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İpek Türeli, *Istanbul, Open City: Exhibiting Anxieties of Urban Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2018, xiii + 169 pages

İpek Türeli's *Istanbul, Open City* is a well-timed addition to the recent body of work produced on urban space and life in Turkey. Placing visual cultural analysis in dialogue with urban history and breaking with conventional modes of periodization, the book provides a fresh look at Istanbul, a city which understandably looms large within the field of urban studies. It approaches head-on the ways in which the dramatic changes in Istanbul's physical and social space since the 1950s have been represented visually in various media such as photography, cinema films, public exhibitions, panorama museums, and theme parks, so as to "peel back the layers of cultural anxiety that shape the way the city is experienced today" (p. 5). As such, the book, which is based on a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of California Berkeley's Department of Architecture, not only enriches our understanding of Istanbul's recent history, but also provides insights into the conceptualization of the intricate relations between past and present through examining anxieties inherent in the experience of urban modernity.

The book suggests that Istanbul's imaginative geographies have been forged through "a pervasive feeling of loss" which in turn enhances a nostalgic gesture, particularly among the urban middle classes. In the face of the influx of rural-to-urban migrants in the post-war era and the swift urban development that has expanded the city's physical boundaries in an unprecedented way, middle-class urbanites have articulated and mediated their anxieties concerning class relations, cultural practices, and identities through the trope of nostalgia that insistently refers to a vanished sense of totality and certainty. In this regard, nostalgia serves as the primary affect that permeates the visual cultural production on Istanbul, as "the future of the city is increasingly imagined based on improvisations of its past" (p. 4). Such interplay between past and present is not peculiar to a specific period, social group, or political actor, but has become an immanent dimension of discursive practices through which the city is seen and signified. Underlying this overall argument is a particular approach that takes into consideration the "productivity" of visual representations. Conceptualizing them as constitutive of reality, rather than merely reflective of it, the book perceptively illustrates the ways in which visual representations shape predominant perspectives on the built environment and thus form urban imaginaries through which individuals collectively experience the city.

Along these lines, the book unpacks how the socially shocking and politically explosive ambiguities born out of rapid modernization, changing

demographics, and urban growth are dealt with, through a close examination of what Türeli calls “exhibitionary sites.” Each of the five main chapters, which can be read independently, provides an analysis of a specific medium, and engages with a different body of scholarship. Focusing on Ara Güler’s – a pioneer of photojournalism in Turkey – oeuvre, especially his black-and-white photos picturing harsh living conditions in the inner-city slums and the rapidly enlarging informal settlements on the city’s outskirts, Chapter 2 discusses how street photography molded contemporary perceptions of the emerging divided city. More importantly, it demonstrates how meanings ascribed to those images have changed over time and provided “prosthetic memories” for the imagination of Old Istanbul consumed by the larger public along with the place-branding initiatives ongoing since the 1990s. In Chapter 3, Türeli takes up how class conflict between the middle classes and emerging working class deepened, particularly in terms of the uneven geography of housing, through the lens of cinema films. Providing a detailed analysis of three important examples of social realism or “people’s cinema” produced in the 1960s, she again deals with the figure of the migrant and discusses the ways in which middle classes form their sense of urban identity through cinematic representations.

Chapter 4, which is one of the most inspiring sections of the book, revisits the increased awareness of architectural heritage in the 1970s as a response to unplanned urban growth. Through a case study of public exhibitions, which idealized the vernacular wooden house and hence engendered a cultural preservationist sensibility among “urban enthusiasts,” Türeli demonstrates the exclusionary nature of the act of memorizing and place-making that omitted the multicultural and multi-religious makeup of the city and ultimately paved the way for the gentrification of popular neighborhoods in the historic center. Chapters 5 and 6 shift the lens toward the post-2002 era, a time when Istanbul’s cityscape began to undertake comprehensive transformations along with policies of neoliberal urbanism, and illustrate how the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) has employed visual techniques to refashion the notion of locality via selective references to the Ottoman past. In Chapter 5, Türeli examines Turkey’s first nation-themed park of miniature models that seeks to create “alternative modes through which to imagine the nation” (p. 123) and build the “vernacular politics” of Islamism. The park, opened in 2003, had a significant place in the popular historical landscape, as it could mediate the tensions spurred by the AKP’s “global city” perspective and provide an escape from the experience of the everyday. Chapter 6 takes up another cultural attraction, a panorama museum – opened in 2009 – that reconstructs a visual historical narrative of the “conquest of the city,” in order to survey changes in the AKP’s representational strategies in parallel to a shift in its political agenda. Unlike the miniature park

that mobilizes selective and exclusionary references to an imagined multiculturalism of the Ottoman city, the panorama museum provides an immersive view of the city to refashion the idea and ideal of conquest, and appeared at a juncture when public life in Istanbul was beginning to be squeezed between authoritarian populist aspirations and the boosted commodification of urban space. Taken together, the investigations of these “exhibitionary sites” reveal the continuities in visual representations which have been deployed in various media since the 1950s, in terms of “a desire to shape the public through culture and create urbanite citizens out of crowds” (p. 10).

Istanbul, Open City offers two major contributions that I would like to highlight. First, bringing forth the perspective of the urban imaginary, the book offers insights into the scholarship on Istanbul, which has evolved dramatically over time. While the first generation of urban scholars in the 1960s and 1970s emphasized the problems stemming from rapid urbanization within the context of the developing economy, later research in the 1980s and 1990s shifted the lens toward the social, political, and spatial effects of globalization. Recently, a major strand within the field specifically explores the ways in which neoliberal urbanism has transformed the city’s physical and social space during the AKP era. It is against this backdrop that the book, by unpacking how subjectivities are produced and molded through an examination of urban imaginaries, engages with crucial aspects of urban modernity that have hitherto been understudied due to the hegemony of the perspective of urban political economy. Second, demonstrating continuities in terms of uncertainties embedded in urban experience, the book not only provides an account of modernity within a non-Western context, but also challenges methodological tendencies prevalent in Istanbul studies. Unlike the previous sociological, political, and architectural histories of the city, which have predominantly focused either on the modernization of the nineteenth-century Ottoman capital or the nation-building process of the early republican era, it examines communalities, overlaps, and tensions through a more expansive span of time from the 1950s to today and thus reconstructs a persuasive genealogy of the present.

That said, I found one of the book’s central concepts – open city – to be lacking clarity, and hence confusing. While the term originally designates cities that abandoned their defenses to avoid destruction by invaders, and has more recently been deployed in urban-planning literature to describe cities whose deficient control mechanisms lead to an incapacity to divert unwanted migrants, Türeli, referring to Richard Sennett, defines it as an ideal which is positioned in opposition to “a closed, over-determined system that denies chance encounters, narrative possibilities, and growth over time” (p. 5). Thus, in contrast to a straightforward use of the term, she suggests that Istanbul’s history of modernity, despite all sorts of anxieties, has been imbued

with such encounters – not necessarily non-conflictual, yet open to dialogic interactions, if we are to follow Sennett’s conceptualization – among inhabitants. While the book delicately illustrates the ways in which anxieties have been processed through varying visual strategies predicated on and revolving around loss and nostalgia, it is not equally clear how these strategies have reinforced the possibilities that might be born out of such encounters.

Istanbul, Open City presents a powerful and inspiring account of urban modernity in Istanbul – a city, with its multilayered histories, which is charming at first glance, yet equally challenging for its observers. Combining meticulous visual analysis with a comprehensive historical outlook, it skillfully explores deep-seated conflicts and tensions that plague the city’s present. As such, it is a stimulating work that deserves to be read not only by scholars of urban studies, but also by anyone who seeks to understand the perplexing reality of contemporary Turkey.

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Pelin Başçı, *Social Trauma and Telecinematic Memory: Imagining the Turkish Nation since the 1980 Coup*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, xiii + 340 pages.

In Turkish history the year 1980 signified both an end of a period and the outset of another. As a historic point of rupture in Turkey, the military coup of 1980 ended the political, socioeconomic, and cultural process of the 1960s and 1970s, on one hand, while starting a new period of neoliberalism that was translated to the Turkish context as “a new ethos, which combined political authoritarianism with ‘competitive individualism,’” on the other (pp. 74–5). In her book, Pelin Başçı analyzes twenty-eight coup films and three television serials narrating coup stories that reflect this dual characteristic of the coup. She examines these films not only as artistic productions but also as “one of the key sites of [Turkey’s] popular appraisal” of its military coups as social traumas specifically constituting the public memory of the 1980 military intervention (p. 2). While based on interpretations of films and television serials, Başçı’s study goes well beyond the boundaries of film and media studies and presents the reader with an interdisciplinary example of cultural studies situated in a historical framework.