

The Museum of Innocence

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"It was the happiest moment of my life, though I didn't know it." So begins the new novel, his first since winning the Nobel Prize, from the universally acclaimed author of *Snow* and *My Name Is Red*. It is 1975, a perfect spring in Istanbul. Kemal, scion of one of the city's wealthiest families, is about to become engaged to Sibel, daughter of another prominent family, when he encounters F^ısun, a beautiful shopgirl and a distant relation. Once the long-lost cousins violate the code of virginity, a rift begins to open between Kemal and the world of the Westernized Istanbul bourgeoisie—a world, as he lovingly describes it, with opulent parties and clubs, society gossip, restaurant rituals, picnics, and mansions on the Bosphorus, infused with the melancholy of decay—until finally he breaks off his engagement to Sibel. But his resolve comes too late. For eight years Kemal will find excuses to visit another Istanbul, that of the impoverished backstreets where F^ısun, her heart now hardened, lives with her parents, and where Kemal discovers the consolations of middle-class life at a dinner table in front of the television. His obsessive love will also take him to the demimonde of Istanbul film circles (where he promises to make F^ısun a star), a scene of seedy bars, run-down cheap hotels, and small men with big dreams doomed to bitter failure. In his feckless pursuit, Kemal becomes a compulsive collector of objects that chronicle his lovelorn progress and his afflicted heart's reactions: anger and impatience, remorse and humiliation, deluded hopes of recovery, and daydreams that transform Istanbul into a cityscape of signs and specters of his beloved, from whom now he can extract only meaningful glances and stolen kisses in cars, movie houses, and shadowy corners of parks. A last chance to realize his dream will come to an awful end before Kemal discovers that all he finally can possess, certainly and eternally, is the museum he has created of his collection, this map of a society's manners and mores, and of one man's broken heart.

A stirring exploration of the nature of romantic attachment and of the mysterious allure of collecting, *The Museum of Innocence* also plumbs the depths of an Istanbul half Western and half traditional—its emergent modernity, its vast cultural history. This is Orhan Pamuk's greatest achievement.

Amazon Best Books of the Month, November 2009: The story of Kemal, the half-hearted industrialist who is the hero of *The Museum of Innocence*, Orhan Pamuk's first novel since he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, is a deeply private one, built around an often inexplicable obsession that he attempts to justify to the reader. In honor of F^ısun, the poor, beautiful cousin he had a short affair with when he was 30 and engaged to another, he has hoarded a museum of relics, both of their time together and of the much longer time when, like Gatsby drawn by the green light on Daisy's dock, he hovered at the edge of her life, held in check (but yet held nearby) by the proprieties of Turkish society. From Kemal's passion Pamuk constructs a masterful meditation on time, desire, and possession, saturated with the details of the city of Pamuk's youth: the brand names, the film stars, the streets, the intricate social relations between classes and between modernity and tradition. It's as if the museum of the title was built in honor not of F^ısun but of Istanbul, circa 1975. -- Tom Nissley

Orhan Pamuk won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006. His novel *My Name Is Red* won the 2003 IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. His work has been translated into more than fifty languages. He lives in Istanbul.

Other Books

Museum Making. Over recent decades, many museums, galleries and historic sites around

the world have enjoyed an unprecedented level of large-scale investment in their capital infrastructure, in building refurbishments and new gallery displays. This period has also seen the creation of countless new purpose-built museums and galleries, suggesting a fundamental re-evaluation of the processes of designing and shaping of museums.

Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions examines this re-making by exploring the inherently spatial character of narrative in the museum and its potential to connect on the deepest levels with human perception and imagination. Through this uniting theme, the chapters explore the power of narratives as structured experiences unfolding in space and time as well as the use of theatre, film and other technologies of storytelling by contemporary museum makers to generate meaningful and, it is argued here, highly effective and affective museum spaces. Contributions by an internationally diverse group of museum and heritage professionals, exhibition designers, architects and artists with academics from a range of disciplines including museum studies, theatre studies, architecture, design and history cut across traditional boundaries including the historical and the contemporary and together explore the various roles and functions of narrative as a mechanism for the creation of engaging and meaningful interpretive environments.

26 Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 3, trans. K. Blamley and D. Pellauer, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988. *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1, trans. ... Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1, p.75. 31G."