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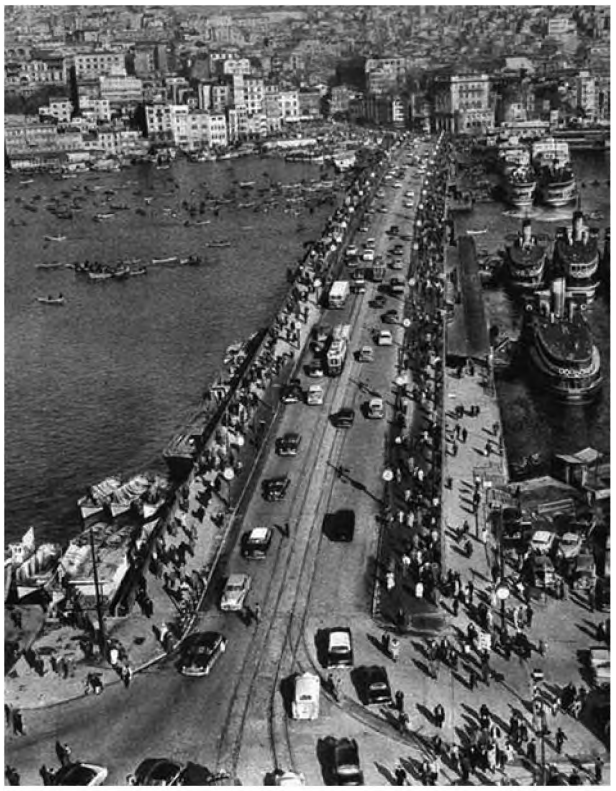
# *Istanbul*: Recollections from a Lost City

*I sometimes think myself unlucky to have been born in an aging and impoverished city buried under the ashes of a ruined empire.*

In his autobiographical intimate novel: *Istanbul -Memories and the City*[1] Orhan Pamuk embarked upon an imposing challenge: to capture the essence of the town in which he grew up and to which he tried throughout his whole life to return by resorting to snatches of texts, scraps of newspapers, fragments of images, and reminiscences of scents. This effort of recollecting Istanbul as seen by the later Nobel Prize laureate in the course of the first 22 years of his life – the period embraced by the narration - appears to be hazardous. Pamuk endeavoured to recreate, evoke, and present to the reader a city no longer existent, unrecognisable in its present-day shape, and undecipherable on a contemporary map. We thus received a paradoxical apology, a hymn in honour of a remembered and imaginary location – a phantom cosmopolitan Istanbul, deteriorating but still capable of casting a spell with its Oriental allure. A brief demographic outline of the town on the Bosporus enables us to envisage the scale of changes; in the 1920s it had a population of 500 000, which during Pamuk's childhood totalled a million, and in 2000 – 10 million.[2] Today, the cypress-covered hills viewed by the young Orhan have vanished under cheap housing estates, bridges cross the Bosporus, and the favourite promenade of the Pamuk family had been taken over by tourists.

Those readers who expect *Istanbul* to be a city guidebook endowed with an aura of the belles letters and enhanced with spicy local details will be disappointed: the peregrination routes bypass easily identifiable spots and Istanbul icons (perhaps with the sole exception of the Galata Bridge linking the banks of the Golden Horn). They lead us down the kempt streets of the wealthiest districts, joining assorted points of Pamuk's private topography: the family house in Nişantaş, the "Little Paris" of Istanbul,[3] and an apartment in another Europeanised district, i.e. Cihangir. From here we make



Galata Bridge. 1950s
Source: www.azizistanbul.com

our way to the American Robert College and eventually reach the vestibule of the Hilton Hotel, in which friends of the author's father took their afternoon tea. If we should decide to travel to the Bosporus then only in a 1952 Dodge so as to catch a boat already waiting to take the Pamuk family to a summer residence on the largest of the Prince islands. When he managed – escaping the prying gaze of his mother and omniscient aunts – to find himself with his first girlfriend in the poor Greek districts of Fener or Balat, the local urchins would run at the sight of the lovers trying to hide, crying: *Tourist! Tourist! What is your name?*

I recall this caricature not in order to discredit Pamuk's portrayal – *Istanbul* is an in-depth, dense, and multi-strata description endowed with poetic ambiance and sarcastic self-deprecation. Reading the recollections of the Nobel Prize laureate calls, however, for critical awareness making it possible to decipher his text in the most complete way possible – the author himself appears to encourage us to do so by carefully outlining the novel's socio-cultural backdrop.

This is a manifesto of the identity of a native-born resident of Istanbul, an apology of enrootment and affiliation to a town whose greatest force is duration and continuity; it is those features that discourses competing with Pamuk – especially nationalistic and anti-Western ones – would like to obliterate. On almost every page of his book the author stressed his alienness and "foreigness" in new Istanbul - this is not a Baedeker travel guide but the narration of an egocentric and introvert

man of letters who devoted long years to arrive at the by no means simple essence of the city and to become capable of consciously identifying himself with its sublime depiction. To be able to say: *Istanbul's fate is my fate: I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am.*

## *Between the East and the West: melancholic Istanbul*

In a justification of their verdict, members of the Royal Swedish Academy explained that they presented the award to a writer *who in the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures*.[4] Despite the fact that he evaded the well-worn metaphor of the bridge linking the Orient and the Occident Pamuk did not resign from exploring the potential of this fundamental opposition. Nonetheless, he sought regions where the terms "East" and "West" still mean something, say something essential, and explain the condition of people from the world around him: suspended, torn between extremities, unable to fully identify themselves either with one circle or the other.[5] Benefitting from Orientalist clichés, stereotype depictions, and simple connotations with which sentimental descriptions of Constantinople abounded, Pamuk tried to reach that level of experiencing the city along which there takes place a profound identification with the site, its texts and imagery due to the absorption, personal interpretations or rejection of existing representations. This is a difficult and painful identification, marked with a feeling of shame and uncertainty, loss and paradoxical pride.

Return for a moment to the social context: the Pamuk family inherited a fortune made by the author's grandfather who built railroads during the first years of the Republic,[6] and which Orhan's father and uncles managed to squander in the post-war period. The author's relatives can be regarded as a model-like sample of the Istanbul Europeanised elite – educated at the best universities, ostentatiously lay, and associated with the cosmopolitan legacy of the town rather than with the nationalistic project of modern Turkish identity. Torn by inner conflicts, lost in the elegant interiors of their Istanbul apartment, surrounded by piles of Western books gathering dust, and with difficulty finding their place in the new social and cultural reality of the Republic. *Home became as empty as the city's ruined* yalis[7] *and as gloomy as the fern-darkened gardens surrounding them* - Pamuk recalled; elsewhere, he supplemented the image of the catastrophe approaching those closest to him and the town: *…but as nothing, Western or local, came to fill the void, the great drive to Westernise amounted mostly to the erasure of the past; the effect on culture was reductive or stunting, leaving families like mine, otherwise glad of Republican progress, to furnish their houses like museums*.[8] Pamuk seems to suggest that the degeneration of people is merely a reflection and derivative of the ruin into which the town declined. Times of splendour had passed, and streets and houses together with their residents were doomed to exist on the margin of great history.

We arrive at the point in which Pamuk's Istanbul begins to slowly disclose its true face – that of a town relegated to the peripheries, forgotten, and full of traces of dead imperial culture gradually ousted by the mediocrity of modernity. It is here, amidst the ruins and snatches of former might, that the author sought anchorage points. Pamuk described the feeling accompanying this difficult identification as *hüzün* – he had in mind specific melancholy characteristic for the residents of Istanbul, embedded in an overwhelming feeling of loss and decline, additionally supplemented with recollections of imperial glory and poisoned by the irreversibility of the changes to which the town had succumbed.[9]

Already due to its Arabian etymology *hüzün* refers to Koranic and Sufi tradition ousted in republican Turkey,[10] to the era of spiritual death and philosophical sophistication: contemporaneity appears to be their failed and ungrateful child. This paradoxical feeling – sorrow mixed with pride, and reminiscences of greatness with the experiences of degeneration, a subconscious willingness to undergo suffering - becomes the content of Istanbul existence. Searching for a counterpart of this *par excellence* local state of the spirit Pamuk turns to the outside, towards analogues of urban sadness recorded in the writings of Western authors. In its capacity as individual suffering, leading towards alienness and loneliness, Romantic European melancholy does not, however, exhaust the nature of the phenomenon, which in its Istanbul edition is a shared feeling and possibly the sole experience linking all those who manage to identify themselves with the city on the Bosporus. Understanding *hüzün* could be facilitated by reading *Tristes Tropiques* by Claude Lévi-Strauss, although this *tristesse* too will not be an exact reflection of Istanbul sorrow; depression accompanying the observation of the poverty of São Paulo or Delhi has an underpinning of a colonial feeling of guilt, of which Pamuk's kinsmen are free. Perhaps its identification is better assisted by the symptoms of the Istanbul malaise and not its sources: *It is by seeing* hüzün, *by paying our respects to its manifestations in the city's streets and views and people, that we at last come to sense it everywhere. On cold winter mornings, when the sun suddenly falls on the Bosporus and that faint vapour begins to rise from the surface.*

Pamuk perceived the mark of sadness unmistakably in the remnants of former Constantinople - immersed in the tissue of the city and with time losing their integral character vanishing amidst the successive strata of the Istanbul palimpsest of the ruins of previous towns.[11] It is on their rubble and in the gaps in their tissue that successive forms developed, creating hybrid spaces dif-

ficult to decipher. In order to explain the special enthralling and attractive nature of those Istanbul strata Pamuk rather provocatively referred to the category of the "picturesque" conceived by John Ruskin, so as to in a thoroughly nineteenth-century and Romantic style express every few pages his admiration for a Byzantine wall overgrown with ivy or a semi-buckled mossy roof of a *tekke* belonging to crazed dervishes, whose garden provides shelter for homeless dogs - the emblematic residents of a town abandoned by successive civilisations.

The sorrow that is part of the essence of the locality is projected onto its image: in its purest and correct form Istanbul will appear to Pamuk as black-and-white. The scarlet and orange of the sultanate, Muslim green banners and turquoise robes have already faded, leaving *the city of ruins and of end-of-the-empire melancholy*. The greying and rotting timber of the collapsing Ottoman villas,[12] the ashen, indescribable fur of dogs roaming in the streets, the severity of stone mosques marking the town panorama, the threads of thick smoke spewed by ships sailing across the sound, the dark whirl of the water surrounding and invading the town. Finally, the most important component of the Bosporus monochrome: snow. Pamuk constructed his Istanbul from such images and it is they that condense most effectively the very essence of post-imperial colourlessness. Once again, and as in the case of the *hüzün*, despite the feeling of loss and an awareness of the ostensibly unattractive colour scale of the city, it is this black-and-white quality that for Pamuk will render Istanbul his town.

Hence, melancholy and ruins, black, grey and white, unclear memories of former opulence and quiet consent to the local peripheral character.[13] By embarking upon a quasi-Orientalist game played both with the texts describing the town and with the reader, the author continued to circulate around "dangerous'" motifs: clichés of Oriental harems and cemeteries, mysterious murders committed by moonlight or Romantic images of "beautiful ruins". He provocatively resorted to texts from the "black list" of Western writers-Orientalists, laboriously disclosed by Edward Said and his emulators[14] – descriptions of Istanbul by Nerval, Gautier, and Flaubert become the keys to the gates of a non-existent town. This is a step just as effective as it is hazardous: Pamuk's book thus becomes an easy target both for the pro-revision numerous trackers of Orientalist deviations on the Western side of the barricade (who, in turn, accuse him of copying Western clichés and the "Orientalisation" of Istanbul) and the Turks, readily criticising Pamuk for his "Occidentalisation" of the town, contrary to the national ethos, for pandering to European tastes, and for failing to notice the "genuine", Moslem and, predominantly, Turkish character of the metropolis.[15]

Defending his stand, Pamuk developed a unique theory of the Istanbul amalgamate, in which elements borrowed from Eastern and Western tradition create a difficult and ambiguous whole. Although this rather unsurprising apology of syncretism and multicultural qualities resounds with truism (could the identity of a town with a population totalling more the 10 million be based on a single tradition?) in *Istanbul* it is constructed in an interesting fashion: *via* a multi-strata criticism of the *cul de sac* into which fascination with figures of the East and the West has led the residents of Istanbul. Openly critical of Turkish nationalism,[16] Pamuk seems to parallelly – although somewhat more gently – doubt the tendency to copy Western models (and turned the edge of irony predominantly towards his relatives, thus revealing the cultural shallows, on which they have landed). A search for references to Islam will not lead us far while reading *Istanbul*: attachment to religion is, according to Pamuk, a feature typical for the "primitive" residents of the poor districts, arrivals from the Anatolian province, while the author's direct contact with the Moslem ritual seems to be limited to spying upon and tormenting a female servant employed by his parents when he was a child. The poor and those mistreated by fate "need" God, but this certainly does not hold true for Pamuk. If one were to seek the positive aspects of the Istanbul mixture, the writer would have probably assigned them to the cosmopolitanism of the town, its multicultural qualities inscribed into the history of a city for centuries populated by Turks, Greeks, Jews, Armenians and representatives of other diasporas. Here too, however, *hüzün* makes itself known – due to brutal nationalisation and successive pogroms little is left of former great variety: at best, memory and consecutive traces marking the map of the town, a phantom of the past.

Istanbul identity *à la* Orhan Pamuk is undoubtedly excusive and elitist – hence the majority of the critical opinions about his literary commentaries voiced in Turkey.[17] Significantly, the author too described his position as ambiguous, stressing that his prime intention was writing books and not politics, that he was unafraid of formulating strong opinions about the cultural rank of the country. His voice, one of few, is heard and carefully heeded on the western shores of the Bosporus. *Istanbul* is predominantly a literary text; more, it is an urban mega-text, involving earlier descriptions into a dialogue.

## *Istanbul in a text*

Sometimes, it might appear that Pamuk owes more to his literary predecessors than to an actual experience of the town. The Istanbul *Bildungsroman* is, after all, primarily the story of taming space *via* text, of becoming old enough for Istanbul (and *Istanbul!*) by delving into its successive representations. Here, the author rendered the reader's task easier and this one time did not compel him to participate in a game: without conceal-

ing the sources of his inspirations he openly indicated which texts moulded his image of the town (we must forgive a megalomaniac inclination to regard himself as an equal of the greatest - sometime Mann, at other times Conrad or Nabokov). More, he patiently guides the reader across his textual *silva verborum* comprising an unobvious likeness of the town on the Bosporus.

If the most sensitive chords of the Istanbul spirit are affected by the West-East dichotomy then the same holds true for texts that enabled Pamuk to reach the very essence of the town: famous Orientalists, on the one hand, and local writers, forgotten by the Turks (who was supposed to read them?), on the other hand. Hence Nerval and his *Voyage en Orient*, in which Istanbul, rather colourless in comparison with Cairo, is one of the last stopovers; then, following Nerval's tracks, Gautier and his *Constantinople*; finally, Flaubert suffering from syphilis caught in Beirut and, similarly as Nerval, disappointed with the "insufficiently Oriental" Constantinople. Further on, Gide, unsparing in his racist comments about the natives, and Le Corbusier, under the spell of the Ottoman legacy (he toured the town prior to his fascination with the aesthetics of the limousine and the transatlantic liner; more, in a bout of Orientalist nostalgia he was wont to urge the Turkish modernisers to preserve and revitalise historical wooden architecture![18]). Pamuk read them patiently and indulgently – at times expressing irony for the schematic depictions, upon other occasions seeking in their descriptions details to which none of the earlier examined texts drew attention. In a word: he allowed the Europeans to tell a story about *their* Istanbul, regardless of the character of those accounts.

The whole issue grows more complicated when we examine the local dragomans, with Pamuk devoting more attention to four of them: Resat Ekrem Koçu, Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, Istanbul guides described by the author as melancholic men of letters. What is the crux of the matter? Apparently, these four writers, at least when read by Pamuk, managed to penetrate the town the most, to salvage the majority of Istanbul in their texts, to best render its specificity lost in time._Koçu – the Sisyphus of the Bosporus – devoted his whole life to a deed that cannot be rivalled: *Istanbul Encyclopedia* (keep in mind that while collecting material for this perverse compendium he devoted himself to studying the special beauty of the local boys, leaving the town and its description on the margin), Kemal - whose poetry is up to this day used to educate consecutive generations of Turks, and Tanpınar, closest to the Nobel Prize laureate: master and student. Both spent their youth becoming familiar with Armenian poetry and devoted their mature years to delving into the language of Western poets and parallel roaming across the poor suburbs, where they discovered a foretaste of the desired *hüzün*. Finally, there is Hisar, whose "Bosporus civilization" remained for Pamuk a model of the Istanbul saga: the fate of people and the town constitute a tangle not to be unravelled.

Where are the complications? - asks the more observant reader. It appears that within the context of the four writers there recurs the melancholy echo of an unavoidable complexity of the identity of the town on the Bosporus – the already familiar East-West paradox. All four enjoy the deserved renown of "great Turkish writers" (perhaps with the sole exception of the rather too controversial Resat Ekrem Koçu), and all four developed their talent and perception in contact, context, and deep fascination with Western literature – either imitating European models or trying to translate and adapt them to local reality. Pamuk is uncompromising in his assessment: he hears clearly the Western semitone even in the "native" representations of Istanbul, closest to virtuosity; the "purity" of description and innocence so desired by nationalists and Turkish purists, its independence from European impact are simply impossible. We reach a successive essential and sensitive point of the arguments presented by the Nobel Prize laureate: the inevitability of borrowing, whose source is both the centuries-long fascination with the West and a *sui generis* impotence of Turkish authors incapable of describing their town. *Leaving aside various official documents and the handful of city columnists who scolded Istanbullus for their poor comportment in the streets, until the beginning of the twentieth century, Istanbullus themselves wrote very little about their city. The living, breathing city – its streets, its atmosphere, its smells, the rich variety of its everyday life was penned by Westerners* – a harsh opinion formulated in a characteristically Orhan Pamuk style.

Whoever would like to make a riposte to this critique by referring to Said's theory of Orientalism, arguing that the Turks simply had no other solution at their disposal than to succumb to the cultural and political domination of the West, cannot expect to enjoy easy success. Only awareness of the complexity of the Turkish paradox, that East-West angle characteristic for contemporary Turkey, makes it possible, Pamuk claims, to perceive the reverse side of the issue. *Orientalism* is interpreted in Istanbul, unfortunately, mainly *to justify nationalist sentiment or to imply that, if it weren't for the West, the East would be a wonderful place* - and Pamuk seems to be correct within the context of the identity disputes conducted from the onset of the Republic.

## *Album*

The author reads about Istanbul, but just as often observes it by seeking its soul and the recognisable face of the town in books, etchings, and sketches. Already browsing through his book makes it possible to imagine the way in which Pamuk sees the space of the metropolis: obsessively recurring images of decrepit wooden villas, the *yalı* along the Bosphorus, views of streets

sprinkled with snow, photographs of the Galata Bridge and ships trying to squeeze into the Golden Horn ports, and, finally, the nineteenth-century etchings by Melling, a favourite illustrator and another European who managed to portray the town better that the local artists. The secret of the force of Melling's compositions is supposed to be concealed in the specifically "humble perspective" assumed by him: the absence of a central point, the distance from which he looks at a panorama, and the emptiness and life granted to elements placed in the frame - all those features bring his way of seeing closer to Pamuk's perception and enable the Nobel Prize laureate to discover in the archaic etchings the shadow of *hüzün*. One more thing that cannot be overlooked: the affiliation supposedly linking Melling with the Ottoman authors of miniatures ready to resign from faithful depiction for the sake of representation concurrent with the canon and subjugating details of the "human" world to strict rules of composition (on the margin: the same principle appears to be applied in Pamuk's text). Yet another person suspended "between" and non-identifiable either with the imaginary East or the West.

The second protagonist of the visual novel and a great illustrator of the town is Ara Güler[19] – a reporter prowling the dark and narrow streets and registering the grim face of Istanbul at the time of Pamuk's childhood. His photographs are supposed to express the writer's favourite black-and-white image of the town: street scenes that could appear to be portrayed by sheer accident, blurred takes of dubious lanes at twilight, pedestrians captured as they hurry along day after day, and, finally, scores of photographs documenting the no longer existing Istanbul with its wooden villas and cobblestones. At first glance, this is an accidental collection or rather one that illustrates the text in a somewhat excessively literal way. Nevertheless, it remains valuable because it enabled Pamuk to descend into the street, to leave for a while the drowsy cosiness of his studio with a view of the Bosporus, and to pretend that he too manages to traverse the town and not only imagines it upon the basis of depictions by others.

Finally, private photographs – *Istanbul* is, after all, also a parallel family saga with the town as its backdrop, and the lead protagonists – Orhan, growing up, his brother, who gives him an undeserved bashing, their beautiful mother, the permanently absent dandy-father and the majestic grandmother. Let us add, that this is the Orhan who planned to devote himself to painting and spent several years of volatile adolescence sketching the same panorama of the Bosporus and *personifying* successive European painters so as to attain that special, dual, Eastern-Western acuity. Once again, an ostensible secondariness or perhaps more exactly: a twisting path leading through the stage of emulating the Orientalist clichés of old Constantinople and towards intentional identification with the town and its image.

## *Intimate town, absent town*

The autobiographical convention observes its own rules: there is place for slight exhibitionism and the generalisation of one's condition, and a wide field for manoeuvre for the sake of auteur self-creation as long as the writer is capable of connecting successive motifs into a whole as cohesive as possible. Pamuk made copious use of these possibilities: poignant photographs of the four-year old pouting Orhan next to Orhan-the intellectual involved in politics, showing off his erudition. Self-deprecatory confessions about the excesses of first love lead smoothly towards stories about the ruins of the poor districts and their nineteenth-century descriptions.

In time, the ostensibly chaotic narration (the chronology of the autobiographical novel is disturbed by successive, supposedly haphazard inserts) produced an order of sorts: *Istanbul* registers the process of reaching an awareness of being-in-a-city, documenting its consecutive stages together with all the complications encountered along the way. The path splits into at least three tracks: the text, the image, and life; choosing only a single one leads astray, and ignoring one of them could result in incomplete, fragmentary identification. In other words, there are three domains in which Pamuk seeks his town, and further: three chronological stages of growing up. Childhood appears to be a time of an unthinking, unruffled absorption of space (careless rides in a 1952 Dodge, dancing on the pavement so as to miss the cracks and "dangerous" joints, reading shop signs, announcements and neon lights), while adolescence is a time of rejecting the simple image of the town. The exalted *quasi-flâneuriusme*[20] of this period led Pamuk towards dark bars suffused with cigarette smoke, clamorous meetings of leftists, and the dirty back stage of the suburbs that merely enhance inner frustration. Finally, the last step: overcoming inner rebellion and the joy of identifying oneself with the community of the residents of Istanbul – mournful in a manner shared by the author, melancholic just like him, and longing for a lost town. The epilogue: the outcome of this reunification with people and place, willingness and readiness to create one's own intimate an urban text that would reflect all three fundamental components: life, image, and literature.

Pamuk experienced his *catharsis* (where else?) on a ferry sailing between the Golden Horn ports, among *tired fellow passengers with their dull coats, their skullcaps,*[21] *their scarves and their string bags* – amidst the symbolic Others of *his* Istanbul.[22] Among all these ordinary, common people, whom he saw in photographs by Ara Güler more frequently than in the familiar streets of the Europeanised quarters; people sharing with their numerous children cramped wooden houses on the brink of collapse in historical suburbs evoking the author's nostalgia. Amidst those millions coming to *his*

town who desecrated hills overgrown with cypresses and covered them with *hideous new concrete apartment buildings (each one crushing my soul)*. To what degree are these words full of elitist arrogance insufferable for the Turkish readers, how much do they carry of intentionally created contrast intent on making the reader once again aware of the nature of the Istanbul *hüzün*?

Finally, one last paradox: while declaring his readiness to describe the melancholic spirit of the town, supposedly unconsciously experienced by all the "locals", Pamuk wrote a magnificent literary document of the bright sides of the specifically Istanbul version of exclusion. If one were to follow on the map the routes of his excursions, the majority of the districts will remain blanks,[23] while those mentioned will correspond to the Europeanised exclusive parts of the town, inhabited by local men of means. The Nobel laureate presents himself as a "native" writing about his town as an insider, but a few pages later on he mentions the feeling of alienation and deprivation of roots experienced while strolling in the streets. We can try to decipher the same ostensible contradiction within the context of the social background against which Pamuk placed himself: writing about the town of old he had in mind a town from an era when the feeling of a loss (post-imperial nostalgia experienced while looking at picturesque ruins) was compensated by an awareness of possession (of social prestige, cultural superiority, economic hinterland). In his words: *[…] later on,* [in the 1960s and 1970s – J. Ch.] *when Turkey's democracy had matured somewhat and rich provincials began flocking to Istanbul to present themselves to "society"; by then, my father's and my uncle's business failures had taken their toll, subjecting us to the indignity of being outclassed by people who had no taste for secularism and no understanding for western culture. If enlightenment entitled us to riches and privilege, how were we to explain to those pious parvenus* that we deserved them? Perhaps by resorting to a text?

On the one hand, *Istanbul* is a story about an intimate, personal growing up of an egocentric man of letters, sensitive to beauty; on the other hand, and in a much less obvious manner, it is a narration about the gradual relegation of the old Istanbul (the town of Pamuk *et consortes*) by the new Istanbul, desultory, un-aesthetic and not worth our attention: the "common" and "uncivilised" Istanbul of immigrants from the provinces. The latter are absent in the book, and we may at best notice the shadow they cast on the idealised vision cherished by the Nobel laureate, causing him to become enveloped by *the darkest, most murderous and authentic strain of melancholy*.

The incompatibility of the map sketched by the writer and the actual dynamic of the town should not come as a surprise – this is the consequence of a project realised with sensitivity and piety, intent on reviving in the text a remembered and perhaps slightly mythologised space, certainly one without any claims to objectivism. *For everything we say about the city's essence says more about our own lives and our own state of mind. The city has no centre other than ourselves,* Pamuk explained his powers of observation. Let this be - as long as such non-symmetrical, subjectivised, and intimate attempts remain excellent literature capable of enchanting some and inclining others towards a more profound reflection on the political-cultural theses of the author. In the case of Orhan Pamuk this manner of conducting a narration is sometimes more successful than an amassment of fictional plots.

**Endnotes**

1 *O. Pamuk, Stambuł. Wspomnienia i miasto,* translated A. Polat, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2008. The numbers of the pages in parentheses after the quotations refer to this edition.

2 Already in 2008 the number of the town inhabitants was estimated at 12,5 million. On the Istanbul demographic boom in recent years cf., i.a. A. Aksoy, *Istanbul's Choice*, "Third Text" no. 1 (22) 2008, pp. 71-83. It is worth noting that the total of residents rapidly growing since 1950 up to this day is predominantly the outcome of inner migration – successive tides of arrivals from the provinces settling down in Istanbul.

3 I mention the names of Istanbul districts, probably of little significance for the Polish reader, in order to outline the "elitist map" of the town – these areas are culturally reserved for the Europeanised upper strata and access is hampered for the average inhabitants of Istanbul by the economic barrier. On the ethnic-cultural character of the historical districts of Istanbul cf. Z. Çelik, *An Architectural Survey of the City,* in: *The Remaking of Istanbul. Portrait of an Ottoman City in 19th* Century, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, p. 9 and 21 sqq.

4 . The complete text of the justification of the verdict, the speech given by Orhan Pamuk at the ceremony of presenting the 2006 Nobel Prize in literature, and details concerning the writer's biography and bibliography in: http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2006/ (access 10.01.2009).

5 Another line of division appears to be much more significant within the context of Istanbul: I have in mind the north-south line. The Pamuk family is an excellent representative of the "northern Istanbul residents", a Europeanised and lay middle class living in districts to the north of the Golden Horn – the first beneficiaries of modernisation, in time relegated to the economic and cultural margin. On this division cf. O. Esen, *The Tightrope Walk of the Middle Class in a Fractured Istanbul,* in: *Art, City and Politics in an Expanding World. Writings from the 9th International Istanbul Biennial*, İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı, Istanbul 2005, pp. 120-121. Pamuk described the experience of crossing the border of the Golden *Horn: The trams had been going up and down our street since 1914 connecting* [northern districts - J. Ch.] *Maçka and Nişantaşı to Taksim Square, Tünel, the Galat Bridge and all the other poor, old historic* [southern – J. Ch.] *neighbourhoods that then seemed to belong to another country* (p. 50).

6 On the ideological and non-neutral significance of railway lines linking the most distant parts of Anatolia and

the cultural centre (Istanbul) and political capital (Ankara) for the Turkish project of modernism see: S. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building. Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London 2001, pp. 119-121. Involvement in building the railroad turned Paul's grandfather into a classic representative of the elite of modernisers, who by imposing reforms intended to transform the crumbling empire into a Western-type state.

7 *Yalı* describes a seaside villa, typical for Ottoman housing in Istanbul, situated on the shores of the Bosporus and "opened" towards the straits and not the town.

8 Nationalistic reforms introduced in the 1930s by the iron-fisted Atatürk and his adherents resulted in an effective severance of the cultural continuum between Ottoman and republican Turkey: a change of the Ottoman alphabet to a Latin one and the Muslim calendar to a Gregorian one, a reform of clothes, a secularisation campaign as well as a transference of the capital of the state from sultanate-era Istanbul to historically neutral Ankara were only some of the bold modernisation steps taken to transform Turkey from the "sick man of Europe" into a modern republic. Cf. D. Kołodziejczyk *Turcja. Historia państw świata XX wieku*, Wyd. Trio, Warszawa 2000, pp. 114-127.

9 An attempted analysis of the category of melancholy in Pamuk's Istanbul by, i.a. Esra Akcan, cf. *The Melancholies of Istanbul,* "World Literature Today", 11-12 2006, pp. 39-43.

10 Abandoned ruins of Moslem brotherhoods (banned in 1925 upon the order of Atatürk), a constantly recurring motif in Istanbul, symbolized the religious sophistication of the Ottoman era but at the time of the young Pamuk were merely mute symbols of the fall and degeneration of a past civilisation.

11 On the Istanbul palimpsest cf. A. Nowaczewski, *Pejzaże miejskiej melancholii*, "Przegląd polityczny" no. 89, 2008, p. 59.

12 Orhan Esen identified Pamuk's favourite motif of a wooden crumbling house, characteristic for the poor districts of Istanbul, with unkempt children reclining on the steps and laundry drying in the windows, as a symbol of backwardness and Oriental poverty contested by adherents of the modernisation of Turkey; cf. O. Essen, *Learning from Istanbul,* in: *Self-Service City: Istanbul*, ed. O. Esen, S. Lanz, b-books, Berlin 2007, fragment available on: http://www.metrozones.info/istanbul/index.html (access 15 January 2009). In recent years, successive quarters dominated by such housing, e.g. the Fatih district mentioned by Pamuk, have been torn down.

13 Cf. Pamuk's reflections about the marginal and indirect status of Turkey in the interview: *Nadal naiwnie wierzę w Zachód*, Magazyn "Dziennika", 25-26 October 2008, pp. 7-8. The author devoted much attention to this motif also in his Nobel lecture: *My Father's Suitcase*, "Przegląd polityczny" no. 89: 2008, (insert).

14 Cf. E. W. Said, *Orientalizm*, transl. M. Wyrwas-Wiśniewska, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2005, in particular pp. 284-354.

15 The motif of the collision of Eastern and Western impacts is one of the *leitmotifs* of Pamuk's works. In: *My Name is Red* ( *Nazywam się Czerwień*, transl. D. Chmielowska, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 2007) it is included within the context of a dispute concerning style and authorship conducted by sixteenth-century painters of miniatures active in the sultanate; in *Snow (Snieg*, transl. A. Polat, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 2006) this tension is expressed in a political and world outlook controversy, thus becoming a direct reason for disturbances in the provincial town of Kars.

16 Cf. *Nadal naiwnie wierzę w Zachód*, Magazyn "Dziennika", 25-26 October 2008, pp. 7-8 and *Moja turecka biblioteka*, "Dziennik", 24 December 2008.

17 Cf. S. Morkoç, *City and Self in Three Accounts of Istanbul: Lorich's Panorama (1559), Le Corbusier's Travelogue (1911) and Pamuk's Memoir (2005)*, "Middle East Technical University Journal of the Faculty of Architecture" no. 2 (24) 2007, pp. 96-97.

18 On the Istanbul (unrealised) projects by Le Corbusier see: S. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building. Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London 2001, pp. 3-4 and 67.

19 Born in 1928 in an Armenian family, probably the most famous Turkish photojournalist and the only Turk working for the Magnum agency. Photographs taken in the 1950s and 1960s, showing the fishermen and workers of Istanbul, attained the status of urban icons. In his book Pamuk included chiefly street photographs by Güler.

20 *The impossibility of the emergence of flâneurisme à la Turca* was interestingly described by Uğur Tanyeli: due to the obliteration of the public/private borderline functioning in Western towns, in Turkey streets became an arena of intensive social control making it impossible to unrestrictedly roam other than in groups. Tanyeli pointed out that outer space assumed the form of places of *meetings and interactions* and not of the *isolation* of the individualised subject. Cf. U. Tangelo, *Public Space/Private Space: The Invention of a Conceptual Dichotomy in Turkey*, in: *Art, City and Politics in an Expanding World. Writings from the 9th International Istanbul Biennial*, İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı, Istanbul 2005, pp. 210-225. Another factor hampering the Istanbul version of *flâneurisme* could be strongly politicized town space, cf. E. Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern. State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey,* Duke University Press, Durham and London 2006, pp. 93-124. An interpretation of *Istanbul* as an analogue of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* was attempted by D. Kozicka, cf. *Stambulskie pasaże*, "Przegląd polityczny" no. 89, 2008, pp. 55-57.

21 *Takke* – a small and usually woolen cap used in Turkey by conservative Moslem men, a male counterpart of the shawl worn by women wishing to demonstrate their identification with Islam.

22 Stephan Lanz described those poor and usually conservative arrivals from the provinces as *anti-urbanites* – the opposite of the "genuine" residents of Istanbul, who in time occupied the majority of urban space and became culturally alien *vis a vis* the town elites , cf. S. Lanz, *If you can make it in Istanbul you can make it anywhere,* in: *Self-Service City: Istanbul*, ed. O. Esen, S. Lanz, b-books, Berlin 2007, fragment available on: http://www.metrozones.info/istanbul/index.html (access 15 January 2009).

23 By way of example, the Asian coast, where 35% of the town's population now lives (about 4,5 million people), is mentioned in the book only twice or thrice as a place where Pamuk's friends raced the Mercedes cars borrowed from their fathers (Bagdad Street) and as one of the favourite localisations of engravings by Melling (historical Üsküdar).