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WRITING AS IF IN THE CENTER: WORLD LITERATURE AND ORHAN PAMUK'S *ISTANBUL: MEMORIES AND THE CITY*

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ABSTRACT

The scholarship on world literature has often used a center/periphery model and analyzed the reception of Orhan Pamuk's works by different cultures, especially Western ones. Rather than analyzing the reception of his works, this study will examine how Pamuk overlooks and even sometimes undermines hierarchies that shape the international literary domain by "writing as if in the center." As a case study, a close reading of Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (*İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir*, 2003) will be given and narrative techniques that Pamuk uses to upend center/periphery dynamics will be examined. This article argues that Pamuk transforms elements that threatened to marginalize Istanbul, such as the Western gaze, into sources that nourish his artistic vision. The first section demonstrates that although Istanbul has been marginalized in global politics and world literature, Pamuk describes the act of writing as a means to endow Istanbul with a central status. It points out that Pamuk generates his vision of the city through a process that this study calls interweaving or artistic translation. The second section shows that the writer uses different media such as

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photography and painting to foreground the city's complexity. Furthermore, it will claim that Pamuk's use of Ara Güler's photos throughout *Istanbul* further enriches his work by not always confirming Pamuk's observations and sometimes even contradicting them. The final section examines Pamuk's perspectives on the European gaze, which he finds a source of nourishment rather than a threat. He writes about the shortcomings of Edward Said's theories and criticizes the tendency to view the East and West as two well-defined regions.

Keywords: Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, East/West, world literature, photography, center/periphery model.

MERKEZDEYMİŞ GİBİ YAZMAK: DÜNYA EDEBİYATI VE ORHAN PAMUK'UN *İSTANBUL: HATIRALAR VE ŞEHİR*'İ

ÖZET

Dünya edebiyatı hakkındaki çalışmalar, genelde merkez/çevre modelini kullanmış ve Orhan Pamuk'un eserlerini Batı başta olmak üzere farklı kültürler tarafından nasıl algılandığına odaklanmıştır. Pamuk'un farklı kültürlerde nasıl algılandığını analiz etmek yerine, bu çalışma, Pamuk'un "merkezdeymiş gibi yazarak" uluslararası edebiyat camiasında var olan hiyerarşileri eserlerinde nasıl görmezden geldiğini ve hatta onları bazen altüst edebileceğini inceleyecektir. Bu durumu ortaya koymak adına, Orhan Pamuk'un *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir* (2003) adlı eserin yakın okuması yapılacak ve böylece Pamuk'un merkez/çevre dinamiklerini sorgulamak için kullandığı anlatı tekniklerine dikkat çekilecektir. Makale, Pamuk'un Batı bakışı (*Western gaze*) gibi şehri marjinalleştirmeye neden olacak unsurları sanatsal vizyonunu besleyen kaynaklar olarak gördüğünü savunacaktır. İlk bölüm, uluslararası siyaset ve dünya edebiyatında İstanbul'un marjinalleştirilmesine rağmen Pamuk'un yazma eylemiyle şehri merkezî bir konuma yükselttiğini gösterecektir. Bu çalışmanın örmek ya da sanatsal çeviri olarak tanımlayacağı bir süreç sayesinde Pamuk gibi yazarların dünyanın farklı kültürlerinden beslenerek kendilerine özgü bir kültürel vizyon ortaya koyduklarını savunacaktır. İkinci bölüm, yazarın fotoğraf ve resim gibi farklı sanat alanlarından faydalanarak yazarın şehrin karmaşık yapısını ön plana çıkarabildiğini ortaya koyacaktır. Ayrıca, *İstanbul*'da pek çok kez kullanılan Ara Güler'in fotoğraflarının, Pamuk'un sözlerini

her zaman teyit etmeyerek ve hatta bazen onlarla çelişerek Pamuk'un eserine zenginlik kattığını gösterecektir. Son bölüm ise Pamuk'un Batı bakışı hakkındaki görüşlerine değinecektir. Her ne kadar Batı, İstanbul'a karşı indirgemeci yaklaşsa da Pamuk'a göre Batı'nın bakışı tehdit edici bir unsur değil besleyici bir kaynaktır. Pamuk, Edward Said'in teorisinin eksiklikleri hakkında yazar ve Batı ve Doğu'yu sınırları belirgin iki alan olarak görmenin zorluklarından bahseder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orhan Pamuk, *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir*, Doğu/Batı, dünya edebiyatı, fotoğraf, merkez/çevre modeli.

INTRODUCTION

Critics such as Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti have argued that the domain of world literature often has a center. For example, Casanova notes that Paris was the center of world literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; therefore, authors outside Paris followed the literary developments in Paris and sought to gain recognition there (2004). Although she contests Casanova's framework and considers it Eurocentric, Gloria Fisk (2018), like many other scholars of world literature who work on Orhan Pamuk, focuses on unequal power dynamics that shape the domain of world literature. Fisk examines how these dynamics shape the reception of Pamuk's works in the domain of world literature with a particular focus on the West. Rather than analyzing the reception of Pamuk's writings, this article examines narrative strategies that Pamuk uses to upend this center/periphery hierarchy. In particular, it argues that Pamuk's autobiographical memoir, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (*İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir*, 2003), transforms elements that threatened to marginalize Istanbul and deprive the city of its vitality, such as the Western gaze, into sources that nourish his artistic vision that endows Istanbul with a central status. *Istanbul* narrates Pamuk's childhood and adolescent years before he decided to become a writer. It interweaves segments of his life with descriptions of the city from the perspectives of diverse figures such as Turkish poets and Western travelers. If his everyday experiences confirm his peripheral status in the world, Pamuk contests this sense of marginalization through his writing.

Orhan Pamuk describes writing as a journey that starts from one's inner wounds in his Nobel speech, "My Father's Suitcase": *"When a writer shuts himself up in a room for years on end to hone his craft—to create a world—if he uses his secret wounds as his starting point, he is,*

whether he knows it or not, putting a great faith in humanity" (2008: 412). The giant task of creating a world starts when the writer isolates himself in his room. Writing bridges the gap between the private wounds of the author and the larger world, as writers believe that this world will show some empathy toward these wounds. Likewise, Pamuk asserts that true literature resists unequal power hierarchies that partition the world into a center and its peripheries: *"All true literature rises from this childish, hopeful certainty that all people resemble one another. When a writer shuts himself up in a room for years on end, with this gesture he suggests a single humanity, a world without a center"* (2008: 412). Yet even these words suggest that Pamuk does not necessarily believe in the idea of a single humanity and a world without a center, as he considers it, after all, a "childish" idea. He later writes, *"But as can be seen from my father's suitcase and the pale colors of our lives in Istanbul, the world did have a center, and it was far away from us"* (2008: 412-413). This study will demonstrate that Pamuk's narrative contests the center/periphery hierarchies of the world by what he calls "writing as if in the center."

The first section of this article describes Orhan Pamuk's perspectives on the center/ periphery hierarchy that characterizes the domain of world literature. Later, it examines how Pamuk overturns this hierarchy by exploring intersections among various artistic media, such as photography, writing, and painting. The final section of the article examines Pamuk's relation with the West, since he sees it not as a menace that threatens to marginalize him, but as a source of nourishment that constitutes an integral part of his artistic identity and the city's fabric. The article will conclude with Pamuk's reflections on Edward Said.

Centralizing Istanbul through Literature

Other Colors (*Öteki Renkler*, 1999), an anthology of critical essays by Pamuk, includes an important section entitled "World Literature" ("*Dünya Edebiyatı*"). In this section, Pamuk considers both the novel and world literature as the supreme achievements of Western civilization. He then expresses his concern about world literature as another means of reinforcing the Euro-American cultural hegemony. He writes that while Western writers search *"for the meaning of life, the structure of the world and language, and the depths of human soul, other writers can make their voices heard only by telling stories of poverty, humiliation, violence, and backwardness"* (2014: 219).[2] World literature, in fact, replicates

[2] The "World Literature" section is not included in the English translation; therefore, citations from this section are my translations of the Turkish source text.

power hierarchies that are perpetuated by national literatures: *"Because of the high speed of communication and high number of readers in central countries, world literature has also become like national literatures: a center that forces its preferences on the entire periphery, a periphery that can speak up only to the extent that it can use the language of the center"* (2014: 219).

Although Pamuk believes that world literature perpetuates injustices that substantiate the distinction between the center and its peripheries, he also writes about Istanbul to undermine this distinction. Pamuk notes that the act of literary creation can overturn hierarchies that characterize the literary domain: "Writers in the center who write as if in the periphery (Faulkner, Bernhard) and writers in the periphery who write as if in the center (Dostoyevski, Borges) can save us from suffocating national demands and hackneyed international roles" (2014: 220) . Dostoyevski and Borges clearly know that they do not lie at the center. However, through writing as if in the center (*merkezdeymiş gibi yazmak*), they resist power dynamics within a world literary system that has a clear boundary between the center and its peripheries.

Pamuk too writes as if he were in the center. His writing counteracts his everyday experiences that substantiate the peripheral status of Istanbul, as he also notes in *Other Colors*;

> *"For me the center of the world is Istanbul. This is not just because I have lived there all my life, but because for the last thirty-three years I have been narrating its streets, its bridges, its people, its dogs, its houses, its mosques, its fountains, its strange heroes, its shops, its famous characters, its dark spots, its days and its nights, making them part of me, embracing them all. A point arrived when this world I had made with my own hands, this world that existed only in my own head, was more real to me than the city in which I actually lived. That was then all these people and streets, objects and buildings would seem to begin to talk among themselves, and begin to interact in ways I had not anticipated, as if they lived not only in my imagination or my books, but for themselves"* (2008: 414).

As Pamuk's writing endows the city with a central status, diverse elements of the city become a part of him. The process of ceaseless writing leads to a point in which things in the author's imagination take a life of their own that even he could not anticipate. The artist creates a

world which is "more real" and which does not replicate the power hierarchies that characterize the actual world that he lives in. Thus, Pamuk's writing interferes with world literature, since he challenges the center/periphery hierarchies that shape the domain of world literature and international affairs by writing "as if in the center."

At first, *Istanbul* seems to substantiate the center/periphery dichotomy that shapes the domain of international politics. The memoir documents the disconcerting condition of Istanbul's current citizens who feel unfit to shoulder the city's glorious history; *"[O]urs was the guilt, loss, and jealousy felt at the sudden destruction of the last traces of a great culture and a great civilization that we were unfit or unprepared to inherit, in our frenzy to turn Istanbul into a pale, poor, second class imitation of a western city"* (2006: 211). In the end, Pamuk complains that Istanbul's peripheral status will stifle any creative mind and not allow the generation of any artistic work: *"Art, painting, creativity—these were things only Europeans had the right to take seriously, my mother seemed to be saying, not we who lived in Istanbul in the second half of the twentieth century, in a culture that has fallen into poverty, thereby losing its strength, its will, and its appetite"* (2006: 358). Due to this prevalent sense of loss, life becomes indistinguishable from death that deprives one of vitality, so Pamuk feels that he *"was doomed to live a long, boring, utterly unremarkable life—a vast stretch of time that was already dying before [his] eyes even as [he] endured it"* (2006: 310). In the chapter *"The Photographs in the Dark Museum House," Pamuk writes about his childhood experiences in the apartment: "To my childish mind, these rooms were furnished not for the living but for the dead"* (2006: 10). He meticulously lists the items in his apartment, such as unplayed pianos, untouched plates, and unused desks. All these objects signified his family's successful Westernization, yet unlike the novel, a Western genre with which Pamuk feels comfortable, these items paralyze the entire family: *"Sitting rooms were not meant to be places where you could lounge comfortably; they were little museums designed to demonstrate to a hypothetical visitor that the householders were westernized"* (2006: 10). The family photos in this apartment exacerbate the photos' paralyzing and asphyxiating character, as Pamuk writes about the *"powerful influence these framed scenes exerted over" his daily life (2006: 14). These photos, like the rest of the items, attain a sacrosanct aura; thus his family members cannot even touch them out of veneration: "Once assigned its place in the museum, a photograph was never moved"* (2006: 13).

As Pamuk writes about the marginalized status and asphyxiating character of the city, he emphasizes that the city has a textual character: *"It is a useful distinction to make as we*

'remember' our earliest life experiences, our cradles, our baby carriages, our first steps, all as reported by our parents, stories to which we listen with the same rapt attention we might pay some brilliant tale of some other person" (2006: 8). In Murat Seçkin's analysis, *"[t]his is a section which confesses that all our lives are interwoven from verbal texts, and that even the visual is in the end something textual"* (2008: 277). When Pamuk writes about the dusk of Istanbul, he compares its descent with a poetic text: *"And likewise, as I watch dusk descend like a poem in the pale light of the streetlamps to engulf these old neighborhoods, it comforts me to know that for the night at least we are safe: the shameful poverty of our city is cloaked from Western eyes"* (2006: 35). This "poem"—the descent of the dusk—engulfs the city and shields it from the Western gaze. While this situation provides comfort for Pamuk, it can also confirm the city's peripheral status. Yet, writing generates a sense of euphoric triumph that contrasts with the sense of defeatism that characterizes the city: *"[H]aving walked away half the night, I'd return home and sit down at my table and capture their chemistry on paper"* (2006: 368, emphasis added). The word "capture" suggests that Pamuk feels a sense of confidence and even power when he can distill the chemistry of the crumbling ruins and poor districts of Istanbul. This euphoric confidence that comes from artistic creation contrasts with Istanbul's marginal status in the domain of international affairs that causes in its denizens a sense of humiliation and defeatism.

Instead of lamenting the peripheral status of the city, Pamuk decides to undertake the task of writing so that he can elevate the city to center stage and resist the unequal power relations that generate a center/periphery dynamic in the domain of world literature. When Pamuk writes, *"There are times . . . when I worry that my attachment to this place will ossify my brain, that isolation might kill the desire in my gaze. Then I take comfort in reminding myself that there is something foreign in my way of looking at the city"* (2006: 241), he notes that the city goes through his foreignizing gaze. Thus, one should not read *Istanbul* as an accurate representation of the city. Instead, the author interweaves diverse reflections of Istanbul. This study deliberately employs the word "interweave" here. Pamuk displays authors as agents who interweave diverse elements of the city so that they can create new aspirations for their readers. When he praises Yahya Kemal and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Pamuk notes, "*So this is how two friends living in Istanbul—one a poet, the other a prose writer—drew upon the work of two friends from Paris [Nerval and Gautier]—to weave together a story from the fall of the Ottoman Empire: the nationalism of the early republican years, its ruins, its westernizing project, its poetry, and its landscapes. The result of this somewhat tangled tale was an image*

in which Istanbullus could see themselves and a dream to which they could aspire" (2006: 252-253). Pamuk reveals his role as a "reader" who depends upon different texts to construct his vision of the city: *"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, or a film"* (2006: 288).

Hüzün is an essential concept in *Istanbul* that demonstrates how writers forge their vision of the city. As Erdağ Göknar argues, *hüzün* becomes a term of "overdetermined ambiguity" and *"another absent text waiting to be over-written"* (2013: 230). The reader understands the characteristics of *hüzün* when Pamuk compares *hüzün* with melancholy; the latter describes individual suffering while *hüzün* represents *"the black mood shared by millions of people together"* (2006: 92). However, Pamuk emphasizes that one cannot consider *hüzün* and melancholy as synonyms. While melancholy is solitary, *hüzün* is always communal. When Pamuk praises the talent of Turkish writers who have described this *hüzün*, he points out the relation between the city's poetry and its melancholy: *"They could share in the communal spirit of the city by embracing its melancholy, and at the same time they sought to express this communal melancholy, this hüzün—to bring out the poetry in their city"* (2006: 115). Pamuk later mentions that he *"loved the silent melancholy poetry of the poor neighborhoods"* (2006: 268).

Hüzün is a product of cultural translation. Pamuk writes that Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar often used the term *hüzün* in his writings so that he can craft an authentic, original, and national sentiment that draws upon both East and West: *"The melancholy Tanpınar first discovered in Nerval's and Gautier's arresting observations about the poor neighborhoods, the ruins, dingy residential districts, and city walls, he transforms* [*çevirir* (2003: 233)] *into an indigenous hüzün through which to apprehend a local landscape and, most particularly, the everyday life of a working woman*" (2006: 247). In the source text, one can translate the term "*çevirir*" as both "translates" and "transforms." Tanpınar chooses a prominent concept from world literature, melancholy, and translates it to come up with an indigenous sentiment. Pamuk now first reads and then "translates" various elements such as Tanpınar's *hüzün*, Gautier's melancholy, and Istanbul's landscapes, then interweaving them to create his vision of *hüzün*. Once Pamuk reads the city and "translates" it as he composes his memoir, Istanbul transforms from a monolingual, homogenized, and dead periphery into a cosmopolitan and vibrant center that reminds one of the *"tower of Babel"* (2006: 239).

Istanbul at the Intersection of Different Media

Through using different artistic media as he writes about the city, Pamuk further emphasizes the vibrant and multilayered character of Istanbul. He notes that the city does not have an immutable center: *"Is this the secret of Istanbul—that beneath its grand history, its living poverty, its outward-looking monuments, and its sublime landscapes, its poor hide the city's soul inside a fragile web? But here we have come full circle, for anything we say about the city's essence says more about our own lives and our own states of mind. The city has no center other than ourselves"* (2006: 349). No medium can capture the city's "essence," center, or soul. Instead of scavenging for its center, one can strive, as Pamuk does, to explore Istanbul from many different media and vantage points.

This section explores how Pamuk appropriates different Western media and experiments with them to give arise to a new, hybrid artistic form. It especially focuses on the genre of the text. Pamuk often notes that novel is a European genre, but this does not mean that he humbly accepts his peripheral status since he often writes in a "foreign" genre. Horace Enghdahl, the head of the Swedish academy that gave him the Nobel Prize, notes that Pamuk appropriated and even "stole" the novel genre to create something new. His writing changed the very foundations of the novel, because it had *"enlarged the roots of the contemporary novel"* (McGaha, 2008: 42, emphasis added), as Enghdahl notes, *"This means that he has stolen the novel, one can say, from us Westerners, and has transformed it to something different from what we have ever seen before"* (qtd. in McGaha 2008: 42).

Istanbul is a work that is hard to classify, because Pamuk draws upon different media. According to Hande Gürses, *Istanbul "is a work that is impossible to define using the already existing vocabulary regarding genre. Both thematically and formally it stands on slippery ground, which is constantly moving, challenging any definition that would confine it within fixed boundaries"* (2012: 47). As a medley of different media, *Istanbul* frequently explores the intersections between painting and writing. As he seeks to combine different media, Pamuk aligns himself with authors who endorsed a "painterly style." One of these authors is Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: *"In an article he wrote during the Second World War, Tanpınar criticized other novelists in his circle for their unwillingness to see or describe things around them, and while extolling the painterly style of writers like Stendhal, Balzac and Zola, he added that Gautier was himself a painter"* (2006: 227). Pamuk frequently emphasizes in *Istanbul* that he forged his identity as he engaged in a constant dialogue with authors who

explored intersections among different media such as Flaubert and Tanpınar. Writing becomes more nuanced as it draws upon the visual medium of painting.

To describe Istanbul through any artistic medium risks subsuming to power hierarchies that marginalized Istanbul. Pamuk considers painting as a means of expressing his authentic self: *"My choice of subject was much more important to me than my style or my technique; most of all, I wanted to believe that my art was a spontaneous expression of something inside me"* (2006: 267). Yet, the exigencies of conforming to a particular style often stifles the euphoria of finding authenticity: *"So I painted the little mosques, the crumbling walls, the Byzantine arch just visible in the corner, the domed wooden houses, bowing to the rules of perspective"* (2006: 268, emphasis added). As he searches for authenticity, Pamuk confronts with stylistic rules of painting that originated in the West. "Bowing" to them could remind Pamuk of his peripheral status.

Pamuk emphasizes this point when he writes about Reşat Ekrem Koçu's never-completed tome, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (1944-1973, *Encyclopedia of Istanbul*): *"The real subject is Koçu's failure to explain Istanbul using western 'scientific' methods of classification. He failed in part because Istanbul is so unmanageably varied, so anarchic, so very much stranger than western cities; its disorder resists classification"* (2006: 169). Pamuk puts emphasis on the disorderly character of Istanbul. By using various media such as photography, painting, and writing at once and not overtly privileging one over the other, Pamuk achieves to create an artwork that does not have to "bow" to the exigencies of one medium. Pamuk cannot use one artistic genre only due to the complex character of the city.

Pamuk also uses the medium of photography for further enriching his work. Photos in the memoir can even undermine Pamuk's views. Pelin Erdal Aytekin (2018) draws upon various critics such as Roland Barthes and John Berger to demonstrate that photos in *Istanbul* "fill in the gaps," as his text cannot fully convey the author's vision. Esra Misre Santesso also demonstrates how photography and writing engage in dialogue with each other through contesting the assumption that Ara Güler's photos provide an objective view of the city that stands in contrast with Pamuk's subjective narrative:

> *"Yet the selection process of the photographs used in the book contradicts such an explanation: first of all, Pamuk admits to choosing these images from Güler's private archive after the completion of the book, implying that the images are not clarifications or even part of the same narrative line.*

> *Secondly, the images do not directly correspond with the autobiographical material of the book; indeed, there is often a visible disjuncture between the image and the personal text, not least because some of the photographs long predate the birth of the author. Thirdly, the photographs themselves are interpreted symbolically; Pamuk rarely "reads" the images in a straightforward way, but rather explains them in personal and, indeed, abstract terms, openly manipulating their meaning"* (2011: 154).

Güler's photos engage in dialogue with Pamuk's observations about the city. While sometimes substantiating the author's observations, these photos sometimes expand upon and even challenge them in unanticipated ways. Güler's photographs can capture what Pamuk's words cannot convey and they can reveal the limitations of Pamuk's words. For example, photos of street vendors in the city (2006: 43) and lonely figures in the midst of the city's dilapidated districts (2006: 324) provide another perspective on the city's panorama that Pamuk's descriptions of his apartment cannot provide. Various artistic media, such as photography and writing, cannot be sufficient in themselves to encapsulate the soul of the city that Pamuk wants to capture in his memoir. By creating a work that lies at the intersection of various media, Pamuk appropriates Western genres, creates a new medley and hence forges an artistic form that reflects the complexity of Istanbul.

In fact, these photos further complicate the assumptions that one has about Istanbul. The back cover of the English translation of *Istanbul* claims that the book provides a visual spectacle of the city, calling the work *"[a] shimmering evocation, by turns intimate and panoramic, of one of the world's great cities, by its foremost writer"* (2006). This blurb promises the potential reader an "intimate" access to Istanbul's panorama, as it describes Pamuk as the city's foremost writer and compares his writing to the medium of film: *"With cinematic fluidity, Pamuk moves from his glamorous, unhappy parents to the gorgeous, decrepit mansions overlooking the Bosporus"* (2006). Yet the photos in *Istanbul* do not provide a touristic vista for the city; they capture everyday moments that challenge a reader's typical perspectives on the city. While the metatext suggests that Pamuk will be a tour guide who generates a cinematic panorama of the city, the author uses photos that undermine the easy reduction of Istanbul to stereotypical images. Instead of capturing the panorama of the city, these photos complicate one's vision of the city even further.

The black-and-white photos throughout the memoir do not undermine the work's liminal status, nor do they partition the world into binaries such as "black/white," "religious/ secularist," and "East/ West." Rather, as Hande Gürses notes, they create many shades of grey that nurture the work's liminality: *"The blurry space that emerges in between the black and the white, with the dominance of the shades of the gray and smoke, is similar to the effect that hüzün has"* (2012: 55). Once Pamuk generates a work that lies at the intersection of various media including photography, it gives arise to shades of grey that undermine clear-cut dichotomies such as East/West and center/periphery.

The European Gaze as a Source of Nourishment

The experimental style of *Istanbul* that explores intersections among various artistic media gives arise to new perspectives on the European gaze that contest power hierarchies which shape the domain of world literature. Pamuk does not wish the reader to perceive the European gaze as the threat that deprives one of safety. This gaze does not always have to create a perpetual anxiety; it can provide even joy and nourishment. To perceive Istanbul as black and white from Pamuk's perspective might initially mean a sense of confinement and acquiescence to a European gaze that is a *disease*. Yet, it is this disease, Pamuk reminds the reader, that *nourishes* Istanbul. The city attains its energy from its gaze:

> *"To see the city in black and white is to see it through the tarnish of history: the patina of what is old and faded and no longer matters to the rest of the world. Even the greatest Ottoman architecture has a humble simplicity that suggests an end-of-empire gloom, a pained submission to the diminishing European gaze and to an ancient poverty that must be endured like an incurable disease. It is a designation that nourishes Istanbul's inward-looking soul"* (2006: 39-40, emphasis added).

Therefore, Pamuk does not want readers to abandon the European gaze completely and instead explore its nourishing potentials. As a result, the sense of defeatism and humiliation does not have to shape one's perspective on Istanbul.

Pamuk uses the term "nourishment" two other times in the memoir, which provides the reader with new perspectives about his artistic endeavor: *"Here amid 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, the city's poor neighborhoods seemed, in any event, to become my second world"* (2006: 352, emphasis

added). Pamuk places Western gaze on par with the city's crumbling ruins, as they nourish his "second," artistic world, since he writes: *"By 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, or a film. So whenever I sense the absence of western eyes, I become my own Westerner"* (2006: 288).

Pamuk also asserts in the beginning of *Istanbul* that his gaze at the city nourishes his artistic temperament: *"Conrad, Nabokov, Naipaul—these are writers known for having managed to migrate between languages, cultures, countries, continents, even civilizations. Their imaginations were fed by exile, a nourishment drawn not through roots but through rootlessness. My imagination, 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"* (2006: 6, emphasis added). Unlike other authors who receive their nourishment from a sense of rootlessness, Pamuk asserts that he gazes at a never-changing segment of the city ("same street," "gazing at the same view") and from the same vantage point ("in the same house"). Even though he looks at the same view throughout his life, many sources of nourishment flow into Pamuk's artistic vision: his house, crumbling ruins, and the European gaze, which does not assign his house or ruins to a peripheral position, but instead enriches Pamuk's artistic world.

Because the European gaze ceases to be a harrowing menace that marginalizes its objects, Pamuk declares the *pleasure* that one attains through adopting an outside perspective: *"To see Istanbul through the eyes of a foreigner always gives me pleasure"* (2006: 240-241). This adoption is not a source of shame that needs to be hidden. Instead, for Pamuk, it is a joy to be overtly shared. Even though he notes that *"[t]he living, breathing city—its streets, its atmosphere, its smells, the rich variety of its everyday life—is something that only literature can convey, and for centuries the only literature our city inspired was penned by Westerners"* (2006: 240), Pamuk does not lament the lack of "authentic sources" nor share the anxiety of not having access to the "authentic past." Rather, he accepts, sometimes quite joyously, that this Western perspective too became an integral part of the city fabric.

Through emphasizing the pleasure that comes from adopting the Western gaze, Pamuk provides an implicit critique of his counterparts who had an uncritical admiration of the West: *"As for the city's poets and painters, most had their eyes so firmly pinned on the West that they couldn't even see their own city"* (2006: 351). Although these authors supported

Westernization efforts, they did not adopt the Western gaze in a playful manner as Pamuk did, nor did they experiment with and hence explore the limitations of this gaze. Rather, many Turkish authors were so keen on catching up with the West that they "bowed" to one particular style rather than experimenting with new possibilities and gazed at their country from a single and monolithic vantage point. Although Pamuk deploys the European gaze, he has not completely lost touch with the Turkish culture.

Pamuk also disagrees with the view that Istanbul has been a hapless victim of Western imperialism. In the section on Gustave Flaubert, Pamuk comments on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). While he extols Said's work, Pamuk also emphasizes the perspectives that Said excluded so that his theories could remain coherent. As Pamuk writes about the syphilis that Flaubert caught in Beirut, he notes:

> *"If [Flaubert] had come to the East to see beautiful unforgettable spectacles, Flaubert's desire to survey its diseases and odd medical practices was no less intense. Still, he had no intention of exposing his own lesions or his own odd habits. In his brilliant Orientalism, Edward Said makes much of the opening scene in the Cairo hospital when analyzing Nerval and Flaubert, but he fails to mention the Istanbul brothel where the drama ends; had he done so, he might have prevented many Istanbul readers from using his work to justify nationalist sentiment or to imply that, if it weren't for the West, the East would be a wonderful place. Perhaps Said chose to omit it because Istanbul was never a colony of the West and therefore not central to his concerns"* (2006: 291).

Pamuk's *Istanbul* includes narratives that combat the facile appropriation of Said's work. At the same time, he emphasizes that Said's scholarship overlooks places like Istanbul that was not colonized. Pamuk here points out what has been omitted in *Orientalism* before and displays a facet of Flaubert that does not *"succumb to another East-West joke"* (2006: 29), which can complicate Said's narrative.

It would be misleading to describe the medley of narratives and visions that Pamuk generates as an oscillation between the two well-defined foci, East and West. While both Eastern and Western cultures have considerable impact on Pamuk, one cannot designate them as unchanging elements in his work. Pamuk sometimes even emphasizes that East and West are not universal categories, as he notes that the most influential Turkish writers in Pamuk's life

"drew their strength from the tensions between the past and the present, or between what Westerners like to call East and West" (2006: 111). Pamuk does not present Istanbul as a bridge that connects East and West nor as a city that was once an imperial center and is now doomed to marginalization. Istanbul is rather multidirectional and the city undermines scholarly assumptions about East/West or center/periphery.

CONCLUSION

While the "actual" Istanbul might be marginalized in the political sphere, the literary imagination can endow it with a central status. In fact, what stands in the center in *Istanbul* is Pamuk's imagination and the city that this imagination constructs. This imagination does not create a map of the city that will help the reader to easily navigate in the city and pinpoint its center. Pamuk creates an Istanbul through juxtaposing different artistic media that prevent its work from becoming another dull, plain imitation of its Western counterparts. His Istanbul then can incorporate various elements, including ruins, Turkish poets, and the European gaze, which all engage in dialogue with each other. When these dialogues take place in the artist's imagination, they can challenge unequal power dynamics that shape the current global circulation of texts, which creates a center that controls its peripheries.

It is no coincidence that Pamuk decided to become a writer after his mother reminded him that he would lead a lackluster life if he had become a painter. As Pamuk felt afraid of having a lackluster life in a peripheral city in the modern world, he ensconced himself in a room, and kept on writing to forge an alternative world that upends center/periphery hierarchies that otherwise seemed immutable. A journey that started from his private wounds now engages with some of the most contentious literary debates that address the entire world.

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