

**Istanbul’s Ghost Stories: Investigating the Urban Gothic Space in Ahmet
Ümit’s “A Memento for Istanbul” And Barbara Nadel’s
“Land of the Blind”**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the representations of Istanbul as an Urban Gothic Space in Ahmet Ümit's "A Memento for Istanbul" and Barbara Nadel's "Land of the Blind". The study explores the urban space of Istanbul and argues for its palimpsestic nature, haunted by the blood and memories of the past civilizations and empires that it was once home to. Further emphasis is placed on the constant tug of war between the old and the new and East vs West. The supernatural and various transgressions which are manifested mainly in the historical parts of the urban city are investigated by employing various theories of Gothic and related fields. The first chapter starts with a reading of Ahmet Ümit's historical crime fiction "A Memento for Istanbul" employing an Urban Gothic framework, accompanied by Derrida's concept of "Hauntology". Furthermore, a survey of the city's history in accordance with the theories is conducted. In the second chapter, in Barbara Nadel's crime fiction "Land of The Blind", the intersecting stories of the victim Ariadne Savva and the Negroponte family are explored through Bakhtin's Chronotopes and Carnavalesque. The Negroponte's "Gothic House" is discussed by employing Freud's "Uncanny", together with Poe's recurring Gothic theme, "Fear of being buried alive". Additionally, two Gothic subgenres are investigated, i.e. "The Queer Uncanny" and "Gothic Postmodernism". In the third chapter Walter Benjamin's concept of the "Flâneur" is employed. Inspector Nevzat Akman from "A Memento for Istanbul" and Inspector Çetin İkmen from "Land of The Blind" are compared and portrayed as Flâneur-detectives turning the idle act of strolling into a purposeful act of investigating crime and historicizing the Gothic city in the process. Moreover, the protagonist Ariadne Savva is depicted as a female engaging in "street haunting" through Woolf's concept of the "Flâneuse".

Keywords: Ahmet Ümit; Barbara Nadel; Gothic Postmodernism; Hauntology; Queer Uncanny; Urban Gothic Literature

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore the representations of Istanbul as an Urban Gothic Space in Ahmet Ümit's "A Memento For Istanbul" and Barbara Nadel's "Land of The Blind". The study argues for the palimpsestic nature of the city, haunted by the blood and memories of the past civilizations and empires that it was once home to. Sara Wasson posits that early Gothic literature relied on ghosts or demons to create a sense of fear; in contrast, the metropolis summons the horrors of human violence and corruption which can be horrifying enough without relying on supernatural elements. The anonymity of the city provides a space for sexual and criminal transgression. Literary portrayals of the city reflect the anxieties around class and capital and the city's diurnal dualism is used to represent internal psychological struggles. Disorienting, maze-like, and claustrophobic cities are expressive settings for the Gothic (Wasson, 2010, p. 3).

The first chapter starts with a reading of Ahmet Ümit's crime novel "A Memento for Istanbul" employing an Urban Gothic framework, accompanied by Derrida's concept of "Hauntology". "A Memento for Istanbul" is a murder mystery set in the backdrops of a historical urban city. Chief Inspector Nevzat, in pursuit of the criminals, follows the clues and finds himself immersed in the Gothic past of the city. Nevertheless, as Robert Mighall argues, a Gothic setting is not enough for a city to be called Gothic. For a city to possess a Gothic quality, it requires a significant collection of memories and historical associations that would be manifested in an existing architectural or topographical legacy, as these areas offer a natural setting for supernatural entities that embody imagined or projected significances (Mighall, 2007, p. 57). Furthermore, Mighall claims, the persistence of historical memory is a fundamental feature of Gothic representation; this, for the Urban Gothic implies the city's criminal past haunting its civic present (Mighall, 2007, p. 55). In "A Memento for Istanbul", the seven murders are committed in order to save and protect the archaic city. The narrative, interestingly, facilitates the readers sympathizing with the murderers as they are avenging the death of their loved ones and cleansing the city of ongoing corruption. In the first chapter a survey of the city's history in accordance with the theories is conducted. Further emphasis will be placed on the constant tug of war between the old and the new and East vs. West. Additionally, the struggle and anxiety that lead way to the supernatural and various transgressions which are manifested mainly in the historical parts of the urban space will be

examined. As Botting claims, the intrigue with transgression and the unease that arises from crossing cultural boundaries, still evoke complex feelings and implications in narratives of darkness, lust, and power (Botting, 1995, p. 1).

In the second chapter, in Barbara Nadel's crime novel "Land of The Blind", the intersecting stories of the victim Ariadne Savva and the Negroponte family are explored. The silent protagonist is again the Gothic city, Istanbul. Inspector Ikmen and his team investigate Ariadne Savva's death and search for her missing baby while roaming the archaic city for clues. Bakhtin's Chronotopes and how they represent a crisis and break in life are the theoretical frameworks employed. Furthermore, life turned inside out in the Park (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 329) is portrayed through Bakhtin's Carnavalesque; how the Negroponte House has been turned into a "Gothic House" is discussed by employing Freud's "Uncanny", together with Poe's recurring gothic theme, "Fear of being buried alive". Madam Anastasia is related to Bertha Mason using the "Madwomen in the Attic" trope; it is argued that the constructs that the patriarchy inflicts on women often lead to their demise. Additionally, two Gothic subgenres are investigated, i.e. "The Queer Uncanny" and "Gothic Postmodernism". Paulina Palmer posits that "The Queer Uncanny" originated from recognizing that numerous contemporary fictional works utilize visual elements and themes of the Uncanny and Gothic to explore various aspects of queer sexuality and transgender experience. According to Palmer, the Gothic's ability to transgress boundaries through unconventional and wandering elements is particularly noticeable when it deals with queer identity and experiences (Palmer, 2012, p. 11). In "The Land of The Blind" there is an abundance of queer characters and experiences. They all unite in the Park to protest against the establishment of yet another shopping mall. During this gathering, the Park becomes a place where they can display their queer identities openly as opposed to their regular lives where they are usually closeted or huddled in their own quarters. In Gothic Postmodernism, Maria Beville builds on David Punter's notion of the Gothic as the literature of terror and defines Gothic-postmodernism as intensifying the Gothic language of terror to encompass the contemporary fears and worries of our postmodern period as well as the notions of terror that have arisen from the domain of postmodern cultural theory (Beville, 2009, p. 9). Almost two decades earlier, Baudrillard claimed that modern cities have taken the place of graveyards and resemble abandoned towns that symbolize death. If a highly functioning and extensive metropolis represents the pinnacle of civilization, then ours can be described as a society of decay and death. (Baudrillard 1993, pp. 127). Thus, in the "Land of The Blind" the protests in the park exemplify the cry against capitalism and the anxiety caused by the oppression

provoked by the constant development of high-rising building blocks and the perpetual pressure to consume and become indebted to the government and capitalism.

In the third chapter Walter Benjamin's concept of the "Flâneur" is employed. Inspector Nevzat Akman from "A Memento for Istanbul" and Inspector Çetin İkmen from "Land of The Blind" are compared and portrayed as Flâneur-detectives turning the idle act of strolling into a purposeful act of investigating crime and historicizing the Gothic city in the process. Furthermore, the Inspectors' relationship to the crowds and the city in the context of the "Flâneur" is investigated. Virginia Woolf contends that the desire to possess a lead pencil can be a reason for walking halfway through London between tea and dinner. If we can use this excuse as a pretext, we could enjoy one of the greatest pleasures of winter city life which is wandering the streets of London without any risk or danger (Woolf, 2014). In this context, Woolf's flâneuse is indeed like Baudelaire's flâneur who enjoys the hustle and bustle of the big city. Corresponding to Baudelaire's flâneur and Woolf's flâneuse the protagonist Ariadne Savva in "Land of the Blind" adopts the qualities of the flâneuse while "street haunting" in the streets of Istanbul pursuing an investigation of her own. Woolf's flâneuse encounters the hunchback, the crippled, and disfigured in other words the "Grotesque" in the city. This generates a Carnavalesque environment in the city. This Carnavalesque environment which according to Bakhtin is life taken out of its usual routine and to a certain extent "Life turned inside out" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 329-31) is portrayed in depth in the "Park" in "Land of The Blind". Elizabeth Wilson argues there are various stereotypes of women found in literature such as the seductive temptress, the promiscuous whore, the fallen woman, and the lesbian. Many writers viewed the presence of a woman as a challenge to societal order due to the association of women with the possibility of sexual excitement, which was perceived as a moral and political danger. (Wilson, 1992, p. 6). These stereotypes of women are also represented in abundance in the "Land of the Blind" such as Sergeant Gürsel's transgender lover Pembe and lesbian wife Sinem, and the antagonist Ahmet Öden's mistress the big brassy gypsy Gülizar.

RESULTS

This study has compared two crime novels, one written by Ahmet Ümit, a famous Turkish crime fiction author, "A Memento for Istanbul", and one by Barbara Nadel, a British, female crime fiction author, "Land of the Blind". Barbara Nadel is also the winner of the CWA Silver Dagger Award. Nadel not only knows the geography, heritage, and culture of Istanbul very well

but shares the love and passion of a true “İstanbullu”. Hence, the protagonists are very similar in nature; Inspectors Nevzat Akman and Çetin İkmen retell the history and myths of their beloved city while they pursue the murderers. They are also humanized by acknowledging their vices, such as İkmen’s smoking and Nevzat’s love of drinking rakı with his friends and girlfriend Evgenia. The assessment of their characters through the Gothic lens is established through Nevzat’s frequent shift into the supernatural realm and İkmen’s use of his sixth sense acquired from his “witch” mother.

At the core of the present study was the idea that İstanbul shares the quality of a protagonist together with the two detectives; had these novels been set in a different metropolis, the theories employed could have been selected differently. İstanbul’s geographical position between Asia and Europe and its historical past ruled by several brutal Eastern and Western emperors establish İstanbul as a city full of violence, transgressions, and ambiguity, which are prominent features of the Urban Gothic genre. The impact of this palimpsest city on its denizens is read through Derrida’s concept of Hauntology (Derrida, 1994). As the habitants of the city are born into enormous debt, they carry a burden similar to the mythological Atlas’ on their shoulders. However the detectives are not crushed under this burden, they are comfortable in this mixed ethnic and cultural heritage of the urban city; on a personal level, they have even managed to make peace with their vices and demons and are not defeated by their personal misfortunes. Moreover, the Inspectors use their knowledge of the city, curiosity, and detective skills to find the murderers and bring justice to their city.

Reading these two novels through the lens of Urban Gothic and related theories enabled me to give voice to the abject of the city. The Carnavalesque environment in the Park conveys how the queers and lesbians are united with the “normal” residents fighting against capitalism and the demolition of their sacred green space in the midst of their city. The juxtaposition of the abject with members of the police force such as Sergeant Gürsel, his lesbian wife and transgender lover, Inspector İkmen, his transgender cousin Samsun, and his gay son Kemal, Inspector Süleyman and his gypsy lover Gonca argues for İstanbul as an Urban Gothic city where the transgressions that normally take place in the periphery of the city, in the backstreets and hidden pockets can also take place in the central, most authoritative organization, the police department.

Furthermore, the flâneur-detectives encounter atrocious crimes committed in the midst of the crowds. Inspector İkmen witnesses Poe’s recurring theme of “being buried alive” as Madam

Anastasia's kind caregiver Hakkı attempts to entomb the greedy property developer Ahmet Öden in a wall. Similarly, Inspector Nevzat's childhood friends are revealed as the murderers he had been hunting all along. They have even prepared a kill room, a slaughterhouse to orchestrate in Nevzat's own words "man's inhumanity to man" (Ümit, 2010, p. 547). This also portrays an almost Carnivalistic turn of events where the good becomes the evil. In both novels, the victims Hakkı, Yannis, Yekta, and Demir turn into villains in order to get their own justice where there is ongoing corruption, neglect, oppression, and the system fails them. Thus, the fluidity of identity and crossing of boundaries are other fundamental aspects of the Gothic genre that were discussed here. Additionally, the "Flâneuse" Ariadne Savva in "Land of the Blind" encounters the Grotesque while "street haunting" the City and dies in the sacred Byzantine Red Room room giving birth to her child, thus experiencing the threshold chronotope representing the duality of birth and death, a distinct feature of Gothic.

DISCUSSION

The study argues for the palimpsestic nature of the city, haunted by the blood and memories of the past civilizations and empires that it was once home to. Further emphasis will be placed on the constant tug of war between the old and the new and East vs. West. Additionally, the struggle and anxiety that lead way to the supernatural and various transgressions which are manifested mainly in the historical parts of the urban space will be examined. As Botting claims "The fascination with transgression and the anxiety over cultural limits and boundaries, continue to produce ambivalent emotions and meanings in their tales of darkness, desire, and power." (Botting, 1995, p. 1)

The gothic tradition transitions from the country to the urban city in the 19th century, with T Reynolds' "The Mysteries of London" (1845) and Dickens's "Bleak House" (1853). As Allan Pritchard illustrates:

When Mr. Jarndyce directs Esther's attention from the restored Bleak House to the London slums, he is pointing out in effect that the real locale of Gothic horror is no longer to be found in the country mansion, but rather in the midst of the city. His Bleak House thus provides a crucial link and point of transition between the traditional rural Gothic setting and the new urban Gothic setting (Pritchard, 1991).

However, Robert Mighall argues that a Gothic setting is not enough for a city to be called gothic. The "Gothic of a city [...] needs a concentration of memories and historical

associations” that would be “expressed in an extant architectural or topographical heritage, as these areas provide the natural home for ghostly presences of imagined/ projected meanings.” (Mighall, 2007, p. 57). Moreover, a structured city demands a different spatial model for its horrors. Horror cannot loiter in secluded forgotten pockets. (Mighall, 2007, p. 57) In Hugo’s “Les Misérables” (1862) and “The Phantom of the Opera” (1910), there is the concept of the “criminal underworld”. In “The Phantom of the Opera” the myth of the ghost of the Paris Opera provides us with the historical association of the ghostly presence - the Phantom. In addition, the secret passages under the Paris Opera, the underground lake, and catacombs are the urban gothic settings where the villain lurks. The heroine Christine is both bewitched by and afraid of the antagonist Erik - the Phantom. She depicts him as a man with many skills that can hear her whenever she calls for help. He is a man who lives underground that can do things that no other man can do. He knows things that are unknown in the land of the living (Gaston, 2012, p. 410). In Hugo’s “Les Misérables”, “Patron-Minette” was the name of the four-man society depicted as a single monstrous polyp of evil living in the crypt of society in Paris. They usually met at nightfall when they woke up in the wasteland next to La Salpêtrière to plot and implement their evil deeds until the morning. However, Hugo notes that society cannot be rid of these underground criminals sneaking around the sewers of Paris, for even when they are dead, “under the dark roof of their holds, they are forever reborn out of the slime society oozes.” They return like ghosts, always the same yet they do not carry the same names and wander in the same skin (Hugo, 2010, p. 1,192). Similarly, in “A Memento for Istanbul”, the city itself is full of secret quarters where corrupt businessmen, politicians, and journalists have been plotting and implementing their evil deeds. In addition, the seven brutal murders are carried out in a “kill room” at night and subsequently displayed under ancient monuments. Nevertheless in “A Memento for Istanbul”, the seven murders are committed in order to save and protect the archaic city and the reader sympathizes with the murderers as they are avenging the death of their loved ones and cleansing the city of continuing corruption. As Mighall argues, one of the essentials of Gothic representation is the persistence of historical memory, thus “for the Urban Gothic this meant the criminal past haunting the civic present” (Mighall, 2007, p. 55). The protagonist's first mention of Istanbul is the Istanbul of his childhood, but his memories are vague. “I was taken back to the old days, the good old days, to the Istanbul of my childhood, to those patchy images, those distant voices, those scenes from now hazy memories... But try as I might to revive them, they’d lost their former clarity” (Ümit, 2010, p. 7). As the former images of Istanbul blur in Nevzat’s memory, so do the boundaries between self and place. What

is “heimlich” becomes “unheimlich”. According to Freud, the German word unheimlich is the opposite of heimlich. Heimlich is what is familiar and what belongs to home. Hence the “uncanny” is frightening since it is unfamiliar. (Freud, 2003). In this context in “A Memento for Istanbul” Istanbul becomes an uncanny Urban Gothic space, and the protagonist dwelling in this space is treading between the heimlich and unheimlich. According to Wolfreys the nature of Being-as-dwelling is primarily to always be homeless, unheimlich, and uncanny. To be aware of this as a fundamental function of the new Urban Gothic is crucial. The importance of this functionality is that it is materially and culturally historiographical as well as phenomenological and ontological (Wolfreys, 2020, p. 20). Inspector Nevzat is a born and bred “Istanbulu”, thereupon the backstreets and far corners of Istanbul are not unfamiliar to him. Similarly, he is also accustomed to the history, myths, and folklore of the city through his mother’s tales, visits to museums, and adventures with his childhood friends. However, due to the passage of time the way he sees things are not the same as he remembers them. Consequently, Nevzat frequently finds himself roaming between the heimlich and unheimlich. Istanbul, a city of two continents is both literally and metaphorically situated between the East and the West. Set in the land of the mythical King Byzas who was Poseidon’s son and founded in d. 337 by Constantine, the first Roman Emperor who embraced Christianity; Istanbul was also home to the fascinating Ottoman Empire. From the Megeran pagans to the Christian Roman Empire and Islamic Ottoman Empire, Istanbul became a melting pot albeit a sizzling one that was a habitat to many different religions and powerful rulers. Jelena Bogdanović emphasizes “Constantinople, the capital city of the medieval Roman Empire which we know as the Byzantine Empire (324–1453), was the largest and most thriving urban center in the Old World” (Bogdanović, 2016, p. 97).

Ümit’s victims are found in the old city, nearby historical monuments which were once upon a time, glamorous establishments thriving with people. Thus, this posits a twofold alignment with the Urban Gothic; firstly, the demolition of the glorified past, and secondly the changing of the gothic setting. Sara Wasson notes that whilst the settings of eighteenth-century Gothic are mostly castles, monasteries, convents, or forests, as the nineteenth century advanced these settings transformed into the flourishing metropolis. In the wake of industrialization and increasing urbanization, the bleak countryside settings of earlier Gothic were replaced with thriving cities. As a result, not only did the location of malice change so did the nature of the threat (Wasson, 2010, pp. 2-3).

While earlier Gothic generates a thrill of fear with ghosts or demons, the metropolis evokes the horrors of human violence and corruption, terrifying enough without necessarily needing a supernatural edge. The city's anonymity enables sexual and criminal transgression. Literary representations of the city reflect the anxieties that circulate around class and capital and the city's diurnal duality is recruited to represent interior psychic dramas. Disorienting, labyrinthine, and claustrophobic cities are evocative settings for the Gothic (Wasson, 2010, p. 3).

Furthermore, the historical places where the killers leave the bodies and the way the executions are performed signify a kind of ceremony, a ritual. In all the killings the murderers are placed in a prayer position and their throats are slashed. Correlatively, in gothic literature, rituals are important to restore the order. Krzywinska emphasizes there is a visible sense of urban decay as part of the anthropic landscape where questionable human actions cause its deterioration. To quell the consequent anxiety and attempt to restore order, rituals must be performed to cleanse the habitation. (Krzywinska, 2020, p.145). Additionally, coins minted in past civilizations that were found in the victims' palms portray another element of these rituals. According to Pritchard, mystery in Gothic fiction is also associated with ancient, indecipherable documents, or lost documents. (Pritchard, 1991). Hence, the aforementioned coins can be thought of as such documents.

Barbara Nadel's crime novel "Land of the Blind" takes its name from a legend. In 685 BC the Greeks from Megara fled the Dorians and founded Chalcedon – Kadıköy. The oracle of Apollo called it the Land of the Blind because the inhabitants had failed to see the advantages and beauty of the Seraglio Point and settled on the Asian shore instead. In 667 BC, the Megarian King Byzas founded Byzantium on the shore "Opposite the Blind".

Ariadne Savva, the protagonist, and victim in the "Land of the Blind" is a Greek Byzantine specialist who wants to protect the historical sites that once upon a time belonged to the Byzantines in Istanbul. She was fighting against the villain Ahmet Öden, the wealthy property developer who is trying to demolish Gizlitepe, an old neighbourhood home to the rubbish pickers and gypsies. She is found dead after she gives birth in the ruins of the Constantinople Hippodrome. A piece of red stone is found in her hand and her new-born is missing. Nadel's famous detective Çetin Ikmen and his sergeant, Kerem Gürsel who has a crippled lesbian wife, Sinem, and transsexual lover, Pembe, begin a hunt around Istanbul to unravel the mystery around her death and find her newborn child. Meanwhile, Çetin Ikmen's former subordinate,

the handsome and charismatic detective Mehmet Süleyman, investigates the remains of a 50-year-old skeleton found on the grounds of his old lycee, Galatasaray Lisesi while he continues his affair with the voluptuous gypsy artist Gonca.

Simultaneously, in the center of the city, Gezi Park, one of the city's largest and most central green areas left, is about to be demolished. The government is planning to build a shopping mall in its place. However, the park has become host to a remarkable protest. People of all ages, ethnicity, and vocation have united and camped out in the Park in order to prevent the destruction of the only green space left in an urban concrete jungle. Amidst the chaos, Istanbul once again becomes home to an urban gothic mystery.

The Negroponte household consists of Madam Anastasia, her son Yannis, and their servant Hakkı Bey. Madam Anastasia's house has turned into a haunted house. One of the concepts that can best help to shed light onto its general atmosphere is Freud's "Uncanny". According to Vidler, the uncanny movement tends to shift from "homely to unhomely", as seen in many ghost stories, where a seemingly ordinary and cosy house transforms into a place of horror (Vidler, 1992, p. 32).

In parallel, during the Istanbul pogrom in 1955, Madam Anastasia experienced a tragedy. Her husband was beaten to death, her child was kidnapped, and she was beaten up and injured severely, both mentally and physically. Consequently, she had been confined to live in her home, the Negroponte house, until her old age. Thus, Madam Anastasia's house, which was once a happy house, where children could run around freely, and had no reason to hide anything, became an uncanny site where the familiar and homely turned into the unhomely. As Mariconda notices, a house offers a feeling of security, comfort, and shelter from the outside world. It provides a sense of intimacy, care and protection, and is associated with the Mother archetype. Home is the core of one's existence and a source of personal safety (Mariconda; 2007, p. 267). When the developer Ahmet Oden turns up and pressures the Negroponte's to sell their house, not only are the memories and anxieties of the 1955 lootings and killings triggered but their home and sense of security are threatened; aptly described by Mariconda, albeit in a different context: The Haunted House evokes a feeling of fear, sadness, intrusion, physical danger and the impermanence of life and love (Mariconda, 2007, p. 267).

After she had left the hospital and arrived home Madam Anastasia was obsessed and terrorised with the idea that her husband had been buried alive. The last time she had seen her husband was on the back of a man. Although his face had been distorted and swollen from the beatings,

she had seen that one eye was open. She heard he was buried shortly after and believed that he had been buried alive. For years she heard him scratching the walls. He called her to let him out (Nadel, 2015, p. 299). Similarly, Poe elaborately discusses the fear of being buried alive in his short story “The Premature Burial” (Poe, 1966) where he claims that to be buried alive is without a doubt the most terrifying experience that can happen to a human being. It surpasses any other terror that a human being can be subject to. Thus, this theme has often been employed in Gothic fiction. On the other hand, a ghost scratching the walls can also be read as the manifestation of the homely becoming unhomely. Andrew Smith claims that:

Ghosts are thus projections of our innermost anxieties and this blurring of physical and psychological realities becomes reworked in Freud’s idea that the self is ghosted by the subconscious; or, as Castle puts it, “Ghosts and spectres retain their ambiguous grip on the human imagination; they simply migrate into the space of the mind.” [...] “Ghosts are not just the spirits of the dead; rather they are, in ‘high’ Gothic texts, ciphers for models of subjectivity which refer to culturally specific notions of psychological trauma.” For Castle ‘high’ Gothic represents a cultural shift in which the meaning of death is fundamentally changed because it is no longer part of a logically understood cosmology, as it had been in the Middle Ages, but rather indicates how the self becomes ghosted by images of projection. (Smith 2007, p. 148).

The scratching that stopped when Madam Anastasia’s son Yannis returned from Germany had started again. Madam Anastasia was aware that unspeakable things were being done in her house. As Paulina Palmer expands on Freud’s ‘Uncanny’, the uncanny sensations, and the unsettling transition from the familiar into the unfamiliar they provoke, “Reflect the projection of unconscious fears and desires originating in ‘something repressed which recurs.’” (Palmer, 2012, p. 2).

Madam Anastasia’s alleged son Yannis who had supposedly been rescued from the 1955 lootings and killings when he was a baby and afterwards was taken to Germany to live with another family, came back from Germany years later when he was 40 and started living with Madam Anastasia and her servant Hakkı. Hakkı had saved Madam Anastasia from dying after she was almost beaten to death. Hence, he had taken her home and looked after her ever since. Upon his return, Madam Anastasia had accepted Yannis as her son and he had been living with them thenceforth. Yannis was a magician. He performed magic tricks for kids outside the gates of the Negroponte property.

Magic is a central trope of Gothic. The fact that Yannis is a magician also hints that he could be someone other than he claims to be. Therefore, this idea reinforces the possibility that the

house he lives in could be hiding a secret and the doors and walls in the house might be illusionary, obscuring secret chambers and passages behind them. Thus, Inspector Ikmen recalls a chamber or room that he had seen in the house when he was visiting Madam Anastasia with his mother when he was a child. Nevertheless, he hadn't seen anything similar when he was last in the house (Nadel, 2015, p.300). Inspector Ikmen's mother was an Albanian witch who used to read tarot cards for Madam Anastasia. Therefore, Ikmen had inherited some of her enhanced instincts. Hence, Ikmen could sense something was off at the house. Ikmen outsmarts the servant Hakkı Bey and her son Yannis, who have been trying to prevent Ikmen from speaking to Madam Anastasia by giving Madam Anastasia his mother's tarot cards. Consequently, he uses the tools of the supernatural as a means of communication with Madam Anastasia. If it were another male inspector less dedicated to find out the truth, Madam Anastasia might have fallen prey to the "Madwoman in the Attic" trope and declared insane. As Kranzler explains, the story of Bertha Mason, the first wife of Edward Rochester embodies the very things that Jane and several heroines in Gaskell's novels dread the most: madness, confinement, and the incapacity to speak (Kranzler, 2006). Consequently, these constructs that the patriarchy inflicts on women often lead to their demise. As Holland describes it:

The history of Western literature is, of course, a history of dead mothers and murdered daughters/lovers/wives. Thus "Polonius cannot save Ophelia but can only shame her to madness and to death. Oedipus cannot save Antigone but can only leave a divided heritage that means her death. Creon, like Polonius a substitute father, like Claudius a substitute king, cannot, or rather will not save her, asserting instead his right as father/king to kill her, even if it leads to his own son's death and that of the mother/wife (Holland, 2001).

However, Inspector Ikmen, whose mother was an Albanian witch, has a strong 6th sense; he follows his intuition. Thus, the supernatural prevails over the rational and Ikmen not only picks up on the message she sends him through the Tarot cards, he believes Madam Anastasia's mumblings about scratching in the walls which convey that a man is trapped somewhere in the house. As a result, he saves the entrapped villain Ahmet Oden and unravels the Byzantine Purple Room that Ariadne Savva had discovered that led to her death.

Benjamin's flâneur is a street wanderer based on the fictional "Flâneur" M. C. G. [Monsieur Constantin Guys] in Charles Baudelaire's writings (Baudelaire, 2010). Thus, this study argues that both protagonists Chief Inspector Nevzat in "A Memento for Istanbul" and Inspector Ikmen in "Land of the Blind" are flâneur-detectives that roam the historical city to find the killers and solve the murder mysteries. In both narratives, the victims' bodies are found under historical

places. Hence the flâneur-detectives investigate the crimes strolling in the city in a purposeful way, historicizing the city and revealing the clandestine stories of the palimpsest city.

What are the dangers of the forest and the prairie compared with the daily shocks and conflicts of civilization? Whether a man grabs his victim on a boulevard or stabs his quarry in unknown woods - does he not remain both here and there the most perfect of all beasts of prey? (Benjamin, 2006, p. 21)

In the preceding passage, Benjamin quotes Baudelaire and contends that the “city and civilization” have become as savage and brutal as the wild forest. However, in Benjamin’s “The Flâneur” essay, the habitat the “flâneur” dwells in doesn’t sound like a savage environment at all. On the contrary, it describes a homely and safe environment. According to Benjamin, the street feels like a home for the flâneur. He is just as comfortable amidst the facade of buildings as any man inside his own home. He finds the shiny and enameled signs of businesses as pleasant as a bourgeoisie would find an oil painting hanging as an ornament in his living room. The walls are like his desk, against which he places his notebooks; the newsstands serve as libraries and the terraces of cafes are the balconies where he can look down and observe his surroundings after his work is finished (Benjamin, 2006, p. 19).

Nevertheless, Benjamin asserts that however familiar and comfortable the environment may seem to the flâneur, he will eventually encounter a crime. He refers to Dumas’ “Mohicans de Paris (The Mohicans of Paris)” in which the protagonist follows a scrap of paper floating in the wind when he claims, “No matter what trace the flâneur may follow, every one of them will lead him to a crime.” (Benjamin, 2006, p. 22). Moreover, Benjamin claims that in the “Mohicans de Paris (The Mohicans of Paris)”, the title indicates that the author will “Open a primeval forest and a prairie” for the reader, in Paris, where a wild adventure will begin (Benjamin, 2006, p. 22). Similarly in Ahmet Ümit’s “A Memento for Istanbul” the title suggests that we will find traces of the history of Istanbul in the murder mystery. Albeit in “Land of the Blind” one needs to know a little more about Istanbul’s history to decipher the title as according to the legend the “Land of the Blind” was Khalkedon in antiquity - today’s Kadıköy.

The original “flâneur” Baudelaire’s “M. C. G. [Monsieur Constantin Guys], enjoys mingling with the crowds, relishes anonymity, and takes his uniqueness to the extent of humility. Herein, Baudelaire further depicts the qualities of the flâneur: The crowd is the flâneur’s natural habitat, just like the air is for birds and water for fish. It is his passion and profession to immerse himself in the crowd. The ideal wanderer and zealous observer takes great pleasure in making the crowd his home and partaking in the hustle and bustle, the elusive and the eternal. Thus, these self-

sufficient, profound, and open-minded spirits do not fit easily into linguistic definitions; they enjoy being at the very center of the world yet remain unseen by it. The observer is like a prince enjoying his anonymity wherever he goes. The lover of life embraces the world thus the world becomes his family (Baudelaire, 2010, p. 22). Furthermore, M. G's most powerful qualities are his curiosity and eye for detail. These qualities are indeed the most important qualities of our flâneur-detectives, "Inspector Ikmen" and "Chief Inspector Nevzat" as well as the convalescent in Poe's "Man of The Crowd". Baudelaire compares M.G's character to the spiritual condition of the convalescent mentioned in Poe's "Man of The Crowd" (Poe, 1966). Thus, he argues that the convalescent, just like a child, takes great pleasure in being curious and interested in even the most seemingly insignificant things.

Sitting in a café, and looking through the shop window, a convalescent is enjoying the sight of the passing crowd and identifying himself in thought with all the thoughts that are moving around him. He has only recently come back from the shades of death and breathes in with delight all the spores and odours of life [...] Curiosity had become a compelling, irresistible passion (Baudelaire, 2010, p. 19).

Similarly, Inspector Ikmen uses his curiosity and eye for detail in a crime scene at the beginning of the first chapter of "Land of The Blind". He is called to the crime scene and the first thing that catches his eye is the porphyry, the piece of stone in the deceased's left hand. He remarks that there is no porphyry there and to prove his point he flashes the light from his torch around the dark space. Despite living quite close to İstanbul's Hippodrome, its sphendone or curved back edge was foreign to Ikmen. Although he had never been inside the ancient monument before, his careful attention to detail and deduction ability, which is a method used by master fictional detectives such as Hercule Poirot and Sherlock Holmes, is established early in the novel. Correspondingly, when we turn to "A Memento for İstanbul", Nevzat's curiosity enables him to recognize that the inscription on the coin which was found in the palm of the first victim was in Greek. Nevzat remarks that he had learnt Greek at Uncle Dimitri's house. He had worked out the Greek alphabet from the illustrated books they had brought over from Greece. Furthermore, his deep knowledge and interest in his city's history can be noted throughout the novel. For instance, when he acknowledges that the inscription says Byzantium, his assistants, detectives Zeynep and Ali can't make any sense. Nevzat, shocked at their ignorance replies "Byzantium, for crying out loud! Byzantium! The city you bloody live in! İstanbul's original name!" (Ümit, 2017, p. 11). Hence Halim Kara argues that the narrative strategy of connecting the serial murders to the history of İstanbul allows Ümit to establish a detective protagonist

who transforms his flâneur-like wandering into a focused and deliberate investigation of the crimes in the narrow streets of Istanbul's old quarter. Thus, giving his aimless wandering a new sense of purpose. Moreover, according to Kara, in the first pages of "A Memento for Istanbul", Ümit introduces Chief Inspector Nevzat, a resident of Istanbul, as an urban wanderer who displays several key traits of the modern flâneur, a concept first introduced by Charles Baudelaire in his writings (Kara, 2019).

In his essay, Benjamin compares the leisurely quality of the "colossal parade of bourgeois life" that was described in the physiologies¹ which were first published at the same time as the September Laws in France to the "Style of the flâneur who goes botanizing on the asphalt." (Benjamin, 2006, pp. 18-19). This statement can be read as roaming the streets leisurely and taking in one's surroundings with all senses and faculties. Likewise, in the opening of "A Memento for Istanbul" just after Inspector Nevzat's encounter with the first victim, he remarks that although he was used to seeing such sights, he had felt queasy looking at the dead body. He turns and looks at the sea which he romanticizes as a source for healing and refuge from the horror-filled sights of the world: "Two battered old ferries, those long-suffering sea hands, passed by leaving lines of foam on the gently bobbing blue. A pale light and gentle breeze suffused Sarayburnu, a sweet accompaniment to the scent of the sea filling the air; behind me, the trees lining the asphalt avenue leading up to the palace were beginning to come into flower..." (Ümit, 2010; 6). The almost-lyrical descriptions above emphasize the abilities of the flâneur to activate all his senses, appreciate the beginning of spring, even amidst the most gruesome crime scene. Baudelaire's words reinforce that Nevzat is no fool, since he is using all his faculties to solve the murder and relieve himself of this burden: "Any man who is not weighed down with a sorrow so searching as to touch all his faculties, and who is bored in the midst of the crowd, is a fool! A fool! and I despise him!" (Baudelaire, 2010, pp. 23-24)

No one perhaps has ever felt passionately towards a lead pencil. But there are circumstances in which it can become supremely desirable to possess one; moments when we are set upon having an object, an excuse for walking half across London between tea and dinner. [...] So when the

¹ Physiologies: "They were the salon attire of a literature which was basically designed to be sold on the street. In this literature, the inconspicuous, paperback, pocket-size volumes called " physiologies " had pride of place. They investigated the human types that a person taking a look at the marketplace might encounter. From the itinerant street vendor of the boulevards to the dandy in the opera- house foyer, there was not a figure of Paris life that was not sketched by a physiologue." (Benjamin, 2006, 18)

desire comes upon us to go street rambling the pencil does for a pretext, and getting up we say: “Really I must buy a pencil,” as if under cover of this excuse we could indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life in winter—rambling the streets of London (Woolf, 2014).

Based on the above passage we can conclude that Woolf’s flâneuse has a similar craving for wandering the city as Baudelaire’s poet flâneur. Hence when we look at how the flâneur starts his day we can see that he muses about the amount of time he has lost in sleep. Baudelaire aptly describes the flâneur’s sentiments: Upon waking up and seeing the sun shining brightly through his window the flâneur immediately feels remorse and regret for missing a great part of the day. He has lost several hours of sleep and missed several things he could have seen in the sunlight. With this thought he sets off and observes the magnificent and dazzling flow of life. He adores the eternal beauty and remarkable harmony of life in big cities, a tranquility amidst the commotion of human freedom (Baudelaire, 2010, p. 24).

Almost 64 years after Baudelaire’s poet flâneur, Virginia Woolf introduces her flâneuse, who uses the excuse of buying a pencil to “ramble” the streets of London. Woolf’s flâneuse is indeed like Baudelaire’s flâneur who enjoys the hustle and bustle of the big city. Woolf asserts that as we step outside our homes during the hours between 4 and 6, we are no longer the same person that our friends are familiar with. Instead, we become part of the vast anonymous group of wanderers, enjoying the experience of being among others after being isolated in our own rooms (Woolf, 2014).

Corresponding to Baudelaire’s flâneur and Woolf’s flâneuse the protagonist Ariadne Savva in “Land of the Blind” adopts the qualities of the flâneuse while “street haunting” in the streets of Istanbul. Ariadne, a Greek academic and Byzantine specialist working for the archeology museum becomes a flâneuse-detective whilst investigating the old Byzantine structures; thus, she discovers the secret room underneath the Negroponte house. Meanwhile she manages to hide her private life from her friends and coworkers. We follow the deceased flâneuse-detective, Ariadne’s traces in the footsteps of Inspector Ikmen and his subordinate, sergeant Kerim Gürsel. In her apartment, there are no clues of her life or her pregnancy. Her assistant Meltem and colleague Aylin don’t know about her pregnancy and relationship with her child’s father. She is also part of a congregation where she is not close with anyone. Thus, she remains incognito even amongst her circle while roaming the city and searching for the old Byzantine structures. However, Woolf warns us against the dangers of digging deeper whilst wandering; thus, we might be in great danger. We might awaken the sleeping army of humans and they may bring up on us their weirdness, sufferings, and atrocities. Therefore, let us wander a little longer and

be content with surfaces only. Such as the radiant shine of the omnibuses; the splendid display of meat in the butcher shops; the clusters of blue and red flowers brightly glowing through the florist's windows made of plate glass (Woolf, 2014).

Nonetheless, Ariadne is not content with the surfaces, she possesses qualities of the flâneuse as she digs deeper; she gets involved with the troubles of the rubbish pickers and helps them fight against the selfish property developer Ahmed Öden who wants to push them out to build a housing project. Meanwhile, through her research and investigation she crosses paths with the Negroponte family. However, her whereabouts are elusive throughout the novel. Like the flâneuse she remains anonymous amidst the masses.

CONCLUSION

In this comparative study which focused on Ahmet Ümit's "A Memento For Istanbul" and Barbara Nadel's "Land of The Blind", Istanbul was explored within the theoretical framework of Urban Gothic. As explained in the introduction, the thesis analyzed Istanbul as a palimpsestic city, haunted by the blood and memories of the past civilizations and empires that it was once home to. The ongoing conflicts between old and new, and East and West, which keep unfolding in this fascinating urban setting were also thoroughly discussed.

In conclusion, this study argued that Istanbul is an Urban Gothic City through its encompassing a number of gothic themes and motifs. Moreover, the inhabitants of the city were shown as living in an eternal state of despair and anxiety for their future as a result of the repression, corruption, and injustice they face daily. In Baudrillard's words "[...] If the great operational metropolis is the final form of an entire culture, then, quite simply, ours is a culture of death" (Baudrillard 1993, p. 127). Thus, the anonymous "Flâneur-detectives" and "Flânuese's" of the city will undoubtedly continue to encounter many murder mysteries belonging to the Urban Gothic genre in Istanbul in future works of literature. Moreover, Urban Gothic related theories and subgenres such as "Hauntology" (Derrida, 1994), "Gothic Postmodernism" (Beville, 2009) and "The Queer Uncanny" (Palmer, 2012) will open doors to many alternative readings.

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