

OUT OF PLACE IN ISTANBUL

By Hande Gurses

Introduction

Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories of a City* is a narrative that is defined by the impossibility to define it within fixed terms. Thematically and structurally, it stands on slippery grounds that are constantly moving, hence obliterating any definition that would confine it within predetermined boundaries. *Istanbul: Memories of a City* portrays the first twenty-two years of Pamuk's life using various approaches that range from autobiographical details from his own childhood memories, to photographs from the family album, newspaper articles, paintings as well as writing on Istanbul by various artists. The multiplicity of sources that Pamuk incorporates into the narrative echoes his experience of the city, while also offering the reader a non-linear journey with various diverging points along the streets of Istanbul. Pamuk reinvents himself in *Istanbul: Memories of the City* as Orhan, the narrator who recounts his experience of the city in terms of autobiographical anecdotes, journalistic comments, personal impressions as well as dreams. Alongside the different Orhans that appear throughout the narrative, *Istanbul: Memories of the City* also portrays the construction of Orhan as a writer. In many respects *Istanbul: Memories of a City* mirrors Pamuk's experience of the city in the sense that it brings together various components without trying to reach a harmonious, unified whole. The thirty-seven chapters that compose the narrative appear to be placed randomly without following a thematic order. The lack of a linear development, the shift of tone in different chapters, and the coexistence of image and text are among the strategies that Pamuk uses in order to underline his experience of the city as fragmented and fluid. The narrative thus invites the reader to experience the city the way Orhan did, getting lost along the streets without necessarily following a predetermined itinerary. Instead, *Istanbul: Memories of a City* invites the reader to create his/her own journey, exploring the different spatial, literary and temporal dimensions of Orhan's Istanbul. In this paper I will present Pamuk's construction of his experience of the city as a state of being 'in-between', both culturally and geographically. While following Orhan the narrator in his search for the other Orhan in Istanbul, I will discuss the reverberations of this state in the creation of Pamuk's Istanbul.

City and Self

It can be said that the exploration of the East-West paradox as a result of the Turkish modernization process constitutes the heart of Pamuk's writings. Instead of trying to obtain a homogenous final answer, Pamuk explores the aporetic space that opens up in the in-between. In all of his writings Pamuk portrays different aspects of the state of being in-between, exploring the margins rather than standing at the centre, within fixed and predetermined boundaries. *Istanbul: Memories of a City* illustrates the geographical, literary, temporal and autobiographical dimensions of this experience while using the city as a non-linear text. While walking the streets of the city Orhan learns how to both read and re-write Istanbul through the texts and images that it offers. Pamuk portrays the various duplicities that dominate the city and his life with, respectively, Istanbul and Orhan. Throughout the narrative Orhan is seen walking the streets of the city, like a postmodern *flâneur*, discovering the poor neglected back streets of the old city, where ruins replace the memories of the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire. The gloomy atmosphere of the back streets contradict the newly Westernized, modern and rich Nisantasi neighbourhood where Orhan was born and spent all his life. Throughout the narrative, by using autobiographical, literary and cultural episodes, Orhan explains the condition of not feeling at home in either part of the city, as he was always looking for another Orhan. The feeling of being in-between is rendered visually through the black-and-white images, and textually through the word *büzün*, the Turkish word for melancholy. The images of Istanbul in the narrative are not postcard images but depict the back streets, scenes from the

everyday life dominated by the gloomy, shadowy tones of grey. The photographs do not show the Istanbul of tourist guides but the Istanbul that is blanketed by shadows from the past. The smoke coming from the ships on the Bosphorus, the fog in the early hours of the day, and the shadows that take over the streets late at night dominate the photographs of Istanbul in the narrative. The visual effect that the smoke, shadows and tones of grey have mirrors the state of being in-between. Pamuk uses photographs that show the city dominated by shadows and tones of grey, caught in between the black and the white as a parallel to the various conflicts that dominate his life personally, culturally and geographically. The photographs do not reflect a bright, sharp distinction between the black and the white, underlining, instead, the tones of grey that emerge in the in-between. They become the visual expression of the aporetic space that Pamuk explores in *Istanbul: Memories of a City* while depicting the blurring of the line that separates the East from the West, the modern from the traditional, and the communal from the personal. The atmosphere created by the visual elements is given another dimension with the concept of *büzün*. According to Orhan, *büzün* is mainly created with the feeling of loss that dominates the city, but has now become an inseparable part of it allowing the inhabitants see themselves reflected in it. The Turkish notion of *büzün* has an added communal dimension to the concept of melancholy. It is not merely the expression of the individual feeling of loss, but echoes a shared emotion that allows people to see themselves reflected in it. The narrator compares the effect of *büzün* to the steam on the window:

Offering no clarity; veiling reality instead, *büzün* brings us comfort, softening the view like the condensation on a window when a tea kettle has been spouting steam on a winter's day. Steamed-up windows make me feel *büzün*, and I still love getting up and walking over to those windows to trace words on them with my finger. As I trace out words and figures on the steamy window, the *büzün* inside me dissipates, and I can relax after I have done all my writing and drawing, I can erase it all with the back of my hand and look outside. But the view itself can bring its own *büzün*. (Pamuk 2005, 79)

The *büzün* that Orhan feels inside becomes the steam on the window. Once he erases it, the city's *büzün* becomes visible in its communal realm. The productivity that *büzün* enables, inviting Orhan to write on the steamed-up window, constitutes the foundation of the narrative. The narrative itself emerges as the product of *büzün*; it illustrates how Orhan perceived his city in all its blurriness, lingering in the in-between. In many ways the effect of *büzün* is similar to the effect of the black-and-white photographs in the sense that they are both veiling, obliterating a clear view. They both function like a protective shield between the city and the individual, opening a space where the coexistence of the opposing forces becomes possible. Both the black-and-white photographs and *büzün* are products of the conflicts between opposing forces that dominate the city and its people. These two key elements also challenge the opposition between the textual and the visual in the sense that *büzün* throughout the narrative becomes visible in the photographs, while the images of Istanbul become legible with the word *büzün*. In other words, Pamuk brings out the textual in the visual and vice versa, echoing the opposition between the East and the West.

Istanbul: Memories of a City portrays the narrator's experience of the city as fragmented in its structure and content. It is not a linear and homogenous depiction, but one that is marked by the different conflicts experienced by the narrator. Throughout the narrative Orhan is portrayed in his struggle of reconciling the various, differing aspects of his city, as well as the different desires he has regarding his life. While aiming to reach a unified and homogenous understanding of the city and of his self, Orhan comes to realize that the feeling of confusion, the blurry view of his life and his city through

hiçjin and not being able to feel at home, are the things that define his relationship with the city. Put simply, the narrative illustrates the futility of the attempt to read the city as a meaningful unity, and demonstrates how the city eludes definition, allowing Orhan to get lost. It is only by getting lost that Orhan can become an observer, re-writing the city as he wishes.

Another Orhan

Orhan is like Istanbul, defined by the presence of various conflicting forces. Throughout the narrative he is constantly reinvented and redefined in parallel with the city. The shift in tone in the different sections of the narrative is one of the many indications of the presence of different Orhans. This multiplicity is made explicit in the first chapter of the narrative, entitled 'Another Orhan'. The first sentence of the book shows the presence of a stranger who does not belong to the city; that stranger is the other Orhan.

From a very young age, I suspected there was *more to my world than I could see: somewhere in the streets of Istanbul*, in a house resembling ours, there lived another Orhan so much like me that he could pass for my twin, even my double. (Pamuk 2005, 3, my emphasis)

The narrative begins by highlighting the presence of another Orhan in order to illustrate the fact that the journey ahead will be the journey in search of that other Orhan. The presence of another Orhan evoked early on in the narrative draws attention to the fact that, just like the city with its multiple facets, there will be other Orhans with different voices, which will appear throughout the narrative. *Istanbul: Memories of a City* is in many ways the celebration of those different Orhans. By drawing attention to the presence of another Orhan as his twin, Pamuk echoes a recurring theme of his writings, that of the presence of twins and doubles who take each other's place. Pamuk uses this key motif in order to challenge different concepts that are defined within binary oppositions while questioning the definition of the 'I' as a pure and singular notion. In *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, the presence of another Orhan affirms the impossibility of a fixed and defined 'I', marking the experience of Istanbul for Orhan, who can never feel like he belongs to the city.

The narrator then moves on to explain that this imaginary other Orhan enables him to travel wherever he wishes without moving from his own house. As a person who has never left his own city, the possibilities offered by the other Orhan constitute the experience of the city from the perspective of a stranger. The narrator states that the other Orhan and his connection to the city are the very sources that have made him who he is because it is the foreign gaze of the other Orhan that enables him to appreciate his city without trying to reduce it into a homogenous unity. The narrator states that, unlike other writers who have used the lack of stable roots as the source of their writing, he has thrived on the fact that he had always lived in the city where he was born.

Their imaginations were fed by the exile, a nourishment drawn not through roots but through rootlessness; *mine, however, requires that I stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view. Istanbul's fate is my fate: I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am.... This book is about fate...* (Pamuk 2005, 5, my emphasis)

It is this rootedness that defines his relationship with the city as, despite staying in the same place all

his life, he still does not feel like he belongs. By remaining in the same city, Orhan learns to create his other Orhan, providing himself with a fresh perspective to his life and his city. Due to the various contradictions that rule his relationship with the city, Orhan is always feeling like a stranger in Istanbul, where he has spent all his life; it is the presence of another Orhan that enables him to see the city from the perspective of a stranger. It is in Istanbul that the narrator discovers various other Orhans, as well as various other Istanbuls. The city's reluctance to be read exhaustively forces Orhan to look for alternative ways to experience it. Throughout the narrative Orhan is seen taking walks to the different parts of the city and these walks reflect his own way of writing the city, discovering the other Orhans that provide him with a fresh perspective. Those various Orhans become visible on the streets of Istanbul without ever becoming a unified whole.

The Istanbul of others

The views of other artists have also played a crucial role in the creation of Orhan's Istanbul, providing him with an Istanbul he has never seen. They have functioned as the foreign gaze for him. Throughout the narrative, he refers to various Turkish and foreign authors who have lived, visited and written about his city. There are four Turkish authors, Yahya Kemal (1884-1958), Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar (1901-1962), Abdülhak Sinasi Hisar (1887-1963) and Resat Ekrem Kocu (1905- 1975), who have played a significant role in the creation of Orhan's Istanbul. Although they had different styles and wrote in different genres, these writers had in common a love for the city. All four were influenced by the French tradition and attempted to express their feelings for Istanbul using Western forms. The writings of these four writers have provided Orhan with the perspective of an Istanbul that he did not experience. These writers, who have witnessed the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Turkish Republic, aimed to reinvent the identity of their city. Finding the postcard images of the city that consisted of the silhouette of the city with the Bosphorus and the historical buildings on the background too cosmopolitan, they wanted to change it. Their aim was to create a national image for Istanbul to which the people of the Turkish Republic could relate. In their attempt to create a national image for their city, these writers ventured into the poor back streets of Istanbul. The ruins, poverty and neglect dominating those parts of the city functioned like witnesses of the hardships that the city and its people had undergone. The ruins of the Ottoman Empire were consoling memories, reminding them and the people of the glorious days of yore. It is by using the imagery of the ruins and impoverishment that they produced a new, relatable image of Istanbul. While aiming to create a new national imagery in the fashion of their Western counterparts, these writers ignored the fact that French travellers had explored and wrote about those parts of the city prior to them.

Antoine-Ignace Melling (1763-1831), Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) and Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) number among foreign artists who have visited and wrote about Istanbul. Their accounts play a very significant role in the creation of the narrator's Istanbul, partly because they offer him a new vision of the city, and partly because theirs are the only available accounts dating from the period. Gérard de Nerval in his *Voyage en Orient* (1851) portrays the city during the month of Ramadan. According to Nerval, who had come to the city two years after he had suffered from a severe depression, Istanbul was a beautiful city if one managed to avoid the poor neighbourhoods. Nerval claimed that 'Istanbul, which has some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, is like a theatre and best seen from the auditorium, avoiding the poverty-stricken and sometimes filthy neighbourhoods in the wings' (Pamuk 2005, 201). For him, the city's wings were places that needed to be avoided, while for Théophile Gautier they were as valuable as the touristic sights. Gautier, who also visited the city during the month of Ramadan, used a visual vocabulary to depict the melancholy of the city, as witnessed in the poor neighbourhoods. Gautier, unlike Nerval, moved away from the cosmopolitan postcard images of the city, capturing something different in those neglected parts of Istanbul. He did not think that the 'wings' of the city needed to be avoided; instead, he managed to capture what the other travellers could not see by venturing into those neighbourhoods. As Orhan

states, it is through Gautier's writings that one discovers the significance of the old, poor back streets of Istanbul. He draws attention to the fact that Gautier's writings not only presented an overview of the 'wings' of the city but also expressed the feeling of *hüzün*. In other words, even this feeling that is presented as the genuine 'feeling' of the city has its origins in the writings of the Western travellers.

In the last one hundred and fifty years (1850 - 2000) I have no doubt that not only was *hüzün* ruled over Istanbul, but it has spread to its surrounding areas. What I have been trying to explain is that the roots of our *hüzün* are European: the concept was first explored, expressed, and poeticised in French (by Gautier, under the influence of his friend Nerval). (Pamuk 2005, 210)

Turkish writers like Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar have been following in the footsteps of Gautier in their aim to discover a national image for their city. To this end, they have ventured into the poor districts of Istanbul and praised those ruined structures by underlining the years of suffering they must have endured. However, as the narrator very rightly notes, even the concept of *hüzün* that is presented as being singular to Istanbul and its inhabitants has its origins in the writings of French authors. By indicating the origin of *hüzün*, the narrator underlines the necessity of a foreign gaze, the lack of which constitutes the main reason for the failure of the Turkish authors. The Turkish authors were deprived of the fresh perspective of the foreign gaze because of the memories they had in relation with their city. To them, the ruins and the poverty in those neighbourhoods were perceived through the blurring effect of their memories. For the Western traveller, who views the city afresh, the deprivation in the back streets is an aesthetic source waiting to be discovered. According to the narrator, one needs to be a foreigner in Istanbul in order to be able to see the beauty of the ruined structures and the poetry of *hüzün*.

For natives of a city, the connection is always mediated by memories. What I am describing may not, in the end, be special to Istanbul, and perhaps, with the Westernisation of the entire world, it is inevitable. *Perhaps this is why I sometimes read Westerners' accounts not at arm's length, as someone else's exotic dreams, but drawn close by as if they were my own memories.* (Pamuk 2005, 216, my emphasis)

Living in the same city for a long time causes one's perception of it to be influenced by one's memories, obliterating a clear perspective. A stranger can look at the city with a fresh gaze, assessing its beauty in a way that would be impossible to its inhabitants. Only the foreign gaze is capable of detecting beauty in what the insider sees his pains and sorrows. According to the narrator, this also constitutes one of the main reasons for the failure of the previous generation of writers. They could not disassociate the ruined neighbourhoods from the memories of the defeats that they had undergone in their search for a national image for their city. Despite having lived in the same city all his life, Orhan still maintains the gaze of a stranger; this is made possible by the writing of Western travellers. It is through their writing that he can look at his city through a stranger's eyes, without the veiling effect of his memories. It is through this Western writing that he can look at his city like a foreigner, keeping his relation with it alive. Gautier in his writings on Istanbul could capture the beauty of the poor streets of Istanbul because he did not have any memories that would obliterate his perspective. Because he was a stranger, he could find the poetic even in the most unpleasant aspects of the city. As a stranger, he could observe the ruins from a distance without being clouded by memories. Orhan, who takes a walk onto those neighbourhoods years after Gautier's visit, can still appreciate the beauty of the ruins because 'To savour Istanbul's back streets, to appreciate the vines

and trees that endow its ruins with accidental grace, you must, first and foremost, be a “stranger” to them’ (Pamuk 2005, 231). It is only when looking through the stranger’s spectacles that he can see the beauty of the ruins, free from the interference of his memories.

The views of different artists on Istanbul play a significant role in the creation of Orhan’s city. The Turkish and French authors exemplify different objectives and traditions, and Orhan creates his own city by bringing together these different perspectives. Pamuk’s writing is under the influence of various binary oppositions, as is the city of Istanbul. Instead of trying to choose one over the other or aiming to combine them into a harmonious whole, Pamuk prefers to present them as they are, as the different traditions that have made him and his city what they are. By bringing together his perspective as an inhabitant of the city alongside the foreign gaze of a stranger, Pamuk blurs the boundaries that separate them. In light of the various oppositions that dominate the city, the aporetic space that is created becomes the space of creativity, allowing for an unprecedented perspective. Meanwhile, in line with the black-and-white photographs, and the feeling of *büzün*, the state of being in-between constitutes Orhan’s experience of Istanbul. The emergence of grey space in between becomes a trigger for the dissemination of meaning. According to the narrator, those grey areas with their blurring effect on the view need to be appreciated as part of the city, and as part of its culture.

For people like me, Istanbul with one foot in this culture and one in the other, the ‘Western traveller’ is often not a real person – he can be my own creation, my fantasy, even my own reflection. But being unable to depend on tradition alone as my text, I am grateful to the outsider who can offer me a complementary version – whether a piece of writing, a painting, a film. *So whenever I sense the absence of Western eyes, I become my own Westerner.* (Pamuk 2005, 260, my emphasis)

The narrator experiences those parts of his city like a foreigner, getting lost in the labyrinth-like streets. He can thus become his own Westerner in the old neighbourhoods, where he can get lost, and feel like a stranger in the city where he has lived all his life.

A stranger in the city

As an inhabitant of the wealthy Nisantasi neighbourhood, Orhan is a stranger to the old districts of the city that are dominated by ruins and neglect. Nisantasi, home to the emerging bourgeoisie during the early stages of the Turkish Republic, is a relatively new residential area. Its modern shops, cafés and high-ceilinged apartments reflect the modernisation period while also standing in conflict with the impoverished structures of the old city. Being a relatively new district, it does not boast much history from the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Orhan can be considered a stranger to the poor, ruined districts of the city, as the Istanbul he had experienced all his life is different from the one he is experiencing when he is taking walks in the older parts of Istanbul.

He does explain, however, how he never felt at home even in Nisantasi. He describes how he started to feel like a stranger among his friends and family during his high school years. He describes that he felt like he did not belong to those circles, feeling out of place all the time. He feels like a stranger among his classmates at the Robert Academy. As he explains in detail in the 33rd chapter, entitled ‘A Foreigner in a Foreign School’, he feels alone most of the time, not really being himself among his friends, who only think about girls and the new cars that they will buy. Orhan cannot really be himself among them, despite coming from a similar social and cultural background. He starts finding that kind of life hypocritical and superficial, and begins to look for something different. For him, the

state of being out of place in Istanbul cannot be explained only with the different neighbourhoods of the city as he believes that he 'never wholly belonged to this city, and maybe that's been the problem all along' (Pamuk 2005, 288). In both Nisantasi, where he has lived all his life and in the older parts of the city Orhan feels like a stranger, not being able to feel at home.

Despite having spent all his life among the same people and in the same neighbourhoods, Orhan cannot associate with them, and is thus always searching for something different. The narrator observes that it is the failure of the people who constitute his social circle to understand his confusions or desires that has motivated his journeys on the streets of Istanbul, where he hopes to find company for his sorrow and loneliness. The modern, conventional and predetermined lives of the Nisantasi people are not appealing for Orhan; being submerged into confusion and sorrow, he feels alone among the group of people that belong to Nisantasi. He wishes to find company for his *hüzün* and begins his search on the streets of the city.

This world of 'ours' in which everyone knew everyone, his good points and his limits, and all shared in a common identity, respecting humility, tradition, our elders, our forefathers, our history, our legends – *was not a world in which I could 'be myself'*. Wherever I was the performer and not the spectator, *I could not feel at home*. At a birthday party, for example, I would, after a while – I even went around the room smiling benevolently asking 'how's it going?' and patting people's backs – *I would begin to observe myself from the outside, as if in a dream*, and I would recoil at the sight of this pretentious idiot. (Pamuk 2005, 290, my emphasis)

He feels the need to act according to the roles that have been predetermined for him in order to conform to the rules of that community. By depicting his discomfort during those times, the narrator illustrates the condition of feeling foreign in even the most familiar circumstances. He does not need to go to the older parts of the city, as he already feels out of place in the places where he has lived all his life. In that world where he is accorded a predetermined role, Orhan does not feel comfortable, and wishes to be a spectator. That is why he imagines seeing himself from the outside, rather than being in the moment or acting out the roles that have been arranged for him. In order to feel at home, he needs to detach himself from the proximity of the personal experience and become a distant observer. Triggered by the frustration of these situations where he cannot belong, Orhan starts his journeys into the streets of Istanbul, to get lost, to forget the Orhan of Nisantasi and to find the other Orhan, who can be a mere spectator. In the poor, neglected neighbourhoods of the city he does not need to perform the role of Orhan; instead, he can be the other Orhan, who is there simply to observe. The back streets of the city provide Orhan the opportunity of being an anonymous spectator, allowing him to be a stranger. It is this feeling of anonymity, and the feeling of being a spectator and not a performer, that makes Orhan feel at home even in the most unfamiliar places. The back streets of Istanbul free Orhan from the requisites of his life in Nisantasi, thus allowing him to be whoever he wishes, even if that involves being a foreigner both to himself and to his city. His personal experience of *hüzün* becomes the communal experience on the streets of Istanbul.

The conflict between Orhan, the distant observer and the Orhan who personally experiences the city with his memories is mirrored in the city, which is stuck between the East and the West without ever being able to choose one over the other. Just like the city and the people of Istanbul, he, too, cannot decide whether he is part of the Westernised circle that his family, school and friends belong to, or the other side of the city, that which still resonates with remnants of the Empire, and which allows

him to be a stranger.

Between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, part of me longed, like a radical Westerniser, for the city to become entirely Western. I held the same hope for myself; but another part of me yearned to belong to the Istanbul I had grown to love by instinct, by habit and by memory. When I was a child, I was able to keep these two wishes apart (a child has no qualms about dreaming in the same moment of becoming a vagabond and a great scientist) but as time wore on, this ability faded and, with it, the melancholy to which the city bows its head – and at the same time claims with pride – began to seep into my soul. (Pamuk 2005, 291)

The confusion that dominates both the city and the narrator is also the source of the feeling of *büzün*. Orhan recounts a childhood longing to belong to both sides of the city, but realizes that it is this desire that gave birth to the feeling of *büzün*. His personal experience of the city is conflicted by his roles as performer and observer. The blurry, shadowy space that emerges at the in-between allows Orhan to re-write his city. As the narrative illustrates, there is no need to conform to one role over the other, because it is through the confusion that he can create his unique perspective. Free from the responsibility of overcoming the *büzün*, Pamuk celebrates the inability to decide. The blurry space allows him to be both reader and writer of the city at the same time.

One of Orhan's journeys combines his personal experience with the distant, foreign gaze that he adopts. He recounts this in the penultimate chapter, entitled 'The Ship on the Golden Horn'. In it, Orhan boards on a boat on the Golden Horn, watching the city from the windows of the boat. He feels like he belongs there, despite not having anything in common with the people on board. By looking at the shores of the Golden Horn and at the poor and neglected houses on the hills, Orhan realises that he is not alone in his *büzün*. The narrator recognises that his own deceptions and failures are nothing compared to the destruction that the city has undergone. Thus, he finds consolation in watching the ruined structures of Istanbul; he sees that the city's melancholic views mirror his internal feelings, keeping him company, making him feel part of the city. He can see his personal experience of loss and his memories reflected in the scenes of Istanbul, yet he can look at them from a distance. On that boat, among all those people, Orhan can still remain an anonymous spectator, hence bringing together the two Orhans. Unlike in Nisantasi, he can finally be himself as nobody there knows him and expects him to fulfill the role of Orhan. The ride on the boat allows Orhan to view his personal experience as if from a distance, combining his memories with the foreign gaze of Orhan the writer. He thus learns to celebrate the coexistence of the two different perspectives without trying to combine them into a harmonious whole.

Here among the old stones and the old wooden houses, history made peace with its ruins; ruins nourished life, and gave new life to history: if my fast-extinguishing love of painting could no longer save me, then the city's poor neighbourhoods seemed prepared, in any event, to become my 'second world'. How I longed to be part of this poetic confusion! Just as I had lost myself in my imagination to escape my grandmother's house and the boredom of school, now, having grown bored with studying architecture, I lost myself in Istanbul. So it was that I finally came to relax and accept the

hüzün that gives Istanbul its grave beauty, *the hüzün that is its fate*.
(Pamuk 2005, 318, my emphasis)

Instead of trying to fight *hüzün*, Orhan learns to appreciate the two different elements that constitute it. He experiences it on a personal level, with his memories of the city, but also from a distance, as through the eyes of a foreigner. Finding himself lost in the city, Orhan can also see his own *hüzün*, reflected his memories. He can be at peace with the *hüzün* in the back streets of Istanbul where he is a stranger. The city where he has spent all his life hence becomes a new, unexplored space where he can get lost. Instead of trying to overcome his *hüzün* and bringing order to the conflicting emotions, Orhan decides to explore them as they are, discovering the creative productivity opened up by the grey space that resides in-between. It is in those small back streets of the city, and on the boat ride on the Golden Horn, that the narrator realises that he does not need to obliterate the feeling of *hüzün*. Instead of trying to decide between the two opposing forces, Orhan celebrates the confusion. It is by observing his city as well as his own life like a stranger that he comes to appreciate the *hüzün* that constitutes his personal experience of the city. The coexistence of these two aspects is made explicit in the original Turkish title of the narrative, which, if literally translated, would be 'Istanbul: Memories and the City'. The narrative thus allows him to open a passageway between the personal and the communal, hence making singular memories part of the communal *hüzün*.

Conclusion

Pamuk portrays his non-linear journey along the streets of Istanbul and in his personal memories in *Istanbul: Memories of a City*. It is by making peace with the ambiguity of his identity and his city, and by accepting the insider and outsider that coexist within him, that he is able to explore the aporetic space that provides him with a singular perspective; this makes him both a passive reader and an active writer of the city. He describes the Janus-headed formation of his experience in *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, celebrating its outcome by reading the text that the city offers, while also re-writing it as he walks along.

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