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Filling the Gaps in Broken Memory while Renewing the Cityscape: Navigating Belonging in Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-Haired Woman*

ABSTRACT

The Red-Haired Woman, one of Orhan Pamuk's post-Nobel novels, is a concise, fable-like narrative that delves into the complexities of father-son conflicts. The novel parallels the journey of the protagonist, Cem, with the broader socio-cultural context of modern Turkey. It highlights Cem's struggle between two ideologically contrasting father figures and draws a compelling analogy between his fragmented memory and Turkey's cultural memories influenced by both the East and West. This paper explores the application of various memory types in the novel, scrutinizes the reliability of its narrators, and analyzes the depiction of urban space in relation to both individual and national memory, with particular focus on the contractor protagonist.

Keywords: memory, Turkey, urban space, Orhan Pamuk, *The Red-Haired Woman*.

THE RED-HAIRED WOMAN AS A "FICTION OF MEMORY"

Within Orhan Pamuk's post-Nobel oeuvre, *The Red-Haired Woman* (originally published in Turkish as *Kırmızı Saçlı Kadın* in 2016) stands out as his briefest work of all. Yet it adheres faithfully to Pamuk's signature style, both in terms of its textual and contextual aspects. Textually, this is achieved through a layered narrative structure, the narrative situation, and an intricate web of intertextual, inter-temporal, and inter-spatial connections. Contextually, the novel delves into the complexities of Turkish modernization, particularly exploring the intricate interplay between East and West that shapes individual life paths.

The Red-Haired Woman centres on Cem. In the aftermath of his father's departure from home, the adolescent Cem becomes the apprentice of a well-digger for a summer season to finance his university ambitions. Cem's apprenticeship to Mahmut, an experienced well-digger, takes place in an unpopulated area within the fictitious town of Öngören. Cem's parental home initially provides a sense of belonging. However, this connection is shattered when his father departs from the family. He then develops deep affection for and devotion to his master, Mahmut. One day, Cem happens to watch a theatrical performance in a tent theatre. It is through this exposure that Cem realizes that a mysterious red-haired woman, whom he had already glimpsed from a distance while seated in a coffeehouse one evening is, in fact, one of the theatre's actresses. Cem has sex with the red-haired woman one fateful night. He becomes overwhelmed by his emotions of love and desire. This leads to a weakening of the bond with his master. Tensions arise within their relationship, which eventually acquires a complex dynamic akin to that of a father-son relationship. One day, when Mahmut is at the bottom of the well, Cem refuses to extend a rope to rescue him, and instead hurls a bucket down the well, leaving his master stranded below. After this, Cem departs for Istanbul alone. He harbours concerns that he may have caused harm to or even fatally injured Mahmut with the thrown bucket. Eventually, Cem manages to dispel the lingering notion that he might have caused his master's death.

He studies geology, finds employment in the construction sector and ultimately rises to the position of contractor. In this period, he meets and marries Ayşe. To distract themselves from their childless marriage, they immerse themselves in reading ancient narratives and cultivating a shared interest in their profession. They name their contracting company "Sohrab," alluding to the poignant father-son narrative in the Persian epic *Shahnameh*. Ironically, this common business eventually leads the couple to accept a lucrative project in Öngören. There, a startling fact is discovered:

Cem's ephemeral liaison with the red-haired actress left her pregnant, and she gave birth to a son, the now 26-year-old Enver. Therefore, Cem's return to Öngören as a contractor confronts him both with his unintended murder of a father-like figure and with his unknown son.

The present study examines the depiction of several types of memory and the tension between disconnection and belonging in *The Red-Haired Woman*, while also regarding the novel as an allegory of modern Turkey. The investigation is conducted within the theoretical framework of individual, regional, and national memory. The domain of memory studies is currently marked by its high productivity and dynamism, and it offers a wide array of techniques and conceptual, as well as theoretical, perspectives that are applicable to various fields, including politics and culture. In this study, I incorporate concepts from memory studies. However, here they are applied by being placed within the context of methodologies and approaches characteristic of literary and cultural studies.[1] Generally speaking, the exploration focuses on Jan Assmann's theoretical concepts of cultural memory and communicative memory.

Expanding Maurice Halbwachs's concept of collective memory, Jan and Aleida Assmann have developed the notions of cultural memory and communicative memory. Cultural memory, as the two authors delineate it, represents the memory that is shared by a community and contributes to its collective identity (Assmann 110). Cultural memory frequently manifests itself in oral myths, written narratives, and festive performances. In sum, it continuously serves as a source of illumination within a changing contemporary context. In the realm of cultural memory, the distinction between myth and history becomes less pronounced (113). Cultural memory is characterized by its longevity and resistance to rapid change (110). In contrast, communicative memory diverges significantly; unlike cultural memory, it is transmitted informally from one generation to the next. This means that its lifespan is inherently limited to the generations it directly influences, and it typically spans a duration of 80 to 100 years (111).

[1] Considering that the present paper is grounded in a fictional work, I would like to note that concepts such as memory, space and belonging are not examined here in relation to their physical or neurological features. In this paper, I employ these concepts "metaphorically," following Astrid Erll's insight: "Societies do not remember literally; but much of what is done to reconstruct a shared past bears some resemblance to the processes of individual memory, such as the selectivity and perspectivity inherent in the creation of versions of the past according to present knowledge and needs" ("Cultural Memory Studies" 5). This methodological constraint implies that a detailed analysis, while treating the novel under scrutiny as a thought experiment highlighting a specific tension in Turkish culture, could well be the subject of another paper.

As for the aspects of literary theory that come into play at this point, it should be taken into consideration that many literary "texts portray how individuals and groups remember their past and how they construct identities on the basis of the recollected memories" (Neumann 333). In *The Red-Haired Woman*, the theme of Cem's collective memory and the selective inclusion and exclusion of elements within the narrative of Turkey's foundation surface as narratives addressing questions such as "Who am I?", or, collectively speaking, "Who are we?". Such stories have aptly been characterized as "fictions of memory" (Neumann 334).

Before exploring the analysis of memory projections in the novel, I will address the initial and most conspicuous layer of the narrative structure in *The Red-Haired Woman*. This layer presents itself as a metanarrative, running parallel to the narrative universe within the story world. While depicting Cem's story, the tragedies of Oedipus from *Oedipus Rex* and Rostam from the *Shahnameh* are consistently quoted, remembered, read, and retold as representative texts of two opposing cultures. This establishes the fundamental intertextual connection in the novel.[2] Cem, who has been abandoned by his father Akın, a leftist intellectual, develops a complicated sense of empathy with, and admiration for, his master. Importantly, Mahmut adheres to a worldview which is deeply rooted in religious and traditional values. This mindset is imbued with Eastern legends and Islamic themes represented in the novel through quotations from the *Shahnameh*. Cem naturally becomes the recipient of narratives that result from Mahmut's views, perceiving both his own life and Republican Turkey as projections of mythological archetypes. Thus, while contemplating his position between his father and his master, he also confronts the memory of Turkey caught between the East and the West. The fable-like tone of the novel serves to underpin the importance of its central narrative, which connects with both Western and Eastern mythologies.

FAULTY CONSTRUCTIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY

The Red-Haired Woman is divided into three main chapters, each narrated in the first person. The two initial chapters appear to be recounted by the protagonist Cem. The first chapter concludes with Cem's abandonment of his master at the bottom of the well, and his subsequent departure. In

[2] In his analysis, Julian Rentzsch views *The Red-Haired Woman* as an urban epic with universal traits (363), continuing the traditions of Greek and Persian epics (333). He focuses on themes of blindness, wrath, repentance, and destiny, and considers the myths mentioned in the novel as hypertexts.

the second chapter, events reach a pivotal moment when Cem, following a meeting with landowners in Öngören, wants to revisit the well he and Mahmut had dug years ago. It is during this visit that he comes to the startling realization that the young man accompanying him is his son. Eventually, Enver kills his father Cem near the well.

The narrator of the third chapter, Gülcihan, the red-haired woman, references the novel written by her son Enver, whom she persuaded to document his father's story. This narrative shift makes Enver an implied author "positioned between the real author and the fictive narrator in the communication structure of narrative worlds" (Schmid 161), who endeavours to persuade us, the readers, that he is recounting Cem's story from Cem's own perspective. As Türker Gümüş points out, the inverse is also possible: "[U]sing the power of writing, Enver has managed to make his father think like himself" (239). When Gülcihan implies that what we are reading is the book written by Enver, the connections between the various narrator perspectives no longer constitute a difference in points of view within a shared universe. Instead, it evolves into an interplay of narrative levels. Structurally, the story Gülcihan tells does not adhere to a framed narrative; it is solely the final chapter of the novel. However, contextually, it serves to frame an inner story. If, as Gülcihan suggests, we are reading Enver's book seemingly narrated by Cem, the narrative structure becomes intricate. Even though Enver is not the narrator, he occupies an intradiegetic position between the level framed by Gülcihan (extradiegesis) and the level conveyed through Cem's voice (metadiegesis). In terms of narrative structure, the implied author assumes the role of an intradiegetic narrator without narrating a story but occupies a space in the narrative universe between the storytelling of the extradiegetic and the metadiegetic narrators. The narrative complexity intensifies as Gülcihan emerges as an unreliable narrator, casting doubt upon whose story the readers are truly engaging with. This focalization becomes more perplexing when one considers that if (or as long as) Gülcihan lies, manipulates, or selectively narrates the story, the entire universe becomes somewhat absurd.

Indeed, the red-haired woman who assumes the narrative voice in the third chapter, appears in the role not only of an unreliable narrator, but also a manipulative character. In a fashion characteristic of Pamuk's "postmodern" style, the narrator directly addresses the reader: "[T]he account you will find here is complete and unequivocally true" (Pamuk 245). The concept of an unreliable narrator, often interpreted as "the reader's recognition of textual or normative inconsistency" (Neumann 338), lends an element of instability to the narrative, perpetually leaving the reader on precarious ground. Concurrently, this narrative device serves to prompt a re-evaluation of individual and societal pasts, as it shapes the narrative of Cem's personal history and that of Turkey's social past.

A closer look leads us to actually question the presence of another implied author. Gülcihan proudly tells us how she got her son to write the book we are reading:

> Remembering the stories I had heard from Ayşe and read in books she'd mentioned, I would try to explain everything to my son as if the ideas and the fantasies had been my own. Enver didn't like hearing about ancient myths, since they reminded him of his crime, and often he would pretend not to understand the point I was trying to make. (Pamuk 250)

And, after Enver finally decided to write the book, she continues to get involved: "I came to suggest that he start an account of his life, perhaps even working the entire story, now nearing its end, into the form of a novel. I made sure to check on his progress during those social visits" (251). We are thereby reading a novel that was written by Enver, but conceived and designed by Gülcihan. It is not clear whose imagination is more at the forefront. The events do not take place in a single universe; the story is told by more than one narrator of questionable reliability. The reader is unable to determine whether the characters are as they are described in the novel. We cannot get a clear impression of the characters' personalities, motivations, or perspectives. As Vera Nünning aptly points out, readers need to decide "how they want to evaluate and position themselves" in relation to this ambiguity in the narrative (101). "Personalised unreliable narrators," such as Gülcihan, "provide insight into their strange minds, their values, delusions, emotions, and, finally, into their (sometimes twisted) ways of thinking" (100). This way of telling stories, as the red-haired woman does, indicates "how narrators cunningly concoct lies in order to achieve personal gain" (101).

The female narrator presents her story as though she serves as the storyteller and as the story's architect. Her narrative perspective appears to transcend the characters' realm, creating an impression of meta-awareness and conveying an intimate knowledge surpassing that of other characters. For instance, during her time in Öngören, she recognizes Cem while he is still a minor: Cem's father had sought solace in meeting her when he left his family. In doing this, Gülcihan establishes the red-haired woman as a factor that has contributed to Cem's fatherless upbringing and his sense of estrangement during childhood. Overall, she exerts a seductive influence on both father and son. While she could have potentially given birth to Cem's sibling, she instead bears his son, thereby positioning herself as the central figure that bridges not only the divide between father and son but also among grandfather, father, and son. In essence, her presence disrupts the customary transmission of communicative memory typically confined to three generations.

The narrative structure of the novel, which ostensibly appears as a conduit for the transmission of communicative memory, in fact also operates paradoxically because it hinders the establishment of such memory. Notably, each character assumes the role of storyteller. Mahmut imparts religious stories, Cem narrates his own experiences, and Gülcihan, who both performs on the theatrical stage and communicates the events of the unfolding story, fills the gaps in a manner that remains perpetually open to scrutiny and mistrust. Some of these narrators exhibit an Eastern perspective, while others adopt a Western viewpoint. For instance, the portrayal of the father-son conflict, which constitutes the foundational tension of the narrative, draws inspiration from two archetypal sources; Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. These sources are recurrently echoed and refracted within the narrative realm, and in the process manifest mirror images of each other. In its simplest rendition, the overarching message conveyed is as follows: in the West, exemplified by Oedipus, sons kill their fathers, while in the East, i.e. in *Shahnameh*, fathers kill their sons. Consequently, Western protagonists emerge as emancipated figures liberated from traditional codes, while their Eastern counterparts find themselves constrained by tradition resulting in stunted growth.

Due to the intricately layered structure of the narrative, the female narrator's storytelling approach encompasses the content of the initial two chapters narrated by Cem (or cited by Enver), thereby filling the gaps omitted by Cem either intentionally or unknowingly. For instance, Gülcihan bears witness to Cem's hasty departure from Öngören. We learn that she promptly visits the well and this leads to Mahmut's rescue and facilitates his timely recovery from his injuries. She prevents Cem from committing patricide. Since the circle of friends that she and her husband frequently visit resides in Öngören, she raises her son Enver under the guardianship of Mahmut, Cem's surrogate father.

We may look at these narrative strands from the perspective of the theory of communicative memory. According to Jan Assmann, as already stated, communicative memory "lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations" (111). Consequently, the red-haired woman not only disrupts the transmission of communicative memory between Akın, Cem, and Enver, which could be provided through familial coexistence and the sharing of familial, cultural, social, and economic experiences (Assmann terms this "interacting"), but also endeavours to establish a parallel, though partial, communicative memory by means of her storytelling.

Neither Gülcihan's husband, Turgay, nor Enver's father, Cem, manage to forge a father-son relationship with Enver. Like Cem, whose relationship with his own father remained incomplete, Mahmut provides Enver with emotional and spiritual guidance similar to that of a father, but unable to replace a father. Consequently, Gülcihan plays a pivotal role in introducing both Cem and Enver to traditional and religious codes through her connection with Mahmut. Mahmut, who does not have biological offspring, functions as a common surrogate father, contributing to the establishment of a form of communicative memory. However, as he represents only one facet of this memory (i.e. the traditional and religious one), he also contributes to the family memories remaining incomplete, fragmented, and discontinuous.

The red-haired woman derives a Dionysian pleasure from positioning herself as the predominant agent within the entire narrative of the novel, revelling in the Olympian position she assumes. However, Gülcihan's perspective undergoes a transformation when she experiences abandonment by Cem's father Akın, when she is in her twenties. Simultaneously, as a new coup d'état unfolds in Turkey, her political milieu and friendships disintegrate. In reaction, she articulates her disillusionment in a manner reminiscent of a female rights advocate, almost misappropriating the struggle for women's rights in the process. She gleefully notes, during her time with the theatre company, that she personally takes the initiative to incorporate lines from *Farhad and Shirin*, *Asli and Karam*, and *Rostam and Sohrab*, as well as from Rumi's *Masnavi*, into the monologues (Pamuk 231) to counteract the subtle shift toward a left-wing orientation in the plays following the 1980 coup d'état. It becomes evident that she relishes being in the foreground where she is the primary agent. She emphasizes the impact of her intervention on the male spectators: "The moment I stepped back onstage as Sohrab's mother, Tahmina, and shrieked at the sight of what my husband had done to my son, every single one of them . . . would fall into a ponderous, unnerving silence" (232). She astutely observes that "young provincial men identified with Sohrab, not his powerful, overbearing father, Rostam" (232). Moreover, she extends her insights beyond this context, implying that Turkish modernization does not form a monolithic entity but is akin to the arabesque style, which is characterized by patchwork, fragmentation, and overlapping patterns:

> Trying to find something to balance the scene with the weeping Tahmina, we introduced a reenactment of that moment when the prophet Abraham prepares to cut his only son's throat to prove his submission to the will of God; I played a woman crying in the background and later the angel who walks onstage carrying a toy lamb. In fact, there was no

> real room for women in this story, and I wasn't making much impact. So I reworked Oedipus's exchange with his mother, Jocasta, for my monologue. The notion that a son might kill his own father by accident was met mostly with emotional detachment, but at least it stimulated the audience intellectually. That should have been enough. How I wish I'd left out the bit about the son sleeping with his red-haired mother. . . Today I can see what an ill-fated choice that was. (233)

There are two Eastern narratives at play here: one revolves around Tahmina, whose son Sohrab is tragically slain by her husband Rostam, a tale extracted from the Iranian national epic, *Shahnameh*. The second narrative centres on Abraham, a common archetype within the three monotheistic religions and is therefore of Middle Eastern origin. In the Islamic version of this narrative, Abraham is willing to sacrifice his son Ismail. However, these narratives, steeped in their masculine themes, prove incongruent with Gülcihan's sensibilities. In response, she endeavours to incorporate *Oedipus*, a foundational text of Western civilization, into her monologue. Still, she remains unsatisfied with the outcome. Consequently, Gülcihan, who could be characterized as a half-educated Turkish leftist, finds herself unable to gratify either herself or her audience with the pastiche she creates with elements from both the East and the West.

GAPS IN CULTURAL AND REGIONAL MEMORY

At this juncture, it is pertinent to consider the insight offered by the literary scholar Erdağ Göknar, famous also as the translator of *My Name is Red* into English. Göknar directs our attention to a comparison between *The Red-Haired Woman* and the narratives of Oedipus and Sohrab, remarking that "Greece and Iran today are Turkey's Western and Eastern neighbors." This lucid statement serves as a pivotal point of reference[3] for analyzing the geographical and thematic dimensions of the novel.

Believing he killed his surrogate father Mahmut, Cem identifies himself as Oedipus and gradually relegates the notion that he might be a murderer to the recesses of his mind. However, when it becomes apparent that Mahmut is not actually deceased, the factual inaccuracy of Cem's self-

[3] Pamuk employs *Oedipus Rex* and the *Shahnameh* as archetypes at opposite poles in the novel. While Turkey possesses a distinct cultural background that may, at first glance, appear to challenge Göknar's identification of Turkey's position between them, Pamuk indeed underscores this very in-betweenness. In terms of physical space, however, the Greek cultural heritage that inspired *Oedipus* emerged in the Eastern Aegean region—not modern-day Greece—and *Shahnameh* originates from the ancient Persian culture that spanned, among others, Afghanistan and Tajikistan—not present-day Iran.

narrative manifests itself. As it turns out, Mahmut has played an active role in the upbringing of Cem's son, Enver. Also, it becomes evident that Enver has been raised on narratives of Eastern origin, favouring Sohrab over Oedipus. In spite of his self-identification with Oedipus, Cem is not able to fully embrace a Western identity because he failed to commit patricide. In contrast, Enver, despite his preference for Eastern traditions, right-wing ideologies, and religiosity, is successful in committing patricide. Significantly, both grapple in the well. Their struggle culminates in Enver's killing of Cem when he could have died instead.

In sum, Enver's aspiration to be Eastern and traditional remains incomplete, just as Cem's desire to become Western and progressive cannot set him free from his Eastern roots. Therefore, by analogy, *The Red-Haired Woman* opens a gateway to analyzing Turkey's position in the perpetual deadlock between Oedipus and Sohrab, patricide and filicide, Greece and Iran. Amidst this intricate narrative Turkey finds itself unable to unequivocally align with either side, all the while being imbued with its national memory as a post-imperial nation-state. As Neumann aptly notes, fictions of memory serve as "imaginative (re)construction of the past in response to current needs" (334) and, just as in *The Red-Haired Woman*, they underscore the selectiveness of our memories, revealing that the act of recollection often says more about the rememberer's present, their desires and denials, than it does about the factual events of the past. This phenomenon holds particularly true for the sphere of cultural memory which involves a deliberate act of fashioning to a greater extent than individual memories (333).

In *The Red-Haired Woman* the selective nature of memory, the reconstruction of the past in accordance with contemporary trends, and the unreliability of the novel's narrators coalesce with the depiction of Turkey as a form of meta-narrative in the background. This convergence allows the novel to be interpreted as an allegory of republican Turkey. The modern democratic Republic was one of the nation-states that was established in the period when empires disintegrated after World War I. It embarked on the task of forging a new state that was independent of the previous monarchical history.

Throughout his literary work, Pamuk consistently directs his attention to the multifaceted and contentious facets of Turkey's republican modernization, offering various perspectives on it.[4] *The Red-Haired Woman*

[4] Pamuk's novels can thus be considered as manifestations of the east-west tension that tightly constricts the human psyche. These recurring motifs permeate works such as *Cevdet Bey ve oğulları* (*Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, not available in English yet), *Silent House*, *The White Castle*, *My Name is Red*, and *The Museum of Innocence*. The mental strain and profound sense of alienation resulting from the east-west dichotomy are vividly portrayed in *Cevdet Bey ve oğulları* through the melancholic man that becomes estranged from family

encapsulates this recurring motif, which has already evolved into a leitmotif, within the framework of a memory fiction. Just as communicative memory remains discontinuous for the individuals in the novel, there is discontinuity within the cultural memory shared by broader communities, which is capable of lasting for millennia and providing individuals with a collective identity. For instance, "like most Turks" Cem was also unfamiliar with the *Shahnameh* (Pamuk 135) and couldn't find a translation of "Ferdowsi's thousand-year-old epic in Istanbul," because "after two hundred years of striving to Westernize, no one in Turkey was interested any longer in this profusion of tales" (137). This discontinuity arises due to the critical examination of Turkish modernization within Pamuk's novels, which revolves around the problematic construction of cultural memory understood "as the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" (Erll, "Regional" 305).

In this context, I propose to embark on an analysis of modern Turkey from an additional perspective. If we start from a macro-level view of republican Turkey, examining the national, i.e. cultural memory, and then shift to a micro-level analysis focusing on the settings, we encounter the Öngören-Istanbul-Gebze axis. Historically, Istanbul was the capital not of the nation-state, but of the Ottoman and Byzantine empires. When Cem's father departs from home, Cem and his mother embark on a journey to Gebze, where the mother's relatives live. Gebze is a small city located to the east of Istanbul. Conversely, Cem journeys to Öngören, which, by way of its (fictitious) position on the western outskirts of Istanbul, is situated on the European continent in the direction of Edirne at a considerable distance from the bustling urban centre. It is here that Cem works alongside Mahmut, forging an affectionate bond that compensates for his broken father-son relationship. However, he severs this connection with Mahmut, gets involved with the red-haired woman, and subsequently flees to Istanbul. Yet, as Öngören does not exist in reality, the "west" remains no more than a conceptual construct, an idea, while the desired and sought-after relationship with it fails to materialize. The Öngören-Istanbul-Gebze axis "as a 'mnemotope,' as a space of remembering" (Erll, "Regional" 309)

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ties. *Silent House* illustrates this tension through the story of an educated man who cheats on his traditionally religious wife. In *The White Castle*, the blending and dissolution of eastern and western identities, akin to doppelgangers, is a central theme. *My Name is Red* delves into the murder of an innovative painter within the same context, while *The Museum of Innocence* explores the fragile psyche of a man caught between the superficial and western facets of Turkish modernization, ultimately succumbing to a madness fueled by love. In this regard, these narratives collectively explore the complexities of masculinity. In his seminal monography, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy* (2013), Göknar explores the interplay between religious tradition and the secular state as they emerge as two conflicting yet mutually reinforcing political forces within Pamuk's novels.

can be considered a manifestation of regional memory that reflects the projection of cultural memory in the novel:

> Regional memory operates on both levels of collective remembering, the individual and the social and media. On the one hand, events, persons, stories, myths, and images associated with a certain region are transmitted and circulated through social interaction and media representations (from oral stories to books and to internet platforms). On the other hand, to the very extent that regions thus become collective constructs, they also function as *cadres sociaux* for individual remembering. (308)

The orally transmitted stories and myths within the novel are inherently part of cultural memory, as they have been shared across nations, generations, and centuries. Simultaneously, the Eastern epics and myths narrated by Mahmut to Cem and Enver also constitute a form of communicative memory, albeit one that lacks cohesiveness within the context of family relations. However, although these stories are relayed, enhanced by vivid mental imagery (for instance, envisioning the grieving mother beside her deceased son), and transformed into different media through theatrical performances, they occur within the realm of social interaction. It is worth noting that the archetypal motifs featured in the novel also contribute to a regional memory for Turkey, situated between Iran and Greece. These motifs originate from the Iranian national epic *Shahnameh* and the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, a fundamental text within the European-Western cultural tradition. The novel recounts not only geographical but also cultural liminality, reshaping modern Turkey into a landscape where "the interrelations between cultural remembering and regional integration" (Erll, "Regional" 309) unfold for its inhabitants. In this regard, Cem finds his place in a parallel drawn between *Oedipus* and the *Shahnameh*, manifesting a tendency to prefer regional memory to national memory. Within the narrative, Cem's personal recollections are depicted through themes such as paternal abandonment, the death of his master, and the act of being killed by his son. These memories are constructed against the backdrop of the broader coming-to-terms struggle with history and republican Turkey's role within its larger context. This regional locus of memory takes shape as a cultural, regional, and historical critique of modern Turkey within the novel.

MEMORY SITES VS. CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

Throughout various cycles of construction, demolition, and reconstruction, which bring about changes in the urban landscape, Cem himself plays a role in these transformations. He exacerbates the discontinuity in memory by

causing harm to the places of his memory just as Istanbul expands and engulfs all the smaller surrounding cities, including Öngören. In Cem's words, "Istanbul had by now grown to the point of swallowing up Öngören; Master Mahmut and his well were lost somewhere in that metropolitan morass" (Pamuk 144). While Öngören is fading from Cem's memory, he hopes that the burden of having murdered his master will likewise fade into oblivion. Yet, despite Öngören's receding presence in his mind, Öngören is not entirely forgotten; on his journeys, Cem attempts to spot Öngören from an airplane (129). For instance, he observes that the agricultural lands between Istanbul and Öngören are now adorned with "industrial plants, warehouses, and factories, all of them dull and black as coal from the air" (130). Simultaneously, these lands are being opened up for development, and they expand at a disconcertingly rapid pace, very much like the city itself. The urban landscape is continually evolving due to government construction policies with areas for habitation, commerce, and construction constantly shifting. Öngören is not immune to this construction frenzy, which leads to a rise also in the value of the plateau where Mahmut and Cem dug the well. The beneficiaries are not only the locals but also "members of the new, motorized rich contemplating a home purchase in this rapidly developing area" (195). Everyone is fervently constructing, seeking to capitalize on the rental opportunities. This frenetic transformation of the city and its urban fabric, including the remote, sparsely inhabited Öngören, does not perturb Cem in the slightest. He has embraced a kind of apathy, bordering on aloofness, that extends beyond his endeavour to rid himself of his personal memory, namely, his burden of remorse. Far from preserving the memory of the city, he initiates new construction projects. The urban spaces he alters with his construction activities represent actions that disrupt both cultural and communicative memory. For instance, before Cem's company Sohrab embarks on the Öngören project, Cem travels to Öngören by train, just as he did years before. He describes his arrival in the city as follows: "As the train slowly pulled into Öngören, I couldn't distinguish our plateau for the countless concrete buildings" (193). He fails to find any traces of his own within the memory sites of the city centre:

> The moment I walked out of the station, I knew that the old Öngören was gone . . . Retracing the same steps I followed so frequently in my memories, I started walking automatically from the Station Square to where the Rumelian Coffeehouse had stood, and specifically toward the spot on the pavement where our table had been, but I found nothing to remind me of all the cups of tea we'd had in that place. All the people who'd once been here, and all the homes in which they'd lived, had since disappeared, replaced by new buildings inhabited by new people. (193–94)

Therefore, the rapid construction initiatives, urban transformations, land zoning, and other developments not only distort Cem's memory but also affect the memory of all urban residents. These changes, in addition to altering the memory spaces that hold significance for individuals, communities, and societies also impair the spatial function of memory preservation. The place "isn't Öngören now; it's Istanbul" (199). Cem has already come to terms with this reality. However, he does not lament this transformation; rather, his focus is on the fact that a portion of communicative memory is erased in the process. While he does not wish to obliterate memory elements such as his relationship with Mahmut, the stories he gleaned from Mahmut or the cups of tea they shared at the coffee house in Öngören, he is concerned about being labelled a murderer in the city: "[N]obody in Öngören knew who I was anymore, and so there was nothing much to fear" (195).

Cem, who is willing to risk the transformation of the entire urban space and the associated memories in order to escape from his own crime and the guilt of being his surrogate father's murderer, begins to question the continuity of communicative memory when he discovers that he has a son. For example, "[h]ad the Red-Haired Woman told our son, Enver, that his grandfather was a romantic idealist who'd gone to prison for his political convictions? It was mortifying to think that my son might picture me as some superficial and morally corrupt version of his grandfather" (206). Cem is deeply concerned about the perception of his biological father in the eyes of his own biological son. However, he remains unaware that Gülcihan was his father's lover, and her knowledge of Cem's father extends beyond what Cem has shared with her.

The location where this fragmented memory cycle finally receives a new rupture is the well originally dug by Mahmut: "I sensed that we were getting closer to our well, and that I was nearing the end of the quest I'd spent my life on" (209). The well represents the culmination of this quest, the final destination of a lifelong journey. Although Cem's memory gradually fades and it becomes increasingly difficult to recall the details due to physical changes in the surroundings, Cem gradually begins to recognize geological details of the area as he approaches the well:

> I saw the same weeds and nettles from thirty years ago growing on empty lots and in the cracks in the pavement. I thought briefly of being reunited with that wrinkly-necked tortoise and of venturing, as in the old days, some musings on life and the nature of time. Here we are, thirty years on! the tortoise would say. *An entire, wasted life for you. A blink of an eye for me*. (206)

In fact, as Cem learns—while preparing for the project he initiated in Öngören—that Mahmut is not dead, he no longer carries the burden of feeling like a murderer. His son, who makes a sudden appearance, now forms a father-son relationship with Mahmut. For instance, Enver says to Cem: "Master Mahmut told me everything. . . . You left him at the bottom of the well because you are vain, and you thought your life was worth more than his. Your school, your university dreams, and your life were more important to you than the existence of that poor man" (220). Enver reminds Cem that his sin is not forgotten, even though the places that hold the memory have been destroyed. When memory is passed on, it is often interpreted by the recipient. Enver narrates Cem's act of leaving Mahmut in the well as the act of a secular person deeming a traditional person worthless and abandoning him at the bottom of the pit. Consequently, just as the imaginary west assimilates Istanbul, when Cem passes away, his descendants will remember him not as he truly was but as his son recounts him.

In conclusion, *The Red-Haired Woman* serves as a representation of memory reconstruction in terms of both communicative and cultural memories. While urban transformation alters spaces, construction activities do not always succeed in erasing memory. This is due to the presence of transnational, trans-spatial, and trans-temporal archetypes perpetuated by cultural memory, as well as the transfer of secrets, fears, and memories among families through communicative memory. In the realm of construction activities, the cityscape undeniably undergoes transformations akin to the perceived loss of regional memory. However, the obliteration of memory does not equate to its complete erasure. When the Republic was founded, traditional narratives persisted as archetypes in the collective memory even though cultural memory suffered damage. In a similar vein, as construction activities increased and gentrification began, the urban space of Istanbul underwent significant changes. Change is a constant, and the forms of memory instituted subsequently are dynamic, undergoing continuous transformation.

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