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Post-Imperial Culture and its Melancholies: From Théophile Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* to Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul. Memories of a City*

Abstract I: This article is concerned with literary representations of the affective impact of the Ottoman empire's demise on its principal metropolis, Istanbul. It discusses first the work of nineteenth-century French novelist and diarist Théophile Gautier about the city, *Constantinople of To-day*, then moves on to analyse its subsequent influence on the work of the early Turkish Republican writers, through to Orhan Pamuk's recent memoir *Istanbul. Memories of a City*. In *Istanbul*, Pamuk forges a system of belief that presents itself as a counter-narrative to the ideological discourses that took over the city, as successive Republican governments embarked on radical urban, ethnic and religious reconfigurations of the post-Ottoman metropolis. This is registered in his memoir as an affective structure, a form of melancholy that Pamuk terms *hüzün*, and that may be perceived as operating through the Saidian model of 'intertwined constructions' expressed in his *Culture and Imperialism*. The article proposes that Pamuk's fraught gesture significantly complicates Said's unilateral argument on the French Orientalists in his *Orientalism*, suggesting instead the urgency of reading Gautier's influence on Pamuk through the early Turkish Republican writers as a trope of world literary dynamics.

Abstract II: Questo saggio esplora la ricaduta affettiva della fine dell'impero ottomano sulla sua metropoli principale, Istanbul, così come viene rappresentata per la prima volta nell'opera del diarista francese ottocentesco Théophile Gautier, e poi procede analizzando

l'influenza successiva del monumentale *Constantinople of To-day* di Gautier sull'opera dei primi scrittori repubblicani turchi fino al recente memoir di Orhan Pamuk *Istanbul. Memories of a City*. In *Istanbul*, Pamuk tenta di forgiare un sistema di pensiero che si presenti come contro-narrazione rispetto ai discorsi ideologici che si sono appropriati della città in seguito alla riconfigurazione urbana, etnica e religiosa prodotta dalle politiche della nuova repubblica. Questo sentimento, una forma di malinconia che Pamuk definisce *hüzün*, opera in un certo senso attraverso il modello di Said delle 'costruzioni intrecciate' delineato in *Culture and Imperialism* – il sentimento fortemente intimo e localizzato di Pamuk non è rappresentato come l'eredità non mediata dei primi scrittori post-imperiali, che furono i primi ad esprimerlo in turco. Al contrario, Pamuk individua nell'*hüzün* – così come nella sua stessa concezione di Istanbul – un lascito diretto dei diaristi ottocenteschi francesi e, soprattutto, di Théophile Gautier. L'articolo sostiene che un tale gesto complica significativamente la tesi unilaterale sui diaristi francesi sostenuta da Said in *Orientalism* e promuove, invece, la necessità di leggere l'influenza di Gautier su Pamuk attraverso i primi scrittori repubblicani come indice di dinamiche letterarie mondiali.

In early June of 1852 the French novelist and diarist Théophile Gautier, then forty-one years old, embarked upon a thirteen-day, Istanbul-bound journey across the Mediterranean aboard the mail ship *Leonidas*. The *Leonidas* sailed from the port of Marseilles, past Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily, docked at Malta and then travelled towards the Cyclades, on to İzmir (Smyrna) and finally to Istanbul, where Gautier stopped for a lengthy sojourn. Since the beginning of his narrative – the moment Gautier leaves Paris and journeys to Marseilles – his prose assumes a specific posture with respect to what he often indiscriminately terms as 'the

South'. The aura of gentility, the poise of a sophisticated, European-born-and-bred eye, the confident tone and descriptive ease, even the nonchalance – in other words, the mixture of *disinvoltura* and childlike excitement through which he addresses each location the *Leonidas* sails past, each individual or new phenomenon he comes up against, are unmistakable (1).

Gautier's work has, of course, come within Edward W. Said's line of fire, in the latter's *Orientalism*, as a quintessential example of 'Orientalist' literature, alongside most of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century diarists, philologists, travel writers and others who constituted a salient subject and target of Said's critique. Much of the scholarship on Gautier's work has indeed focused upon and amply demonstrated the yearning for experiences of 'Oriental beauty' and 'Arabic sensuality' that had characterized the writer's mindset at least since 1833, when he was in the process of penning his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (2). Indeed, together with friends such as Gérard de Nerval – who influenced him profoundly, Arsène Houssaye, Charles Baudelaire, Barbey D'Aurevilly and several others, Gautier actively nourished a desire for the 'South' and the 'East' construed as exhilarating *loci* of a promising otherness. Within these spaces, Gautier hoped, one could, perhaps more than anywhere else, experience an alternative aesthetic *milieu* to the increasingly industrialized, capital-driven, demographically expansive, utilitarian and American-inflected Europe that, particularly for many bohemian Romantics and other art-driven collectives at the time, had grown unbearably disenchanting. The subjective projection of fantasies about Egypt – his enduring passion – as it emerges in his short fiction *Une nuit de Cléopatre* as well as his *Le Roman de la Momie* and other works, testifies to Gautier's deep-seated yearnings and expectations of the East as an imaginatively salvific space. In conceiving his fictions, Gautier often relied heavily on received knowledge of the regions he was writing about – and his old friend and classmate Gérard de Nerval's influence in this respect was extensive. Upon his own return from Beirut and Cairo, where he had

accumulated the materials for his *Voyage en Orient* (published in 1851), Nerval briefed an enthralled Gautier about the 'wonders' of the Nile river, Beirut, Egypt and its traditions, 'especially with regard to women and marriage' and so forth (Dahab 1999: 2-4).

Edward Said draws attention, of course, to Gautier's heavy reliance on the testimonies received from Nerval, citing as an example the latter's correspondence with Gautier in which he laments his own experience of the Orient, and particularly of Egypt, as a 'betrayed dream' (Said 1994b: 100). Herein lies the first hurdle for any critical reading of Gautier's stance in his travel diary, especially since Said himself speaks in terms of 'the typical experiences and emotions' that accompany the Orientalist mindset, and draws a fairly broad assumption regarding the latter. The Orientalist frame of mind, he argues, is structured and thrives by means of a sense of disenchantment, a disappointment "that the *modern* Orient is not at all like the [received] texts. […] Memory of the modern Orient disputes imagination, sends one back to the imagination as a place preferable, for the European sensibility, to the real Orient" (Said 1994b: 100-101).

While Gautier's imaginative fictions may be more directly vulnerable to Said's critique, his *Constantinople of To-day*, the voluminous diary of his foray across the eastern Mediterranean, betrays a deep-seated mode of perception that may not be so neatly amenable to being read as an Orientalist stereotype. *Prima facie*, of course, *Constantinople of To-day* seems to deliver its fair contribution to the unilateral Orientalist frame of mind critiqued by Said. This article will suggest that, in seeking beyond the fleeting mention of Gautier proffered by Said in his seminal work, one can encounter a disposition that does not restrict itself to convenient fantasies, overtly implausible projections or the unquestioned endorsement of Orientalist precedents. As I shall argue anon, Gautier's travel diary often purports to complicate and even to undermine,

rather than endorse, many of the facile or unilateralist assumptions that Said criticized as pertaining to the ranks of Orientalist textualism.

A Dialectics of Reception

This more relational disposition in Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* makes itself present, in the first place, as a *suturing* quality. It comes to us as a readiness on the diarist's end, a deeply felt inclination to revise the knowledges he inherited from the metropole, by adopting a receptive and assimilative approach to the complex historical and political realities he encountered upon his journey. As will be pointed out in due course, *Constantinople of To-day* displays a certain ability on the diarist's side to discern the historically contingent from the discursively convenient contexts that he was exposed to, and that influenced him especially during his sojourn in Istanbul. This is not to say that a latent Orientalist, metropole-inflected tendency is not present in his text, but rather, that this itself is tempered by the author's own retrospective critique of his psychological state as he experienced the declining Ottoman city. This latter, self-critical approach is more actively attuned to the material urgencies that the author witnesses as he travels into the eastern Mediterranean.

This dialectic, of a latent metropolitan discourse that is *also* profoundly receptive to the material urgencies it encounters is, I believe, what has made Gautier's writing so attractive to Turkey's early Republican intellectuals. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Yahya Kemal and others amongst their contemporaries were actively seeking thought structures that would allow them to negotiate their existence at the cusp of Ottoman political and cultural formations that were fast disappearing, and giving way to the pressures of Turkification and Republican nationalism. Gautier's metropolitan sensibility, combined with an attunement, conspicuously on an emotive level, to the fact of Istanbul as a lapsed city that "had ceased to be exotic", was so influential that, as Pamuk himself observes, it

percolated through to the deepest concerns of modern Turkish literature (Pamuk 2005: 214).

What came out of this affinity can be perhaps termed a 'dialectics of reception' that, initiated first by Gautier's openness to the influences of a crumbling Istanbul, was eventually to see the native writers drawing upon the mood documented by Gautier in order to explain their own ontological conditions. The trans-cultural currents at play in this dialectics of reception are intriguing, not least because this form of interaction, this trans-generational flow of mutual influence, practically forecloses the problematic presented by Said's unilateral Orientalism. More pressingly, the dialectics of reception speaks of the urgency brought to attention by the latter in his *Culture and Imperialism,* namely, the need to read the cultural archive contrapuntally, in line with the demands of the "dynamic global environment created by imperialism […]" (Said 1994a: 59). Indeed, the posthumous influence of *Constantinople of To-day* on the experiments in the urban representation of Istanbul carried out by Tanpınar and, eventually, by Pamuk himself, is more effectively approached today "with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said 1994a: 59).

The dialectics of reception in *Constantinople of To-day* is often made visible through Gautier's associative sense of observation on his journey, as well as his ability to find and read the qualities of the 'peripheralized' character of his subjects. Inside a cemetery in Smyrna, Gautier remarks, for instance, that here "life is not so carefully separated from death, as with us; but they jostle each other familiarly, like old friends" – and equally layered is his remark, as he sails into the Bosphorus, that "On both sides, Life has Death immediately in its rear; and each town encircles itself with a suburb of tombs" (Gautier 1854: 59, 350). Such observations may not be registered simply as markers of a bizarre difference, or as some radical form of otherness that strikes the traveller's fancy

because it jars with his urbane European breeding. Gautier's words resonate, rather, with the sense of affective dejection that the progressive demise of the old Ottoman order and other governing structures in the south-eastern Mediterranean provoked in him.

As these *anciens régimes* succumbed to the ravages of Great Power expansionism, with its "brutal imposition of 'the logic of unilateral capital'", Gautier's account tends to 'exploit' the aesthetic returns of this sea-change in power relations in the region (Lazarus 2011: 2). Already, as he tours the Church of St. John in Valletta – the temple of the Knights Hospitaller who were overthrown by Napoleon half a century before – Gautier refers to "a sentiment of melancholy" that overtook him in

> the city of La Valette; that stronghold of the knights of the Order of St. John, who have played so bold and brilliant a part in history, but who have passed away, like all ancient institutions when they have no longer an object; and of whom there now remains, only the memory of former glories (Gautier 1854: 36, 41).

This sentiment shapes the psychological chasm that opens up in the European author's vista, as the awareness of an immense memorial legacy that is on its way out impacts upon his senses. The dialectics of reception is born of such an impact: Gautier's terse résumé of the Hospitallers' fate is reminiscent of his corresponding views of a crumbling Ottoman empire, a deep historical decline that stirs in its observer "a gentle and pleasing sadness, which is not without its charm" (Gautier 1854: 59). In other words, Gautier's subjective response to the sense of historical peripheralization he observes taking place around him is a sense of melancholy that is at once requisite *and* irrepressible, since it endows the regional locations he visits with a unique affect, an agency that emanates from its very aesthetics of dejection.

As knowledge and event, present and past, consciousness and contingency coincide within Gautier's ruined landscapes, the structuring affect that obtains in his diary would be "derived from the objective status of the cognized world [and] conversely, the cognized world is at once objectively present and also synthesized under the sign of infinite sadness" (Pensky 1993: 21). Gautier experiences this 'sign of infinite sadness', this perverse epiphany, this melancholic dialectic, more poignantly than anywhere else as he stands in front of the crumbling Ottoman and Byzantine fortifications in the *chora*, in the outlying stretches of land outside Istanbul's ancient, dilapidated walls:

> On every side, decay, dilapidation, and neglect; and above all this squalor and abandonment, the pure, dazzling, implacable sunlight of the Orient, making even more painfully obvious every minute detail of the wretchedness around. […] from the exterior gallery of the minaret of the neighbouring mosque, two muezzins, clad in white, and moving around the gallery with the step of phantoms, proclaimed the sacramental formula of Islam to these mansions, deserted, blind and deaf, and losing themselves in silence and solitude. […] I felt myself, in my own despite, oppressed by an overwhelming sadness […] (Gautier 1854: 223-224).

For the diarist this moment turns out to be, perhaps, the crucial Benjaminian *Jetztzeit*of his entire journey: as he faces the ruins, Gautier experiences the haunting injunction of a destitute history upon its visitor. The ruins constitute the space where what Gautier referred to, earlier in his diary, as the "vague cosmographies of the imagination" (Gautier 1854: 10), the projections of the Orientalist mindset, encounter their tempering "objective status of the cognized world" (Pensky 1993: 21).

The unrequited fall of the ruin, of the lapsed object of history, calls out in turn to the historicist sensibility. The effect of this injunction on the European visitor is that of an 'overwhelming sadness'. It is a paralytic sense of dejection

that Gautier asserts with sincerity, but which does not, however, merely obtain as a mark of helplessness. On the contrary, Gautier perceives it as an intimate form of dejection that expresses itself, that is exteriorized, catalyzed by the 'implacable sunlight of the Orient' itself. As the vaunted Orientalist posture of *disinvoltura* breaks down, as the ruins – the repressed debris of Occidental modernity – come to haunt and paralyse the diarist's present, Gautier draws on the resources of melancholy itself, on the historical urgencies it demonstrates to him, to endow the Istanbullu ruins with a sense of spiritual intensity. The image of the phantasmic muezzins announcing their formula to the 'deserted, blind and deaf' districts, the fluid *denouement* of loss 'in silence and solitude', already gesture to the advent of a culture of belief that is no longer Islamic and certainly not Christian: here, the observant diarist is unwittingly articulating what would come to be termed, as it were, a 'proto-secular' mode of cultural perception.

Gautier's encounter with the Istanbullu ruins is all the more eventful, since, as stated briefly earlier, it has set in motion a cultural intertext which was already visible in post-Ottoman and early Republican Turkish writing, and continues to resonate in the vernacular literature today. A salient effect of the picturesque ruins on Gautier was the knowledge that there, in ancient Constantinople's outlying districts, the *flâneur* abroad could uniquely "recover the hidden dependency of Occidental modernity on what remains in the dark, over the frontier in the silenced territories of alterity" (Chambers 2008: 108). The sense of overwhelming – but also eloquent – dejection that emanates from this recovery of the Occident's dependency on the debris of its emergence overtakes and captivates Gautier. This melancholy speaks of an Orientalist's frustrated effort at self-fulfilment. His frustration is partly the result of his direct encounters with the remainders of imperial grandeur, through which "it becomes evident that the finally found real object is not the reference of desire, even though it possesses all the required properties" (Žižek 2008: 131).

This apprehension, in and of itself, exacerbates Gautier's paralyzing sense of dejection. In his account of Istanbul, however, this experience of an intense melancholy is not conveniently transferred onto the projection of some imaginary conceit reminiscent of the Orientalist accounts critiqued by Said. Gautier's melancholy is particular in that it manifests itself as a form of *objet a*, or what Slavoj Žižek would term, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, the "real-impossible correlative" of that otherwise rigid designator that, in Gautier's case, is the Orientalist *forma mentis* inherited from Nerval *et al*. (Žižek 2008: 95). The Istanbullu ruins inexorably face the diarist – and the diary itself – with the spuriousness of their very inscription. The diary registers itself as the ruin of an event – an encounter with material, cultural ruin that has 'sobered' the author up, showed his desire for self-mythification, as it were, to be impossible. It is this structure of melancholy, at once eloquent and mute, aesthetically rewarding but discursively frustrating, that has lent itself to the efforts of both early and latter-day Turkish republican writers who, "lacking Turkish precedents, […] followed the footsteps of Western travellers" in their subsequent representations of Istanbul (Pamuk 2005: 99-103).

The countless depictions of the city provided in *Constantinople of To-day* adopt a narrative technique that would become a hallmark strategy for subsequent representations of the Ottoman city – Gautier's distinct descriptive realism. Despite its frequent indulgences in hyperbole, his account provides a detailed and eloquent urban depiction of a culturally, politically and economically affluent civilizational hub that for four hundred years of governance under the sign of Islam had encouraged very little in terms of figurative (self-) representation. Gautier simply translates the melancholy, the crippling-enabling affect created in him by the picturesque ruins *in* and *as* a descriptive narrative of urban space: at once an aesthetically eloquent landscape *and* a tangible reminder of the now unattainable heights of material and cultural influence known to the Ottoman *ancien régime* that built it.

For the writers of the early Republican Turkey who also lived through the final years of Ottoman rule, the sense of an abysmal decline was everywhere visible in the then ongoing Republican mutilations of historical Istanbul itself – most notably the obliteration of valuable aspects of the city's architectural Ottoman legacy and the relentless persecution of its Greek, Jewish, Armenian and other minorities. Throughout this interregnum, which saw the rise and consolidation of the Atatürkian state, the "melancholy of the ruins" as a mode of expressing the ennui of loss and peripheralization became a motif of choice, a salient marker of the early Republican literature's quest for a renewed cultural and political assertiveness in the face of Istanbul's historic fate. The adoption of the city's picturesque fall, the potentials of its visual and visible melancholy as at once a paralytic and an enabling mode of identification, was something that the early Republican writers discovered in the writing of Gautier.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, whose representations of Istanbul in *Huzur* (*A Mind at Peace*), his *magnum opus* are perhaps the most fluent portrayals of post-Ottoman melancholy we now have, was very directly influenced by Gautier's own experience. As Pamuk insists, "[Tanpınar,] the Istanbul writer most alert to the changes wrought by the 'vast light show' that is the Istanbul landscape, acquired his vocabulary and his eye for detail from Gautier. Gautier had the sort of eye that could find melancholic beauty amid dirt and disorder. He shared the excitement of romantic literature for Greek and Roman ruins and the remains of vanished civilizations, and also, even as he mocked it, the awe" (Pamuk 2005: 205). Tanpınar's writing reworks Gautier's 'overwhelming sadness' at the sight of an Istanbul at the mercy of Western political, cultural and economic interests, and registers it as an obsessive deployment of ruin-imagery. This is suggested in the poignant opening of Tanpınar's epic novel on post-Ottoman Istanbul:

> Ihsan had complained of backaches, fever, and fatigue for about two days before pneumonia heralded its onset, sudden and sublime, establishing a sultanate over the household, a psychology of devastation through fear,

> dread, rue, and endless goodwill scarcely absent from lips or glances […] the children languished in ruin (Tanpinar 2008: 9).

The republicanized, post-Ottoman city's ailments are personified through its inhabitants, whose structuring emotion is now the 'psychology of devastation' that has established its own 'sultanate', one that rules through 'fear, dread, rue' under the benevolent guise of 'endless goodwill'. Tanpınar often depicts the effects of historical trauma on the city's impoverished worker populations in the same tones of sheer abjection outlined by Gautier, using the ruins as his salient image. "The woman's face was a veritable building on the verge of collapse", Tanpınar observes at one point (Tanpinar 2008: 21). In another example, Mümtaz, a central character in the novel, "plod[s] through decrepit, grim neighbourhoods, passing before aged houses whose bleakness gave them the semblance of human faces" (Tanpinar 2008: 23).

In Tanpınar's novel, the allegorical protagonist and his melancholy emerge as a result of a personal, 'atavistic' awareness of the city's ruined past. The history of Istanbul begins to manifest itself physically, by means of the ruin-images that in turn construct and dismantle the protagonist's affective schema. This is a direct bequeathal of Gautier. Tanpınar's melancholy-bound Mümtazexists in the twilight zones between life and death, the past and the present, fear and anamnesia – a liminal condition symbolized by the imagery of ruins that shapes his surroundings:

> Mümtaz liked to spend the twilight hours perched on boulders between the road and the sea. The sun above the Bey Mountains girded the hilly undulations in golden and silver armor as if arranging the rites of its death and preparing a sarcophagus from its own gilding and indigo shadows; […] The boulders, during the daytime, were only seaweed-covered blocks of stone that wind and rain had eroded with holes like sponges […] Mümtaz tried not to be scattered by that astounding gust of

> apprehension whose origins extended deeply into the past and whorled about his entire being (Tanpinar 2008: 34).

This is a melancholy which emanates from the increasingly distorted social and urban landscape of the city: Gautier's melancholia, represented as an erosion of the spirit, interpellates the Istanbullu one in the same way as the landscape itself crushes Mümtaz's spirit: a mood, therefore, that engulfs and determines the 'entire being' of the post-imperial Istanbullu subject. By associating the city's cultural and social impoverishment with its ruined or 'eroded' landscape after reading the French Orientalists, the Istanbullu writers were able to reconfigure the resulting ennui, and to present it anew as the city's own *leitmotif*. "Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar created an image of the city that resonated for Istanbullus", Pamuk writes, "something they could do only by merging those beautiful views with the poverty 'in the wings' invoked by Gautier" (Pamuk 2005: 201).

The ambivalent identification of a crippling-enabling melancholia, elaborated by Tanpınar in the wake of Gautier, is reinforced in Orhan Pamuk's own memoir, *Istanbul – Memories of a City*. Pamuk's work spells out the paradoxical sentiments evoked by a post-imperial melancholic mood that Pamuk terms *hüzün*. One of his many and varied definitions of this affective structure is revealing of the continuing legacy of Gautier, and the latter's perception of old Istanbul as an inevitable marker of the contemporary South, or one of modernity's many surplus locations:

> To feel this *hüzün* is to be able to see the moments and places in which this feeling and the context that arouses this feeling mix together […] what I am trying to describe now is not the melancholy of Istanbul, but the *hüzün* in which we see ourselves reflected, the *hüzün* we absorb with pride and share as a community […] the same grief that no one can or would wish to escape, an ache that finally saves our souls and also gives them depth. […]

> So it is, too, for the residents of Istanbul as they resign themselves to poverty and depression [...] but it also explains why it is their choice to embrace failure, indecision, defeat and poverty so philosophically and with such pride, suggesting that *hüzün* is not the outcome of life's worries and great losses, but their principal cause. [...] *Hüzün* does not just paralyze the inhabitants of Istanbul; it also gives them poetic licence to be paralyzed (Pamuk 2005: 84, 88, 93-94).

This form of melancholy owes its beginnings to Gautier's observations in his *Constantinople of To-day*. Like its eponymous city, Pamuk's *Istanbul*, seen through this perspective of post-imperial *tristesse*, does not lend itself easily to any projection of it as an oppositional space evolving against some notion of the 'West' as a historical *idée fixe*. For, as it plumbs the unrequited layers of the city's past, Pamuk's memoir works on the indeterminate premise of "what it feels like to live in the psychological gulf that opens at the end of an era" (Hughes 1997: x). Pamuk's consciousness of his city's *mise en abyme* in the course of the twentieth century is a self-consciously 'writerly' account that addresses, in large part, the question of – and the quest for – a post-imperial Istanbullu identity. As will soon be pointed out, the memoir incorporates several other intertexts that help the memoirist trace a certain urban literary imaginary that arose as a consequence of the city's peripheralization over the past hundred and fifty years, since Gautier's own visit. It is this imaginary, Pamuk argues, that has to an important extent shaped the understanding of Istanbullu modernity *as* and *through* a series of "structuring engagements" with Western forms (Casanova 2005: 79).

Entering the 'World Space'

Modern Turkey's earliest generation of Republican writers may be regarded as Pamuk's own literary predecessors insofar as they reconfigured a modern Istanbullu identity around the embryonic notion of *hüzün* – a notion they

gleaned from the nineteenth-century diarists and writers of the period as well as their own individual observations. The ideals promulgated by the writers of the early Turkish Republic had a very direct influence on how Istanbul's residents perceived their own geographic and political identity in the subsequent years. Pamuk, in fact, notes that the writing of exponents such as Yahya Kemal, Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Reşat Ekrem Koçu acquired its sense of purpose in large part through exploring the "tensions between the past and the present […]" (Pamuk 2005: 99-103). "It was from Théophile Gautier, another author greatly admired by Yahya Kemal, that Tanpınar learned how to put a landscape into words", Pamuk observes, and he further indicates that, lacking as they were in Turkish literary precedents, "they followed the footsteps of Western travellers, wandering around the ruins of the city's poor neighbourhoods […]" (Pamuk 2005: 99-103). The perception that most Istanbullu residents entertain about their city, Pamuk insists, "depends very much on the images these writers created", and the latter constructed and re-presented the city's melancholic essence, in turn, "by seeing Istanbul through the eyes of a Westerner" (99-103).

The early Republican writers succeeded in fashioning their 'poetics of the past', of which *Istanbul* purports to be a latter-day exponent, as a result of two main affective influences. Their melancholic engagement with the ruin-space as a basic identitarian practice simultaneously hinged on the city's post-imperial peripheralization *and* assumed the French writers' own versions of 'melancholy' as its point of departure. Pamuk is here referring to the process of a profound, lengthy and trans-generational literary "interference" (Moretti 2000), a cross-narrative conversation between vastly differing cultural *milieux*. This process may be more adequately understood in terms of Pascale Casanova's notion of a 'world literary space' as well as Franco Moretti's 'world literary' dispensation. Kemal and Tanpınar, in Pamuk's view, forged their melancholic vision of the post-imperial city only after taking issue with the highly individual formulations of

melancholy that writers hailing from the centres of global literature wrote as they experienced Istanbul (Casanova 2005: 74).

Kemal, and particularly Tanpınar, incorporated and conversed with these Western formulations of melancholy within their own texts. As Casanova has pointed out, the notion of a 'world literature' constitutes a proper cultural mediation that may exist in parallel with the political sphere while being relatively autonomous from it. Pamuk is, I believe, referring to this phenomenon when he associates the writers from the early Turkish Republic with the nineteenth-century French diarists. Within this space "struggles of all sorts – political, social, national, gender, ethnic – come to be refracted, diluted, deformed and transformed according to a literary logic, and in literary forms" (Pamuk 2005: 72). The 'worldly' context of such a space becomes visible, Casanova insists, through the structural inequalities within the literary world itself which give rise to specific struggles, both over literature itself and its place in the local and global circuits of transmission and reception, within and beyond national borders. The Istanbullu writers' urban poetics participates in this agonistic world structure: Kemal, Tanpınar and Pamuk himself establish, in their work, a very intimate affinity with Richard Burton, Gérard de Nerval and Théophile Gautier – three of the more heavily critiqued figures in Said's *Orientalism*.

According to Moretti, this interstitial literary space would house the problematic interconnection of literary forms in a relation of what he terms 'foreign debt' – a literary transaction wherein one literary work evolves precisely through the interference within it of another, 'alien' aesthetic mode. Literary interference, Moretti argues, is often asymmetrical and unequal. "A target literature is, more often than not, interfered with by a source literature which completely ignores it", he notes (Moretti 2000: 56). The law of literary evolution in cultures belonging to the "semi-periphery" of the world space arises, according to him, from "a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French

or English) and local materials" (Moretti 2000: 58). These writers' creation of an aesthetic identity for the city at the height of its historical peripheralization operates precisely at this mediating fault line: modern Istanbullu identity was born, Pamuk shows, as the amalgam of an imported literary-affective model – Orientalist melancholia – and its reconfiguration by the Istanbullu writers into autonomous local variations. Both Gautier's *Constantinople* as well as Burton's mammoth work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* were basic sources for the "foreign debt" that then interpellated the early Republicans' formulation of Istanbul's aesthetic modernity. The inherent ambivalences of Pamuk's *hüzün* itself – its paralyzing ennui and salvific beauty – are already present in Gautier's impressions, a century and a half earlier: the sense of failure that both co-exists with and gives rise to one's self-expression, the ambience of decay evinced and transformed by an implacable sunlight.

The awareness of this 'foreign debt' to Gautier and his contemporaries is precisely what Pamuk means when he states that "the roots of our *hüzün* are European" (Pamuk 2005: 210). *Hüzün* is conceived as an affective palimpsest that is Benjaminian in nature: it emanates from the constellation of unrequited pasts (Gautier's "same grief that no one can or would wish to escape") that survive in order to crowd the present with their disturbing significance. Like Gautier's own melancholy, Pamuk's *hüzün* seeks amid the city's dilapidated locations a paradigm for a spiritual intensity gleaned from the amnestic devastation of Western modernity and the advent of aggressive capital.

As such, it follows the model initiated by Gautier, inferring quotidian forms of identification from the psychological wastelands of history. This sentiment is further complicated by Pamuk when he confesses that

> this is why I sometimes read Westerners' accounts not at arm's length, as someone else's exotic dreams, but drawn close by, as if they were my own memories. […] To see Istanbul through the eyes of a foreigner always gives me pleasure, in no small part because the picture helps me

> fend off narrow nationalism and pressures to conform" (Pamuk 2005: 214-218).

Pamuk's intimate disclosure here testifies not simply to his own need to estrange himself from his birthplace, but also to the notion that the signifier "Istanbul" is far wealthier than its conventional, stereotypical designation as the nexus between East and West suggests. The city becomes a mode of representation in and of itself, constantly seeking self-renewal through that radical form of alterity that was already, a century and a half ago, echoed by the French diarist as he sailed into its waterway: "The Bosphorus is full of currents, the direction of which varies greatly […]" (Gautier 1854: 352).

Pamuk perceives his own writerly legacy, therefore, as pertaining to an aesthetic order that permits one to transcend the nationalist parameters that restrained Istanbul during the rise of the Republic and, in many ways, to this very day. This is a view that partakes, therefore, of that distinct literary *limen* that is the 'world space'. Any literary text's positioning today will invariably be doubly defined: one is situated once "according to the position he or she occupies in a national space, and then once again according to the place that [one] occupies within the world space" (Casanova 2005: 81). But Moretti has taken this tenet a critical step further. The product of cultural history, he argues, is always a composite one. But which is the dominant mechanism in its composition? "The internal, or the external one? The nation or the world?" (Moretti 2000: 68). In the case of *Istanbul*, it can be inferred that, insofar as he is concerned with the constraints of the nation-state model on the otherwise diverse identifications inside his native city, the memoirist's responsibility is to display Istanbul's present as a direct result of communal pasts which tended to recognize the co-existence of creeds and ethnicities, thereby invalidating the Turkish nationalist claims over the city.

Pamuk's native consciousness as an Istanbullu – and his repeatedly acknowledged inheritance from Gautier and his contemporaries – is often

concerned with undermining exclusivist or monocultural claims to his native space. He achieves this by unsettling stereotypical perceptions of Istanbul to the degree of inducing a certain *ostranenie*, a scathing defamiliarization of Istanbullu spaces, by juxtaposing its strange – because intentionally obscured – pasts to the narrative present. In achieving this unsettling effect, the works of European travellers and artists themselves serve Pamuk as important memorial substitutes that can shelter the Istanbullu writer's own imaginary from state-manufactured amnesia. This fact in itself constitutes one important reason for why Pamuk's work is so indispensable today to the echelons of world literature.

In Pamuk's earlier novel *My Name is Red*, the origins of Ottoman miniaturist art are traced back to Isfahan, Tabriz and the Far East. Its future, on the other hand, is inextricably bound to the developments in Frankish portraiture and perspectival painting. This planetary consciousness achieves an almost solipsistic dimension in *Istanbul,* where the memoirist finds his own voice and his critical stance towards his native space precisely by hosting other memories coming from beyond his national borders. In one sense, *Istanbul* is about a sustained cosmo*politics* of narrative habitations – it is a text which reconstructs the Istanbullu social space by perceiving others' written experiences of it as anything but foreign, and thereby inhabiting them as one's own, across the strictures of time and place.

In this manner, Gautier's memoirs open up the possibility for Pamuk to transcend the cultural depthlessness of the present and direct his critical gaze to the narratives concealed behind the threefold veil of Westernization, nationalization and capital. It becomes possible for Pamuk, therefore, to inhabit his native city – insofar as this residence entails the *a priori* hosting of other aesthetic visions as essential components in the cultural constellation that shapes his Istanbul. The memoirist's sensibility operates in the knowledge that hosting other narratives within one's space, as one's own, may not be reducible to one sporadic literary gesture among others, but becomes a vital attribute of

local culture itself and a direct intervention onto the world-space. "Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*", Jacques Derrida has written, "that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality* [...]" (Derrida 2001: 17). It is such an ethos that leads Pamuk to trace the origins of *hüzün* to Gautier's melancholic form as a structuring theme across the gamut of universal human experience.

A final question to be raised here, having traced some literary-historical aspects of modern Istanbul's cultural melancholia, is whether the *hüzün* invoked by Pamuk could itself be considered in any way, to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept, as a 'provincialization' of the nineteenth-century Orientalist derivations of melancholy. One of the more understated implications in Pamuk's own memoir is that, in the process of acquiring their 'foreign debt' from the French diarists, the early Republican Istanbullu writers found the latters' notions of melancholy to be "at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping [them] to think through the experiences of modernity", thereby compelling them to explore aesthetic alternatives through which that form may be 'renewed from and for the margins' as an alternative social aesthetic in the Republican era (Chakrabarty 2000: 16).

In tracing the literary origins of *hüzün*, Pamuk is trying to demonstrate that the French Orientalists' relation to Istanbul, as well as their unwitting participation in the Istanbullu writers' own imagination of their city, was perhaps more complex than *Orientalism,* with its founding premise of largely unilateral projections of the 'Oriental other', makes it out to be. Standing on Casanova's 'dominated' side of the relation, these writers' representations of Istanbul wove freely, in and out of the French travellers' impressions of the city during the Empire's last decades. Pamuk's memoir itself owes as much to the French diarists as it does to the Istanbullu writers of the early Republic, if not more, precisely because the French documentations offer a more comprehensive, visual and

detailed account of the late Ottoman city than any early Republican Turkish writer could have in fact provided. Moreover, Pamuk's assertion that the roots of the city's *hüzün* are European – his tracing of the city's representation of its most subjective affect, its enabling abjection, to the work of the French diarists – remains at once a most auspicious endorsement of Orientalist literature *and* its severest indictment. Even as Gautier is hailed as one of the city's quintessential *archon*, a literary 'custodian' of the city's melancholic identification, his work today continues to be simultaneously recognized as an agent of the Western ideological apparatus that, in large part, precipitated the city's historic – and melancholic – decline.

For the four centuries of Ottoman governance in the name of Islam, aesthetic representation in and of Istanbul did not actively seek to focus on figurative representation or self-representation. The sparseness of local representations of the city's fate also arose, however, because the one hundred and fifty years that elapsed between Gautier and Pamuk contained the destruction of a more heterogeneous community than Pamuk could ever remember. This included the many artists and intellectuals whose portrayals of late Ottoman Istanbul were either destroyed or actively inhibited. Pamuk's own depiction of the city itself ultimately pertains to the 'world literary space' by virtue of his own incorporation of Gautier's text within it. The memoirist regards Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* both as a subjective historical account to be regarded with a critical eye but also, crucially, as a unique anamnestic device that survived through an epoch marked by memorial haemorrhage. He argues that, with the new concept of Turkishness that was being cultivated with the demise of Ottoman power, what came into being was, effectively, "a certain *cordon sanitaire* from the rest of the world. It was an end to the great polyglot, multicultural Istanbul of the imperial age; the city stagnated […]" (Pamuk 2005: 214). Within this context, Pamuk confesses that "I sometimes read Westerners' accounts not at arm's length, as someone else's exotic dreams, but drawn close

by, as if they were my own memories" (Pamuk 2005: 216-217). Pamuk's own judgment is uncompromising in this regard – a vivid, real, realist depiction of Istanbul's intertwined cityscapes is, according to him, "something that only literature can convey" and for many centuries, he scathingly remarks, "the only literature our city inspired was penned by Westerners" (Pamuk 2005: 216).

NOTES

1. Even as he draws nearer to the regions of southern France, Gautier impatiently exclaims that 'The South declares itself already, by a bright sunshine, which warms the flagstones, or sets a-chirping the hundreds of exotic birds […]' (Gautier 1854: 11).
2. See for quotations and a more detailed argument and information on the data presented throughout this paragraph, F. Elizabeth Dahab, Théophile Gautier and the Orient', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 1.4 (1999).
3. The Turkish word *huzur* translates literally as 'peace'. See Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace* (2008).

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