



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

## **Negotiating History and Literature in Orhan Pamuk's *A Strangeness in My Mind***

**Sunaina Jain**

### **ABSTRACT**

The interface between history and literature has witnessed new episteme of theoretical understandings and the constant mutability between the two disciplines has led to new sites of critical discourse. More often than not, their fusion has led the writers to address the issues of national consciousness, representation and identity. The study seeks to explore the essence of historical consciousness and problematic of identity by situating them within the context of Istanbul, through Orhan Pamuk's latest novel - *A Strangeness in My Mind*. The paper uses the theoretical inferences of a cultural theorist, Homi Bhabha, including his concepts of 'liminality' and 'hybridity'. The novel functions within the ambit of liminal zone where the city Istanbul as well as the protagonist is confronted with the problematic of negotiating the conflicting tendencies. The paper also studies *hüzün*, a Turkish word, which becomes synonymous with Istanbul's identity. Despite decades of socio-political upheavals and rapacious expansion, Istanbul's history seeps in through numerous small chinks of Mevlut's reminiscences and it remains haunted by its past. Mevlut Karatas, the *boza* seller himself personifies this polarized consciousness, drifting sporadically between the old decaying world and the new, the traditional and the secular values. Although history acts as a springboard in carrying forward the plots of his previous novels, yet I argue that *A Strangeness in my Mind* is different from his other works as it allows Pamuk to explore Istanbul's politics and history through the eyes of a plebeian protagonist, Mevlut. The novel magnifies Istanbul in its faded and dusty glory; marching its way through the relics of the past to the threshold of power, wealth and self-confidence that it has borrowed from the West. The demolition of Christian and Jewish quarters, the indiscriminate rise of scruffy blocks of flats and the hillsides colonized by illegal shanties, *gecekondu*, the city's



## A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh

volatile political extreme left- and right-wing ideologues, the military coups are interwoven seamlessly into the narrative and allow Pamuk to comment on the ways in which fictional representation engages with historical reality.

**Keywords:** fictional representation and historical reality, national consciousness, traditional and secular values, socio-political upheavals, Homi Bhabha, liminality

The interface between history and literature has produced new episteme of theoretical understandings and the constant mutability between the two disciplines has led to fresh sites of critical discourse. Their fusion has led the writers to address the issues of national consciousness, representation and identity. The study seeks to explore historical consciousness and problematic identity within the context of Istanbul, through Orhan Pamuk's novel - *A Strangeness in my Mind (SMM)*. The novel draws its theoretical inferences including concepts of 'liminality' and 'hybridity' from a cultural theorist, Homi Bhabha.

Turkey's identity can, often, be best described as contradictory, elusive, bewildering, dynamic, and divested of all absolutes. Orhan Pamuk's works harp on this identity and representation crisis. Pamuk regularly touches on the dialectics of the East vs. West, secularism vs. Islamism, and modernism vs. traditionalism, which have shaped the historical consciousness and cultural ideology of Istanbul. Pamuk is a writer who treads the borderlines by which I refer to Pamuk's capacity to interrogate as well as reconcile the intersection of past and present, tradition and modernism, thereby blurring the binary distinctions.

Cities are sites of contestation as well as cultural exchange. A city is a veritable locus of habits, customs, traditions, conflicts and attitudes adopted and played out by its people. It is a social institution that is defined by a convoluted array of actions and responses to a particular environment. Contemporary Istanbul has a sprawling history which spans across two empires and a republic which signifies that there are two Istanbuls. On one side, it is the city of many pasts, the structures and antiquities of which are constitutive of the relics of Byzantine and the Ottoman regimes. At the other end of the spectrum is the city of Turkish Republic which is



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

turning into a globalizing hybrid, always in a state of flux, re-inventing itself and which is devoid of the notion of a stable identity. In Turkey, the Westernization process acts as a necessary corollary to globalization promoted by the state as an attempt to gain entry into the European Union. Because of its location at the complex crossroads of Europe and Asia, Istanbul's spatial setting acts as a mediator between the East and the West. However, this interface of disparate cultures produces an ambivalence which in turn posits a challenge to the formation of identity and subject formation. With an ever-booming population, a changing skyline with its high-rise apartments, a wide array of international companies, its proliferating business of tourism, Istanbul disorients and overwhelms its visitors, inhabitants and migrants alike with its cross-cultural and multi-faceted narratives.

Istanbul is the channel through which Orhan Pamuk defines and configures his 'self' and the city emerges as an organic entity that moulds the self that inhabits it, whereas the self, in turn, shapes the city by writing it. In his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, Pamuk admits: "Istanbul's fate is my fate. I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am" (Istanbul 6). Pamuk writes about an emotion which he attributes to the Turkish people – *hüzün*. The closest English translation of 'hüzün' is melancholy, but he distinguishes between the two. He demarcates 'hüzün' by its collectivity. On the contrary, melancholy, according to its historical meaning given by many scholars, is a feeling/condition experienced individually and it is not necessarily collective. *Hüzün* is attached to the whole Turkish nation since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Pamuk places *hüzün* in the realm of a sense of loss and non-belonging. According to him, it denotes a feeling of deep spiritual loss but also a hopeful way of looking at life. He writes: "The *hüzün* of Istanbul is not just the mood evoked by its music and its poetry, it is a way of looking at life that implicates us all, not only a spiritual state, but a state of mind that is ultimately as life-affirming as it is negating (Istanbul 82). Pamuk internalizes this *hüzün* as something to be absorbed with pride and shared as a community. This *hüzün* in fact becomes one with city's conflicting and convoluted identity. He posits: "To feel this *hüzün* is to see the scenes, evoke the memories, in which the city itself becomes the very illustration, the very essence, of *hüzün* (Istanbul 84).



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

The protagonists of Pamuk's novels set in Istanbul, more often than not, imbibe and internalize *hüzün* as a way of life. They are melancholic wanderers searching for their identities amidst the mumbo-jumbo of Istanbul in the literal as well as metaphorical sense of the word. In *SMM*, *hüzün* is seen emerging from Mevlut's oscillation between the feeling of belonging and non-belonging, state of optimism and despair. The history of Istanbul is also immersed in the same spirit of *hüzün* which is well reflected through his literary works.

Although history acts as a springboard in the plot-construction of Pamuk's previous novels, yet I argue that *A Strangeness in my Mind* can be set apart from his previous works as it allows Pamuk to explore Istanbul's politics and history through the eyes of a plebeian protagonist, Mevlut. His first novel, *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, and later *The Black Book*, tell the story of Istanbul through the lives of modernized, affluent and distinguished characters. Told from different perspectives by a bewildering variety of characters (mostly Mevlut's family and friends), *A Strangeness in My Mind* can be deemed as Istanbul's own epic giving a panoramic account of the city's topography, culture, customs, transitions in political and religious front. During decades of socio-political upheavals and rapacious geographical expansion, Istanbul's history seeps in through numerous small chunks of the protagonist Mevlut's reminiscences. The novel magnifies Istanbul in its diminishing and dusty glory; marching its way through the relics of the past trying to reach the threshold of power, wealth and self-confidence that it has borrowed from the West. Pamuk posits that Istanbul's "arches, fountains, and neighborhood mosques inflict heartache on all who live amongst them" (Istanbul 91). He weaves its past glory into the present day narrative by not being just nostalgic, rather by an acceptance of its neglected dwellings as part of its heritage. He postulates: "These are nothing like the remains of great empires to be seen in Western cities, preserved like museums of history and proudly displayed. The people of Istanbul simply carry on with their lives amongst the ruins" (Istanbul 91). The demolition of Christian and Jewish quarters, the indiscriminate rise of scruffy blocks of flats and the hillsides colonized by illegal shanties called *gecekondu*, the city's volatile political extreme left- and right-wing ideologues and the military coups are interwoven into the narrative as



## **A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

markers of Istanbul's identity. This depiction allows Pamuk to comment on the ways in which fictional representation engages with historical reality.

Pamuk details the explosive urbanization that has shaped Istanbul and Mevlut's life during the period spanning four decades. The 'metamorphosed' city explodes the myth of monolithic identity. In the postcolonial discourse, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable (Ashcroft et al 1995). Liminality (between or in-between state) has specific importance in postcolonial theory as it identifies the interstitial environment in which cultural engagement and transformation takes place. In post-colonial and cultural studies, the concept has been appropriated by Bhabha as a threshold, dividing distinct spheres, identities or discourses. Bhabha is aware of the dangers of fixity and fetishism of identities within binary colonial thinking arguing that "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (qtd. in Rutherford 211). Bhabha in his introduction to *The Location of Culture* posits:

The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (pg. 2)

According to Bhabha, a "third space" emerges when two cultures encounter and translate each other, setting in motion the process of transformation in the subject, a kind of consciousness which is an interface between the cultures. For the present study, Bhabha's concepts of liminality have been used to destabilize and dismantle the notion of culture and identity as transparent and fixed categories, in fact, these are dynamic, open-ended, contingent and ever-evolving entities. At



## **A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

the core of Bhabha's argument is the fact that identity is formed contingently and indeterminately at the border line between cultures. Bhabha's interpretation of liminality is constructive since it opens up room for the production of new meanings and hybrid identities. In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie states: "Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, we fall between two stools, but however ambiguous and shifting the ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy" (15). Bhabha's concept of liminality has been appropriated by taking it out of the post-colonial space of the colonizer and the colonized and used as a conceptual framework for the textual analysis of *SMM* as a means to project the intersection and reconciliation between history and literature.

The novel is not set in the high-society milieu of the Istanbul neighborhood of Nişantaşı from where Pamuk himself originates. The novel becomes the voice of those who come from elsewhere, the migrant workers from the small towns of Anatolia seeking their fortunes in the metropolis. Pamuk harps on the fragmented self of the city inhabited as it is by an ultra-rich minority and an impoverished majority, inundated with immigrants, divided by its diverse ethnic groups and vulnerable to unrest and violence. It is argued that Istanbul as well as Mevlut undergoes liminal identity crisis, which mainly emanates from a series of experiences during the transition from empire to the Republic in the post-World War I period. Other reasons for this crisis are the immediate and radical changes aimed at reforming the life style, the forced effacement of the past Ottoman culture and the influences of all these elements on the contemporary identity problem of Turkey.

Constructed as a *mélange* of polyphonic voices, the novel allows each character to tell his or her portion of story which unwinds itself as a saga of Mevlut's life. Born in a poor village in the province of Konya, around 700 miles south-east of Istanbul, in 1957, Mevlut leaves his home as a 12 year old boy and follows his father, Mustafa Karataş to Istanbul. There begins a succession of failed attempts at schooling, love affair, small businesses and political engagements. Mevlut is seen plodding his way through a series of menial occupations including selling yoghurt, *boza*,



## A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh

rice dishes and ice-cream on the street. He opens a short-lived *boza* shop with his brother-in-law and old friend Ferhat; he works as a parking lot attendant; and he works as an electricity inspector with a newly privatized electricity company. Seething in the backdrop are the major upheavals and calamities of modern Istanbul history – political clashes, outbreaks of ethnic and sectarian violence, terrorist attacks, military coups and a major earthquake. Pamuk starts off the novel in a unique way by encapsulating the events of the novel related to Mevlut's fortunes. The first line sets the mood for the narrative ahead: "This is the story of the life and daydreams of Mevlut Karataş, a seller of *boza* and yogurt" (3).

*Boza* is a traditional fermented drink made from wheat (sometimes sweet, sometimes sour), served with roasted chickpeas and cinnamon which was popular during the Ottoman Empire. *Boza* is a symbol of the vanishing past and the street vendors selling it are, in a way, trying to cling to the old order and consider it as their obligation to uphold the soon-to-be-lost heritage. It is said that *boza* served as a humble substitute for alcohol which was forbidden during the Ottoman rule. By the time The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, the *boza* shops had long closed down but the street vendors still carried forward the old tradition of *boza* selling. People were free now to consume *Raki* (an unsweetened, anise-flavored alcoholic drink that is popular in Turkey and Greece), hence, *boza* lost its place among people. After the 1950s, *boza* became a relic of the past, though still retained by small street vendors like Mevlut in whose hands it became the preserve of "centuries past, and the good old days that have come and gone" (SMM 18). Mevlut carries forward his father's business of selling yogurt during the day and *boza* at night with a melancholic refrain, characteristic of *boza* peddlers. Pamuk has written this novel from the lens of a humble migrant who retains his simplicity despite all odds that befall him.

During a series of bad fortunes, in which he finds himself caught up after reaching Istanbul and his falling in love with a girl whom he had seen at one of his acquaintances' place, becomes a catch-22 situation for him. Over three long years, he writes her love letters. Finally, his brother, Süleyman arranges an elopement which is followed by the odd discovery that the girl Süleyman



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

has brought with him is not the one Mevlut had fallen in love with, but her older sister. Mevlut's hopes are shattered for a while, but he accepts his fate. His attitude is not one of resignation, but of gratitude for the bountiful, unexpected gifts bestowed on him by God. He lives precariously close to poverty, with circumstances often threatening to push him over the edge. Despite his financial and personal worries, despite his friends and cousins advancing quickly on the ladder of prosperity, Mevlut's spirit remains uncrushed. An adulterated optimism suffuses his being. The pleasures of domestic life offer him great contentment. Even then, he feels sometimes lost; his mind teetering between the opposing pulls of forced marriage and actual marital bliss. This 'third space' where Mevlut finds himself landed by a quirk of fate not only seems to be the juncture of translations and dialogues, it also raises questions towards the essentially rooted ideas of identity. This 'third space' marks a new beginning of possibility in terms of meaningful identification and even productivity that the interstitial space carries with it. Mevlut shares his ambivalent feelings with his wife, during his visit to Rayiha's father to pay respects to him as a means of forgiveness for elopement: "There's strangeness in my mind. No matter what I do, I feel completely alone in this world" (228). At this crossroad where Mevlut finds himself in a state of dilemma, Rayiha replies, "You will never feel that way again now that I'm with you" (228). Her words embalm his troubled mind. After spending a few months with Rayiha, Mevlut develops a genuine love and fondness for her. Pamuk writes, "Mevlut felt he'd known Rayiha for years and slowly began to believe that his letters had been meant for someone like her – perhaps even for Rayiha herself" (256).

Pamuk's twinning of the historical and the humdrum is shown through the prism of the humble Mevlut and the people who inhabit his world. The cityscape manifested momentous changes after founding of the Turkish Republic upto the early years of twenty first century which Pamuk describes in detail. There were rumours of an imminent amnesty for the growth of unregistered property and illegal shanties resulting from the approaching elections in 1965. In reality, the land belonged to the national treasury or to the forestry department. The face of Istanbul witnessed sweeping changes with immigrants erecting more unauthorized homes and buildings on the hills of Duttepe and Kültepe located on the outskirts of Istanbul. Mevlut and his





## A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh

father lived in a shanty built on Kültepe hill which was in stark contrast with the rest of Istanbul which could be seen “in the distance, the ghostly silhouette of the city with its tall buildings and its minarets” (50). Mevlut’s humble lodging on the outskirts may make him feel as an outsider to the city, yet his peddling on the streets of Istanbul every night keeps his sense of belonging alive. After living in Istanbul for more than twenty years, Mevlut identifies himself absolutely with the city. Pamuk writes: “He didn’t see it as a place that had existed before his arrival and to which he’d come as an outsider. Instead, he liked to imagine that Istanbul was being built while he lived in it and to dream of how much cleaner, more beautiful, and more modern it would be in the future” (318). In March 1971, there was a military coup and the long standing Prime minister, Demirel stepped down. The event may not conspicuously seem to affect Mevlut’s life, yet it had profound implications as the street vendors were barred from big squares and avenues. After curfews and raids, house searches, the restrictions were relaxed and the streets again resonated with the calls of the street vendors. Mevlut prides himself on being the carrier of the old glory as he asserts, “Street vendors are the songbirds of the streets, they are the life and soul of Istanbul” (28), though his aloofness keeps surfacing intermittently in his conscious mind. Pamuk reiterates his feelings when he says, “In a city, you can be alone in a crowd, and infact, what makes the city a city is that it lets you hid the strangeness in your mind inside its teeming multitudes” (107).

Pamuk repeatedly uses the motif of stair well in the novel which may be seen as an interstitial state between the past and present. During his vocation as a *boza* seller, Mevlut must have climbed up the stairs leading to the apartments a hundred of times. *Boza* being an outdated drink for most of them, they romanticize the drink as well as the *boza* seller. Many a time, during his initial years in Istanbul, people would show hospitality and affection. He would often be invited inside the homes and customers wanted to listen to his rendition of ‘GoooodBoozaaaa . . . .’ in an attempt to soak themselves in and recreate the memories of the past. Therefore, stairwell is suggestive of the liminal space where two classes and temporal dimensions are in a dialogical state with Mevlut on one side and his customers living in those apartments on the other side. The



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

two identities cannot be bifurcated as they stand at a junction trying to bridge the past and present, and tradition and modernity. Bhabha writes:

The stairwell as the liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (5)

Pamuk is a subtle writer on class distinctions. During his life spent in Istanbul, Mevlut experiences transition in the eating habits of people in accordance with their social status. Once dishes like chicken with chickpeas and rice, eaten outside with plastic cutlery by office workers, begin to be seen as poor people's food and the sales shrivel for vendors like Mevlut. "These bastards and their chemical yogurt have ruined street vendors" (314), Mevlut complains to Rayiha when his yogurt sales drop steeply. He laments that the big companies are plundering the small-scale businesses of street vendors. Besides this, the ideological, ethnic and religious divisions that are dramatized in his work are determined by the nation's geography and history – not only the fact that Turkey bridges Europe and Asia, but the fact that it is an ethnically diverse, majority Muslim nation that officially embraced secularism in the early twentieth century under Atatürk, the founding father of the Turkish republic. The city of Istanbul encapsulates the odd sense of alienation and melancholy which the nation's multilayered and conflicted cosmopolitanism is apt to engender.

The socio-political upheavals running parallel in the background of Mevlut's narrative are not without implications on the life and business of Mevlut. The subterranean network of politics and history now and then adds up to the vicissitudes of Mevlut's life. Even events as remote as catastrophic Chernobyl disaster in 1986 affected his business since the "wind had supposedly



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

brought cancer clouds right over the city” (314) and people stopped buying cooked rice or *boza* from the street vendors.

Mevlut’s naivety and simplicity coupled with his conflicting tendencies are scattered throughout the text and reinforce his liminal identity crisis. Pamuk’s historical consciousness of the strange presence of dog right from the nineteenth century to the present day is also a part of city’s experience. He writes, “Then there are packs of dogs mentioned by every Western traveller to pass through Istanbul during the nineteenth century . . . they continue to bring drama to the city’s streets. . . . Fearsome as they are, united as they have been in their defiance of the state, I can’t help pitying these mad, lost creatures still clinging to their old turf (Istanbul 39). As a young boy, during his initial years in Istanbul, Mevlut was quite afraid of dogs and was advised by a holy man (to whom his father had taken him) to repeat a verse three times. It was after twenty-five years later that the same fear returns to him. This time, it is another modern Holy Guide with whom Mevlut has a long-standing association who sermonizes on the reasons and methods to get rid of our inner fears. He banishes the recital of verses as an antidote to fear rather harps on the necessity of keeping one’s intentions pure. Mevlut has recently been embroiled in the electricity fraud (working as an assistant to Electricity Inspector, Ferhat who happens to be his old friend and brother-in-law) which makes him question his own intentions. The Holy Guide rationalizes the action of dogs and the resultant fear they instill in the hearts of men when he says:

“Dogs can sense when a person doesn’t belong among us. This is their God-given gift. That is why people who want to copy the Europeans are always afraid of dogs. Mahmud II butchered the Janissaries, the backbone of the Ottoman Empire, and thus allowed the west to trample upon us; he also slaughtered the street dogs of Istanbul . . . .” (458).

He further states that the people of Istanbul filed a petition to bring those dogs back which were pushed out to the wretched Island. The Holy Guide discourses about the wealth of experience in their blood which has given the dogs a keen sense of distinction between their friends and foes. The fear of dogs which Mevlut has struggled to keep at bay throughout his life



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

does not go away completely and it is this interstitial space between fear and the power of overcoming it which makes Mevlut stand at the crossroads of faith and doubt in the discourse of the Holy Guide.

Pamuk interweaves the narrative with the stories of expulsion and violence to the non-Muslims like Greeks who were either forced to leave Istanbul due to the ethnic-cleansing policies the Kemalist regimes implemented in their struggle to develop and construct a Turkish national identity. 1942 Property Tax was the first blow the Non-Muslim population of Beyoğlu which imposed levies on Tarlabası's Christian community that most of them would never be able to pay and sent the Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, and Jewish men who failed to do so to the labour camps. Most of the Greek population went over to Greece during the Anti-Christian uprisings in 1955 and the finally, the Government decreed them to leave the country overnight in 1964. The emptied homes were taken over by the Government officials and the police who had a close nexus with the criminal gangs. Later on, these emptied homes were rented out to the poor migrants coming in from eastern Anatolia. Mevlut feels himself to be an accomplice in the crime. Whenever he sees the Greek families coming back to Istanbul to check on their old houses, they are often heckled and stoned by the bands of children recruited by one of the many operational criminal gangs in the area. Mevlut's intermediary state of self-reproach and impenitence pulls him in opposite directions fighting to claim their rightful place in the thoughts of Mevlut. Eventually, if Mevlut ever witnesses any unpleasant situation, he would just walk away saying nothing, "half-ashamed and half furious" (317). Thus, Mevlut's crossover to a stable state is never achieved.

The ethnic cleansing of the Greeks is followed by the physical cleansing in an effort to modernize the city. The performers of the nation-building project choose a deliberate demolition of the past by razing the historic buildings to the ground. Pamuk entwines this history of erasure with Mevlut's relation to Istanbul. Throughout the demolition years, his business also suffered a little since he would not take his rice-cart anywhere near crowded or noisy areas. Pamuk writes:



**A bi-annual peer - reviewed journal of Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

Mevlut had been in Istanbul for twenty years. It was sad to see the old face of the city as he had come to know it disappear before his eyes, erased by new roads, demolitions, buildings, billboards, shops, tunnels, and flyovers, but it was also gratifying to feel that someone out there was working to improve the city for his benefit. (318)

In *SMM*, different facets of Istanbul have been captured by fusing fiction and history which converge at the level of representation as a means of comprehending fluid reality. Since Bhabhian liminality aims for openness, transformation and dissolution of fixed identities, the text becomes a free zone which celebrates the dialogue, *mélange* and transition between different classes and cultures. In *SMM*, this in-betweenness is experienced by Mevlut as well as the city of Istanbul itself. Mevlut Karataş, the *boza* seller personifies this polarised consciousness, drifting sporadically between the old decaying world and the new, the traditional and the secular values. The novel is replete with textual richness, slippery melancholy and empathy that Pamuk, in his unique way, celebrates and brings to bear on his narrative.

## Works Cited

Ashcroft, Bill et al, editors. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 1995.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2015.

Pamuk, Orhan. *A Strangeness in My Mind*. Translated by Ekin Oklap, Penguin Books, 2015.

---. *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. Translated by Maureen Freely, Faber and Faber, 2005.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, Granta Publications, 1991. Print.

Rutherford, Jonathan. "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha." *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. Edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp. 207-221.