

Field Notes 1
10 January 2013

Johannesburg - hot day but not much above average for this time of year. Clear, bright day but will probably build up to habitual afternoon thunderstorm. Natives fairly surly following return to work after major festival. Enter field armed with Baudrillard and Pamuk. Interested in exploring issues around objects and collections and am using hair slides - one of the objects that Pamuk's protagonist in *The Museum of Innocence*, Kemal, collects in his low-key, kleptomaniac way. Hair slides seem ubiquitous in these parts.



When does a slide/statue/carpet become an object or a 'piece'? What constitutes a series? See Baudrillard on this. When is a series complete? Do old objects have more value? Why - when ageing objects do not? Is absence necessary? What happens to the collector when the final item in the series is located? (See Baudrillard again around p. 130). Note: Ask informants what they would do if they lost a particular slide - would they look for it at the Fundburo?



Metaphors for the vagina? Metaphors for women? Is collecting a form of wanking? Isn't that what Pamuk's Kemal is really doing with the objects he steals from Fusun's household? Pamuk is quite explicit about sex but he doesn't mention masturbating per se, perhaps because he is writing on behalf of Kemal and is worried about losing his commission. Baudrillard does talk about masturbating (see pp. 97-8 for explicit reference) in his discussion of the automobile as a new centre of subjectivity and a space where one can establish intimacy with oneself and about the importance of understanding that speed is not only about getting from one place to another but also about 'transcendent' pleasure.

Baudrillard concedes that cars (especially in French) are female but nevertheless insists that they are 'phallic projections'.





Note: Try to establish exchange value or other basis for value or possible role in gift (don) rituals.

Is collecting a (sexual) perversion? A perversion because it is narcissistic - really just an amorous relationship that the collector conducts with himself? He can only apprehend and appreciate the whole as objectified parts. He's afraid of a full-on relationship (see Baudrillard around p. 141) - Baudrillard's analogy with male lovers who see the women they love in generalisable, anatomical parts - the parts of her body become items in an inventory of desire. It's suspicious that Pamuk's Kemal often mistakes women he passes in the street at first glance for his beloved Fusun.



Do all people on the global circuit have hair slides like these? Why do women collect hair slides? Why do women buy them without being persuaded by adverts? Baudrillard, reflecting on contemporary works like the Hidden Persuaders when he was writing in the 1960s describes advertising as a skilful renewal of the ritual of the gift - the object is sold but the advert offers the object to YOU. It speaks to you in the polite form of vous (although I noticed on my last trip to Paris that many adverts now use tu). Adverts promise you that a particular form of the object will marry itself to you and your needs. Through adverts, the achat (the purchase) is transformed into a fair-ground, a spectacle, a dance, into foreplay (jeu amoureux) simultaneously of gratification and frustration.



References: Baudrillard, J. (1968). *Le Systeme des objets*. Paris: Editions Gallimard.
Pamuk, O. (2008). *The Museum of Innocence*. USA: Vintage