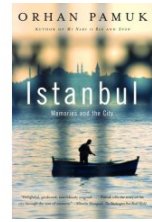




THE ATS BOOK CLUB
Istanbul: Memories and the City
Orhan Pamuk



About the Book Knopf/Vintage International, June 2005)

A portrait, by turns intimate and panoramic, of one of the world's great cities, by its foremost man of letters, author of the acclaimed novels *Snow* and *My Name Is Red*.

Blending reminiscence with history; family photographs with portraits of poets and pashas; art criticism, metaphysical musing, and, now and again, a fanciful tale, Orhan Pamuk invents an ingenious form to evoke his lifelong home, the city that forged his imagination. He begins with his childhood among the eccentric extended Pamuk family in the dusty, carpeted, and hermetically sealed apartment building they shared. In this place came his first intimations of the melancholy awareness that binds all residents of his city together: that of living in the seat of ruined imperial glories, in a country trying to become "modern" at the dizzying crossroads of East and West. This elegiac communal spirit overhangs Pamuk's reflections as he introduces the writers and painters (among the latter, most particularly the German Antoine-Ignace Melling) through whose eyes he came to see Istanbul. Against a background of shattered monuments, neglected villas, ghostly backstreets, and, above all, the fabled waters of the Bosphorus, he presents the interplay of his budding sense of place with that of his predecessors. And he charts the evolution of a rich, sometimes macabre, imaginative life, which furnished a daydreaming boy refuge from family discord and inner turmoil, and which would continue to serve the famous writer he was to become. It was, and remains, a life fed by the changing microcosm of the apartment building and, even more, the beckoning kaleidoscope beyond its walls.

As much a portrait of the artist as a young man as it is an oneiric Joycean map of the city, *Istanbul* is a masterful evocation of its subject through the idiosyncrasies of direct experience as much as the power of myth--the dazzling book Pamuk was born to write.

About the Author



Orhan Pamuk was born in Istanbul in 1952 and grew up in a large family similar to those which he describes in his novels *Cevdet Bey and His Sons* and *The Black Book*, in the wealthy westernized district of Nisantasi. As he writes in his autobiographical book *Istanbul*, from his childhood until the age of 22 he devoted himself largely to painting and dreamed of becoming an artist. After graduating from the secular American Robert College in Istanbul, he studied architecture at Istanbul Technical University for three years, but abandoned the course when he gave up his ambition to become an architect and artist. He

went on to graduate in journalism from Istanbul University, but never worked as a journalist. At the age of 23 Pamuk decided to become a novelist, and giving up everything else retreated into his flat and began to write.

Apart from three years in New York, Orhan Pamuk has spent all his life in the same streets and district of Istanbul, and he now lives in the building where he was raised. Pamuk has been writing novels for 30 years and never done any other job except writing. His books have been translated into more than 40 languages. *Orhan Pamuk was awarded the 2006 Nobel Literature Prize.*

You can find interviews, speeches, and profiles on Orhan Pamuk's website:

<http://www.orhanpamuk.net/interviews.htm>

Pamuk's Works in English (www.nobelprize.org)

-**The White Castle** / translated from the Turkish by Victoria Holbrook. – New York : Braziller, 1991; London : Faber & Faber, 2001. – Translation of Beyaz Kale

-**The Black Book** / translated by: Güneli Gün. – New York : Farrar, Straus, 1994 ; London : Faber & Faber, 1994. – Translation of Kara Kitap

-**The Black Book** / translated by: Maureen Freely. – New York : Knopf, 2006 ; London : Faber & Faber, 2006. – Translation of Kara Kitap

-**The New Life** / translated by Güneli Gün. – New York : Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997 ; London: Faber & Faber, 1997. – Translation of Yeni Hayat

-**My Name is Red** / translated from the Turkish by Erdağ M. Göknar. – New York : Knopf, 2001 ; London : Faber & Faber, 2001. – Translation of Benim Adım Kırmızı

-**Snow** / translated from the Turkish by Maureen Freely. – New York: Knopf, 2004; Translation of Kar

-**Istanbul: Memories and the City** / translated from the Turkish by Maureen Freely. – New York: Knopf, 2005; London: Faber & Faber, 2005. – Translation of Istanbul: Hatıralar Ve Şehir

About the Translator



Maureen Freely was born in Neptune, New Jersey, and grew up in Istanbul, Turkey. Since graduating from Harvard in 1974, she has lived mostly in England. She is the author of five novels — *Mother's Helper*, *The Life of the Party*, *The Stork Club*, *Under the Vulcania*, and *The Other Rebecca* — and three works of non-fiction. She is currently at work on a sixth novel, her second to be set in Istanbul. Her translation of Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* was published by Faber in May 2004. She is a senior lecturer in the Warwick Writing Programme in the Department of English at the University of Warwick. She is also a regular contributor to the *Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Independent*, the *New Statesman* and several Turkish magazines.

Reviews

"Delightful, profound, marvelously original. . . . Pamuk tells the story of the city through the eyes of memory." To read more: "[My City of Ruins](#)" *The Washington Post Book World*, June 2005, *Alberto Manguel*.

"Far from a conventional appreciation of the city's natural and architectural splendors, *Istanbul* tells of an invisible melancholy and the way it acts on an imaginative young man, aggrieving him but pricking his creativity." –To read more: "[A Walker in the City](#)" *The New York Times*, June 2005, *Christopher de Bellaigue*.

"A fascinating literary adventure... Rich in details and research." To read more: "[Eastern Glow, Western Grays](#)" *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2005, *Sandip Roy*.

About the Moderator

Esra Akcan was born in Ankara, she now lives in New York, where she works as a postdoctoral core lecturer at Columbia University. Akcan received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in architecture from Middle East Technical University, and her MPhil and Ph.D from Columbia University. She taught history-theory classes, architectural and landscape design studios at Columbia University, New School, Pratt Institute, METU, and did yearly doctoral research in Germany through Berlin Technical University. She recently gave a lecture at a conference on Orhan Pamuk, organized by World Literature Today, entitled "Melancholy as Object: Orhan Pamuk's Istanbul."

About Istanbul



The god and human, nature and art are together in there, they have created such a perfect place that it is valuable to see." Lamartine's famous poetic line reveals his love for Istanbul, describing the embracing of two continents, with one arm reaching out to Asia and the other to Europe.

Istanbul, once known as the capital of capital cities, has many unique features. It is the only city in the world to straddle two continents, and the only one to have been a capital during two consecutive empires - Christian and Islamic. Once was capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul still remains the commercial, historical and cultural pulse of Turkey, and its beauty lies in its ability to embrace its contradictions. Ancient and modern, religious and secular, Asia and Europe, mystical and earthly all co-exist here.

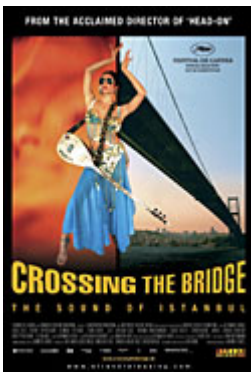
Its variety is one of Istanbul's greatest attractions: The ancient mosques, palaces, museums and bazaars reflect its diverse history. The thriving shopping area of Taksim buzzes with life and entertainment. And the serene beauty of the Bosphorus, Princes Islands and parks bring a touch of peace to the otherwise chaotic metropolis.

For more information about Istanbul, please visit Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism's website: <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN/BelgeGoster.aspx?17A16AE30572D313679A66406202CCB0251C64DF22CCB2F6>.

You can also visit New York Times Istanbul Travel Guide section:
<http://travel.nytimes.com/travel/guides/europe/turkey/istanbul/overview.html>

Related Resources

MOVIE:



Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul (June 2006)

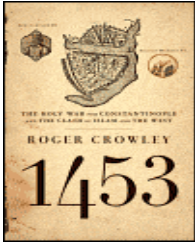
A European musician and composer sets out to capture the musical diversity of Istanbul. A lover of experimenting with sound, Alexander Hacke (of the German avant-garde band Einstürzende Neubauten) roams the streets of Istanbul with his mobile recording studio and "magic mike" to assemble an inspired portrait of Turkish music. His voyage leads to the discovery of a broad spectrum ranging from modern electronic, rock and hip-hop to classical "Arabesque." In his follow-up to the critically acclaimed film 'Head-On,' director Fatih Akin introduces an international audience to the diversity and uniqueness of the historic and recent expressions of musical creativity in the heart of Istanbul. 'Crossing the Bridge' was a selection in the Cannes Film Festival, 2005.

Los Angeles Times | Kenneth Turan

Crossing the Bridge does more than offer a wide variety of entertaining and intoxicating Turkish music. It also uses music to paint a portrait of a vibrant, cosmopolitan city and provide a window into a rich and varied national culture.

BOOK:**1453****Roger Crowley**

1453 is brought to life by the stories of its two ambitious battling leaders—Mehmed II, sultan of the Ottoman Empire, and Constantine XI, the 57th emperor of Byzantium. The book explores the issues that led up to and resulted from the fall of Constantinople.

**Reader's Guide**

1. "I can't remember where I got this idea or how it came to me," Pamuk writes, but from as early in life as he could remember he sensed the presence of a second self [p. 3]. When his aunt verified this notion by insisting that a strange boy in a photograph in her apartment was Orhan, the "ghost of the other Orhan" came to haunt him [pp. 4–5]. What interpretations might you suggest for this fascination with and fear of the double self? If you have read Pamuk's fiction, which books does the story of "the other Orhan" bring to mind?
2. In saying "This book is concerned with fate" [p. 7], Pamuk suggests that fate consists largely in being born in a particular place at a particular time. If fate usually connotes a fixed course in life and a passive acceptance of circumstance, how does Pamuk, as a writer, manipulate his own fate? What does he make of the fate of being born an *Istanbullu*?
3. Why does Pamuk refer to his family-owned apartment building as "our bleak museum house" [p. 34]? What are the circumstances or physical details that convey the sense of bleakness or entrapment?
4. Readers familiar with Pamuk's writing are aware of his delight in lists. What is the purpose of the list that runs from page 94 to page 99? What is its effect?
5. What do the photographs contribute to the book? Although the images come from a variety of sources, those of Ara Güler and those from the archives of Selahattin Giz are most numerous (see pp. 371–73). Do the photographs convey a certain mood or a certain perspective on Istanbul? What do they express about the city, particularly for readers who have never visited?
6. To what degree is Pamuk's adult identity rooted in his childhood and adolescent experiences? If you have read Marcel Proust or other writers whose childhood memories are the source of their creative life, how does Pamuk's writing compare?
7. Does it seem that Pamuk possesses an extraordinarily extensive memory for the scenes and events he experienced as a child? Is it possible that children are far more sensitive to their surroundings than adults? If so, why?
8. For a person so rooted in his native culture, is Pamuk also alienated, in certain ways, from Turkish culture? What are the causes of his alienation? How does his status as a writer of international fame contribute to his isolation?

9. The concept of *hüzün* is perhaps the most important idea in the book. The sense of melancholy, of paralysis, of having been left behind by modernity, exists in many cultures—it even pervades James Joyce’s *Dubliners*. What is the cause of *hüzün* in Istanbul? Does this phenomenon have different causes and different manifestations in different cultures?

10. In an interview, Pamuk described the dual urges behind the writing of **Istanbul**: “Walter Benjamin says there are two kinds of city writing: those books written by people who come from outside, who tend to look for the exotic, and those written by the people who have lived in the city, which tend to be autobiographical. So I thought, why don’t I go ahead and write a book that would be ambitious as autobiography, and also ambitious as a strange essay about the town? I thought that if I tried to do this, I would find something new. And this is my attempt” [“A City of Constant Melancholy,” *The Irish Times*, April 23, 2005]. Does **Istanbul** come across as “something new” in its merging of two genres?

11. How does Pamuk relate himself to the four Turkish writers—Kemal, Tanpinar, Hisar, and Koçu—he discusses in chapter 11?

12. Pamuk notes that Antoine-Ignace Melling, who created beautiful scenes of Istanbul, was a European. What happens when Western visitors to Istanbul romanticize the city, and when natives see themselves and their city through Western eyes? What does Pamuk mean when he writes, “the roots of . . . *hüzün* are European” [p. 233]?

13. Pamuk is aware that his family was a privileged one that has come down in the world. He writes, “It was a long time coming . . . but the cloud of gloom and loss spread over Istanbul by the fall of the Ottoman Empire had finally claimed my family too” [p. 17]. How does his family history affect his view of himself and his city? How does his status as an internationally known writer affect his identity as an *Istanbullu*?

14. In chapter 5, “Black and White,” Pamuk writes, “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” [pp. 39–40]. Is such a vision full of opportunities for a writer like Pamuk? How does the relative world-historical significance of his native land affect a writer’s creative outlook?

15. Speaking of the scenic paintings by Antoine-Ignace Melling, Pamuk says, “At times when I was most desperate to believe in a glorious past . . . I found Melling’s engravings consoling. But even as I allow myself to be transported, I am aware that part of what makes Melling’s paintings so beautiful is the sad knowledge that what they depict no longer exists. Perhaps I look at these paintings precisely because they make me sad” [p. 63]. Is this ability to take pleasure in melancholy perhaps a major reason that Pamuk has remained in Istanbul when many other writers might have left?

16. Pamuk has said, “It seems if you write fiction [in the West] your nationality is not that important, but if you write fiction in this part of the world your nationality and, even worse, ethnicity are important. When an English writer writes about a love affair he writes about humanity’s love affair, but when I write about a love affair I am only talking about a Turk’s love affair” [“Occidental Hero,” *The Guardian* (London), May 8, 2004]. Is this an accurate judgment of how non-Western writers are viewed by the West?