



## Orhan Pamuk'un *Masumiyet Metinleri*'nde Postmodern 'Yüce'

### The Postmodern 'Sublime' in Orhan Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence*

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#### Abstract

Orhan Pamuk published *The Museum of Innocence* in 2008, two years after getting his title of the first Turkish Nobel laureate. He opened the city museum named "Museum of Innocence" four years after the publication of this novel, which he had dreamed of collecting the objects to be exhibited for many years. In the same year, he published a catalogue titled *The Innocence of Objects* (2012) for this museum in which Pamuk writes about the objects, their relations to his life and his city İstanbul. The documentary film on this city museum, *Innocence of Memories* (2015), is shot in a collaboration between Pamuk and British director Grant Gee. Finally, a retrospective book titled *The Innocence of Memories*—which includes the screenplay, the conversation between the author and the director, and

Geliş tarihi (Received): 8-08-2022– Kabul tarihi (Accepted): 23-12-2022

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selected frames of this film—was published in 2016. All these written and visual texts by Pamuk, which are preferred to be named *The Texts of Innocence* in this study, open the way for an interplay and intertextuality re-represented by the spiral metaphor. This paper suggests, based on this metaphor that signifies an ‘unwinding path’ going through all these narratives, Orhan Pamuk produces the dynamics of the sublime that is related to presenting the unrepresentable, free play, aesthetic formation, and the gaze of the perceiver in the postmodernist era. In this sense, this study aims to trace the postmodern dynamics of the sublime, turning around a set of objects presented and (re)presented to the reader, the museum-goer, and the audience within the fiction, the fictionalized non-fiction, and visual art narratives by Orhan Pamuk.

**Keywords:** *Orhan Pamuk, The Museum of Innocence, postmodern sublime, object, representation*

## Öz

Orhan Pamuk, ilk Nobel ödüllü Türk unvanını aldıktan iki yıl sonra, 2008 yılında *Masumiyet Müzesi*'ni yayımlar. İçinde sergilenecek nesnelere toplayarak uzun yıllardır açma hayali kurduğu “Masumiyet Müzesi” adındaki şehir müzesini ise romanın yayımlanmasından dört yıl sonra açar. Aynı yıl, müzede sergilenen nesnelere, bu nesnelere yaşamıyla ve yaşadığı şehir İstanbul ile ilişkisini anlatan *Şeylerin Masumiyeti* (2012) adlı müze kataloğunu yayımlar. Bunları takiben, bu şehir müzesini konu alan *Hatıraların Masumiyeti* (2015) adlı belgesel, Orhan Pamuk ve İngiliz yönetmen Grant Gee iş birliğiyle çekilir. Son olarak, belgeselin senaryosunu, yazar ile yönetmen arasındaki röportajı ve bu belgeselden seçilmiş kareleri içeren *Hatıraların Masumiyeti* adlı retrospektif bir kitap 2016 yılında yayımlanır. Bu çalışmada *Masumiyet Metinleri* olarak adlandırılması tercih edilen Orhan Pamuk’un tüm bu yazılı ve görsel metinleri, sarmal metaforu ile temsil edilen bir karşılıklı etkileşimin ve metinlerarasılığın yolunu açmaktadır. Bu makale, Orhan Pamuk’un tüm bu anlatılarının içinden “çözülerek giden bir yolu” temsil eden sarmal metaforundan yola çıkarak, Pamuk’un postmodernist çağda temsil edilemeyen, serbest oyunu, estetik biçimi ve metinleri algılayan kişinin bakışını ortaya koyan bu metinlerinde yücenin dinamiklerini ürettiğini öne sürmektedir. Bu anlamda bu çalışma, okura, müze gezginine ve izleyiciye sunulan ve yeniden temsil edilen bir dizi nesne etrafında dönen yücenin postmodern dinamiklerinin Orhan Pamuk’un kurgusunda (roman), kurgulaştırılmış kurgu-dışı anlatılarında (müze kataloğu ve film üzerine kitap) ve görsel sanat anlatılarındaki (müze ve belgesel film) izini sürmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *Orhan Pamuk, Masumiyet Müzesi, postmodern yüce, nesne, temsil*

## Introduction

Orhan Pamuk's novel *The Museum of Innocence*, published in 2008, two years after getting his first Turkish Nobel laureate title, is based on a devastating life-long love story that plays with the stories of the objects. Starting with this novel, Pamuk paves the way for an interplay between the works of art he creates. When Pamuk was writing this novel, he imagined establishing a city museum named the "Museum of Innocence," which was finally opened four years after the novel's publication and was awarded the *European Museum of the Year* in 2014. Following the museum's opening, Pamuk published *The Innocence of Objects*. This book held in that very same museum retells the objects depicted in the novel and displayed in the museum. In this book, Pamuk also includes the relationship of the objects to his life and his city, İstanbul. In addition to them, a documentary about this city museum and İstanbul, *Innocence of Memories* (2015), was directed by British filmmaker Grant Gee and a retrospective book, *The Innocence of Memories*, which includes the screenplay, the conversation between the author and the director, and selected frames of this film, appeared in 2016. In these works, Pamuk uses the spiral metaphor by embedding it into the novel and virtually inserting a spiral figure on the museum floor. I claim that this metaphor represents an 'unwinding path' going through all these narratives and referring to the dynamism of representation, perception, and sensation in life and art. Contrary to the re-circling, which passes over the same circles, the spiral is open to new unwinding paths, new representations, and narrations. In this sense, I argue that these unwinding texts, which I will call *The Texts of Innocence* by Orhan Pamuk in this study, trace the spiral of artistic and aesthetic pleasure in the process of creation and perception, which makes them an example of postmodern sublime.

*The Texts of Innocence* evolve out of a set of objects presented and re-presented to the reader, the museum visitor, and the audience within the storytelling of fiction, fictionalized non-fiction, and visual art narratives of the museum and the film. While Pamuk's style of rendering a flaring text *within a text within another text* reveals his creative aesthetics and experimentalism, the perception of these texts paves the way for an aesthetic pleasure that is shared with the author. This creative process and its perception are mostly related to an ongoing discussion on aesthetics: the undefinable and unrepresentable *sublime*. Initiated with Longinus's text *On Sublimity*, in which he defines the sublime as "the echo of a noble mind" (2010: 141), this concept is discussed regarding not only the writer but also the receiver of a literary work. Longinus's focus on the emotional intensity of sublimity concerns the emotional psychology of the author and the audience. Especially in the eighteenth century, Longinus's ancient text maintained a reputation regarding literary critics' focus on the concept, like Joseph Addison did in his writings published in *The Spectator*. Addison made several points on the sublime, such as the pleasure of the imagination, which originates from "great, uncommon, or beautiful" objects and requires a unified "magnificence" (1712). By analysing the sublime effect caused by the mind's attempt to fill itself with a magnificent object, he provided his successors, like Edmund Burke, to think about the sublime effect in detail. Initiated by the ancient philosophers, the experience of the sublime and the status of

a sublime object have been the primary concern not only of aesthetics but also morality and psychology. While Kant associates the experience of the sublime with nature in his *Critique of Judgment* (2007[1790]), accepting that the sublime is related to natural objects which force the mind to the hard work of conceiving the transcendent, some other philosophers, such as Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Schiller focus on the potential of artificial objects, mostly in visual works of art and written texts, to explain the sublime. Many post-Kantian thinkers alter the path of the sublime from the natural to the artificial creation of forms, which lies in modernist and postmodernist thought.

Especially based on Schopenhauer's aesthetics, the sublime's revival from the idea of its relation to the transcendent and sacred to the human-made artworks was discussed as the core matter of aesthetics by many postmodernists such as Paul de Man and Lyotard, whose discussion of art and literature conceives the sublime mostly related to the human creations. Although Lyotard stays closer to the classical understanding of the sublime in terms of its focus on the senses, such as pain and pleasure, in his essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?", he brings forward the autonomy of the writer or the artist whose work is not "governed by the preestablished rules" (Kitson, 2019: 81). In this sense, by challenging the understanding of aesthetics and the sublime as natural entities, Lyotard supports the strength of art and the artist who uses free-play, re-representation, experimentalism, and artistic creation to arouse the feeling of the sublime both for the creator of art and its perceiver. The postmodern understanding of the sublime enhanced to address the sublime object of art as the source of a productive signification and interpretation system. In this respect, many theorists commented on how the sublime experience includes the gaze, interpretation, perception, and senses of the perceiver. While Deleuze identified the sublime as the *pure sensation* that affects the body, even the nervous system, Slavoj Žižek theorized the sublime by referring to the gaze of the perceiver.

In this sense, this paper argues that Orhan Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence*, which use experimentalism, re-representation, interplay, and intertextuality, unfold the dynamics of the postmodern sublime for the author as well as for the perceiver (the novel reader, the museum-goer, and the documentary spectator). Combining "the object-oriented Burkean sublime" with "the subject-oriented Kantian sublime [which] anticipates an irresistible effect upon the audience by leading them into the realm of the incomprehensible and unrepresentable" (İpekçi, 2020: 280), Pamuk creates a world of sublimity aroused by the re-represented objects (his written, visual, and even audial texts) and perceived by the re-interpreting subjects (his readers, museum-goers and film spectators).

### **The spiral of re-representation in *The Texts of Innocence***

The interplay between Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence* is based on the formation and representation of representation, which results in high artistic practice. The novel, Pamuk's chronologically first published work amongst these texts, embodies the words as the representation of the objects, emotions, and thoughts related to them. On the other hand,

the opening of the museum, the composing of the catalogue, the premier of the film at the Venice International Film Festival in 2015, and the book about this film render a series of visual as well as narrative *re-representations*. For instance, the museum re-represents the objects defined in the novel, and the museum's catalogue re-represents these objects within a new narration and visual collage. In this sense, in Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence*, narration, visual objects, and fictional visuality all exist within the presence of the other. It results in a representational spiral—a metaphor Pamuk uses for many of his ideas about time, narration, and representation. Pamuk's representational spiral is the source of the experience of the postmodern sublime, not aroused by the greatness in nature or natural objects that cannot be totally represented, but, contrary to this Kantian approach, by the new efforts of re-representation. Thus, the sublime feeling in his texts is predominantly connected to the experience of art as a way of creation and perception.

The paradox inherent in the experience of the sublime is that representation is germane to the representational insufficiency, which identifies “the sentiment of the sublime” (as cited in Tabbi, 1995: x), combining pleasure and pain at the same time. Whereas many postmodernists share the same idea of the sublime about its relation to the contradictory but also complementary feelings of pain and pleasure, they deviate from the classical understanding that these feelings are together a response to the greatness of nature and natural phenomenon. Their focus is on the primacy of representation as well as the insufficiency, even impossibility, of representation which attracts the artist and the perceiver going through a process of pleasure and pain. Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence*, the representations in themselves and the representations of each other, operate within this mechanism of the sublime based on pain and pleasure, frequently experienced albeit hardly expressed. First and foremost, his first text, the novel, is based on the storytelling of happy and sorrowful memories of the narrator—the protagonist Kemal, who tries to speak the unspeakable to the reader: his life-long love for Füsün and the inexpressible pain of her death.

Kemal's attempt to present the unrepresentable (his unconditional love and the pain of her death) is the main source of his motivation to express his experience of the sublime and transport it to his readers and future museum visitors. Exclusively, Kemal's way of representing his life via symbolic objects gets the narration extremely close to the postmodern sublime experienced by the narrator, the author, and the reader. At that point, Pamuk's style incorporates Lyotard's writings on the sublime (1985, 1994), which he describes as an attempt to “present the unrepresentable.” To Lyotard, presenting the unrepresentable gives the artist freedom of expression of a story by creating allusions that resist presenting. In this regard, besides verbal representations of the objects to describe his feelings and thoughts, Kemal decides to open a museum to present the objects and their stories visually. Thus, Kemal and/or Pamuk open another dimension of representation in order to try to convey the inexpressible or unrepresentable and invite the reader and the museum visitor to get the feeling of the sublime within creative art.

The postmodern free-play of representation is evident in terms of the opening of the museum in which the objects whose stories are narrated by Kemal in the novel are displayed

within a new creative representation. Those objects once triggered the feeling of *epiphany* for Kemal in the novel—a concept defined as “a sudden spiritual manifestation” mostly inclined by any “commonest object” whose “soul, whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance” and “seems to us radiant” (Abrams, 1999: 80)—are re-represented in the museum as natural visual objects to spark the experience of the sublime, a moment of *wonder and dread*. It is a similar mechanism to an epiphany for the visitor to the museum. Laura Barrett, in her article “‘How the Dead Speak to the Living’: Intertextuality and the Postmodern Sublime in *White Noise*,” questions the possibility of epiphany and sublime in postmodern literature, which many critics reject on the ground that technology and media have complicated their possibility. However, Barrett concludes that the postmodern sublime and epiphany mostly arise “through re-construction, through representation, through language. Ironically, the narrative itself, is the means of self-discovery” (2001: 109). A similar postmodern sublime is observed for Kemal, or Pamuk himself, through representation within the borders of language, storytelling, and visual art. The sublime through representation is also experienced by the reader, the museum visitor, and the film spectator, who appreciate the representation of representation through re-construction. As an illustration, the display of the beige handbag with the fake brand of Jenny Colon gives the museum visitor “the pleasure of facing the fake of a fake designer item that becomes an actress in the cast of objects Pamuk creates” (Ogut, 2017: 50). A similar representation of representation arises a similar aesthetic pleasure in the film spectator when s/he realizes the interview of Pamuk on the TV screens of various houses in İstanbul.

In this process of re-representation and the experience of the sublime it creates, the semi-documentary film about the museum is a significant narration attempting to represent and re-present Pamuk’s earlier texts: the novel and the museum, all in one. The shooting of the film, as well as the following published book on it, *The Innocence of Memories* (2016), contributes to the annulate representation operating like a spiral. When the postmodern theorists revealed their theories on the relationship between the sublime and representation, they mostly referred to Kant’s concept of *Darstellung*, the “presentation” or “representation” of aesthetic ideas, which he describes as “a representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking, though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it” (as cited in Ginsborg, 2019). Reconsidering Kant’s *Darstellung*, those postmodernists interpret the aesthetic experience of the sublime in terms of its relation to the imagination. The imagination aims to present an intrinsically unrepresentable object; however, by going against its limit, this experience of the sublime creates “a crisis for the faculty of presentation in the form of irresolvable conflict between it and a set of objects that remain fundamentally inaccessible to it, but that it strives to present nonetheless” (Johnson, 2012: 118-119). Although this process is accepted as a negative presentation in line with the unrepresentable, it is also a free aesthetic process in which imagination continues to represent not an object but an intuition.

The paradoxical relation between presentation and the impossibility of presentation is named “*differend*” by Lyotard (1994), which results in the feeling of sublimity. The paradox

is that the absolute cannot be presented by symbolic representation though it is required by the faculty of reason. Lyotard, in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, claims that this paradox results in a representation of “a sign of the presence of the absolute” (1994: 152) which surpasses presentation. The absolute is represented at that point via symbolic presentation—namely literary and artistic symbolization that works through the form. Pamuk’s texts, which are based on many transcendental concepts such as love, death, and innocence, are also significant attempts to represent them as various parts of the absolute.

Similar to Lyotard’s classification of avant-garde modernism, which plays with realities and presents multiple perspectives resulting in the experience of the sublime, Pamuk’s texts challenge the unrepresentable by presenting “the fact that the unrepresentable exists” (Lyotard, 1985: 78). For instance, among many objects narrated in the novel and displayed in the museum, the broken porcelain heart is exhibited “to represent his [Kemal’s] heartbreak” (Pamuk, 2009: 271) and “the advertisement of Paradison, a painkiller” to illustrate “an anatomical chart of love pains” (Cabinet, 26). Though love and loss of the beloved have been expressed so much in art and literature, they might still be classified in the category of ‘supersensible’ that goes beyond representation but attracts the artist to represent as well as the perceiver to witness this representation—the junction where the sublime asserts itself. The counterpart of love, another absolute resistance to be represented, is death—which constitutes the core of Pamuk’s texts with the partnership of love. The deaths of Kemal’s father and Füsün are narrated and represented via the objects in the novel and the museum. Kemal narrates what he senses because of his father’s death as follows: “With the death of my father, it wasn’t just the objects of everyday life that had changed; even the most ordinary street scenes had become irreplaceable mementos of a lost world whose every detail figured in the meaning of the whole” (Pamuk, 2009: 226). By relating the feeling of absolute loss to *the irreplaceable mementos of a lost world*, Kemal attempts to redefine and represent death. His father’s false teeth exhibited in the museum exemplify the attempt of Kemal, who is attached to the objects more than before to compensate for the inexpressible senses. The death of Füsün is also represented by some objects, one of which is the accident report that represents the “journey to another world” (the title of Chapter 79). In this sense, though Pamuk challenges the unrepresentable by presenting the objects and their stories again in the museum, the absolute and the notions related to it—such as love and death—still resist representation in the fullest sense. *The Texts of Innocence* by Pamuk, either verbal or visual, generate the experience of the sublime emerging “within representation which nonetheless exceeds the possibility of representation” (as cited in Tüzün, 2012: 137). To exceed this possibility of representation, Pamuk uses aesthetic tools such as form and experimentalism in which the sublime is deployed by taking place “on the occasion of a form; thus, the object has an attraction on the mind” (Lyotard, 1993: 110). His experimentalism in the form of his narratives attracts the mind of their receivers resulting in a sublime feeling.

### **The way to the sublime: Aesthetic formations in *The Texts of Innocence***

Representation is created chiefly with limitless aesthetic formations in avant-garde literature and postmodernism. Shawn Alfrey, examining Žižek's "ridiculous sublime" in aesthetic tradition contrary to the Romantic sublime, situates the sublime within the reproductive chain of signification, in which the "sublime object" keeps interpretation circulating "not [in] the traditionally vertical domain of transcendence" but in a "spatial, architectural, horizontal" way (2017: 63). This spatial, architectural, and horizontal way is observed in the reading process of Pamuk's texts as well as within different perspectives of the museum visitor and the film spectator. In this sense, this way provides new approaches and perspectives to the sublime object, as Žižek puts it, "which cannot be approached too closely: if we get too near it, it loses its sublime features and becomes an ordinary vulgar object—it can persist only in an interspace, in an intermediate state, viewed from a certain perspective, half-seen" (1989: 170). In this context, Pamuk's texts enable us to conceive verbal or visual objects from different perspectives that allow new representations and interpretations. Especially the formation of the objects in the museum and the museum's interior architect present the possibility of various perspectives that invite the visitor to experience the sublime. To give a specific example, in the early days of collecting the objects for his museum, Kemal writes a letter. Pamuk mentions its presence in the novel and displays it in the museum; however, the content is not known either by the readers of the novel or the visitors to the museum. The presence of the letter in the novel without its content, as well as its presence as a mystery in the museum, is related to the aesthetic sublime that is aroused by not approaching the object too close.

Pamuk's presenting the objects, either as a part of narration or visibility, paves the way for new interpretations by the perceivers. The aesthetic way that creates the sublime is obvious in terms of the independent representation and re-signification of the novel, the museum, and the film. While the dialogue amongst the texts raises the experience of the sublime, their separate existence substantially unfolds aesthetic sublimity. In the catalogue of the museum, *The Innocence of Objects*, Pamuk states that the core of "The Museum of Innocence," both the novel and the museum, was imagined and created together from the beginning; however, on the last day of the formation of the museum, he apprehends the museum that is not just an illustration of the novel and cannot be narrowed to the narration of the museum has an independent soul (2012: 11, 18). This independence or free-soul of the objects, the words, the museum, the photographs in the catalogue, or the film operates within the formation of aesthetic items, namely the verbal and visual objects. It is the point of the rise of the sublime when aesthetic formation takes precedence over representation by developing "the ability somehow to gain authority to achieve power and voice" (Alfrey, 2017: 63).

The aesthetic formation wandering through different levels of representation works within the aesthetic collage of Pamuk's texts. For instance, in the catalogue for the museum, the additional photographs not derived from either the novel or the museum but hold a nostalgic sense and feeling are given in a new composition contributing to the creation of a unitary



soul while persevering to be identified. The revelation of the collage creates the experience of the aesthetic sublime just as the objects do—which are “not presented in a chronological or taxonomic order” (Ogut, 2017: 47)—within an aesthetic collage in the museum engendering “a unique configuration among them” (Pamuk, 2012: 51). The collage of Aunt Nesibe’s sewing box with “the view of Istanbul adorning its lid,” her scissors, pins, measuring tape, thimbles, and “swatches of material and lace” (Pamuk, 2009) displayed in box 3 in the museum is just one example among many others. Pamuk claims that the items of the museum “composed with attention and compassion” get a much more substantial meaning than they carry in life (2012: 51). The impression they arouse due to their aesthetic formation is unique and performative such as in the film for which Pamuk collaborated with the director, Grant Gee, who has “carefully assembled a collage of textual fragments, painterly visuals and mysterious voiceovers” (Pulver, 2015).

The aesthetics of the postmodern sublime requires the ingenious forms of postmodern art observed in Pamuk’s works. The ingenious forms even turn into formless aesthetics at some points. By breaking the rules of traditional composition, the formation and style of those texts are partly based on aesthetic coincidence. As Pamuk mentions, the coincidence in the arrangement of the objects unfolds the feeling of beauty as frequently observed in the museum (2012: 83). Quoting Velican, the 16th-century artist of miniature, Pamuk supports the idea that beauty means rediscovering *the thing* seen by the eye in this world but already known by the mind instinctively, and the coincidental beauty—as the rediscovery of the eye—is the biggest happiness that the mind or the hand had not consciously considered or intended before (2012: 86). In this respect, *The Texts of Innocence*, in which the lion’s share is visuality, formation, and aesthetic collage, contribute to what Pamuk names aesthetic happiness and rediscovered coincidental beauty for the perceivers. To instantiate some of them: the entirely new objects and even a machine created by various old machine parts in the cabinet numbered 29, the attachment of the picture of a girl with a red shirt to some photographs of the places where Kemal fantasies that he sees Füsün in chapter 32, the creative collage of the cigarette butts of Füsün both in the museum and in the catalogue symbolised with the photographs representing Füsün’s hand while smoking, the food and newspaper column replicas, the photographs of the ships sailing through Bosphorus. What Pamuk names the happiness in gazing at those objects is undoubtedly related to the *deep feeling* that cannot be separated from the feeling of the sublime. In the catalogue corresponding to chapter 41 of the novel, titled “Swimming on My Back,” Pamuk mentions that he puts various photographs of the sailing ships on the Bosphorus that stimulate “a deep feeling” that he cannot explain exactly, and he adds that he founded The Museum (2012: 171) to be able to express that feeling. In the museum, besides virtual representations, he uses an audio guide and additional sounds, such as ship horns and some other city sounds, to express what he calls *deep feelings*. In this sense, Pamuk’s *Texts of Innocence* are diverse efforts serving the same purpose—to express, or at least to get closer to expressing, the inexpressible by using creative aesthetic formations and methods.

### Visuality and the sublime in *The Texts of Innocence*

Considered as a whole, each of Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence* uses visuality to express and impress the feeling of aesthetic beauty, a notion Pamuk mentions in his Nobel lecture, declaring he writes "because it is exciting to turn all of life's beauties and riches into words" among the other reasons (2006). In doing so, his wish to be highly experimental and performative, besides his desire to make people take pleasure in his experimentalism (Pamuk, 2017: 100), is the intersection point of the sublime experience for the artist and the perceiver. Pamuk sequences his literary texts with visual texts to present, as Lyotard utters, "the unrepresentable in presentation itself" (1985: 81). Thus, Pamuk's *Texts of Innocence* exemplify the postmodern sublimity, which is "expressible not in any single text but in the spaces between texts" (Barrett, 2001: 113).

The spaces Pamuk creates, either in his written texts or visual representations, are distinctive in their visuality and architecture, which identifies Pamuk as a novelist of imaginative visualization. While Pamuk uses objects to tell a story as well as telling the stories of those objects, he draws pictorial narrations by using them in the novel, the museum, and the catalogue. In *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist*, he clearly states that when he transforms his thoughts into words, he strives to "visualize each scene like a film sequence, and each sentence like a painting" (2010: 94). Believing that he is accepted as a "visual writer" who appeals to the visual imagination of the reader (Pamuk, 2017: 82), Pamuk frequently states that novel writing and painting hold a similar process in terms of aesthetic creation and perception. Especially in his book *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist*—in which he focuses on how the novelists work, the novels are written, and they affect their readers—he claims the novels are "three-dimensional fictions" (2010: 26) and they have a "museum-like quality" (2010: 135). Like painting a picture or composing a visual art craft, writing a novel requires visual imagination by considering both the whole picture and the separate parts of it. Pamuk's style in *The Texts of Innocence* presupposes the arrangement of emotions and thoughts with the objects that frame and represent them. While Pamuk achieves this combination "with a single deft stroke, in one sentence" in the novel form (Pamuk, 2010: 111), he gives the same *single deft stroke* in an object, a photograph, and a film frame, by visualizing the words and verbalizing the visuality. In this process, the picturesque narration of his texts is based on giving the moment in time, an object in a vision, and the word in the narration. It requires imagining the world as a picture in which the perceiver could grab the moment of the experience of the sublime.

Pamuk strongly believes that in the art of the novel, we "might say, 'In the beginning there seems to be the picture, but it must be told in words'" (2010: 114). Thus, novel writing and reading work through visuality that requires imagining the world as a whole picture. In terms of this visuality, his narratives' relation to the sublime is noteworthy because of the sublime's relation to visuality. Pamuk considers the writer and the reader as a person "standing before a landscape painting," thus, "the writer's attention to visual detail, and the reader's ability to transform words into a large landscape painting through visualization, are decisive" (Pamuk, 2010: 8). At that point, the visualizing reader is much closer to the

experience of the sublime since s/he is “powerfully struck by the extraordinary nature of the things” (2010: 3) and seeks to conceive them in wholeness.

The attempt to conceive wholeness is akin to grasping the sublime, an attempt to perceive what is unperceivable. Referring to this attempt, Pamuk designates it as going beyond the limits of ourselves and perceiving everything as a great whole, which was the goal of the ancient Chinese painters who were trying to “capture the poetry of vast landscapes” (2010: 72). The point in doing so is to find the imaginary centre situated in *the whole* which enables us to perceive the centre and the whole, or the totality, at the same time. What Pamuk names the centre corresponds to “a fragment of knowledge, an intuition, a clue about *the deepest thing* [italics mine]” (Pamuk, 2010: 27). The power of this centre is significant as it embodies a sense, knowledge, and intuition which are also embodied within the sublimity.

Pamuk relates the importance of seeing a centre in totality, as well as the general landscape simultaneously, to a central feeling in the totality; i.e., the central feeling of *The Texts of Innocence* is “Turkish melancholia” (*hüzün* in Turkish), which combines pleasure and pain at the same time. Though Turkish melancholia is associated with feelings of sadness and sorrow in a general sense, it is also allied with a kind of pleasure occasioned by the free choice of declining a vain enjoyment. In this respect, rather than giving a readerly text that the reader or the spectator perceives as a vain enjoyment, Pamuk presents a writerly text which invites the perceiver to experience aesthetic pain and pleasure—probably experienced by its creator as well. Technically, to arouse a similar feeling in the perceiver of those texts, the visual and the verbal form are combined with visual imagination. To Pamuk, in this formation, the novel is constructed upon minor points such as “narrative units, subjects, patterns, subplots, mini-stories, poetic moments, personal experiences, [and] bits of information” (2010: 78) that are similar to the Aristotelian points of time which are the smallest indivisible entities. In this sense, the novels present “frozen moments” just like in the paintings, and they visualize the “word-formed moments, these points of Time” which are transformed into Space (Pamuk, 2010: 97). When Pamuk’s texts are considered as a whole, it is observed that not only the novel and the other written texts but also the museum and the film embody those points or moments which attempt to render totality by conceiving a central feeling in it.

In all of those texts, one single point or moment, as well as the feeling it gives, corresponds to an image, which is named “the right image” by Pamuk (2010: 94). To verbalize the visual and to visualize the verbal is related to the right image that melts literature and visual arts in the same pot. In all of *The Texts of Innocence*, the right image appears as a point in totality as in Chinese landscape paintings. To Pamuk, that is the point and the moment of feeling “the *thrill* [italics mine] of being in the presence of everything all at once” and “the *dizzy* [italics mine] pleasure of being in a world which we cannot see in its entirety” (2010: 98). His definition of the perceiver’s feeling *the thrill* and *the dizzy pleasure* while striving to enter the painting or a novel to conceive the biggest picture through the right images mirrors the feeling of the aesthetic sublime. As an example of this feeling, the brilliant case among his texts is probably the unique cigarette butts displayed in the museum—corresponding to

the unique moods of Füsün as well as “most truly to Aristotle’s moments” as depicted in the novel (Pamuk, 2009: 396, 397)—and the shooting of those butts in the film by enlarging the focus from a single butt to 4,213 cigarette butts that create a sublime totality existing in uniqueness. Referring to Lyotard’s statement that “the figural arises as the coexistence of incommensurable or heterogeneous spaces, of the figurative in the textual or the textual in the figurative,” Sebnem Timur Ogut mentions that the wall of the cigarette butts is an excellent example of “the mix of the textual and the figural” in the museum as “a heterogenous space” (2017: 54). As a figurative image, a single cigarette buff holds meaning in itself and the totality simultaneously. By using the image of smoking attached to many feelings—little or extreme, pleasure or sadness—that govern the human soul, Pamuk gives the impression of the sublime moment not only within the wall of the butts but also in an awe-inspiring scene of the film. This scene makes the spectator perceive that each smoking is unique by telling its own story. However, it loses this uniqueness in the crowd of the others, though still expressing inexpressible moods. The experience of the sublime in this example, like in many others, is related to giving a fascination with visual novelty to daily objects and “awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of the world before us” (Pamuk, 2010: 177).

The particular in totality and its sublimity are notable in the museum, the catalogue, and the film, as well as in the novel. For each of them, the feeling of gazing at a landscape, detecting a particular item while focusing on it, and considering the whole by the deep feeling it awakens are all remarkable. This experience and “the uniqueness of these sensations” (Pamuk, 2010: 45), as well as perceptions, correspond to the pleasure promised by the totality formed within the particulars. The feeling of the sublime is defined chiefly as arising through the insufficiency of the imagination to grasp an object, either natural or representative, or a phenomenon in its totality. Besides the pain and the terror in which this inadequacy arises, it results in pleasure because the perceiver comprehends that the totality is hard to grasp but still possible within temporary moments. For Pamuk, aesthetic pleasure is not pure happiness or joy perceived by the novel reader, the museum visitor, and the film spectator. Even when the formation of those texts is considered from the viewpoint of the artist—namely Pamuk—and the perceiver, the feeling is not only pure joy but a combination of pleasure and pain. That is the point where Žižek’s sublime object and the feeling of sublimity it arouses are at stake in their relation to “looking awry.”

### ***Looking Awry: The sublime object, perception, and sensation in *The Texts of Innocence****

Žižek, in his *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, attempts to explain the nature of the sublime object within its relation to the viewer’s perception. The sublime object, in its nature, is open to a horizontal reading in which each perceiver looks at the object and perceives it from a different perspective. Thus, the sublimity requires looking awry by which the perceiver is situated “in the most radical existential sense” (Žižek, as cited in Alfrey, 2017: 79). The existence of the perceiver within the sublime object is especially

obvious in the museum and the film. In the museum, the inner architecture enables the visitors to see all the objects “at the same time from any perspective,” as Kemal wishes (Pamuk, 2009: 520). Besides, the composition of the objects that creates a “harmony in the arrangement of their pictures and objects” (Pamuk, 2009: 501) requires one to look awry to see the sublimity in the objects.

The different perspectives of the perceiver are based on the desire embarked on the object in terms of looking awry. As Žižek puts it (1991), this gaze is not an “objective gaze” but a gaze “distorted” with desire. The desire of the perceiver determines the certain perspective to identify the object. In the museum, the catalogue, and the film, the variety of objects which are given horizontally requires looking awry that is open to particular perspectives. Besides, in Pamuk’s written texts—the novel, the catalogue, and the book on the film—the possibility of looking awry is also evident as he plays with the narrative by telling the stories from different perspectives open to a horizontal reading. For instance, by taking a minor character from the novel and putting her in the film and the book on the film as the main “gazer” of the events, Pamuk changes the perspective and makes the perceiver look awry. Ayla, a minor character in the novel, is fictionalized as the narrator in the book on the film. We learn that Ayla was once the neighbour and confidante of Füsün and has turned back to İstanbul from exile (her husband is told to be a political refugee). Ayla presents a different perspective on the events; i.e., she tells how Füsün came down with the Engagement of Kemal to another girl, which is not included in the novel, and she comments on how İstanbul has dramatically changed, which is not included in the novel, either. Though Ayla’s perception makes it possible to look awry, it still does not restrict other potential perceptions. To illustrate, when she comments on Füsün’s death, she does not give an exact answer, whether it was a suicide or an accident; thus, her perspective is still open to a variance of perspectives in which the sublimity arises.

Although Pamuk represents and re-represents the objects connected to certain feelings and thoughts, they are still open to new perspectives, as Yin Xing designates, to perceive the “invisibility” or “invisible value” of the objects (2013: 198). In this sense, the sublimity of the object is strictly related to being looked at from a certain distance, a particular perspective contrary to being observed too closely to miss its sublimity. This “half-seen” (Žižek, 1989: 170) position is apparent in the museum, the catalogue that gives a new perspective, and the film, which makes the museum its subject matter though from another new perspective. In the museum, of 83 cabinets named with the novel’s corresponding chapters, some are still being prepared and veiled with curtains. Some of the completed ones reserve some drawers *half-seen* and boxes *half-open*. This invitation to new perspectives requires what Žižek calls the “parallax view”—the quantum reading of the sublime as a new science of appearances in which the “appearance” of a particle determines its reality (as cited in Alfrey, 2017: 80). Based on the relation between the observer and the observed—or subject and the object—within the parallax view, the absence is shaped in which different perspectives and

fantasmatic constructions interact with each other and exist simultaneously (Alfrey, 2017: 81). The interior of the museum building presents a similar *parallax view* by which each of the objects, or the appearance of the particle in quantum terminology, can be conceived within that representation. Pamuk intentionally demands such an interior architecture to make the viewer see all the cabinets from a certain point, thus, experiencing the particles temporarily in their totality.

The temporary reality of the particles, namely the objects in *The Texts of Innocence*, should be reconsidered concerning temporality, which is mostly focused on in avant-garde art by referring to the moments of sublimity. To Lyotard, modern avant-garde art has a strong contact with “*now* that is no more than *now*” (as cited in Johnson, 2012: 122). What could be named *the now of the event* appears when an event and its perception occur simultaneously, mainly within a picturesque perception of the unrepresentable sublime by the observer. In this sense, the spatiotemporal objects in *The Texts of Innocence* provide the moments of sublimity that occur ‘in the present,’ the ‘now’ of the perception. In the novel, Pamuk—via the narration of Kemal—primarily defines what feeling an object should arouse, determining the reader’s perception. For instance, in chapter 38, it is stated that the soccer ball is displayed in the museum to remind the grief of Kemal by the end of the summer as well as the happy roaring of the children in the neighbourhood (Pamuk, 2012: 40). Nevertheless, while the feelings of pleasure and pain as two contradictory elements of the sublime are maintained in the image of the ball, its display in the museum collaged with other objects *still* invites new perceptions which would appear in the ‘now’ of each perceiver.

In this sense, Pamuk’s visual-based texts get closer to the Deleuzian sublime in terms of focusing on the sensation that appears within the tension of chaos and rhythm, corresponding to pain and pleasure in the experience of the sublime. To Deleuze, in order to get the rhythm of sensation, the artist should follow the chaos to which the rhythm would return. By giving the figures by Francis Bacon as an example of the transference between rhythm and chaos, Deleuze exemplifies (2003, 2006) how the experience of the sublime could appear within “pure sensation” that affects the nervous system directly. This pure sensation is related to the figuration of chaos temporally turned into the rhythm, just like the soaps in the shape of fruits that remind Kemal of the “slow and humble rhythm of the routines”—a sentiment he believes to be transferred to the visitors to the museum (Pamuk, 2009: 324).

Very strangely, *The Texts of Innocence* shelter a Deleuzian painter who points to “pure sensation” in his painting. Named Ahmet Işıkcı, the painter is a fictional character in Pamuk’s novel *Cevdet Bey and His Sons* (1982). He is also claimed to be the designer of the cover photo of the novel and the painter of some paintings displayed in the museum. By inserting the ideas of Işıkcı in the catalogue of the museum that are based on “the metaphysics of painting,” Pamuk names Işıkcı’s work “esrarengiz” in Turkish (2012: 106), meaning inexplicable, mysterious, and uncanny all of which are the connotations of the sublime. As Pamuk states in an interview, Ahmet Işıkcı believes that our point of view is poisoned by the Western paintings of the Renaissance period, particularly by the rules of the perspective (Börekcı, 2012). The

main point in the art of painting is to search and find our “pure state” that existed before this poisoning, Pamuk states as the ideas of Işıkcı in the catalogue (2012: 106).

A careful reader would realize that Ahmet Işıkcı is the pseudonym of Pamuk as a painter, and most probably, the works displayed as those of Işıkcı belong to Pamuk himself. It is an innocent and playful attempt of Pamuk—as a painter-writer or writer-painter—who wants to generate some feelings in his future followers. Kemal experiences similar feelings when he visits Musée Gustave Moreau, which he names a “sentimental museum,” giving him a passion “that might be called almost religious,” the feeling of “awe” and “elation” (Pamuk, 2009: 497, 501)—to remind, the most frequently used words to identify the feeling of the sublime. Among the 1,743 museums Kemal visited across the world over fifteen years, he mostly identifies with Musée Gustave Moreau. In a similar vein, the presence of the paintings, most probably by Pamuk, in The Museum of Innocence creates a Deleuzian “pure sensation” for the viewers who meet the works by Ahmet Işıkcı or Orhan Pamuk. In this respect, the visual texts of Pamuk, especially the museum and the film, present immediate appearances of the rhythmic scenes not necessarily conceived by the imagination and reason but by the body, even the “nervous system” in the Deleuzian sense. This reflective sensation is perhaps mostly experienced by museum visitors and film spectators who have not read the novel because their imagination is not restricted to the earlier significations. By sensing the rhythm engendered in those visual texts, they are more likely to get closer to experiencing the Deleuzian sublime of sensation. To them, various photographs and objects created from a chaotic collection would give a different sense of the sublime as the established stories do not restrict their imagination. Nevertheless, the unique rhythm of the museum and the film, even the catalogue, might give rise to an immediate sensation in the viewer who is not obsessively bound to the stories of the objects but free to perceive the rhythm they re-create.

### Conclusion

Orhan Pamuk’s *The Texts of Innocence* produce the postmodern sublime, aspiring to present the unrepresentable and using intertextuality, free-play, aesthetic formation, and the gaze of the perceiver. His intention to shift the experience of the sublime from natural objects and entities to artificial ones, moreover to the reception of them, reveals how he points to the significance of the artist’s and the receiver’s interference in this process. Like many postmodernists, such as Paul de Man and Lyotard, who theorize the sublime within its relation to human creations and recreations, Pamuk makes the potency of art and the artist visible as long as experimentalism and artistic creation are expended to arouse the feeling of the sublime both for the creator and the perceiver.

The object of art—the source of a productive signification and interpretation system—emerges as the main component in Pamuk’s *The Texts of Innocence*. Pamuk fictionalizes a world of objects within a recycling representation interpreted with the gaze, the perception, and the senses of the perceiver wandering in his written, visual, and even aural texts. The re-represented objects are perceived by the re-interpreting subjects—the readers, the museum-goers, and the film spectators. In this sense, his understanding of the sublime coincides with

Deleuze, who identifies the sublime as the *pure sensation*, and Žižek, who theorizes the sublime regarding the gaze of the perceiver.

In his *Texts of Innocence*, Orhan Pamuk's artistic representation of the objects within an endless representational chain is based on four fundamental and transcendental concepts in life that resist full representation: love, death, innocence, and melancholia. His attempt to present the most significant but obscure concepts for human beings quintessentially corresponds to the sublime's unrepresentable, however appealing, nature. In this sense, not scrutinising these concepts but the way he does it gives the feeling of the postmodern sublime. Pamuk's play with presenting the unrepresentable (Kemal's unconditional *love*, his pain for Füsün's *death*, and his understanding of *innocence* and *melancholia*) is a result of his motivation to express his experience to re-represent these concepts as a writer and artist, as well as to transport the sublime feeling this experience arouses in him to his readers, museum visitors, and film spectators.

Based on the aesthetic formations, creative intertextuality, and interplay, the texts are perceived from different points of view, unveiling different interpretations and taking the perceiver into the spiral of sublimity. The re-representation and visuality in the texts embody the words and the objects with a sensation that can be perceived uniquely at every turn. Pamuk's narration and visual representation in *The Texts of Innocence* are grounded on the free-play between the texts within a limitless signification. Thus, each of the objects in the novel and the museum as well as their endless stories, which include transcendental concepts, are open to diverse perceptions, which would inevitably make the perceiver fall into the clutches of sublimity.

**Research and Publication Ethics Statement:** This is a research article, containing original data, and it has not been previously published or submitted to any other outlet for publication. The author followed ethical principles and rules during the research process. In the study, informed consent was obtained from the volunteer participants and the privacy of the participants was protected.

**Araştırma ve yayın etiği beyanı:** Bu makale tamamıyla özgün bir araştırma olarak planlanmış, yürütülmüş ve sonuçları ile raporlaştırıldıktan sonra ilgili dergiye gönderilmiştir. Araştırma herhangi bir sempozyum, kongre vb. sunulmamış ya da başka bir dergiye değerlendirilmek üzere gönderilmemiştir.

**Contribution rates of authors to the article:** The first author in this article contributed to the 100% level of preparation of the study, data collection, and interpretation of the results and writing of the article.

**Yazarların makaleye katkı oranları:** Bu makaledeki birinci yazar % 100 düzeyinde çalışmanın hazırlanması, veri toplanması, sonuçların yorumlanması ve makalenin yazılması aşamalarına katkı sağlamıştır.

**Ethics committee approval:** The present study does not require any ethics committee approval.

**Etik komite onayı:** Çalışmada etik kurul iznine gerek yoktur.

**Financial support:** The study received no financial support from any institution or project.

**Finansal destek:** Çalışmada finansal destek alınmamıştır.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**Çıkar çatışması:** Çalışmada potansiyel çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.



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