

## CULTURAL AMNESIA AND ORHAN PAMUK'S VISION OF TURKEY IN ISTANBUL: MEMORIES OF THE CITY

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses Turkey's novelist Orhan Pamuk, and his book *Istanbul: Memories of the City* in 2006. Pamuk is well-informed about the historical topics he handles in his non-fiction book *Istanbul: Memories and the City* of 2003. He employs a vast knowledge accumulated through extensive readings to address a variety of topics, some of which are controversial. One of the recurrent topics he is concerned with is the prevailing state of melancholy in Turkey, which he links to the decline and fall of the great Ottoman Empire. He wants his people to change how they look at the past: rather than attempting to relive the past and, failing to do so, experiencing melancholy, they should use it to engage in a thought-provoking examination and assessment of it. Pamuk laments the authorities' neglect of his lovely town, Istanbul, and worries that the city will lose its importance and beauty due to its poverty, shabbiness, and isolation. This paper employs the Cultural Amnesia theoretical framework that Halimah Mohamed Ali and Aina Nabila Ahmad created in their essay "Tracing Cultural Amnesia in Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*" of 2017.

**Keywords:** *Turkey, orhan Pamuk, cultural amnesia, Istanbul, Ottoman empire*

### Introduction

Examining both culture and literature is mainly carried out in parallel. This can be attributed to the significance of literature related to cultural studies. More broadly, human life is likely to be included in culture itself. Humans within life can practice their lives, actions, thinking, and feelings in addition to their possessions as an outcome of the society where they are. This paper discusses a newly created notion known as cultural amnesia, taking Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2003) as a source of data collection and analysis. Cultural amnesia describes the progressive erasure or selective forgetting of collective cultural memories, frequently connected to historical and social changes. It also refers to "the diagnosis of a condition that occurs due to external or traumatic damage. This can be a cause for society to forget their roots, culture, and relationships with landscapes" (Jerlei, 2015). This subject is prevalent in *Istanbul: Memories of the City* by Orhan Pamuk. In his book, Pamuk is well-known for having a strong bond with Istanbul and captures the depressing spirit of a city that lies between East and West. This feeling, known in Turkish as *hüzün*, captures the general anguish and sense of loss as Istanbul changes and elements of its cultural legacy disappear. Pamuk's memoir, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, is a profoundly depressing work that is mostly autobiographical. It discusses the profound cultural shift that has shaken Turkey and the never-ending conflict between the contemporary and the fading past. It also serves as a tribute to the vanished shared family customs. Pamuk's

autobiographical memoir is a representation of the cultural amnesia tackled by the writer to cope with his motherland one time and to protest the norms set either by Islam or the authorities that ruled Turkey. This cultural and religious clash is well-set in Pamuk's semi-novel within the same geographical point.

Pamuk writes his memoir as being diasporic in his own country, where he once praises his country and then retreats to blame that country for what its people go through. He depicts people who live in Turkey as being exiled from their society. He pinpoints himself as twice as alienated from his society and the modernity that filled the world in his time. Narratively speaking, Pamuk showcases his ideas concerning cultural amnesia. These ideas, in turn, made him unaware and unable to comprehend his ancestors' culture within their homeland, Turkey. Pamuk's memoir has a sense of nostalgia due to his attempts to trace the experience of being alienated from his motherland within his memories. His background is that of a Muslim who is frightened by the cultural colonialism in Turkey. In this article, a look will be made at the author's memories of crises of remembering and forgetting in the context of the Turkish citizen's diaspora in Turkey.

### *Literature review*

Orhan Pamuk, one of Turkey's most well-known modern authors, was born in Istanbul in 1952 and is best recognized for his writings that explore Turkish identity and history. He won the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature and is a professor, author, and screenwriter. Pamuk uses the clashes between Islam and secularism, tradition, and modernity, and East and West as his central themes in his books. He examines these themes from a variety of temporal locations. A sense of disorientation or loss of identity, partly resulting from the clash between Western and Eastern ideals, is a recurring theme in Pamuk's works. Pamuk faces the possibility of being rejected in his native country because of his inclination to write novels on controversial political and historical events. He was sued in 2005 by an ultra-nationalist attorney over remarks he made on the Ottoman Empire's Armenian genocide. Varied people in Turkey have different opinions about Pamuk and his works. Some claim that Pamuk is not even a very good writer and that his writing is gloomy and uninteresting in Turkish yet tremendously fascinating in other languages. Others claim that Pamuk's writings hurt Turkey and anger Turks. However, because Pamuk is a historian, his books are rife with the political, cultural, and theological conflicts between Islamization and Westernization (Hashemipour, 2017). Pamuk's works have been analyzed differently. In her dissertation, *Critique of Western Modernity Through Liminal Space in Pamuk's The New Life and My Name is Red*, Sapkota (2018) explains Pamuk's apparent optimism regarding "the rise of political Islam and the future of democracy in Turkey from a culturalist perspective on modernization and development", arguing that in these two novels Pamuk presents a critical analysis of the hegemonic modernity of the west via his "in-between space". Pamuk disapproves of the utter rejection of Islamic culture traditions and the enforcement of Western modernity in the 1920s, claiming that the modernization imposed by Ataturk in Turkey was merely a relegation of Islamic traditions and culture.

Turkey has not totally escaped its traditional Islamic culture, nor has it been able to fully embrace the Western concept of modernity. Pamuk identifies this moment in time of the country and himself as "liminal identity" in his two novels *The New Life and My Name is Red* (Sapkota, 2018). Although Pamuk criticizes the hegemonic forces of

modernity, he does not support the emergence of political Islam. Pamuk is against the idea of giving legitimacy to any Islamic party, as such partisanship opens the door for Muslims to form political groups and eventually become part of the government. Pamuk believes that Islam represents an obstacle to the modernization of Turkey. This illustrates that Pamuk is caught between two extremes: the uncertain past and the uncontrollable present. Sapkota offers her scholarly opinion of three reasons supporting what Pamuk came up with: First, Turkey's westernization drive, "which conflates modernization with secularization," has failed to provide the masses with a "strong philosophical grounding". Second, Islamic revivalism due to the excellent income of oil returns in the 1970s and a population expansion has spread in Turkey. Third, there is an inclination toward a milder interpretation of secularism. These reasons stated by Sapkota do not change the fact that Pamuk has an attitude toward Islam and political Islam in particular. In his study titled "Orhan Pamuk's My Name is Red and Snow: Representations of the Clash between the East and the West," Toker (2019) states that the literary work of Orhan Pamuk is marked by the "confusion or loss of personal identity" resulting from a conflict between the East and the West. Analyzing the two novels in the context of the said conflict, the study points out that the clash between the two different worlds of these geographical hemispheres, between history and modernity, and the love-hate relationship that Pamuk had for his fellow citizens are the principal emphasis and the fundamental source of emotional tension in Pamuk's literary works (Toker, 2019).

Although each of the two novels has its own unique time and location settings, the study justifies the selection of them as novels that carefully explore the ongoing East-West struggle. They are also seen as providing solid and convincing proof that this persistent problem between the two different geographical hemispheres has continued over time, despite Pamuk's assertion that he does not believe in this conflict (Toker, 2019). The study states that Pamuk acknowledges the existence of the said clash, yet he doesn't believe in it; instead, he wants to draw his readers' attention to "think that other peoples in other continents and civilizations are actually exactly like you and you can learn this through literature and novels". The study states that it is possible according to Turkey's point of view, that this ongoing conflict between East and West can result in an East-East compromise by using practical common sense and improvisational skills to combine the best aspects of Eastern and Western civilizations (Toker, 2019). According to the study, Pamuk tries to highlight the importance "of blending the artistic expressions of the conflicting civilizations, claiming that good art results from mixing it from multiple roots and cultures" (Toker, 2019). The study concludes that there is still a heated debate over the alleged clash of civilizations between the West and the Islamic world or the East.

Turkish author Orhan Pamuk speaks to a global audience, explains that as the 2006 Nobel laureate with high receptivity in the global reading world, Pamuk has become a significant voice of authority. Pandikasala states that Pamuk's writings provide an insight into the ideological foundations of Islam and secularism and, therefore, are crucial for understanding modern resonances. The study aims to examine the problems with Pamuk's interaction with modern Islam in Turkey in his novel *Snow*, paying particular attention to his perspective on the topic of Muslim women's headscarves. In addition, the study seeks to depict the liberal-secular worldview that the texts are predicated on, notably concerning Islam, "even as they make claims to be dialogic and polyphonic". It examines the problems with liberal-secular interpretations of the

controversial topic of Muslim women's headscarves or hijabs in the context of Pamuk's self-professed desire to understand and interact with the Islamic Other. Pamuk claims that he is creating a space for different voices in his text: "My book has many voices, and I do not comment on them individually." However, he realizes that "the challenge is to also make the voices representing opinions I find repugnant, sound, convincing, whether they belong to political Islamists or to the military vindicating a coup" (interview with Jorg Lau). Yet he detracts from his own claim of Snow being an outsider's/objective dealing with issues like Islam and secularism. Pandikasala argues that Snow is very much an insider's account, with liberal-secular moorings. He further adds that Pamuk is not particularly concerned about approaching the headscarf question on its own terms. Hence, he fails to know and write the Islamic other. Although Pamuk creates space for different voices, not all the voices are dealt with equally. Pamuk is harshly skeptical of Muslims and their identity and religious concerns.

In her article "The Representation of Islam under modern Turkey in Orhan Pamuk's Snow," explores how Islam is represented in the novel. The researcher employs the theory of representation coined by Stuart Hall in 1997. The study states that Orhan Pamuk's Snow offers a good representation of Islam in modern Turkey. This representation is shown clearly in the conflict between the two sides-the Turkish government, which intends to impose liberal westernization and modernization on the Turkish people, and Islam, which adopts eastern and customary culture instead. The study traces the representation of Islam in three different ways: the representation of Islam in the media, the headscarf culture, and how the main character, Ka, views the tension between Modern city and Traditional city. In the media, for example, the character of Blue has been represented in two different ways throughout the novel. Blue has been depicted as a radical terrorist while his people regard him as a hero who defends his Muslim brother in Bosnia against Russia. The study further shows that the representation of Muslims varies in modern Turkey depending on their ethnicity. Purnama provides evidence from the novel explaining the way the police deal differently with Ka and Muhtar, softly punishing one and harshly beating the other. The researcher adds that the Turkish government put restrictions on Kurdish nationalism and drove them out of public political space. In the novel, Ka, who is a member of Istanbul media investigating Kars city, does not get rough treatment since he has a higher status than Muhtar. On the different side Muhtar represents religious parties, Kurdish and traditional identities; as a result, the police do not hesitate to interrogate Muhtar violently and abuse him physically. On the other hand, Ka embodies the identity of modern Islam; as a result, the government strives to avoid penalizing him and the police do not want to interrogate him. The representation of the political figure Muhtar shows how he as a party leader-running for the upcoming election-fights against the coercive measures that the police used against an educationist causing his death. He seems so happy to defend his ethnicity and honor as a Muslim that he is on the right path, even if he takes a beating in the process of that interrogation. In his struggle, Muhtar represents the struggle of a group of Muslims living in a secular country.

The study also addresses the representation of Islam by secularists and others of the same culture. According to Purnama, secularists have a different concept of godliness from that of the Islamic side of the argument. In the novel Snow, the typical representative of secularists is the owner of and actor in the National Theater named "Sunay Zaim." Islam for Sunay Zaim is equal to terrorism: it is a dangerous fanatic religion that makes the public live in fear by terrorizing them and needs to be destroyed

by the army. Secularists see if it is time for them to make a movement in Kars city that can exclude traditionalism, in order to bring in modernism. They do not want to go back to the Middle Ages and live the way their ancestors lived under the Ottomans. The study concludes that only the West or Muslims who have been infected by the West, have the right to label any Islamic group that fights and defends their faith against injustice as engaging in terrorist activity. This study ignores the role of nationalism within the Turkish context. Imposed by the government, nationalism has become the country's belief system instead of the long-term Islamic identity. As such, Turkish Muslims feel that they are marginalized in their own country and struggle to be able to maintain their Muslim rituals. The previous studies tackled many aspects of modernity; however, not much focus has been placed on analyzing nationalism as an outcome of Western modernity, which attempts to draw people's attention away from religion and tradition. The studies discussed above show that Pamuk is torn between two poles. He is uncertain about his identity; he is caught between the Islamic identity and the secular one. He is conflicted between tradition and modernity. He shows signs of cultural amnesia, which this study will trace through his memoir Istanbul: Memories and the City.

## Materials and Methods

This research uses a Cultural Amnesia theoretical framework used by Halimah Alahmed (2015) in their essay "Tracing Cultural Amnesia in Sara Suleri's Meatless Days" Ali and Ahmad (2018) to examine the discourse of cultural amnesia as expressed in Orhan Pamuk's Istanbul: Memories and the City. It discusses cultural issues, such as identity crises and confusion over national identity; that have been forgotten, outmoded, or abolished, leading to cultural amnesia. In addition to critically analyzing the text's intrinsic issues with cultural amnesia, this research reflects the author's attempts to overcome them. Cultural amnesia describes how a culture or group members lose or forget their cultural knowledge, customs, values, and historical events. It is an idea that draws attention to how people and cultures tend to lose track of or ignore certain facets of their cultural history. Many factors, such as social, political, economic, and technical shifts, may contribute to this occurrence. Cultural amnesia takes various forms, including the deterioration of language, the abandonment of historical events, the loss of customs, and the decline in the importance of cultural practices. It might happen accidentally due to generational changes and the passage of time or on purpose due to outside influences like political beliefs, globalization, or cultural assimilation. According to Ali and Ahmad (2018), amnesia in the current use is a reference to:

*"Loosely and interchangeably to either one or two quite different states or both of them. First, it refers to a state in which memories that were available to recall in the past have been lost and is no longer available for recall in the present. Second, it refers to a state in which current experiences are not being kept account of and duly recorded, which result that they will not be available for recall in the future. The first usage is reflected in the oxford English dictionary definition of amnesia as "loss of memory" and roughly coincides with retrograde amnesia, whereas the second usage is reflected in the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition as "forgetfulness".*

(Ali and Ahmad, 2018)

Ali and Ahmed (2018), argue that cultural amnesia has moved from historiography studies to memory studies during the past few decades. The study claims that there hasn't been as much emphasis in academia yet on studying cultural amnesia in literature. This is because there has not been much scholarly research on cultural forgetfulness in literary texts. However, in the last ten years, academics have focused more on cultural amnesia in their studies, critiques, assessments, and analyses of the cultural discourse around forgetfulness in literary contexts. It has been discovered that cultural amnesia functions as a topic, motif, presenting aid, textual purpose, division of literary history, and narrative that takes the place of experience via the research of cultural amnesia discourse that has ever been conducted.

## Results and Discussion

In his autobiographical memoir, Pamuk discusses cultural amnesia. He is mentally occupied with Westernization, so he goes back to the past, trying to remember and study it differently to justify the new change in his mind, even if it has not been realized. Pamuk aims to westernize his country, an act that he feels is the solution for his people to depart the state of "huzun" that occupies them. Pamuk feels unstable due to the changes that happened in his course of life. He descended from a family that lost its fortune and wealth, and he might attribute that family deterioration to an outside factor, i.e., the situation in his country. Through the last 40–50 years, Turkey has been trying to join the European Union, hoping to use the prosperous European economy to help the Turkish economy develop and flourish:

*"Joining the European Union would revive the Turkish economy and goods would be tax-free, something that would allow the producers to focus on the fields that Turkey excels at such as textiles, clothing, business and transport services and agricultural products which represents more than 50% of Turkey's exports."*  
(Alahmed et al., 2015).

Pamuk believes that to develop his country, his people and government must adopt the Western lifestyle and separate themselves from their religion, culture, and history. He feels that the past carries only failure, even if it was once bright. He feels that the wheel of time is not returning to building the same Ottoman Empire again. Besides, beliefs are not the same, and people are not the same either. That is why, for him to gain wealth, change the lifestyle of his people, and develop his country, the only solution is to join the Western culture and depart from the Islamic-based Turkish culture. To achieve that, Pamuk works on undermining the role of religion as a way of building a successful, prosperous state, assuming that religion is the reason behind his country's poverty and backwardness. By going back to memory, Pamuk is trying to prepare for the change he's looking for. By going back to history and tradition, Pamuk wants to prove or come up with evidence that shows Islam and Turkish tradition as worn out and useless. Pamuk has two conflicting emotions toward his city; he at times thinks himself unlucky to have been born in an ageing and poor city buried under the ashes of a ruined empire, yet there is a voice inside him that always insists that it was a piece of luck being the son of such a fantastic city. Istanbul, for Pamuk, is a source of imagination and inspiration, unlike for some other writers. He says he is like Conrad and Nabokov, who feed their imagination from alienation, languages, and places. Pamuk assumes that

his imagination requires him to stay in the same city, "My imagination, however, requires that I stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view" (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk links his fate to that of Istanbul and attaches himself to it as it has made the way he is. Deriu (2020) asserts that "[Pamuk] identification with the city is not only biographical but truly existential" (Deriu, 2020). So, besides being personal, his connection to the city is genuinely existential. Pamuk does not differ from his people in that state of huzun, and reflecting on the part of his birth city is his source of imagination and inspiration in writing about the change he is looking for (Ahmet, 2013).

The city of Istanbul has a vital role in shaping Pamuk's character. He regards Istanbul as his source of imagination and that his creativity is nourished by his stay in his beloved city, Istanbul. By comparing the source of imagination, Pamuk claims that it feeds on his roots other than alienation, different languages, and other places, like the case with Conrad and Nabokov. He openly states, "My imagination, however, requires that I stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view. Istanbul's fate is my fate. I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am" (Pamuk, 2006). The rift between these two feelings reflects Pamuk's struggle in life, indicating a state of cultural amnesia. When Pamuk wants to embark on the change he is looking for, he is in a state of fear about the past that still inspires him.

*"At least once in a lifetime, self-reflection leads us to examine the circumstances of our birth. Why were we born in this particular corner of the world, on this particular date? These families into which we were born, these countries and cities to which the lottery of life has assigned us, they expect love from us, and in the end, we do love them from the bottom of our hearts; but did we perhaps deserve better? I sometimes think myself unlucky to have been born in an ageing and impoverished city buried under the ashes of a ruined empire. But a voice inside me always insists this was really a piece of luck."*  
(Pamuk, 2006).

Yet Pamuk is worried that Istanbul will lose its importance and beauty. He laments that the city is now poor, shabby, and isolated. He cites Gustave Flaubert's impression of Istanbul 102 years before Orhan was born. Flaubert predicts that in a century, Istanbul will be the capital of the world (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk says that the reverse came true: after the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the world almost forgot that Istanbul existed, and the city I was born in was poorer, shabbier, and more isolated than it had ever been in its two-thousand-year history. Pamuk is lamenting that Istanbul is a city of ruins and end-of-empire melancholy. Pamuk draws our attention to the fact that he has two lives. The first prepares us for the brighter, the one that we begin when we awake, and the second life is merely the book in our hands. Pamuk feels that when he accepts his own life as he heard about it, he likes to narrate it the way the past events are normally narrated, "Once upon a time I used to ...." Then there was the shift in the twenties of his life when he had the feeling of writing his entire life story as if it was something that occurred to someone else. This feeling reflects a shift in Pamuk's view to his past. The past seems to have no link or be separated from the reality of the present as Pamuk wants to write it as if it had belonged to someone else. Pamuk states that:

*"I'd have liked to write my entire story this way, as if my life were something that happened to someone else, as if it were a dream in which I felt my voice fading and my will succumbing to enchantment. Beautiful though it is, I find the language of epic unconvincing, for I cannot accept that the myths we tell about our first lives prepare us for the brighter, more authentic second lives that are meant to begin when we awake."*  
(Pamuk, 2006).

Pamuk explains that whatever brilliant past we have is not going to be of any use. The first life or let say the past cannot help to prepare us for a better life. That's why he liked to narrate his life as if it were someone else. Pamuk discusses the influence of the West and how people like the appearances of modern life. He exemplifies his statement by showing how they like to show off by putting a plaque that shows the family's name on their houses' gates. He also comments on the pianos they keep in each apartment, which no one ever plays them. According to Pamuk, the change in traditions has happened already, and many artifacts that were in use previously only exist as antiques now (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk draws our attention to the fact that although there was a piano in each apartment, no one ever played on it, which reflects that these pianos are only there as part of the neglected past. Pamuk here reflects the state of melancholy that characterizes the Turkish society, as another form of cultural amnesia. The way he describes the house of his family reflects the fact that he looked to their past as if they were dead. Pamuk escapes to the past to find solace but unfortunately it doesn't appeal to him. He states that "on each floor there was at least one piano ... No one ever played on ... this may be why they made me feel so sad" (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk further believes that these furnished rooms were preserved for the dead not for the living.

Out of his melancholy, Pamuk tries to revive his memories. Thus, he ruminates and reconstructs his dream to find solace and enjoy what might be good from his memories and the inheritance of his beloved city, Istanbul. When bored, he plays a game of imagination by imagining where he sits in places like a bedroom, sitting room, classroom, barracks, hospital room, government office, or elsewhere. He says, "When I had exhausted the energy to daydream, I would take refuge in the photographs that sat on every table, desk, and wall" (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk escapes reality whenever he feels bored, but his escape takes him to his primary cause, his attitude about the past, and his dream about the future. Pamuk speaks about a vast number of pictures that cover every space in the house, even the pianos. While these pictures serve as an album of his past, the pianos remind him of his family's lost fortune. He says that "Among those photographs are the photographs of my grandmother and the other of my grandfather" (Pamuk, 2006). He adds that anyone walking into this museum room to meet their haughty gaze would know immediately that the story began with them (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk compares himself to his grandmother as she looks like him. She seems to be pulled in two directions:

*"It seemed that she-like me-was pulled in two directions, wanting to get on with life but also longing to capture the moment of perfection, savoring the ordinary but still honoring the ideal. But even as I pondered these dilemmas-if you pluck a special moment from life and frame it, are you defying death, decay, and the passage of time or are you submitting to it? I grew very bored with them."*  
(Pamuk, 2006).

Pamuk is torn between two forces: nostalgia for his family's glorious past and the ambition to Westernize his country. These forces pull him in opposite directions. He feels nostalgic and proud of some aspects of his family's history. Despite longing for a new life, Pamuk cannot see a clear horizon that fulfills his desire to leave and forget his past. However, his long reflection on the photographs throughout his house has helped him appreciate their importance, as they capture specific moments for future generations and influence daily life. Pamuk thinks his grandmother's photos should be woven into the present. Pamuk further adds that his grandmother, when talking about his grandfather, especially in discussions related to the nation's establishment, seems to be like him "was pulled in two directions, wanting to get on with life but also longing to capture the moment of perfection, savoring the ordinary but still honoring the ideal"(Pamuk, 2006). Feeling bored while looking at these pictures, Pamuk raises a question that reflects his yearning for the past and his ambition to create a new future "Even as I pondered these dilemmas, if you pluck a special moment from life and frame it, are you defying death, decay, and the passage of time, or are you submitting to it?" Pamuk feels unhappy with his current situation, so he questions whether to defy death, which in this context is the past, and the passage of time or to submit to it, meaning accepting the state of melancholy and his country's and family's living conditions (Pamuk, 2006). Part of this autobiography's setting is how the writer describes the ruins, the city's most gloomy sections. The poor neighborhoods are still seen as symbols of Istanbul and Turkey, which are poor neighborhoods in the view of the rest of the world (Pamuk, 2006). All these images support the idea that Istanbul is a melancholic city for Pamuk. He even feels the shame of being a Turkish citizen belonging to this country. That's why he resorts to painting, hoping that painting makes him feel free of embarrassment. He says that "To draw was to find a second world whose existence was not cause for embarrassment (Pamuk, 2006). For Pamuk no matter how beautiful Istanbul looks in the eyes of outsiders, Westerners, and travelers, or those who live in those neighborhoods, these ruins look gloomy and cause them to have continuous melancholy.

Pamuk was an avid reader. He read many books by travelers who vividly described Istanbul and felt compelled to comment on it. That's why much of his autobiography discusses the city of Istanbul. Pamuk grew up when the city was at its lowest point. People saw it as either too Eastern or too Western, so they always felt they didn't quite belong. Still, natives dislike seeing old mansions restored because it breaks their connection with the past. Throughout his memoir, Pamuk communicates his perspective about Islam. For him, Islam has been changed from a system prescribed by God through prophets, books, and laws into a different, strange, and sometimes amusing set of beliefs applied by lower classes who deprived religion of its power and message (Pamuk, 2006). He adds that we accept it as strange background music only to witness our fluctuation between East and West (190). As part of the culture, Islam is losing its importance and influence on Pamuk, which reflects the state of cultural amnesia that this paper assumes Pamuk has. Pamuk feels that Islam represents an obstacle to modernizing Turkey. He says that he realized that the "Muslims' good-hearted purity carried a price. It was making the dream of a modern, prosperous, westernized Turkey more difficult to achieve" (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk and others who share his views believe that their country's future development requires distancing their community from Islam. He also believes that Westernized individuals and property owners should

lead these semi-literate people and prevent them from becoming attached to superstitions, as this impedes their country's progress (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk believes that Muslims are less educated and believe in superstitions; therefore, they should not be given a chance to practice authority. The notion Pamuk talks about proves the inclination toward Westernization, which Pamuk feels requires departing from the national culture and religious identity.

Pamuk's autobiography explores postcolonial themes; it references the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Undoubtedly, that fall marked a turning point in Turkish culture. Turkish people still mourn the fall of their empire. However, in his memoir, Pamuk couldn't hide his disapproval of Ottoman rule, so he either aligned with his country's enemies or positioned himself somewhere in between. He also supported Westernization in his country. This Westernization will influence their culture, religion, and national sovereignty, forcing the country to restart from zero and potentially lose influence and territories. Turkish culture for Pamuk is a dying culture and his people are now living in a state melancholy. He openly states that,

*“Still, the melancholy of this dying culture was all around us. Great as the desire to westernize and modernize may have been, the more desperate wish was probably to be rid of all the bitter memories of the fallen empire, rather as a spurned lover throws away his lost beloved's clothes, possessions, and photographs.”*  
(Pamuk, 2006).

According to Pamuk, the way for Turkey to overcome its melancholy and achieve progress is to embrace Westernization. By following his views, Pamuk shows a lack of respect for the Islamic religion. His comment on Esma Hanım's prayer reflects disrespect for Islam, and he sees believers as weak, implying that their poverty causes them to depend on "God" for support. He says, “You could almost say it was a relief to know they depended on someone else to save them, that there was another power that could help bear their burdens” (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk's autobiography reflects significant signs of cultural amnesia, intertwined with a sense of fear and collective melancholy. Pamuk illustrates how the residents of Istanbul turned inward as a response to historical trauma, namely, the decline of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent defeats by Western powers. This introspection and mistrust of outside influences indicate either conscious or unconscious cultural amnesia, in which a community chooses to ignore or downplay parts of its history to preserve a certain identity or shield itself from more suffering. Pamuk explains that,

*“After seeing all the wealth of the Middle East seep out of their city, after witnessing the slow decline that began with the Ottoman defeats at the hands of Russia and the West and ended with their city falling into poverty, melancholy, and ruin, İstanbullular became an inward-looking nationalist people.... It's still important to do something to fight off the dread and the melancholy, and that is why the idle contemplation of the Bosphorus can seem like a duty.”*  
(Pamuk, 2006).

This type of amnesia enables a community to create a version of history that prioritizes survival over accurate remembrance. In Pamuk's depiction, the fear of new defeats and changes is linked to this selective memory: İstanbullular choose to dwell on

and maintain their familiar cultural identity, insulating themselves from reminders of past humiliations and foreign interventions. The ritual of watching the Bosphorus becomes both a symbolic act of resistance against fear and a distraction from facing deeper, unresolved historical and social wounds. Pamuk's background and his books about Istanbul, whether historical or autobiographical, show how much he is interested in glorifying and reviving the history of his city. He doesn't want to live in the fictional world that other authors create of the city and its people. He criticizes his people for being melancholy and explains some reasons he believes cause that sadness. According to Pamuk, part of his melancholy stems from the neglect of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. He views them as part of the reason for his people's widespread "huzun" melancholy. Pamuk observes that although many Westerners and travelers find these remnants charming, they carry a different meaning for sensitive and perceptive people. These ruins serve as reminders that the struggling city of today can never dream of returning to its former heights of wealth, power, and culture. He thinks that "It is no more possible to take pride in these neglected dwellings, which dirt, dust, and mud have blended into their surroundings than it is to rejoice in the beautiful old wooden houses (Pamuk, 2006).

It is clear from Pamuk's memoir that poverty and ignorance are the leading causes behind the prevalent condition of melancholy of the Turkish people. Poverty and ignorance, as a result of the fall of their empire, caused people to ignore all historical monuments and pay no attention to the names of buildings or their architectural particularities as a way suitable to fly from huzun caused by the ruins of their lost empire. Pamuk states that "History becomes a word with no meaning; they take stones from the city walls and add them to modern materials to make new buildings, or they go about restoring old buildings with concrete" (Pamuk, 2006). This account of Pamuk's life is set in terms of social situation. Bovsunivska (2018) suggests that the "Focusing of Pamuk-character on the possibilities of transformation is always broken into the drive of the past, [reminding] of the Istanbul melancholy" (Bovsunivska, 2018). We can say that the whole country suffered from poverty because of the declining Ottoman Empire and the loss of territories in the East Balkans and the Middle East (Pamuk, 2006). Pamuk's account of the city of Istanbul reflects the conditions faced by people and the city during and after his childhood. The level of unemployment was very high, the city lived the period after the humiliated truce with no resources, and the vast waves of displaced people from the new Balkan republics (Pamuk, 2006). According to Pamuk, Istanbul grew poorer, lost its importance in the world, and became a remote place burdened with high unemployment. As a result, Pamuk does not feel proud of his country. He says that "he had no sense of living in a great world capital but rather in a poor provincial city" (Pamuk, 2006). He justifies his melancholic condition and his people's indifference to their past.

## Conclusion

Pamuk's memoir indicates that he is in a state of cultural amnesia. He escapes reality whenever he feels bored, but his escape takes him to his primary cause, his attitude about the past, and his dream about the future. Pamuk is mentally occupied with Westernization, so he goes back to the past, trying to remember and study it differently to justify the new change in his mind, even if it has not been realized. Pamuk is under the influence of two forces: nostalgia for the glorious past of his nation and the ambition

of westernizing his country. These two forces pull him in two different directions. He is nostalgic and still proud of some of his family's past despite his longing for a new life, but he does not see a clear horizon that fulfils his ambition for a life that pushes him to leave and forget his past. As part of his attempts to achieve his goals of Westernizing Turkey, he works to undermine the role of religion as a way of building a successful, prosperous state, assuming that religion is the reason behind his country's poverty and backwardness. By going back to memory, Pamuk is trying to prepare for the change he's looking for by going back to history and tradition, only to prove or come up with evidence that shows Islam and Turkish tradition as worn out and useless. Pamuk's autobiography reflects significant signs of cultural amnesia intertwined with fear and collective melancholy. He illustrates how the residents of Istanbul turned inward as a response to historical trauma, namely, the decline of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent defeats by Western powers. This introspection and mistrust of outside influences indicate either conscious or unconscious cultural amnesia, in which a community chooses to ignore or downplay parts of its history to preserve a certain identity or shield itself from more suffering. This type of amnesia enables a community to create a version of history that prioritizes survival over accurate remembrance. In Pamuk's depiction, the fear of new defeats and changes is linked to this selective memory: Istanbulites choose to dwell on and maintain their familiar cultural identity, insulating themselves from reminders of past humiliations and foreign interventions.

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### **Conflict of interest**

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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