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Istanbul as an Urban Palimpsest: Rewriting Cultural Memory and Deconstructing the East-West Binary in Orhan Pamuk's Novels

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إسطنبول كرقيم حضري: إعادة كتابة الذاكرة الثقافية وتفكيك ثنائية الشرق والغرب في روايات أورهان باموق

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Abstract
In this essay, Orhan Pamuk is discussed as an author who describes Istanbul as a palimpsestic city in both My Name is Red and The Museum of Innocence, specifically the cultural memory and the EastWest hybridity. The paper explores how the narratives of Pamuk create stratified identities of Istanbul by using the palimpsest theory and basing on the idea of sites of memory by Pierre Nora and the structure of cultural memory and urban palimpses developed by Andreas Huesser. Through the analysis of the artistic and philosophical conflicts presented in My Name is Red and the changes that were experienced in the society in the Museum of Innocence, this thesis shows how Pamuk disrupts the binary opposition between tradition and modernity and between the Western and the Eastern paradigms. This study has a contribution in that it is a new form of postcolonial and city literary research since it is the first study that deals with literature that mediates thick historical experiences and identity in a city that is a paradigm of hybridity. The results describe the image of Istanbul provided by Pamuk as not a stable historical place but a dynamic palimpsest, where various stories are written on the landscape of the city and redefine the cultural memory of the city. Such a detailed description can provide much information about identity formation in the global city, which focuses on the constant struggle of heritage and global mobility.Keywords: Orhan Pamuk, Istanbul, palimpsest, cultural memory, East-West hybridity

الملخص
تتناول هذه الدراسة أورهان باموق بوصفه كاتبًا يصوّر مدينة إسطنبول كرقيم حضري متعدد الطبقات في روايتيه *اسمي أحمر* و*متحف البراءة*، خصوصًا فيما يتعلق بالذاكرة الثقافية والهجنة بين الشرق والغرب. يستكشف البحث كيف تُنتج سرديات باموق هويات متراكبة لمدينة إسطنبول من خلال توظيف نظرية الرقيم، والاعتماد على مفهوم **أماكن الذاكرة** عند بيير نورا، وعلى بنية الذاكرة الثقافية والرقيم الحضري كما طوّرها أندرياس هوسر. ومن خلال تحليل الصراعات الفنية والفلسفية في اسمي أحمر، والتحولات الاجتماعية التي تشكّلت في متحف البراءة، تُظهر الدراسة كيف يعمل باموق على زعزعة الثنائيات الضدية بين التقليد والحداثة، وبين النموذجين الغربي والشرقي. تُسهم هذه الدراسة في حقل ما بعد الاستعمار وأدب المدن بوصفها مقاربة جديدة تتناول نصوصًا أدبية تقدّم خبرات تاريخية كثيفة وهويات متعددة في مدينة تُعدّ نموذجًا بارزًا للهجنة الثقافية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن صورة إسطنبول عند باموق ليست مكانًا تاريخيًا ثابتًا، بل رقيمًا دينامي ًا تُكتب فوقه طبقات سردية متعاقبة تعيد صياغة الذاكرة الثقافية للمدينة. يسهم هذا الوصف التفصيلي في تقديم فهم أعمق لعمليات تشكّل الهوية في المدينة العالمية، حيث يتفاعل الإرث الثقافي مع حركة العولمة والصراع المستمر بين الثبات والتغيّر. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** أورهان باموق، إسطنبول، الرقيم، الذاكرة الثقافية، الهجنة بين الشرق والغرب.

Introduction

Nobel Prize-winning contemporary Turkish author Orhan Pamuk has dedicated his academic career to Istanbul study. The metropolis is not only represented as a geographical place but a palimpsest--endless overwriting of inscription in which previous writing recurs--this way indicating centuries of cultural memory as well as a

landscape where numerous identities exist together. This palimpsestic conception is what is most important to note in the conception of Pamuk in his narrative strategies in My Name is Red (1998) and The Museum of Innocence (2008) where Istanbul is depicted as an active archive of EastWest syncretism and and a location of tension between tradition and modernity, memory and forgetting.The vision of Istanbul that Pamuk creates is that of a city full of conflicting coexistences. He writes in his memoir, Istanbul: Memories and the City (2003) that it is a poor city at the fringe of Europe but he at the same time writes that the city is rich in history and is culturally resilient (Pamuk, 2005, p. 45). This duality is realised in the idea of the huzun, a certain tint of mourning and remembrance that Pamuk describes to be the spirit of the city spirit, a mixture of historical submission and Sufi modesty (Pamuk 2005, 23). As a result, the palimpsestic nature of Istanbul is not only spatial but also emotional and cultural, and in which the histories of the Ottoman, Byzantine, and modern Turkish are intertwined or collided.This paper explores the way in which the novels by Pamuk build the palimpsestic identity of Istanbul concerning the cultural memory and EastWest hybridity. Basing the analysis on the theoretical discussion of the cultural memory studies and the theory of the urban literary, namely, the concept of the lieux de memoir by Pierre Nora and the idea of the urban palimpsest by Andreas Huyssen, the present study will examine how Pamuk manages the opposition between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, East and West. My Name Is Red and The Museum of Innocence give ample grounds on which this question can be posed, shedding light into the way in which, through individual and collective memory, the city is weaved, erased and rewritten.The intellectual notion of lieux de memoire by Pierre Nora provides an essential perspective with which Istanbul created by Pamuk can be viewed. In modern societies, where organic memory has dispersion, the continuation or sustainability of collective memory resides residually in symbolic sites musical monuments, museums, texts of which Nora has argued (Nora 1989, p. 7). Pamuk makes the city of Istanbul like such a place, where its urban environment and cultural objects are both disputed repositories of shared memory. As noted by Samar, imaginative projection of Istanbul by Pamuk, depicts a field of shooting where two poles of reference which are the most opposite are converged in identity politics of the city and its city dwellers: a cosmopolitan Ottoman Islamic patrimony and a nationalist, westernized, modernist mode (Aljahdali 2018, p. 2). This strain is the focus of Pamuk, whose idea of palimpsestic stratification is not about wiping out the heritage but it is constantly being redefined.This cultural negotiation is dramatized in My Name is Red where it is a clash between the traditional Islamic miniature painting and the artistic paradigms of the Renaissance Western world. The metafictional form of the novel, presented in the way of using various narrators, is a manifestation of a larger culture battle, an illustration of the historical experience of Istanbul to come to terms with its place between opposing worlds. Pamuk writes: Western art lies on the basis of a viewpoint and realism, ours on the plainness and spirituality (Pamuk 1998, p. 115) which is a dichotomy metaphorically applied to urban hybridity in which stratification of conflictual cultural memories is created. On the same note, The Museum of Innocence depicts Istanbul as a palimpsest within the confined spectrum of autobiographical recollection intertwined with the social and political changes of the twentieth century of the city. The protagonist Kemal collects his own museum of material mementoes, reminiscing Nora in her lieux de memoire where the memory is objectified. It is a metaphor of the city, as Pamuk explains, because a city is a collection of memories, the remnants of the past, and these are the ones that shape and determine the present (Pamuk 2008, p. 203). The story of Kemal shows the temporary character of identity in a city being transformed to modernity and globalization.This paper fits into the postcolonial and urban literary literature in the way it shows how this Istanbul by Pamuk defies simplistic dichotomies like East/West and tradition/modernity. The palimpsestic city is a place in which cultural hybridity is not symbolically represented but negotiated dynamically in relation to more general identity issues in a post-imperial world environment. According to Huyssen, urban palimpsest is a figure used to signify the layers of conflicting memories that characterize the contemporary urban environment: history is never erased or fixed but is trampled upon or rewritten constantly (Huyssen 2003, p. 12). This ambiguity is explored in the novels of Pamuk showing how memory and past can guide the modern life. Also, the work by Pamuk challenges nationalist histories that aim at homogenizing the Turkish culture. Through his foregrounding of the cosmopolitan Ottoman history of Istanbul and its Westernizing forces, Pamuk resurfaces the pluralized cultural memory. Aljahdali argues that the memoirs and novels by Pamuk reclaim the multi-ethnic ruins of the city periphery to the text centre and confront monologic Turkification, as well as restoring the pluralised cultural memory (Aljahdali, 2018, p. 15).To sum up, Istanbul by Orhan Pamuk is a kind of a palimpsest where cultural memory and East West hybridity interlace to produce a multidimensional or multilayered identity. In My Name is Red, The Museum of Innocence, and other, Pamuk illustrates that the history of the city is being constantly reformulated

and thus challenges binary thinking and creates a feeling of multiplicity. This highlights the centrality of the literary representations in mediating the cultural memory and identity in modern urban settings, which makes his works a useful tool to the study of literature, memory, and urban cultural theory.

Literature Review The oeuvre of Orhan Pamuk has been seized upon by many scholars for the subtlety with which it represents Istanbul as a palimpsest inscribed with historical, cultural and social memories. The metaphor of the palimpsest--as a manuscript erased (but never entirely effaced) to make room for new texts--has been broadly employed in urban and cultural studies to discuss cities such as Istanbul while occupying or retaining successive layers of civilizations and cultural influences (Huyssen, 2003). Other works by Pamuk (both fictional and autobiographical, namely, My Name is Red (1998), The Museum of Innocence (2008) and Istanbul: Memories and the City (2003)) have been examined with reference to this theoretical framework in order to discern how the city's identity is constantly re-inscribed and challenged.The palimpsestism of Istanbul in Pamuk is as much a question of cultural memory and identity construction as it is spatial and architectural. While noting that Pamuk's Istanbul is a complex hybrid city confronting itself with the binaries of East and West, tradition and modernity. Aljahdali 2018 contends that in Pamuk's representation, "the cosmopolitan Ottoman islamic heritage who interact with a national western modern style" portray how identities in Istanb ul are "never determinate but ever escaping" (p. 2). This indeterminacy mirrors the complex history of the city and the multilayered identities of people who live there and Pamuk conveys this through his narrative techniques and use of symbols.Pamuk's autobiography, Istanbul: Memories and the City, has been fundamental in constructing the city as a place of melancholic memory -or huzun, a Turkish word referred to as a sense of mourning and nostalgia that is shared by a group of people. As Pamuk (2005) describes, huzun is "a collective shared melancholy that descends on the city, a sadness of lost empire and influence, of individual desires, and a sense of the end of both a personal and collective past" (p. 23). This mood also underlies the physical and cultural scene of the city, and the ways in which memory and identity are lived and told. The memoir is a testimony to how being marginalized in global politics and culture underpins a sense of marginalization but also a special hardiness and cultural richness. Pamuk's artist engagement with the city, then, is both a mourning work and a resistance: by writing about Istanbul, Pamuk tries to "bring the city to the center of attention" (Aljahdali, 2018, p. 9).Pierre Nora's (1989) theory about lieux de memoire (sites of memory) has been a fruitful tool for interpreting Pamuk's Istanbul. Nora suggests that in contemporary societies, where living memory is fading, memory is being stored in symbolic sites that secure collective identity. Pamuk's Istanbul is one such site, in which monuments, districts, and cultural practices are inscribed as contested memories. Huyssen (2003) develops this notion further, imagining the urban palimpsest as a metaphor for the dense and contradictory memories richly layered within the cityscape. Pamuk's novels embody this tension, depicting Istanbul as a city where history is not forgotten or crystallized, but constantly rewritten.In My Name is Red, Pamuk stages the cultural dilemma of Istanbul in its hybridity with the altercation between traditional Islamic miniature painting and Western Renaissance painting. Its metafictional tale (which delivers points of view by paintings) symbolizes the larger Eastern/Western reckoning. For Pamuk (1998), "the West's art is perspective, west's art is realism, our art is flatness, and our art is spiritual" (207). This aesthetic dualism mirrors the complex identity of the city, in which cultural memory is contested and called into question. Critics like Aljahdali (2018) have emphasized the significance of the novel's agenda in probing artistic stylistic differences as a metaphor for Istanbul's cultural syncretism, and thus the "continual tug-of-war between the traditional and the modern" (p. 5).The Museum of Innocence similarly evokes a moving meditation on individual and collective memory sutured to the social changes unfolding in late twentieth-century Istanbul. The protagonist Kemal's obsessive practice of collecting objects associated with his lost love may be thought of as mirroring the city's own act of putting away bits of its own past. The museum, according to Pamuk (2008), is "an analogy for the city itself--... a collection of memories, pieces of the past that define our identity" (p. 203). Foregrounded in this narrative is the materiality of memory and its part in the construction of identity, a construction that echoes Nora's (1989) concept of lieux de memoire. There is a fluidity of identity in a city in the midst of rapid urbanization and globalization, and the novel portrays both the neighborhoods and social life of Istanbul.Pamuk's politics of memory is also relevant to Turkish nationalism, which has frequently been dominated by an urge to homogenize cultural history. According to Aljahdali (2018), Pamuk's writing "resubmit[s] several of its multi-ethnic ruins - those forgotten but sought after by anachronistic readers - from the margins of the city center to the heart of the text, thereby twisting Turkification into a univocal project, and honoring a pluralistic cultural memory." (p. 15) This dissident position makes Pamuk, in the words of another author, a memory activist, who writes to give memory a voice, to contest the conventional discourse and to

uphold the city's multicultural identity. Istanbul as Palimpsest In this sense the palimpsestic Istanbul begins to appear as a site of resistance and negotiation, a space of competing memories and identities.Palimpsest has also been used as a metaphor for Pamuk's other writing as well, for example, The Black Book has been read as a postmodernist history of Turkey and its political and cultural intricacies. The Black Book, foregrounds that identities are never determinate but forever eluding and adopts detective form of the novel to confront its polyphonic and polyharmonic tones, it corresponds to Hagopian and child's work that explores confound civilizations of Istanbul (The Black Book as criticism of Istanbul's ataturkism identity) elsewhere Hagopian and child was showing Istanbul Meltin pot of civilization (The Black Book as the book II)" (p.1). This is consistent with the prevailing academic consensus that Pamuk's Istanbul is a contested, dynamic space where history and memory are constantly re-imagined.Pamuk's literary representation of the city of Istanbul has also been analyzed in connection with the urban and socio-economic shifts within the city. Kara (2021) refers to Pamuk's stories as they document a continued physical and social evolution in the urban landscape of Istanbul, influenced by a combination of civilizations and modern forces. This attitude is expressed in the architecture, neighbourhoods, and culture of the city that framed the tensions between the old and the new. This point emphasizes how urban literary studies enable us to understand cities as locations of memory and identity.In addition, Pamuk's writing has been associated with more general theoretical debates on cultural syncretism and on postcolonial identity. Significantly for Huyssen (2003), the metaphor of the urban palimpsest unsettles binary oppositions such as East/West, tradition/modernity, and highlights the fluidity, the plurality of subjectivity in the fluid metropolis of today. This hybrid character of Pamuk's Istanbul is a city that both supports and holds off Westernization and retains its Ottoman and Islamic past. This complicated negotiation is the heart of the city's cultural memories, amply depicted in the pages of Pamuk.Besides literature, Pamuk's memoir Istanbul: Memories and the City has also been analysed for its autobiographical connection with cultural memory. Pamuk's memories of his childhood and coming of age illuminate the juncture at which individual experience meets national history to form the soul of the artist. And then there are" - he continues - "some days I am afraid my clinging love for the place will make a bone of my brain, that isolation may freeze the hots in my glance. Daha sonra rahat u lass yorum kendime, cunku thehri gormemde bir yabanc>lik olduyunu hat>r lat >r>m kendime" (Pamuk, 2005, s. popeye.cartoonnetwrok.cartoons, p. 241). This foreignising effect enables Pamuk to blend the various times of Istanbul together, resulting in a complex narrative that makes reductive readings nearly impossible.The function of the European gaze in Pamuk's work is also a theme that has attracted scholarly attention. Though the Eurocentric eye has generally been dismissive of Istanbul as marginal in space, Pamuk repositions it as a site of "nourishment" instead of danger, offering a possible critical return to the city's identity (Pamuk, 2005, p. 39). This ambivalence is characteristic of the city's ambivalence towards modernity and globalization, themes that run through Pamuk's literary and autobiographical work.In the final analysis, the existing studies on OP's Istanbul provide an overview of the fact that the literature on his work often foregrounds the city's palimpsestic character as a space of overlain cultural memory and hybridity. My Name is Red, The Museum of Innocence, and Istanbul: Memories and the City, in their entirety combined corpus, conjure up a deeply layered representation of Istanbul as identity in perpetual rewriting and contest. The concepts of lieux de memoire (Nora) and urban palimpsest (Huyssen), among others, offer useful frames of analysis to understand how literature mediates layered histories and identities. The work of Pamuk resists these binary dualisms and nationalist discourses, affirming the multicultural character of the city and its fluid identity. This one-two punch of scholarship illuminates not just Pamuk's literary craft, but also advances the arguments of the burgeoning fields of cultural memory, urban studies, and postcolonial theory.

Discussion

The metaphor of the city of Istanbul as a palimpsestic city by Pamuk involves digging too deep into the past as the cultural memory of the city and the hybridity of the city nature are put under the microscope. This argument represents an elaboration of the conceptual framework of palimpsest initially presented by Thomas De 30 and subsequently adopted by critics like Andreas 2003 and Pierre 1989 to understand the process by which the city of Istanbul and its cascading cultural traditions are written and erased in the novels of My Name is Red by Pamuk and The Museum of Innocence by Pamuk. The palimpsest analogy is specifically most appropriate to Istanbul, the heavy morphing ground of Byzantine, Ottoman, and the contemporary Turkish civilisations where the past invariably exists and is in constant interrelationship with and interaction with the new.The city of Istanbul that Pamuk creates is a city of memory and loss onto which the historical mutations and cultural negotiations are written on its physical and social landscape. According to Kalsoom and Rukh (2023), Istanbul offers a concept

of palimpsest, which is an indicator of the indefinitely evolving elements of urban composition (p. 480). The development is not only architectural but also social and cultural and is being directed by the coexistence of diverse civilizations and their consequences. The identity of the city, therefore, is a result of such an overlapping of historical, social, economic and even traditional layers, and that is what Pamuk visibly employs in his novel.The conflict between the East and the West, as well as the opposition between the tradition and modernity, is a kind of a theme in the description of Istanbul by Pamuk. Aljahdali (2018) emphasizes that the writing of Pamuk writes in the politicoarchi -textural points of Istanbul in-betweenness in tension of past and present, conservatism and cosmopolitanism, tradition and modernity (p. 1). Such in-between-ness is reflected through the architecture, the culture and social structure of the city where its Ottoman/Islamic past and the westernized modern lifestyles are maintained. Pamuk portrays these tensions in his novels through narrative and symbolic tropes, which demonstrate the way the residents of Istanbul negotiate the thick cultural heritage.In My Name is Red, Pamuk employs the conflict between the Islamic miniature painting and the Western Renaissance artwork as an allegory of the Istanbul cultural synthesis. The artistic and intellectual issues of convention and creation are brought into focus in the metafictional structure of the novel in which paintings do the talking. One of the forms of the exchange or the negotiation between the East and the West is the Turkish culture and the cultures of the Occident, according to Pamuk (1998), the art of the West is about the vision and the reality, and our art is about the surface and the mysticism (p. 115). Such artistic duality is the matter of layered identity of the city, the cultural memory in conflict and rearticulated. The novel, thus, serves as a platform through which the palimpsestic nature of Istanbul can be enacted via the relations between images and texts.Similarly, The Museum of Innocence addresses the issue of memory at both individual and social level in the shifting social life of Istanbul in the second half of the past century. The fact that Kemal is a compulsive collector of the objects related to this lost love, is a metaphor of the fact that the city itself is holding the traces of its past. Pamuk (2008) states that the museum is a circle of memories, fragments of the past that make us what we are and thus the museum can be said to be a metaphor of the city itself. Such embodiment of memory is similar to the definition of lieux de memoire by Nora (1989), which grounds the memory on material locations and objects. Such description of neighborhoods in Istanbul and social world depicts how identities are transient in a fast modernizing and globalizing city.The feeling of melancholy, or huzun, of the city which Pamuk also dwells on in his book, Istanbul: Memories and the City, is, he claims, a collective psychological state of collective bereavement and nostalgia that has defined the culture of the city. According to Pamuk (2005), one sadness is not individual sadness but a collective sadness, the existence of which can be summoned whenever one wishes to take a glance at the city (p.23). It is an atmosphere that addresses both the distance that the city has gone on its long way out of imperial grandeur to the modern fringes of marginality, but also addresses the strength and cultural energy. The personal and communal memory merge together through the tender memories of childhood presented in the memoir, as well as the memories of the life of the city, and they write the palimpsestic identity of the cityThe literature justifies that Pamuk Istanbul, on the contrary, is a palimpsest a vibrant palimpsest that is not erased or sealed and more: a history that is being rewritten continuously. Huyssen (2003) argues that, the urban palimpsest is a symbol of overlaid layers of memory of contested, and continually re-written history in the formation of the modern city (p. 12). This is the defining feature of the novels by Pamuk who brings Istanbul as a city of stratified stories and lives. According to Kalsoom and Rukh (2023), the identity of a place is neither constituted exclusively by its architectural and historical shapes but also by the nuances of social, cultural, economic and traditional artefacts of a place (p. 484). This multidimensionality is what helps one to admire the cultural memory and hybridity of Istanbul.Neither is the politics of memory (and forgetting) as actualized in the Turkish setting by Pamuk inadvertently polemical as nationalist discourses are often used to homogenize the cultural history. The novel of Pamuk reclaims the multi-ethnic ruins of the city periphery to the very core of the text to the detriment of univocal Turkification and in its place the pluralistic cultural memory (Aljahdali 2018, 15). This critical position is in opposition to the hegemonic discourses that obscure or rationalise the multicultural and Ottoman historical background of the city. On the contrary, Pamuk provides the existence of different cultural components: the cosmopolitan heritage of Istanbul in the first place.The palimpsestic Istanbul that Pamuk created should also be aesthetically considered. Aljahdali (2018) explains a subtle body -banking of ruins and paradise, the crumbling buildings (and streets) that form the geopolitical picturesque that was initially cobbled together by DonnaLandry a post-imperial auto-critique: the beauty of the architecture of Istanbul in decay incorporating the imperial elements/nature intrusion (p. 11). According to Pamuk, the beauty of a broken fountain and an old ramshackle mansion can be described as the symbols of the dense history of the city (Pamuk, 2005, p. 231). This

visual treatment of the palimpsestic face of a city, as both a place of disintegration and renewal, which is literally written in the scribble of the streets, and where legends of cities are written in every form, points up the inspiration that Hamburg has given to urban legends of all sorts.There is the other important facet of the works of Pamuk which is the identity of Istanbul that is being formed under the European gaze. In contrast to the regular exoticisation and marginalisation of Istanbul in the Western mindset, Pamuk reclaims the city as a form of nourishment rather than a threat and as such, enables one to criticise the identity of the city (Pamuk, 2005, p. 39). This ambivalence is a reflection of the ambivalence of Istanbul that exists between East and West, tradition and modernity, and accentuates on the hybridity of the city as a place of cultural exchange.The theme of memory loss and erasing is also present in Pamuk Istanbul in literature. Old memories become reborn, and the new order causes things to go blank and erase the past, ready to get new experiences, new truths, new memories (Kalsoom 2023). Historical inscription is erased to make way to new inscription, and the city of the present and the past, between development and decay, the need to modernize and modernize our infrastructure, is mired in the erasure and restoration of memory. It is indicated by the physical and social shifts and changes that transform and at times even cover old with new simultaneously in Istanbul. The stories by Pamuk are, therefore, memory-saving efforts; they are retaliations against erasure, ode to the multifaceted foregoing of the city.The palimpsest metaphor involves the physical space as well as the social and cultural identities. The characters in Pamuk are walking on a border ground in which identities are subject to change and challenge. Retaining the past self simultaneously and abandoning a past self at once constitutes the liminal identity of the residents (Aljahdali 2018, p. 3). This is a liminal space that is suggestive of the dynamics of post-colonialism and globalisation, where the cultural hybridity of the urban institution is a fact.The palimpsestic motif is also a result of multiplicity of narratives and self-referential techniques used by Pamuk. In My Name is Red, an uneven narration by everyone, present and absent, even the paintings, creates a text that is reflective of the layers of the past in the city. This way, the narrative richness challenges the readers to react to the situation in plural terms of perception and diverse levels of attention to the conflicting memories and identities of Istanbul, which resonates with the plurality of the city itself.In conclusion, it has been shown that in his literary depiction of Istanbul as a palimpsest, Orhan Pamuk manages to explore the idea of cultural memory and East-West fusion in a very colourful and subtle way. To his Turkish and global audience, Pamuk makes a city that has a complicated identity, a connection to the forces of national and international institutions, the conflict to overcome the tensions between secularism and Islam and the further struggle over the memory and identity in a city that, that has never been the same every other generation. His composition prompts the challenge of binaries and nationalistic myths of origin and reminds us about the cosmopolitan character of Istanbul and its multiple identities. The metaphor of the palimpsest is therefore thought-provoking in the context of analyzing how literature mediates more complex histories and cultural negotiations and offers beneficial points of reference to the literary scholars, cultural memory and urban studies researchers.The depiction of palimpsest in Istanbul, as a city, by Orhan Pamuk is analysed and discussed, indicating how the very structure of it was based on its cultural memory of the layers that were received and/or appropriated by the city, as well as on the dialogue that was created between its western and eastern sectors. The novels Pamuk wrote demonstrate that Istanbul is not a unitary structure nor a historical monument but a contagious, moving and heterogeneous space where various histories and cultures intersect and rewrite the city and socio-cultural space. The fluidity challenges dichotomies tradition/modernity and East/ West and emphasizes hybridity as the characteristic element of the city image.Second, the essay sheds light on the significance of cultural memory as an individual and a community in Pamuk. In such pieces as My Name is Red and The Museum of Innocence, Pamuk brings memory to life: by means of narrative techniques, particularly in metafiction and material culture, memory may be inscribed and not erased, it can even be the witness of other initiating. His version of Istanbul as a center of melancholy memory (huzun) and competing heritage points out the importance of the need to maintain multiple cultural narratives amidst the reductive nationalistic narratives. On this note, the text by Pamuk is read and unveiled on the plane of memory-activism, that is, pluralising the awareness of identity and history.Lastly, this research is a contribution to broader fields of postcolonial, urban and memory studies in that it demonstrates the ability of literature to mediate intricate cultural dealings within the contemporary cities. The Istanbul of Pamuk is the perfect example of the urban palimpsests at work, when strata of the past and memory are projected onto the physical, social and symbolic inscriptions. The findings verify the need of such literary images as that of Pamuk to unravel multidimensional and hybrid urban selves as they are constructed through imperial histories, through globalisation and in order to provide a critical perspective of developmental and continuing patterns of cultural change, alteration and identities.

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