts brought with it a deep problematic in a Muslim society at that time, as the Koran sets clear limits on the righteousness of visual representation.

So, in this sense, we have another approach to perspective, that of competing interpretations of what constitutes righteousness and the righteous life. For Ottomans in the period in question, the official interpretation of the Koran and its religious authority were seated firmly with the Sultan. Pamuk's story also introduces other perspectives, though, like that of Husret Hoja, a radical cleric who preaches an ascetic interpretation of the Koran, forbidding dancing, music, the drinking of coffee, and other "sinful" indulgences. His fanatic and violent followers reverberate with current fears of fundamentalist extremism of all stripes. Alongside the official, one might say moderate, interpretation and the extremist one, we have the many middling positions inhabited by the vast majority of the characters in the story: those who oscillate between secular and religious poles for reasons of fear, faith, and fastidiousness, among others.

Perhaps the most clear sense in which this story is about perspective, though, is in how it is

told: while the novel is written in the first person, each of the fifty-nine chapters is narrated by a different character, and while the main characters reprise their roles as narrator many times, we still have twenty (by my count) different perspectives on what transpires in the story. And the point of view shifts radically, ranging from the perspective of a master illuminator, to a dog, to a corpse speaking from beyond the grave. None of these narrators are to be considered wholly reliable, each one addressing the reader more or less directly, often with the aim of persuading us. Much of that persuasion is related to guilt or innocence, as this is a story centered on murder, but that theme doesn't exhaust the ways in which the various characters try to win us to their standpoint. They argue for art, religion, common decency, and many other reasons. Part of what makes this book masterful is that each voice is distinct and (mostly) consistent. The few moments where it becomes difficult to distinguish the voices of certain characters are, you discover later, purposeful and functional.

Let it be said: this is a superb book. It combines art, religion, and murder through a cunning weave of voices. No character is faultless, though many are deeply sympathetic, even in their faults. Where perhaps, at times, the story gets a little long-winded, especially in the exhaustive catalogues of paintings that characters marvel over, the expansive quality of the text makes for a good effect when Pamuk gets to the dirty business of violence and action; in a sense, the action is earned. For anyone interested in the period and culture of the middle Ottoman Empire, the text is fascinating and, without question, learned without being too overbearing in its smartness. Even in his great learning, Pamuk knows how to tell a story (to the point that it even becomes a joke in the text itself), even a murder mystery. I, for one, was never sure of the identity of the murderer before it was revealed, and this works well as a mechanism to keep the reader firmly invested in the narrative. *Whodunnit?! Pamuk dunnit and dunnit well.*

That last sentence was hard to write, both because of the annoying spelling, but also because I struggle to grant respect to Pamuk the man. I've had an aversion to him since I read his Nobel Prize acceptance speech; I reacted strongly against his ideas of what art is, who gets to make it, and what place he inhabits in that scheme. I also hated how he wrote about his father. But, I have had to soften my distaste and separate the man from the work. While I might still disagree with his personal views on art and writing, I cannot dispute his mastery, and this at least makes it a bit easier to grant him pardon on those personal views: he is so good that it is not a surprise that he feels as he does about the act of creation. And though I am beginning to think he cannot write a woman character (chapter fifty-four, "I Am a Woman," may be the most revealing testament to that, intentional or not), Pamuk has shown me that despite controversy, the Nobel committee often selects very, very well. My growing love of Mario Vargas Llosa also adds to this sentiment of mine, but we'll see how it progresses.

In any case, I recommend this book to anyone who has liked *The Name of the Rose*, even if I've already gone to lengths to show how the two books differ. Anyone interested should also not be scared off by the 666 pages: call him a devil, but if you commit yourself to the first four chapters, you'll find yourself devoted to the rest of Pamuk's tale. Besides, the pages turn easily; I found myself effortlessly reading one hundred pages in a sitting. If you're still not certain, and if you haven't already, try some of his other books first: *Snow* and *Istanbul* are both recommended. He still pisses me off, this Orhan Pamuk, but perhaps that is partly motivated by raw envy. In considering that, I realize that with *My Name is Red*, he has certainly taught me

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