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OBJECTS OF PHILOLOGY
OR PHILOLOGY OF THE
OBJECTS? ORHAN
PAMUK'S *THE MUSEUM
OF INNOCENCE*. BETWEEN
MATERIAL CULTURE,
MEMORY AND NARRATIVE

ABSTRACT

This article reflects on material objects and the practice of collecting as literary subject linked to the themes of memory and past in contemporary Turkish fiction. The analysis focuses mainly on Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* considering the objects exhibited both in the novel and the museum as narrative texts of subjective and collective memories. In order to better understand Pamuk's works we will preliminarily reconstruct the intertextual chain that preceded such a specific approach to material culture, having particular reference to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's first novel *Mahur Beste*. By comparing both the authors' poetics of objects we aim at highlighting the intimate reasons which made this subject a peculiar *topos* in modern Turkish literary tradition.

KEYWORDS: collection, objects, memory, museum, Turkish novel

TEXTS AND OBJECTS: A SPECIFIC APPROACH

The transnational panorama of philological and literary studies in the last thirty years has considerably broadened its critical horizons, increasingly reaching beyond the textual dimension to embrace more traditionally unconventional subjects. The field of Turkish Studies has only recently begun to take its first steps in this direction. This article aims to contribute to this shift with a reflection on the relationship between material, visual, and literary cultures¹.

¹ This article resulted as a whole from common reflection and elaborations. Ayşe Saraçgil contributed mainly to paragraphs 2 and 3, Tina Maraucci to paragraphs 1 and 4.

We will concentrate our attention on the unique poetics of the objects which Orhan Pamuk (b. 1952) exhibits in his *Masumiyet Müzesi* (*The Museum of Innocence*, 2009), examining combinedly the novel, first published in 2008, and the museum of same name, which opened in Istanbul in April 2012. The first Turkish novelist to become a Nobel laureate for literature in 2006, Pamuk praises himself for being the first to create and set up what is currently the only example of a literary museum in the world, which recreates a fictional universe, both material and iconic, of his narrative text in a concrete and real exhibition space. The undertaking, obviously of the widest national and international appeal, was followed by the museum's catalogue, published by Pamuk in 2012 with the title *Şeylerin Masumiyeti* (*The Innocence of Objects*), and then in 2015 by a documentary film, *The Innocence of Memories. Orhan Pamuk's Museum & Istanbul*, directed by Grant Gee with Pamuk acting both as screenwriter and narrating voice.

Such a variegated production required a specific and in many ways eclectic approach, which while trying to hold together the material, the visual, and the textual, avoided running into the long-standing question of referentiality, remaining able instead to open itself up to considerations of theoretical-critical and socio-cultural nature. While the novel transforms the materiality of daily life into a literary subject, the museum overturns the relation, suggesting, in a way, a 'philology of objects'. Its creation requires a mixed methodological frame to adapt textual analysis to a physical space and its material content, a perspective which allows to look simultaneously at the novel as a museum and vice-versa.

As is well known, the analysis of the relationship between material culture and literature, in their reciprocal, mutual interactions, has drawn lifeblood from the new critical scenarios opened by the happy conjuncture between the social sciences, semiology, and cultural semiotics. A number of fundamental essays, although of a sociological nature, highlight the semiological status of material objects, as well as the images which make up daily experience. Such essays gave different practices correlated to these objects — practices like use, consumption, accumulation, and waste — a fundamental function as signifiers in the processes of cultural production of the Self, whether individual or collective (Baudrillard 1968; Lefebvre 1947, 1974). In reference to the inherent mnemonic value of objects, Jean Baudrillard asserts that collecting is a manifestation of both fanaticism and the human desire to impose order and continuity onto the disorder and entropy of the world around us. The French sociologist acknowledges that this practice serves a crucially consoling role amid the crisis of religious and ideological instances and postmodern decline of grand historical narratives. He even defines private objects as "(...) the consolation of consolations, the everyday mythology absorbing all the angst that attends time, that attends death." (Jean Baudrillard *The system of Objects* trans. By James Benedict London–New York, Verso, 1996 [1968], p. 96). In such a perspective it thus became possible, within the narratological sphere, to relate the practice of collecting to that of narrating, pointing towards their shared action, which is selective, compositive and ordering. Through this relation it became possible to attribute a specific value and meaning to the semantic entropy of the material (Bal 1997).

These reference points enable us to interpret the objects and the images of the *Masumiyet Müzesi* just as many signs of a text, at once cultural and literary, which become meaningful through writing and collecting. Such a reading finds its first confirmation in the volume entitled *Saf ve Düşünceli Romançı* (*The Naive and Sentimental Novelist*), which comprises

the famous Norton Lectures delivered at Harvard in September 2009. In this very interesting essay Pamuk, affirming that his way of writing has a visual function, defines it in direct reference to the concept of *ekphrasis*, the capacity “to describe, in words, the splendour of or the real or imaginary visual word to those of have never seen them” (Pamuk 2012b: 101). The author does not consider objects and images as simple adornments of the narrative scene. They are structural elements, organizing and orienting narrative strategies of artistic-literary reinvention of historical time and space. Defining novels as “rich and powerful archive of common human feelings, our perceptions of ordinary things, our gestures, utterances and attitudes” (Pamuk 2016: 130), Pamuk assimilates them to museums, functional as if they were instruments of thought and “preservation, conservation and the resistance to being forgotten” (*ibidem*: 135).

The focus on memory has had almost absolute predominance in the panorama of critical studies so far produced on *Masumiyet Müzesi*. Ranging from literary critique to museology, these works overwhelmingly highlight the intrinsically mnemonic value that material objects assume in Pamuk’s aesthetic vision. Thus, they interpret both his poetics and his politics in a Proustian key, finalised to the remembrance of ‘the lost time’ (Xing 2013: 198–210; Yağcıoğlu 2017: 185–202). This enables us to read the objects exhibited in *Masumiyet Müzesi* as relics of a mnemonic patrimony, or still better, as fragments of a text of history and memory, both personal and collective. In this context the author’s practices of writing and collecting make it possible to fix a new form of unitarity that had previously been lost due the fragmented nature of the patrimony represented by the objects.

The importance given to the objects as tools of memory, capable as such to help recollect a lost tradition, is not new to modern and contemporary Turkish literature. A long chain of writers, beginning from the last few years of the 1890s, focused on objects, primarily as representatives of the problematic relationship that Ottoman subjects established with them. Their difficulties in absorbing the many items of everyday use coming from the West are treated as metonymical of the belated imperial modernization. This uncertainty appeared as a haunting sense of loss in time and space due to the cultural, semantic breaks and resulting cultural dualities brought about by the alienating effects of the modernization process.

Pamuk, a son of second generation republican natives, mourns for the loss of the “grand polyglot, multicultural Istanbul of the imperial age” (Pamuk 2005, 215) describing deep sadness, *hüzün*, as the atmosphere and culture shared by millions who live in a capital city in which “the remains of a glorious past and civilization are everywhere visible” to “inflict heartache on all who live among them” (*ibidem*: 91). While not quite this same sense of loss, some Ottoman novelists such as Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem (1847–1914) and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil (1866–1945), had certainly already pointed out a link between the helplessness felt by the sons of the imperial upper classes for not being able to integrate these objects of western origin into their daily lives in the same way the previous generation have been able to. These writers’ work seems to have paved the way for Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–1962), the first republican writer to have made recourse to objects as mnemonic texts. The continuity in treating objects almost as a *topos* over such a long historical time span leads to the question of why this subject came to become a peculiar yet defining aspect of the Turkish modern and contemporary narrative tradition. Furthermore, we should underline how the topic of memory is linked to that of Istanbul, making the city into a trope

of a lost tradition and placing it as the almost unique setting of the novels of all the authors we have mentioned thus far. While the problematic and controversial outcomes of the modernization process that brought about discontinuities between the lives of different generations led to the creation of works that focussed on their hampering, tormenting effects on the construction of subjectivities, Tanpınar and Pamuk, writing instead in the republican era, are interested in inquiring into the peculiar relationship that the modern Turkish subjectivity entertains with its own historicity. The narration of the recent past is a complex and controversial relationship which draws its intimate origin from the 1920s and 1930s, when the founders of the Turkish republic severed the ties of the new-born nation with the historical and cultural experience of the Empire.

OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS IN OTTOMAN TURKISH NOVEL

A changed attitude towards Europe in the 1700s brought about the first radical split in the lifestyles of the imperial ruling class, with on the one hand the representatives of traditional religious and legal institutions and the civil and military elites working in close proximity to European diplomatic and economic circles. The cultural references of this civil and military elite were never embedded in the Muslim community. Instead, their imperial mindset, power, and wealth, made them the first social milieu of Ottoman modernity. They quite naturally integrated into their lives new architectural styles for buildings and gardens, new attires, objects such as mirrors, watches, consoles, bookshelves and books, carriages, as well as new forms of sociability and entertainment such as playing music and singing, or leisured excursions on the waters of the Bosphorus (Saraçgil 2011: 613–652).

The second split, this time social and generational, came about around the 1850s, when a newly formed lower ranking civil and military bureaucracy, dominated by the sons of middle-class Istanbulites, gave life to a movement of cultural contestation. This movement was largely a reaction against the perceived lifestyle of the upper classes, which was considered imitative of western ways, alien, even menacing for Muslims. It was not a reaction to the goal of modernization itself, but rather an attempt to govern it from within the community itself, reassuring the Empire's Muslims against their fear of losing their identity. This new bureaucratic class called upon the community to maintain its cultural and moral values while going through the process of transforming into a prosperous and advanced society. They saw access to the scientific and technological discoveries and material culture of the Western World as useful as long as it was not allowed to threaten Muslim spiritual "superiority". The dangers the Western World represented included an increased desire for material goods, for a luxurious life, for a constant search of pleasure, in place of the modesty, contemplation, and capacity to control one's emotions that Muslim ethics called for.

The alterity that was thus established with the lifestyles of the previous modern ruling classes by the young exponents of this new Istanbulite middle class created a rupture with traditional elaborations of culture, to the point that traditional artistic and literary expressions began to be seen as detrimental, since they did not represent the new reality, the modern way of life which required rational thinking. The novel came to be presented

as one of the best instruments for defining how the new modern life and the modern Ottoman individual ought to be. During the 1870s, Muslim Ottoman writers, such as Ahmet Midhat Efendi, did much to define the main traits of this new genre as they adapted it to the necessities of the Ottoman Muslim community (Saraçoğlu 2006: 46). The plausible limits of the shift towards Western modernity set by these novels were drawn primarily around the capacity to refrain the desires that objects of Western origin could awaken. Thus, since the dawn of Ottoman capitalism, these writers and thinkers were pointing towards consumerism as the main danger wrought by such transformations, capable of subverting the Muslim way of life. The first novels in Turkish repeatedly tell the tale of the financial and psychological ruin of their characters, left without a father's keen eye to control and censure their sensual awakening and their compulsive desire for material consumption, displaying the authors' anxiety around the excessive attachment to material objects brought by the capitalist mode of life (Parla 1990). The disintegration of communal culture and its world of objects with shared meanings was the ultimate danger pointed to by these early authors. Their worldview, strictly limited by communitarian boundaries, held back the push to develop new social and economic orientations, to comprehend how in a capitalist modern society the experience of owning and consuming goods was decisive in building modern bourgeois subjectivities. This very limitation turned their efforts for a disciplined transformation towards the modern into fear of the modern itself, leading them to create characters whose "relationships with objects were colored by anxiety and impotence" (Irzik 2017: 199) – in short, they were overwhelmed by things.

A first turn away from this narration of the modern in the Turkish novel, which would eventually pave the way to the modernist and post-modernist authors including Tanpınar and Pamuk, appears with *Araba Sevdası* (*The Carriage Affair*) by Recaizade Ekrem published in 1896–1897, where the author's attention moves away from the defence of communitarianism and its morals to concentrate instead on the impossibility for the young upper class Ottomans to benefit their fathers' inheritance. The incurable rift in mentality and lifestyles that occurred between the two generations is depicted in the inability of the main character, Bihruz, to establish a liveable relationship with the objects used by his father and grandfather in their daily life. To Bihruz, these objects appear devoid of their once shared meaning and function. Bihruz is a character stuck in a semantic confusion, overwhelmed by objects and words, meanings, and symbols which he is unable to process. His father's remarkable inheritance, which includes a rich library with rows of books and manuscripts containing major examples of imperial high literary tradition, doesn't mean anything to Bihruz, just as the examples of modern French novels he comes across and is not quite able to read are equally senseless to him. Bihruz is possessed by words and objects; he strongly desires them but cannot use them if not as mere objects of ostentation.

The portrait of individuals stuck between the obligations of communitarian morals and the infinite possibilities promised and suggested by the modern, with its promises of rich, comfortable, and free lives is again the focal point of Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's novels. The objects are representative of a world that the young Muslims of the Empire don't have the means to reach. They have lost their link to their fathers' world and are held back from attaining a new mindset by their communal duties and responsibilities.

The anxiety created by the permanent, incessant movement of the modern prevents them from being productively engaged with the present leading them to develop a fraught

relationship with the possession or dispossession of the objects of material life. Instead of producing feelings of empowerment, possessing these objects causes alienation, due to the strong rift between what the objects are for and the meaning they acquire through the subject's desire to possess them, to the point of generating shame, even a sense of guilt. The deep crisis that consumes the subjects of the belated Ottoman modernity stems from the inability to establish a continuity between the generations, from the impossibility of the young heirs of the imperial elites to identify themselves with their fathers and be able to receive their heritage. This crisis manifests itself in a substantial loss of any sense of property, of a legitimate sense of possession. Faced with his feeling of inadequacy, the dispossessed individual perceives himself as unable to have obtainable desires; he receives constant narcissistic wounds, which show him the belatedness of his condition as a source of perennial impediment. At the same time his own milieu is also a constant reminder of his duties, turning his desire into shame and guilt (Gürbilek 2004). The unhappy consciousness resulting from elements that carry different roots and historicity invests the superego, the narcissist and Oedipus. The failure of the superego caused by the conflict between the ideal inspired by the modern and the duty grounded in tradition, brings about the paralysis of the ego and the breaking up of the inner world, creating a split where the victory of one part inevitably brings about the defeat of the other (Koçak 2010: 306). Uşaklıgil wrote during the final decades of the Empire, trying to understand the difficulties that individuals faced in attempting to engage with the West, and to point towards a possible way out of communitarian morals to legitimate the formation of an Ottoman imperial subjectivity. The fall of the Empire and the subsequent affirmation of the idea of substituting the Muslim community with a modern and secular national society brought about a new perception of the West. The nation was built as a new historical phenomenon with no links to its Ottoman imperial past, ready to realize progress by means of an overall transformation, political, economic, social, and cultural. The republican ruling class under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tried to implement a European lifestyle as a condition for economic and political progress as well as the development of a new Turkish civilization in which everything Ottoman came to be defined as the stagnating Other to the dynamic modern Turkish Self.

DISINHERITING TRADITIONS, DISPOSSESSING OBJECTS: TANPINAR'S *MAHUR BESTE*

Tanpınar studied literature in Istanbul and graduated in 1923, the same year of the foundation of the Turkish Republic, with Ankara as its capital. Deeply influenced by his mentor, the famous poet Yahya Kemal (1884–1958), Tanpınar firmly believed that, for its sound development, a nation needed to be rooted in tradition and to have a history with no interruptions. Born in 1901, Tanpınar experienced the fall of the Empire as a personal and collective trauma of loss and dispossession. His first novel, *Mahur Beste* (1944) can be seen as a kind of prototype of his literary production, just as the main character of the novel, Mr. Behçet, appears in the plots of almost all of his following novels, as a well-acquainted person. *Mahur Beste*, the name of a musical composition created to heal the

loss of a beloved, begins when its protagonist Mr. Behçet is 75 years old, which places his childhood and youth in the last decades of the Nineteenth century. The only son of a powerful Ottoman judge, he lived in a large and rich household, moving between family's two residences, wintering in the Istanbul peninsula and spending the summers on the shores of the Bosphorus. The book is composed of eight chapters: the first four deal with Behçet, whereas in later chapters the story begins to fill with a steadily growing number of characters who are less and less related to him and finishes abruptly in the middle of a sentence in the 8th chapter – causing it to be received as an unfinished novel. This conclusion is followed by a letter in which the narrator explains to his main character why the novel has been interrupted, blaming Behçet for having called in too many people, to the point of having rendered the story unmanageable.

Behçet inhabits a disorderly room, “which had emerged in the body of the house like a mythical fruit with its strange existence” (Irzik 2017: 205). It is packed with a great number of objects, unread old books, unsynchronized clocks, a recently acquired large mirror, several musical instruments hanging from the walls, heaps of antiques, dishes, pottery, silverware, and old miniatures everywhere. Despite the disorder, Behçet, who spends most of his time in this room, is capable, even in the dark, of “seeing”, as long as all the items are in their correct, usual place. In this room, he abandons himself to his reveries, repairs clocks once owned by or still belonging to people he knows, or binds books he never reads. His father used to treat those books as if they were women, discarding them once he had read them, but Mr. Behçet is only able to establish some kind of contact with them while binding them, feeling as if he is taking care of them. He frequents the antique stores, auctions, and second-hand markets, entranced by things, he inquires about their former owners, their makers and places of production. He never uses the objects he gathers; they are there for the memories of the lived lives that they carry. With those objects he entertains long conversations, recalling his old dreams of the world they come from. Tanpınar informs his readers that his character is neither “a connoisseur of art nor a collector”; what he looks for is not the rarity of the objects he brings together, nor he is after a refinement; he is “only a poet” who asks the objects he accumulates to take him away “from his own un-lived life” to “somewhere else” to let him “escape” (*ibidem*: 206–207). The only function that the objects filling Mr. Behçet's room have is to remind him of the people who in one way or another entered in his life, without him having been able to establish the relationship he so passionately desired. His wife, who married him because of the Sultan's imposition, took care of him but never loved him. For his entire existence, Mr. Behçet observed life and people without ever being able to be a part of either. His adored father, who was a strong, influential, passionate man, with his potent vitality and unemotional nature, traumatized Behçet's childhood and adolescence, leaving him with a sense of brittleness, a feeling of total impotence. The father, astonished as he was by how his son bore no resemblance to him, concluded that “Poor Behçet will never feel a sense of mastery in his life, and everything he'll come to know will possess him”, and decided to disinherit him (*ibidem*: 209). The impossibility for the young generation of Ottomans to inherit from their fathers, who they bear no resemblance to, is connected to the definitive demise of the Empire; the major loss, the cause of a deep trauma. Individuals such as Mr. Behçet, who were born into a period of deep, uncertain transformation with its consequent sense of belittlement, of loss of self-esteem, found themselves standing in a void, lonely, defenceless, unable to solve their trauma.

FROM HOARD TO COLLECTION:
ORHAN PAMUK'S *THE MUSEUM OF INNOCENCE*

Since the beginning of his writing career, Pamuk has always been extremely sensitive to the problematic and contradictory relationship of Turkish subjectivity with the material universe of daily life. Sharing Tanpınar's intuition, he takes as his starting point that the loss of imperial high culture, of its text and its objects, created the features of a long and unresolved trauma. But as a third generation republican, his perspective towards Ottoman history and culture is certainly different from Tanpınar's, and is also clearly inspired by post-modern poetics, as Pamuk strives to be a part of the wider panorama of world literature.

While Tanpınar, who personally experienced the waning years of the Empire, perceived the loss of its tradition as a traumatic aspect of his own autobiography, Pamuk, born in Istanbul into an upper middle class, secular family with a westernized gaze, proud to be part of a nation which severed its links to the imperial-oriental past, obviously does not carry Tanpınar's same visceral feeling. From Pamuk's distant standpoint – a distance that is temporal, emotional, and aesthetic – the loss feels rather like a latent wound at the centre of his personality, both human and artistic. While his historical proximity and nationalist perspective enabled Tanpınar to identify his own life traumas, such as his mother's premature death, with the collective loss of the Empire and the difficulty of restoring the temporal continuity of the national memory, Pamuk introjects the narrative of collective deprivation into his own, personal experience. Thus, the existential misery, both material and spiritual, of the middle-class Istanbul subjectivity, with its deep split between a naïve desire to emulate the Western. Other and a sentimental need to assert the cultural specificity of the Self, becomes the very foundation on which Pamuk builds his autobiographical narrative as well as his poetics. The literary "filiation" between Tanpınar and Pamuk can be traced back to their common goal of exploring the question of the "absent tradition" as a symbol and a trauma. The works of both authors emanate from the attempt to re-establish the complex psychology of loss at the origin of the cultural imaginary of modern-republican Istanbul middle class dwellers, who continued in the new era to carry the political and cultural leadership of the nation.

Several studies have compared Pamuk and Tanpınar's works from this very perspective, paying particular attention to the issues of memory, of the centrality of Istanbul and of the practice of collecting (Seyhan 2008: 135–157; Maraucci 2018: 259–276, 2020; Özbey 2022: 353–370). But no study has so far focused on the way both writers reflected upon the failed intergenerational transmission of the Ottoman mnesic patrimony, which acquires a particular metaphorical value on the level of material culture, conferring to the phenomenon the meaning of a disinheritance, not just in a symbolic but also concrete sense.

In the prologue – with a rather evocative title, *Babamın Bavulu* (*My father's suitcase*, 2006) – that Pamuk gave upon receiving the Nobel Prize, the author recreated the tormented youth of his father, who was animated, as Pamuk himself was, by literary ambitions, but felt frustrated by the perceived impossibility to find his own, authentic voice. An imprudent manager of his family assets, who in turn had also been deprived of a cultural tradition to refer to, Pamuk's father could not help but pass on an inconsistent legacy, made of a briefcase containing just a few notebooks, scattered sheets confusedly

scribbled with notes, reflections and unfinished attempts. Not an orderly narration of one's life experience, not a consolidated memory text, but a series of incomplete fragments that fail to communicate a specific meaning and story. Besides, as a consequence of the lack of a shared memory, they convey to the son a profound sense of misery, inadequacy, and marginality. This dramatic consideration on the author's part has its roots in the contemplation of his father's rich library, which began during his childhood and gave way to a gradual awareness that, upon its shelves, the masterpieces of Western literature, from which the new national canon sought to draw inspiration, lay side by side with local productions: much more modest works, which failed to conceal their mimetic character, or which, in the specific case of most literature on Istanbul, reproduce the same story of exclusion and impoverishment. In Pamuk's father's library there is no example of the high imperial literature that Bihruz, despite being unable to read and appreciate such texts, was able to find in his own father's library, while Mr. Behçet, who never even received an inheritance, merely gathered the books his father discarded after reading them as if they were women, to keep them lovingly in his hands. For Pamuk, furthermore, the way back to the roots of his own self and thus to his lost cultural tradition was materially closed: born in republican Turkey, he did not possess the knowledge of the complex and mixed Ottoman language and of its alphabet.

Alienated from their historical temporality, the republican sons find themselves immersed in a daily reality dotted with signs that no longer communicate the security of belonging to a single, shared history and memory but continually refer to other people's discourses and identity narratives. The difficulty of defining one's self, projected onto a horizon that is as ideal as it is extraneous to one's mnesic reference text, is thus attributed to a metaphorical and real impoverishment of texts and significant objects. The impossibility of recomposing one's split identity in a unitary narrative unleashes a sort of obsessive tension towards the accumulation and material possessions. *The Museum of Innocence* is precisely an attempt to reconstruct this complex story of loss and deprivation through the objects that mark daily experience. It narrates the dramatic affair of the historical and actual identity of a third-generation middle class Istanbulite, who in the documentary void of his own cultural sources, struggles between conflicting signs, discourses and texts in a ceaseless attempt to write his own story. The work is in fact an account of a controversial process of subjectivation, constantly frustrated and repressed, made of continuous oscillations between contrasting pleasures and duties, between two distinct visions and perceptions of the Self. A process dictated by a fundamental dualism, which the author seems to return to in terms of a dialectic of love between two individuals pertaining to two different and separated worlds. The novel and the Museum recall the story of the passion that Kemal, the descendant of a rich family of Istanbul businessmen, had for his remote relative of a considerably more modest social background, the young and provocatively beautiful Füsün. A careful reading of the book and the Museum together makes it clear that the narrative's central nucleus consists not of the interpersonal dynamics of the two lovers, but of the unilateral and dysfunctional relationship that Kemal, a divided and uncertain subject, has with the historical materiality of his personal story. Indeed, what gives form and content to *The Museum of Innocence* is the universe of the objects representing the beloved who embodies Kemal's deepest desires and his constantly frustrated need to assert his own Self.

As Pamuk himself admitted, *The Museum of Innocence* had a dual genesis due to the mutual interaction between its textual and material components. The work was conceived at the end of the 1990s and went through a decade of gestation marked by the continuous and mutually influential alternation between writing and collecting. In some cases, as recollected by the author, the former preceded the latter, stimulating research, or alternatively creating *ex novo* real objects to represent the one imagined in the text. In other cases, however, the process was reversed and a particular object, belonging to the author's family or found by chance in an antique shop, mainly but not exclusively in Istanbul, inspired the writing of the text (Pamuk 2012b: 15–18). Due to their twin relationship, the novel and the museum exhibit a symmetrical architecture which, while guaranteeing that they can also be enjoyed individually, certainly amplifies their substantial affinity. In fact, the 83 chapters of the text correspond to the same number of display cases in which the collection is divided. The latter are in turn organized in an exhibition itinerary which, unfolding along the three floors of the building in which the museum is housed, reproduces, in addition to the internal division, the narrative flow of the novel. In fact, in the text the story does not proceed according to a progressive chronology but in a retrospective perspective where the single temporal instants, evoked by the objects that occupy the scene, follow one another according to a spiraling line. The sinusoidal movement and the centrifugal direction of the line also suggest the trend of the narration which, from a perspective initially centered on Kemal's personal story, progressively widens towards the collective, embracing the cultural memory of the Istanbulite middle class over a span of time that roughly covers the decade between 1974 and 1984. In the museum, this spiral finds its architectural counterpart in the spiral staircase that connects the different floors. At the end of the visit, the spiral can also be admired from above, through the staircase shaft, graphically reproduced on the floor of the entrance hall as an integral piece of the collection.

Made so as to each stand on its own, the novel and the museum, while sharing the same collection, are however not subjected to a strict exhibition logic. The criterion with which the individual objects are chosen to be exhibited, in the text or in the museum, is not always the same, nor is there, in this sense, a rigid correspondence between the various chapters and the related display cases. This is partly a consequence of the different narratological needs that each medium must answer, so that if in the novel the description of a particular object is necessary first and foremost contextually to the development of the plot, in the museum the same object is the absolute protagonist of its own narrative scene and therefore acts as the only trigger to give substance to a wider multiplicity of meanings, discourses and narratives.

It is interesting to note how in *The Museum of Innocence* the triggering cause of the entire evolution of the story is represented by a connected series of desires for possession. Indeed, the fortuitous meeting between Kemal and Füsün takes place in the high fashion boutique where she works as a saleswoman and where the young man goes to buy a Parisian brand handbag strongly desired by his girlfriend Sibel. The cultured Istanbul upper class young woman, with her experience in refined manners and luxury western goods, recognizing the counterfeit nature of the accessory, forces Kemal to return it, thus providing him with the pretext to see Füsün again. The latter, mortified by what had happened and for having naively believed in the authenticity of the object, awakens the young man's

tenderness and sense of protection, thus beginning to take the form of his object of desire (Pamuk 2009: 4–6). Reproduced in the second display case of the museum, the handbag not only contains the prologue of the story but embodies its meaning as a status symbol in collective cultural practice (Pamuk 2012b: 60–61). While it is an item of consumption exclusive to the wealthier classes, it is also simultaneously an object of desire embodying the dreams of social ascent of the petty bourgeoisie. Reconstructed retrospectively, the episode of Kemal returning the bag takes the form of a pre-text of the clandestine relationship that the two lovers – endowed with different resources, but similar desires – will entertain in the following months and which will completely upend Kemal's balance and certainties.

An important item which in all its poignant intensity represents this brief but overwhelming relationship is the earring Füsün loses in the love bed of the apartment where she and Kemal meet. As clearly expressed by the title of the first chapter of the book in which it is mentioned, the remaining unpaired jewel is the most vivid representation of the happiest moment the young protagonist had in his life (Pamuk 2009, 3–4). In fact, it marks an apical moment of power and satisfaction for Kemal who finds himself fully in possession of everything he most desires; it shows him finally being in a position of completeness, having collected not only his father's professional and social legacy but also his privileges in the private life, happily dividing himself between licit and illicit desires; a legitimate, socially and culturally adequate wife and a young and passionate lover (*ibidem*: 87–94). But the single earring, which is exhibited unpaired in the first display case of the museum, also anticipates the dramatic development of the story: the separation from Füsün, the loss of the object of desire, and the subsequent loneliness (Pamuk 2021b: 59).

Seeing how Kemal does not even pretend to consider ending his relationship with Sibel, but on the contrary publicly celebrates their engagement with a sumptuous party, Füsün, despite her young age and relatively weak social position, displaying a surprising level of autonomy of judgement, decides to disappear from his life, without giving any explanation. Füsün's decision to deprive Kemal of herself is the very act that triggers his amorous obsession and turns on an irresistible need to fill the void, to possess her once more by collecting the objects she used and left scattered in the flat that had once been their love nest. The obsessive collection of her traces – accessories, clothing, tea glasses bearing the imprint of her lipstick, even the butts of the cigarettes she smoked – induces Kemal to spend more and more time on the stage of their love affair, and to simultaneously also start his own personal collection. This original nucleus of the museum, which however is not sufficient to soothe Kemal's suffering, cannot keep him from sinking into a spiral of depression. Obsessed by the thought of the girl, gradually less and less able to live his usual daily life, Kemal stops working, ends his lively social life, begins to neglect his appearance and to drink excessively to the point of losing Sibel, who having tried in vain to make him come to his senses, decides to end their engagement. Freed from the last bond that kept him tied to his previous life, Kemal sets out on a desperate search for Füsün, exploring every nook and cranny of the city until he travels through its peripheral suburbs, staying overnight in dilapidated low-end guesthouses and frequenting the symbolic places of urban marginality where he consumes his own unhappy existence. Called back to reality and to his family duties by the sudden disappearance of his father, the young man sees a glimmer of hope when he receives

a telegram of condolences from his beloved's family. Having traced the family's home, located in the Çukurcuma district where the museum will also be placed, he immediately makes his way there, only to be faced with a new disappointment; Füsün's parents tell him that she has married a militant socialist with filmmaking ambitions. Offering to finance the man's film project, Kemal begins to frequent the couple and Füsün's paternal home, secretly stealing all sorts of objects, from crockery, to furnishings, to keys, and even clothes and toys dating back to the childhood of his beloved. This second phase of compulsive accumulation, which further enriches his collection, corresponds to the desire to reconstruct the milieu to which Füsün belongs, his past and that of his family. After 8 years of total immersion in the world of his beloved, Kemal finds himself faced with the possibility of finally seeing his dreams of happiness come true. Füsün, who until then had remained totally indifferent to his attentions, decides to divorce her adulterous husband. However, Kemal's prompt marriage proposal will only be accepted by the woman after her father's death, to be realized upon her return from a journey to Paris. On the very morning of departure, Füsün expresses the desire to drive her husband-to-be's car, causing, perhaps intentionally, a head-on collision in which she loses her life, and leaving Kemal severely injured. After a long stay in hospital and an even longer convalescence, Kemal leaves for Paris, where, wandering among the city's small museums, visiting their private collections, he takes the decision to create a museum with his collection to commemorate his painful love story. In Europe, Kemal thus finds the dual tool to define himself: the museum, which he himself will create, and the novel which he will decide instead to entrust to a promising young writer named Orhan Pamuk. The work thus completed, which the reader holds in his hands and which the visitor can admire, finally recomposes the split existence of the collector-writer who restores meaning to his personal experience in the loss and through the loss of Füsün, a metonym of the "true" object of desire, that is a pure, authentic, uncontaminated Self. Giving up both possession and authenticity liberates and reveals the subjective and timeless value of objects, which is combined with their historical value. Rebuilding the Self, Kemal recreates the universe of material culture of the petty bourgeoisie.

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