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Ipek Türeli. *Istanbul Open City: Exhibiting Anxieties of Urban Modernity.* Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. Illustrations. 184 pp. \$140.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4094-2211-2.

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Istanbul Open City opens with the tale of a 2010 photomontage of Istanbul's Taksim Square in which the 1930s modernist Atatürk Cultural Center has been photo-shopped out of the picture, replaced by the late Ottoman Haydarpaşa train station. The advertisement sparked an intense debate on the future plans of this significant piece of public urban space, in which the city's secular, modernist, republican tradition was squared off against a neo-Ottomanist, Islamist vision of development under the aegis of Turkey's ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party). This battle would culminate in the Gezi Square protests of 2013, which captured the world's attention as a flashpoint in the country's culture wars. With this example, Ipek Türeli draws the reader straight into the core of her argument: the city's past is a contested terrain in which the domain of the visual is central.

Türeli defines her objective in this book as seeking to "highlight cultural creativity by examining the diverse and shifting ways Istanbulites have defined themselves while they debate, imagine, build and consume their city" (p. 7). She explores how making visual representations of their city's past has helped Istanbulites to mediate anxieties about the present and the future, in the period since the mid-twentieth century. It builds on Türeli's research interest and earlier work on the expression, mediation, and contestation of identity through the built environment, and offers a solid contribution to scholarship relating to architecture and heritage in the Middle East. Unlike many other studies interested in similar problematics, her work does not engage in hagiography of a coterie of elite aesthetic producers, nor is it structured around state ideology but takes instead a bottom-up approach, looking at the perceptions of a vast array of Istanbulites.

The author takes the reader on a stroll through the city via five "exhibitionary sites"—photography, cinema, exhibition, architecture, and museography—that she identifies as key visual ventures in the negotiation of Istanbul's past. The book is structured along seven chapters, each of which stands as an independent essay that "calls for a different body of scholarship" (p. 10). This organization can be vexing for those who prefer an all-encompassing introduction and an unbroken narrative, but it does not lead to discontinuity. Türeli delivers her promise as chapters come together in the end, offering valuable vignettes of the different visual platforms implicated in the production and consumption of the city's historic imagery. In its very structure, the book supports her argument that the present is "a collage of pasts" (p. 1)

In each chapter, Istanbul's past is staged as a different form of spectacle populated by various actors—"Istanbul enthusiasts," new migrants, state officials, and ethnic/religious minorities—sometimes with competing or antagonistic agendas. In chapter 2, perhaps the most engaging of them all, the author explores the transformation in the meaning of Ara Güler's iconic black-and-white photographs of Istanbul, since their first publication in the 1950s. As Türeli explains, Güler's photojournalism was the product of a period that saw an influx of rural Anatolian migrants to Istanbul. The image of these unsophisticated newcomers was mobilized to paint a contrasting authentic, cosmopolitan Istanbul identity. Since the 1990s, a moment of renewed governmental endeavors to enhance Istanbul's cultural capital and international appeal, Güler's work has been revived and re-configured as "cosmopolitan nostalgia" (p. 22). Türeli

shows how these monochrome images of the past have provided a background against which the sophistication of present-day Istanbul could shine. In that, the author perfectly exemplifies the interdependency between the modern and the traditional, such as previously articulated in the work of Michael Herzfeld.[1]

Equally polished, chapter 4, “Exhibiting Vernacular Heritage,” mainly focuses on the so-called Ottoman wooden houses. Türeli traces the beginning of their patrimonialization in the 1960s, following the rise of citizen-led heritage movements in Istanbul and the penetration of international heritage discourse circulated by such organizations as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), ISESCO (Islamic Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and the Council of Europe. In this chapter, the author provides a perfect example of the emergence of heritage paradigms in the Middle East. We see how vernacular heritage went from being a nation-building cement, to an object of intellectual concerns, to a strategic instrument used to position the nation-state as equal among the community of nations in its modernity and its controlled deployment of historical memory. However, in Istanbul as in other historic urban centers, attempts to salvage houses of historical significance as sites of vernacular cachet led to their gentrification, forcing out the “vernacular” population in the process.

Türeli’s book is not an anthropological study and

does not claim to be one. Her methodology clearly borrows from visual culture and architecture, relying on site, newspaper, and archive analysis. Within this orderly scheme, an ethnographic study of intangible heritage—religious and domestic traditions, dancing, music, plays, etc.—such as displayed during Istanbul’s numerous folk festivals, would have provided a refreshing addition to a study concerned with representations of the city’s past. This lacuna, however, does not diminish the importance and merit of the book, particularly the novelty of its approach, à la Erving Goffman (*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [1956]), focusing on the city as a theater where the past is constantly reimagined to support claims in the present.

Istanbul Open City will interest students and scholars of the Middle East engaged in urban history, architecture, and the built environment, as well as those interested in questions of visual culture and cultural heritage. The bringing together of these often-isolated disciplinary fields is perhaps the greatest strength of the book, and the source of its many valuable insights into urban culture. I have no doubt that Türeli’s work will lead to more scholarly engagement with the concept of the “open city.”

Note

[1]. Michael Herzfeld, *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 18.

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