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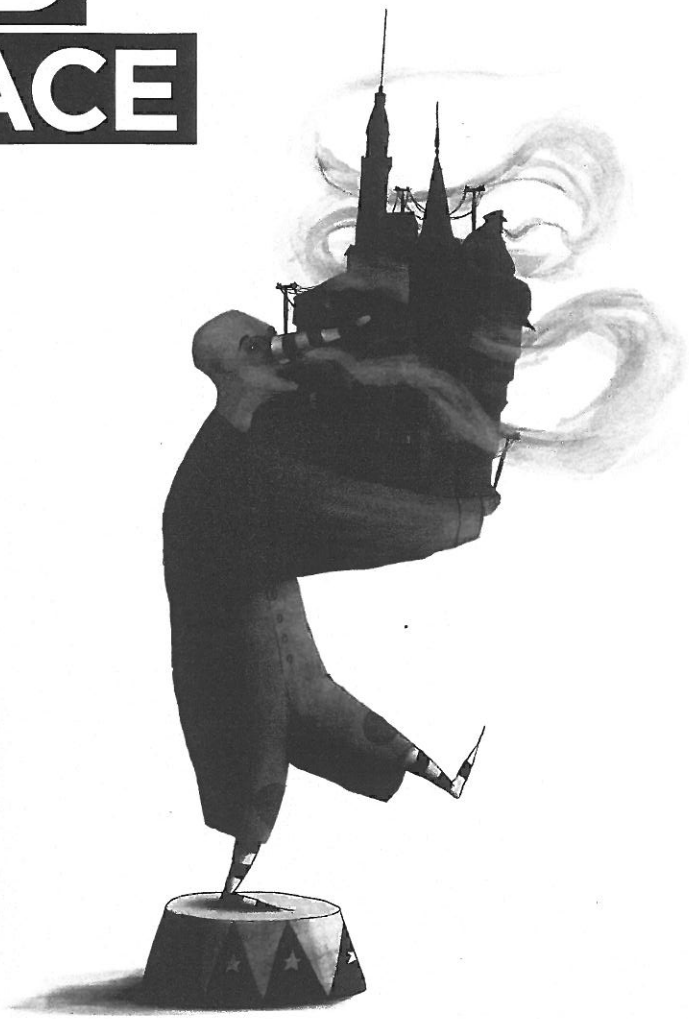

edited by

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Because once you know, you are part of it.

Where conscience is no longer strong enough to cushion the deeds of history that have been delegated to forgetting.

Arkanya, this ancient land of othering and blood and war and human misery and wrongdoing and secret mass graves and denial…

Arkanya, this land of iridescent light and terrifying ghosts….

Arkanya, your land and mine.

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Istan*blues*: The City as a Site of Nostalgia

Ayşe Naz Bulamur

Nostalgic reconstructions of Istanbul's Byzantine era in Julia Kristeva's *Murder in Byzantium* (2004), and its Ottoman past in Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2003), function as critiques of post-Republican Istanbul. Nostalgia is defined as an emotion of sadly longing for an unattainable past and as a desire to "recapture a mood or spirit of a previous time" (Wilson, J. 26). In *The Imagined Past*, Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase remark that one often dreams of a lost golden age due to "the great declines of history, to the fall, for instance, of once empires" (3). Besides yearning for a perfect mythic past, another requirement for nostalgia, for Shaw and Chase, "is that objects, buildings, and images from the past should be available" to demonstrate the greatness of the fallen empire (4). Istanbul meets these two prerequisites for nostalgia as an imperial city where the Byzantine and the Ottoman monuments coexist with the post-Republican buildings. Whereas Kristeva's narrators lament the Turkish invasion of a glorious and refined Constantinople, Pamuk[1] yearns for the cosmopolitan Ottoman Istanbul that has become a culturally uniformed, and black and white city. Yearning for another time is never innocent but ideological, as Renato Rosaldo remarks, and I examine how nostalgia for Istanbul's imperial past, in both texts, engages with the present political debates, such as Islamophobia, Turkey's European Union membership, and minority rights in Turkey.

Orhan Pamuk-*Istanbul: Memories and the City*

In his multilayered narrative that travels between different genres of history, autobiography, fiction, and city writing, Pamuk interweaves his childhood memories with Istanbulites' mourning over Istanbul's diminishing cosmopolitan character. He describes the collective sadness that inflicts Istanbul's population as "hüzün," which he differentiates from melancholy: *hüzün* is not "the melancholy of a solitary person but the black mood shared by millions of people together. What I am trying to explain is the *hüzün* of an entire city: of Istanbul" (92). For Pamuk, Istanbulites wear black to mourn for Istanbul's lost diversity after the gradual departure of non-Muslims: "This is how you dress in a black-and-white city, they

seem to be saying; this is how you grieve for a city that has been in decline for a hundred and fifty years" (42). Ara Güler's black and white photographs, in Pamuk's text, also suggest that Istanbul has lost its colors, its multicultural character.

The Black and White City: Pamuk's Nostalgia for Istanbul's Multicultural Past

Pamuk's nostalgic visions of the multicultural Ottoman Empire criticize a Turkish nationalism that forsakes cultural plurality for the integrity of the State. He remarks that the French writer Théophile Gautier traveled to Istanbul in 1852, and was fascinated with the multilingual Ottoman capital, where one could hear Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Italian, French, and Kurdish. Praising the Ottoman era when minorities had the freedom to speak their mother tongue, Pamuk blames the Turkish government for imposing cultural unity by declaring Turkish as the only official language:

> When the empire fell, the new Republic, while certain of its purpose, was unsure of its identity; the only way forward, its founders thought, was to foster a new concept of Turkishness, and this meant a certain cordon sanitaire to shut it off from the rest of the world. It was the end of the grand multicultural Istanbul of the imperial age; the city stagnated, emptied itself out, and became a monotonous monolingual town in black and white. The cosmopolitan Istanbul I knew as a child had disappeared by the time I reached adulthood. (238)

Pamuk also remarks that the French traveler, Gustave Flaubert, who visited Istanbul in 1850, "was struck by the variety of life in its teeming streets" and predicted that the city would be the world's capital within a century (*Istanbul* 6). Instead of becoming "a great world capital," Istanbul, according to Pamuk, turned into a black and white city that is homogenously Turkish (246).

Istanbul's Changing Landscape with Turkish Nationalism

Istanbul's modernized architectural landscape becomes the medium for Pamuk to show how the heterogeneous Ottoman capital turned into an ethnically and religiously unified city. He laments the loss of Istanbul's cosmopolitan past with the photographs of the Greek shops he used to visit with his mother in Beyoğlu and comments that violence against the shopkeepers was more dangerous than "the worst Orientalist nightmares" (173). He writes that the government also contributed to the Turkification of Beyoğlu by changing the name of "Pera"

(beyond Golden Horn) to "Istiklal," which reflects the nationalist plan of transforming Istanbul into a Republican city. In the 1980s, Istanbul's mayor, Bedrettin Dalan, ordered the demolishment of Levantine buildings in Tarlabaşı for a highway construction and defended the modernization project: "We are against the preservation of historical sites if they prevent development" (qtd. in Bartu 35). Beyoğlu is the site of nostalgia, for Pamuk, who laments the destruction of the Levantine district, where the Greeks, Jews, and Armenians lived.

Pamuk laments that the Turkish government burned down many empty, rotting, and neglected Ottoman mansions to break away from its imperial past. Once the living quarters of pashas from diverse ethnic origins, the elegant mansions with narrow high windows and cypress trees are now "mere shadows" of the destroyed Ottoman culture (50). While lamenting the vanishing *yalıs* of the Bosphorus, Pamuk also blames Turkish nationalists for severing their Ottoman roots: "at a time when the empire had fallen, the ideology of the Turkish Republic was ascendant, and westward-looking Istanbul had begun to reject, suppress, deride, and suspect anything to do with its Ottoman past" (157). Pamuk laments that Westernization leads to "the erasure of the (Ottoman) past" in the city where decaying mansions are regarded as "decrepit anomalies" that belong to another country (29). Istanbul turned into a "second-class imitation of a western city," as the government replaced Ottoman mansions with ugly multi-storey buildings (*Istanbul* 211).

Despite his sentimental yearning for the past, Pamuk is mesmerized by the hybrid city, where he enjoys walking through the Byzantium and Ottoman remains. In "Looking Backward," Elizabeth Wilson writes about a sense of pleasure due to "the ambivalence of nostalgia," which she defines as "a liminal experience, on the threshold where past meets present" (100); and it is Istanbul's position between a Republican and an imperial city that fascinates Pamuk. Although he nostalgically creates a glamorous past, it is, indeed, the present-day Istanbul that he is in love with: "To escape this hybrid lettered hell, I conjure up a golden age, a pure and shining moment when the city 'was at peace with itself,' when it was a 'beautiful whole.' … But my reason reasserts itself, I remember that I love this city not for any purity but precisely for the lamentable want of it" (320). He is attracted to the disorder and plurality of the city that retains its imperial character within the Republican present. The coexistence of the modern apartments and decaying Ottoman mansions makes Istanbul a museum-like city where different time periods merge into one another. It is "*hüzün* that gives Istanbul its grave beauty," Pamuk writes (352), suggesting that what makes Istanbul beautiful is its capacity to

generate contradictory emotions of a sentimental yearning for the past and also of enjoyment of imperial remains in the Republic.

In conclusion, Pamuk imagines a cosmopolitan and multicultural Ottoman Istanbul based on nineteenth-century European travel narratives as well as Ara Güler's black and white photographs. He believes that Istanbul's imperial ruins generate hüzün for the loss of a multicultural empire and also remind Istanbulites that they are the inheritors of a glorious civilization. As Jens Jäger remarks in "Picturing Nations," however, landscape photographs are not objective but speculative; and Güler's photographs of Istanbul's historical districts on the European side, where Pamuk lives, also offer a selective and mediated vision. The Ottoman ruins become "the city's essence" (349) as the photographs exclude both the city squares with Atatürk's statues and republican monuments, and the neighborhoods with apartment complexes. The selections from Güler's archive do not capture the city holistically, but instead collaborate with Pamuk's purpose to revive Istanbulites' memories of the Ottoman past, which he thinks is indispensable for their national and cultural identity.

Julia Kristeva- *Murder in Byzantium*

While Pamuk glorifies multicultural and multilingual Ottoman Istanbul, Kristeva's narrators—the French journalist Stephanie Delacour and the third-person voice—long for Istanbul's Byzantine past. The unnamed narrator mourns the fall of the extinguished Byzantine Empire to its barbaric Turkish invaders: "Since after the Turks … , Byzantium is no longer what it once was" (173). Indeed, the title of Kristeva's novel can be read as the *murder* of the sophisticated Empire due to the attacks of the Latin crusaders and the Ottoman Turks. Her nostalgia for a cultivated Byzantium also speaks to her fear that Europe will lose its Western Christian character due to the increasing number of Muslim immigrants. Originally published in French in 2004 and in English in 2006, *Murder in Byzantium* intervenes in the debates of Turkey's membership in the European Union by foregrounding Istanbul's cultural and religious differences from the rest of Europe.

Before discussing the politics of nostalgia, I will briefly summarize the plot of this highly experimental, nonlinear, and intertextual novel. The French journalist, Stephanie, goes to the imaginary city of Santa Varvara, to help Detective Rilsky investigate a serial killer. In the meantime, they also investigate the sudden disappearance of the detective's uncle, Sebastian, a professor of human migrations, who writes a novel on the Byzantine princess-historian Anna Comnena. Stephanie reads the professor's computer files on Anna and realizes that he is in love with the

princess, who lived in Constantinople (1083-1148) and recorded the history of her father's rule (Alexius I Comnenus) in *The Alexiad*. Kristeva's novel deviates from the conventions of detective fiction as Stephanie reads Sebastian's novel on Anna, and finds herself invested more in Byzantium rather than the identity of the serial killer. While Pamuk narrates Ottoman Istanbul exclusively from the points of view of Turkish and European male artists,[2] the feminist writer Kristeva challenges the traditional assumption that His-story is a masculine discourse by imagining Istanbul through Anna's book, *The Alexiad*. Instead of creating suspense by focusing on the murder suspects, the novel travels back in time as the Bulgarian-French writer investigates her cultural roots in Byzantium.

Byzantium's liminal space and the questions of fragmented identity

Given its liminal position between the two continents, Istanbul's landscape becomes a metaphor for Stephanie's state between different cultures. She idealizes Byzantium as an "unnameable" place that has no point of origin or a fixed location, and that is in the middle of diverse cultures and religions (69). The city's cultural complexity embodies Stephanie's multi-ethnic identity as the daughter of a Russian mother and a French diplomat father:

> No, don't look for me on the map, my Byzantium is a matter of time, the very question that time asks itself when it doesn't want to choose between two places, two dogmas, two crises, two identities, *two continents*, two religions, two sexes, two plots. Byzantium leaves the question open and time as well. (my emphasis 88)

Although she states that her Byzantium cannot be found on the map, she evokes Istanbul by commenting that it is in between "two continents" and "on the tingling skin of the Bosphorus" (83). Byzantium is depicted as the epitome of a decentered and deterritorialized sense of place, where, according to Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, "there are multiplicities which constantly go beyond binary machines and do not let themselves be dichotomized" (26). Stephanie imagines Byzantium as a heterogeneous place that evades cultural dualisms, and, in doing so, becomes an assemblage of different populations, territories, and ethnic identities.

Stephanie's depiction of Byzantium as a multi-dimensional space in a state of flux, however, does not include its current inhabitants. To make Istanbul Oriental, Stephanie first renders Byzantium as Occidental by challenging the associations between Byzantium and mischief. Indeed, she distinguishes her refined Byzantium from the novel's imaginary setting, Santa Varvara, "the paradise of various mafia

groups" (1). By setting up the two places against one another, she claims Byzantium as a civilized place that is aloof from crime and corruption. She asks the readers to be skeptical of history books, which argue that with all its political intricacies, Byzantium "had already flowed into the arabesques of the same Oriental spirit" (85). For Stephanie, the Roman Catholics needed the narrative of violent, treacherous, and heretical Byzantines to establish their cultural and religious superiority, and to justify their invasion of Constantinople. Perceiving the historical narratives on vicious and twisted Byzantine plots as detective stories, Stephanie chooses the crime fiction genre to reclaim Byzantium as Occidental and to praise its "Western" qualities of progress and refinement.

For Stephanie, Byzantium does not have "taste for intrigue," as many historians claim, but for artistic elegance (18), which is illustrated with the photographs of Greek paintings and architecture in the novel. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag argues that photographs "promote nostalgia:" "Photography is an elegiac art ... A beautiful subject can be the object of rueful feelings, because it has aged or decayed or no longer exists" (15). The narrator's nostalgia for Hellenic origins is evident as she pictures "the most precious" Byzantium through the black and white photographs of Byzantine frescoes, paintings, and temples. Referring to the "Portrait of Dessislava" (1259) at Sofia's Boyana Church, for example, the narrator praises the "graceful" woman's "fine Greek nose" and "the Slavic Cheekbones" (170). The narrator further elevates Byzantine architecture with the pictures of the Eleoussa Basilica and Saint Stefan Church in Nessebar, a Bulgarian city first occupied by the Byzantines and later by the Ottomans (178-179). For the narrator, the photographed art works illustrate the Byzantines' level of sophistication, which was never attained by the Ottomans.

Images confirm words in Kristeva's text as the photograph of Saint Stefan is juxtaposed with the narrator's statement that Byzantium was too refined to fight against its enemies: "Byzantium was definitely a matter of taste, and this was in fact the key to its downfall. ... Pitted against crusaders, Muslims, Santa Varvarois, and other kinds of warrior, taste is an inexorable weakness" (179). As Pierre Bourdieu argues in *Distinction*, however, taste is never natural, but political and self-interested, and it also legitimizes social differences (7). The narrator's elevation of Byzantine art becomes problematic as Martin Bernal in *Black Athena* focuses on Greek cultural borrowings from Near Eastern cultures, especially Egypt, "in the 2nd millennium BC" (17). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam also state in "Narrativizing Visual Culture" that Greek artists were highly influenced by non-Western cultures: "The notion of a pure Europe originating in classical Greece is premised on crucial exclusions, from the African and Asiatic influences that shaped classical Greece

itself ... . Western art, then has always been indebted to and transformed by non-Western art" (39). Due to her prejudice against Turks and Islam, the narrator glosses over Eastern influences on Greek art, and regards the photographs in the novel as illustrations of a homogenously Western Byzantine civilization.

By reclaiming the Byzantine Empire as Occidental, Kristeva's novel imagines Istanbul in light of stereotypical themes of barbarity and sensuality in *The Arabian Nights*. The narrator uses Orientalist clichés of merciless warriors and Turkish baths to claim the imperial city as non-Western:

> As a result of having to finesse multiple invaders and migrant populations, this empire found itself often defeated and forced to give in to nationalist pretentions or turn some against others before eventually collapsing under the brutality of Turkish Islam, its warriors, its rugs, its hammams, and a bloody degeneration that only thrived on yatagan fights and throat cutting. (177)

By pointing out the fear of Ottoman Empire's westward expansion in a novel published in 2004, the narrator addresses many Europeans' concern that the number of Muslim immigrants will increase if Turkey joins the European Union. Twenty-first-century representations of "barbaric" Turks intervene in the current debates on whether Turkey is civilized enough to be a European Union member.

Kristeva's multi-vocal novel discredits the narrator and Stephanie's Islamophobia by providing passages from Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*, which represents Latin crusaders and Muslims as equally barbaric. Stephanie reads Anna's remarks on how both Muslims and Roman Catholics equally constituted a dangerous threat to Constantinople: "What difference is there between your barons who invade our lands, threatening our capital while claiming that they are here to deliver Jerusalem—an outcome we hope for, believe me—and these anti-Christs, descendants of Abraham and Agar, the Islamists, ... " (129-130). As early as the eleventh century, Anna counters the Orientalist association of barbarity with Islam. Stephanie, however, does not question her prejudice against Islam after reading excerpts from *Alexiad*. Ironically, although Stephanie identifies herself as a nomad with no fixed cultural roots, she sees herself a part of French collectivity, which should not be diluted by Muslim immigrants. Kristeva's text seems to discredit Stephanie's ethnocentric prejudice against Turks and Muslims by including Anna's voice, which does not attribute barbarity only to Islam.

The French journalist imagines Istanbul not only as a violent, but also as a sick city that inflicts its inhabitants. For Stephanie, Istanbul is "porphyrian," a term which both means a purplish red Egyptian rock and a disorder that affects the skin and nervous system. She revives the myth of Ottoman Empire as the sick man of Europe by representing Istanbul as a city covered with dust and falling into pieces.

> Today the region from which Anna's chronicle emerged is falling to pieces. I've been there; I've felt its wind spreading a sticky powder over the porphyrian city. It's as though the earth were separating from itself so as to caress its surface, migrate as far as the Bosphorus, diffuse into the Marble [Marmara] Sea, and dissolve finally into mud with the first rain—the Russian poet and I spoke about this. I choose to believe that it is indeed this dust that is definitely overwhelming the actual inhabitants … no relation to Anna these people, these usurpers, these impostors, these numskulls. (87)

Stephanie imagines that Istanbul will be destroyed with "a sticky powder," which travels to the Bosphorus and covers the whole city. With the "rusty cloud," she refers to the radioactive rain from the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, which took place in Ukraine in 1986, and highly affected Turkey's Black Sea coast by contaminating Turkish tea and hazelnut. After more than two decades, the radioactive risk is still overwhelming for Turks, as Stephanie comments, as the deadly results of the disaster are evident with the increased rates of child leukemia. Covered with radioactive clouds and brown films, Stephanie's Istanbul emerges as a toxic landscape that kills its inhabitants, who have "no relation" to the refined Byzantine princess.

Lamenting the destruction of the refined Byzantine Empire, Stephanie believes that the sick and deadly Istanbul is the most wretched and gloomy city. Although there is homelessness in many metropolises, she represents the shoeshine boy in Istanbul as the emblem of the world's misery:

> I met a Russian poet who believed that he was in Byzantium when someone shined his shoes in Constantinople. It's a cliché—Constantinople is overflowing with shoeshiners of all types, each armed with brushed and brilliantly shiny tins of shoe polish. An emblem for the worlds' misery can be the shoeshine boy in Istanbul. This poet liked to do his shopping in the grand bazaar with its famous catacombs filled with bronzes, bracelets, crucifixes, yatagans, samovars, icons, and rugs. To the eyes of the tourist, the rug is the very symbol of Byzantium—and a bargain! What blindness, what myopia, what a lack of metaphysical discernment and sense of history to have mistaken this vaulted labyrinth for an Orthodox church … And what could be more outside for these snowy melancholics [Russians] than the passing wisp of my Byzantium that they take to be some fatal Arabia? (83)

For Stephanie, the Russian poet she once met should be blind to confuse Byzantium with the gloomy city of Istanbul, where the shoeshine boy stands for the city's increasing poverty. All Muslim countries seem interchangeable, for Stephanie, as she compares Istanbul to "some fatal Arabia," where Oriental culture is evident with the Grand Bazaar shops that sell Turkish rugs, glass vases, and samovars. She believes that Istanbul has nothing to do with "her" Byzantium, which is not "Koran-based," and "has no rugs" and "no samovars" (84). Paradoxically, although Stephanie claims that her Byzantium does not choose between different cultures, she clearly privileges Istanbul's Christian past over its Turkish present. Ironically, with its Byzantine, Ottoman, and Republican elements, Istanbul resists Stephanie's clear-cut divisions between Byzantine past and present. As Pamuk remarks in *Istanbul*, Byzantines did not vanish "into thin air soon after the conquest" and that most of Istanbul's non-Muslim inhabitants are "descents of Byzantine Greeks" (170-172). Instead of acknowledging the cultural plurality of Istanbul, Stephanie turns the city into an Oriental spectacle with rugs, samovars, and hamams.

On Turkish women, the headscarf, and the European Union

The Orientalized Istanbul is the terrain for Stephanie to imagine a subservient and ignorant Turkish Muslim female identity that is set against Anna Comnena, the epitome of Constantinople's elegance and sophistication. In "Identity and Its Discontents," Deniz Kandiyoti remarks that women often "serve as boundary markers between different national, ethnic, and religious collectivities" (382). While looking down upon "backward" and "ignorant" Turkish women, Stephanie praises Anna, the first female historian and the leading intellectual of her times. Stephanie claims that Western women, such as the Byzantine princess and her mother with Slavic roots, are superior to "mushy" and "passive" "Turkish women that a husband has no reason to fear" (185).

She further constructs unbridgeable cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union countries by foregrounding women's Islamic headscarf. A secular woman, she believes that the European Union should be without Turkey: "my wanderings have taken me today to another European era, nine centuries before the problematic 'Union' of the present day that still hesitates to extend its reach from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, with or without Turkey—perhaps without, in my view as a woman with no Islamic headscarf" (80). Ironically, while associating the headscarf with Islam, Stephanie ignores that the practice of veiling is pre-Islamic, and existed long before the Ottoman Empire: "Historically, veiling, ... was a sign of status and was practiced by the elite in the ancient Greco-Roman and Byzantine empires" (Hoodfar 251). She dismisses the continuity between Istanbul's Christian heritage and its recent history. With her prejudice against veiled women, Stephanie becomes the voice of Julia Kristeva, who, in *Nations without Nationalism,* supports the headscarf ban in French schools to preserve national identity. Stephanie believes that Turkey's European Union membership might shatter Europe's Western Christian character.

In fact, Stephanie's nostalgia for the refined Byzantium speaks to her fantasy of Europe without Islamic influences. She is afraid that France, like Byzantium, will be "turned Oriental" with the arrival of Muslims: "Byzantium did not last, and France itself is fading" (86). She believes that France is losing its refinement with the arrival of Turks, Pakistanis, and North Africans. The French ambassador of Santa Varvara, whom Stephanie meets at a dinner party, however, exposes her naiveté as he sarcastically asks, "Isn't France the most advanced of Muslim countries?" (109). He problematizes Stephanie's belief in the purity of cultures by noting that France has the largest Muslim population within the European Union. Indeed, at the end of the novel, Stephanie herself discredits her idealization of Byzantium: "What I say is not what I think, my words describe an illusion that is the opposite of my sincere conviction" (243). She admits that her nostalgia for an extinguished and refined Byzantium is an "illusion" that is constructed by Anna's *The Alexiad* and the professor's unfinished book on Anna.

Conclusion

The narrators of both texts are aware that their nostalgia for a golden age is textually constructed. Stephanie's idealization of Byzantium, for example, rests on Anna Comnena's *The Alexiad* and Sebastian's unfinished novel on Anna: "My Byzantium is in her [Anna's] fifteen books, an imaginary chronicle; has it ever existed any other way?" (87). Pamuk, on the other hand, imagines a multicultural

Ottoman Istanbul based on nineteenth-century European travel narratives, Ara Güler's photographs, and early Republican Turkish novels. The narrators' partial and selective reconstructions of Istanbul's imperial pasts, however, critically engage with the city's present sociopolitical dynamics. While Stephanie's lament for Byzantium stands for her wish for a homogenously western Christian Europe, Pamuk's nostalgia for a cosmopolitan Istanbul stands for his critique of Turkish government that forsakes cultural plurality for the integrity of the state. Nostalgic fantasies of imperial Istanbul in Julia Kristeva's *Murder in Byzantium* and Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul*, then, are ideological in the sense that are sites where Turkey's current political complexities are negotiated and debated.

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Notes

[1] Relying on poststructuralist approaches on autobiography, I foreground the split between the author, Pamuk, and his first-person narrator, Pamuk. I refer to the narrator, Pamuk, and not to the author himself.

[2] The only female artist referenced in *Istanbul* is the Turkish novelist and essayist, Samiha Ayverdi, who Pamuk discredits for depicting Ottoman life as more modern than it actually was (261). Ironically, he judges Ayverdi on the basis of verisimilitude, while not requiring it from the European writers, who Orientalized Istanbul's harem and Turkish baths.

When Dystopia Matters: Negotiating the Space for a Memorial of the Bhopal Disaster

Constantin Canavas

The spatiality of industrial accidents

Industrial plants modify living spaces in several ways. Perhaps the severest intervention results from major industrial accidents, in the sense that such events inscribe the distortion of industrial activities into the spatiality of the social life by re-arranging the relations of interest and power among the old and the new actors who claim a re-partition of the space related to the past disaster according to their specific agenda. One of the stakes of post-disaster negotiations concerns the spatiality of memory, and installs debates embedded in cultures engaged in the memory of the disaster (Uekötter 2014, 7-10).

The present study can be read as a case study of such procedures concerning the Bhopal disaster of 2nd to 3rd December 1984 and focusing specifically on the negotiations of the memorial.

1. The pesticide plant of Union Carbide in Bhopal

Bhopal, the capital of the state of Madhya Pradesh in Central India, has obtained a tragic world-wide fame through the chemical disaster which occurred during the night of 2nd to 3rd December 1984 in the chemical plant of Union Carbide (UC). The plant was built in 1968 with the aim to produce pesticides for the South Asian subcontinent – mainly Sevin™. It constituted a strategic decision not only for UC, but also for the Indian government. UC dimensioned the plant to meet a demand supposed to increase not only in India but also in the whole Southeast Asian market. The decision fell into the euphoric era of the proclaimed "Green Revolution", one of the programmatic goals of the Indian government. The latter considered the large-scale production of pesticides in India as a major political issue in an agenda including not only fighting against hunger through chemically enhanced agriculture, but also the trade expansion in the Southeast Asian space.

During the first years of plant's operation chemicals considered critical for safety reasons (e.g. toxic substances or basic chemicals whose production