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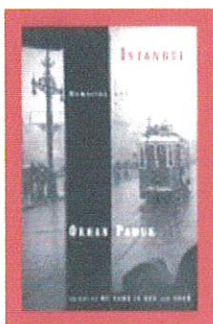
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NEWS

Pera Palas: Finding a Community, Defining Westernization

Posted by [Purple Tigress](#) on July 23, 2005 12:09 AM (See [all posts by Purple Tigress](#))
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[Istanbul : Memories and the City](#)

Orhan Pamuk

Book from *Knopf*

Release date: 07 June, 2005

When you hear the phrase "Orient Express" images of West meeting East, murder, intrigue and wealthy, distinguished or adventurous travelers arise. This, of course, is mostly due to Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express," which she wrote while staying at the famed Pera Palas, a hotel in Istanbul.

Sinan Unel's play, "Pera Palas," which opens on July 23 at the Boston Court as a co-production with the Antaeus Company, sets the main action at the hotel and follows the lives of a Turkish family through three generations. The play has won several awards, including a Massachusetts Cultural Council New Plays Grant.

In a recent telephone interview, Unel, who grew up in Turkey, said, "The play is really about the exchange between the Muslim Eastern culture of Turkey and the West, how Turkey, over the course of a few decades, went from being a Muslim empire to a modern democracy."

His play basically breaks into three different stories about foreign travelers—an English woman writer, Evelyn, in 1918-1924; an American woman teacher, Kathy, who reaches Istanbul in 1952 and a gay man, Murat, who is half-Turkish.

He wrote the play because he found and still finds many misconceptions about his country. These "are more from a lack of information, assumptions like Turks are Arabs."

Part of the transition that Turkey made in the 20th century was the

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