Capitalizing Istanbul: reading Orhan Pamuk’s literary cityscape

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Chapter 1 - ‘Bridging’ the East-West Divide: Reading the Pamuk Controversy through Istanbul’s Bridges

This chapter deals with bridges, with the image and practice of connecting two sides, ‘bridging’ the divide between two points. An image of a bridge comes to my mind when I try to capture the international reputation of Istanbul, this metropolitan city that straddles East and West, and is home to Nobel laureate writer, Orhan Pamuk. Through the parallel between Pamuk and Istanbul, this chapter traces the “temptation” of the bridge as a “monument,” a cultural site, and an epistemological tool. Just as bridges come in many forms, so do my uses of the term in this chapter. It alternates between a symbol of a city, a metaphor to define a writer, a vantage point and hence an epistemological tool, and ‘real’ bridges that straddle over the stretches of water that define Istanbul. In a similar vein, they do/perform multiple tasks: some are between the present and the past, others are between the East and West, some are reconciliatory, and others are means of war mongering. Not all of these bridges function, and at times, alternatives are necessary. In other words, even though this chapter is on the idea of a bridge, the objects I deal with are many. So is the status of the object: a symbol, a grid and a theme, the bridge that I aim to establish in this chapter is a polyvalent one, articulating the multiple sides of Istanbul, and its foremost writer, Orhan Pamuk.

Yet, however evocative it may seem, the image of the bridge is also problematic. When I speak of East and West as two separate and identifiable entities, I am naming something I don’t accept. I don’t believe in the existence, or even the necessity of a bridge that straddles the two. So here is the trap: the moment I deploy this imagery, I am, in a sense, naming and affirming the space of something I question. Nevertheless, this may prove to be a productive trap, and as such, one worth inhabiting for a time. Already troubled as a conceptual point of departure, the bridge may yield new insights precisely because it is troubled. Moreover, to hope for a fixed, unchanging conceptual framework would be an
illusion. Surely the point is to allow our theoretical understanding to shift and change under scrutiny, and as a direct result of our questions. In sum, this chapter is marked by a rift in my own theoretical framework and my purpose here is to explore that rift and engage head on, the constant reconfiguring that marks all encounters with theory.

In this chapter, I seek to multiply the bridges of Istanbul, identifying not only the bridges that cross stretches of water, but also those that move across and through history and literatures. The bridges I will be talking about are not all the same: some are actual, others are metaphors or images, they move across and through land, music, film and literature. First, I introduce Istanbul as a city of bridges, actual and metaphorical. I then move on to Orhan Pamuk, as a writer who has been positioned as a bridge between East and West. By relating Pamuk’s persona to Istanbul’s cultural and urban imaginary, I aim to highlight his relevance not only for literature but also for politics and urban studies.²

Section I - Bridges over Istanbul’s Water(s)

The history and topography of Istanbul have literally turned it into a bridge. Istanbul is a city of two sides. However, the location and the content of these two sides have undergone historical change in relation to the many stretches of water that define the city. The Bosphorus, the waterway connecting the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea and dividing Europe and Asia, has a mythical significance due to its legendary passersby. Narratives include that of Io, one of Zeus’s unfortunate love-interests, whose crossing of the waterway in the form of a heifer is reputed to be the origin of the name Bosphorus (literally “ox ford”). The Argonauts steered the narrow strait against strong counter currents; and Darius the Great built the first bridge in 512 BCE in order to march his army across the Bosphorus, an event

² Andras Huyssen, for example, refers to Pamuk’s hüzün as an exemplar of urban imaginary in his Other Cities Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age (2009), equating the significance of Pamuk’s imagery of Istanbul with Walter Benjamin’s work on Paris.
described by Herodotus in the first written reference to the waterway. All of these narratives underline its historical and mythological importance. During the five hundred years when Constantinople was the seat of the Ottoman Empire, the locus of the East West binary shifted to the two sides of the Golden Horn. The Greek Byzantion, which later evolved into Constantinople, the seat of the Roman, the Byzantine and the early Ottoman Empires, was the triangular stretch of land between the Marmara Sea and the Golden Horn, the natural harbor by the southern end of the Bosphorus.\(^3\)

The Ottoman Istanbul was a port city, with significant commercial and maritime activity. The seat of Ottoman power was known also as the Sublime Porte: a French translation of Turkish Bâbiâli (“High Gate,” or “Gate of the Eminent”), it was the official name of the gate giving access to the block of buildings that housed the principal state departments. The Porte as a gate suggests the opening up of infinity and unknown. Georg Simmel’s essay, “The Bridge and the Door” (1909), elaborates on the imagery of the door as a structure that defines space by creating a threshold between human space and nature. He comments: “the door shows how man breaks the uniform continuous unity that exists in nature” (173). The door provides access to a limited (designated) space; outside its boundary is the limitlessness of expansion. The door, according to Simmel, signifies a threshold, “the image of the boundary point at which human beings actually always stand or can stand” (172). Reading the Ottoman symbolism of the Porte through Simmel’s door evokes the perceived contrast between the limitations and the limitlessness of the Ottomans. In other words, the Ottomans symbolized a boundary with arbitrary access that could be opened and closed at will.

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\(^3\) The Golden Horn and its conquest is part of the Ottoman founding myth. To prevent the Ottoman attack along its shores, Emperor Constantine XI ordered a chain to be placed at the mouth of the harbour. Yet, Mehmed II outwitted this plan by ordering the construction of a road of greased logs across Galata on the north side of the Golden Horn, and rolled his ships across on 22 April, which contributed to the fall of the city in May 1453.
Bridge One: Galata Bridge

Across the city and the Sublime Porte were Galata and Pera, the homes of the Genoese and the Levantine settlers of the city. Accordingly, earlier attempts to build bridges took place along the Golden Horn, bridging the Levantine settlement and the Ottoman Constantinople, or Konstantiniyye as it was then called. The oldest surviving plan to build a bridge on the Golden Horn may be found in a letter, dated 1502, from Leonardo da Vinci to Sultan Beyazid II, in which the Italian polymath submits a proposal to join the two sides of the inlet. The plan was not put into action. It was not until the nineteenth-century reconfiguration of the city and empire that the idea was pursued. The first bridge on this spot was built in 1845 and was replaced three times before the advent of the Republic.

In order to examine the linking of the two sides of the Golden Horn by these nineteenth-century bridges, I propose to situate this history, and indeed that of the Ottomans and Istanbul, within recent discussions of colonialism. The use of the term when discussing the Ottoman Empire poses a question: the Ottomans were colonizers, not themselves colonized. The nineteenth century marks the empire as the only sovereign Muslim state that took part in the alliances among Western European empires. The same period marks the Ottomans employing a colonialist attitude towards its peripheral territory. The historian Selim Deringil refers to this practice as “a survival tactic,” one that was necessitated by the dismemberment of the Empire during the period (Deringil). According to Deringil, Ottoman colonialism is a borrowed practice where Ottoman and Western practices met:

4 The immediacy of borrowing colonialism is evident in the voluminous expansion of Western European Empires as opposed to the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, during when Ottomans assigned autonomy to virtually all of their territories: Egypt in the early 1800s, Greece in 1829, Serbia and Bulgaria in 1830, and Lebanon in 1861.
One half of this borrowed colonialism was based on tried and true practices of Islamic Ottoman empire building; the Caliphate, the Sharia’, Hanefi Islamic jurisprudence, guilds, and Turkish/Islamic law (kanun/yasa). The other half, or ‘new’ half, was a creature of the nineteenth-century positivist, Enlightenment-inspired centralizing reforms. (316)

Deringil’s remarks portray the Ottoman Empire as a juncture of different and conflicting political stakes and practices. The Ottoman Empire of the period was a semi-colony of the Western powers. The literal territory of Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) was the Empire, then referred to as “the sick man of Europe.” With its state officially bankrupt in 1875, it was the object of Western European Empires, and practically under control of its creditors, notably France, Britain, and Germany. Within this context, the parameters of post-colonialism apply, at least culturally, to Istanbul.

Istanbul’s cityscape evokes but does not conform to the parameters of colonialist architecture. Especially in the nineteenth century, due to the change of the Empire’s status, the presence of the Westerners acquired a colonial significance. In that sense, the waters of the Golden Horn could be considered, as architectural historian Zeynep Çelik put it, as the demarcation between Ottoman Istanbul and Levantine Pera, or between ‘locals’ and

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5 Vladimir Lenin, in “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” refers to Turkey, China and Iran to highlight different shades of colonialism and the distribution of capital: “I think it is useful, in order to present a complete picture of the division of the world, to add brief data on non-colonial and semi-colonial countries, in which category I place Persia, China and Turkey: the first of these countries is already almost completely a colony, the second and the third are becoming such” (Deringil 4).

6 This phrase is attributed to Tsar Nicholas I, who is reported to have referred to the Ottoman Empire as “the sick man of Europe.” Nicholas’s rule is marked with the attempts to position Russia as a European power, and its wars with the Ottomans, which resulted in the Crimean War between 1854-1856, where the British and the French Empires joined the Ottomans.

7 Here, my understanding of the word is based on the definition of the term by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (1989): “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2).
'westerners,’ a division that found its counterpart in the urban design of most colonized cities (Çelik 160). Nevertheless, this divide was mainly topographical. Although Pera and the old Istanbul could be discerned from one another by the relative absence of mosques on the former and by their sheer number in the latter, both had narrow, winding streets, and neither side of the Golden Horn was exclusive to one ethnic or religious group. The location of the royal residences and administration points to a similar configuration of the cityscape. Through the course of the nineteenth century, the seat of Ottoman power moved northward from the historic peninsula: first to Dolmabahçe, and then to Yıldız, both close to Pera and Galata. The administration, on the other hand, remained in the old city. In the context of nineteenth-century urban reconfiguration of the city, the act of bridging the two sides of the Golden Horn served to underline their connectedness, linking the old and the new centers of power, as well as widening the influence of the Galata area, increasingly becoming more important as the Ottoman dependence on its western creditors increased. It formed, as Çelik put it, part of the “the general goal of defining a larger metropolitan area by uniting Istanbul and Galata” (80).

The shift from the Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic changed the nature and the locus of the rift. The significance of the Golden Horn as a marker of two different lifestyles extended to the early years of the Republic, albeit in a highly different context. The move of the capital from Istanbul to Ankara meant that the Old City was no longer the seat of the government, leaving the area desolate and deserted. The city was above all deserted by its non-Muslim inhabitants. Istanbul of the 1910s was a city with non-Muslims constituting half of its population (12). With the founding of the Turkish Republic, and the ensuing population exchanges, Istanbul, in historian Stéphane Yerasimos’s words, “had never been this Turkish before” (24). The change in ethnic makeup worked in tandem with the establishment of Turkish identity. Turkish in the late Ottomans was a word of insult, signifying the boorish, uncultivated Anatolian. The Ottoman elite of Istanbul identified themselves as Istanbullu, the
inhabitant of the city (Yerasimos 12). Istanbul’s peripheralization in the Turkish state and Turkification also marks the period when the ‘Turk’ designated the model citizen of the newly founded Turkish Republic (Lewis 523). Accordingly, the divide that Istanbul symbolized was reconfigured. It was no longer between the Turks and the Levantine settlers, but between the traditional versus the Westernized Turkish communities. In other words, the divide was displaced, pointing to different rifts within a ‘whole,’ here the Turkish community. A defining aspect of Istanbul’s Turkish inhabitants as a whole, the dualism was internalized as well as nationalized.

The two sides of the Golden Horn are now more closely linked, and both are part of the history of the city, as opposed to the new districts that has emerged on the hills of the Bosphorus and tower over the city. The Galata Bridge has in that respect become a site of nostalgia, functioning as a vantage point to experience the hub of the old city and to enjoy its silhouette. Although no longer representing the connection between the ‘eastern’ and the ‘western’ inhabitants of Istanbul, Galata Bridge is still the most popular, the most lived in and familiar bridge in the city. It is considered the vantage point where “one can [best] sense the intimacy which this city has with the sea, [and best] understand how its maritime situation has influenced its character and its history” (Boyd and Freely 1). The Galata Bridge itself has been a center of the daily life for Istanbullu, the inhabitants of the city, as well as a center of tourist attraction and a favorite vantage point. The Galata Bridge continues to feature strongly in the cultural and artistic life of the city, from stories to art projects and exhibitions specifically about the bridge. In the words of Merih Akoğul, a photographer whose work has been featured in exhibitions on the Bridge, Galata Bridge “stands between the two sides, uncertain as to which side it belongs, looking as though it links these two cultures, but with no reconciliatory or integrating properties” (Özendes 16).

8 Here I am referring to the 2007 exhibition at the Istanbul Modern Museum, entitled Kopru Altı, literally ‘6 Bridge,’ but meaning ‘under the bridge.’ Based on the work of 6 Photographers on Galata
The threshold between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, is indeed a space of its own.9

**Bridge Two: The Bosphorus Bridge**

The reconfiguration of Istanbul’s citiescape worked in tandem with the redefinition of Turkey and Turkish culture. Istanbul as a site of the dualism within Turkish culture was further enhanced following massive waves of immigration to the city from the 1950s onwards. By the middle of the century, the city had a predominantly Muslim population, a result of the emigration of the non-Muslims from the city as opposed to the immigration of Central and Eastern Anatolians. The city expanded in area, especially towards the Asian side, and experienced further change following expansion the construction of two bridges in 1973 and 1988. Of these bridges, the Bosphorus Bridge has become the city’s symbol. In tourism advertisements and in the 2010 European Cultural Capital campaign, the Bosphorus Bridge has been used to project an image of Istanbul as the crossing point between east and west, and between Europe and Asia.

The Bosphorus Bridge features in the work of Elif Shafak, a popular writer with international renown.10 The decisive instance is in her 2004 novel, *The Saint of Incipient Bridge*, the exhibition traced the contemporary cultural imagery of the bridge for the city’s inhabitants.

Dutch historian and novelist Geert Mak’s 2007 travelogue *De Brug* is an example of the space the Galata Bridge occupies in the urban imaginary of the city. Mak’s account weaves together the stories of the sidewalk vendors on and under the Galata Bridge with the history of the bridge, and with that of Istanbul itself. Mak’s account, in the footsteps of earlier writer-visitors to the city and the bridge, notably Edmondo de Amicis, combines the past and the present, the locals and the outsiders. Despite the centrality of the bridge in his account, Mak is also cautious about overstating its significance. He forewarns the reader: “Yanılığıya da düşmemek lazım çünkü Köprü, şehir değil, şehir de ülke değil, hatta hiç değil. Köprü, daha çok kendi başına özel bir yer” (“The bridge is not the city, and the city is not the country. The Bridge is a place of its own”) (11, my translation).
Insanities. The novel tells the story of three foreigners who share a house in Boston. Of these, Omer, the Ph.D. candidate from Istanbul, falls in love with the bipolar, bisexual, suicidal, displaced Gail. The couple goes to Istanbul, and the novel ends with Gail jumping from the Bosphorus Bridge: “Suddenly it occurred to her, and the next second she knew with certainty that this inbetweendom was the right place, and this very moment was the right time to die” (347). The Bosphorus Bridge becomes the space of ‘inbetweendom,’ the locus and the symbol of the dualism that characterizes Gail as well as the oppositions along which the characters straddle: local-foreigner, east-west, male-female, sane-insane.

Shafak makes use of the symbolism of the Bosphorus Bridge to talk about Turkish politics and cultural identity. In an article from 2006, she refers to Istanbul as a city that makes one “comprehend, perhaps not intellectually but intuitively, that East and West are ultimately imaginary concepts, and can thereby be de-imagined and re-imagined.” Nevertheless, she refers to the bridge as a structure that straddles between Europe and Asia and its ideological undercurrents, ‘Europeanism’ as opposed to ‘nationalism and anti-Westernism,’ to talk about Turkey’s cultural identity and the complexities associated with it. This imagery of the bridge represents Istanbul as an arena where opposites clash: the Europeanists and nationalists, secularism and political Islam, and Islam and democracy. Equating the topographical divide with a cultural one, she attributes the defining characteristic of the city to a divide, the locus of which has shifted over the centuries.

The imagery associated with Istanbul’s bridges is the result of long and complex histories, as even a brief overview reveals. The bridge that connects East and West is not one but many, and its location is historically situated. The changes in the location and the

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10 Elif Shafak (Şafak in turkish), shares with Orhan Pamuk the status of international writer. Unlike Pamuk, however, Shafak appeals to a wider audience in Turkey: she had a weekly column in the Islamist newspaper Zaman between 2006-2009, and in the mainstream Habertürk from 2009 onwards. Shafak is marketed as “the most-read female author in Turkey,” and her writing is considered to offer a “third way to understand Turkey’s intricate history” (ted.com).
significance of the bridge reflect the political changes the country underwent. The image of Istanbul as a crossing point working to close the rift between cultures blurs the cultural and historical complexity of the city itself. Istanbul is also a city of multiple bridges, which extends over different binaries. The privileging of a univocal bridge articulates neither the multiple binaries the city has come to represent nor its role as a site of their encounter.

Fatih Akın’s imagery contrasts with this image of the bridge as the symbol of an oppositional and conflictual divide. An intermediary figure positioned between Turkish-German cultures, his films are about multicultural encounters and experiences. Akın’s significance has not been lost on politicians. In October 2010, Akın was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his contribution in depicting the problems of Turkish-Germans. However, Akın has not readily accepted the mantle of conciliator between two cultures. He comments: “I never had the feeling I want to be a messenger or the guy crossing the bridges and link the two worlds ... I just want to do good films—whatever that means” (2008).

The Bosphorus Bridge, as the central visual theme, becomes the definitive metaphor of Akın’s 2005 documentary on Istanbul’s soundscape, tellingly entitled Crossing the Bridge. In Barbara Kosta’s words, the bridge “opens the space for active multidirectional exchange and engagement” (347). Narrated by Alexander Hacke, a musician and the producer of the soundtrack of Akın’s award-winning Gegen Die Wand (Head On) (2004), the film follows Hacke’s encounters with an eclectic range of musicians from Istanbul, presented through interviews and collaborations in a kaleidoscopic rendition of Istanbul’s soundscape. The film is marked by shifting points of view in order to track myriad musicians and musical styles, including hip hop, rock, jazz, classical Turkish music, and a range of other artists and perspectives from street musicians, to the bestselling singer of Arabesk. Thus, the sound of the city is shown to be a site of multiple encounters. To take one example, Baba Zula, a band whose sound mixes Oriental with jazz-oriented psychedelic themes, is recorded on a boat on
the Bosporus, thereby rendering the fluidity of borders, encounters, and influences. As such, *Crossing the Bridge* is as much about Istanbul’s soundscape as it is about the “thematization of mobility (through) the crossing of extant cultural borders, the traversal of physical landscapes as much of psychological mindscapes, (and) the reconstitution of one’s identity” (Schindler Koepnick 2007 6). Any space of fluidity and encounter becomes a scene of bridging two sides.

The visual and aural imagery associated with the bridge is infused with commotion, translation, transition, and transposition. Neither the bridge, nor the sides it is bound to join cannot be reduced to a singular and reductive conception. Indeed, one musician comments, “I don't believe that Asia begins at the Bosporus and ends in China and the West begins in Greece and stretches to Los Angeles.” So is Akın’s Istanbul: tourist destination, oriental city, and mythical home. A city that promotes and attracts mobility, Istanbul in the film emerges as a city with innumerable easts and wests.

Unlike Shafak, who deploys the imagery of the bridge as a metaphor of interstitiality, Akın displaces the imagery by pluralizing it. Viewed from this perspective, his imagery of the dichotomy is a way of declining the stereotypical image, in the sense introduced by Mireille Rosello on her study on stereotypes (1998). Her analysis of ethnicity and representation in French cultures offers not only what can be done against stereotypes, but also what can be done with one, or “the mental, intellectual, social, and literary activities” that can be deployed in the face of a stereotype (13). Akın declines the bridge by using the hackneyed imagery tactically, to make it a marker of his work and his international renown.

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11 A productive read of Akın’s emphasis on the moving spaces or spaces of movement and transit is through Marcel Augé’s definition of non-space as non-relational, a-historical, and non-identitarian, or, “spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure) and the relations that individuals have with these spaces” (76). Akın’s spaces of transit, unlike Augé’s, shape the character and the story. Characters, and indeed sound, are constructed in transit. Identity is space bound; the nature of that space, just like identity, is multiple.
Istanbul’s location at the crossing point between multiple divides generated numerous attempts to bridge them. Indeed, in his article on the Istanbul of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in relation to its interaction with the west, the historian Edhem Eldem explains the significance of the city within the world system as an unusual contact zone:

Contact may be read in many and often overlapping ways: encounters between cultures and ethnicities, conflicts between political goals and economic interests, mixtures between creeds and mentalities, equilibria between opposing tendencies, and, most of all, a constant process of brokerage and mediation between actual or potential rival forces (East and West, center and periphery, Islam and Christianity, state and society, modernity and tradition, the elite and the masses, Empire and Republic). Istanbul, in that sense, was and is no ordinary city and cannot be reduced to an ordinary function. No wonder therefore that it should constantly have developed into a myth, a symbol, even if this symbol should often appear to be quite removed from reality. (138)

Eldem uses a variety of terms to define the city, which include, but cannot be reduced to mere opposition. Istanbul in the above account emerges as a space of contact, which involves brokerage and mediation, as well as conflict and rivalry between different forces. A meeting point of multiple opposites, Istanbul is both split and connected. This dynamics, as Eldem comments, form Istanbul’s myth, one that both feeds and feeds on the dualisms of the city.

This difficulty to classify the Istanbul and its role can be traced in its present imagery. The expansion of Istanbul in the last fifty years clearly reflects the city’s recovery of its status as a cultural and economic, if not an administrative, capital, on both local and global scale. Urban theorist Saskia Sassen refers to Istanbul as “the immutable intersection of vast and diverse mobilities.” She comments on Istanbul’s “[capabilities for handling and enhancing network functions] across diverse histories and geographies” (Sassen 1). In a similar vein, a study on Istanbul as 2010 European Cultural Capital refers to the compulsive use of the metaphor of the bridge by social scientists and creative artists to locate the city in global maps and cultural imaginaries (Göktürk et al. 3). These views are echoed in not only the
cultural but also in the political imaginary of the city as well. The most recent example is the city’s selection as 2010 European Capital of Culture. This official acknowledgement of the city as a part of European heritage, while Turkey’s candidacy to EU and its European identity are a constant question of debate, separates the city from the rest of the country. The city is again a zone of contact, a gateway to Europe, as well as a bridge between Europe and Turkey. In short, the Ottoman door, closed with the demise of the Empire, gave way to the symbolism of Istanbul’s bridges with advent of the Turkish Republic. The shifting symbolism resonates with the changes in the cultural politics of the city and the country, blending in with unusual harmony with its foremost writer, Orhan Pamuk.

**Section II - Pamuk as the Bridge**

A prominent figure in both Turkish and world literature, and a Nobel laureate in 2006, with various prestigious international awards to his name, Pamuk represents a highly complex sense of Turkish cultural identity. This is an identity fully laden with its Ottoman, Islamic, and European legacies, mainly demonstrated in his fiction by showing the impact of religion and westernization on his characters. Pamuk’s current international significance, with the exception of the Nobel Prize, derives mainly from his political and politicized stance concerning Turkish identity, as the overview of responses will reveal. What appeals to me is the recurrence of the imagery of the bridge to describe his work, his persona, and the controversy around his persona. In the following section, I will refer to his work and to his self-positioning to suggest how the bridge helps unpack a set of issues concerning his role and stance.
Bridge One: Pamuk’s Work

Bridge does not always simply link; it also functions as an epistemological tool, a place from which one “embraces” the city. A significant use of the image of the bridge is in Pamuk’s first novel, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (*Cevdet Bey and His Sons*). Published in 1982, and still not translated into English, the novel narrates the rise from small shopkeeper to member of the Turkish high bourgeoisie, as achieved by one of the first Muslim merchants, Cevdet Bey. The story of his dynasty begins with the coup of 1908, when the Young Turks overthrew Abdulhamid II, and ends on the eve of the military takeover of 1971. This is also an account of the rise of the Turkish bourgeoisie and the paradoxes of westernization confronted by subsequent generations. In a telling passage, Cevdet Bey, the founder of the family dynasty, crosses the Galata Bridge overlooking the city. He reflects on the city and how it might appear to the outsider, in this case his brother, a doctor educated in France:

Cevdet Bey köprüden gözüken eski İstanbul’a, kubbelere, durgun ve ölü Haliç’e baktı. ‘Burayı beğenmiyorum! Buradaki herseyi kötü buluyor, küçümsiyor! Beni de küçümsüyor, ama ben onu anlıyorum!’ (34)

Cevdet Bey looked at the old Istanbul, the cupolas, and stagnant waters of the Golden Horn as it was seen from the Bridge. ‘He doesn’t like here! He looks down upon everything in here! He looks down on me, too! But I understand him!’ (trans. mine)

In this first novel on a topic that will inform Pamuk’s later work, Galata Bridge serves as the vantage point from which Cevdet Bey reflects on both sides of his culture. He sees the cliché image of a morbid city in decay, and its restless westernized inhabitants. Cevdet Bey as the onlooker is given the privileged position to see and understand it all. As a westernized bourgeois, seeing both sides but belonging to neither, he grasps the problem of the city. Yet

12 The novel traces the family saga through the male characters. His two sons, who are uninterested in their father’s work and project, follow Cevdet Bey, the founder of the dynasty. The novel ends with his grandson Ahmet who dreaming of being a painter, decides to draw a portrait of his grandfather.
as one of its inhabitants, he too, is part of that problem. The bridge here serves as a place from which one masters the city, its past and present. It provides access to the city’s many facets, but it also serves as a vantage point to reflect on it all.

Bridges are scarce in Pamuk’s fiction and imagery of the city. There is at least one bridge he does not like: the Bosphorus Bridge. In an interview, he refers to the Bosphorus Bridge as a cold, distant structure, and not one that has become a part of the daily life of the city’s inhabitants. He acknowledges its prominence and how it has come to be identified with the city (“Bir Istanbul”). Pamuk’s predilection shows a connection with and a preference for the Old City and to pedestrian-friendly monuments. The Bosphorus Bridge, according to Pamuk, is popular only for those who are not from the city, a comment that puts Shafak’s and Akın’s depictions of the Bosphorus Bridge in a different perspective, making them a marker of their locality as outsiders to the city.

Pamuk has used the bridge as a figure to describe his role and his work: in an interview in 2002, he singled out the advantages of the position of a bridge in the following words:

I want to be a bridge in the sense that a bridge does not belong to any continent, does not belong to any civilization, and a bridge has the unique opportunity to see both civilizations and be outside of it. That’s a good, wonderful privilege. (“Bridging”)

The image of bridge in the above quote provides a frame for a scene through which Pamuk gives himself the opportunity to provide a vantage point to assess and write the city. It becomes an epistemological tool to survey and to capture the city in text.

The image of the bridge, drawing from the topography of the city, helps acknowledge two sides. For Pamuk, the role of the writer enables him not only to join these separate sides, but also to generate a new space generated by the act of joining them, here as a bridge relatively independent of continents or civilizations. His bridge is a structure which both
reaches, and transcends, historical and geographical markers. Identification with bridge, a structure that connects two sides but does not belong to either, connotes neutrality and a privileged vantage point from which he can see both sides. The notion of the bridge, Pamuk claims, offers a privileged space within which one may develop a more genuinely inter-cultural, if not quasi-omniscient point of view.

Pamuk’s self-positioning acknowledges the existence of East and West as disparate entities and draws from the east-west divide that is repeatedly problematized in his work. In a post-Nobel interview, he expressed a desire to move beyond the bridge metaphor: “The metaphor of the bridge is so old-fashioned. My job is to find new metaphors. My culture is made of two worlds. I explore the two. That’s my history” (2006). Pamuk’s comments here are ironic in the sense that although he expresses discomfort with the usual imagery associated with Istanbul, he does not extend it to the east-west dichotomy underlying that imagery. On the contrary, he confirms the binary nature of Turkish culture, thereby paving the way for what, in his words, is “the old fashioned imagery” identified with the city. His position on the east-west binary, in other words, is not one of questioning, but one of aestheticizing. Accordingly, in a more recent interview, he is critical of the ready-made association between Turkey and the bridge:

Bridge is a cliché imposed on me just because I’m a Turk and of course the first thing everyone says about Turkey is that it’s between East and West. But before being a bridge, you have to understand the humanity of the culture, its shadows, dark places, unreasonable sights, its aspirations, its hopes for the future, its daily moments, its weaknesses, its misery. My job is to see that before saying ‘I’m a bridge.’ (2008)

This last quote displays a different understanding of the role and place of the bridge. Although the east-west rift associated with Turkish culture is reiterated, the emphasis is now on the hidden foundations, the soil that supports and gives reason for the bridge.
The complex nature of the act and the image of bridging helps in situating Pamuk’s work within the discussions of east-west binary. Georg Simmel’s essay, “The Bridge and the Door,” also works to problematize the imagery of the bridge. Comparing the symbolism associated with the bridge to that of the door, Simmel posits the bridge as a structure that can exist only because the mind that designs it sees the two parts it connects as separate:

The human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating—that is why we must first conceive intellectually of the merely indifferent existence of two river banks as something separated in order to connect them by means of a bridge... Things must be separate in order to be together. (406)

The bridge does not simply join; it also separates. For Simmel, it would be senseless to relate that which was not separate, or to relate that which in some sense does not remain separate.

The aesthetic value of the bridge is to make this ambiguous act of separation and relation visible. Simmel comments: “The bridge becomes an aesthetic value not only because in reality it achieves the inter-relation of what is separate, and because it achieves practical purposes, it becomes an aesthetic value because it makes the inter-relation immediately visible” (409). Simmel’s conceptualization of bridging, which relates visibility to aesthetics, helps explain why Pamuk’s work and persona, equated with the east-west rift, have become the primary markers of the aesthetic value of his work. Bridge is not simply an image. It is a practice, a reconfiguration of space, the exercise of which hints at the opposites inherent in the process of conceptualization. Pamuk’s work feeds and feeds on the clash between the supposed sides of the bridge.
Bridge Two: The Pamuk Case

Pamuk’s work has become a metaphor for Turkey. In her 2004 review of *Snow*, for the *New York Times*, Margaret Atwood refers to Pamuk as a writer whose project is to “narrat(e) his country into being.” An incontestable example of Pamuk’s international political appeal may be found in a speech given by George Bush. Speaking at a NATO summit in Turkey, held in June 2004, Bush hailed Pamuk as a great writer whose “work has been a bridge between cultures”:

His work has been a bridge between cultures, and so is the Republic of Turkey. The people of this land understand, as Pamuk has observed, that “What is important is not [a] clash of parties, civilizations, cultures, East and West. What is important,” he says, is to realize “that other peoples in other continents and civilizations are ‘exactly like you.’” (“George Bush”)

A year after the US troops invaded Iraq, Bush’s speech attempted to legitimize the war through a discourse of equality that is here elaborated through the metaphor of the bridge. The US stance considered, the bridge here reduces both sides equally from a distance rather than leading to an understanding of their equality. The metaphor of the bridge, in other words, served as ammunition to wage a polemical debate on a black and white understanding of sameness. Bush’s speech portrays Pamuk as a writer whose work bridges ‘troubled waters’ and may be used in conflict resolution. Pamuk’s status, in other words, stems from his role as an intermediary between East and West. Pamuk’s self-positioning relates to the reception of his work, the image of the city, and the country. Unsurprisingly, Pamuk was not pleased. When asked in an interview what he thought of Bush’s remark, Pamuk responded that it was yet another instance of his words being vandalized, “used as a sort of apology for what had been done. And what had been done was a cruel thing” (2004).13

13These comments by George W. Bush are used in reviews of Pamuk’s work. One such example is the *London Review of Books* review of his latest novel, *The Museum of Innocence* (2010).
Pamuk’s significance in Turkish politics has followed a similar pattern, in which he is regularly identified as an intermediary figure between Turkey and Europe. A turning point, however, came in 2005, a year after Bush’s speech. In an interview with Swiss newspaper *Tages-Anzeiger*, Pamuk noted that he was the only writer to comment on the deaths of one million Armenians and thirty thousand Kurds in Turkey. His statement made headlines in Turkey and was followed by public protests, legal action, and an indictment under Turkey’s criminal code on the basis that he had insulted the country's national character. The case sparked an international uproar. More significantly, it cast doubt on Turkey’s bid for membership in the European Union. For example, an article by Salman Rushdie published in *The Times* (October 2005), is tellingly entitled “How can a country that victimises its greatest living writer also join the EU?” Rushdie’s comment alludes to the idea of the Fortress Europe, with Turkey waiting at its gate. Referring to the case as a “test for the east and the west,” Rushdie concluded his article with the Bosphorus as trope: “On both sides of the Bosphorus, the Pamuk case matters” (Rushdie "How"). The reference was to Turkey’s precarious position as a country that straddles Asia and Europe. The politicians followed suit: Olli Rehn, EU enlargement commissioner at the time, declared the incident “regrettable” not just for Pamuk, but for Turkey (Dymond, "EU"). Following a reminder from the Turkish Minister of Justice concerning recently ‘modernized’ legal codes, and with pressure from EU officials and politicians, the charges were dropped on January 22, 2006.

In the interim, Pamuk himself frequently appeared in the Turkish media to apologize for his highly ‘misunderstood’ views; he blamed the journalist for ‘inciting’ him to speak without premeditation, and then twisting his words. He also stated that although his intent had been to draw attention to issues concerning freedom of expression rather than pass

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14 One example of the public protest against his work occurred in March 2005, in the formal circular by the governor of Sütçüler, a village in Isparta, ordering a ban on his books in the village. The circular was condemned by the national government (“Orhan Pamuk imhacısı”").
judgment on Turkish history, his words were twisted by the nationalists (2005). In a similar vein, Pamuk published a letter on the trial in the December 2005 Issue of the The New Yorker, which ends by pointing at the distrust of Western freedom of speech following the war in Iraq (2005). The Nobel Prize was, for the most part, interpreted in relation to Pamuk’s political and politicized stance.\(^{15}\) An overview of the news reveal a number of allegations: Pamuk was accused of being the enemy within, of ‘selling’ his country; his international renown and status were considered to be the result of his comments, with his work geared to facilitate Western schemes that sought to divide the country. Soon after the award, a group of Turkish writers issued a statement denouncing the prize as “a fee” for Pamuk’s statements in support of the Armenian lobby, and US and EU imperialist designs on the country.\(^{16}\) Pamuk’s comments on Turkish history were earlier considered efforts “to secure the Nobel Prize.”\(^{17}\) Literary scholar Murat Belge calls these “the syndrome of the Nobel Prize” (“Love Me”).\(^{18}\)

At this stage, a parenthesis on responses to Nobel laureates in literature in countries with problematic relationships with the ‘West’ helps unpack the “syndrome of the Nobel Prize.” The literary prize has been the most controversial one and created numerous instances of international political controversy. Earlier notable cases were Boris Pasternak (1958) and

\(^{15}\) The award started polemics in Turkish media. Pamuk refused to comment on Turkish politics in the interviews following the ceremony. For international coverage see Rainsford.

\(^{16}\) Erol Manisalı’s article on Dec. 19, 2005 in the nationalist newspaper Cumhuriyet (The Republic), following Pamuk’s remarks on the Armenian and Kurdish massacres, was “Orhan Pamuk secured the Nobel Prize,” was a landmark for those with a similar view. See Çölaşan 17.10.2006. In a similar vein, the President at the time, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, did not congratulate Pamuk, arguably due to Pamuk’s words on the Armenian issue.

\(^{17}\) The dynamics of power and the preoccupation with the country’s past resonates with China, which, like Turkey, was was never completely colonized. Rey Chow’s comments: “The obsession of Chinese intellectuals remains ‘China’ rather than the opposition to the West... whatever oppositional sentiment that exists is an opposition directed towards itself” (223).

\(^{18}\) A study of the articles on Pamuk in the four mainstream newspapers in Turkey in 2005 concludes that the negative depictions of Pamuk, from traitor to conflict maker and slanderer, outweigh positive representations, including his literary success (İri and Arcan).
Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1970), who both ran into difficulties in their home countries following the award. Pasternak refused the award because of its disapproval by the Soviet state, in what he referred to as “the meaning [it] has been given in the society to which I belong” (“Nobel Prize in Literature 1958”). Solzhenitsyn’s award in 1970, on the other hand, led the Soviet authorities into the denigration of his work, even though previously it was held in high esteem. More recently, the awarding of the 2000 Nobel Prize to the Chinese-born dissident Gao Xingjian, resident in France, was followed with a ban on publishing or discussing Gao’s work. The awarding of these writers had caused uproar in their countries of origin, sparking discussions on the political motivations of the prize. A short overview reveals the politics around the prize as the space of conflict, with two sides, namely the writer and the state. In a similar vein, Pamuk here creates multiple bridges

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19 The Nobel webpage for Boris Pasternak has the following information on the official communication: On October 25, 1958, two days after the official communication from the Swedish Academy that Boris Pasternak had been selected as the Nobel Prize winner in literature, the Russian writer sent the following telegram to the Swedish Academy: ‘Immensely thankful, touched, proud, astonished, abashed.’ This telegram was followed, on October 29, by another one with this content: ‘Considering the meaning this award has been given in the society to which I belong, I must reject this undeserved prize which has been presented to me. Please do not receive my voluntary rejection with displeasure.’

20 Solzhenitsyn’s literary career is exemplary in terms of the politics of literature. His critical accounts of the gulags, especially his semi-autobiographical One Day In the Life of Ivan Denisovitch (1967) first championed by the USSR governments of the period, to demonstrate the break with the practices of the Stalinist period, was later denigrated when the same novels started to appear in the West. The awarding of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1970 was the last step that led to Solzhenitsyn’s expulsion. See Michael Hanne, Power of The Story (1994) for an account of the political reception of his work.

21 In her tellingly entitled study, The Politics of Cultural Capital: China’s Quest for a Nobel Prize in Literature (2006), Julia Lovell contends that the Chinese obsession with the Nobel Prize results from the country’s ambivalent relationship with the West and “is compromised in the discourses on nationalism and national inferiority” (5). Despite a national frenzy for a Nobel Prize as a marker of international merit, or what she calls a “Nobel Complex,” the response to Gao Xingjian’s awarding of the Prize in 2000 was mostly negative, as a response to Gao’s exilic status and his outspoken criticism of Chinese state.
through his words, his work, and the dialogue his stance and the award generate. The politics of the prize as such refers to the controversy around representation and whose voice gets to be heard.\textsuperscript{22}

To speak of Pamuk’s reception in Turkey, or what I here refer to as the Pamuk case, is to take on board a complex set of cultural and political misunderstandings and disagreements. The upheaval surrounding his remarks stem from wider issues on representation. The Pamuk case evokes a Rancièrean disagreement, an occasion generated not by the misuse of words, but by the objectives in uttering them. Disagreement, for Rancière, “is not to do with words alone. It generally bears on the very situation in which speaking parties find themselves” (xi). Pamuk’s fiction and interviews, which have caused a series of misunderstandings and disagreements, make an interesting case for a reading of his work through Jacques Rancière’s conceptualization. What sparked the disagreement in Pamuk’s case were not simply his words. Pamuk is not the only outspoken dissident. The criticism of state policies on a number of issues, ranging from freedom of speech to minority rights, and especially the official history have been voiced earlier and elsewhere, as critics such as Belge have also noted. Accordingly, the disagreement in his case is generated not by what he said, but what he represented: in this case it is his status as a writer of international renown and his image as a spokesman for Turkey. The international arena made it so that the same words meant,\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{22} In one of the few articles on the politics of the Nobel Prize, Jeffrey Meyers argues for the political motivation of the award through a discussion of those who have not won the prize. The Swedish academy, who in Meyers’s words, is “often blind to real distinction and unduly influenced by geography and politics, race and gender ... (and) has frequently awarded it to mediocrities” (1). Focusing on what Pamuk and Turkey represents to the West, Meyers refers to Pamuk’s international appeal in the following words: “His serious novels were widely translated and gained an international audience. He is Moslem and comes from an important country that had never won the prize ... he denounced the \textit{fatwa} against Rushdie, dared to mention the Armenian massacres, and opposed government oppression with formidable courage” (9).
according to Pamuk, a means of promoting freedom of speech, whereas for the nationalists, they meant a traitorous utterance.

Reading the Pamuk case as a disagreement helps identify the space and the stance contested. It’s about who gets to speak and who gets to be heard. Pamuk, a writer whose work challenges Turkish language and history work while straddling the Ottoman and the Turkish Istanbul is not accessible enough to be considered a spokesman. That his work problematizes Turkish identity in complex language and imagery makes him elitist, someone also cut off from the Turkish identity. What I would suggest is that the disagreement is also about the metaphors that define the city. Pamuk as such is a site of cultural anxieties about the metaphors that define the city and its identity. To extend Simmel’s argument, the bridge that Pamuk is associated with was resisted by a discourse that was rather keen on closing in on itself.

In short, the Pamuk controversy and ensuing spectacle revealed the layers of disagreement embedded in the politics of speech and language in Turkey. With international political interference, Pamuk’s case became an arena where conflicting political, cultural, and social forces met, clashed, and superseded one another. The responses to Pamuk’s reception of the Nobel Prize in Turkey follow a similar logic with the responses to the dissident writers of USSR and China. Cultural politics, which I have sketched earlier in this chapter, make language and especially literature a precariously political arena. Reading Pamuk case as a disagreement tells us about issues of representation that are at stake in world literary space. The overlap between politics and aesthetics relates not simply to the power of words and literature to mobilize and reconfigure, but also to who gets to speak, and who is considered to make sense.

**Conclusion**
In this chapter, I approached Istanbul as a city of multiple bridges, carrying us to multiple experiences and representations of difference. The bridge has become a part of the urban imaginary of the city from the nineteenth century onward. An overview of Istanbul’s Ottoman and Turkish history, however, reveals a palimpsest of different symbols, especially that of the door, and hence the metamorphosis of its imagery from the marker of boundary and possibility to a marker of a divide. This chapter situated Pamuk’s persona and controversy within this change to highlight his position of the subject on a bridge, notably his role as an intellectual situated along this binary. This juncture between Pamuk’s and Istanbul’s imagery accentuates different markers of change and points of contact.

Istanbul's bridges are indeed a metaphor that the city lives by, to paraphrase the title of Lakoff and Johnson’s work on the term (1980). They are not simply a means of access or a linear conduit between two sides; they inform the experience of the city. Pamuk’s self-positioning, which draws from the stereotypical image of the bridge associated with Istanbul and Turkey, situates the city and the country within the east-west divide. What Pamuk does, is a tactical use of the stereotypical imagery to make it a marker of his work and his international renown, as well as a tool to position both. Pamuk’s international appeal results from the way he declines the stereotypical imagery, to use Rosello’s term, in a way that highlights both its reductive nature and the layers of images that constitute it. The image of the bridge that arose from this survey is not that of the means of linear connection that the bridge generally signifies. Just like Istanbul, it includes the not necessarily dissonant image of a door, which, in Simmel’s words, symbolizes the flow of life “from the limitation of isolated separate existence into the limitlessness of all possible directions” (173). Problematizing the image of the bridge as a metaphor and a cognitive tool, helps reorient it as a structure that can lead to unexpected directions.