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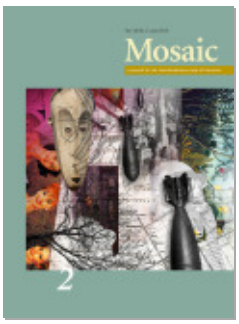

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This essay examines melancholy/*hüzün* in three overlapping contexts: as a historical condition of modernity, in aesthetic production, and as a cultural condition. In Pamuk's writing, melancholizing becomes a creative device to explore European and Islamic influences on historical and aesthetic connotations of *hüzün* that the city holds in its essence.

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Istanbul: Memories of a City is a tightly woven text in which Orhan Pamuk narrates three stories: how he decided to become a writer, how he positions himself in relation to Turkish melancholic writers, and how he responds to the prevalent melancholic perception of Istanbul's historical and cultural status as a fallen city and to his memories of it. The text follows three intertwined temporalities. First, Pamuk uses historical chronology of particular episodes in his life, in his family's life, and in Turkey's history; the book ends in the mid-1970s, when he is in his early twenties. Second, tapping into the reservoir of Pamuk's memory, the text flows in the temporal dynamic of selective/voluntary remembrance. On one hand, then, the narration defies any historical analysis, but on the other, it carries the trademark of Baudelaire's modern aesthetic tradition (84, 203; see also Baudelaire's *Selected Writings* and *Paris Spleen*) and the critical analysis of Walter Benjamin's memory (216, 232; see also

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Illuminations and *Charles Baudelaire*). Third, he maintains that temporality on land and temporality at sea follow different moods, evident in specific scenes of the Bosphorus—"Hymn to Smoke" (257) and "The Ship on the Golden Horn" (314). The two contrasting moods keep each other company: "if the city speaks of defeat, destruction, deprivation, melancholy and poverty, the Bosphorus sings of life, pleasure and happiness" (41). Similarly, in certain locations, joyful moments on land are accompanied by deep sorrow. Perhaps because of the finely tuned construction of temporalities, Pamuk himself appears almost as a skillfully developed character in a novel, and indeed, the writing reflects his selective, playfully tailored autobiography (see *Other Colours* 361, 366).

To address a question Pamuk raises, "Why have I devoted so much energy to convey to the reader the melancholy I feel in the city where I've spent my entire life?" (209), this inquiry suggests that Pamuk's conceptualization of melancholy/*hüzün* is embedded in the creative tension between the personal and the social and the historical and the atemporal.[1] My objective is twofold: to explore how Pamuk in Istanbul stands as a local, European, and Westernizer (his term for one who is pro-modernization) on one hand, and as a wanderer in a fictitious, fantastic location on the other; and how these constantly varying viewpoints help him transform the personal, historical, cultural, and psychological attributes of melancholy from grief, loss, defeat, and resignation into instants that he calls "delicious melancholy" (320), moments of rapture "where melancholy mixes with joy" (61), and timeless, spaceless moments in one's life that defy any representation.[2] Similar to Burton's technique, which Cowan (242) and Flatley (160) refer to as "melancholizing," Pamuk yields to the depressive mood of melancholy/*hüzün*, but at the same time, by contemplating his mood in an aesthetic and historical context, he transforms collectively experienced resignation into a creative endeavour to understand the specific historicity and spatiality of Istanbul. This understanding makes it possible to explore how melancholy in aesthetic production transverses with melancholy as a historical condition of modernity and with melancholy as a cultural condition.[3]

To begin with the specifics of the text, Pamuk presents himself as a resident of Istanbul, an Istanbullu.[4] The word Istanbullu retains its intrinsic quality in the book's English translation such that outsiders, including citizens of other cities in Turkey, gain a convincing picture of what it means to hate oneself in general and Istanbul in particular (286-93). As Pamuk also offers observations such as identifying the humming sound that emanated from the engines of *Kocataş*, a certain ferry (319), the term Istanbullu denotes an intense relationship with the awkward soul of the city.

In this context, Istanbul's collective *hüzün* is heightened by Pamuk's sensibility. He presents Istanbul's history, as narrated by European and Turkish writers, painters, and photographers, whereby the roots of "European" melancholy are transformed into *hüzün*, the distinguishing attribute of Istanbul.

In Pamuk's narration, although there is an assumed difference between melancholy and *hüzün*, the difference remains unclear. In the Turkish original, the opening line by Ahmet Rasim reads: "The beauty of a landscape resides in its *hüzün*"; the English version directly translates *hüzün* as melancholy. Initially, Pamuk seems undecided about these words: "We might call this confused, hazy state melancholy, or perhaps we should call it by its Turkish name, *hüzün*, which denotes a melancholy that is communal rather than private" (79). At times, in describing Istanbul's distinguishing attribute, he refers to melancholy and *hüzün*: "I've spent my life either battling with this melancholy, or (like all Istanbullus) making it my own" (6). "So it was that I finally came to relax and accept the *hüzün* that gives Istanbul its grave beauty, the beauty that is its fate" (318).

The tension between the personal melancholy and the collective nature of *hüzün* is heightened by the context of his carefully tailored position of being a local, but also a European/Westerner, who appreciates the "sublime beauty" of the city. At a personal level, readers get a sense of Pamuk's aesthetic grounding not only as a writer, but also as an amateur photographer and painter. Although his literary influences are varied and too many to name, he cites Melling's (1763-1831) and Utrillo's (1883-1955) painting styles as notable influences on his youthful awakening to the perspectives Istanbul offers. According to Pamuk, Melling "saw the city like an Istanbullu, but painted it like a clear-eyed Westerner" (67). On the other hand, in narrating his youthful relationship with Melling and Utrillo's paintings, Pamuk also touches on one of the select wounds of aesthetic pursuit in Turkey: how to produce original work without imitating the European arts.[5] Pamuk's response to this national preoccupation was twofold. He yielded to "that deepening melancholy [. . .] the almost-but-not-quite shameful truth that [. . .] I'd imitated [Utrillo's] style, I'd imitated (though without ever using that word) an artist with his own unique vision and style of painting" (244). At the same time, as he contemplates the complex ways in which European influences affected Turkish authors (101), he speaks of varying forms of loss and grief as the defining character of modern Turkish literature.

At this point I should address the intersection between melancholy in modernity and melancholy in modern Turkish literature. Quoting Baudelaire, that "We are all of us celebrating some funeral," Flatley (28) argues that "one of the central problems

of modernity is the attempt to grapple with" losses that cannot be mourned: from being "haunted by the dead," guided by "a sense of *being* lost, of being left out of the human community in general" to Fanon's terms of experiencing his body "sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning," modernity offers a rich repertoire for melancholia (30-31, emph. Flatley's).[6]

At a historical level, the melancholic formation of Turkish literature intersects with particular episodes of loss and grief in modernity. However, in Pamuk's own writing career, as well as in the works of the Turkish writers he analyzes, we come across the peculiar twist of modernity. As Pamuk's mother posed the problem to him, "Art, painting, creativity [and writing for that matter] [. . .] were things only Europeans had the right to take seriously, not we who lived in Istanbul in the second half of the twentieth century in a culture that had fallen into poverty, lost its strength, its will and appetite" (323). Standing at the threshold of being a European and an Istanbullu, Pamuk grapples simultaneously with the historical condition of melancholy in Turkish modernity and the peculiarly Turkish reception of art and aesthetics from within the inferiority complex of a defeated culture.

From a historical point of view, Istanbul's *hüzün* is intrinsically tied to the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. After the English publication of *Istanbul* appeared, Pamuk clarified his stance: "I am not mourning the Ottoman Empire. I am a Westernizer" (*Colours* 369). From this perspective, the underlying current of *hüzün* is not grief resulting from the loss of the Ottoman Empire as an object of love (using Freud's terms of loss in melancholia), but grief resulting from the historical losses that resulted from the Westernization and modernization efforts of the twentieth century.

At a historical level, the concept of loss in Istanbul's *hüzün* can be contextualized in terms of four developments. First, the desire to Westernize and modernize was pursued concomitantly with a systematic attempt to suppress "all the bitter memories of the fallen [Ottoman] empire" (27). While the city was still host to Ottoman architecture, fountains, mosques, and monuments, "Westward-looking Istanbul had begun to reject, suppress, deride and suspect anything to do with the Ottoman past" (142). Second, the Western republican mindset "reduced religion to a strange and sometimes amusing set of rules on which the lower classes depended" (164). These two factors intensified the "spiritual void" among the Westward-looking population. Third, the "diminished lives" of "the Westernised rich of the last Ottoman generation" were due to their failure and reluctance to invest in capitalist business ventures (174).

In order to convey this all-pervasive nature of loss in Istanbul's *hüzün*, Pamuk poses a pertinent question: "But if the melancholy flows from loss and poverty, then

why do the city's rich embrace it too? Perhaps it is because they are rich by chance. It may also be because they have created nothing brilliant of their own to rival the Western civilization they hope to imitate" (323).[7] In this particular context, the loss that resulted from Westernization and modernization efforts denotes the questionable origins of both the bourgeois culture and the financial, historical, scholarly, and artistic infrastructure that produced a "Western, modern" outlook of city life. Fourth, as a result of the rise of Turkish nationalism in the mid-1950s, non-Muslim Istanbullus were forced to leave the city. Pamuk refers to this transformation as the "Turkification of Constantinople" (155-59). The grief of the Armenians, Greeks, and Jews who left Istanbul is a reminder of the limitation of historical analysis in explaining the unspoken, forbidden ache that resulted from the political vacuuming of the city. At the threshold of the historical and atemporal, Pamuk notes both the ordinary: "The barbers [. . .] complain that men don't shave as much after an economic crisis" (84), and the ordinarily forgotten: "For that entire night, every non-Muslim who dared walk the streets of the city risked being lynched" (158). As Nichanian aptly puts it, when it comes to the ordinarily forgotten, "we are still in the claws of the executioner" (Kazanjian and Nichanian 127).[8]

To address how historical episodes of loss transverse with melancholy in aesthetic production, an analysis of Turkish melancholic writers deserves more care than this inquiry offers. Suffice it to note that the writers included in Pamuk's narration experience a wounded association with writing while being in the shadows of European creativity. In this context, Istanbul the city becomes their muse as well as a social/spatial centre of self-estrangement from the historical loss. Four of the writers he analyzes—Yahya Kemal, Reşat Ekrem Koçu, Abdülhak Şinasi, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar—witnessed the fall of the Ottoman Empire in their youth. According to Pamuk, their works mark the arrival of a poetics about the beauty lost with the erasure and suppression of the Ottoman past. Their writing tried to embrace the rationalism of Montaigne, the emotional solitude of Thoreau, and the communal sense of *hüzün*. In order to highlight the meticulous attention Pamuk pays to the complexities of each writer's perception of his reality in a *fin de siècle* mood, it is important to also acknowledge author Ahmet Rasim's survival technique.

In Pamuk's narration, these authors were in search of an authentic voice in the midst of the "decline and the fall of the great empire into which they were born" (101), and their works can be read as self-survival kits. Rasim "confined himself to the present: Istanbul was an amusing place to live, and that was all there was to it" (123). A student of Rasim, Koçu "gave his greatest attention to the strange and terrifying details of [. . .] the methods of Istanbul's torturers and executioners" (139). In one

instance, Pamuk draws the reader's attention to how Koçu resembles "the 'powerless historian' in Nietzsche's essay 'On the Uses and Abuses of History'—honing in on historic details to change the history of his city into the history of himself" (151). From Pamuk's exploration of Şinasi, the following is notably melancholic: "All civilizations are transitory as the people now are in cemeteries. And just as we must die, so too must we accept that there is no return to a civilization whose time has come and gone" (qtd. in *Istanbul* 102).

The remaining two authors—Kemal and Tanpınar—are regarded as influential forces of Turkish literature. Both "had a political agenda" in their patriotic way of enunciating the melancholic beauty of Istanbul's *hüzün*. Both had an uneasy relationship with Western accounts of Istanbul. They read André Gide even though his deplorable accounts of Istanbul wounded their patriotic pride (211).[9] In terms of transforming a communal melancholy into his own, Pamuk's method is closer to Tanpınar's than Kemal's. According to Pamuk, following André Gide's degrading account in *La marche Turque*, Kemal and other intellectuals "hid their injury like a guilty secret and grieved in private" (213). Tanpınar, on the other hand, submitted "to the conditions imposed [. . .] by history and society" (95) and transformed the melancholy he discovered in Nerval and Gautier's observations into an indigenous *hüzün* (223).

In Pamuk's work, the personal melancholy of the writer is fused with another transformative creative process—that is, of producing a unique understanding of the European and Islamic roots of melancholy/*hüzün*. However, as Pamuk's creative writing is free from any theoretical and conceptual categorization, it is almost impossible to identify clearly the European and Islamic roots of melancholy and thus difficult to move beyond his undecipherable claims and demarcate the conceptual boundaries of melancholy/*hüzün* as a cultural condition. From a literary perspective, Pamuk's use of the term Istanbullu (which is not confined to Turkish melancholic writers and denotes a particular perspective found in Melling's paintings and in Gautier's *Constantinople*) is only one reflection of his personal view that melancholy is neither European nor non-European per se. Gautier made a deep impact on Tanpınar's vocabulary and painterly vision to the city lights (202-10). Pamuk sees Gautier as an Istanbullu, which shapes his own memories and aesthetic vision of his city. Pamuk states that in addition to noting the usual observations of a Western traveller, Gautier "knew how to put views into words [. . .] also had the sort of eye that could find melancholic beauty amid dirt and disorder" (205): "Every time I read about the unpainted, darkened, dilapidated wooden houses, the broken down fountains, the neglected türbes with their fallen-in roofs and all the other things [Gautier and his French guide] observed during their walks, I am amazed that these places I saw while

driving in my father's car a hundred years later were unchanged, except for the cobblestones" (205-06).

Regarding Western travellers and observers, on one hand Pamuk stays a critical distance from both Nerval (199) and Flaubert's Orientalist views of the city (201), but on the other hand, he puts the creative tension at the forefront of his own stance: "For people like me, Istanbullus with one foot in this culture and one in the other, the 'Western traveller' is often not a real person—he can be my own creation, my fantasy and even my own reflection [. . .] So whenever I sense the absence of Western eyes, I become my own Westerner" (260).

The calculated ambiguity of European and Istanbullus' aesthetic visions and the view of the Western traveller as a phantom start disintegrating when Pamuk engages in an analysis of melancholy as a cultural condition. In this context, he uses a dubious phrase—"the European roots of melancholy"—to refer to Nerval and Gautier's observations about Istanbul. Pamuk notes the absence of the East in Nerval's poem "The Black Sun of Melancholy." According to Pamuk, during his stay in Istanbul, Nerval paid attention "to things that helped him forget" his own melancholy (199). Yet, his *Voyage en Orient* influenced Kemal and Tanpınar's views on the beauty and poverty of their city. In Pamuk's opinion, "the inventions, which reveal much about Nerval's deep powers of imagery but little of Istanbul, provide a frame in the manner of Scheherazade" in *1001 Nights* (201). Since both Nerval and Gautier had a decisive influence on Turkish literature at the turn of the last century, and since Pamuk concedes that his cultural stance is embedded in both the European aesthetic tradition and in Istanbul's history, the dubious term "European roots" matters not so much as an assumed necessity for reconciling Western and non-Western visions, but rather as a spatially specific cultural understanding of the melancholy Istanbul holds in its essence.

To enunciate the cultural/spatial specificity of Istanbul's melancholy, Pamuk relies on three questionable claims: first, that individual melancholy is primarily a European condition; second, that *tristesse* is a collective condition as well as the experience of the guilt-ridden Western traveller; and, third, that *hüzün* is a distinct sentimentality of Islamic culture. Regarding the former, Pamuk intimates that "there is a great metaphysical distance between *hüzün* and the melancholy of Robert Burton's solitary individual" (89). Since he offers no specific reference to the three volumes of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, this difference remains unsubstantiated. Despite the stated difference, Pamuk implies a similarity between Burton's "sweet melancholy" (82) and Istanbul's *hüzün* experienced by "choice" (93). Pamuk's hasty reference to "Burton's solitary individual" has notable limitations in locating the cultural boundaries of "European" melancholy and the particularity of Istanbul's *hüzün*.

From the point of view of Burton's own personal collection of books and his fascination with astrology, precise data, and Latin, *The Anatomy* "is a monument to and expression of the solitary and endless pleasures of reading, searching, and comparing" (O'Connell 29). It is in this context that melancholy can be construed as solitary and sweet. At the same time, however, like Pamuk's book, Burton's seminal work on melancholy "poses us an immediate problem of definition" (34). In the first volume, Burton describes melancholy not only as a mental disease, but also as a punishment sent from God and a form of madness affecting philosophers, kingdoms, and political bodies. In the second volume, he offers comprehensive therapeutic remedies including talking, citations from Scripture, moral recognition and control, a moderate diet, and "study" as a diversion from self-absorption. In the third volume, he explains the relationship between love as both a cure and a symptom of melancholy and despair in religious melancholy as metonyms of the human condition.

If we put aside Pamuk's claim of metaphysical differences, there is still the question of historical interpretation. Among different explorations of Burton's work, it is significant to note Ruth Fox's analysis that Burton's book "portrays as fully as possible the disordered state of humanity" (O'Connell 36). Seen from this point of view, Burton's conception of melancholy as a psychological and physiological disease of the solitary individual is at the same time a specific condition that affected all parts of social, moral, and political life in Europe in the seventeenth century. From a late-Renaissance point of view, melancholy is a universal folly affecting humanity. In Burton's words: "Thou shall soon perceive that all the world is mad, that it is melancholy dotes" (I: 38-39). As O'Connell remarks, the melancholic disorder in Burton's analysis concerns "the disorder in the mind of the culture as it confronts its illness" (46).

To complement this historical reading of Burton's *Anatomy* as a representative of Renaissance humanist perspective, situated within the literature of the entire history of melancholy since Aristotle,[10] Burton's work is also viewed as a timeless metaphor for contemplative human nature and specifically for containing a literary device to enable creative transformation. In this respect, melancholy is regarded not so much as a mental spiritual disease or, as in Aristotle's perspective, a condition inflicting a genius mind, but as a specific code of recognition, cognition, and perception that can be used as a literary device. Cowan (4, 242) and Flatley (2, 64-75) identify in Burton's work a unique technique—"melancholizing"—in creative thinking.

Burton himself alludes to this intentional act to "melancholize" (I: 19) in explaining "voluntary solitariness" as a cause of melancholy. For Burton, compared to the potentially depressing activities of staying in bed or walking alone, melancholizing can be an enjoyable activity, as in meditating "upon some delightsome and pleasant

subject," building "castles in the air," "to go smiling to [oneself]," and using and acting upon one's imagination in "infinite" varieties (283). In his "Abstract of Melancholy" he captures the intentionality of this act as follows:

> When I go musing all alone,
> Thinking of divers things fore-known,
> When I build Castles in the air,
> Void of sorrow and void of fear,
> Pleasing my self with phantasms sweet,
> Methinks the time runs very fleet.
> All my joys to this are folly,
> Naught so sweet as Melancholy (I: 9)

Pamuk uses the technique of melancholizing not only as a creative endeavour to separate himself from the collective black mood of the city; he also employs it to produce a spatially specific account of Istanbul to dissipate the sorrow and grief of the past, only to be transformed in a timeless context under a different guise. By reiterating the willful dimension of melancholizing, this essay aims to move beyond Pamuk's dubious use of the term "European roots of melancholy" toward a specific psychological/emotive condition, neither genius nor diseased, but reflective of one's condition in relation to historical, social, and universal human folly.

In locating the cultural boundaries of melancholy and *hüzün*, however, we need to attend to another conceptually fuzzy problem. Pamuk briefly mentions Claude Lévi-Strauss's work *Tristes Tropiques*, a dense text in which he narrates his uneasy relationship with anthropology and his journey to São Paulo and indigenous communities in Brazil in the 1950s, amid his memories of fascism, Judaism, and undated trips to Calcutta and Delhi. With regard to the latter, Lévi-Strauss also offers observations about Islamic culture. For this inquiry, it is particularly important to note Lévi-Strauss's view that for Islam it is "difficult to conceive of solitude. It sees life as being first and foremost a communal affair, and a dead man is always inserted into the framework of a community which has no participants" (400). Pamuk's reference to *hüzün* in Islamic culture does not corroborate this observation. Instead, in his only reference to *Tristes Tropiques*, Pamuk initially notes that from the point of view of Western travellers there is "an affinity between *hüzün* and another form of melancholy [. . .] *tristesse*" (89). They "both suggest a communal feeling, an atmosphere, and a culture shared by millions" (90).

Pamuk does not elaborate on the connection between the two, but it can likely be attributed to how the tragic transformation of indigenous communities under colonial

rule (the "fast and ugly face of construction") and the poverty that left its mark on São Paolo's landscape reflects the degradation of Istanbul after the decline of the Ottoman Empire (Lévi-Strauss 96-97).[11] The connection may well be in Pamuk's own imagination. Notwithstanding the possibility of seeing one's mind and soul reflected in some remote corner of the world, there is yet another ambiguity. The communal dimensions of *hüzün* and *tristesse* evade the metaphysical difference between rituals of death as experienced in Istanbul and those of Bororo, an indigenous community in Brazil where "a man is not an individual but a person" (234). According to Lévi-Strauss, the death of a person in Bororo is an occasion to observe an intricate web of power relations between the "sociological universe of the village" and the "physical universe of [. . .] celestial bodies, meteorological phenomena," and the world of the spirits. Considered from the individual point of view, "each death is the occasion for a personal arbitration between the physical universe and the society" (240).

Without noting metaphysical differences among indigenous communities in Brazil, Pamuk maintains a vague distinction between the communal and the individual, where the subtle differences in arbitrating one's life and death in Istanbul are left to the reader to decipher. Furthermore, in distinguishing between Istanbul's *hüzün* and Lévi-Strauss's *tristesse*, Pamuk claims that "*tristesse* implies a guilt-ridden Westerner who seeks to assuage his pain by refusing to let cliché and prejudice colour his impression. *Hüzün*, on the other hand, is not a feeling that belongs to the outside observer" (92). In the general context of Pamuk's candid note on Western travellers as well as his detailed descriptions of *hüzün*, this contrast between *tristesse* and *hüzün* implies the introspective nature of *hüzün* offered by a specific Istanbullu, who came to know his city partly through the lens of Western travellers and European painters, poets, and writers, and partly through incessantly walking the streets of Istanbul from a young age.

Regardless of the ambiguities and conceptual difficulties, the main point cutting through Pamuk's narration is the symbiotic relationship between his melancholy and the gloomy, bleak mood of Istanbul, with its filthy streets, foul smell, and pushing and shoving as a daily routine: "When its melancholy begins to seep into me and from me into it, I begin to think there is nothing I can do: like the city, I belong to the living dead, I am a corpse that still breathes, a wretch condemned to walk the streets and pavements that can only remind me of my own filth and my own defeat [. . .] The darkest, most murderous and authentic strain of melancholy creeps in from streets too distant to see, and I can almost smell it" (286).

In this relationship between the personal and the culturally specific melancholy/*hüzün* in Istanbul, Pamuk is conspicuously quiet on death. He does not investigate the

reception of life and death in Islam, nor does he explore how Istanbullus respond to the death drive in their own lives. Although he refers to Edgar Allan Poe's construction of "the universal understanding of mankind" in terms of melancholy and death (101-02), he notes that four melancholic writers—Tanpınar, Kemal, Şinasi, and Koçu—"never consciously followed Poe's logic" (102). The question then is, if not death, what is the underlying current in *hüzün* as a cultural condition?

At one level, Pamuk traces the etymology of *hüzün* to the Arabic words *hüzn* and *hazen* and contextualizes it at three levels. First, with reference to the Koranic use, he notes the Prophet Muhammed's grief at the death of his wife, Hatice, and of his uncle Ebu Talip. It also means a feeling of "deep spiritual loss." Second, to elaborate on this spiritual loss, Pamuk refers to an unspecified Islamic philosophical tradition where one experiences such loss when one invests too much of one's being in worldly pleasures and possessions. Third, he refers to Sufism as a distinct philosophical tradition, in which *hüzün* denotes grief, emptiness, a sense of inadequacy, and spiritual anguish resulting from a true believer's impossible desire to be close to Allah. The underlying current in a Sufi's suffering is not death, but his lack of "apprehension of Allah." It is not clear how Pamuk makes the leap that these two Islamic traditions represent Islamic culture in general. Yet, the anathema of his book is that "Islamic culture has come to hold *hüzün* in high esteem" (81).

While reflecting on the enigmatic boundaries of the Islamic and European roots of melancholy and *hüzün*, Pamuk notes the similarity between Ibn-Sina's *Fi'l Hüzün* and Burton's *Anatomy*.[12] He argues that "*hüzün* stems from the same black passion [. . .] first conceived in Aristotle's times (*melan khole*—black bile)" (82-83). In spite of their "different cultural traditions," Ibn-Sina and Burton both had an "encyclopedic view of the black pain" and offered similar remedies (82). Notwithstanding this "common ground," Pamuk returns to his brief inference that Burton's conceptualization of melancholy is a condition of solitude. This time, his argument is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's observation of the absence of solitude in Islam. Pamuk claims that "all classic Islamic thinkers" were preoccupied with *cemaat*, or the community of believers. In particular, he notes El-Kindi's analysis of *hüzün* as "a mystical state (engendered by the frustration of our common aim to be at one with Allah) and as an illness." According to El-Kindi, the experience of *hüzün* is "at odds with the communal purpose" (83). The enigmatic question, which remains unattended in Pamuk's narration, is how an illness that contradicts the Islamic understanding of community has come to define the communal black mood in a predominantly Muslim city.

By amalgamating references to *hüzün*, Pamuk uses it as both a cultural concept and as the defining feature of Istanbul's essence. As a particularly Islamic cultural concept,

hüzün is inherent to the communal longing for Divine Oneness. At the same time, Ibn-Sina's depiction of it as the black bile is also connected to Islam. Pamuk insists on the communal-understanding version, which ignores such personal events as the Prophet Muhammed's family losses. A systematic theological and philosophical analysis of death and personal mourning in Islamic culture, which is seemingly absent from the literature, could explore this issue.

When it comes to *hüzün* as both a cultural concept and the essence of Istanbul, Pamuk intimates that *hüzün* conveys "failure," "listlessness," and "spiritual suffering" (82) as much as it does "grief," "ache" (13), "shameful poverty" (32), and neglect. He explores the historical, psychological, and emotional underpinnings of *hüzün* as Istanbul's essence by using the city as a canvas and a black-and-white movie backdrop. While being mindful of the problematic contextualization of melancholy/*hüzün* as a cultural condition, we can finally turn to *hüzün* as the mood of the city.

Although Pamuk does not specifically engage in a psychoanalytical examination of *hüzün*, he refers to a number of psychological conditions. At a personal/communal level, posturing against creativity speaks in the feminine (maternal) voice of a national alter-ego: the culture that has lost its strength and fallen into poverty in the second half of the twentieth century cannot afford the European preoccupation with art and aesthetics (323). Elsewhere, when Pamuk traces the footsteps of his deeply rooted depression, he sees Ottoman architecture in Istanbul from the purview of "an end of empire melancholy, a pained submission to the diminishing European gaze and to an ancient poverty that must be endured like [an] incurable disease; it is resignation that nourishes Istanbul's inward-looking soul" (38).

Pamuk narrates many scenes of deep-seated melancholy whose roots are difficult to trace to a single cause such as European aesthetics or losses associated with the end of the Ottoman Empire. Yet there is one emotive thread that runs throughout the book: "The remains of a glorious past and civilization" inflict heartache. "The people of Istanbul simply carry on with their lives among the ruins. Many Western writers and travelers find this charming. But for the city's more sensitive and attuned residents, these ruins are reminders that the present city is so poor and confused that it can never again dream of rising to the same heights of wealth, power and culture" (91).

Before elaborating on the "inward-looking soul" and "the erosion of will" as telltale signs of submission in Istanbul's *hüzün*, it is helpful to return to the question of mourning. Although Pamuk does not refer to Freud's distinction between the "normal effects of mourning" in response to the "loss of a loved person, or to the loss of an abstraction" and "a pathological disposition in melancholia" (Freud 243), his narration does not spare the tragi-comic ramifications of how the decline of the Ottoman

Empire registered in Istanbul's psyche: "their city falling into poverty, melancholy and ruin—Istanbullus became an inward-looking, nationalist people [. . .] suspicious of anything new, and most especially anything that smacks of foreignness. (Even if we also covet it.) For the past hundred and fifty years, we have lived in timorous anticipation of catastrophes that will bring us fresh defeats and new ruins" (186).

Immersing his psyche into the psyche of the city, Pamuk narrates many morbid incidents with the implication that they are part of the ordinary, such as anticipating ship accidents and radio announcements during the Cold War warning of free-floating mines at the mouth of the Bosphorus (180). He posits that watching ships and old wooden mansions burning and people death-jumping off the Bosphorus bridge were entertaining and pleasurable group activities. Pamuk makes sure to remind readers that the voyeurism of fire-watching in Istanbul dates back to at least the nineteenth century. "It was not just pashas, looters, thieves and children who ran to watch the old Istanbul fires; Western travel writers felt compelled to observe and describe them, too" (190). Further, *Other Colours* contains two essays on the 1999 earthquake in Istanbul and the angst following (84-104). To reiterate the repressed fear of death in the aftermath of the earthquake, he notes how he and one of his neighbours researched the likelihood of their building falling onto the minaret of the nearby mosque or the minaret falling onto their building (95).

From the defensive posture of the national alter-ego and paranoia to the present angst of Istanbullus anticipating new catastrophes, Pamuk offers scenes from a melancholic individual psyche that is deeply insecure and lives off death, destruction, defeat, and despair. This particular context recalls Freud's analysis of "an object-loss withdrawn from consciousness" in a melancholic patient who "cannot consciously perceive what he has lost," and shows signs of confusion and the impoverishment of the ego (246-48). Freud's analysis assumes the existence of a core self, which, in Pamuk's narration of Islamic culture and Istanbul's communal essence, is nowhere to be found. Putting aside the layers of loss that remain in the city's psyche, in Pamuk's work, I identify the constituting element of *hüzün* as the erosion of individual will: "The *hüzün* of Istanbul suggests nothing of an individual standing against society; on the contrary, it suggests an erosion of the will to stand against the values and mores of the community, encourages us to be content with little, honoring the virtues of harmony, uniformity, humility" (94).

At one level, Pamuk relies on the notion of Sufi resignation, which offers the "choice to embrace failure, indecision, defeat and poverty." From this perspective, "*hüzün* is not the outcome of life's worries and great losses, but [its] principal cause" (93). This notion of resignation further underscores the argument that the most

pervasive element of Istanbul's *hüzün* is the erosion of will: a paralyzing feeling that obliterates the individual's desire to even imagine a different present and future. Individual resistance to submission and resignation is incorporated into a communally praised and honoured "cloak of melancholy that brings [to the lives of Istanbullus] a contentment, an emotional depth and that almost looks like happiness" (268). This outlook suggests that the ability to respond honestly to one's surroundings is so deeply buried under layers of an accepted psyche that a true Istanbullu is fated to become one with *hüzün*.

How can a creative soul survive in such a bleak communal existence? Pamuk's response is that "this world of 'ours' in which [. . .] all shared in a common identity, respecting humility, tradition, our elders, our forefathers, our history, our legends—was not a world in which I could 'be myself'" (290). Of numerous possible interpretations of *Istanbul*, there is an affinity between Burton's technique of melancholizing and Pamuk's own remedies in creating a lively space for his imagination. The artists of modern aesthetic tradition, from Baudelaire to Turkish authors at the turn of the last century, from Melling, Nerval, and Gautier to Lévi-Strauss and Pamuk, grappling with the phantasms of their own "Western travellers," succumbed to the condition of melancholy as a way of creating a world different than the one ordinary mortals live in. Regarding Pamuk's decision to become a writer, his mother thought that the "child who did not know what sadness was [. . .] blackened his future" (330-33).

Pamuk's style of melancholizing simultaneously offers the possibility of yielding to the submissive, self-deprecating melancholy/*hüzün* with that of enjoying Istanbul's sublime beauty and the childishly defiant pleasures of searching for an "undiscovered" corner of the city. Because of the chance to experience its timeless moments of joy, Istanbul, the ancient city, comes alive in Pamuk's portrayal of *hüzün* as a representation of both historical decline and ungrievable loss.

The enigmatic contextualization of "European" melancholy and Istanbul's *hüzün* is in part due to the conceptual ambiguities and unsubstantiated metaphysical claims in Pamuk's narration. The ambiguity at times seems intentional. The intersection in Pamuk's narration between the historical and the timeless, between the Istanbullu and the imaginary Western traveller and between black mood and sweet melancholy, is tailored such that the reader is left with life-affirming choices and a deep sigh by which to remember death.

NOTES

1/ In terms of Pamuk's memories being both historical and atemporal, I am referring to Benjamin's analysis of memory and consciousness as incompatible yet simultaneous processes. According to Benjamin, both in Proust and Baudelaire, "the data of remembrance" is not historical data but that of prehistory (*Charles* 141). In this particular reading, I rely on Walter Benjamin's conceptualization of the present not only as the moment and site of the actuality of the past, but also as a monadic structure of remembrance that sets itself apart from historical time. For this interpretation, see *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (Ed. A. Benjamin and P. Osborne. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print).
2/ I situate melancholy as an aesthetic condition particularly, but not exclusively, within the context of Baudelaire's conception of modernity, art, the *flâneur*, and the solitary individual wandering in the city, inspired by its horrible, bizarre, hysterical, and repellent elements. See Baudelaire's *Paris Spleen* and *Selected Writings;* Benjamin's *Charles Baudelaire;* and Margery A. Evans's *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at Crossroads* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. Print). For melancholy in aesthetic production, also see Thomas Mann's *On Myself and Other Princeton Lectures* (Ed. James N. Bade. New York: P. Lang, 1996. Print) and Julia Kristeva on Nerval, Dostoevsky, and Duras in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1989. Print).
3/ In conceptualizing modernity as a historic condition, I follow a specific distinction of modernity not only as a category of historic periodization and social experience, but also as an incomplete project that articulates specific temporalities and invents innumerable presents within a given historical temporalization. See Peter Osborne's *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1996. Print).
4/ In the English translation of Pamuk's book, while the Turkish word *hüzün* is italicized, the word Istanbullu is not. In order to be consistent with the quotations used, I follow the same inconsistency.
5/ See Nurdan Gürbilek's "Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel" (*The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2/3 [2003]: 599-628. Print) and Meltem Ahıska's "Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern" (*The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2/3 [2003]: 351-79. Print).
6/ See Jonathan Flatley on Moscow in the 1990s in "Moscow and Melancholia" (*Social Text* 19.1 [2001]: 75-102. Print) and Anita Schorsch on mourning art in America in "Mourning Art: A Neoclassical Reflection in America" (*American Art Journal* 8.1 [1976]: 5-15. Print).
7/ See also *Other Colours* 370.
8/ For the limitations of representing the totality of catastrophic mourning, see Marc Nichanian's "Catastrophic Mourning" in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003. 99-124. Print).
9/ See Pamuk's "A Private Reading of André Gide's Public Journal" in *Social Research* (70.3 [2003]: 1001-14. Print).
10/ See Jennifer Radden's *The Nature of Melancholy from Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000. 129-55. Print).
11/ On the absence of colonial rule in Turkey, see *Other Colours* (370).
12/ Ibn Sina (980-1037) is also known as Avicenna, whose *Canon of Medicine* was translated into Latin in the twelfth century. I am not sure what Pamuk has in mind when he refers to Aristotle's times. According to Kristeva, "Aristotle breaks new ground by removing melancholy from pathology [. . .] The melancholia he evokes is not a philosopher's disease but his very nature, his ethos" (7). For the odyssey of melancholia from Aristotle's times to the Middle Ages, see Giorgio Agamben's *Stanzas: Word and the Phantasm in Western Culture* (Trans. Ronald L. Martinez. Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis P, 1993. 16-28. Print). Specifically for Ibn-Sina's work within this history, see Radden 75-78.

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