

**PAMUK, Orhan (2005) (trans. Maureen Freely).
Istanbul. Memories of a City, London: Faber and Faber, (348 pp).**

Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul. Memories of a City* (2005) is much more than a book of individual memoirs. It is a book whose genre definition remains ambiguous to the reader until the last page. If, on the one hand, the reader opens the book expecting to find the writer's personal recollection of the city where he has lived, on the other hand, s/he is confronted with a review of some of the most significant moments of Turkey's history. This review addresses and questions the issue of national representation and of a complex and labyrinthine identity, since the writer's reminiscences are either filtered through the lense of aesthetic discourse (embodied, from the beginning, either in the figure of «another Orhan» and in the writer's recollections about his favourite Turkish writers and painters), or projected onto the ruins and cracks of Istanbul buildings and monuments, which have witnessed the merging of various cultures throughout time.

In *Istanbul. Memories of a City* Pamuk revises Turkish cultural memory at a crucial moment in Turkey's history, when the country's membership of the European Union is considered a controversial, but key, factor in the future stability of Europe. In the Nobel Prize winner's book, the accounts of Istanbul and adjacent areas epitomize Turkey's fractured sense of identity: between the ghostly presence of a lost great empire and the constraints imposed by the construction of a secular nation, the reader, besides being led on a meandering tour around one of the former most important world capitals, is confronted with the issue of how present European discussions of Turkey's membership in the European Union seem to some extent to perpetuate, in cultural and ideological terms, the representations the West has made of the oriental world that have been thoroughly discussed by Edward Said in works such as, among others, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. In sum, Pamuk's book undoubtedly gives food for thought as the European Union celebrates its 50th anniversary.

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