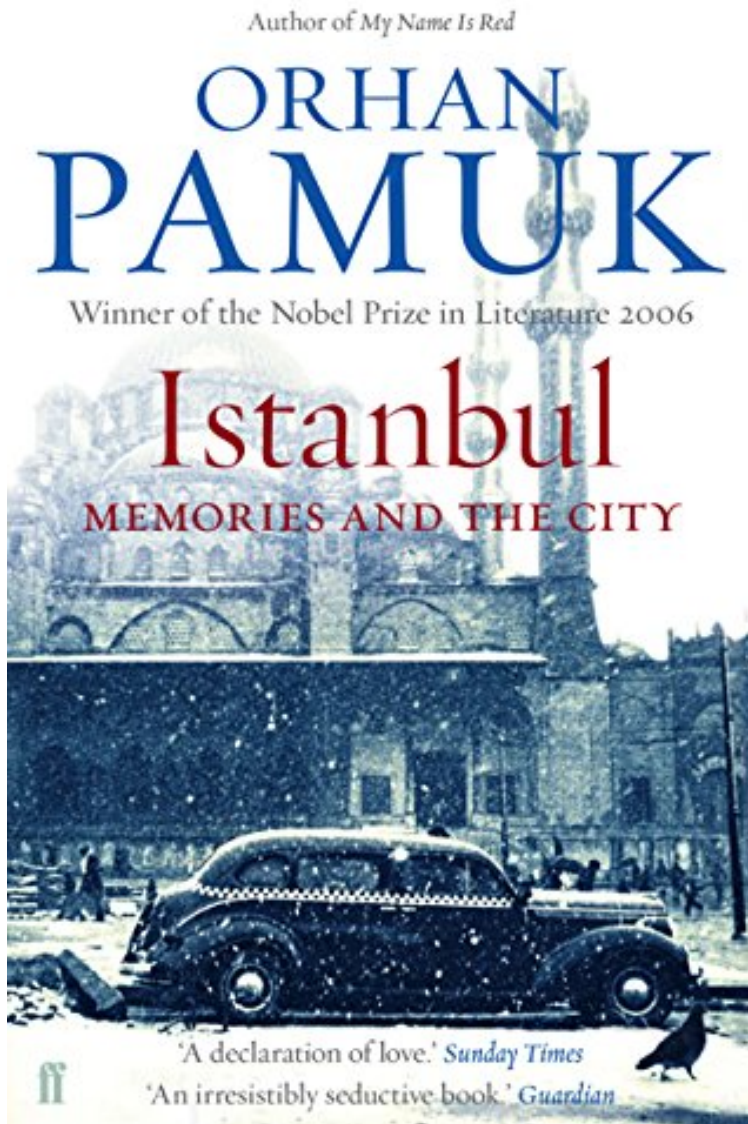


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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIstanbul is a shimmering evocation, by turns intimate and panoramic, of one of the world's great cities, by its foremost writer. Orhan Pamuk, winner of the Nobel Prize in 2006, was born in Istanbul, in the family apartment building where his mother first held him in her arms. His portrait of his city is thus also a self-portrait, refracted by memory and the melancholy-or hzn- that all Istanbul share: the sadness that comes of living amid the ruins of a lost Ottoman Empire. As he companionably guides us across the Bosphorus, through Istanbul's historical monuments and lost paradises, its dilapidated Ottoman villas, back streets and waterways, he also introduces us to the city's writers, artists and murderers. Like the Dublin of Joyce and Jan Morris' Venice, Pamuk's Istanbul is a triumphant encounter of place and sensibility,

beautifully written and immensely moving. Extrait Chapter One Another Orhan From a very young age, I suspected there was more to my world than I could see: Somewhere in the streets of Istanbul, in a house resembling ours, there lived another Orhan so much like me that he could pass for my twin, even my double. I can't remember where I got this idea or how it came to me. It must have emerged from a web of rumors, misunderstandings, illusions, and fears. But in one of my earliest memories, it is already clear how I've come to feel about my ghostly other. When I was five I was sent to live for a short time in another house. After one of their many stormy separations, my parents arranged to meet in Paris, and it was decided that my older brother and I should remain in Istanbul, though in separate places. My brother would stay in the heart of the family with our grandmother in the Pamuk Apartments, in Nianta, but I would be sent to stay with my aunt in Cihangir. Hanging on the wall in this house where I was treated with the utmost kindness was a picture of a small child, and every once in a while my aunt or uncle would point up at him and say with a smile, Look! That's you! The sweet doe-eyed boy inside the small white frame did look a bit like me, it's true. He was even wearing the cap I sometimes wore. I knew I was not that boy in the picture (a kitsch representation of a cute child that someone had brought back from Europe). And yet I kept asking myself, Is this the Orhan who lives in that other house? Of course, now I too was living in another house. It was as if I had to move here before I could meet my twin, but as I wanted only to return to my real home, I took no pleasure in making his acquaintance. My aunt and uncle's jovial little game of saying I was the boy in the picture became an unintended taunt, and each time I'd feel my mind unraveling: my ideas about myself and the boy who looked like me, my picture and the picture I resembled, my home and the other house all would slide about in a confusion that made me long all the more to be at home again, surrounded by my family. Soon my wish came true. But the ghost of the other Orhan in another house somewhere in Istanbul never left me. Throughout my childhood and well into adolescence, he haunted my thoughts. On winter evenings, walking through the streets of the city, I would gaze into other people's houses through the pale orange light of home and dream of happy, peaceful families living comfortable lives. Then I would shudder to think that the other Orhan might be living in one of these houses. As I grew older, the ghost became a fantasy and the fantasy a recurrent nightmare. In some dreams I would greet this Orhan always in another house with shrieks of horror; in others the two of us would stare each other down in eerie merciless silence. Afterward, wafting in and out of sleep, I would cling ever more fiercely to my pillow, my house, my street, my place in the world.

Whenever I was unhappy, I imagined going to the other house, the other life, the place where the other Orhan lived, and in spite of everything I'd half convince myself that I was he and took pleasure in imagining how happy he was, such pleasure that, for a time, I felt no need to go to seek out the other house in that other imagined part of the city. Here we come to the heart of the matter: I've never left Istanbul, never left the houses, streets, and neighborhoods of my childhood. Although I've lived in different districts from time to time, fifty years on I find myself back in the Pamuk Apartments, where my first photographs were taken and where my mother first held me in her arms to show me the world. I know this persistence owes something to my imaginary friend, the other Orhan, and to the solace I took from the bond between us. But we live in an age defined by mass migration and creative immigrants, so I am sometimes hard-pressed to explain why I've stayed, not only in the same place but in the same building. My mother's sorrowful voice comes back to me: Why don't you go outside for a while? Why don't you try a change of scene, do some traveling . . . ?

Conrad, Nabokov, Naipaul these are writers known for having managed to migrate between languages, cultures, countries, continents, even civilizations. Their imaginations were fed by exile, a nourishment drawn not through roots but through rootlessness. My imagination, however, requires that I stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view. Istanbul's fate is my fate. I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am. Gustave Flaubert, who visited Istanbul 102 years before my birth, was struck by the variety of life in its teeming streets; in one of his letters he predicted that in a century's time it would be the capital of the world. The reverse came true: After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the world almost forgot that Istanbul existed. The city into which I was born was poorer, shabbier, and more isolated than it had ever been before in its two-thousand-year history. For me it has always been a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy. I've spent my life either battling with this melancholy or (like all Istanbulis) making it my own. At least once in a lifetime, self-reflection leads us to examine the circumstances of our birth. Why were we born in this particular corner of the world, on this particular date? These families into which we were born, these countries and cities to which the lottery of life has assigned us they expect love from us, and in the end we do love them from the bottom of our hearts; but did we perhaps deserve better? I sometimes think myself unlucky to have been born in an aging and impoverished city buried under the ashes

of a ruined empire. But a voice inside me always insists this was really a piece of luck. If it is a matter of wealth, I can certainly count myself fortunate to have been born into an affluent family at a time when the city was at its lowest ebb (though some have ably argued the contrary). Mostly, I am disinclined to complain; I've accepted the city into which I was born in the same way that I've accepted my body (much as I would have preferred to be more handsome and better built) and my gender (even though I still ask myself, naively, whether I might be better off had I been born a woman). This is my fate, and there's no sense arguing with it. This book is concerned with fate. I was born in the middle of the night on June 7, 1952, in a small private hospital in Moda. Its corridors, I'm told, were peaceful that night, and so was the world. Aside from the Strambolini volcanos having suddenly begun to spew flames and ash two days earlier, relatively little seems to have been happening on our planet. The newspapers were full of small news: a few stories about the Turkish troops fighting in Korea; a few rumors spread by Americans stoking fears that the North Koreans might be preparing to use biological weapons. In the hours before I was born, my mother had been avidly following a local story: Two days earlier, the caretakers and heroic residents of the Konya Student Center had seen a man in a terrifying mask trying to enter a house in Langa through the bathroom window; they'd chased him through the streets to a lumberyard, where, after cursing the police, the hardened criminal had committed suicide; a seller of dry goods identified the corpse as a gangster who the year before had entered his shop in broad daylight and robbed him at gunpoint. When she was reading the latest on this drama, my mother was alone in her room, or so she told me with a mixture of regret and annoyance many years later. After taking her to the hospital, my father had grown restless and, when my mother's labor failed to progress, he'd gone out to meet with friends. The only person with her in the delivery room was my aunt, who'd managed to climb over the hospital's garden wall in the middle of the night. When my mother first set eyes on me, she found me thinner and more fragile than my brother had been. I feel compelled to add or so I've been told. In Turkish we have a special tense that allows us to distinguish hearsay from what we've seen with our own eyes; when we are relating dreams, fairy tales, or past events we could not have witnessed, we use this tense. It is a useful distinction to make as we remember our earliest life experiences, our cradles, our baby carriages, our first steps, all as reported by our parents, stories to which we listen with the same rapt attention we might pay some brilliant tale of some other person. It's a sensation as sweet as seeing ourselves in our dreams, but we pay a heavy price for it. Once imprinted in our minds, other people's reports of what we've done end up mattering more than what we ourselves remember. And just as we learn about our lives from others, so too do we let others shape our understanding of the city in which we live. At times when I accept as my own the stories I've heard about my city and myself, I'm tempted to say, Once upon a time I used to paint. I hear I was born in Istanbul, and I understand that I was a somewhat curious child. Then, when I was twenty-two, I seem to have begun writing novels without knowing why. I'd have liked to write my entire story this way as if my life were something that happened to someone else, as if it were a dream in which I felt my voice fading and my will succumbing to enchantment. Beautiful though it is, I find the language of epic unconvincing, for I cannot accept that the myths we tell about our first lives prepare us for the brighter, more authentic second lives that are meant to begin when we awake. Because for people like me, at least that second life is none other... From Publishers Weekly Turkish novelist Pamuk (Snow) presents a breathtaking portrait of a city, an elegy for a dead civilization and a meditation on life's complicated intimacies. The author, born in 1952 into a rapidly fading bourgeois family in Istanbul, spins a masterful tale, moving from his fractured extended family, all living in a communal apartment building, out into the city and encompassing the entire Ottoman Empire. Pamuk sees the slow collapse of the once powerful empire hanging like a pall over the city and its citizens. Central to many Istanbul residents' character is the concept of *hzn* (melancholy). Istanbul's *hzn*, Pamuk writes, "is a way of looking at life that... is ultimately as life affirming as it is negating." His world apparently in permanent decline, Pamuk revels in the darkness and decay manifest around him. He minutely describes horrific accidents on the Bosphorus Strait and his own recurring fantasies of murder and mayhem. Throughout, Pamuk details the breakdown of his family: elders die, his parents fight and grow apart, and he must find his way in the world. This is a powerful, sometimes disturbing literary journey through the soul of a great city told by one of its great writers. 206 photos. (June 10) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.