

Concretized Realism in Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes.v23i2.456>

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Abstract: *The Museum of Innocence* is an innovative postmodern text that fuses the literary world with the material world outside of the text. Orhan Pamuk did this by establishing a physical museum in Istanbul to complement the text after the novel's publication in 2008. There is a crossover between the novel and the museum through the narrative of objects represented in the novel and the tangible objects on display in the museum. This paper relies on both affect theory and thing theory to argue that a nuanced aspect of realism is created by Pamuk's novel coined in this paper as "concretized realism". This paper argues that Pamuk's novel translates the feelings and emotions of the protagonist, Kemal Bey, through the objects that are described in the text. These emotions and feelings exist outside the realm of language. They are then translated into emotions and feelings within the world of the museum that visitors experience once they enter and observe the objects on display. Pamuk's novel and its reliance on the cluster of objects in the text suggest that the objects create affective responses in characters, readers, and visitors alike.

Keywords: affect theory, concretization, realism, thing theory

1. Introduction

For the last couple of decades scholars such as Ankhi Mukherjee (2008: 533) have argued that the novel is dying and losing its singularity in our contemporary times; yet, Orhan Pamuk is a novelist who has proven that novels persist and resist marginalization and deterioration repeatedly. Pamuk (2010:187) states in his book *The Naive and Sentimental Novelist* that:

Over the past one hundred fifty years, the novel has marginalized traditional literary forms in every country where it has appeared, becoming the dominant form, in a process paralleling the establishment of nation-states. Now, in every corner of the world, the vast majority of those who want to express themselves through literature write novels.

Orhan Pamuk proves this claim by writing best-selling and award-winning novels. *The Museum of Innocence*, for example, is an innovative text which has "introduced a radically new mode of interaction between fiction and reality. Pamuk wrote it in tandem with his work on the physical Museum of Innocence—the book includes an admission ticket to the museum in Istanbul" (Turkkan 2017: 7). The fiction/reality dialectic and the verbal/visual dialectic occupied Pamuk's mind since he was young, for he had aspirations to become a painter but gave up on this art form to become a writer. Nonetheless, Pamuk always felt like painting had a superior take

on the genre of the novel in the way it affects its audience visually. In *The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist*, he confers the inferiority of the novel when compared to painting; “what I am talking about is the feeling of insufficiency one gets when reading novels—a feeling born of the fact that novels need the willing participation of the reader’s imagination” (2010: 123). In an attempt to address this inferiority, Pamuk (2010: 128) paired his novel, *The Museum of Innocence*, with an actual museum, creating what he terms: “The realization of the novel,” for this realization/concretization is a key for allowing readers to tap into their imagination in a different way. Pamuk’s (2010: 124) museum in Istanbul helps him perfect his novel by making it four dimensional rather than three dimensional:

Whatever the reason may be, the sounds, smells, and images of the world we encounter in novels evoke a sensation of authenticity we fail to find in life itself. But on the other hand, novels put nothing concrete in front of us—not a single object to touch, not a smell, not a sound, not a taste. When we’re reading a good novel, a part of our mind thinks we are immersed in reality indeed, at a profoundly deep point in that reality—and that life is exactly like this experience. Meanwhile, though, our senses are reporting that this isn’t happening at all. This paradoxical situation is what leaves us feeling unsatisfied.

Nonetheless, readers of *The Museum of Innocence* are not left with that feeling of dissatisfaction when they visit Pamuk’s museum in Çukurcuma, Istanbul; the museum displays the ‘concrete’ that the novel fails to reify.

This paper argues that Pamuk’s comment on the importance of objects in creating the ‘concrete’ that he writes of in *The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist* offers a different dimension in examining the genre of the novel and its classical take on realism. Thus, when Pamuk explains that novels do not offer anything ‘concrete’ for the reader to feel or sense, it is an indication that there is a disparity in the representation of reality which Pamuk resolves in the presence of the museum and the objects on display. The objects, however, are the real focus of both the novel and the museum because they carry within them a power that goes beyond the capacity of language in the text. Therefore, the objects located in the real-life museum and those described meticulously in the novel offer a nuanced way of examining the realism portrayed in the novel. Pamuk (2010: 121) confers that his story is a story told through objects; “I was imagining situations, moments, and scenes suited to these objects, many of which (such as a quince grater) I had bought on impulse”. It is a story where objects carry the main character’s emotions/affects and convey them to the readers, not only in the novel but also inside the museum in Turkey; oscillating readers back and forth between two different modes of objects; fictional and real. Pamuk (2010:111) explicates that:

On the one hand, we look at the world from the viewpoint of protagonists, and identify with characters’ emotions. On the other hand, we mentally cluster the objects around the protagonists, and link the details of the described landscape with their emotions. Writing a novel involves combining the emotions and thoughts of

each protagonist with objects that surround him, and then blending them, with a single deft stroke, in one sentence.

Pamuk toys with orthodox realism when he creates a textual narrative constructed by a set of objects, then concretizes that narrative in a physical museum that is eventually textualized again in the museum's catalog.

Therefore, this paper explores how *The Museum of Innocence* represents the impact of objects in creating affective responses in the protagonist as well as in the readers of the novel. This paper argues that the protagonist of *The Museum of Innocence* has an intricate relationship with the objects of the novel that can adequately be explained through the two theories: affect theory and thing theory. Kemal Bey's responses to the objects he collects in the novel are affective responses that can only be represented through affective manifestations inside the pages of the novel. These manifestations are, in turn, represented in the real-life museum that exists today in Istanbul. Hence, the realism of this novel is not represented through a linguistic channel but rather through the ontological presence of objects both in the novel and the museum. Kemal Bey, the protagonist of the novel, collects a vast number of objects over many years that belong to Füsün and after gathering them all he establishes at the end of the novel a museum with the help of the author, Orhan Pamuk, to write the novel about his love story. These objects, this study argues, show the reader how objects can create a significant "affective" response in the self, whether that self is a character or a reader. Thus, using the concept of "Thing Theory," discussed by Bill Brown, and using important concepts from Affect theory (such as "Happy Objects" by Sara Ahmad, and concepts in Fredric Jameson's study *The Antinomies of Realism*), this paper relies on both theories to show how the novel represents a nuanced aspect of the principle of realism coined as "concretized realism."

2. Affect and thing theories

Both affect theory and thing theory are relatively new and are still tentative especially in their relationship with literary studies. Affect theory emerged in the early 1960s, but not without controversy, when the psychologist Silvan Tomkins published the first volume of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (1962). Tomkins' affect theory "provides a far more flexible and dynamic basis for understanding human motivation than Freud's drive theory" contends E. Virginia Demos (2019:2) in *The Affect Theory of Silvan Tomkins for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: Recasting the Essentials*. For Tomkins, affects are "analog amplifiers" in which facial expressions conceptualize drive (Demos 2019: 123). The face for Tomkins "not only communicates to the self, but also communicates to others" which is imperative for reading the self internally and externally (Demos 2019: 139). Many philosophers and critics then became interested in what is eventually called "the affective turn," which Donovan O. Shaefer in *The Evolution of Affect Theory* argues is the result of accumulative studies and investigations based on Gilles Deleuze's analysis of Spinoza and Bergson (2019: 7-10). For Schaefer (2019:34), Tomkins developed only a few ideas that were loose and relied heavily on Darwinian ideologies and thus Deleuze's dialectics of affects better explains the power of

feelings. Schaefer (2019: 2), and Gilles Deleuze, nonetheless, explore the “animality of affects” which focuses on the dialectic of power in bio-logic. Accordingly, Deleuze’s and Tomkins’ affects do not clash, but they present two ends of the same spectrum; the first studies the experience of the body while the later studies the experience of emotions.

Correspondingly, affect theory is not only hard to define but is also hard to trace back to a point of origin. Donald R. Wehrs (2017:4-10) examines closely the point of origin in Greek and Roman philosophy such as in the works of Socrates and Aristotle. While scholars such as Silvan Tomkins have established affect theory as a field of interest particularly of the 20th century with the publication of the first volume of his book *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* in 1962. But for the purposes of this study, affect theory’s definition in relation to literature and literary studies will be espoused. In “Poetic Fear-Related Affects and Society in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” Dana LaCourse Munteanu (2020: 33) argues that affect in literature “underscores the idea of corporeality of an emotional experience as well as of transmission of reactions between individuals. To these two elements, a third can be added: intentionality. By constructing a virtual reality through narratives that can maneuver people’s affects, politicians and writers can influence society”. Thus, affect for authors is not only an apparatus to manage and control characters but is also a method to influence the readers. Literature, for Munteanu (2020: 43), “through calming irrational affects... leads people to mental clarity and, ultimately, to a joyous acceptance of reality”. Munteanu notes that writers are aware of the power of affect, and it entails that they engage characters’ and readers’ affects in their writings. This paper argues that Orhan Pamuk does precisely this in *The Museum of Innocence*, where he invests in affects and capitalizes on “things”. Tomkins adhered that affects “could be correlated with known external stimuli” (Demos 2019: 130), and this study here argues that “external stimuli” could be read as “things”; which is where affect theory and thing theory intersect (Demos 2019: 130).

Finally, a discussion on affect theory would be lacking if it did not cover two prominent theoretical pieces that have had powerful impacts on affect theory and will also be necessary for the purpose of this study: Sara Ahmad’s “Happy Objects” and Lauren Berlant’s “Cruel Optimism.” Sara Ahmad’s (2010: 34) “Happy Objects” uncovers how objects become the emblem of happiness allowing the possessor to give value to that particular object because it is imbued with a value that promises happiness. Berlant (2010: 94) argues that one’s attachment to an object or a concept, such as happiness or nationalism for instance, becomes a source of misery and cruelty because the “realization is discovered either to be *impossible*, sheer fantasy, or *too possible*, and toxic”.

The principles of representation can be examined differently through the close exploration of ‘affects.’ Thus, the corporality of the body creates a different type of representation than that of language. Not only has language been the sole vehicle for representation in novelistic prose, but language is also studied as an area that can create affective responses. Thus, in studies on affect, language is examined as a means of creating affective reactions. For instance, Denise Riley (2005:4)

writes of how affective responses are created in language in several different contexts such as apologies, verbal attacks and in deceptive conversations. On the other hand, Fredric Jameson (2015:32) writes in *The Antinomies of Realism* of how language is in crisis because the body has been able to substitute the role of language and to create meaning:

But this is then to endow the concept of affect with a positive content: if the positive characteristic of the emotion is to be named, the positive content of an affect is to activate the body. Language is here opposed to the body, or at least the lived body (which may itself be a “modern” phenomenon). And therefore, alongside a crisis of language, in which the old systems of emotions come to be felt as a traditional rhetoric, and an outmoded one at that, there is also a new history of the body to be written, the “bourgeois body” as we may now call it, as it emerges from the outmoded classifications of the feudal era.

Thus, Jameson argues that language falls short of representation when the body is present and capable of creating meaning. This body that Jameson refers to is a modern one unlike the body of the “feudal era.” The body is quite capable of creating meaning through affective responses without the narrative having to depend on language. This paper uses Jameson’s argument as a launching point to explore the role of objects that the authors believe may also be able to replace the role of language in representing affective responses. Thus, the objects of the novel are able to invoke specific affects in the protagonist Kemal without there having to be a linguistic vehicle. Pamuk further creates the real-life museum to contemplate the role of objects in the novel in real-life as visitors are able to visit the museum and see for themselves the objects of the novel on display and connect them to Kemal's affective moments.

As affects are closely related to “external stimuli,” it would be poignant to examine affect theory alongside or through the lens of thing theory. Bill Brown initiated the dialogue on thing theory when he published “Thing Theory” in a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* in 2001. Brown (2001:4) argues that “the story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation”. To explain it clearly, the humans’ new relations to objects/things arise from a sense of “longing” for a long-lost past that only objects (that belong to that past or carry a certain memory from the past) can make it real again (Brown 2001: 2). Thus, in thing theory, “the quest for things may be a quest for a kind of certainty” where “the amorphousness out of which objects are materialized by the (ap)perceiving subject, the anterior physicality of the physical world emerging, perhaps, as an aftereffect of the mutual constitution of subject and object, a retroprojection?” (Brown 2001: 4,5). Thus, Brown’s view suggests that things embody materialized affects. Lambros Malafouris (2013:247) in *How Things Shape the Mind* argues that:

Things change the brain. They effect extensive structural rewiring by fine tuning existing brain pathways, by generating new

connections within brain regions, or by transforming what was a useful brain function in one context into another function that is more useful in another Context.

Accordingly, things are assigned meanings by the subjects because these things concretize moments of happiness that the subject then realizes as moments that only lead to “cruel optimism”.

3. Concretized realism in *The Museum of Innocence*

The Museum of Innocence was published in 2008 in Turkish and was translated into English in 2009. It traces the passionate love story of Kemal Basmacı and Füsün Keskin, two far-off relatives who fall in love in modern day Istanbul. Kemal is engaged to marry another woman who belongs to his own social class and position (both are upper-middle class Istanbulites), but all the while he has fallen in love with Füsün at first sight. As the novel progresses, Kemal breaks off his engagement and begins to pursue Füsün. Throughout the years of Kemal’s pursuit of Füsün, he gathers objects that she might have owned or touched. He carries those objects back home, hoarding them away until the end of the novel. Eventually, Füsün dies in a car crash and Kemal must now figure out what he has to do with the objects that he has collected throughout the years. He decides to meet an author named Orhan Pamuk and they both agree that Pamuk should write the novel and establish the museum for Kemal. The museum is meant to exhibit the years of love, joy, and misery that Kemal had to endure while he was with Füsün.

After the publication of the novel, Pamuk establishes the real Museum of Innocence in Istanbul in 2012 that has thousands of objects on display in close description to the novel itself. Pamuk started collecting objects for the museum in the early 1990’s from antique stores, particularly those found in the Çukurçuma area of Istanbul. Visitors to the museum will see how the museum has 83 showcases, each one representing a chapter in the novel. Moreover, the visitors enter the museum to observe the three floors of objects that represent not only the events that take place from within the novel and the tragic love story of Kemal and Füsün, but also to show the complexity of Turkish life in Istanbul. Display cases include, for instance, ID cards, clothes, food replicas, photographs, refuse, clothing, cups, and much more. Thus, the museum is capable of depicting the material life of the novel and bringing to life the love story of the two characters of the novel as well as representing important cultural and social aspects of Turkish life.

Scholarship has focused on the fact that *The Museum of Innocence* pays close attention to the relationship between the novel and the museum. Because Pamuk’s novel is so innovative in its concept, much of the research focuses on the connection between the real-life museum as well as the material and aesthetic value of the text. Duygu Tekgül (2015: 2) writes in her article “Fact, fiction and value in the Museum of Innocence” about the “ethnographic dimension of the Museum”. Tekgül (2015: 3) states that the “museum depicts scenes and emotions through objects”. Yin Xing (2013: 199) in “The Novel as Museum: Curating Memory on Orhan Pamuk’s *The Museum of Innocence*” argues that the writing process in Pamuk’s novel is a different form of documentation and surveying and how the city of Istanbul “is

embodied in the wealth of objects associated with a life-defining love story (intensively visualized in the novel)". Xing (2013: 199) writes further that "Pamuk represents an emerging modernity, at once half-Western and half-traditional, omnipresent and inchoate, brought to visibility through the artifacts of a lost love". Finally, Zuzanna Jakubowski's (2013) article, "Exhibiting Lost Love: The Relational Realism of Things in Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*," and Leanne Shapton's *Important Artifacts*" addresses the representation of literary realism in the text. Jakubowski (2013: 124) argues that the representation of literary realism in the novel is in "terms of presentation rather than representation, constitution rather than depiction". Jakubowski writes in her article of a revised version of literary realism that is depicted through the presence of the museum and the novel. Jakubowski (2013: 129) also explains that the reality represented is represented through "relationality" by the "production of a historical reality through both particular and generic detail, and in their relation and reference to a museum exhibit that blurs the established boundaries between fiction and world, literature and materiality". Jakubowski explains that the relationship between signs and their referents in the novel are purely relational and she uses both a Barthesian and Latourian understanding of reality and signs. This paper offers another dimension of this examination of realism in the novel. This paper argues that the objects that Pamuk collects and exhibits in both the novel and the museum invoke a reality of feeling in the reader and the visitor of the museum through the medium of affect theory and thing theory.

In Chapter 68 of *The Museum of Innocence* titled "4,213 Cigarette Stubs," Kemal reveals how and why he secretly collects the cigarette stubs of his young lover, Füsün:

Back in the Merhamet Apartments I would retrieve the butts from my pocket for careful examination, likening each to some other form. For example, I would see some as little black-faced people with their heads and necks smashed, their trunks made crooked by the wrongs others had done them; or I would read them as strange and frightening question marks. Sometimes I likened the cigarette ends to crayfish or the smokestacks of City Line ferries; sometimes I saw them as exclamation marks, one warning me to take heed of lurking danger of which another was an omen; or as just so much foul-smelling rubbish. Or I would see them as expressions of Füsün's soul, even fragments of it, and as I lightly passed my tongue over the trace of lipstick on the filter, I would lose myself in communion with her. (Pamuk 2009: 395)

While Füsün is away, Kemal holds on dearly to the stubs that were at one time held between her lips because each of the 4,213 cigarette stubs has a story to tell about Kemal and Füsün's love. In another scene of the same chapter, Kemal explains that "each cigarette butt in its own unique way records Füsün's deepest emotions at the moment she stubbed it out" (Pamuk 2009: 397) and once again on that very same page, Kemal explains that he would pick up the cigarette stubs and "recall various 'moments' belonging to the past: "Of all the objects I collected, it was the cigarettes

that I found to correspond most truly to Aristotle's moment" (Pamuk 2009:397). Kemal explains what he means by Aristotle's moments: "In Aristotle's work in *Physics* where Aristotle makes a distinction between Time and the single moments he describes as the 'present.' Single moments are —like Aristotle's atoms— indivisible, unbreakable things. But Time is the line that links these indivisible moments" (Pamuk 2009: 287). What these episodes show is that the cigarette stubs are imbued with a certain type of power over the protagonist invoking within him specific emotions and feelings. The cigarette stubs are nothing but mere objects or things or more specifically trash, but to Kemal these "things" offer him different ways of remembering Füsün and his experience with her. Furthermore, Kemal explains that the cigarette stubs along with other objects such as "a porcelain saltshaker, a tape measure in the form of a dog, a can opener that looked like an instrument of torture, a bottle of the Batanay sunflower oil that the Keskin kitchen never lacked" (Pamuk 2009: 397) he manages to carry away from Füsün's parents' home "would recall the particles of experience until I had summoned up the entire reality of sitting at the dinner table with Füsün and her family" (Pamuk 2009: 398). Objects as diminutive as a cigarette stub can bring out "an entire reality of sitting at the dinner table with Füsün" and her family for Kemal offering him a portal into the past and reconstructing a particular reality for him (Pamuk 2009:398).

Gloria Fisk (2018: 71) writes that "the objects do more than remind the protagonist of his absent lover; they exceed referentiality, expressing her qualities as a feature of their ontology, so he can spend time with them in bed *as if* it is time spent with her." Thus, this indicates that Pamuk attempts to create a strong relationship between Kemal and the objects in a way that exceeds the abilities of language and writing all together and brings together a relationship between Kemal and the objects through the power of affect. Moreover, the representation of Füsün through these objects is not in any way limited to the signification of language. Rather the representation of the character of Füsün is portrayed through the objects Kemal puts on display in the real-life museum in Istanbul that is a continuation of the literary representation outstretching the possibilities of language. Kemal explains that the objects of Füsün's life create in him "the deepest emotions" possible, transporting him to moments in the past that cause him to have a myriad of sensations and passions (Pamuk 2009: 397). For instance, returning again to the cigarette stubs, it seems quite ridiculous that out of all the things that a lover would use to remember his love interest, Kemal uses litter to remember Füsün and her emotional states. Nevertheless, Füsün's cigarette stubs are not supposed to be comical in anyway. Pamuk is portraying the emotional landscape of a man in love. And Kemal's love for Füsün is no jest. Even the most miniscule of objects like the cigarette stubs provoke the most powerful emotions out of Kemal. This particular chapter (chapter 68) is significant because of the uniqueness of the protagonist's peculiar obsession with cigarette stubs and how it most certainly addresses a more important question about the role of objects and things in evoking certain emotions in human subjects as well as how in this particular chapter along with the quotations that have been chosen for the purposes of this study comment on the role of reality in the genre of the novel.

Kemal's affective states when he is united with Füsün's objects allow him to have out of body experiences. The objects that he collects which either belong to Füsün or were touched by her trigger these emotions in Kemal. In fact, one particular chapter in the novel titled "The Consolation of Objects" shows how Kemal spends days in his apartment surrounded by objects that were closely related to Füsün. Kemal projects his feelings through objects, his gaze is focused on the objects surrounding his loved ones, and he views Füsün through things that surround her; "Slipcovered armchairs, a table, a buffet holding a candy bowl, a set of crystal tumblers, and a television crowned by a sleeping china dog—I found these things beautiful, because they had all assisted in the making of the wondrous miracle that was Füsün" (Pamuk 2009: 158). Some of the most trivial objects, even those considered waste, bring great happiness to Kemal:

For a week, I had been aware that in the ashtray now resting there was the butt of a cigarette Füsün had stubbed out. At one moment I picked it up and rubbed the end that had once touched her lips against my cheeks, my forehead, my neck, and the recesses under my eyes, as gently and kindly as a nurse salving a wound. Distant continents appeared before my eyes, sparkling with the promise of happiness, and scenes from heaven; I remembered the tenderness my mother had shown me as a child, and the times I had gone to Tesvikiye Mosque in Fatma Hanim's arms, before pain would rush in again, inundating me. (Pamuk 2009: 156)

Kemal explains that the objects do something very unique to him. Objects as minor as a cigarette butt can alter his emotional state and send him to "distant continents." Here is another example of what the objects of the museum do for Kemal and his emotional state: "I once loved a woman so much that I, too, hid away locks of her hair, and her handkerchiefs, and her barrettes, and everything she ever owned, and for many years I found consolation in them, Orhan Bey" (Pamuk 2009: 514). The objects for Kemal bring him consolation or peace of mind.

Happiness, another significant affective response, is mentioned in Kemal's story several times. Several chapters refer to feelings of happiness and joy: *The Happiest Moment of My Life*, *City Life and Happiness*, and *Happiness Means being Close to the One You Love, That's All*. The expression of happiness in relation to Kemal's obsessive love for Füsün is reminiscent of Sara Ahmad's theory of 'Happy Objects.' Thus, Sara Ahmad's theory in 'Happy Objects' (2010) can be traced in Kemal's attitude toward not only the objects that he collects that remind him of Füsün, but also of his love towards her. Sara Ahmad explains how happiness is a means of living the good life when it is within the standards of typical societal and cultural norms. Nevertheless, Kemal's search for true love with Füsün may give the appearance of happiness and living the good life, but in reality, it is a story that brings more unhappiness to both their lives. Thus at the end of the novel, Füsün dies and Kemal spends the rest of his life traveling to museums to observe and study how he may build his own museum with the objects that remind him of her. This brings further misery when all the while Kemal thinks that he is happy living amongst Füsün's objects, but in reality, he is suffering. He also describes what

visiting other museums from around the world brings to him, particularly happiness:

And then I would try, yet again, to explain the spiritual effect that the silence of museums had on me, what sublime happiness it was to be in a far corner of the world on an ordinary Tuesday morning, strolling through a forgotten museum in an out-of-the way neighborhood, and evading the scrutiny of the guards. (Pamuk 2009: 515)

The objects of the museum that Kemal collects for the memory of Füsün not only fabricate the happy life that Kemal seeks desperately, but the objects also appear to create some sort of punitive memory of Füsün that continually remind him that he may never obtain her as his own. Kemal feels an overwhelming wave of numerous emotions, misery is one that continues to overcome him when he spends his time with Füsün. The contradiction that Kemal feels lies between misery and optimism that his life with Füsün will eventually transpire, but the reality of this story is that he will never have her as his own. Berlant's theory of "Cruel Optimism" applies well in this context. Hence, the novel depicts a narrative that fluctuates between misery and optimism in a cruel manner. Kemal's love for Füsün will never be complete and he appears for the majority of the narrative delusional about his relationship with her and whether they may ever be together. More importantly, Füsün's misery at the end of the narrative represents in many ways the kind of turmoil that she has to undergo because the relationship she has with Kemal has left her unhappy. This finality shows the readers how Berlant's theory of "Cruel Optimism" transpires within the narrative itself. Both of these characters assume that what they are seeking will bring them a life that will make them both happy and content, but the cruelty of this fabricated optimism causes the death of Füsün and leads the protagonist into a delusional state of mind.

Moreover, Kemal's delusion is cathartic, for he finds relief and comfort in objects that belong to his loved ones:

Eighteen minutes later I was in the Merhamet Apartments, lying on our bed, finding such relief as I could from the new objects recovered from the empty apartment. Sure enough, these things that Füsün had touched, these objects that had made her who she was—as I caressed them, and gazed at them, and stroked them against my shoulders, my bare chest, and my abdomen—released their analgesic and soothed my soul" (Pamuk 2009: 182).

Kemal maintains that he is attached to objects "for the peace of my memories and the therapeutic comfort of the things (Pamuk 2009: 219). He becomes interested in his father's things too, after his father passes away:

From time to time I opened up his drawers, to touch the things that carried so many of my early memories. My father's death had turned these familiar props of childhood into objects of immeasurable value, each one the vessel of a lost past. I opened the bedside table drawer, and as I breathed in the fumes of cedar and my father's sugary cough syrup, I gazed for a long time at the old

phone bills, the telegrams, my father's aspirins and medicines, as if I were looking at a complicated picture. (Pamuk 2009: 221)

What these scenes show is that the objects in Kemal's apartment connect him closely to the people he loves in his life and they (the objects) are ontological extensions of these people.

Kemal becomes enmeshed in a world of things in which he fetishizes on and the excitement he gets from objects is greater than that of sexual excitement:

Even the smell of the apartment brought me peace as I inhaled it from the threshold; I knew from experience that Füsün's lead pencil had the greatest consolatory power of all the things in the apartment, with her teacup, which I had not washed since her disappearance, coming in a close second; I took these things into bed with me. After touching them and stroking my skin with them for a short time, I was able at last to relax." (Pamuk 2009: 223)

This is because, for Kemal, both he and things are made of desire: "I now understood as an elemental fact of life that while I was here, inside my body was a soul, a meaning, that all things were made of desire, touch, and love, that what I was suffering was composed of the same elements" (Pamuk 2009: 235). And because he associates with things, his things become his world: "I wanted to return to my own world, to my own things" (Pamuk 2009: 262).

Things for Kemal have power and agency because they communicate his experiences and feelings to readers:

The power of things inheres in the memories they gather up inside them, and also in the vicissitudes of our imagination, and our memory—of this there is no doubt. At some other time I would have had no interest in the bars of Edirne soap in this basket, and might even have found them tawdry, but having served as tombala presents on New Year's Eve, these soaps formed in the shape of apricots, quinces, grapes, and strawberries remind me of the slow and humble rhythm of the routines that ruled our lives. It is my devout, and uncalculating, belief that such sentiments belong not just to me, and that, seeing these objects, visitors to my museum many years later will know them, too (Pamuk 2009: 307).

The moments of his interaction with these objects have become the special moments in his life. The objects together then present his life in full. "By now these objects were no longer just tokens of moments in my life, nor merely mementos; to me they were elemental to those moments" (Pamuk 2009: 349). Kemal's relationship to things progresses and he becomes driven by his desire to collect objects. He says;

after the summer of 1979, an object in my pocket was the key to prying me out of my chair. Years later, when I fell in with Istanbul's weird and obsessive collectors; when I visited their houses packed to the rafters with paper, rubbish, boxes, and photographs, every time trying to understand how these soul mates of mine felt about their soda bottle caps or pictures of film stars, and what meaning a

new acquisition held—I would remember how I'd felt every time I took something from the Keskins' house. (Pamuk 2009: 350)

Objects narrate Kemal's life story and prove to others that he lived and did not waste his life:

Sometimes, thus consoled, I would imagine it possible for me to frame my collection with a story, and I would dream happily of a museum where I could display my life—the life that first my mother, and then Osman, and finally everyone else thought I had wasted—where I could tell my story through the things that Füsün had left behind, as a lesson to us all. (Pamuk 2009: 461)

Finally, it is evident that what Pamuk is doing in *The Museum of Innocence* aligns closely with what realist novelists of the late 18th and 19th centuries were doing in representing and detailing objects as a technique to describe material realism. But the presence of these objects in the real world displayed in a museum complicates this 19th century imitation. Pamuk, this research contends, does not only want his readers to see the objects themselves on display as they are in the novel, but also wants to evoke similar affective responses from his readers, for “any suppression of affect results in a bleaching of the experience of affect and thus to some impoverishment of the quality of life” (Demos 2019: 137). So Kemal publicizes his affects to retain a degree of respectability and authority that he very much needs for a better quality of life. Hence, towards the end of the novel Kemal explains that visitors should feel the respect and love that he and Füsün had for each other and even compare it with their own experiences. In other parts of the novel as well he explains how he wants his visitors to feel, experience, and understand the same affective responses that he and Füsün felt from the very same objects. The same way “[t]hings lie beyond the grid of intelligibility the way mere things lie outside the grid of museal exhibition, outside the order of objects,” Pamuk's museum lies outside the grid of the novel and outside the grid of fictive objects (Brown 2001: 5). These objects that Pamuk collects in the museum not only create affective responses within Kemal as a character, but also bring something to the table in terms of understanding the role of the novel and realism. This brings us to wonder whether *The Museum of Innocence* suggests that we see the principle of realism differently, or if Pamuk is asking for a different dimension of classical realism, something that this paper coins as “concretized realism.” Returning once again to what Fredric Jameson (2013: 28) writes in *The Antinomies of Realism* the “isolated body begins to know more global waves of generalized sensations,” which Jameson calls affect and which he also claims “eludes language and its naming of things (and feelings).” Thus Kemal's strange obsession with the objects he collects symbolize these “generalized sensations” that cannot be examined through language, but rather through the presence of the thing itself especially once it is displayed in the real-life museum Pamuk established in Istanbul (Jameson 2013:28). By creating his museum, Pamuk is creating a dimension of realism beyond language and embodied in feeling which is further embodied in the thing itself.

4. Conclusion

Pamuk's novel is a text narrated through objects. It is also a text where objects are at the center of the characters' emotional states, especially the protagonist's, Kemal. Thus, this is a novel that is told not through time or through the medium of language, but rather through things and objects. The representation of objects in a narrative, for Pamuk, nonetheless, seemed lacking; while these objects easily trigger Kemal's affects through his gaze and touch, the narrative fails at conveying these affects to the readers to the fullest, because the readers are ontologically detached and distant. To remedy this disconnection, Pamuk established a museum in Turkey that showcases the objects described in the novel. Readers of *The Museum of Innocence*, then, can easily oscillate between the fictive reality of Kemal's obsession with objects and the real museum in Çukurçuma. This reification of fiction instigates a new type of realism that this paper argues is "concretized realism". Orhan Pamuk (2010:51) rejects the notion that "the novel existed to defend and maintain [an] independence of imagination from reality." Thus, his novel deviates from fictive conventions and creates a set of shared affects that guarantees readers the sensory experiences of characters.

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