

FIELD NOTES - 5 - DREAMS, KITSCH, A PLAGUE OF DREAMS?



‘We have a rich selection inside...’

‘The warmth has gone out of things’ - Benjamin

Evidently, Benjamin collected snow globes. I have a hankering for them myself.

‘Man,’ wrote Benjamin (but I guess he meant people) face ‘a huge task every day, overcoming the secret resistances... (of things).’



‘I slipped ... a few hairpins (into my pocket) that I had no doubt were hers. Imagining the comfort I would eventually extract from these things in privacy, I relaxed.’  
Kemal in Pamuk’s Museum of Innocence.



My granny brought me back a glass bead necklace from Venice once. It seemed too precious to wear. I often look in shopwindows when I'm in Italy to see if I can find another like it.



‘Fusun’s girlish hair clip should remind us that the stories she told happened to a child’ - Kemal.

So, what was Kemal taking?

Where’s the comfort in a hair clip?

Why is there this mania here for kitsch - for dreaming (see Aragon cited by Benjamin cited by...)

How could there be ‘vagues des rêves’ all over Paris/Lyon/Joburg?

‘And which side does a thing turn towards dreams? What point is it at its most decrepit? It is the side worn through by habit and patched with cheap maxims. The side which things turn toward the dream is kitsch’ (WB)

Benjamin wrote that he dreamed of meeting Goethe in his study, which was nothing like his real study and that just by touching Goethe on his elbow to guide him, was moved to tears.





In my dream, Benjamin wrote, Goethe gave me 'a small vessel, an antique vase'...

The question that occurs to me because my investigations have taken me far and wide is how wise it would be to take antique vases around with one and Benjamin, writing when he did, extolled the virtues of 'restless nomadism' while fearing that it was getting harder.

Remember to ask informants:

- what is it about antique vases that drives you to collect them?
- do they keep you in one place?
- how many vases make up a collection?
- do they reconcile you with things?
- aren't you angry with them for restricting your freedom of movement?
- do you think they would agree to part with you?

AND

- can a collection exist without a collector?
- can a collector exist without a collection?
- what price do you put on your collection?
- does putting a price on it change its meaning?
- why would it be richer on the inside?



# **NOUN:**

Kitsch: 'Decorative objects and other forms of representation of questionable artistic or aesthetic value; a representation that is excessively sentimental, overdone or vulgar'

**Swedish:** Min mosters handmalade madonnastaty i elfenben är ren kitsch (Wiktionary)

If the Moderns are so partial to novelty why do they keep up the pretence of loving the old?

'My aunt's hand-painted ivory statue of the Madonna is pure **kitsch**' (Wiktionary)

What do you make of the dialogue between '**la mode**' and '**la mort**'? (WB)

'Toutes les matières des différents règnes de la nature peuvent maintenant entrer dans la composition d'un costume de femme: J'ai vu une robe charmante; faite de bouchons de liège...On fait des souliers en **verre de Venise** et de chapeaux en cristal de Baccarat' (WB after Appolinaire)



Slippers of Venetian glass and row upon row of crucifixes - I hadn't noticed the connection before - fashion and death...

## REFERENCES:

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- '...these pale roses do not let me see  
My red ideal, the flower of my dreams'

'Car je ne puis trouver parmi ces pâles roses  
Une fleur qui ressemble à mon rouge idéal' (L'Idéal)

