

My Name Is Red: Acts of Literature and Translation in the Margins of Cultural Literacy

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Taking as its backdrop the reception of Orhan Pamuk's novels in the "West" as meta-commentaries on the "clash of civilizations", this paper discusses a Derridean approach to the value of teaching literature in general and teaching literature for cultural understanding and global citizenship in particular. This approach implicates a double shift in education perspective: from the cultivation of narrative imagination to a translational approach to literariness, and from Nussbaum's definition of cosmopolitanism as development of love for humanity across concentric circles of identification to a cosmopolitan framing of acts of literature and translation. This double shift is elucidated in the paper through a double gesture: first, the engagement with Derrida's concepts of iterability, repetition, acts of literature; second, animating the performative's break from context by interlayering its elucidation with a performative reading of Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name Is Red*. The paper calls for an educational philosophy of literature in education that addresses the self-reflexivity of the text rather than story line, form rather than content of narrative imagination, and politics of translation rather than translation of cultural others. Cultural literacy and culturally engaged readings of literature could learn from such an interlayered performative reading how to preserve translation alive in the other, and, vice versa, how to reenact adventures of translation towards challenging familiar and reified forms of cultural identity and not only orientalist images of "mullahs".

Keywords: Derrida; Pamuk; Nussbaum; Literature; Literary Imagination; Iterability; Performativity; Translation

Introduction

Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name Is Red* (*Benim Adım Kırmızı*, Instabul, İletişim, 1998) was originally translated to English and published in the US by Alfred A. Knopf and in the UK by Faber and Faber the week before September 11, 2001. The time, geopolitical milieu and media reception of its publication, inscribe *My Name Is Red's* circulation with the impossibility of translation. The parallel relay of the book's reception and the apocalyptic representation of 9/11 as an exemplary instantiation of the clash of civilizations framed the novel's exegesis with expectations for "lessons": a fictional investigation of the war of cultures; a search for the historical origin of the clash between East-West; a literary "dip" into cultural Islam. Could we read Pamuk's historical novel as something other than a diagnostic genealogy for the clash between East and West? Could a pedagogical articulation of this book aim at a more radical engagement with difference than what a "culturally responsive teaching" (Gay, 2000) would do? What is the educational literary value of reckoning with the problems of translation? Do we teach global literatures for "traversing the boundaries of individual experience to connect with the experiences of others different from ourselves" (Bell & Roberts, 2010: p. 2303), or for reclaiming educational thinking from the synchronicity of globalization (Papastephanou et al., 2012)? Could the release of the imagination (Greene, 1995; Egan, 1985) become intertwined

with acts of literature that rupture the quest for lessons in the story and release the text's polyphonia and *différance*? What would the educational value of such acts be? In an era of cultural flows and global disjunctures, with various disciplinary domains of educational studies becoming increasingly engaged in the project of teaching for global citizenship, this paper delves into acts of translation as reenacted in the unique idiom of fiction and explores the potential of translational as opposed to concentric cosmopolitanism. With regards to the teaching of world literature, the paper calls for a philosophy of literature education that addresses literary devices rather than story line(s) and aporias of translation rather than the crossing of borders. A culturally engaged reading of literature, I argue, needs to go beyond an empathetic reading that cultivates concern for distant humanity (the latter is problematically assumed to be conveyed through the "voices" of characters). It needs to sensitize and engage students in the multiple and interlaced layers of translation involved both in cultural change and artistic creativity. It needs to revise the tools and not just the content of narrative imagination.

Set in Istanbul during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Murat III, 1574-1595, and somewhat beyond into the reign of Sultan Ahmet I, *My Name Is Red* chronicles one week that proves to be the tipping point for a centuries-old Islamic artistic tradition of miniaturists and illuminators whose art form began during the Timurid Dynasty. Pamuk's novel destabilizes the synchronicity

of the global perspective and displaces the notion of tradition as a stable axis of cultural identity. Tradition, instead, is inscribed and ruptured through the narrativization of artistic and religious debates. These debates will be re-staged and re-iterated in the most dramatic form in a seven-day long narration of miniature painting's demise. The poetic retrospect into the golden age of Ottoman art, which had emerged from artistic influences drawn from Persia, China, India and, most controversially, Western Europe, is sculpted into a hybrid mix of murder mystery and love story. The story centers—let us tentatively succumb to the luring tropes of the genre of book reviews—on Black's return to Istanbul. Black is an itinerant secretary and part-time commissioner of illustrated manuscripts. He has been invited back to Istanbul by Enishte Effendi, his maternal uncle and also father of his childhood's forbidden love, to work on a controversial book of illustrations for the Sultan. This clandestine—and for some, also blasphemous—book aims to “use the science of perspective and the methods of the Venetian masters.” Even more scandalously, the book will reproduce the likeness of the Sultan himself.

Will the translation of Pamuk's novel and Black's crossing into the Anglo world yield an equally blasphemous response, one that scandalizes the traditional reception of tales from the East? Such a crossing is almost impossible and the barriers to translation are many. The least impermeable of these barriers would be the difficulty to translate to English from Modern Turkish, an agglutinative language, with S-O-V word order, divided grammatical time, modifiers and clauses in compounded suffixes (whose full meaning is not revealed until the end of the sentence and whose deferring effect is further intensified while repeated by Pamuk in long parallel structures). This difficulty is discussed in depth by Erdağ Göknaar (2004), Pamuk's translator, who analyzes the challenges to literary translation. Even more difficult than translating from modern Turkish to English is the difficulty of translating from Pamuk's “mixed style” (Göknaar, 2012: p. 52) of literary Turkish which is already “other” to pure Turkish. As Göknaar explains, one of the biggest challenges he faced in translating *Benim Adım Kırmızı* was the challenge of preserving (i.e., recreating in “English”) the aesthetic, narrative and historical effect of Pamuk's use of multiple language registers. Eventually, “Pamuk's impressionistic use of Perso-Arabic, Turkish and pure Turkish (*öz Türkçe*) language registers would be met by Latinate, Anglo-Saxon, and contemporary words and expressions—of which, to my advantage, I had many, many more to choose from” (ibid).

The impossibility of translation, however, which this paper reckons with, is of a political rather than literary nature (though political is still related to the literary as I will explain later). It refers to the use of Pamuk's novel as a mirror for the representation and solidification of Western views about the relationship between East and West and the latter's war against terror. The conditions for this mirroring would include both the reception of *Adım Kırmızı* (Alfred Knopf and Straus and Straus publishing houses' “coat of arms” overlaid by the orientalist aura of the book cover/s, reviews of the book, commentaries on covers and book pockets, etc.) but also the reception and establishment of Pamuk himself as the exemplary crosser of borders of traditions: cultural traditions, religious traditions, national traditions (including the crossing of taboo national silences). The latter kind of exemplarity would be exemplified by the global focus on Pamuk's 2005 comment on the mass killing of Armenians and Kurds (the reference to Kurds would be progressively

eliminated from citations of Pamuk's comment) and the sustained coverage by Western media of Pamuk's prosecution by the Turkish state under Turkey's criminal code on charges of denigrating Turkish national identity (EU warnings to Turkey about the slow pace of reforms towards EU membership often pointed to the Pamuk case as a “litmus test” of Turkey's commitment to EU membership criteria). Finally, the crossing of “translated Pamuk” to Western readership, authorship and authority would be countersigned with a series of honors and awards, including a series of awards specifically for *My Name Is Red* (the 2002 Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (France), the 2002 Grinzane Cavour Prize (Italy), the 2003 International Impac Dublin Literary Award (Ireland) and, of course, the 2006 Nobel Prize).

What kinds of emotions and cognitive appetites are being capitalized, what kind of cosmopolitan western subject is being interpellated and which idealizing memory of worldwide-ization is reiterated as the reader is called forth to read *Adım Kırmızı*? With the “sublime” image of the burning twin towers, orientalist mullahs and doctrines on the “the clash of civilizations” at the background, the heading of the culturally engaged reading is becoming beautified, beatificated and reified: a sub-tale of jealousy and nostalgia, “as Western culture encroaches upon the East” (Pamuk, 2002); a “cultural clash that *apparently* echoes today” (Stefan-Cole, 2001); a lesson in Islam-ology: “[t]hose readers horrified by the Taliban blowing away the gigantic ancient statues of Buddha will certainly be intrigued by this novel's exposition of various Islamic arguments regarding figurative art” (Harbor Press, 2003).

The “impossibility” of translation discussed so far must be discerned from Derrida's use of the same term. As I will analyze in more detail in the last section, Derrida uses the term “impossible translation” to refer to the impossibility of a full and accurate transference of an authentic and original meaning as a communication across cultures and languages. This impossibility questions the production of meaning as the becoming present of the original's representation but affirms, at the same time, the production and multiplication of meanings through the deferring effects of signifiers in general and of literarity in particular. This notion of impossibility is also meant by Derrida as an ethical experience of *aporia*. It acknowledges, on the one hand, the singularity of the other but engages, at the same time, in a process of translation that endangers, corrupts and depilates such singularity by iterating and inserting the other in an economy of cultural biodegradability which changes its meaning. Absolute translatability would mean annihilation of the other; absolute singularization, on the other hand, would mean the other's monumentalization and sacralization, ultimately, the other's death.

This contradictory but not self-annulling participation of translation in a double process of singularization and iteration is enacted in *Adım Kırmızı* through acts of literature (the hybrid tropes, the iteration of a story by different narrators) but also through the novel's own self-reflectivity. This self-reflective narrative on cultural change and dissent envelops and simultaneously disrupts the nostalgia for an immaculate language of manuscript painting. Culture is eventually construed as something that is already always in a relation of translation with its own tradition and roots, a translation that involves both humor and pain. Most critics of the novel note as an irony the coincidence of its publication with the terrorist attacks of September 11. “[I]t's an irony,” we read in PBS's cover note on an inter-

view with Pamuk, “because his novel deals with precisely the issues that have dominated the news since: clash of civilizations, Islam and the West” (Pamuk, 2002). “Did I hear Mullah Omar calling?” critic Stefan-Cole remarks in brackets of ironic commentary aside, as he cites *hoja Nusret’s* fanatic castigation of Islam’s corruption:

“... *our having strayed from the path of the Prophet, to disregard for the strictures of the Glorious Koran... tolerance toward Christians, to the open sale of wine and to the playing of musical instruments.*” (*Sound familiar?*) *Add coffee-drinking, opium use, and tolerance of sects like wandering dervishes—beggars with a penchant for hashish, and buggery—and you are pretty much where we are today (Did I hear Mullah Omar calling?)* (Stefan-Cole, 2001).

What is ironic, I would argue, is that a novel whose content and pragmatics of translation/publication thematize translation as a philosophical and literary problem eventually becomes framed as an illustration, an-other example, that testifies to Huntington’s (1996) master narrative on the “clash of civilizations”. If narrative imagination has a role to play today in registering cultural diversity and promoting intercultural respect and cooperation, I would argue that this task involves reclaiming works such as *Benim Adım Kırmızı* from their cultural sedimentation as depictions of the other and thematizing, instead, translation as the *tool* and *topic* of such texts’ pedagogical articulation. Questioning the limits of narrative imagination as a tool for empathetic connection with other fellow human beings (the model of narrative imagination articulated by Nussbaum and others), the next section puts the literariness of translation at the heart of the educational experience of literature. To the critic who might anticipate a resurrection of New Criticism and accuse such a reading for closing up the text against the human condition, against the passionate attunements of identification which motivate any reading, I would argue that such a post-humanist reading reserves new pleasures and passions for the reader. In its poetics of the particular, its meticulous attention to nuances of styles, its depiction of actors in shimmering contours, it can nurture other kinds of emotions, not necessarily empathetic, and not necessarily anthropocentric: sympathy for the tragic effects of cultural nostalgia, wonder for the passionate patience of artistic creativity, tenderness for the human beings caught into the treadmills of cultural change, those whose soul is torn between a nostalgic heart and a mind lingering with desire over the landscapes of the new.

“I am the murderer”: Displaced performativity.

Nay, I wouldn’t have believed I could take anyone’s life, even if I’d been told so moments before I murdered that fool; and thus, my offense at times recedes from me like a foreign galleon disappearing on the horizon. Now and again, I even feel as if I haven’t committed any crime at all. Four days have passed since I was forced to do away with hapless Elegant, who was a brother to me, and only now have I, to some extent, accepted my situation (Pamuk, 2001: p. 18).

While reading the opening paragraph of chapter four of Pamuk’s novel *My Name Is Red*, we recollect that four days must have passed since that other narrator, in the opening of the novel, spoke to us in the uncanny voice of a corpse and obliged us with a double duty—we might as well say haunted us with a double threat: To trace his decaying body into the depths of a deplorable well, and to find his murderer (and our own potential enemy). We are summoned not as witnesses to a murder but as devotees to a tradition at risk. “Find my body *without delay*,

pray for me and have me buried,” pleads the haunted and haunting corpse. Yet at the same time we know that a certain delay is necessary if time will be granted for the telling to go on, to unfold its dendrites and to uncover the identity of the murderer, a “beastly murderer” whose imminent punishment—slowly splintering his bones, “preferably his ribs”—is envisioned and graphically staged by the corpse’s narrative imagination.

Unlike the expository prose of philosophical writing, which sets to establish something and then does so, without surprises, life contains significant surprises. But literary form, more complex, more allusive, more attentive to the particular and thus more truthful to the depiction of human life than raw experience, Nussbaum suggests, also implies that our life contains significant surprises: “that our task, as agents, is to live as good characters in a good story do, caring about what happens, resourceful for new things” (Nussbaum, 1990: p. 3). What kind of value would the philosophical reading of a novel bestow to “new things” if those “new things” triggered the most vile of passions to the characters of humanity, if the narrative moral perspective of the good story was displaced by the kaleidoscopic narratives of unremorseful murderers and bileful corpses, intriguing rivals, canny women weaving camouflage to nurture clandestine loves, a coin, a dog, the ink of color red, Satan himself? Building on the main argument of *Love’s Knowledge* that literary form can *do* things which cannot be stated in the language of philosophy, I will try to stretch and test the limits of narrative imagination towards the reading of works that do not fit the prototype of Nussbaum’s English novel. Exploring what kinds of ethical encounters literature can enact toward the other, we will be addressing anew the old question “What is philosophy?”

We must discover who the murderer is. But we do not do this just in order to cajole the disquieting *aporia* of a dead body concealed, untraceable, in a well. *Aporia* is used in its double sense: it refers to the question “Who is the murderer?” but also to the dead’s lack of a passage since the status of his unburied body obstructs his soul from making its passage to heaven and gaining a panoramic view. The latter would annul not only the economy of darkness but also the device of multiple narrators and narratives used to establish the novel’s “meta-historical themes and plot” (Gökner, 2004: p. 56). We must discover who the murderer is in order to protect ourselves and “our tradition” from a conspiracy of which the unconcealed murder is only a small part. For, as the corpse has cautioned us, “My death conceals an appalling conspiracy against our religion, our traditions, and the way we see the world. Open your eyes, discover why the enemies of the life in which you believe, of the life you’re living, and of Islam, have destroyed me. Learn why one day they might do the same to you” (Pamuk, 2001: p. 6). The two commands interpellate us into a duty that is double and contradictory (but not impossible). On the one hand, a duty to find who the murderer is, to administer retributive justice and inflict punishment. This duty is invoked as a promise to the dead and enacted in reading through the narrative devices of the modern genre of mystery fiction which Pamuk iterates and grafts onto historical novel. On the other hand, an “other” duty: a duty not to disclose the identity of the murderer, to postpone adjudication and to give the murderer time so that the cultural telling (and our trip of acculturation into the society of miniaturists) can go on. Abiding with this other duty would be a necessary condition for the narrative disclosure of more perspectives to

the cultural other:

Give me the license not to dwell on every single detail, allow me to keep some clues to myself. try to discover who I am from my choice of words and colors, as attentive people like yourselves might examine footprints to catch a thief. This, in turn, brings us to the question of “style,” which is now of widespread interest: Does a miniaturist, ought a miniaturist, have his personal style? A use of color, a voice of his own? (Pamuk, 2001: p. 20).

The task of identifying the footsteps of the murderer gets even more complex as we are admonished to defer any presencing of meaning: representation is not allowed; we have to translate even our reading devices. “Open your eyes,” the corpse remarks with caution, calling on “us” to learn why one day they would do the same to “us”. In order to learn, in order to engage in an inquiry for this upcoming destruction, we have to defer as learners our phototropic desire and sustain, with our “pupils” blinded, the impossibility of translation. For the upcoming destruction, predicted in an apocalyptic manner by Nusret Hoja of Erzurum, derives its power, like the Koran, from its impossibility to be depicted. It is not accidental that in most “petite recits” depicting the culture of miniature painting the protagonist is blinded once his inquiry approximates the revelation of a deep secret. But his eyes are not the only ones to be blinded. The tip of any narrative that exceeds the narratives of other multiple speakers and threatens to become a dominant narrative, a “central root” (in the terms of Deleuze’s rhizomatics), is severed. In a similar manner, our desire to follow a central story line and identify with the protagonist’s ethical inquiry is decapitated. Which doesn’t mean that other kinds of pleasure or other kinds of ethical experience are not possible (e.g., the emphasis on the particular, the enchanting descriptions).

To position ourselves at the multiple perspectives of the various and different heroes—or better, to rotate amongst them kaleidoscopically—and to understand the particulars of the interlocking moral dilemmas that torment them, to perceive the cognitive dimensions of their emotions and to follow up their inquiries into the good life but also into truthful explication of tradition, we would have, as witnesses to the murder (and as recipients of the murderer’s summons for a resolution), to place ourselves, imaginatively, “there”: Istanbul. But how can we embrace that ideal reader perspective when the narrative acts of the novel are staged specifically for a Turkish audience which still—perhaps for ever—remembers—nostalgically or remorsefully—and re-negotiates its relation to the Ottoman history? “It could be said,” points out Göknaar (2004), “that one of the significant aspects of *MNR* is that it manipulates the discourses of Orientalism in some measure to explode the limits of nationalism” (p. 56). What Göknaar describes here has nothing to do with a dialectic or a clash. Rather, he talks about the temporalization of the present: “Pamuk, as author, uses the Ottoman past to achieve his triangulating perspective, to take a critical look at the present [...] what is ultimately revealed in the novel is not an exotic world but a lesson in how to ‘read/translate’ and understand the other, the ‘old Turk’” (p. 59). There are limits, however, to the intelligibility of narrative triangulation. The very same Ottoman Past that triangulates perspective for the ideal reader is exactly that which undermines the critical perspective of the nonideal reader in a context that facilitates an orientalist conflation of Ottoman Past with menacing Islam. Could western readers in a post 9/11 epoch perceive Pamuk’s polyphonic narrativization of the Ottoman Past as a device that

serves historical reflexivity when the ‘other’ has been synchronized with the war on terror and “Islam has been fixed as the universal Other” (Majid, 2008: p. 135)? Can the dead’s admonition for watchfulness against an appalling conspiracy against “our” tradition (and our way to see the world) sustain its citationality (and temporality) when such an admonition has already been fixed as the universal perspective of the new world order?

My pondering over a possible formalist contradiction between the ideal reader, invoked by the original novel, and the Western subject, is only temporary and tentative. The purpose of my reading is to problematize the discourse of “narrative imagination” in its particular use as the means for cultivating cultural literacy and intercultural dialogue in the context of a cosmopolitan project. The reason we cannot embrace the perspective of Elegant Effenti or that of the murderer is not because we cannot study Islam due to constraints of cultural incommensurability or because the narrative devices of the text are effective only in an ideal (i.e., Turkish language) speech situation. In “Signature Event Context” Derrida argues that the performative’s (including literary acts’) force is not conditional upon its original context. In other words, the effect of a text exceeds its context and the production of meaning and puts out of place the situation of a communication that would deliver, intact, messages. In the double writing of “Living On/Borderlines”, a text where the philosophical and the autobiographical, the expository and the intimate, suspend each other’s totalizing effect, Derrida writes:

A text lives only if it lives on, and it lives on only if it is at once translatable and untranslatable [...] Totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language. Totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately (Derrida, 1979: pp. 102-103).

The aim of my reading then is not to argue that there is a cultural incommensurability between *Benim Adım Kırmızı* and western audiences. Rather, my goal is to question and expose the limits of a theory that projects the reader’s identification with a novel’s characters as the ideal condition for an ethical inquiry that promotes cultural understanding and cosmopolitan bonding on the basis of (recognizing) common humanity. Identification is deliberately ruptured throughout this reading not because I hold that it cannot motivate a passionate reading or does not reveal truthful depictions of the other, but because it is inappropriate in iterating those acts of literature that mark postcolonial literature in general and Pamuk’s novel in particular. That is, acts of translation that iterate (and preserve) and, at the same time, pollute and change the “original”. Such processes of translation are multiple, interlocking and mutually enabling. First, the storytelling iterates narrative devices from multiple and culturally diverse genres such as mystery and love novels and mixing them with magical realism produces a multivocal, post-humanist text (not the inner voices of people but the stylized voices of dogs, ink, stylized elements from manuscripts, a horse). Second, the theme of the novel is the investigation of a culture’s translation of its own roots and tradition, particularly in conditions of fear and panic.

At the same time I question narrative imagination and, in particular, identification with characters as the basis for ethical inquiries, I want to suggest that there is something ethically important about our encounter with texts such as *Benim Adım Kırmızı*. But the ethical does not lie in the pursue of the Aristotelian inquiry of how the good life should be, or in the cultiva-

tion of empathy and appreciation for our common humanity, or in the search for commonalities among the values narrativized in culturally diverse stories (though I would not disagree with Nussbaum that such goals are both useful and “honorable”). “We in the West,” writes critic (and novelist) Philip Hensher for Daily Telegraph, “can only feel gratitude that such a novelist as Pamuk exists, to act as a bridge between our culture and that of a heritage quite as rich as our own” (book jacket on mass-market paperback, Faber and Faber, 2002). Cultural bridges or bridges of cultures are exactly the structures of thought and reading to be questioned here.

The empathetic perspectivism of narrative imagination: Unfit for fanatics?

“Do you think this is what we’ve been doing?”

“Never,” I said with a smile. “However, this is what *Elegant Effendi*, may he rest in peace, began to assume when he saw the last painting. He’d been saying that your use of the science of perspective and the methods of the Venetian masters was nothing but the temptation of Satan. In the last painting, you’ve supposedly rendered the face of a mortal using the Frankish techniques, so the observer has the impression not of a painting but of reality; to such a degree that this image has the power to entice men to bow before it, as with icons in churches. According to him, this is the Devil’s work, not only because the art of perspective removes the painting from God’s perspective and lowers it to the level of a street dog, but because your reliance on the methods of Venetians as well as your mingling of our own established traditions with that of the infidels will strip us of our purity and reduce us to being their slaves” (Pamuk, 2001: pp. 178-179).

In *Cultivating Humanity*, Nussbaum argues that three capacities, above all, are essential to the cultivation of humanity in today’s interlocking world: Socratic inquiry applied towards critical examination of oneself and one’s traditions, concern and empathy for other human beings and, finally, narrative imagination. These could be perceived as interlocking and mutually interdependent skills of cultural literacy. The latter is defined as “the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (Nussbaum, 2002: p. 299). Though this ability, Nussbaum argues, is cultivated in courses in literature and the arts though many “standard and familiar works”, there is reason to focus specifically on literary works that combat the “refusals of vision.” Focusing on groups with which “our citizens’ eyes have particular difficulty”, such works educate them to see “complex humanity” in places where they are most accustomed to deny it. That is:

works that confront students vividly with the experience of minority groups in their own society and of people in distant nations. The moral imagination can often become lazy, accustoming sympathy to the near and the familiar, but refusing it to people who look different. Enlisting students’ sympathy for distant lives is thus a way of training, so to speak, the muscles of the imagination (Nussbaum, 2002: p. 299).

Which are these “carefully chosen” literary works that, lingering between emotional identification and moral confrontation, stretch and strengthen those lazy muscles of moral imagination? Castigating the “unseeing characters” of Ellison’s *Invisible man* and Scrooge’s example of bad citizenship in Dickens’s novel *A Christmas Carol*, Nussbaum parallels Scrooge’s

first venture outside the walls of his successful business and blunted imagination to a belated liberal education. But the journey into the literary devices that host and nurture narrative imagination never ventures beyond the English novel.

Where closer encounters with non-western literary texts take place, the emphasis shifts radically from the literacy and narrative devices of the works to content. For example, blatantly didactic and exhaustively cited, Rabindranath Tagore’s novel *The Home and the World* provides a pool of figurations for cosmopolitans, nationalists and, in-between the previous two categories, mediating women with agitated feelings and divided loyalties. In Nussbaum’s essay “Citizens of the World” (a defense of liberal curriculum for cross-cultural understanding), corporative cosmopolitanism is narrativized as the adventures of cultural illiterates in Anna’s (a political science graduate’s) “passage” to China (Nussbaum, 1997: pp. 50-51). How cosmopolitan journeys replicate one-way globalism flows is not problematized in Nussbaum’s educational vision. This excludes from a cosmopolitan consideration issues of immigration, economic embargos and colonial legacies. Wouldn’t “she” (Anna, or any other American ‘graduate going cosmopolitan’, or any American business going global) have been better off if she had known the “other” (i.e., non-western culture) better? Nussbaum’s cosmopolitan proposal, in its effort to both vernacularize Socratic pedagogy and preserve the origins of the cultural tradition of liberal education, often collapses the problem of cultural translation to knowing “some rudiments about others” (p. 11), “something about Chinese gender relations”, “something about academic women’s studies in the United States, which have influenced the women’s studies movement in Chinese universities”, “something about the history of Chinese attitudes about race and sexuality” (pp. 51-52).

The paradox in this approach to cultural literacy is that Others are excluded as subjects and partners from the espoused political culture of ethical reasoning, whereas the “Jamesian angels of fine-tuned perception and bewildered human grace” (Nussbaum, 1990: p. 379) succumb to the blunt imagination of “rudiments” of culture. Why are others banished from the journey in and through literature? Is it because not all angels have the moral perceptiveness of James or the Aristotelian perspective of good life? While today’s cosmopolitans are historically located at the crossroads of cultures, their education is still teaching them the rudiments of other cultures but nothing about the *triangulation* of cultural sensitivity. Liberal philosopher Seyla Benhabib, adopting a cultural deconstructive approach to the canon, argued back in 1996: “The university of the twenty first century will have to be a home to the mestizos of the mind” (p. 17). I cannot say if the university has become a home to the mestizos or mestization of the mind but I can definitely say that lessons about the cultural other are increasingly finding niches in the university especially under the aegis of boutique multiculturalism, migration management and conflict diagnosis and prognosis. Usually diagnosed as prone to indigenization and lacking in self-reflexivity, the other meets its benign articulation only when it is codifiable into rudiments of culture and perceived as useful for flexing the cosmopolitan bending of the Western subject. The other reveals then to the reflective inquirer the conventions and tropologies of culture, enabling him/her to understand how cultural conventions might obscure ethical judgment. Cosmopolitans are depicted as interpreters of culture but never as shapechangers across cultures, never haunted by fear and existential guilt at the brim of cultural

change. Culture and its narrative voice remain ancillary supplements to cosmopolitan education: providing a pool of examples and figures for its rhetorical articulation and decorating pedagogical primers for the study of others. Still, could we read Nussbaum against Nussbaum, could we recover the insights of *Love's Knowledge* and radicalize the contribution of literature to the understanding of culture and cultural difference?

I believe the insight of *Love's Knowledge* can be rephrased: certain literary texts, more appropriately than others, can embody philosophical questions in their own stylistic choices and narrative structures and can enable a reader's emotional and mental involvement while pursuing such questions: "As readers of stories we are deeply immersed in the messy *impure* world of human particularity; and we learn, as readers, to ascribe a high importance to events that befall our particular heroes and heroines as they move through the world of contingency" (Nussbaum, 1990: p. 386; emphasis added). Where the prose becomes more expository in anticipation of a philosophical closure, ethical insight becomes solidified into a normative ethics: certain literary texts can adequately "state" certain "important truths" about the world, embodying ethical perspective in characters' narrative perspective and "setting up in the reader the activities that are appropriate for grasping them" (p. 6). This thesis sometimes becomes entangled with a didacticism that appears to reduce texts to "optical instruments" and literary reading to a philosophical supplement: "I suggest that we would do well to study the narrative and the emotional structures of novels, viewing them as forms of Aristotelian ethical thinking" (p. 390). The more the reader-text relationship is figured as a pedagogical one, the more the connection between form and content becomes solidified into a search for an internal consistency that aspires to expel any *différance*: the novel is defended as an appropriate host of inquiries because it can state them [certain truths] in its form and its content "fully and fittingly, without a contradiction" (p. 7). While both New Critical formalism and normative ethics were earlier questioned by Nussbaum for expelling contingency and establishing closed texts and closed lives, in this pedagogical figure they are reactivated towards a double Platonic pursue of certainty.

Yet, where Nussbaum's text becomes forgetful of its pedagogical responsibilities, the reader-text relationship is detached from the optics of representation and becomes more receptive to the contingency involved in reading. In this latter approach, the intimacies of reading are not materialized as romantic identifications with characters but rather as "comparisons." As we engage with works of literature, Nussbaum (1990) argues, we are "bringing to the text our hopes, fears and confusions, and allowing the text to impart a certain structure to our hearts" (p. 22). At the same time, we are bringing to the text ethical inquiries: "how to be"; "what to be"; how to live "together in a community, country, or planet." As we compare the multiple conceptions of the ethical expressed in the novels with one another and with our own active sense of a good life, we come to "recognize that the novels are in this [ethical] search already" (p. 24). Yet every text maintains a singularity, a moral perspective of the particular, which exceeds both the repeatable narrative forms and the structures of feeling that made our intimacy with the text as well as the appeal of the text to us possible. This singularity that emerges in literature's own translation (i.e., of literature as philosophy) and resists the *full* accommodation of literariness into preset ethical inquiries slips into forgetfulness as Nussbaum's work becomes more programmatically

oriented to the articulation of problems such as ethnic strife and cultural relativism. Is it accidental that the shift from the original project to broaden the possibilities of what is human (*Fragility of Goodness*) to a normative view of humanity (the ground for the adjudication of cultural conflicts in *Sex and Social Justice* and *Cultivating Humanity*) coincides with a shift from the wonder of (and wander in) the particular to the transcendent query into the canon's universal messages?

I believe there are ways to engage narrative imagination in the cultural turn and avoid, at the same time, both the allure of exoticism and the nostalgic search for a confessional voice. The premise of *Love's Knowledge* that as readers of stories we are deeply immersed "in the messy *impure* world of human particularity" could open up to different kinds of search regarding both the connection of literature and philosophy and the sustained engagement with cultural particularity in literary experience. For example, how do we become, as readers-translators, deeply immersed in the messy *impure* world of cultural particularity? What kinds of emotions and which experiences of incommensurability are implicated in the cultural mediation of texts? If the relation of literature to itself and to philosophy is a process of iteration rather than representation, then the impurity and messiness of human particularity must be re-positioned from the story and the moral dilemmas of the characters to the textual devices of the authors. The ethical questions that a *culturally engaged* reading of stories activates are slightly different from the Aristotelian kinds of questions: What are one's debts to one's tradition, especially during times of cultural change? How is authenticity re-enacted in experiences of cultural translation? What kind of agency is built into storytelling? Does creativity (of the artist, of the writer, of the reader) sustain or undermine the structure of iterability that is built into culturally established forms and genres?

We are back in the culture of miniaturists, tracing the murderer's footsteps in the distinctive nuances of his storytelling, in his depiction of a horse in the manner of the Islamic tradition. If he has reached, as a master miniaturist, the point where he paints *as if* he were blind, depicting things in the way Allah perceives him, how can we possibly recognize distinct traces of inventiveness, a signature of artistry and murder? "This, in turn," he concedes, "brings us to the question of 'style,' which is now of widespread interest: Does a miniaturist, ought a miniaturist, have his personal style? A use of color, a voice of his own?" (Pamuk, 2001: p. 20). The three miniaturists who have been working on the blasphemous book in the manner of the Venetian artists are all considered to be suspects for the murders of two other artists who were also working on the blasphemous book. The test of "artist's proof" to which master Osman subjects all three of them, is the task to paint a horse in the manner of the great masters. Only the one who has succumbed to the lure of Western techniques will depart from the Islamic form and will leave traces of this peculiar cultural poisoning in the immaculate form of the horse (in the same way he left traces on the shred of his artwork that is held by the gatekeepers of traditional miniature painting and used as a reference point for deciphering the code of his style). "But who am I?" he reflects as he has just taken the test and engages in a monologue that relocates existential anxiety from the depths of the self to the surfaces of artistic creativity, where singularity borders with cultural transmutation. "Am I an artist who would suppress the masterpieces I was capable of in order to fit the style of the workshop or an artist who would one day triumphantly depict

the horse deep within himself?" Suddenly and with terror, he feels the existence of that triumphant miniaturist within him: "It was as if I were being watched by another soul, and, in short, I was ashamed" (p. 339).

In the chapter that follows, the storyteller will reiterate the condemnation of artistic ingenuity. This time, however, he will be speaking through the mouth of Satan himself: "I had the urge to say, 'It was Satan who first 'I'! It was Satan who adopted a style. It was Satan who separated East from West'" (p. 349). Despite the fact that many critics cite this passage as the overall "thesis" of the novel, the condemnation needs to be read in the context of the narrative devices that frame it. "[B]ecause I'm the one speaking, you're always prepared to believe the exact opposite of what I say." Where narrative imagination, devoted to the search for the good and unable to sustain its interest when storyline is subverted by double voices, would simply dismiss Satan as an unreliable narrator, a culturally engaged reading would thrill on such an instance of double writing. The latter forces us to go back, to re-read the story one more time, to re-evaluate the statements taken too literally, or too seriously, in the first reading. A difference kind of cultural reflexivity is implicated in this never ending call to translate and multiply meanings and contexts. What kinds of philosophical tools are required for this double reading? To understand the art of repetition, one needs to go beyond a transcendent reading, beyond distinguishing truth from lies, good from evil; one needs to ask what acts of literature the Satan stages rather than what statements he actually utters.

Literariness in Acts of Translation: Iteration and Singularization

I, SATAN.

I am fond of the smell of red peppers frying in olive oil, rain falling into a calm sea at dawn, the unexpected appearance of a woman at an open window, silences, thought and patience. I believe in my self, and, most of the time, pay no mind to what's been said about me [...] I was created from fire, a superior element as all of you are familiar. So I didn't bow before man. And God found my behavior, well, "proud" (pp. 349-350).

In an interview with Derek Attridge entitled "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Jacques Derrida (1992) claims that the institution of literature in the West is linked to an "authorization to say everything." Doubtless too, it is also linked to what calls forth a democracy. This duty of irresponsibility, of refusing to reply for one's thought or writing to constituted powers, does not mean that literature suspends contexts and disregards its readers. On the contrary, it depends on historical contexts, while the force of its singularity to produce events is suspended awaiting for the reader's countersignature. This act of literature, this *promising* of being able to say everything, is not realized as a juridico-political institution (though it relies on such institutions) or a formal device but rather as an oscillation, a vibration between two other literary acts of translation: iteration and singularization: "The uniqueness of the event is this coming about of a singular relation between the unique and its repetition, its iterability" (Derrida, 1998: p. 68). What these acts entail, what conditions they require but also what they necessitate, how they are fictionalized, repeated and singularized, in a historical novel that addresses specifically the thematic of cultural change is what I will explore next.

"Iterability" is the necessary repeatability of any item ex-

perienced as meaningful. At the same time, it can never be repeated exactly since its grafting and translation in the potentially multiple contexts where it is re-enacted contaminates the "original". Its original singularity is compromised by this openness to change and loss. At the same time, it is only through such structure of iterability that literature can speak to us:

An absolute, absolutely pure singularity, if there were one, would not even show up, or at least would not be available for reading. To become readable, it has to be divided, to participate and belong. Then it is divided and takes its part in the genre, the type, the context, meaning, the conceptual generality of the meaning, etc. It loses itself to offer itself (p. 68).

Derrida often cites the function of the proper name as the exemplary example of this mutually constitutive co-occurrence of the singular and the universal. A proper name is supposed to refer to an original and not to mean (which would implicate its contamination). Yet, this "properness," as Attridge (1998) notes, depends on its occurrence within a system of differences, it has to be repeatable and "can never be prevented from sliding into the functions of common nouns" (p. 19).

It is exactly this "properness" of East as a set of culturally solidified idioms that Pamuk's novel opens up to literary iteration as he fictionalizes the history of manuscript painting. In Heart and Shiraz, when an old master miniaturist would become blind from a lifetime of excessive labor, it would be acknowledged as a sign of the master's determination but also commended a God's acknowledgment of his talent. In fact, among great master miniaturists there would not be difference between the blind and the sighted artist as the talented hand would always draw the same horse, that is, the way Allah perceives it. The quest for singularity in developing a style, the act of signature in affirming one's unique way of seeing things, would be reserved for the Satan and the Frankish innovation of perspectival painting. But an idiom is never pure, Derrida argues, as "its iterability opens it up to others" (Derrida, 1998: p. 62). It is not the Frankish style that contaminates Allah's way of seeing and the culture of manuscript painting. This culture is already contaminated within its own tradition in the sense that its preservation necessitates its iteration. Unavoidably, however, it also necessitates its singularization when iteration is enacted in encounters of inter-cultural artistic exchange and hybridization, usually in the context of conquest. The idiom of the "blind" (or, the blinded) artists already undergoes a unique differentiation (and thus a singularization) in becoming a style when it is adopted by Abu Said, Tamerlane's grandson from the Miran Shah line of descent. After he conquers Tashkent and Samarkand, he will introduce a "further twist" in his workshop: "the practice of paying greater homage to the imitation of blindness than to blindness itself" (Pamuk, 2001: p. 348). Locked in the storage rooms of the Treasury of Topkapi Palace, trying to trace similarities between the murderer's style and the great Masters' works (diagnosing and territorializing the impact of the polluting influence), master Osman will be surprisingly enchanted by a multitude of stylistically nuanced singularities in Islamic, Persian and Arabic miniature art. His self-inflicted blinding in the end of his journey in the depths of Topkapi could be read as a desperate effort to erase from sight such multitudes, to resist the lure of translation, to preserve the sacralization of the painting idiom and to contain the iterability of the sacred idiom by canceling his own countersignature. But, it could also be read as theatrical staging of Modern Turkey's

denial of its cultural past: a denial that has the effect of encasing the idea of the past in the cultural nostalgia for the non-translatable. This denial, however, is also staged, thus dissimulating itself, challenging its seriousness, and affirming modernization as a threshold of cultural change and not as the death of Islam.

At a time when Islam's encounter with the West is diagnosed with fearfulness of cultural contamination and linked to the Fundamentalists' turn to indigenization, Pamuk fictionalizes a historical encounter between East and West which sabotages with humor and critical reflexivity the dissimulation of any artistic or cultural "properness". Every time the event of an untranslatable text occurs, writes Derrida, "every time there is a proper name, it gets sacralized" (Derrida, 1988: p. 148). Analyzing the sacred as "the untranslatable in literature", Benjamin argues that the translation of a literary text into another language should be able to preserve exactly this original non-translatability. Reading *Red* as a literary "dip" into cultural Islam (the dominant reading), we would probably locate this original non-translatability in the miniaturist idiom of Heart and Shiraz, in the Koran, in God's vision of the world imprinted in the books of the old masters and safeguarded in the Treasury chambers, enveloped in blackness, dust and humidity, in Shekure's clandestine letter forbidding her returning lover to ever visit her again, chained by the conventions of Islamic family law to eternal awaiting for the return of her missing [probably dead] husband.

And yet, there is another way to read the non-translatable, a way that comes to life when we overcome the ethnographic urge to read *Red* as a cultural narrative on/of the other, or as a cultural war between East and West, when we give ourselves over to the multiple duels of singularities that undergo the novel: on the one hand, an urge to identify with the suffering of old masters anticipating the decline of a civilization and their nostalgia for the past; on the other hand, an urge to laugh along with the Satan as he dissimulates the preachings of "learned mystics" against western influence, deception and departure from the non-translatable prescriptions of the Glorious Koran:

Even the Almighty couldn't find anything evil in passing wind or jacking off. Sure, I work very hard so you might commit great sins. But some hojas claim that all of you who gape, sneeze or even fart are my dupes, which tells me they haven't understood me in the least (Pamuk, 2001: p. 351).

Those who would read the novel looking for Mullah Omar calling would definitely find many echoes of his castigations. What they would probably miss, however, is the waves of iterability to which a literary text subjects the words of mullahs and preachers, inserting their words in citation marks, presenting to us the cultural other staging its own translation, sometimes with laughter and sometimes with the nostalgic sadness of loss.

What remains non-translatable (thus what is preserved) in a good translation, and also in the pedagogical mediation of a culturally engaged reading, I would say, is this literary staging of translations. "You did embarrass me once before, and afterward, I had to endure much suffering to regain my honor in my father's eyes," writes sweet Shekure to Black, bidding him to please her by not calling on her again. But a letter doesn't communicate by words alone, we are reminded by Esther, the deliverer of the letter, also a matchmaker and cloth seller who, as a Jewess, is free to roam the streets of Istanbul as long as she wears the identifying pink garment. "A letter, just like a book,

can be read by smelling it, touching it and fondling it" (Pamuk, 2001: p. 44). Fondling the letter, Esther teaches us how to translate its folds. "Alas, I am rushed, I am writing carelessly and without serious attention," conveys fear and urgency perhaps to terminate the romance. But the letters that twitter elegantly as if caught in a gentle breeze convey the care taken in each line, in the same way the phrase "just now come," conveys the deliberation of a tactics. We might read her like an Eastern Penelope weaving ploys to defer the suitors, or like a slave in a harem, one of the many slaves locked in the neo-orientalist harems of "pink literature". An iteration of such contexts is unavoidable, necessary too to the extent the gesture of a love letter would not be readable without the background reading of love novels. Yet it is also imperative to discern the differential mark of this gesture while receiving, recognizing and assimilating it in the context of our familiar literary stories and devices. In the folds of her unsealed letter, she sends her lover an illustration of a classical love scene, a classical theme in traditional manuscript painting and often used as both referent and signifier in the love letters of Istanbul's lovelorn ladies. This scene, however, has never been "cut out" and used as an object of exchange before. Pamuk delivers to us the history of Islamic manuscript painting through citations of love letters and love scenes, borrowing the devices of the postmodern and postcolonial novel to empty hojas' and mullahs' condemnations [of illustrators] of their apocalyptic tone. The differential mark that this repetition [and translation] of the history of manuscript painting in a historical novel incites, while challenging the western apocalyptic logos of the cultural clash, is that there is culture in change rather than civilization in decline. It is this singularity of Pamuk's writing that I have tried to translate here, recognizing the limits of preserving and reproducing but also resisting the novel's pedagogical translation into and through a metalanguage. Cultural literacy could learn from such readings how to preserve translation alive in the other, but also how to reenact it by challenging the familiar and not only the oriental mullahs. Perhaps the countersignature to *Benim Adım Kırmızı/My Name Is Red* is, yet to come, a literary translation of the post-September patriotism. Or, is "our" mourning too sacred to translate?

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