

Reproducing Memories and Portrayal of the Concept of Virginity in Turkey through Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*

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Abstract

The Museum of Innocence (2009) delves into love and everyday objects of love to explain the country's cultural emissions and political issues due to cultural contradiction with few characters in the novel. The novel is planned as a love story but is written in a decidedly unorthodox narrative style. The narrative is focused on the lovers' connection and revolves around Kemal's alterations due to his love for Fusun. He brings the supernatural close to the material, combining them most unexpectedly. Pamuk's construction of the actual museum in the memory of Fusun was discussed. Pamuk spoke about the memories of Fusun in Kemal's story narration with the portrayal of cultural indifference in Turkey. Further, this paper brings out the clash between fundamental traditional Islam and modern secularism by portraying the westernisation lifestyle of Istanbul's bourgeois society. The research paper concentrated on women's status and depicted the concept of virginity.

Keywords: Political Issues, Memories, Triangle love, Virginity

1. Introduction

The Museum of Innocence returns to the 1970s, setting the novel in the bourgeois milieu of 1970s Istanbul. This is unquestionably a melodramatic novel that centres on the egotistical obsessions of Kemal, a wealthy, spurned lover. As he becomes increasingly preoccupied with his passion for Fusun, who is also his cousin, he gradually withdraws from Istanbul's bourgeois society and establishes a museum filled with seemingly unimportant, daily artefacts that he views as priceless relics of their illegal passion. These artefacts acquire a specific value for Kemal as they add to his collection of triggering memories, achieving a level of significance for him that elevates them to incredibly personal belongings. This yearning for a sublimated purpose and meaning and the failure to find a means of achieving it is the novel's thematic preoccupation. Kemal says, "I Would dream happily of the museum where I could tell my story through the things that Fusun left behind" (Pamuk, 2009, p.680).

The researcher observes that while the objects, from cigarette butts to the vehicle in which Fuzun dies, are intimate, they also remind family, society, and the nation's social and political memories. The museum is housed in Fuzun's childhood home. Pamuk made a copy of this archive and opened it to the public in Istanbul in 2012. The museum enables readers to view and experience the objects described in the book. It is a tangible replication of a literary depiction, a novel venture in the literary world. Visitors can also purchase museum mementoes.

With my museum, I want to teach, not pride in the lives they live. I have travelled all over, and I have seen with my own eyes: While the West takes pride in itself, most of the rest of the world lives in shame. But if the objects that bring us shame are displayed in a museum, they immediately transform into possessions in which to take pride; this was what Kemal delivered himself (Pamuk, 2009, p.711).

Additionally, the museum conveys the sense of an absent love, underlined and punctuated by the seemingly small yet overwhelming array of things. Each exhibit in the museum reveals the intensity of love's displacement. The items acquire a muddled identity. In contrast to his earlier books, which essentially reversed the logic, here, a more significant spiritual gain makes up for a financial loss. "Orhan Pamuk questions the metanarrative of Turkish secular nationalism in its various manifestations" (Goknar, 2006, p.34). The novel continues Pamuk's former trend of secular sanctity and secular Sufism. The comprehensive nature of the novel's presentation of objects associated with love is not unfamiliar to Pamuk readers.

2. Review of Literature

According to Olamijuwon and Odimegwu (2022), Sex education in many African countries prevents sexual intercourse and expects a woman to have virginity until marriage due to religious and social norms. Zaib (2016) has spoken about how European dress has come to Turkey. In 1970, Turkish girls thought it was shameful to have relationships before getting married. But some of the coolest and smartest girls started to reject this old idea. Sibel was born in Europe and brought Western ideas with her. She agrees to have sex with Kemal before they get married because she is modern and a woman. Palit & Allen (2015) Spoke about how men understand the concept of virginity. He says young men understand in four areas: emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and physically.

Kumar & Prakash (2023) pointed out that Pamuk depicted the historical culture of the East and the current ideas through his characters. Conflicts between Eastern and Western cultures in Turkey have existed since the inception of the Turkish novel.

3. Political Issues

Pamuk's novel *The Museum of Innocence* depicts Turkish society and politics in the final quarter of the twentieth century. The book depicts a realistic picture of Turkey, with young leftists and rightists murdering one another in an impoverished and turbulent country. Once again, the novel is set in Istanbul. Pamuk recorded the Bomb Blast that happened in 1978:

By 1978, bombs were going off at night, even in this neighbourhood. The streets leading to Tophane and Karakoy were controlled by nationalist factions. And in the papers, it was claimed that many murders had been planned in the local coffeehouses. At the top of Cukurcuma Hil, on the crooked cobblestone street heading toward Cihangir, by contrast, the residents were bureaucrats, workers and students sympathetic to the Kurds, the Alevis and various left-wing factions (Pamuk, 2009, p.711).

Thus, Pamuk portrays the city's many instances of political violence in this way: In the 1980s, violence in Istanbul was a common occurrence. Increased instances of bloodshed, people murdering one another, and vandalising public property were fairly widespread. Turkey's political dilemma Kemal, the protagonist, and his pals discuss current events in Istanbul and throughout the Turkish Republic. Turkey's political disputes complicate and jeopardise the lives of ordinary citizens. Nobody can live in dread or be threatened with death. While one of Kemal's muses about terrorism in Turkish society, Pamuk depicts street battles between fanatical nationalists and communists. In the 1980s, Istanbul was engulfed in political upheaval as a result of America's cold war with Russia. The novelist recounts the city of Istanbul's constant street murders. Machine guns aimed at coffeehouses in the middle of the night, university takeovers and boycotts, bombs going off, and militants raiding banks were all familiar sights. He demonstrates how political supporters used to paint their political messages on the wall. "Turkish speakers are the intended target audience" (Workman, 2023, p.1). The majority of the populace was uninterested in such political activity. In Istanbul, the image of social and political turmoil has become almost ubiquitous. By 1978, bombs were being detonated at night in this neighbourhood, according to Kemal. The military utilises force and tyranny against all people, including innocent and neutral ones, to maintain control of the situation and establish law and order. In *The Museum of Innocence*, virginity serves as the female identity. The novel *The Museum of Innocence* (2009) explores feminine identity from a sexual standpoint. Turkish society, like other civilisations, views women sexually. Turkey, despite its Westernisation, retains traditional views of the female as a sexual object. Society views girls through the conventional patriarchal lens of virginity or chastity, which serves as the foundation for her character.

In Istanbul, the city that was the capital of this region, virginity was still regarded as a treasure that young girls should protect until the day they married. Following the drive to Westernize and Modernize, and (even more significantly) the haste to urbanise, it became common practice for girls to defer marriage until they were older, and the practice value of this treasure began to decline in certain parts of Istanbul. (Pamuk, 2009, p.83).

The question of a girl's virginity becomes critical for individuals when deciding whether to have a favourable or negative perception of her. When a woman openly converses with men, she becomes famous and a "society girl," as was the case with Fusun. However, as society becomes more westernised, the concept of virginity is evolving. Kemal discusses how society's contemporary attitude is changing: Sex is

not as taboo in Western cultures as it is in Eastern countries. Sexual freedom in society becomes a barometer of how westernised or civilised a society is. The identity of the woman differs from one point to another point, for instance. It depicts the consequence of Westernisation in the form of modern culture.

Few of the young men believed that there were innumerable young men and women willing to sleep with a man just for the fun of it. Such beliefs, which social scientists call urban legends, were so prevalent among the poor, the petite bourgeoisie and recent immigrants from the provinces, who clung to the notion as fervently as Western children cling to Santa Claus (Pamuk, 2009, p.85).

4. Women's Status in Turkey

A traditional girl cannot lose her virginity before her wedding day. The protagonist, Kemal, considers Fusun's status as a modern or traditional girl, as well as her views on sex and virginity: "From a sexual perspective, Kemal paints a picture of feminine identity. According to proponents of Westernisation, as Turkey modernises, the moral code associated with virginity will be forgotten. However, in those days (1980s), even in Istanbul's most westernised circles, a girl who gave up her virginity before marriage faced terrible penalties from society. "Virginity or of unsuitability for marriage—is always in the final event to be understood ethically and religiously from faith" (Weber, 1996, p.83)

According to Kemal, virginity was still viewed as a precious commodity that young girls should guard until the day they married. As a result of the attempt to westernise and modernise, and (maybe more crucially) the haste to urbanise, when a girl lives with a man for several days, society views her differently. Kemal discusses the matter with his friend Zaim, who accuses Kemal of damaging the life of his fiancée, Sibel. Kemal attempts to defend himself against claims of breaching Sibel's virginity in exchange for a marriage promise. He asserts that virginity has historically been associated with unmarried girls' social status. "At a certain age, being a virgin is "enviable" and "normal," yet, at another age, it seems to be "deviant," "embarrassing," and "unenviable" (Jonathan et al., 2016, p.3)

Girls who have been modernised and westernised are urged to be careless with their virginity. Here, we see the conflict between two philosophies, one Western and one Eastern. Historically, European countries have been relatively liberal in terms of sex and premarital interactions that do not negatively impact a woman's social position. In eastern countries such as Turkey, society remains conservative towards sex and marriage. It is common to express the country and culture's conflict in an individual's character.

While Turkish culture has mostly developed and become more westernised, people remain bound by traditional and religious taboos: "In all aspects of life, the East is always considered primitive and the West as advanced" (Mushtaq, 2023, p.516). Once a girl's name is spoiled, whether for good or bad reasons, she is unable to live a regular life. The male-dominated society torments her and makes life difficult for her. It is difficult to control them, so they realise their mistakes themselves. "To end patriarchy, men must confront male domination and stop it" (Jensen, 2017, p.3). She will never be able to live a regular life with the dignity and honour accorded to a common woman. In Western countries, society is completely liberal when it comes to sexuality. Western ideology is ineffective in Eastern societies.

One must be virginal before marrying. Even the Westernised girl, Sibel, conveys her anger and grief toward Kemal for allegedly violating her virginity prior to marriage. A traditional girl, like Fusun, is also aware of her virginity as a component of her sexual identity in society. She forbids her husband, Ferudin, from having a marriage with her in order to maintain her virginity; in this sense, Kemal is the only guy she has ever been with. She persuades Kemal of her virginity and chastity. She is well aware that Kemal adores her lovely body, which is supposed to be "chaste" in the conventional sense. She accuses Kemal of failing to make her an actress out of fear of losing her. Kemal does not want her to have any contact with men. That's the typical male perspective on women. Even the most ardent lover, such as Kemal, becomes sexually obsessed with Fusun's stunning body. The Sibel-Kemal relationships shed light on female sexual identity. Sibel lives with Kemal for several days in an attempt to rescue him from the catastrophic event of his heartbreak, but she is unable to do so. Though she is a Westernised girl, she faces the social issue of society's suspicion of her virginity.

In Turkey's traditional society, how a girl can remain chaste after living with a man is a point of contention. People view women sexually, which either enhances or diminishes their character. Kemal considers Sibel, in particular, when her engagement is called off. Sibel suffers from her fiancée's devastation of her honour and dignity. She chastises Kemal for sullyng her honour by proposing to her and staying with her for many days. She serves as a reminder to Kemal of something like the traditional Turkish society in which they live; Sibel is aware that, despite its Westernisation, Turkey no longer tolerates female premarital relations. Each fiancée anticipates virginity from her fiancée regardless of whether he is a Westernised individual. Kemal plans to marry Fusun. He says to Zaim: "Things are going well. I said, I am going to marry Fusun. I am going to reenter society and bring her with me. Assuming, of course, I can see past those disgusting gossip" (Pamuk, 2009, p.564).

A woman's identity is contingent upon her purity and chastity. Males and females are not equally quantified in units of sex. Nobody questions a man's celibacy, but the same society casts doubt on a girl's virginity." women have a higher tendency not to return to the country due to increasing gender inequality" (Eleveren, 2018, p.10). The Turkish film also addresses the issue of virginity as well as female sexuality. The general public opinion is conservative, and they condemn girls for violating their chastity prior to marriage, but men are not castigated for breaching their virginity. A girl like Sibel understands the anguish of others' suspicions about her personality and overall identity. She serves as a reminder to Kemal that the situation is not as straightforward as he believes. in an outburst of rage and bitterness. Pamuk spoke about the changes in the modernisation of Turkey after the Republic: "In the early years of the twentieth century, and after the founding of the Republic, when the country was aspiring, such clocks rapidly gained favor with the city's middle classes" (Pamuk, 2009, p.85).

The novel focuses on men's perceptions of women as sex objects. Females are subjected to restrictions and servitude in countries such as Turkey. Turkey, like the majority of eastern countries, believes that women belong within four walls. Females are primarily viewed as toys., Women and men cannot coexist socially unless they marry. They are viewed suspiciously, and the female is destined to tarnish her reputation throughout society. Kemal's mother tries to persuade her son to abandon his Fusun obsession. She sheds light on the male perspective on women. She does not believe in things like love in a society as male-dominated as Turkey. The moment men notice a woman expressing interest, they don't bother to consider whether she is good or evil, beautiful or ugly—they simply pounce on her and then starve her. This is merely a function of their conditioning. Men are impatient to quench their thirst and will not wait for anything. According to Kemal's mother, women are not safe in a patriarchal society like Turkey. "The historical ways in which religious, moral, and political values have thus influenced the predominance of patriarchy and its several challenges illuminate and inform a consideration of the continuing power of, and the ongoing legacy of, patriarchy in the contemporary world" (Douglas, 2021, p.25). A female who lives alone without a man faces numerous difficulties concerning her dignity. She is the most vulnerable target for male society in order to quench their thirst. Fusun's mother correctly sheds light on the plight of a woman living in Turkish society without a man.

A lovely widow or divorcee is doomed to sexual harassment by men. As a result, male society is so intolerable that they will never believe a woman could indeed live alone and without sex for the entirety of her life. She tries to convince Kemal as to how Fusun was shielded from Feridun, her husband, with whom Fusun never had marital relations. She articulates her assertion and experience of what happens to a beautiful woman who is not preceded by a man: "I've had a taste of this in my own life," she explains. When it's incredibly difficult to be a beautiful woman in this country, let alone a divorcee—even more difficult than being a beautiful girl—when men are unable to obtain what they desire from a beautiful woman, they do evil things to her. Pamuk, Kemal's father, shares with his son a tragic love story he had with an adolescent girl who died of cancer. Due to his giving it a second thought and social taboos, he was unable to marry her. The man tells Kemal that men should respect women and not judge them based on their sexual orientation.

5. The Real Museum

The elderly gentleman discusses love and male-female relationships. In the case of Fusun, Kemal—a stereotypically masculine figure—abuses her sexually. "students' gender significantly moderated the effect of the gender stereotyping of creativity on creative self-efficacy" (Luo & Guan, 2023, p.1.). He sexually exploits her and coerces her into leaving him. According to Fusun, the difference between a man's and a woman's love is different; it is as pure as platonic love for a woman. However, a man makes platonic love and then waits seconds to perform an erotic act. "International specialists examine the Platonic distinction between higher and lower forms of eros, the role of the higher form in the ascent of the soul and the concept of Beauty". (O'Brien & Dillon, 2023, p.81). A male desire to impose himself on a woman as soon as possible. On the other hand, a single error on the part of a girl can devastate her entire life, as her identity in society is defined solely by her sexual orientation. The story of a person who has fallen in love does not end with the death of their beloved. Kemal remembers her death in an accident his memory has given him pain for many years:

A month later, I found the wreck, and I remembered, as I touched the various parts of the ruined Chevrolet, what I had recalled in my dreams: that just after the crash, Fusun and I had looked into each other's eyes. Fusun knew she was about to die, and during those two or three seconds, she told me with her pleading eyes that she did not want to, that she would cling to life as long as she could, hoping for me to save her but I could only smile at my beautiful fiancé, still so full of vitality, the love of my life. (Pamuk,2009, p.670).

After her demise, Kemal constructed a museum dedicated to her possessions, deriving a sense of contentment and fulfilment from these artefacts. At the age of sixty-two, he passed away, resulting in the transfer of museum management to his acquaintance, Orhan Pamuk, a writer, who assumed responsibility for the establishment's administration. Pamuk is the creator of "The Museum of Innocence," a museum that is based on his novel. In 2012, a museum was established in Istanbul dedicated to honouring a fictional heroine. In Turkey, I looked at the Panorama Museum 1453, Kabatepe Simulation Center and Museum, Istanbul Museum of Science and Technology in Islam, and Istanbul Military Museum. All of them look predominantly at Turkey's Ottoman heritage, which has been, and still is, a strategic element of Erdoğan's cultural policy" (Posocco, 2021, p.10). The narrative of Kemal and Fusun's romantic relationship spans over 700 pages. The individual intentionally inflicts torment against Kemal as a means of retribution for his mistreatment and objectification of her as a sexual entity. Despite her refusal to engage in sexual intercourse with her husband, she endeavours to convey her contentment to Kemal, provoking feelings of envy inside him. Finally, she concludes to initiate divorce proceedings and enter into matrimony with Kemal. Regrettably, while en route to Europe for the tour, the untimely demise of the individual occurs due to a vehicular collision, leaving Kemal to grapple with the recollections associated with the deceased. Kemal established The Museum of Innocence, a museum devoted to preserving her personal belongings and commemorating her legacy. Pamuk discusses an additional sad love narrative, culminating in a catastrophic outcome.

The narrative of Kemal and Fusun's romantic relationship evolves and ultimately concludes tragically, mirroring the pattern observed in all of Kemal's previous amorous encounters. "The novel narrates the struggles of several protagonists and their failed attempts to self-actualise themselves in the modes that accentuate the tensions between the characters (Nuri, 2023, p.24). The distressing experiences of heartbreak and disillusionment often eclipse the joys associated with romantic love. Upon reaching the outcome of the literary work, it becomes evident that the individuals involved in romantic relationships with the protagonist are notably distant from a state of satisfaction or fulfilment. The Kemal-Fusun couple experiences transient moments of bliss while enduring pervasive trials and tribulations inside their romantic bond. According to the novelist, a significant portion of our existence is occupied with grief and the negative aspects of love. "We often associate empathy with love, compassion, and altruism. However, one can also understand empathy as an instrument of assessment and observation,

which does not necessarily include the need to alleviate others' difficulties." (Marcinko et al, 2022, p.3). Despite their intense love for one another, the individuals in question have endured a lot of hardship. Kemal's perpetual anguish evokes a profound emotional response from the readers. The individual's preoccupation with the young woman and the subsequent deterioration of his life can be attributed to the limited number of days in which he experienced happiness. He perseveres for a duration exceeding ten years, from 1975 to 1985, to reinstate his affection. He undergoes a profound metamorphosis throughout this profound suffering, emerging as an entirely distinct individual from his previous self, subjected to ridicule and amusement by others.

Nevertheless, the ardent lover remains undeterred in their pursuit of love, displaying unwavering passion despite obstacles. The protagonist in Pamuk's work has significant psychological distress due to the consequences of his errors. Regarding Kemal, he commits the error of erroneously perceiving Fusun solely as a sexual entity. He intends to retain her presence even after entering into matrimony with another aesthetically pleasing individual. The individual in question will experience the anguish of an unsuccessful romantic partnership. An individual's sense of self-worth appears to have been significantly diminished, leading to an abrupt departure from the individual's life for around one year and a half (339 days). Fusun's mother articulates the anguish that Fusun is experiencing due to Kemal's betrayal.

The woman in question presents herself to Kemal as being in a state of matrimony. "Holy matrimony, with its sacred affection" (Graff, 2004, p.219). Still, she later discloses that she is currently separated from her spouse and has not had any marital connection with him for an extended period. The individual has a stoic demeanour and consistently refrains from outwardly expressing any signs of pain in the presence of others. She inflicts torment upon Kemal by deliberately presenting herself as engaged in a close and personal connection with him in his presence. While the protagonist harbours affection for Kemal, the narrative diverges significantly as she is compelled to inflict harm upon him in response to his transgression against her sense of honour. "The individual possesses absolute authority over her spouse and compels him to consent to her requests. Spills over into matters of sexual behavior" (Less, 1990, p.24). She exhibits signs of emotional distress when the individual is involved in a vehicular collision. However, the romantic relationships depicted in Pamuk's narrative through growth and development finally meet an unfortunate demise. The romantic relationship between Fusun and Kemal serves as an additional illustration of the recurring motif explored inside the novel. The narrative in the current novel diverges from conventional storytelling techniques yet ultimately culminates in a tragic outcome, effectively portraying the complete absence of love in the human experience. "First of all, people are much unhappier than one thinks . . . and second, there is no such thing as a grownup person." (Toksoz,2003, p.13). Pamuk, by creating a new museum *gi*, provides free entry to the people who desire to visit his museum with the novel:

Those who read the book will certainly wish to come here to see the locks of Fusun's hair, her clothes, and her other belongings, just as you have. So please put a map at the end of the novel so that anyone who cares can make their way on foot through Istanbul's streets. Those who know the story of me, Fusun, certainly remember her as they walk that Street and see those prospects just do each and every day (Pamuk, 2009, p.85).

6. Conclusion

In his work, Pamuk introduces the romantic relationship between Sibel and Kemal as a secondary narrative that complements the overarching topic of love between Kemal and Fusun. Empathise with Sibel as she has experienced a significant setback without justifiable cause. In the context of an unfaithful romantic partner, the individual assumes the role of a committed and cherished figure, even though their lover seems concerned for them. 30. The individual articulates her dissatisfaction towards him due to his negligent conduct towards her and for compromising her chastity before marriage with another individual. The individual in question brings to Kemal's awareness the predicament faced by Fusun, as well as the incident wherein he sought to objectify her for sexual purposes. She directs Kemal's focus towards the socioeconomic inequality between high and low economic statuses. The individual resides within a social circle that has adopted Western cultural influences. They are currently experiencing high satisfaction and contentment in their life. However, the other individual mentioned, Fusun, captivates their interest and consistently attracts their attention. The individual in question demonstrates a sincere endeavour to retrieve and reintegrate the subject into their routine, yet ultimately fails to achieve this objective in a highly unsatisfactory manner.

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Authors contributions

Author 1 (Sangeeth kumar A): conceptualized and developed the arguments presented in the article and drafted the research paper.

Author 2 (Dr. Prakash A): contributed to the literature review, validation of the arguments presented.

Author 3 (Dr. Rajeswari A): contributed to the development of the ideas, edit and revision of the paper.

Author 4 (Paulsy Diana P): supported to the edit and revision of the paper.

Author 5 (Dr. Jayapaul V.L): contributed to the edit and revision of the paper.

Author 6 (Dr. Thenmozhi A): Review and Proofread.

Author 7 (Dr. Robert S): provided critical insights and ensured the overall clarity of the paper.

Author 8 (Dr. Revathi P): Review and Proofread.

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