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My Father's Suitcase

ORHAN PAMUK



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ORHAN PAMUK, winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, was born in Istanbul in 1952 and raised in a prosperous, secular household. Initially intending to become a painter, he studied architecture and journalism before turning to writing full-time. According to the Swedish Academy, Pamuk "has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures" in his "quest for the melancholic soul" of Istanbul. His novels, complexly narrated and counterposing modernity and Islamic tradition, include *Kara kitap* (1990; *The Black Book*), *Benim adım kırmızı* (1998; *My Name Is Red*), and *Kar* (2002; *Snow*). His memoir *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve şehir* (2003; *Istanbul: Memories and the City*) is in part a portrait of his native city.

This translation of Pamuk's Nobel Lecture was provided by the Nobel Foundation.

TWO YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH, MY FATHER GAVE ME A SMALL SUITCASE FILLED WITH HIS WRITINGS, MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTEBOOKS. ASSUMING his usual joking, mocking air, he told me he wanted me to read them after he was gone, by which he meant after he died.

"Just take a look," he said, looking slightly embarrassed. "See if there's anything inside that you can use. Maybe after I'm gone you can make a selection and publish it."

We were in my study, surrounded by books. My father was searching for a place to set down the suitcase, wandering back and forth like a man who wished to rid himself of a painful burden. In the end, he deposited it quietly in an unobtrusive corner. It was a shaming moment that neither of us ever forgot, but once it had passed and we had gone back into our usual roles, taking life lightly, our joking, mocking personas took over and we relaxed. We talked as we always did, about the trivial things of everyday life, and Turkey's neverending political troubles, and my father's mostly failed business ventures, without feeling too much sorrow.

I remember that after my father left, I spent several days walking back and forth past the suitcase without once touching it. I was already familiar with this small, black, leather suitcase, and its lock, and its rounded corners. My father would take it with him on short trips and sometimes use it to carry documents to work. I remembered that when I was a child, and my father came home from a trip, I would open this little suitcase and rummage through his things, savouring the scent of cologne and foreign countries. This suitcase was a familiar friend, a powerful reminder of my childhood, my past, but now I couldn't even touch it. Why? No doubt it was because of the mysterious weight of its contents.

I am now going to speak of this weight's meaning. It is what a person creates when he shuts himself up in a room, sits down at a table, and retires to a corner to express his thoughts—that is, the meaning of literature.

When I did touch my father's suitcase, I still could not bring myself to open it, but I did know what was inside some of those note-

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books. I had seen my father writing things in a few of them. This was not the first time I had heard of the heavy load inside the suitcase. My father had a large library; in his youth, in the late 1940s, he had wanted to be an Istanbul poet, and had translated Valéry into Turkish, but he had not wanted to live the sort of life that came with writing poetry in a poor country with few readers. My father's father—my grandfather—had been a wealthy business man; my father had led a comfortable life as a child and a young man, and he had no wish to endure hardship for the sake of literature, for writing. He loved life with all its beauties—this I understood.

The first thing that kept me distant from the contents of my father's suitcase was, of course, the fear that I might not like what I read. Because my father knew this, he had taken the precaution of acting as if he did not take its contents seriously. After working as a writer for 25 years, it pained me to see this. But I did not even want to be angry at my father for failing to take literature seriously enough . . . My real fear, the crucial thing that I did not wish to know or discover, was the possibility that my father might be a good writer. I couldn't open my father's suitcase because I feared this. Even worse, I couldn't even admit this myself openly. If true and great literature emerged from my father's suitcase, I would have to acknowledge that inside my father there existed an entirely different man. This was a frightening possibility. Because even at my advanced age I wanted my father to be only my father—not a writer.

A writer is someone who spends years patiently trying to discover the second being inside him, and the world that makes him who he is: when I speak of writing, what comes first to my mind is not a novel, a poem, or literary tradition, it is a person who shuts himself up in a room, sits down at a table, and alone, turns inward; amid its shadows, he builds a new world with words. This man—or this woman—may use a typewriter, profit from the ease of a computer, or write with a pen on paper, as I have done for 30 years. As he writes, he can drink tea or coffee, or smoke cigarettes. From time to time he may rise from his table to look out through the window at the children playing in the street, and, if he is lucky, at trees and a view, or he can gaze out at a black wall. He can write poems, plays, or novels, as I do. All these differences come after the crucial task of sitting down at the table and patiently turning inwards. To write is to turn this inward gaze into words, to study the world into which that person passes when he retires into himself, and to do so with patience, obstinacy, and joy. As I sit at my table, for days, months, years, slowly adding new words to the empty page, I feel as if I am creating a new world, as if I am bringing into being that other person inside me, in the same way someone might build a bridge or a dome, stone by stone. The stones we writers use are words. As we hold them in our hands, sensing the ways in which each of them is connected to the others, looking at them sometimes from afar, sometimes almost caressing them with our fingers and the tips of our pens, weighing them, moving them around, year in and year out, patiently and hopefully, we create new worlds.

The writer's secret is not inspiration—for it is never clear where it comes from—it is his stubbornness, his patience. That lovely Turkish saying—to dig a well with a needle—seems to me to have been said with writers in mind. In the old stories, I love the patience of Ferhat, who digs through mountains for his love—and I understand it, too. In my novel, *My Name is Red*, when I wrote about the old Persian miniaturists who had drawn the same horse with the same passion for so many years, memorising each stroke, that they could recreate that beautiful horse even with their eyes closed, I knew I was talking about the writing profession, and my own life. If a writer is to tell his own story—tell it slowly, and as if it were a story about other people—if he is to feel the power of the story rise up inside him,

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if he is to sit down at a table and patiently give himself over to this art—this craft—he must first have been given some hope. The angel of inspiration (who pays regular visits to some and rarely calls on others) favours the hopeful and the confident, and it is when a writer feels most lonely, when he feels most doubtful about his efforts, his dreams, and the value of his writing—when he thinks his story is only his story—it is at such moments that the angel chooses to reveal to him stories, images and dreams that will draw out the world he wishes to build. If I think back on the books to which I have devoted my entire life, I am most surprised by those moments when I have felt as if the sentences, dreams, and pages that have made me so ecstatically happy have not come from my own imagination—that another power has found them and generously presented them to me.

I was afraid of opening my father's suitcase and reading his notebooks because I knew that he would not tolerate the difficulties I had endured, that it was not solitude he loved but mixing with friends, crowds, salons, jokes, company. But later my thoughts took a different turn. These thoughts, these dreams of renunciation and patience, were prejudices I had derived from my own life and my own experience as a writer. There were plenty of brilliant writers who wrote surrounded by crowds and family life, in the glow of company and happy chatter. In addition, my father had, when we were young, tired of the monotony of family life, and left us to go to Paris, where—like so many writers—he'd sat in his hotel room filling notebooks. I knew, too, that some of those very notebooks were in this suitcase, because during the years before he brought it to me, my father had finally begun to talk to me about that period in his life. He spoke about those years even when I was a child, but he would not mention his vulnerabilities, his dreams of becoming a writer, or the questions of identity that had plagued him in his hotel room. He would tell me instead about all the times he'd seen Sartre on the pavements of Paris, about the books he'd read and the films he'd seen, all with the elated sincerity of someone imparting very important news. When I became a writer, I never forgot that it was partly thanks to the fact that I had a father who would talk of world writers so much more than he spoke of pashas or great religious leaders. So perhaps I had to read my father's notebooks with this in mind, and remembering how indebted I was to his large library. I had to bear in mind that when he was living with us, my father, like me, enjoyed being alone with his books and his thoughts—and not pay too much attention to the literary quality of his writing.

But as I gazed so anxiously at the suitcase my father had bequeathed me, I also felt that this was the very thing I would not be able to do. My father would sometimes stretch out on the divan in front of his books, abandon the book in his hand, or the magazine and drift off into a dream, lose himself for the longest time in his thoughts. When I saw on his face an expression so very different from the one he wore amid the joking, teasing, and bickering of family life—when I saw the first signs of an inward gaze—I would, especially during my childhood and my early youth, understand, with trepidation, that he was discontent. Now, so many years later, I know that this discontent is the basic trait that turns a person into a writer. To become a writer, patience and toil are not enough: we must first feel compelled to escape crowds, company, the stuff of ordinary, everyday life, and shut ourselves up in a room. We wish for patience and hope so that we can create a deep world in our writing. But the desire to shut oneself up in a room is what pushes us into action. The precursor of this sort of independent writer—who reads his books to his heart's content, and who, by listening only to the voice of his own conscience, disputes with other's words, who, by entering into conversation with his books develops his

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own thoughts, and his own world—was most certainly Montaigne, in the earliest days of modern literature. Montaigne was a writer to whom my father returned often, a writer he recommended to me. I would like to see myself as belonging to the tradition of writers who—wherever they are in the world, in the East or in the West—cut themselves off from society, and shut themselves up with their books in their room. The starting point of true literature is the man who shuts himself up in his room with his books.

But once we shut ourselves away, we soon discover that we are not as alone as we thought. We are in the company of the words of those who came before us, of other people's stories, other people's books, other people's words, the thing we call tradition. I believe literature to be the most valuable hoard that humanity has gathered in its quest to understand itself. Societies, tribes, and peoples grow more intelligent, richer, and more advanced as they pay attention to the troubled words of their authors, and, as we all know, the burning of books and the denigration of writers are both signals that dark and improvident times are upon us. But literature is never just a national concern. The writer who shuts himself up in a room and first goes on a journey inside himself will, over the years, discover literature's eternal rule: he must have the artistry to tell his own stories as if they were other people's stories, and to tell other people's stories as if they were his own, for this is what literature is. But we must first travel through other people's stories and books.

My father had a good library—1 500 volumes in all—more than enough for a writer. By the age of 22, I had perhaps not read them all, but I was familiar with each book—I knew which were important, which were light but easy to read, which were classics, which an essential part of any education, which were forgettable but amusing accounts of local history, and which French authors my father rated very highly. Sometimes I would look at this library from a distance and imagine that one day, in a different house, I would build my own library, an even better library—build myself a world. When I looked at my father's library from afar, it seemed to me to be a small picture of the real world. But this was a world seen from our own corner, from Istanbul. The library was evidence of this. My father had built his library from his trips abroad, mostly with books from Paris and America, but also with books bought from the shops that sold books in foreign languages in the 40s and 50s and Istanbul's old and new booksellers, whom I also knew. My world is a mixture of the local—the national—and the West. In the 70s, I, too, began, somewhat ambitiously, to build my own library. I had not quite decided to become a writer—as I related in *Istanbul*, I had come to feel that I would not, after all, become a painter, but I was not sure what path my life would take. There was inside me a relentless curiosity, a hope-driven desire to read and learn, but at the same time I felt that my life was in some way lacking, that I would not be able to live like others. Part of this feeling was connected to what I felt when I gazed at my father's library—to be living far from the centre of things, as all of us who lived in Istanbul in those days were made to feel, that feeling of living in the provinces. There was another reason for feeling anxious and somehow lacking, for I knew only too well that I lived in a country that showed little interest in its artists—be they painters or writers—and that gave them no hope. In the 70s, when I would take the money my father gave me and greedily buy faded, dusty, dog-eared books from Istanbul's old booksellers, I would be as affected by the pitiable state of these second-hand bookstores—and by the despairing dishevelment of the poor, bedraggled booksellers who laid out their wares on roadsides, in mosque courtyards, and in the niches of crumbling walls—as I was by their books.

As for my place in the world—in life, as in literature, my basic feeling was that I was "not

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in the centre." In the centre of the world, there was a life richer and more exciting than our own, and with all of Istanbul, all of Turkey, I was outside it. Today I think that I share this feeling with most people in the world. In the same way, there was a world literature, and its centre, too, was very far away from me. Actually what I had in mind was Western, not world, literature, and we Turks were outside it. My father's library was evidence of this. At one end, there were Istanbul's books—our literature, our local world, in all its beloved detail—and at the other end were the books from this other, Western, world, to which our own bore no resemblance, to which our lack of resemblance gave us both pain and hope. To write, to read, was like leaving one world to find consolation in the other world's otherness, the strange and the wondrous. I felt that my father had read novels to escape his life and flee to the West—just as I would do later. Or it seemed to me that books in those days were things we picked up to escape our own culture, which we found so lacking. It wasn't just by reading that we left our Istanbul lives to travel West—it was by writing, too. To fill those notebooks of his, my father had gone to Paris, shut himself up in his room, and then brought his writings back to Turkey. As I gazed at my father's suitcase, it seemed to me that this was what was causing me disquiet. After working in a room for 25 years to survive as a writer in Turkey, it galled me to see my father hide his deep thoughts inside this suitcase, to act as if writing was work that had to be done in secret, far from the eyes of society, the state, the people. Perhaps this was the main reason why I felt angry at my father for not taking literature as seriously as I did.

Actually I was angry at my father because he had not led a life like mine, because he had never quarrelled with his life, and had spent his life happily laughing with his friends and his loved ones. But part of me knew that I could also say that I was not so much "angry" as "jealous," that the second word was more accurate, and this, too, made me uneasy. That would be when I would ask myself in my usual scornful, angry voice: "What is happiness?" Was happiness thinking that I lived a deep life in that lonely room? Or was happiness leading a comfortable life in society, believing in the same things as everyone else, or acting as if you did? Was it happiness, or unhappiness, to go through life writing in secret, while seeming to be in harmony with all around one? But these were overly ill-tempered questions. Wherever had I got this idea that the measure of a good life was happiness? People, papers, everyone acted as if the most important measure of a life was happiness. Did this alone not suggest that it might be worth trying to find out if the exact opposite was true? After all, my father had run away from his family so many times—how well did I know him, and how well could I say I understood his disquiet?

So this was what was driving me when I first opened my father's suitcase. Did my father have a secret, an unhappiness in his life about which I knew nothing, something he could only endure by pouring it into his writing? As soon as I opened the suitcase, I recalled its scent of travel, recognised several notebooks, and noted that my father had shown them to me years earlier, but without dwelling on them very long. Most of the notebooks I now took into my hands he had filled when he had left us and gone to Paris as a young man. Whereas I, like so many writers I admired—writers whose biographies I had read—wished to know what my father had written, and what he had thought, when he was the age I was now. It did not take me long to realise that I would find nothing like that here. What caused me most disquiet was when, here and there in my father's notebooks, I came upon a writerly voice. This was not my father's voice, I told myself; it wasn't authentic, or at least it did not belong to the man I'd known as my father. Underneath my fear that my father might not have been my father when he wrote, was a deeper fear: the fear that deep inside I

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was not authentic, that I would find nothing good in my father's writing, this increased my fear of finding my father to have been overly influenced by other writers and plunged me into a despair that had afflicted me so badly when I was young, casting my life, my very being, my desire to write, and my work into question. During my first ten years as a writer, I felt these anxieties more deeply, and even as I fought them off, I would sometimes fear that one day, I would have to admit to defeat—just as I had done with painting—and succumbing to disquiet, give up novel writing, too.

I have already mentioned the two essential feelings that rose up in me as I closed my father's suitcase and put it away: the sense of being marooned in the provinces, and the fear that I lacked authenticity. This was certainly not the first time they had made themselves felt. For years I had, in my reading and my writing, been studying, discovering, deepening these emotions, in all their variety and unintended consequences, their nerve endings, their triggers, and their many colours. Certainly my spirits had been jarred by the confusions, the sensitivities and the fleeting pains that life and books had sprung on me, most often as a young man. But it was only by writing books that I came to a fuller understanding of the problems of authenticity (as in *My Name is Red* and *The Black Book*) and the problems of life on the periphery (as in *Snow* and *Istanbul*). For me, to be a writer is to acknowledge the secret wounds that we carry inside us, the wounds so secret that we ourselves are barely aware of them, and to patiently explore them, know them, illuminate them, to own these pains and wounds, and to make them a conscious part of our spirits and our writing.

A writer talks of things that everyone knows but does not know they know. To explore this knowledge, and to watch it grow, is a pleasurable thing; the reader is visiting a world at once familiar and miraculous. When a writer shuts himself up in a room for years on end to hone his craft—to create a world—if he uses his secret wounds as his starting point, he is, whether he knows it or not, putting a great faith in humanity. My confidence comes from the belief that all human beings resemble each other, that others carry wounds like mine—that they will therefore understand. All true literature rises from this childish, hopeful certainty that all people resemble each other. When a writer shuts himself up in a room for years on end, with this gesture he suggests a single humanity, a world without a centre.

But as can be seen from my father's suitcase and the pale colours of our lives in Istanbul, the world did have a centre, and it was far away from us. In my books I have described in some detail how this basic fact evoked a Checkovian sense of provinciality, and how, by another route, it led to my questioning my authenticity. I know from experience that the great majority of people on this earth live with these same feelings, and that many suffer from an even deeper sense of insufficiency, lack of security and sense of degradation, than I do. Yes, the greatest dilemmas facing humanity are still landlessness, homelessness, and hunger . . . But today our televisions and newspapers tell us about these fundamental problems more quickly and more simply than literature can ever do. What literature needs most to tell and investigate today are humanity's basic fears: the fear of being left outside, and the fear of counting for nothing, and the feelings of worthlessness that come with such fears; the collective humiliations, vulnerabilities, slights, grievances, sensitivities, and imagined insults, and the nationalist boasts and inflations that are their next of kind . . . Whenever I am confronted by such sentiments, and by the irrational, overstated language in which they are usually expressed, I know they touch on a darkness inside me. We have often witnessed peoples, societies and nations outside the Western world—and I can identify with them easily—succumbing

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to fears that sometimes lead them to commit stupidities, all because of their fears of humiliation and their sensitivities. I also know that in the West—a world with which I can identify with the same ease—nations and peoples taking an excessive pride in their wealth, and in their having brought us the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Modernism, have, from time to time, succumbed to a self-satisfaction that is almost as stupid.

This means that my father was not the only one, that we all give too much importance to the idea of a world with a centre. Whereas the thing that compels us to shut ourselves up to write in our rooms for years on end is a faith in the opposite; the belief that one day our writings will be read and understood, because people all the world over resemble each other. But this, as I know from my own and my father's writing, is a troubled optimism, scarred by the anger of being consigned to the margins, of being left outside. The love and hate that Dostoyevsky felt towards the West all his life—I have felt this too, on many occasions. But if I have grasped an essential truth, if I have cause for optimism, it is because I have travelled with this great writer through his love-hate relationship with the West, to behold the other world he has built on the other side.

All writers who have devoted their lives to this task know this reality: whatever our original purpose, the world that we create after years and years of hopeful writing, will, in the end, move to other very different places. It will take us far away from the table at which we have worked with sadness or anger, take us to the other side of that sadness and anger, into another world. Could my father have not reached such a world himself? Like the land that slowly begins to take shape, slowly rising from the mist in all its colours like an island after a long sea journey, this other world enchants us. We are as beguiled as the western travellers who voyaged from the south to behold Istanbul rising from the mist. At the end of a journey begun in hope and curiosity, there lies before them a city of mosques and minarets, a medley of houses, streets, hills, bridges, and slopes, an entire world. Seeing it, we wish to enter into this world and lose ourselves inside it, just as we might a book. After sitting down at a table because we felt provincial, excluded, on the margins, angry, or deeply melancholic, we have found an entire world beyond these sentiments.

What I feel now is the opposite of what I felt as a child and a young man: for me the centre of the world is Istanbul. This is not just because I have lived there all my life, but because, for the last 33 years, I have been narrating its streets, its bridges, its people, its dogs, its houses, its mosques, its fountains, its strange heroes, its shops, its famous characters, its dark spots, its days and its nights, making them part of me, embracing them all. A point arrived when this world I had made with my own hands, this world that existed only in my head, was more real to me than the city in which I actually lived. That was when all these people and streets, objects and buildings would seem to begin to talk amongst themselves, and begin to interact in ways I had not anticipated, as if they lived not just in my imagination or my books, but for themselves. This world that I had created like a man digging a well with a needle would then seem truer than all else.

My father might also have discovered this kind of happiness during the years he spent writing, I thought as I gazed at my father's suitcase: I should not prejudge him. I was so grateful to him, after all: he'd never been a commanding, forbidding, overpowering, punishing, ordinary father, but a father who always left me free, always showed me the utmost respect. I had often thought that if I had, from time to time, been able to draw from my imagination, be it in freedom or childishness, it was because, unlike so many of my friends from childhood and youth, I had no fear of my father, and I had sometimes believed very

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deeply that I had been able to become a writer because my father had, in his youth, wished to be one, too. I had to read him with tolerance—seek to understand what he had written in those hotel rooms.

It was with these hopeful thoughts that I walked over to the suitcase, which was still sitting where my father had left it; using all my willpower, I read through a few manuscripts and notebooks. What had my father written about? I recall a few views from the windows of Parisian hotels, a few poems, paradoxes, analyses . . . As I write I feel like someone who has just been in a traffic accident and is struggling to remember how it happened, while at the same time dreading the prospect of remembering too much. When I was a child, and my father and mother were on the brink of a quarrel—when they fell into one of those deadly silences—my father would at once turn on the radio, to change the mood, and the music would help us forget it all faster.

Let me change the mood with a few sweet words that will, I hope, serve as well as that music. As you know, the question we writers are asked most often, the favourite question, is; why do you write? I write because I have an innate need to write! I write because I can't do normal work like other people. I write because I want to read books like the ones I write. I write because I am angry at all of you, angry at everyone. I write because I love sitting in a room all day writing. I write because I can only partake in real life by changing it. I write because I want others, all of us, the whole world, to know what sort of life we lived, and continue to live, in Istanbul, in Turkey. I write because I love the smell of paper, pen, and ink. I write because I believe in literature, in the art of the novel, more than I believe in anything else. I write because it is a habit, a passion. I write because I am afraid of being forgotten. I write because I like the glory and interest that writing brings. I write to be alone. Perhaps I write because I hope to understand why I am so very, very angry at all of you, so very, very angry at everyone. I write because I like to be read. I write because once I have begun a novel, an essay, a page, I want to finish it. I write because everyone expects me to write. I write because I have a childish belief in the immortality of libraries, and in the way my books sit on the shelf. I write because it is exciting to turn all of life's beauties and riches into words. I write not to tell a story, but to compose a story. I write because I wish to escape from the foreboding that there is a place I must go but—just as in a dream—I can't quite get there. I write because I have never managed to be happy. I write to be happy.

A week after he came to my office and left me his suitcase, my father came to pay me another visit; as always, he brought me a bar of chocolate (he had forgotten I was 48 years old). As always, we chatted and laughed about life, politics and family gossip. A moment arrived when my father's eyes went to the corner where he had left his suitcase and saw that I had moved it. We looked each other in the eye. There followed a pressing silence. I did not tell him that I had opened the suitcase and tried to read its contents; instead I looked away. But he understood. Just as I understood that he had understood. Just as he understood that I had understood that he had understood. But all this understanding only went so far as it can go in a few seconds. Because my father was a happy, easygoing man who had faith in himself: he smiled at me the way he always did. And as he left the house, he repeated all the lovely and encouraging things that he always said to me, like a father.

As always, I watched him leave, envying his happiness, his carefree and unflappable temperament. But I remember that on that day there was also a flash of joy inside me that made me ashamed. It was prompted by the thought that maybe I wasn't as comfortable in life as he was, maybe I had not led as happy or footloose a life as he had, but that I had devoted it to writing—you've understood . . .

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I was ashamed to be thinking such things at my father's expense. Of all people, my father, who had never been the source of my pain—who had left me free. All this should remind us that writing and literature are intimately linked to a lack at the centre of our lives, and to our feelings of happiness and guilt.

But my story has a symmetry that immediately reminded me of something else that day, and that brought me an even deeper sense of guilt. Twenty-three years before my father left me his suitcase, and four years after I had decided, aged 22, to become a novelist, and, abandoning all else, shut myself up in a room, I finished my first novel, *Cevdet Bey and Sons*; with trembling hands I had given my father a typescript of the still unpublished novel, so that he could read it and tell me what he thought. This was not simply because I had confidence in his taste and his intellect: his opinion was very important to me because he, unlike my mother, had not opposed my wish to become a writer. At that point, my father was not with us, but far away. I waited impatiently for his return. When he arrived two weeks later, I ran to open the door. My father said nothing, but he at once threw his arms around me in a way that told me he had liked it very much. For a while, we were plunged into the sort of awkward silence that so often accompanies moments of great emotion. Then, when we had calmed down and begun to talk, my father resorted to highly charged and exaggerated language to express his confidence in me or my first novel: he told me that one day I would win the prize that I am here to receive with such great happiness.

He said this not because he was trying to convince me of his good opinion, or to set this prize as a goal; he said it like a Turkish father, giving support to his son, encouraging him by saying, "One day you'll become a pasha!" For years, whenever he saw me, he would encourage me with the same words.

My father died in December 2002.

Today, as I stand before the Swedish Academy and the distinguished members who have awarded me this great prize—this great honour—and their distinguished guests, I dearly wish he could be amongst us.

Translation from Turkish by Maureen Freely

Babamın bavulu

ÖLÜMÜNDEN İKİ YIL ÖNCE BABAM KENDİ YAZIları, el yazmaları ve defterleriyle dolu küçük bir bavul verdi bana. Her zamanki şakacı, alaycı havasını takınarak, kendisinden sonra, yani ölümünden sonra onları okumamı istediğini söyleyiverdi.

"Bir bak bakalım," dedi hafifçe utanarak, "işe yarar bir şey var mı içlerinde. Belki benden sonra seçer, yayımlarsın."

Benim yazıhanemde, kitaplar arasındaydık. Babam acı verici çok özel bir yükten kurtulmak isteyen biri gibi, bavulunu nereye koyacağını bilemeden yazıhanemde bakınarak dolandı. Sonra elindeki şeyi dikkat çekmeyen bir köşeye usulca bıraktı. İkimizi de utandıran bu unutulmaz an biter bitmez ikimiz de her zamanki rollerimize, hayatı daha hafiften alan, şakacı, alaycı kimliklerimize (personas) geri dönerek rahatladık. Her zamanki gibi havadan sudan, hayattan, Türkiye'nin bitip tükenmez siyasi dertlerinden ve babamın çoğu başarısızlıkla sonuçlanan işlerinden, çok da fazla kederlenmeden, söz ettik.

Babam gittikten sonra bavulun etrafında birkaç gün ona hiç dokunmadan aşağı yukarı

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