

THE INNOCENCE OF OBJECTS



Orhan Pamuk

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THE MUSEUM OF INNOCENCE, ISTANBUL

See, in these silences
in which things yield and seem
about to betray their ultimate secret.

—“Lemon Trees,” Eugenio Montale

Translated from the Turkish by Ekin Oklap



YAPI KREDİ YAYINLARI

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A view of the floor of the Museum of Innocence. The sequence of boxes begins on the far wall across the stairwell with Box 2, “The Şanzelize Boutique,” and continues chapter by chapter along the wall at right.



Visible in the photograph are Box 68, “4,213 Cigarette Stubs” (on the rear wall of the entrance hall on the floor below), and Box 73, “Füsun’s Driver’s License” (at the top of the stairs on the museum’s floor).

Keskinlerin 1975 ile 1999 yılları arasında yaşadığı bu bina 1999 ile 2012 yılları arasında müzeye dönüştürüldü. Kemale sergisini başlatılan eşyalar, sergilerine kulu ve vitrinlerine Orhan Pamuk'un romanındaki bölümlere göre yerleştirildi.

This building - the Keskin family home - was converted into a museum between 1999 and 2012. The display cases contain objects that once served to remind Kemal of his beloved Fusun. These follow the same order as the chapters of Orhan Pamuk's novel.



THE STORY OF THE LAST OTTOMAN PRINCE

The idea for my museum came to me when I met His Imperial Highness Prince Ali Vâsib for the first time in 1982 at a family reunion in Istanbul. The prince, who was Sultan Murad V's great-grandson, would have been sitting on the throne at that time had the sultanate still existed and the Ottoman Dynasty been in power. But this octogenarian had just obtained leave to return to Turkey as a tourist after being forced to leave in 1924 following the collapse of the Ottoman state and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, and that too on a foreign passport. He cared neither for the throne nor for political power; he wished only to be able to remain permanently in the country that his ancestors had ruled for more than six centuries. He lived in Alexandria, spending his summers in Portugal, where he had made friends and killed time with the dethroned and retired kings and princes of Europe and the Middle East. (He was able to tell me why the Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi, had separated from his first wife, Fawzia.) His memoirs, published posthumously in 2004 as *Memoirs of a Prince: What I Saw and Heard at Home and in Exile* and edited by his son Osman Selaheddin Osmanoğlu, reveal that the prince's constant worry in life was indigence. For many years he made a living by working as a ticket taker and then as director of the Antoniadis Palace and Museum in Alexandria. "I was charged with the administration and cleaning of the palace, and with the conservation of its objects. The silverware, crystal, and furniture were my responsibility," he proudly recounts. I had written about one of the last Ottoman princes in *The Black Book*; the topic was of interest. My curiosity at the family table prompted the elderly prince to share some stories. Among them was King Farouk's kleptomania. During a visit to the Antoniadis Palace and Museum, Farouk had, unbeknownst to anyone, opened a

The museum's entrance hall. Inscribed on the floor is the time spiral that the novel develops; symbolizing Aristotelian ideas about time as a line that connects indivisible moments. Objects, like atoms, are carried through to the clocks exhibited in the central stairwell that comprise Box 54, "Time." Each object in the museum, whether a saltshaker or a cigarette butt, helps us remember the moments, converting time into space.

cabinet and taken away an antique plate he'd set his sights on for his own palace in Cairo. The prince spoke of the time before the royal family left Istanbul, when he had lived in Ihlamur Palace. After graduating from Galatasaray High School, he had attended the military academy in Harbiye where Atatürk had also studied. These were the places where I had spent my own childhood, forty or so years after his. In my mind's eye, I could see the dilapidated palaces and mansions and the old streets of Nişantaşı where I'd grown up and a prince taking math lessons.

The prince was looking for a job that would provide him with an income and enable him to settle down in Turkey permanently after a fifty-year exile; but, he complained, nobody seemed willing to help. We realized that the main reason for this was that the Turkish secret services wanted to keep the man who could have been the last Ottoman sultan from becoming a political symbol. We all knew that the aged prince had no such ambitions, so someone at the table suggested that Ali Vâsib Efendi might find employment as a museum guide at Ihlamur Palace, where he had spent so much time as a child. He was very familiar with life at the palace and knew how to manage a museum; would this not be an ideal solution to his problems?

Upon this suggestion, the prince and all those at the table began to imagine, in complete seriousness and without a trace of irony, how Ali Vâsib Efendi might show visitors around the rooms where he had rested and studied as a child. I remember that I later built on these imaginings with the zeal of a young novelist looking for new perspectives: "And here, sirs," the prince would say in his usual and inordinately polite manner, "is where I sat seventy years ago studying mathematics with my aide-de-camp!" He would walk away from the ticket-toting crowd, step over the line that visitors are not allowed to cross—marked by those old-style velvet cords that hang between brass stands, just like in the penthouse of our museum—and sit once again at the desk he used in his youth. With the same pencil, rulers, eraser, and books, he'd reenact how he had studied in those days, and from his seat he would call to the museumgoers: "Esteemed



those days, and from his seat he would call to the museumgoers: “Esteemed guests, this is how I used to study mathematics.” With this in mind, I first imagined the joy of being the guide to a museum and one of its artifacts at the same time, just like Kemal—and the thrill of explaining to visitors a life, with all its paraphernalia, many years after it was lived. This was the very first seed of the Museum of Innocence, both as a novel—whose protagonist, Kemal, experienced this joy—and a place. I conceived of the novel and the museum simultaneously from the very beginning.



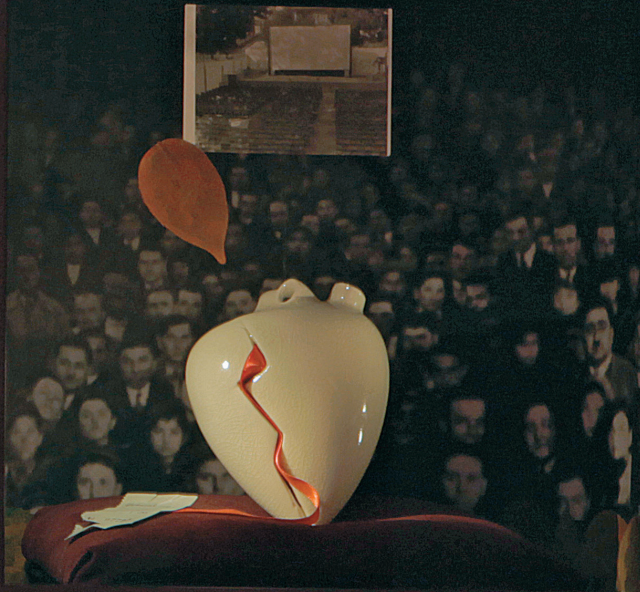
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KALKIP GIDEMEMEK
On Being Unable to Stand Up and Leave



53

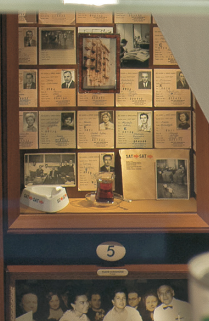
KIRILAN KALBIN ACISININ VE KÜSKÜNLÜĞÜN KİMSEYE YARARI YOK
An Indignant and Broken Heart Is of No Use to Anyone



55

YARIN GENE GELİN, GENE OTURURUZ.
Come Again Tomorrow, and We Can Sit Together Again



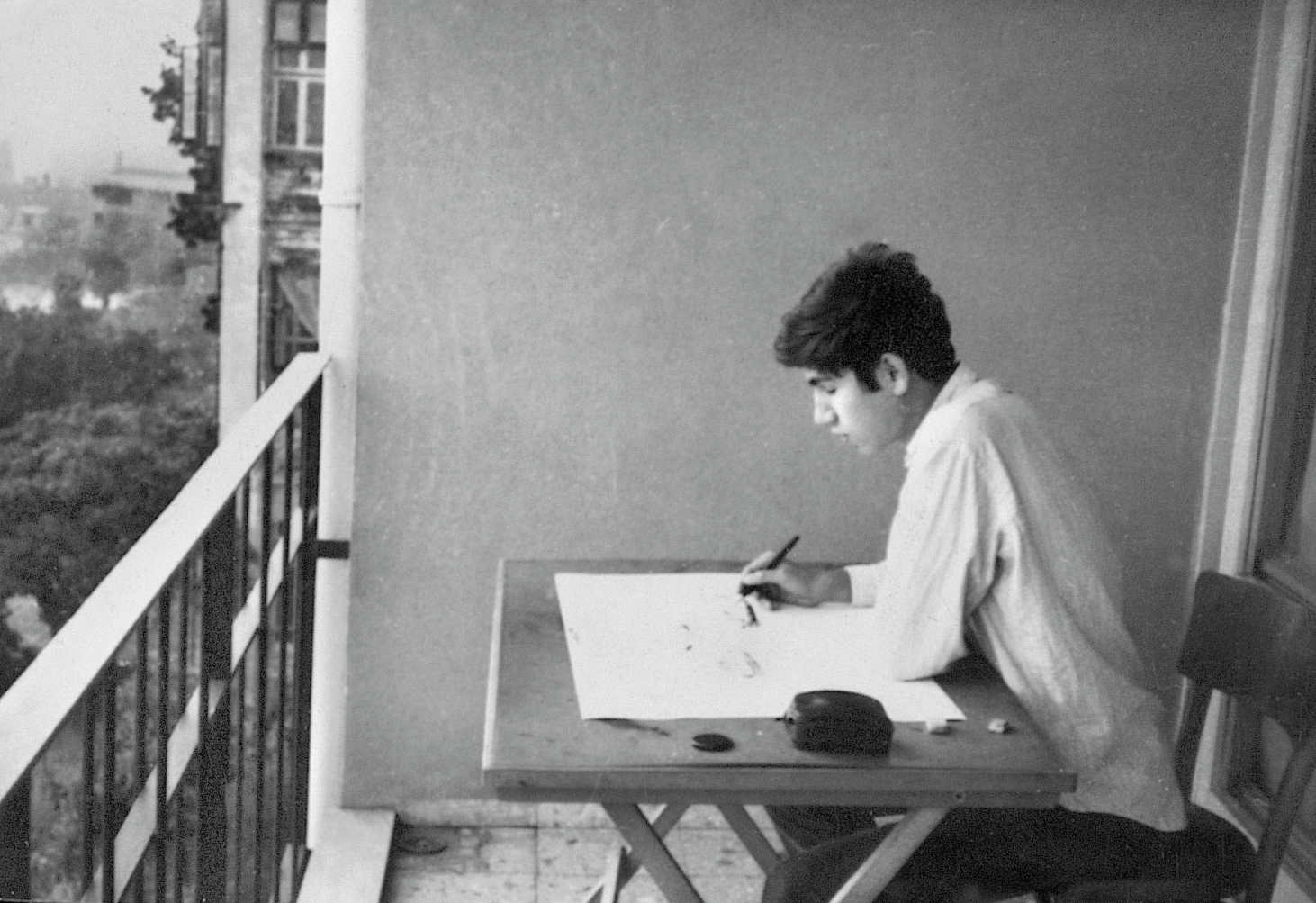


NOVEL, MUSEUM, CATALOGUE

My prince was not going to be real. But because he was going to display and describe real objects in a museum, visitors would soon be persuaded that he was real, just as they would realize with amazement that Kemal is a real person. I wanted to collect and exhibit the “real” objects of a fictional story in a museum and to write a novel based on these objects. At the time, I did not know what sort of place the museum would be, and neither did I know the shape the novel would take. But I had the feeling that focusing on objects and telling a story through them would make my protagonists different from those in Western novels—more real, more quintessentially of Istanbul. What I had in mind was a sort of encyclopedic dictionary in which not only objects (a radio, a wall clock, a lighter) and places (an apartment block, Taksim Square, Pelür Restaurant) but also concepts (love, impatience, panic) would be the subject headings. Just as I would treat and represent and illustrate concepts such as “impatience” and “jealousy” many years later in my museum, I often thought of illustrating, explaining, and treating these concepts in this dictionary. The painter inside me, whom I had killed off at twenty-three, was—a mere fifteen years later—attempting to resurface from the depths of my soul onto the table, to nestle onto the page.

From the ages of seven to twenty-three I painted; then I decided to become a novelist. I dropped my paints and brushes and closed the studio I had set up in one of the unused rooms my mother had filled with her discarded belongings. This allowed me to channel the creative energy of my inner painter to writing, but it did not entirely rid me of the desire to paint. Even after writing *My Name Is Red*, I had visions of novels with characters who were painters. After *The Museum of Innocence*, I still dream of novels featuring painters and, more important, the pictures they have painted.

A view of Box 73, “Fusun’s Driver’s License,” from across the stairwell on the second floor of the museum. Objects used by the Keskin family in the house before it became a museum are mounted on glass shelves along the balustrade.



Orhan Pamuk drawing Bosphorus landscapes with boats on the balcony of his home on the hills of Beşiktaş in 1970.

The idea of an encyclopedic novel was often on my mind in the mid-1980s when I was writing *The Black Book*. Many of my friends had lost their university jobs after the 1980 military coup in Turkey; at the same time, Turkish encyclopedias were going through a boom and revival, and some of my friends tried to make a living by writing entries and working for encyclopedia publishers. In those days, when newspapers were giving out encyclopedias in exchange for coupons and everyone was collecting encyclopedias in installments, friends would say to me: “Orhan, you should write an encyclopedic novel, maybe it would sell.” As a young writer