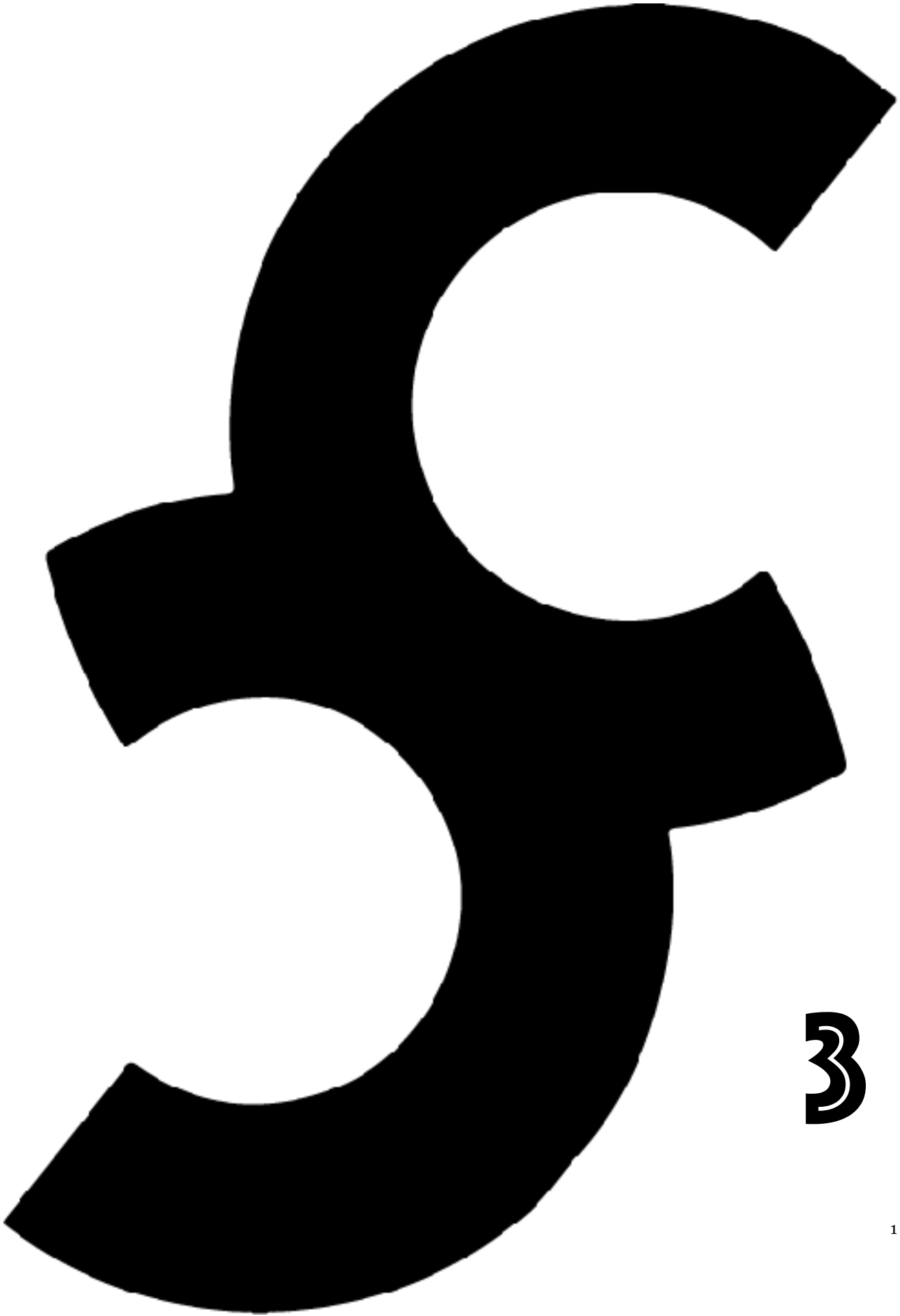

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Contents

Editor's Note:

Well, that was some three months. It took me, as the weary, lone and quixotic editor of Fictive, abruptly from my humble abode by the shores of the Sea of Marmara to five cities in the United States, and three in Germany, with a hefty turning of their rural soils.

Despite the current of unexpected unsettling, I was undaunted in my commitment to the wildly independent, DIY trajectory of this magazine, as it has grown and come to embody something of a slapdash cultural review, but one which I feel has a future integrating the impetus for its inception, that being to foreground creative subjectivity in works of nonfiction, and reflexive objectivity in more intently artistic pursuits.

With an eye for interpretation, I've returned to certain works and ideas that have highlighted my journalistic career, stretching from the fields of Greece's refugee camps to endangered Bosphorus fisheries, the building of a new road in South Sudan and the emergency rooms of pandemic-era Boston.

Quite graciously, many contributors from past issues have returned with to Issue 3 of Fictive with precious insight into their respective milieus, such as Bosphorus Review of Books editor Luke Frostick writing about an Italian d.j. on the scene in Istanbul, or Andrew Bell turning nonpareil phrases of linguistic invention in his stream-of-consciousness writing practice.

The literary becomes celluloid, and sound breeds art in this issue, featuring poetry, essays, film, music, interview, and photography. I could not have asked for a more delightful momentum to continue onward, toward the next issue, which will complete the first year of Fictive's productions as a published magazine, online, and free for all, even if the art itself did demand all of the value a person might fit into their own nook of life. — Matt AH

Idomeni, 2016: Photo Essay

In the spring of 2016, the some 200 locals in the northeastern Greek village of Idomeni were inundated with an influx of over 14,000 refugees from as far afield as Syria, Afghanistan and Iran. With backpacks, strollers and families in tow, these intrepid men and women walked across the plains of Thrace, or sailed across the Aegean and Mediterranean seas to come to the Macedonian region of Thessaly, which grows from the eastern foothills of the Pindus Mountains with orchards of pink blossoms and flatland pastures.

About a hundred years prior, Christian and Greek migrants were following the same paths from Thrace to the mainland peninsula. And

throughout history, the strip of land which connects Europe and Asia has ever been a throughway for migrants, travelers, refugees and pilgrims. In March of 2016, the EU and Turkey cut a deal to stem the overwhelming tide of refugees who had been fleeing the Syrian Civil War in numbers not seen since World War II.

Though, in the wake of historic displacement, Turkey's signing the Geneva Convention only guaranteed refugee status protection for forced migrants from within the EU, mostly in reference to the Jews, Roma and others victimized by the Nazi regime now nearly a century past. So, tens of thousands of people were caught between a rock and a hard place, unwanted by the EU, and exploited by Turkey to make political and economic traction with the bloc.

They were protesting at the northern border of Greece, up against national police armed with tear gas and rubber bullets. One man sewed his mouth shut, and held up a sign. They demanded human treatment. They fought to live, and for the right to life. Young and old stood on that field, looking toward the mountains of North Macedonia, and they dreamed, smiled, grunted, conversed, demonstrating the relativity of human rights in a world where humanity and its absence is defined by wealthy Western nations and their sheltered citizenries.

A man from Egypt who had been living in his van on the streets of Thessaloniki, furnishing it with a piano for impromptu live performances, stood in solidarity with humanitarian and university activists to serve fresh, hot, sugary tea at the camp, which had been built with UNHCR tents, gates and fencing. Doctors Without Borders was on the scene. A team led by an English teacher and former refugee from Afghanistan had stepped forward to try and engage youth in Thessaloniki to reach out to the people on the ground, simply to offer human connection.

Even in an emergency situation, as medical needs and informational dissemination are at least addressed, people relish in moments of social ease.

They made campfires, pitched tents and told their war stories with everyone who passed, exchanging photos, IDs, and memories that will outlive their presence on the crossroads of Idomeni, where, one spring, thousands of people were changing their lives on the front page of history.


UNHCR


UNHCR


HUMANS ARE
MORE THAN


ΑΝΑΨΥΚΤΙΚΑ
TEA


EITHER
CROSSING
OR
KILLING


Open the
Borders

A Mythopoetic Cycle by Ece Eldek

Ece Eldek, ma ma ma (3 act performance), performance, 16th Istanbul Biennial, Digestion Programme, 2019. courtesy of the artist

The two poetic works of Ece Eldek, “Kurulu An” and “ma ma ma” are not so much critiques of institutionalized religion, its literature and customs, as they are creative adaptations that reveal an underlying human layer, the power inherent in its psychomagic, as a source of material transformation. Her language charts the metamorphoses of interpretability, which lies at the heart of scriptural tradition. A potato, for example, in “ma ma ma” assumes symbolist potency, in reference to its history as a forbidden New World fruit to the church of medieval Europe, and later, as a device for instituting military and domestic burden.

Eldek effects lucid passages, both oblique and direct, as when she writes, in the third and final poetic cycle of her performance, “ma ma ma“:

- religion is now at the final curtain
-
- don’t beg
-
- the voice that comes out of darkness
-
- transforms into lullabies and songs

These lines in quotation are an apt link to “Kurulu An”, as Eldek investigated the roots of the Quran and its literature as part of stream-of-consciousness writing, a popular technique used by avant-garde surrealists to reflect their fragmented, immediate selves within the cultural milieu of interwar society. Her piece, besides being a wordplay on Islam’s holy book, is a nod to its riptide-strong current that pulls minds into its oceanic whirlpools of the imagination, prompting believers to realize the unfading dreams of their mythological ancestry.

- FictiveMag

Ece Eldek, Kurulu An / The Wound Up Moment, performative installation, 2016-2021.
photo by Erhan Arık. courtesy of the artist

Two of Ece Eldek's poems in "Kurulu An", translated by Efe Murad

ANGELS DON'T GIVE GUARANTEES

I should have kept silent

as the words were sore and

the deprived thing was passing the river
pour the words into an empty bucket,
let's see what will happen?
angels do not warrant cachets
what could be the meaning of this?
would angels act disrespectfully
if only you lie

self-entitled bastards
do you have a right to fate?
a fate that threatens death?
windows are shut
run said the shepherd
how many times have you escaped?
and destroyed the city
what is now left behind?
lost pictures
ruined sorrows
one night they tucked me in
in a demolished city
words are hazy
the city slippery
women captive
my voice tweezing
ruined buildings
show no mercy

this is an act
for the honor of sinking harbor
speak up, o head
speak up, o day
don't fade away
howl
howl
flashbacks, reality
winners and losers face to face
mirrors
after "time?" the first question is "at what time?" did you sign the contract
prices, the invaluable, reality

chew the time
hide it in a matchbox
and wait

the time will come when you become
an old fart searching through plastic bags

IN THIS PLACE

Wars and pyramids
ruins and pencils
tips and Shamans

reason and cause
to which school did they go

to what ends did they journey
from which stone came their necklace
questions folded with one hand
wine and repetition
were raised in vain
    art was mummified
(IS ART A RELIGION?)
in this degenerate world
chins ran to the water
bleeding lands
oceans to oceans
faces to faces
storms rolled into storms

Ilya passed by Olivia
Magnolias and cyanide
cyanide is burning
In the half old spiral cords
salmon time
find ideas
live
chalices
old fables

believers
non-believers
here they are

The visual material used by Ece Eldek in this work is based on a found book written in English. This book, titled "Muhammad and the Quran," written by Rafiq Zakaria, contains certain verses from the Quran and narrates the life of the Prophet. While reading the book, which she came across by chance, Eldek realized that the translations of the verses into English were very poetic and began writing stream of consciousness poems on several pages of the book. She changed the title of the book to "Kurulu An / The Wound-up Moment", considering holy scriptures as mechanisms that set up life like a wind-up clock. Stream of consciousness is a writing technique used by certain writers and poets to transfer glimpses of thought, associated to momentary feelings or triggered by other ideas, on paper. By interpreting the book with this method, the artist also wants to reflect on the moments and techniques involved in the writing of holy books.

text from EceEldek.com

Artist wrote poems throughout the exhibition to the "Kurulu An / The Wound Up Moment". photo by Erhan Arık. courtesy of the artist

Ece Eldek, ma ma ma (3 act performance)'s chapbook, poetry & performance, 16th Istanbul Biennial, Digestion Programme, 2019. courtesy of the artist

Excerpts from three poems in Ece Eldek's book "ma ma ma", translated by Ayça Göçmen

SOLDIER

7 months 5 days
7 months 6 days
7 months 7 potatoes
how many tins I shot I didn't count potato
how many punishments I peeled, I counted potato
my feet sore from sitting down,
my hands from cutting
I could not get my tongue around

you are rather right
I ate my punishment
but I am not full

...

General repeats himself,
his spit remains on the ground
the crowd steps on it and marches on
Either own it,
Or piss off, Or piss off
how many times you experienced your master with a leash on your neck
how many times you experienced your master with a leash in your hand
it wasn't enough

...

HOUSEWIFE

Sound of my two hands can't catch the time

I no longer have a hope chest, I gave away everything
what remained in my hands
lost pictures
desolate grieves
the words are hazy
the city is slippery
I am a woman, imprisoned
my voice is a pincer

...

I couldn't make anyone believe what cooking food means
my share was mixing of the blend only
it impossible to taste the freedom
a child's scream would hung in the air
my body's flapping wings would harm those around me
they shot me as I was rising up to the air
and all eyes looked up

...

POPE

Old stories, believers, non believers, they are all here
I have been thinking since I made up my mind to be
yes they have forbidden the potato like apple
I have been dreaming about it since I made up my mind to be
what if I can't be, what if I can't terrorize like god

ma ma ma
I wet my bed
out of fear
I am scared all the time
mama

ma ma ma
wash my robe
dull voice
evil voice
wash my robe
I lost my voice
mama
ma ma ma
don't put potato on that table
these are recent inventions
don't put apple as well
ma ma ma
don't put
you brought me from the bee hive
ma ma ma

...

ma ma ma
they opened their eyes,
the apple was forbidden, potato was forbidden
I opened my eyes to an established moment
ma ma ma
what else should be forbidden now
let me help you with your prohibitions

they gave me that hammer secretly
for me to bang it upon my table to multiply my voice
my name written in pages
like every actor hidden in an interlude
accompany me with chorus
I vulgarly hail the ruby clothes
mama, sing your lullabies

...

"ma ma ma (3 perdeli performans) / ma ma ma (3 act performance)" was produced for the public program of the 16th Istanbul Biennial. The performance focused on the theme 'potato'. Potato played a servant's role like it has in agriculture and in society. Ece Eldek created three characters in her performance; the soldier, because peeling potatoes is a punishment; the priest, because the church in Middle Ages has banned potato; and the housewife because she uses potatoes at home quite frequently. The artist wrote three poems that criticize state, religion and family over potatoes, over these people who serve. Using the theater as her medium, the artist has created a performance. In this work, with the curtains, which were used conceptually, the housewife, the priest and the soldier are playing the identity roles that are given to them. They act as servants through the identities that the society imposes on them, and which are memorized by them. Ece Eldek distributed the text into performances with specific rhythms and with the act of peeling potatoes in the center. Eldek prepared the booklet of her performance entitled "mamama / 3 act performance"

text from EceEldek.com

Ece Eldek is a multi-disciplinary visual artist and poet. In her artistic practice; she mainly uses video, sound, photography, poetry, installation and performance. She tends to combine writing and visual works. Eldek is interested in rethinking and understanding what it means to be a human. Her motivations for her practice consist of unconsciousness, existence, myths, persona, identity, belonging, social classes and history. The network of social, political and cultural relations, intertwined mechanisms and processes are the focus of her interest. She is working on the whole of relationships that establish the subjective experience. Eldek graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Graphic Art and Design. Eldek has participated in various exhibitions in Turkey and abroad, her poems were published in distinct publications and she has taken part in numerous art initiatives as founding partner.

my libido by Deniz Gül

there is life between us (+transparency) by Deniz Gül, book design by Ömer Ozan Erdoğan, cover image Ezgi Tok

**The following is excerpted from Deniz Gül's book, "there is life between us (+transparency). December 2020. notonlypublications. Istanbul. Translated by Rana Kelleci and Deniz Gül*

I'll tell you about my libido. It's different than yours.

In fact, I have just elaborated on my libido. Now, I'll explain it in the language that you will understand.

When I walk naked in my flat, kids in the neighbouring school flock to the windows (+glass) together, watch my body (+image). Since I do not conceal

myself, they take shelter under the window frames, hiding their peeping from me. They feel ashamed because they are watching. Yet still, they look with curiosity and appetite. You want me to conceal and incite an erotic appetite so that these children can look, free from shame.

Making love begins when it falls away from the gaze. This is short-lived pleasure, what you're going through. Let me continue telling you about my libido.

*

My libido is the explosion of a fungus moistened on a knotted branch along the stripped trunk of a tree. My libido is skin wearing thin. A glacier calving in masses in the sun's heat; water that foams as it flows, rises as it falls; a rock that's been wearing down for a lifetime. A piece of paper being torn. The bass and treble vibration of a barbed wire, perhaps a tense guitar string; swinging dim states of gesture sweating, juddering 'til it heals. The sound of a flute carved from a bear's tibia. The tension within the meaning. A whirlwind. Boiling milk. Flocks of frogs courting each other at night. The hand of a dying woman is my libido. My aching ovaries; my underpants wet and smelling. A blind cat black is my libido. High, in short. It's so, for me, to feel, to rejoice.

Deniz Gül is a Turkish contemporary artist, conceptual sculptor and writer. Born in 1982, in Izmir (Smyrna), she is acknowledged for her work that subverts language; for Gül, language not only performs as text, but as sculpture and space as well. Her narrative exhibitions speak of structure, composition, form, and consequence. Her text work accompanies her exhibitions throughout. Gül's books and exhibitions are titled, Loyelow (2016), B.I.M.A.B.K.R. (2013), 5 Person Bufet (2011), Meydan (2020), and Scratch and Surface (2021) Gül's latest solo show, held at SALT Galata. She resides and works in Istanbul.

The Operating Table by Alex Butler

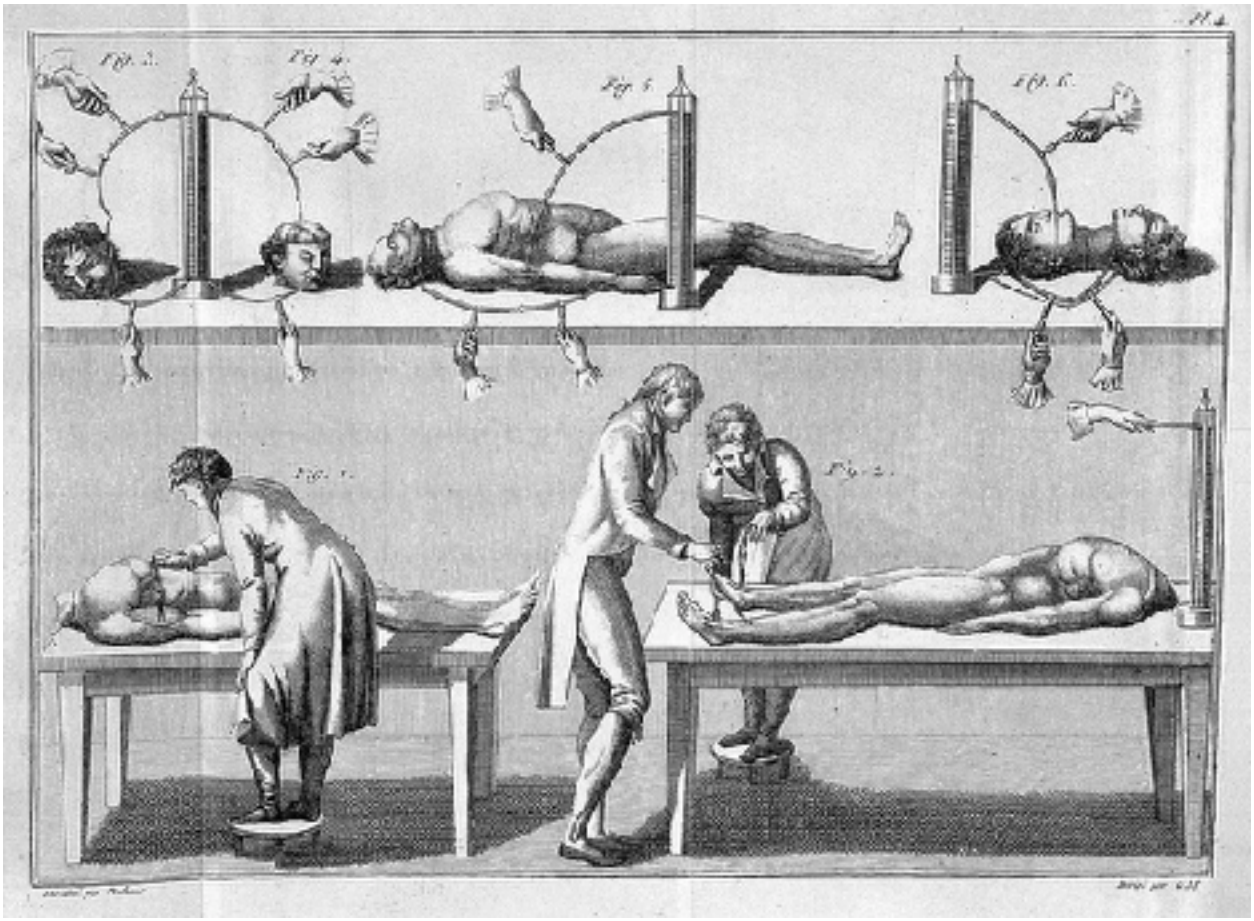


Plate 4 from Aldini's Essai théorique et expérimental sur le galvanisme, avec une série d'expériences (1804) - Source: Wellcome Library

As a surgical nurse, I am fortunate to witness the beautiful details and wild intricacies that make up the human body on a daily basis. From vein to artery, tissue to organ. And so when I came across this passage from Mary Shelley's masterpiece, I felt an obligation to contribute words along with it; transplanting and injecting my own thoughts like a syringe into the side of the passage. My 14-line sonnet fits in the passage as bolded text, complete with the traditional rhyming couplet at the end.

Poem can be read three ways: alone, with the surrounding text, and the non-bolded by itself.

"The Operating Table"
Alex Butler, RN
Immured Sonnet, using Mary Shelley's 1818 'Frankenstein'
To be read 3-ways

"The Operating Table"

Alex Butler, RN

Immured Sonnet, using Mary Shelley's 1818 'Frankenstein'

To be read 3-ways

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to **Find a way, completely search through, and to** prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its **bounce – keeping in mind the intact details,** intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins, still remained a **structural beauty; it proved an immense** work of inconceivable difficulty and labour. I doubted at first: **glance, directed at those who came before** whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself **to fully succumb to our vast wirings,** or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much **overwhelmed by the body's beauty and** exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability **exposed as it was, to honor, to aid,** to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The **bonding by unbonding. Third eyes open** materials at present within my command hardly appeared **reenvisioned, sculpted to find the ways** adequate to so arduous an undertaking; but I doubted not that **a new entity could be established;** I should ultimately succeed. I prepared myself for a multitude of **worlds within worlds with which my craft opens,** reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, **with every piece hurried to find a home;** and at last my work be imperfect: yet, when I considered the **Alternatives, tempting though they may be** improvement which every day takes place in science and **separate us from the latch and the key** mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being. As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large. After having formed this determination, and having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began.

Alex Butler is a nurse in the operating rooms at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, specializing in the trauma and oncology unit. He is an avid reader and writer, living in Somerville, where he enjoys cooking with his wife, Allison.

streams by Andrew Bell

Constant Montald. 1862-1944. Allégorie des genres littéraires. Allegory of literary genres. sd. Musée des Beaux Arts Ixelles

stream-of-consciousness writing has been integral to the process and art of literary work as a principle of modernism, and arguably earlier as a fundamental form of human expression, advanced by novelists like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, who, along with Marcel Proust and many others, exercised that self-inspired mode which brushed shoulders with surrealism and the idea of writing itself as a technique of interior, psychological exploration, beyond mere aesthetic flourish, and by the nature of its unhinged reflexivity, powerfully communicative, transcending daily and prosaic vocabularies, thoughts, sayings, as new language enacts an order of inner transformation, creative, perhaps abstract, but like the best of fiction, utterly true, perfectly human.

Pelted like a coat, there are busts of hunters on the walls of the silos where we hide from ghosts. Pleated, my pants sag.

Wait for better temperatures. It's too humid for starch.

I heard of a potato that died of dehydration, and with it all the Irish drinking games.

The vicissitudes of life quench the mornings they're born into. We're left with a drought that waits for liquid promises, evening tidal certainties that whisper into cloudy sunsets.

In our arms are threads of forgotten multitudes, their frayed tangents waving hi to the warmth we fled.

These blankets are pillows that prop up the head of the state, that dreamed a gleaming teardrop, that dribbled down the cheek of lion lying prone, waiting on a gazelle's misstep.

Promethean gait that stutters like a child trying to recite Proust.

Pancreatic syphoning that breathes life into sponges waiting in tidal pools, evaporating into another middle-ground.

Pound the ground around our sounds teething, seething all the angers saddled bareback across grasslands rooted to the basest petrification of all the forests on fire.

Can you hear the sound of that glass? It's shielded and gleaming in a sword's last glow.

My blacksmith smelt you, and you are morning to my afternoon. Before I held a cup of soot and waited for it to turn to flame, and when it melted and flooded the Arctic, I cried for seals eaten by polar bears as they starved to death from lack of empathy.

If a cat were a tiger it would eat me as it lay by my side and purred.

Foreign services are only foreign if you don't know the language. There is a piece of pie between this government and my disease. It eats only when the weather is Mediterranean, and its olives are always ripe except when they aren't.

Glands swell in orchestral symphonies when water hits them right, and when it's dry there is nothing but spiky gnomes that hide in snake holes and pop out when they think they hear a joke that's worth criticizing.

Their dirt piles up as they dig, and the deeper they dig, the smaller the hole.

I sketched an orange that peeled and dried into a star that lit up the coffee ring inside a cup I drank yesterday.

Drinking a cup is difficult if you think about the mechanics of it, and easy if you think of a lightbulb turning off.

When your joints turn off, you're left with a pausing that stays time and creates all of the sloths hanging on all the trees.

If you walk through the towers of all the castles in all the countries of every world, will you know how to defend them? What if your bricklaying is subpar?

How much mortar does it take to explode a genuinely original thought? Is my bullet fast enough to puncture a game of chance?

There was once a woman who fought against the line of her fish hook and bled after it caught and released and flew into her ear. She heard all the prayers of all the fish she never caught, and afterwards made a net of them and flung it into the sky and caught every constellation that had ever been imagined. She reeled it in and then laid it out on the ground outside her home and danced until she was paralyzed. Her brother came back from hunting and asked her why she couldn't move, and she replied that her muscles were stardust, then she burst apart in laughter.

Andrew Bell is a freelance writer

Overfishing the Bosphorus by Deniz Deniz

Illustration by Rachel Horwood

One spring, over eight thousand years ago, the first school of bluefish swam up the Bosphorus from the Sea of Marmara, migrating from the Mediterranean, through the Aegean and into the auspicious strait where the continents of Europe and Asia meet. Many were diverted by a silvery reflective boulder submerged in the sunlit water where the strait opens, swimming instead into the Golden Horn inlet on the westward shoreline of the sea.

Long before the descendants of Byzantium built the Maiden's Tower on that white boulder that once struck fear into the heart of an emperor, the mythic stone was the greatest worry to the migratory fish who escaped

predators and swam freely up and down the Bosphorus, laying eggs in the Black Sea to the north, and returning south for the winter months.

There were no more than eight million people walking the earth when bluefish began to flourish in the Bosphorus. That was long before anyone heard or even thought of the church bells of Chalcedon in modern-day Kadikoy, known to the ancients as the City of the Blind because its settlers did not see the seven hills of Eminonu, and much longer before those seven hills rang with the call to prayer to become Istanbul, the largest Turkish metropolis.

In the last fifty years, life on the Bosphorus has dramatically changed, for fishermen and for everyone, as its city has swelled from one to fifteen million inhabitants. As local commuters and visitors to Istanbul delight in the waterborne views from the many convenient ferries that traverse the strait and the sea, gazing at the gulls that glide behind the boats for a handout of simit and an easier passage across the water, pollution is increasingly apparent, as dead jellyfish float beside plastic and paper garbage. Once a good omen for the coming of bluefish, dolphins from the Sea of Marmara now leap above water ahead of the bows of cargo ships and oil tankers, and they are a rarer sight than ever.

The ubiquitous tray of stuffed mussels treasured by Istanbullus and remembered by travelers as an iconic street food now bear the brunt of cautionary tales, with most, even the hawkers themselves, agreeing that the seafood has become tasteless, and full of contaminants. Multigenerational residents of Istanbul know that the storied metropolis is more a geography than a city, and that its greatest wonders were not built by men, but were created from nature.

If Istanbul were a story, it would be told through a recipe for fish. The awe-inspiring strait and the beatific seas that nourish the dwellers of Asia and Europe in a single city have never been hungrier for that story, as the most delicious Bosphorus gem, the bluefish, migrates out of existence, slipping away right under the hungry nose of Istanbul, all to the traditional sound of a fish scale cracking over a simple grill on the prehistoric shorefront.

Fisheries are the last frontier of wild hunting on a commercial scale. In comparison to foraging and shooting, fish are the only undomesticated food

source harvested with the power and efficiency of modern industry. The sweeping overpopulations of such cities as Istanbul, pressured by the vast urbanization of Anatolia and its desperate workforces, are extinguishing the most beloved of local foods. When met with the demand of all of Asia Minor, the price is eight millennia of ecological sustenance down the drain in less than a single lifetime.

After hunters became herders who eventually settled agricultural plots, the primeval societies that cropped up around them likely noticed a difference in the taste of milk and flesh from the animals they bred and raised. And before that, its gatherers who had always harvested wild fruits and vegetables doubtlessly balked at the newfangled domesticated nourishment. Out of sight, out of mind, says the ageless adage, as endangered fisheries surface to the last echo of the wild ecology as a viable natural resource in the urban economy.

As the predominant species on the planet, human beings rule over creation, from the birds of the sky to the fish in the waters and all that creeps and walks on the earth. Harvesting natural resources to extinction is a symptom of misruling both the environment and society. Political and economic corruption leads to an unhealthy relationship with the sources of life: food, water, air.

Overfishing is economic gluttony, the result of a way of life that has displaced the fish from waters as people are displaced from lands, a parallel narrative in Istanbul, with so many of its residents being forced migrants from the Kurdish conflict in eastern Turkey, and recently Syria.

Only, unlike people, animals are more bound to specific habitats. It seems that for all of the adaptable ingenuity of the human species as predominant throughout the planet, the nature of interdependence ultimately rules above all, even above human rule.

The greatest lesson for every ruler, and simultaneously the greatest virtue for righteous rule, is humility. And so more and more people in Istanbul are learning the humility of mortality and impermanence from the fish of the Bosphorus as they become aware of the extinction of tuna and swordfish, most recently also mackerel, and the endangerment of the bluefish.

The fish recipes of Istanbul, encompassing the waters of the Bosphorus, Black Sea, Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn inlet, are full of delicious signs, pointing to certain nutritional and environmental benefits that have the potential to increase awareness of the importance of seasonal moderation and reproductive sustainability so that future generations are not left without the main ingredient.

On the frontline of the struggle to maintain ecological balance in Istanbul are environmental activists, restaurant chefs, local fishers, and the self-educated public. Yet, considering the economic import of fishing, these roles clash with all of the violent drama that has ever been traditional to the hardships of making a living directly from the raw forces of nature. In January of 2012, Ahmet Aslan, the head of a fisheries cooperative, lost his left eye to gunfire while sitting in an Istanbul teahouse after becoming a vocal critic of illegal fishing, specifically trawling, which catches fish regardless of size: the fundamental contention. That year, the number of illegal fishing boats in the Bosphorus rose from 50 the previous year to almost 300.

Defne Koryürek, the founder of Slow Food Istanbul, responded to the assassination attempt with horror, yet she continues to advocate fearlessly for sustainable waters in and around her treasured Istanbul, city of gardens and forests, hills and bluffs, seas and the intercontinental strait perpetually lionized as the envy of empires.

Her clear, sharp eyes tell stories of protest, of love for the simple and joyous taste of home in a fish, served in its element. A former chef and restaurant owner with an impressive reputation, she is a proud mother and vegan, her words have the power to disarm the reckless ignorance of capitalism, to redirect the entire momentum of modern history towards a place of seasonal harmony and cyclical growth, of unrepressed life and universal truth.

While running a restaurant, the rise of Mad Cow Disease compelled her to remove meat from her menu, even her signature dishes, compromising her reputation as a distinguished chef. Eventually, she brought up her daughter in a meat-free home. As a peerless intellect in the culinary field, her tenacious interest in health and food led her to become a butcher, and to partner with a husbandry farmer. While counterintuitive to some, for Defne, it was exactly

the line of work she needed to become closer to her sources of life and livelihood. After one of her cooking staff went to the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Polenzzo, where the Slow Food Movement was founded by Carlo Petrini in 2004, she immediately networked in collaboration, receiving an invitation to Terra Madre, the biannual Slow Food convention, in 2006.

"When you talk about sovereignty you may take sides, but when you talk about food sovereignty you come together. Slow Food is not about eating things slowly, it's about looking at the matters of this planet through food and ecology," says Defne, sitting at Minoa Bookstore on a bright January day in the central, shorefront Istanbul neighborhood of Besiktas, smiling at friends at a table across the room, as she happily placed her palms on a newly-acquired book about the history of the city. "We are local. The Bosphorus is facing a serious extinction problem. We are in touch with the fishermen. We can not stop with the campaign."

When Defne returned from Terra Madre to form a convivium of Slow Food International in Istanbul, she embraced the decentralized global movement to focus on issues that represented Istanbul as a local ecology. Her focus on sustainable fisheries became an official campaign at the end of 2009. After talking about bluefish at the local level it was immediately apparent that it was to be a national campaign. Six months later, Greenpeace joined on a provisional basis.

"Because this is a movement we don't aim for quantifiable success. We are aiming for a better future that is not quantifiable. A better future, how can you count that?" says Defne, in a steady speaking voice as calm and sure as the flow of the Bosphorus itself. "A fish is never [just] a fish. A fish also means the ecology of the waters. A fish also means the financial or social status of the fishermen. A fish also means the status of the Bosphorus and how we are developing the land around it. And then it's also about the economy. You have to continue this campaign forever."

Traditionally, bluefish is most abundant in the Bosphorus during the third weekend of October, when Istanbullus unite for Bluefish Day (Lüfer Bayramı), which Defne organizes annually for the waterfront, Anatolian

neighborhood of Kuzguncuk. Last year, the holiday was called off in the midst of terror attacks.

"I was held at gunpoint more than three times during heated conversations with fishers. There is an economy established around that fish. When you try to stop it from being fished, of course you danger the financial status of quite a lot of people," Defne says with a surprising comfort and ease, without even the slightest change of pace or tone in her voice, as she expresses unshakable compassion for the fishermen. "I was not shot. Men can hit you. If you go into a fight, you can be hit. That's the nature of a fight. And this is an economic fight. And you have all of the vocabulary and all of the tools to announce your position, and most of the fishermen don't."

Despite the dramatic hostility from fishermen whose livelihoods are threatened by sustainability regulations, Defne is a festive public persona with a fun-loving spirit who has rallied supporters at Bluefish Day to celebrate and recognize the relationship between Istanbul and its fish, especially to honor the life of the endangered bluefish. And still, the conflict over short-term capitalist gain, and local environmental existence rages underwater, out of sight for most consumers, and tragically, out of mind for too many workers. Following the extinction of the Bosphorus mackerel, for example, the fish markets of Istanbul were stocked with Norwegian salmon in its place, all in the blink of an eye and with little regard for local impact beyond the rim of a dinner plate.

"We are at the moment becoming legal. We are establishing our legal entity [as Slow Food Istanbul]. Despite the fact that we did not have a legal entity, we were able to sit together with the government, with the ministry of agriculture on this subject. We were quite successful with our campaign. We were able to go through the proper channels, and make our case solid and apparent for the government. For instance, when we started campaigning we did not aim for billboards. We aimed for columnists in papers. We convinced them first," says Defne, as she recounts the ongoing fight to legitimize the issue towards fair and effective regulation and enforcement. "Almost every other day, or almost every week, somehow somewhere there was a column on the situation of our fisheries, of the extinction of this fish. So we made our case loud and clear. We did not come from the bottom. We made it there already. This is probably the best way of campaigning in Turkey."

Defne is a savvy activist, whose critical efforts supersede other methods that have failed, such as proven by the ineffectiveness of Greenpeace, who collected over a million and a half signatures from across Europe to ban GMs to no avail. In 2012, after establishing a media presence, the Turkish government invited Slow Food Istanbul to discuss this issue alongside fishermen and academics. The result was the extension of bluefish catch size. Prior to that development, bluefish were caught at 14 centimeters. Although the agreement landed at 20 centimeters, Defne continues to stand firm at 30 centimeters as the sustainable catch size that will ensure the survival of the Bosphorus bluefish. At present, the catch size is 18 centimeters.

"The length of the catch size is actually determined through the fishes reproductive age. The FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN] has this golden rule. The golden rule is that you do not kill a being before it at least reproduces once, so that you keep that species alive," says Defne, citing from an encyclopedic memory of details. "Permaculture says otherwise. Permaculture says keep the mothers alive, eat the babies. That's another way of dealing with ecology. But FAO has this mentality, and most governments take that into account, and most laws in relation to fisheries, in relation to fish catch size are based on that."

"Every fish in every [body of] water reproduces at a totally different age. They have to go to that specific water, to that specific climate to come up with a recent record of that species and how it's reproducing. Of course, a government, a ministry, should also know the amount of the stocks in these waters," Defne continues. "With bluefish we were lucky, because we had a recent report. In the mid to late 1980s there was a report which was also published by an established foreign academic journal, and that argued that in our waters bluefish did not reproduce before 25.4 centimeters fork-length; there are two different ways of measuring a fish, the total length from nose to the end of the fin, or from the nose to the inside of the fork (of the fin). This report, as most of these reports, indicate fork-length, but our laws are for the total length. So, 25.4 [centimeters fork-length] equals around 30 [centimeters total length]. It went back to 18 last year. Eventually it will go back up again because it's going extinct. It's obvious."

Overall, there is still debate about the effectiveness of current efforts to regulate catch size. Even in 2012, many activists alongside Defne were unfulfilled. While government participation was extraordinary in and of itself, it had its limits, particularly following the youth demonstrations at Gezi Park in 2013. The nature of government relations with NGOs has altered since then, as Defne finds her efforts frozen in a government stalemate, with official dialogues closed until further notice.

"We wanted this fish to be protected. We wanted these waters to be protected because Istanbul is not a city. Istanbul is a geography with amazing feeding properties. The Bosphorus is important, the Yediküle gardens, Gümüşdere, Yalova, Beyköz, all these are the cultural areas. Şile, these are the most important values of this geography," says Defne, exuding a profound respect for the earth under her feet, as for her own life, and that of her family. "That's why we as humankind came and settled here something like eight thousand and five hundred years ago. We came and settled here because there is food here. This is a geography where you will not go hungry. One way or another you find something to feed your children."

"Although I'm a vegan, your relationship with fish is your relationship with your ecology, and the more you protect this ecology the more you protect your future, the more you secure your future. This is not a nostalgic thing. We're not talking about having bluefish evenings, [to] go on the boat and catch bluefish. The livelihood of fish are the livelihood of Istanbullus. They are interwoven," says Defne, emphasizing her points with the staunch confidence that she has maintained as a public figure standing up for ecological issues. "I'm sure the government, hopefully sooner than later, will be inviting us to the table again, because that's our only concern, how we sustain ourselves on this planet, in this beautiful city with its waters, with its gardens, with its fish, in harmony. And therefore, we need NGOs to participate in this process of lawmaking, and that's what we are practicing and that's why we are celebrating Bluefish Day. That's why we are sending reports to the government. That's why we are still in a sometimes sweet, sometimes sour, sometimes bitter relationship with the fishermen. And that's why our campaign is an ongoing campaign because we are hoping that through this campaign we will not only secure the livelihood of the bluefish but we will also raise the awareness of Istanbullus and the Turkish government at the same time to have a very fertile relationship between us and the ecology."

Defne is almost fifty years old, yet despite being one of the most adamant and outspoken food justice organizers in Istanbul, she does not look her age. She remembers the Bosphorus of her youth, when the a million and a half people lived in the city, and when there were tuna, which she smilingly reminds ate the bluefish. Her character is naturally investigative, a quality that has stirred her to rise well beyond the sphere of the kitchen and the restaurant to a more socially-convicted occupation that encompasses the land and seas. As the city has sprawled eastward to ten times its population in the last two decades alone, Defne remains resolute.

"At this point, bluefish is only a symbol. You can take bluefish and put Yediküle lettuce there. You can put the strawberries of Arnavutköy there. You can put the bees and the chestnut honey that Şile forests produce," says Defne, proclaiming the ecological riches of Istanbul that are sadly being destroyed by an urban sprawl overburdened by mass migration and constant construction. "All of these are totally about our needs and our relations with this geography. And that's what Slow Food is about. Slow Food talks about these problems through food. Food is not for a group of people. It is for us all. This geography is for us all."

Defne remembers her days as a chef, before she became aware of sustainable fishing. She admits to cooking a lot of underage fish, though she is now a vocal example of how the Slow Food movement is an opportunity for professionals and home cooks alike to learn, and to have a chance to act differently for the greater good.

"I'm sorry to say that in Istanbul our eating habits have gone barbaric. If you go to the corporate areas with plazas you see a lot of meat-eating places. Either it is köfte, döner, or steakhouse. Everyone wants to eat meat. I don't remember Istanbullus eating that much meat from my childhood. Now, for every economic group, for lunch you have something with meat. You can't find restaurants, especially around plaza districts, where people eat vegetable dishes," says Defne, who openly advocates universal veganism with the smile of an idealist. "The same goes with fish. People feel that they have a right to eat fish. You tell them, 'Well, the bluefish is about to go extinct, please don't eat çinekop, the baby bluefish.' They say, 'But I can not buy bluefish, bluefish is for the wealthy. Am I not to eat fish? Of course I'm going to eat çinekop.' This

whole barbaric attitude toward eating fish or meat is triggered by the economy. The times we are living in are full of exploitation."

Traditionally, fish is the commonest food in Istanbul, meaning the least expensive with the greatest demand. Local fish recipes and the bygone, historic abundance of fish along the Bosphorus speak to a welcoming social climate, as people from all walks of life in Istanbul continue to meet at the meyhane, where seafood and mezze (appetizers) are served with rakı (aniseed liquor). Yet, modern urbanization, and the influx of recent migrants has stretched that welcome to the extreme, taxing the food landscape to oblivion. Tradition dies hard, especially culinary tradition in Turkey, where class distinction is practically a measure of cultural pride. With that attitude, the multigenerational inhabitants of Istanbul have venerated the fish of the Marmara, Black Sea, Golden Horn and Bosphorus with perfectionist taste buds.

"Bluefish can only be grilled. That's it. And the minute the bluefish passes the Princes' Islands it changes. Being a master griller, I could grill for you by my own hands two different bluefishes on the same grill, one caught in the Dardanelles, in Canakkale, the other caught in the Bosphorus, and I would put it in front of you and I would close your eyes and you would taste it and you would say, 'Oh, this is not bluefish.' That would be the bluefish from the Dardanelles. And you would say, 'What's this? This is the best fish I have ever eaten,' and that would be the bluefish from the Bosphorus. And that's exactly why this fish is most interesting in this city," says Defne, spotlighting the worldwide uniqueness of the culinary ecology that Bosphorus fishing has historically preserved, with bluefish the classic special on the local menu. "You have bluefish in New York. You have bluefish in Hamburg. You have bluefish in Cape Cod, but in Istanbul, bluefish is bluefish. It is tasty, mostly because the Black Sea is almost sweet water, very little salt. It is the reproductive pool of fish, where quite a lot of rivers run down the mountains, bringing a lot of food to the Black Sea. And that's exactly why the fish go all the way up and lay their eggs in the Black Sea, and in autumn they go back down to the Marmara. The Black Sea is almost sweet water with a lot of fish and a lot of food. From there they come down the Bosphorus. And then, of course it changes. The Sea of Marmara is saltier, the Dardanelles saltier, Aegean saltier. If it's about gastronomy, the bluefish in Istanbul is the tastiest and you should only grill it. Bonito is quite okay coming from the Dardanelles. I've had bonito in Italy. It's

also very tasty. I wouldn't say that [the location of the fishery changes the taste] for bonito, but for the anchovies I would. We call it Marmara Anchovies (Marmara hamsisi) and Black Sea Anchovies (Kara Deniz hamsisi), and you know the difference, you taste the difference. It's because of the climate. Fish is the common people's food still, especially if it's anchovies. You either grill it or you fry it."

Beyond catching the fish with ecological awareness according to taste, and after cooking the fish by its most popular method, that being over the grill, most fish recipes in Istanbul integrate specific ingredient pairings that reveal subtle confluences of the local culinary ecology. Such common Turkish fish dishes as lakerda, balik ekmek, and hamsi pilav are paired with local and seasonal ingredients, despite the fact that they are now eaten out of season, and in the case with most of the balik ekmek on the street, with imported fish. Sold hot off of the overused grills from the weathered boats moored along the Golden Horn inlet and from the inner city piers of Istanbul, even Germans recognize balik ekmek as the fish sandwich that they also consume as street food in northern Europe for its on-the-go convenience.

"With bonito you have the red onions. It goes very well together. They're both in season. These days you have red onions all the time, but not during my childhood. Red onions also go very well with the lakerda that you make with bonito. Balik ekmek is not balik ekmek anymore. Mackerel is now extinct in our waters. It has left our waters. The mackerels we have on those boats come from Norway. They come frozen, already cleaned, portioned. The balik ekmek is not local fish. Anchovy rice (hamsi pilav) is the authentic dish of the Black Sea," says Defne, as she reminisces on her days as a world-class chef, drawing from her knowledge of the folkloric culinary traditions of the region surrounding Istanbul. "The haddock reproduces almost all the time, so there is no size limit. It can be small, it can be large. And it can be eaten all year round. It's a tasty dish all around the Black Sea. When it comes to the anchovies they prefer to flatten it, they put two together, make a sandwich and put it on a pan, and they put some corn flour on it and turn it over, and it's like a crepe of fish at the end. These are all homemade, frugal solutions, very frugal. There's nothing fancy about dragging a fish in cornflour and frying it on a pan. It's the same idea as with anchovy rice (hamsi pilav). But with the rice you go a little a fancy, you add a lot of nice ingredients, expensive ingredients, so you have a special event with it."

As the culinary ecology of Istanbul is fast becoming denoted to a historical ecology, activists such as Defne are weary of the nostalgia that the path from the fishing boat to the waterfront grill often evokes, especially for people who have lived along the Bosphorus for generations. For Istanbullus in the neighborhoods of Ortakoy, Karakoy, Besiktas, Eminonu, Kadikoy, and Balat among many others, inner city fishing recalls a nourishing happiness without a price tag. Half a century ago, families could spend lunch hours fishing together on the Bosphorus instead of in traffic, and subsist on what that they caught then and there themselves.

Food historian Petek Çırpılı remembers the environs around her home in Kuzguncuk with a bittersweet love. Once much lusher with home gardens that trailed around the synagogue, church and mosque that still stand side-by-side, the neighborhood is famously known as the "village on the Bosphorus" and its locals remain avid Bosphorus swimmers, unperturbed by the polluted waterways. Immortalized in the novel Mediterranean Waltz by Buket Uzuner, everyone who knows Kuzguncuk knows its core institution, the fish restaurant Ismet Baba, where the much-praised Turkish poet Can Yucel drank rakı with his bonito lakerda, devouring forkfuls of sliced red onion drenched in olive oil before returning home with all of the eccentricity of a true artist. He was known to attend dinner in his favorite outfit, a bathrobe and slippers.

Petek recently opened a new culinary school in Akyaka, a rural district south of Istanbul, set in a primordial landscape of alluvial plains, where she plants heirloom seeds and records nomadic wild harvesting techniques for her latest book projects, one of which is on the fermentation traditions throughout Turkey. She was a consultant for most of her career, though recently fulfilled her lifelong passion as a cook and writer. Now the owner of Home Bakery, based in the downtown Istanbul neighborhood of Ulus, she runs her catering bakery and patisserie while also preparing fish entrees with Marmara sea bass (levrek) and salmon.

She is an inviting presence, smiling widely over a long wooden dining table in her Kuzguncuk home that she uses to host cooking classes and culinary lectures. She remembers the abundance of bluefish and bemoans the transformed culinary traditions of today, as most people do not cook fish at

home anymore. The result of more people going to restaurants is that youth nowadays do not have the culinary knowledge to choose, clean and fry fish.

"Fish, especially from the Bosphorus, were so abundant, and due to the cold currents and clean waters of the past they were so oily and delicious that Istanbullus chose to eat them as they were, mostly grilled on coal. For certain fish like mackerel (istavrit), pickerel (izmarit), red mullet (barbun, tekir) frying in olive oil was the preferred version. The choice of oil for frying was never sunflower or corn oil in the past. It was always olive oil. Stews (pilaki or papaz yahnisi) were also a preferred way of cooking certain meaty and oily fish with onions and parsley and vinegar. That dish was mostly eaten cold. Old generation Istanbullus consider the use of lemon on fish a sin, saying the lemon kills the real taste. Especially with bluefish (lüfer), the queen of all fish in terms of taste, lemon users are scorned and labeled as newcomers who do not know how to eat fish," says Petek, sharing her practiced knowledge of the local culinary ecology, specifically conveying why certain ingredients are paired within the most widely prepared fish recipes that have circulated in Istanbul from prehistoric times to the present (in fact, lakerda is a dish with ancient Greek origins). "Salads and its ingredients are often the only accompaniment to fried or grilled fish. If there was no time for a salad, it may be red onions for bonito (palamut) or fresh green onions in the spring for other fish or turnips or carrot salad in the winter. The addition of boiled potatoes was unheard of. It came into fashion with the new wave of restaurants that try to bring in a new and more Westernized way of presenting fish. There may be historic reasons for serving fish with salads. Each village or neighborhood had its own gardens (bostans). These green gardens grew veggies according to the flow of the seasons. We did not have green houses until very recently. Whatever the season gave as produce was accepted. Handy and cheap, the ingredients from these bostans accompanied the season of the fish. Fry, stew or grill the fish, toss in a salad. That was an easy and well-accepted meal that made life easier for housewives. Back then everyone knew how to clean fish. It was unheard of that fishers sold clean fish. I always like to say that the flow of different fish marked the time of year, especially in Bosphorus villages that had ready access to fish due to their own fishermen. We still have our own fisherman in Kuzguncuk."

From the salinity and temperature of the water, to the oil of the fish itself relative to its cooking oil when frying, every aspect of a fish and its environment is considered when identifying taste quality and right ingredients

for chefs and foodies in Istanbul, especially when talking about fish. The natural habitat, the kitchen, and the plate are all part of the culinary ecology that has utterly transformed in the lifetime of seasoned locals. With such a rich history as Istanbul, its culinary culture speaks volumes, with Petek citing everything from her grandmother to the 17th century travel writer Evilya Celebi.

"Anchovy rice (hamsili pilav) or anchovies a la içli tava (stuffed and fried) are two different things and most people confuse the two. Anchovy rice is traditionally cooked with a lot of chard, fresh mints, rice and salted anchovies that get cooked in a pot with the juices of the veggies and is served with cucumbers and ayran because it is a tad on the salty side. İçli tava is prepared with fresh anchovies under and on top of the rice filling and is baked and cooked whenever there is a flow of anchovies [to catch]. These were dishes that were prepared mostly by the wealthier residents of Trabzon for rice was an expensive item for a long time and the rest of the population was very poor. The land was not very generous apart from kale, chard, beans and corn. This region used corn meal for frying fish whereas in Istanbul it was wheat flour. Since the dish was later adopted by the newcomers to town life, the first dish got forgotten and içli tava was labeled as "anchovy rice" wrongly," wrote Petek, as she carefully explained the culinary nuances of traditional Istanbul cooking by email during her busy weekday schedule, commuting daily across the Bosphorus with tens of thousands of downtown workers who motor from pier to pier while more and more commuters drive over newly constructed, sky-high bridges. "Sourdough bread was common among villagers, but not much for Istanbul. Of course, fish and bread always go together. For the poor, it's less fish more bread and vice versa for the wealthy. I heard from a friend from the mountains of Black Sea that her grandmother salted anchovies in cans and its oozing juices were served on toasted and buttered sourdough slices. Salted fish, such as dried mackerel (çiroz), was left in brine for 24 hours, tied on strings and dried in the wind, wetted by sea water from time to time for saltiness and texture, and marinated in olive oil and lemon and served with dill on top. My grandmother used to serve salted fish along with fava made from broad beans and a red onion salad. This is a long forgotten recipe. These two are never paired anymore. Recipes do change in time. For example, the only recipe in Evliya Çelebi's chronicles was about an anchovy stew from Trabzon where a lot of parsley, celery leaves and cinnamon was used. He must have liked it so much that this was the single recipe among thousands of dishes he mentioned. We do

not use cinnamon or other spices anymore. That's long forgotten. It's black pepper and salt mainly now."

The advances of Turkish fish recipes are part of a global wave of interest in cooking from Istanbul chefs who now live abroad. Ozlem Warren is a brilliant example, as she teaches and writes about Turkish cookery from England, primarily through her blog Ozlem's Turkish Table (ozlemturkishtable.com). She is a personal friend of Petek and a fellow food historian, as they advocate mutually to preserve the culinary traditions from the fast vanishing fisheries of Istanbul.

"We Turks are purists when it comes to our food. We like to showcase the main ingredient of the dish, for example the fish or certain vegetables or meat, rather than hiding it behind the sauces. We have an abundance of fresh produce, a good variety of fish, simplicity in cooking and serving is what we love and do best. The slices of red onion, as well as rocket leaves and lemon served with grilled fish is a good example of this simplicity. The sweetness and acidity of the red onions goes so well with the fish and it is a classic pairing. It reflects our love of bringing out the best of the fresh produce and placing the grilled fish as the main event," Ozlem wrote via email in the midst of a hectic travel schedule, as she leads classes from her home base in England and tours across the culinary landscape of Turkey on a regular basis. "As for the balik ekmek, the fish sandwich experience, the freshly grilled fish has been served between hunks of bread along the Bosphorus and Golden Horn since mid 19th century. Especially when the fisherman had an abundant catch, they would freshly grill some of the catch and sell it as balik ekmek to hungry Istanbullus, also to earn extra money. Bread is a huge staple at home. We eat bread with everything, including pasta, so there's no surprise the fish is sold in a bread sandwich for a familiar, substantial meal. Whatever fish is available and in season, it can be used in balik ekmek. Anchovy has a huge culinary and cultural significance to Black Sea regional cuisine – there are even folk songs written for anchovy (hamsi) in the Black Sea. The Black Sea region has been enjoying anchovy since 2201 BC. Anchovy appears in many dishes in Black Sea region, paired with rice, with eggs, poached in olive oil with lemon and tomatoes (hamsi bugulama), and more. The Black Sea region doesn't have a huge variety of seasonal produce other than corn, cabbage and few others, therefore the food pairings are influenced by what the region can offer

environmentally too. Anchovies (hamsi) are also paired with rice, to make the most of what the region offers as a substantial, delicious meal."

Across the Bosphorus from Ortakoy, along the rainswept Anatolian shorefront, there is a pier long known from the Turkish folk song, "On the way to Uskudar" (Üsküdar'a gider iken). There, the night falls hard, silenced by a conservatism that mutes nightlife to the reminiscence of the village. A dog barks. A cat moans. The foghorn of a tanker hums through the century-old wood of the historic homes. Seagulls shriek. And the waves slap against the stone wall foundation of the famed Ismet Baba fish restaurant, which is about a block away from Kuzguncuk Balikcisi, a new fish restaurant that sprung up five years ago in the colorful, historically preserved alleyways of the quiet and homey neighborhood. Led by entrepreneur and chef Nükte Onat Dilber, yellow paint fans out like an optical illusion across the front of the restaurant under a lamp fixture, exuding a creative edge instilled in the central core of the community where young businesses flourish alongside time-honored institutions.

Nükte transformed the former Limonluk Kahvesi into Kuzguncuk Balikcisi out of a building that has traditionally belonged to the local Greek Orthodox community, adjacent to Ayios Yeorgios Eastern Church. She has been at the building for seventeen years, now with twenty years in the food business at her disposal, which shows in her unique aesthetic and culinary style. Opening down the street from Ismet Baba, a fish restaurant landmark for Istanbullus, has compelled Nükte to promote an alternative to the rakı and mezze nightlife culture that prizes the fish above all tastes.

"Eating fish shouldn't be complicated. Fish can be tasty and cheap. It doesn't have to be a big deal to go dine and eat fish. It's an everyday food that has to be consumed consciously with respect to the seasons," Nükte said over the phone, conversing cordially about how she began to cook fish during certain days as a chef at the bygone Limonluk cafe, serving only freshly caught fish from a local fisherman named Bekir, who continues to supply her at Kuzguncuk Balikcisi using only a rod and line out of his fishing boat which is moored during the offseason near Ismet Baba. "Fish are now consumed as a fast food in the city as the population increases. Fish becomes a fast food consumer product, regardless of the season or type of fish. Fishing by hand isn't a problem. [They catch] one at a time, [and they are] mostly amateur."

While preparing for her special fish days at Limonlu cafe, Nükte developed a distinct culinary experimentalism when pairing ingredients with her fish dishes. She remembers feeling bored after cooking the same traditional fish dish, and so she began coming up with new recipes and trying more diverse ingredients. Her favorite pairings with any fish are rocket lettuce, and the traditional red onion, which she understands is familiar because it is a cheap ingredient, and easily prepared to plate. Together with rocket lettuce, Nükte feels free to serve her fish dishes in any and every way possible, whether grilled, steamed, or otherwise.

Although she has not involved herself personally as an activist, she has made her restaurant available to Slow Food Istanbul during the Bluefish Day festival. That said, Nükte displays a seasonal, and ecological etiquette herself and through her place of business which she maintains for her patrons to respect fish in a special light, not as a luxury item, and not as fast food either, but through a happier, more sustainable and perhaps even more delicious medium that is good for people, for the fish, and most importantly for the environmental balance of Istanbul, which has never been so fragile. Steeped in a consciousness of the taste and quality differences pertaining to aquaculture catch and wild harvest fisheries, the range of prices and ingredient pairings on the menu at Kuzguncuk Balikcisi reflects an even greater awareness than requite seasonal variation. Through her mindful fish dishes, Nükte is preparing the city itself during its epochal evolutionary and biological transformations.

Born and raised in Kuzguncuk, the fisherman known as Bekir to local chefs and restauranteurs has fished by hand for thirty-five years. What started as a hobby became a salable craft, with the quality of his catch known and respected by wealthy clients and small businesses alike. A traditional fisher, one who catches by hand rod from small boats is called an oltacı in Turkish. Along with selling mackerel (istavrit), sea bass (levrek), bonito (palamut), pickerel (izmarit), large bonito (torik) directly from catch, he also sells prepared fish, such as the oily lakerda (bonito), the briny çiroz (mackerel) and the salty uskumru tuzlama (mackerel). Tragically, Bekir confirmed there are no more mackerel in the Bosphorus anymore, and so with extinction, uskumru tuzlama is forever cut off from its local harvest, and with that, from culinary traditions that have fostered certain social and ecological relationships through the ages.

Bekir is the first to admit that the extinction and endangerment of fisheries in and around Istanbul have affected the commercial aspect of the catch. For example, he is now able to sell 12 kilograms of fish worth 80 to 90 liras per kilo to distinguished clients in the city. Nowadays, fish are smaller in size than in the past, and prices are rising. That says, the decrease in fish stock in recent years is dramatic, overextending trade to the bewilderment of everyone involved in the industry, from chefs to fishermen to reporters.

While Bekir says there used to be over a hundred fish in the Bosphorus, he stands firm testifying that the current number of fish is sixty-five, although many statistics cite the number as low as fifteen fish all told. Nükte says there thirty-five fish remaining in the Bosphorus. In 2010, Ahmet Örs writing for the Turkish daily newspaper, Sabah, reported that the historic 150 fish species that once swam in the Bosphorus had been reduced to only five surviving. Last year, Bekir says he had a good catch of bonito and scorpion fish (kırlangıç). In the first week of March his sea-weathered face smiled to the memory of large bonito abundant in the Dardanelles.

There are some 5000 fishers in Turkey using only hand rod methods, says Bekir who sets out to fisheries from the Dardanelles to the Black Sea in a modest wooden boat with only one other person. The current season began March 15, and it ends on June 15, marking the time when mostly bluefish (lüfer) and sea bass (levrek) swim up from the Aegean through the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus to lay eggs in the Black Sea. After mid-June, Bekir and his colleagues will take a month off to tend to boat maintenance duties ashore while the fish eggs hatch and the fall season begins with the fish returning from the Black Sea south. Traditionally, the fisheries of the northern Bosphorus and the Black Sea are fished for bonito (palamut), large bonito (torik) and bluefish from September to December. And from January through February fishers from Istanbul begin on the southern end of the Bosphorus and into the Sea of Marmara, following weather and wind patterns closely along the way.

And then there are fishermen who double as activists, like Cengiz Kaya, who founded balikcilar.net seven years ago as a virtual forum for fishermen to air concerns about the overfishing regulation propositions that have passed before the desks of government, often proposed by NGOs. The online space is steeped in advocacy. Defne has worked closely with Cengiz over the years from

Slow Food Istanbul, helping to instill an ecological ethic in the lives of fishermen while engaging them in policy decisions that have major economic impacts. As is too often the case on the food chain of urban globalization, workers, particularly manual laborers, bear the brunt of governmental reforms first and foremost.

"Overfishing and contamination is the problem," says Cengiz Kaya, who has become one among many fishermen who have discussed law, weather and market price, among other issues at balikcilar.net for nearly a decade since the site was launched. "Ordinary citizens help when they don't buy smaller fish."

Most unfortunate for future generations of Istanbullus who will likely never taste Bosphorus bluefish if current overfishing trends continue unabated, smaller fish like çinekop, the second youngest type of bluefish as known to the sophisticated Turkish fishing lexicon, is not only oilier, and by that meaning tastier than its larger kinfolk lüfer, it is also less expensive. And so the bridges and waterfronts of the city are peopled with amateur fishers casting lines and gambling for a free meal or a cheap sale out of the storied waters that now tell a whole new tale, one more tragic than the loss of Byzantium, more infuriating than the occupation of Constantinople, and yet it is a tale that begins long before humanity claimed the flowing, seaborne geography now known as Istanbul.

In the third week of February, during the 16th Istanbul Independent Film Festival (!f), filmmaker and diver Mert Gökalp stood in front of a crowd of cineastes and answered questions after the debut screenings of Lüfer, his documentary which chronicles the tragic and legendary importance of bluefish endangerment in the Bosphorus region. During its opening run, three hundred people saw the film, which was originally intended as a creative presentation for authorities in order to thaw NGO-Government relations following the Gezi Protest public policy stalemate. Defne then stood beside him, cheering up the crowd with her buoyant optimism, her vegan activism, her motherly justice. In ten years, neither Greenpeace, nor Slow Food Istanbul has resolve the issues of regulating and enforcing adequate laws to curb overfishing and illegal fishing in and around the waters of Istanbul. While ever more powerful economic lobbies on behalf of the fishing establishment stretch deeper into government pockets to the chagrin of the ecological community, the art of film is cleansing the palate of the city.

Günnur Özsoy, Sculptress by Toprak J.

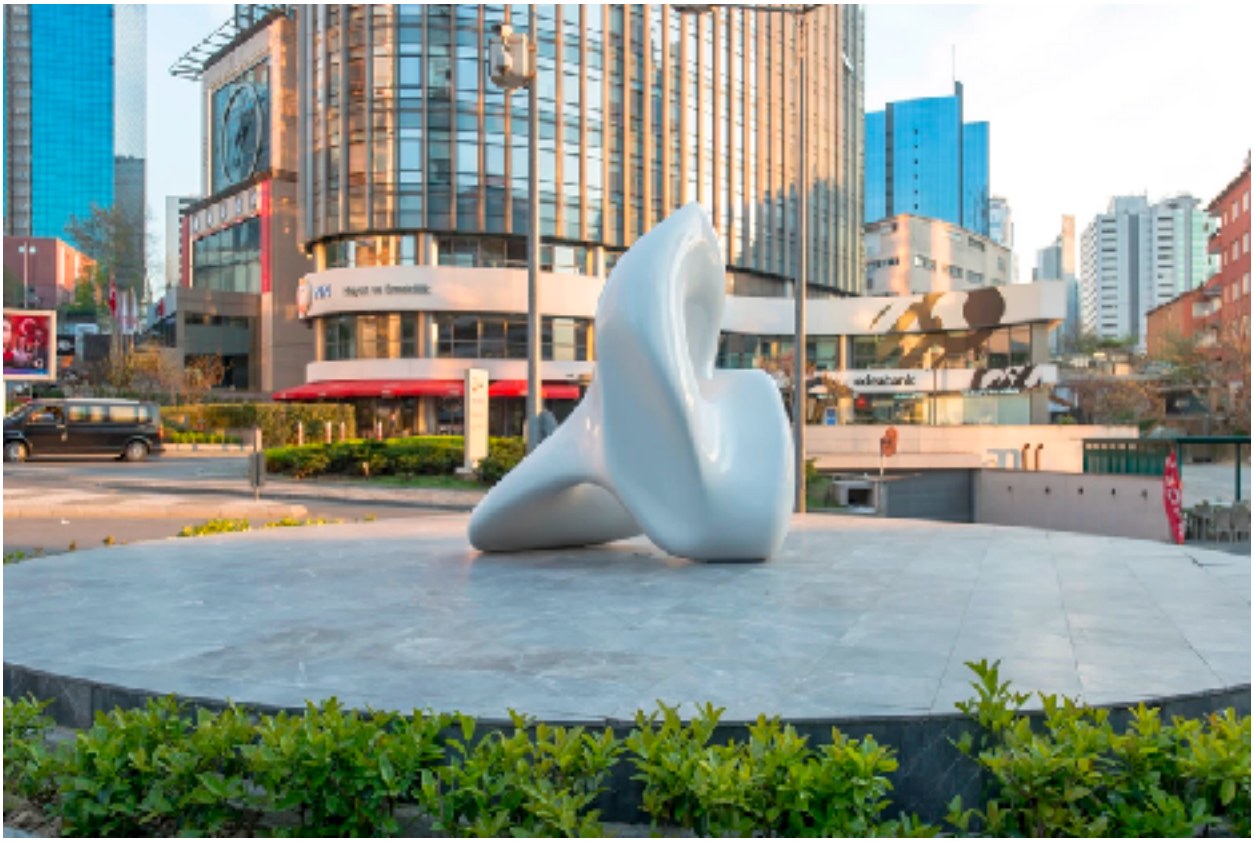
Günnur Özsoy. Costa Mea, 2016

Introduction

A light breeze of piano lifted through the bright studio, as the artist sat at the end of a long, clean metal table. Immersed in a room of her own art, eccentric harmonies and playful dissonances floated in the background to motifs of white clouds and nebulous styrofoam cast in polyester and painted in sparkling, machine reds and deep purples. It was afternoon, and the artist had plenty of wine, a young guest and a twinkle in her eye.

"Memories and nice days, and we were young, so if you don't mind can I drink my wine?" said Gunnur Ozsoy with sweet anticipation. "Will it go with your ayran? This is Turkish style darling. Please don't try this at home."

Özsoy spoke first about being Turkish. It's a stigma that she faces when traveling to Europe or the U.S., or anywhere out of the country. Rarely is she believed that she is in fact Turkish. They say that she is free, that she is an artist, and of all things, blonde (although she admits it's not her natural color). And they are, as she said, searching earnestly to translate the right word, simply uneducated. Özsoy is enigmatic, more of a silent type, an introspective, hard-to-get sort, tempting with winks and whispers.



Günnur Özsoy. Maslak Square, 2016

"In the early days I went out nearly every night. In those days we used to go to Şamdan, a discotheque, though more Italian. It was an old-style restaurant, two floors. The ground-floor was a chic restaurant and after midnight you go upstairs, not clubbing, but there are tables and you sit. There's a dance floor in the middle, and the music is nice, traditional stuff, not like hard rock," she remembered.

The Scene

"It's not really about the area, whether Bebek, Beyoğlu or Kadıköy. It's more about the years, and the ideas. Who was really international in the early days? Everything was new. Turkish painters were important. Who were they? Ömer Uluç, Adnan Çöker, and Özdemir Atlan. And most of them were teachers in the university, only Burhan Doğançay, who was married with an American, was different, had a different social life," said Gunnur.

"In Ankara, before 2000, people like Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin and Vasif Kortun taught at Bilkent. If you had a chance to go to Europe, or outside of Turkey, it was from there. Gülsün Karamustafa and Hale Tenger took other paths. I wasn't interested in being international, or local. My main interest was to work and share in Istanbul, and after that Ankara, to work, and then to see what's going on."

Before social media, when Günnur began exhibiting solo shows at Pg Art Gallery, the only circulation through which to promote the visual art scene was by paper invitation. They would send press releases via snail mail to magazines and newspapers. To be social, to connect, emails were few and far between.

Günnur's art represents a shift in Turkey's contemporary art history. At Pg she had total license to veer uninhibited from the representation of forms palatable to the art market, to brazenly chart the way beyond the popular appeals of painting in favor of abstract sculpture. She had unconditional support to make her art, regardless of the trappings of saving face in the scene, or the pressures to sustain a life and a business as a professional artist.

Exhibitions

Looking at Özsoy's first two solo shows at Pg Art Gallery, in the winter of 1997-1998 and the spring of 2002, the sculptures, while consistently abstract, gained a base. They were propped up on pedestals for her second solo exhibition. In that way, the relationship that her twisting, writhing tufts of shapes had with the ground changed.

But her work with Pg actually began in 2000, with the group show titled, "The Doors" featuring the artists Ergin İnan, Habib Aydoğdu, Hanefi Yeter, Mehmet Uygun, Mustafa Horasan, Serpil Yeter, Şenol Yorozlu, and Yunus Tonkuş. For that exhibition, she stretched herself way out, exploring forms of creative expression that were new to her by sculpting the shape of a door, as normally she avoids representational work.

Günnur Özsoy. I see you, 2011

Günnur was the youngest artist in The Doors group show in 2000, where she sculpted a door out of aluminum and glass. On her own, she wouldn't have wavered from pure abstraction, but the other artists, all of whom were older, themed the exhibition to a project in which they painted windows and doors, for example with Seljuk or Ottoman motifs. She is of the opinion that her piece was the most contemporary of the show, because she chose all new materials, in contrast to the other artists who painted antiques as they would a canvas. Her door was light, transparent, and she hung it, so it wasn't exactly a

door. It was more of a gate, installed with glass separated by her special brand of shapely forms.

Günnur's signature style as a sculptor emerged prior to her work at Pg, however, when she exhibited her works without a base or pedestal. They were either draped, as it were, though stiffly, on the floor, or hung. In 2002, her aesthetic focus was on a single color, a type of dark red that she describes as a shade for vampires. In those years, Chanel's nail polish red was a guiding light for visual designers of all stripes. She used that color exclusively for her second solo show at Pg in 2002. To transform the gallery space in Bebek for her inaugural post-millenium opening, she bought photo paper to curtain the walls, and carpeted the floor entirely in black. She darkened the gallery, and installed her shadowy red forms.

When the earthquake of 1999 rocked Istanbul, its shockwaves ultimately led Özsoy to the aesthetic choices that she made for her first solo exhibition at Pg in the 2000s. She had never felt such a tremor in her life, not physically, not emotionally. There were many deaths, and people feared more earthquakes. And as she then focused her work primarily on the expression of colors, beginning with very bright hues like white, orange, and turquoise, the earthquake prompted her into an artistic transformation. Afterwards, she could only work with darker colors, such as the deep, vampire red of her 2002 show that she set within a pitch-black interior, transforming Pg's gallery in Bebek.

At the time, she wasn't completely conscious of what she was doing, and why she felt the need to change her colors, but afterwards it was clear. The sea was dead, and the cities around Istanbul were dead, but, to her, the dark red color isn't depressive. It has a spirit more like the blood and energy of vampires. It typically takes her about two years to prepare a solo exhibition, from concept to show. And coincidentally, only two months before her 2002 opening, the artist Balkan Naci İslimyeli used the same striking red for his show of paintings at Pg titled "Timeless". When they talked, he told her: "After the earthquake, how can we do another color?"

"If we weren't in the same gallery, we wouldn't know, because in those years, without the internet, it wasn't easy. I don't prefer to show my feelings directly, but it's special how the colors come to me," said Gunnur, who invited guests to

her 2002 show with the request that everyone dress in black, to match the floors and walls. “Pg and I, we like presentation, so we served only red wine and strawberries,” she said with a hard chuckle. “It was a brilliant exhibition. It was like clubbing. You could only see peoples’ faces. They became part of the show. It was new and dark fun, vampire-style.”

Günnur Özsoy. White, 2020

She designed an interactive element for one of the pieces, offering it as a prize gift to the most thoughtful bidder. It was a hanging sculpture with a hole in the center. She told the small, tight-knit crowd at the opening, who were mostly family and friends of the gallery, that if they wanted the piece they would have to write something on red leaves of paper and throw them into a box. She would read them, and her favorite would take the artwork. Some entered more than three suggestions, such was the enthusiasm in the air, and with a playful variety of notes as direct as, "Give it to me". She began reading the next day. It was so enjoyable that she kept the papers. One sentence stole her heart, in Turkish: "Delikli taş yerde kalmaz", an old proverb loosely translated as, "When you see a stone with a hole in it you can't help but pick it up."

"I really loved this sentence, because it belongs to the old Turkish culture. We use this sentence, and many sentences like it," said Günnur, who soon learned that the author of the proverb was none other than the gallery owner's father. "I thought, I can't give it to him because everyone will think that he won only because he's Pg's father." So she reread the entries again and again, trying to find another person. But she couldn't. He won.

Günnur's next phase of artistic development emerged during her 2008 solo show when she covered her sculptures in soft, grey shades of felt, a marked transition from the synthetic polyester works painted with reflective polish. In between, she participated in a number of prestigious group shows, such as under corporate sponsorship by the industrial group Eczacıbaşı at Istanbul Modern, for a project titled, "60 Years, 60 Artists".

She collaborated with the art critic and curator Beryl Madra, and with Döne Otyam, director of the Mardin Biennial, focusing on eastern Turkey, where she visited Diyarbakir and nearby cities before returning to Ankara and Istanbul for two respective shows. Her work enjoyed international attention in dialogue with traditional Turkish crafts at Hagia Sophia Museum, and for her contemporaneity in Bon Génie 2005 exhibition in Geneva, Switzerland.

"Those days, I was more freestyle. I did everything to look around and see what's going on in more group shows. I had done a lot with colors and surfaces, so I asked myself, 'Günnur, what else can you do? Your polyester works have bright colors, you see the light. It's shining. What else can you do that's opposite?' I started thinking, thinking, thinking," she said, vocalizing some of

her characteristic chittering sounds, indicating that her inspired aura is alive and ticking.

"I decided to work with felt, because it belongs to our Turkish culture, but we don't really use it as it's old-fashioned now. Herders out in the mountains wear a felt cloak. We call it çoban kepeneği [shepherd's cloak]. It is worn over the shoulders. Under the sun it's good, under the cold it's nice, because it's natural. And we used to live in a huge tent, a çadır. It used to be felt. Because traditionally we are Anatolian, walking, not like city people, but camping."

"The felt tent is very important. It still exists, probably in the mountains. There are some Yörük people. They live in the mountains, especially in Asia. They are blonder, with green eyes. They are interesting, nice people. They make their own cheese. They are very good with animals, and they don't have houses. They have a çadır. It's a tent," said Günnur.

"You can't really meet them. You have to go to the mountains. It's a different lifestyle. In my mind, to be Yörük is a source of pride, because you are in nature. It's like the American Indian. You make your own medicine. Your ideas are open, because you are in nature, so you always care for it. That's the biggest point."

"Felt belongs to our culture also from the Mevlana dervish. We call the dervish hat sikke, pronounced like Sikh, the other, east Indians. Those are also felt. It's very unique," said Özsoy. "When I was young we lived in Ankara. It was very cold. My mother used to put felt under my feet in my shoes because socks aren't warm enough. Felt was really important to our old days. It has become touristic. But no one used felt in three dimensions in contemporary art."

What started as an inkling, a desire to work with felt, soon left Özsoy with more questions than answers, the first of which was, "How?". Nobody in her social, or artist circles were working with felt. She found the phone number of a felt maker in Konya, the most important center for Mevlana dervish culture. To her surprise, after calling him, he asked her to send him an email. The funny part is that she, a metropolitan woman, hadn't a clue how to send an email. With the help of a girlfriend, she emailed the Konya felt maker her photos to design the material.

To her astonishment, when she went to Konya to meet him, she found that he was not only a lovely fellow, but he spoke perfect English, even better than her she admits. He was blond, tall, had blue eyes with a mustache, and only listened to jazz. He introduced her to a woman from Argentina, his second wife, and his son named Celaleddin, after Mevlana's second name. They lived in the center of Konya, where they worked together.

"He was like a sculpture, very abstract," she said, still bewildered by him, as she expected a stereotypical, conservative Muslim. That's how she started working with felt, eventually making so many pieces that she keeps a lot of them in her studio until today. That was around 2005, leading to her solo show at Pg in 2008, although they first showed it at Contemporary Istanbul. She produced her first works of the kind together with the felt maker, and later she would send more pieces for him to make.

The man in Konya had learned the craft of felt making from his father's father. Traditionally, felt is made in a hamam, in a Turkish bath, because you need warm and sticky places. Raw animal hair is like cotton, but to craft it requires water and soap, so the hamam is the perfect workshop, as it was in the days of old. The process of making it requires vigorous physical activity, almost in the manner of a modern dance. There is body rhythm, to hit and press the material into felt. Özsoy stood up in the middle of her neat, spacious studio to reenact the full-body techniques.

"I was really happy with the show, because I managed my ideas. Nobody really understood the pieces. They asked, 'Are we to accept this as sculpture?' They had parts animals and the wild, but the installation was really clever. You know me," she laughed. "I made the same show in Ankara. I showed them on the wall, on the floor. I used different colors, but they were always natural colors."

Before her next solo show leading into the 2010s, she produced an offsite project with Pg in Kemer, titled "I see you" (2011) for which she showed all red pieces hanging in suspension. The show went well, because she and Pırıl enjoyed a mutual course of ideas, and it was in a country setting. Even though it wasn't in the center of the city, it's a well populated and active environment. Many of her pieces sold. Also in 2011, with the opening of her solo show "Spiritual Experiences", the art historian Marcus Graf described her work as

neo-minimalist after evaluating her new series of marble and polyester sculptures installed with video art.

She first met Graf when he reviewed her second solo show at Pg in Bebek in 2003, and continued a friendship that blossomed into the core inspiration for her latest show, "Memories and Letters" (2018). "Spiritual Experiences" was her first show in Bogazkesen, a small gallery space that she packed with a variety of elements. For the installation, featuring her felt art, she covered the window, and invited engineers to create the effect of flight to appear from the street in the window at Pg's Bogazkesen gallery. But on the day of the opening, the air machine contraption ceased to function.

"On that day, I was sitting on the road, and it smelled, Bogazkesen. On the street, everyone walked around and asked what I was trying for. I said, 'I wanted them to fly.' It wasn't easy. I told Marcus what I was trying to do, and he always told me, 'If you want something, do it.' The video art was about seagulls. Different materials, different disciplines were all together at the same show," said Gunnur, who had exhibited her first video artwork at Akbank Sanat in 2003 with Levent Çalıkoğlu, currently Chief Curator at Istanbul Modern.

"I presented my pregnant belly, and the next video was inside, all of the sonography. Inside and outside, the idea was about casting, because when you do sculpture, you never know the inside. It's kind of like being pregnant. Levent said that I was like a natural scientist."

In her 2016 solo show at Pg, titled "Costa Mea", she had also dabbled in video art by showing the digital illustration of her works, which were crafted to the biblical theme of Adam's rib as a feminist statement on the nature of the human form, as hers. Her works for Spiritual Experiences have the reminiscence of a cemetery. In 2008 and 2009, she lost her mother and lover, and after she started working the headstone form emerged, though closer in appearance to the old Ottoman style, with its thin, cylindrical stand of white stone poking upwards into the sky, only she nipped the forms off at the bottom and top, as a sharp cut from the world pointing to the pain of mortal separation.

Günnur Özsoy. Spiritual Experiences, 2011

"I don't know what I'm doing, but when they came together, I recognized it as the Ottoman cemetery. First I made the base with polyester, and thought that inside it would be empty, transparent. Between life and reality is a very thin line. The material is thin, and inside is empty. They are big, but they are light, tragic, but white," said Özsoy, who had followed the same two-year creation cycle as for her 2002 show at Pg after the 1999 earthquake, since her mother died in 2008, and Spiritual Experiences opened in 2011.

"I didn't want to make a headstone. I didn't choose it. Also, at the same time, this is interesting, I was working with marble. They were small, but all together they were like seagulls, the color and texture, but heavy, so it couldn't fly."

Ideas

Özsoy agrees that her artworks fall into greater historical categories, social movements, and critical concepts, such as minimalism, abstractionism, and archaism, particularly the latter, which she applauds, saying, 'Bravo' to those who recognize it in her works, as it is an authentic interpretation of her source inspiration. Archaism in Özsoy's sculpture exists where she draws directly from nature, from the earthquake of 1999 to the Yörük people and the shepherd's cloak, as they are perennial muses by which she shapes and patterns her thought and creations. That said, although she is open to varying, outside perspectives, she puts interpretation in its place.

"I choose some words, like Yörük, but I prefer to talk in a general way, because if you start specifically you have to continue in that way. Yörük people belong to the Turkish culture, and of course Turkish culture belongs to nature. To have a house, to settle, came later. And generally speaking, we are living in nature," said Özsoy with a sense of conviction.

"From the beginning, I worked with brighter, polyester colors. I started thinking of which material I can use that's exactly the opposite of bright colors. I can't say that it's definitely comparable to ideas."

"When I found felt, it was done, finito. If I believe, and really trust myself, I know. Okay, you can compare me to other things, but it's only about you and your mentality. I didn't start by saying, 'Now, I have to work with nature.' It was only about finding the opposite of the artificial. The idea should be really perfect to the touch. It became about nature, because felt comes from the animal, hair. The colors are natural. It looks natural. You can fix it easily. If you have a hole in it you can put some soap and water," she said with a smile.

"My idea is about the space and feelings, especially for felt, where natural life is in it. When you look at my artistic life, there are many materials. I didn't choose them because I said, 'Okay, it's time to work with stone.' If I do that, it's not really showing my whole artistic life. My solo shows connect with my other shows. When they come together, you can see the whole picture. There can be different materials, but it's about the ideas of my choices."

"Especially for solo shows, you really have to concentrate. You create ideas, and you create a world. If you decide to make another solo show and you do the same thing again, what the hell. When you look, you can see the same things, but in the main ideas, there is the difference," she continued.

"Contemporary, archaic, minimal, I can accept all of them, but for me, I'm not really interested in that. I'm interested in my work. Some people look at my pieces and say that they are figurative. Yes, if you find that they are figurative, you can find it. You can see many figures in abstract works. I trust my work. They're strong enough. If you're interested in minimalism, you can connect to my work that way. You can think, you can talk, you can write."

Günnur Özsoy. Memories and Letters, 2018

For her show at Pg, titled, "Memories and Letters", the critic Ali Simsek identified her use of light and dark as Baroque, but for Özsoy, she prefers to express herself more essentially. As she clarified: "I work abstract. I'm interested in my working self, not afterwards. Some have really strong stories,

and ideas, especially in a cultural light, but it just happened like that. I didn't choose it. That's my style as an artist. And I don't follow trends. When I did video art I was pregnant, and had no chance to work. I work abstract, and then it happens, and it comes of itself, like a waterfall."

Özsoy's mentality is akin to the Hindu philosophy, known from the Sanskrit, as neti-neti, which means, "Not that, not that." In other words, her path to realization, whether it be of her artwork, or how she lives as an artist, is through a form of meditative negation, or to what is known in Romantic literary theory as negative capability. Its point isn't to negate nihilistically. Instead, it is a form of alogical, spiritual criticism that seeks a more elevated sense of earthly development and human expression by cutting through surface consciousness to a deeper plane, one that embraces the perpetual motion of life. Gunnur repeatedly emphasizes that the importance of her work is the work itself, and then, it is only important when she is working on it. Such is the essence of enlightenment philosophy, of the search for beauty beyond reason.

Road to Maji by Augustino Lucano

In December 2020, I joined Jervasio Amotun in Kenya and headed to South Sudan to mobilize the community of Maji to come together to finish a feeder road, linking the rural town of Maji to the greater region of Eastern Equatoria. Jervasio & I met with Tito Abas, the Executive Director of Ngauro County to discuss a feeder road into the village of Maji. After our meeting, Tito provided 5 police officers to support the community while working on the road.

On my left in the following photo, in grey, is Tito and next to Tito is MP, Jervasio Amotun

It was an unusual year in South Sudan and Africa at large because there was so much rain. Because of this, the Maji area became thorny and bushy so the community began clearing the area in January 2021. Due to thick, thorny, and bushy forests, it took the community awhile to finish clearing where the water well will be drilled.

Once the water well is completed, the plan is to build a small village that will be home to approximately about 500 people. This will provide the focus to promote trading, building and an open air market for sustainable development in the area.

Therefore, after the community cleared the thick and bushy forests, they began construction of the first houses. The next step will then be to undertake building the feeder road. Unfortunately, the cattle keepers from the Toposa community moved their cattle to graze nearby Maji town. They became a threat to the workers on the road because the Toposa cattle keepers suspect anyone who is crossing close to their cows must be a cattle thief.

Accordingly, I had to meet with Abdallah Anjilo Lokeno of Narus County and Peter of the cattle keepers to bring the two communities together to complete the feeder road. In addition, Akileo Mboya, the Commissioner of BUDI County agreed to work with Abdallah to coordinate the meeting to discuss the completion of the feeder road.

On my left in black is Abdallah Lokeno and next to him is Peter in grey stripe

Also, I talked to the Governor of Eastern Equatoria, Louis Lobong Lojore, General Secretary of Kapoeta State, the former Speaker of Parliament in Kapoeta State, Bosco Lotyang Peter, MP, Joseph Lokodo and all considerately agreed and advised the two communities to come together to complete the road so that water will be drilled in Maji.

The Toposa cattle keepers and the Didinga local farmers lack capacity building. I also shared with the government officials mentioned above that Peace Africa Alliance Consulting, Educating and Training Centre (PAACET), plans to come to Eastern Equatoria region to provide sustainable peace and development to local communities in Equatoria, but it is still seeking funding. Once it receives funding, it will be consolidating peace through indigenous reconciliation & social justice training to the whole area.

I have left MP Jervasio Amotun, Chief Akileo Achulo, Chief John Nangurahopir, Peter Benen Alex, Mark Lokang Lino, and Arkanjilo Grato Lothike to carry on the work. They will complete the feeder road after Akileo Mboya and Abdallah Lokeno bring the two communities together to cooperate on the feeder road.

There are two major bridges that need to be done. The whole road is just covered by grass and little trees that need to be cleared out. Maji is one of the richest lands on earth. The land is very fertile and magnificent. The local farmers grow a variety of crops that support the sustainability of the local villagers. It also produces the most pure and delicious honey in the entire world. This pure organic honey was incredibly delicious.

The land is also rich in minerals such as gold which is locally mined and marketed by the youth. International mining companies from countries such as

China and India have begun operating locally which is posing serious environmental challenges for the local communities. Building the water well will encourage settlement in Maji and provide sustainability and strong community presence to mitigate the incursion of foreign development.

Former Paramount County Judge, and currently MP of Maji, Jervasio Amotun supervised the young volunteers, Mark Lokang and Ajeo Lohidic as they were buying the materials such as hoes, slashers and axes from the local shop in Kapoeta. Mark and Ajeo were inspired and they wanted to make a difference in the community. They both came from Kakuma refugees camp in Kenya. They now carry on the work with Jervasio Amotun.

In a similar fashion, Executive Director of Ngauro County, Tito Abas was inspired and he offered his great support to freely take the materials to Ngauro. As well, the community members were inspired so they voluntarily carried the materials to the village. They had to carry them on their shoulders or heads for four hours. The community members in Calgary had contributed the money for the materials for the road clearing. Generously, the community members in the village had contributed the food, such as corn flower, maize and beans.

The women patiently wait for the well in Maji. The well will be a huge advantage for the women as it will save them walking 2-3 hours each way to collect water as they currently do.

All these tools are for the feeder road clearing. These are the hoes and axes (left). The hoes help to clean the grass while the axes are used to cut down the trees on the road way. The hoes were very useful at the site in Maji. The slashers are used to slash the grass on the road way.

Augustino Lucano is South Sudanese. He was a refugee, student, social worker, and president of his own not-for-profit NGO. In 2015, Lucano received his a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Dalhousie University in New Brunswick, Canada. He also holds a Social Work Diploma from Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta. He worked as a Multicultural Support Worker, and a family Support Counsellor in Calgary, connecting students and families of new immigrants with community resources.

Lucano spent four years in a Kenyan refugee camp before receiving refugee status in 1990 and came to Canada in pursuit of education, employment, and peace. Lucano volunteers with The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre at the University of Calgary. He co-founded The Southern Sudanese Children's Literacy Foundation (SSCLF) to help children and families in South Sudan.

Words on Gender by Merve Pehlivan

Jenny Pearson performs, photo by Merve Pehlivan

Spoken Word Istanbul, in pre-pandemic times, offered a unique opportunity to a rich variety of performers on stage. We encouraged and were home to writers, poets, singers, stand-up comics, actors, some of them complete amateurs, some of them inching their way or leaping into professional venues.

I took for granted my regular presence as a female host and our ban on sexism, thinking that these only would naturally sustain gender balance on our stage. For a long time, I didn't even notice that the weekly performers' lists I kept in a tiny notebook were overwhelmingly filled by men. Growing up in a world where patriarchy runs the show in politics, business and many other social

spheres, you're hard-wired to assume that gender imbalance is the norm, and therefore, normal.

In fall 2017, among performers on our stage on a Tuesday night, only 3 out of 18 people were women, preceded by a 4/27 and a 5/18 ratio in earlier weeks. I made a call on the stage and on our social media accounts to attract more women. After an initial foam of enthusiasm and increase in female presence on the stage, the rate dwindled back, stabilizing on a regular male predominance week in, week out.

Then I tried to ask myself why and how that was happening. I began to notice that some people who approached me to sign up said: "Well, I don't know exactly what to say and my English is not that good, but put my name in there." As we pride ourselves on providing a platform for free expression, we always welcomed performances which did not quite fit into any definition. Then I noted these performers who really proved that they had nothing to say but filled their 6-minute slots anyhow and walked off the stage completely pleased with themselves. These people who oozed self-confidence were always men.

Women in general, I noticed, wanted to feel ready first. They did not boast when they had no substance to offer, were quieter in their sign-up requests. However, this also starkly contrasted with the presence of our women regulars who did not lack the confidence, talent and gregariousness of their male counterparts. They were comfortable, did not take themselves too seriously, and did not hide away in shame after an occasional lackluster performance. Yet the issue remained: These women were a constant minority among a large group of regular or transient male spoken worders.

Exactly two years after I first called attention to the gender imbalance on our stage, I repeated my call, and we again received a short-lasting uptick in female performers. Our regular, Banu, stand-up comic by night, psychotherapist by day, came up with the idea of dedicating a few slots every Tuesday to an open discussion about potential root causes of the problem, thereby hopefully attracting more women to our stage. On our first trial, we met with an aggressive reaction from an audience member, a woman, who shouted: "What you're trying to do is so patronizing - Women might have better things to do

on a Tuesday night than come here to perform spoken word." Our effort fizzled out.

It's not easy to predict what the gender ratio on the stage will look like after nearly two years of stage-thirst among our community members. It is equally difficult to engineer a solution around positive discrimination when we have an open-door policy towards anyone who wants to speak. When we let freedom reign, making it very clear that we welcome everyone on the gender spectrum, why do we have a steady dominance of (mostly cis-gender) male performers? I don't know, but we need to keep highlighting this fact and seek answers.

Merve Pehlivan is a writer, and the founder of Spoken Word Istanbul

Literary Internationalism: Prof. Sibel Erol on Tezer Özlü

Tezer Özlü

Anticipating the debut English-language publication of Tezer Özlü's novel, Cold Nights of Childhood, by Serpent's Tail in the UK, FictiveMag.com interviewed Sibel Erol, Professor of Turkish and Turkish Literature at New York University. Özlü's fiction, narratives and letters develop a course of modernism that brought writing in Turkish to the forefront of internationalism in literature, as she wrote and lived for intellectual and physical liberation beyond the confines of her national origins.

How do we frame an appreciation for Tezer Özlü in literature?

Tezer Özlü can be seen as a transitional voice between the Turkish writers of the 1950s generation who are dominantly men, and of the women writers of the late 1970s and 80s who outnumber men during this period.

Tezer Özlü was born in 1943. Her older brother Demir Özlü (1935-) was part of the 1950s literary scene. Tezer and her older sister Sezer (1942-) who both studied at St. George's Austrian High School grew up around the literary group that their brother was part of, made up of all kinds of writers and artists who seemed to live a collective bohemian life, hanging out at the Baylan Bakery or at literary matinees during the afternoons and at the various Tünel meyhanes at night.

Jale Özata Dirlikyapan's book Kabuğunu Kıran Hikaye (The Short Story that Broke Its Mold) describes the dominant literary themes of this period as loneliness, darkness, alienation, nausea and suicide. This generation of writers were moving away from social realism of the earlier period which was instrumental in creating the idea of the nation and progress. Writers of the 1950s generation retained a social consciousness and class awareness, but they thought capturing and conveying the reality of an inner life was much more important, and central to their mission of depicting the "individual."

They were much influenced by both Marxism and existentialism, which, as Özata Dirlikyapan observes, they encountered filtered through literature. The writers of this period played with narrative time frames, dispensed with mimetic realism to capture an inner life through images and metaphors. As Leyla Erbil explains, they also focused on how they used language, wrote in short and deceptively simple sentences whose illusiveness was ironically increased with a new kind of language that included some made-up words they invented.

The women writers writing in the 1970s and 80s like Nezihe Meriç, Leyla Erbil, Pınar Kür, Sevgi Soysal, Tomris Uyar, Füruzan, Adalet Ağaoglu, among others, are a lot more socially focused, and consequently, more directly examine the lives of women of different classes, probing into the reasons of the inequality, obstruction, plain cruelty they experience while also trying to offer systemic as well as individual solutions. They write in formalistically more distinctly narrative forms while also trying to capture the individuality and inner lives of their characters through epiphanies and images, but they always foreground the "moment" within a larger social and historical time with its political realities of class difference, repression, oppression and injustice.

Tezer Özlü is not very much interested in the plight of other women although she is keenly aware that she's a woman: that she's writing as a woman from a woman's consciousness and that a great deal of the injustice, setbacks and mistreatment she experienced was because she was a woman. In her essay entitled "Our Women" she writes that the problems of Turkish women can't be extricated from other social problems plaguing society, but the main impediment to the improvement of their situation is their misfortune to belong to a society lacking freedom of thought. She, on the other hand, as she describes in her essay "I write to make sense of life and death," has freedom of thought, and awareness of self she gained through literature, which she argues, gives her control and autonomy over her life.

Her writing is generally autobiographical. The reason I say she's a bridge between the writers of the 1950s-1960s and those of 1970s-80s is that she's much more individualistic in her search for fulfillment and meaning than the other women writers I mentioned. Her writing is more lyrical and internally coded, lacking the formalistic shape and contours of the forms that other women authors are writing and experimenting in. In the opening of the essay I mentioned above "I write to make sense of life and death" she declares that she's going to be "individualistic" because "I'm an individualist who values the creation of an individual as the highest accomplishment of a society."

It's very interesting that her novel "Cold Nights of Childhood" covers the same internal terrain as her brother Demir Özlü's novel "The Youthful Years of a Petit-Bourgeois," but his is a starkly masculine narrative, and hers is a feminine and feminist one. It's striking she uses similar light and darkness metaphors and places a similar kind of weight on sexuality both literally and as a metaphor of life -fulfillment. This is quite a risky undertaking for a woman writer, one which may delegitimize everything else she's saying by drawing focus to a sensationalizable point. This fear is the reason why the way sex is dealt with is a lot more through imagery in Füruzan or Nezihe Meriç's writing for example, and a lot more cut off from the senses and is more intellectual in Adalet Ağaoğlu's treatment.

I tried to answer your question of how we may frame our appreciation of Tezer Özlü's works. This is the framework, but let me also say why we should take note and appreciate her writing:

Her writing in general, Cold Nights of Childhood in particular is noteworthy for its truthfulness, boldness and honesty. She tells the story of the artist as a young woman, but this is not a story of a young girl finally finding freedom and vocation. She already gives herself the freedom of making her own choices quite early in life. Where she found the reserves of strength required for this kind of self-confidence- in that time period by a daughter of two teachers who spent the first ten years of her life in provincial towns where her parents were posted- is difficult to fathom. She flaunts all the norms of middle-class respectability and success.

She dropped out of high school during the last semester of high school although she was a very good student. She hitchhiked through Europe during the summer before that decision. She also similarly is in control of her own sexuality from the beginning. She's already sexuality active in high school. Her honesty about her own sexuality and positive depiction of female sexuality are similarly noteworthy.

Another issue she's honest about is her difficulties in mental health. She was eventually diagnosed as bipolar. She endured many stays in various hospitals and many instances of electro-shock therapy. She documents episodes of harassment and abuse of patients by doctors and hospitals staff, and finally says what cured her in the end was the fear of being sent back to yet another hospital to face more cruelty. Her honest treatment of sexuality and mental health distinguishes her from her contemporaries. It's important these same issues are relevant in our day not only in Turkey, but all over the world, which makes her works relatable and relevant to us now.

One comparison I thought of also was with the memoir Girl, Interrupted by Susanna Kaysen, made into the film, for its depiction of mental illness as distinct from, while concurrent with, greater political turmoil.

The Psych ward as a place of abuse, submission and control that needs to be exposed is not a novel social trope. Foucault's book Discipline and Punish talks about how what is determined as "normal" and what is defined as mental sickness is an issue of power. Who gets to decide who's mad? Foucault's answer is "those who have power to do so." We similarly can see this in the play and film One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.

The added angle in Girl, Interrupted is that it's a story of young girls; it's a specific instance of showing control and victimization of women that requires questioning and correction. This film, in questioning the treatment of young women, is not denying the reality and negative impact of mental health problems on their lives. It does suggest though similar treatment of them outside might cause and exacerbate some of the problems. It's possible in literary analysis to go to the other extreme and not even consider the reality of problems, seeing diagnoses as solely metaphors of repressing and controlling female independence- although that was also a real phenomenon, especially in rampant diagnoses of hysteria in the 19th century and the way its supposed cause of a "wandering womb" became the name of the diagnosis.

Tezer Özlü describes the ways patients are victimized, how they are sexually and physically abused in psych wards. She exposes these as social ills. When she is sick, she also loses her independence; she's committed to the hospital many times by her family. In exposing the powerlessness of the patient in the psych ward, we can say her novel is similar to Girl, Interrupted. Before getting her first electro -shock therapy, she cries out, "I'm dying. Carry on with the revolutionary struggle without me." Leyla Erbil sees in this scream, a confession in which Tezer Özlü's guilty subconscious is revealing she's not as politically engaged as she should be. But I rather think that Tezer Özlü is saying the way she's been living her life uncowed by others is a political struggle for freedom and independence.

For real life comparisons of her experience of suffering breakdowns and writing about them honestly- without fear of being labelled or discredited, I will point to two near contemporaries who did not make it beyond their 30s: Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) and Forough Farookhzad (1934-1967). Perhaps, Tezer Özlü was stronger than both because she was not as alone as these women, and had lifelong nurturing friendships and a very supportive older sister.

Have you had many students studying Tezer Özlü?

No, I did not. She was included in a reading class on the authors of the 1950s to the 70s which I offered in 2019. I usually ask my students what they want to study and draw our reading list together with them. Tezer Özlü was the choice of one student. This was the first time I taught her. I teach her contemporaries

Adalet Ağaoğlu and Sevgi Soysal more regularly under the rubric of women writers.

It was productive in that class to study Tezer Özlü in her relationship to the 1950s generation, and collaborations between artists working in different media. A lot of her creative relationships were fostered in that milieu, including her friendship with the novelist, artist and critic Ferit Edgü. Tezer Özlü's second husband Erden Kıral directed the screenplay that Edgü wrote with Onat Kutlar: Hakkâri'de Bir Mevsim [A Season in Hakkâri]. She was the sole breadwinner of the family during the time her husband worked on the film. This alone breaks so much with middle class conventions of the time. The film won the Silver Bear in 1983 in Berlin International Film Festival and is now a classic, which validates her artistic instincts.

How might "Cold Nights of Childhood", and Tezer Özlü be specially significant for readers considering its first appearance in English translation?

I've already spelled out what's specifically noteworthy in Tezer Özlü's works in my answer to your first question. Some works of the writers Tezer Özlü's name is cited with as some kind of a contrast to, like Sevgi Sosyal and Adalet Ağaoğlu are available in English. Theirs are more overtly politically and formally more structured novels. Tezer Özlü's great friend Leyla Erbil will soon be available with the translation of two of her novels into English. She's a lot more political than the other novelists I named. Her soon to be translated first novel A Strange Woman includes a section on the assassination of the first Turkish delegate of the Communist party, Mustafa Suphi, which she updated with each new edition of her novel. Her writing style, though, is in a stream of consciousness mode and sometimes verges on the surreal.

Tezer Özlü represents a different niche of women's writing from Turkey because of her emphasis on the personal and biographical in a form whose formal shapelessness can be read as part of its meaning. She has much to contribute to a discussion on women writers and the form of the novel in transition from the modern to the postmodern in Turkey and abroad.

Since Tezer Özlü was so involved in translating German literature, and also writing in German, I wonder if she represents something

significant in terms of the intellectual history between Germany and Turkey?

There are cultural relationships between Turkey and Germany preceding the First World War. During the early years of the republic many students were sent to Germany on government scholarships for technical knowledge, but also for the humanities. The novelist Sabahattin Ali was one of these students, and in 1943 he wrote his novel Kürk Mantolu Madonna (Madonna in a Fur Coat) inspired by his own experiences in Germany.

Another important exchange student was Ismail Hakkı Tonguç, one of the architects of the Village Institutes which had the mission of educating village children to have them serve as teachers of a well-rounded curriculum that taught technical knowledge rounded up by the arts and self-sufficiency. The novelist Sevgi Sosyal's father was one of the engineering students who married a German woman and brought her to Turkey. Sevgi Soysal talks about the expat German community in Ankara her family was part of. Sevgi Soysal's novel Tante Rosa Is based on the unusual character of her German aunt.

Turkey opened its doors to Jewish professors fleeing Nazi Germany at the beginning of the Second World War. These professors taught at Istanbul and Ankara Universities. That's another important period of cultural exchange and transfer.

Tezer Özlü worked as a translator of German and Turkish in the business world, but also translating literary works. She went to Germany on a German DAAD fellowship in 1980 and then moved to Zurich with her third husband Hans Peter Marti in 1984, which in retrospect, were the last few years of her life; she died in 1986. She tried to introduce and promote Turkish writers in her writing and on her radio programs while in Europe. She was a lifelong translator of Kafka and other German writers. She wrote her second novel Journey to the End of Life in German originally. Her older sister Sezer translated a whole roster of canonical German writers into Turkish.

There is no easy answer to your question. As you can see there's evidence of interactions through every period since the beginning of the republic but there is no genealogical record of these interactions and of whether they left a residue to build on. It's difficult to say if there's a cultural memory left of these

contacts in the local communities in which they were formed or if people of each period, if every expat community started anew from scratch.

Do you call Journey to the End of Life a novel?

I do because Tezer Özlü does. It's an experiment in the form and content of the novel. There have been similar questions and discussions about the form and content, for example, of Leyla Erbil's A Strange Woman, Ferit Edgü's He, the source material of his screenplay for A Season in Hakkari, and Latife Tekin's Berci Kristin: Tales from the Garbage. Some discussion of whether these are proper novels goes on, but now we accept them as novels.

We can call Journey to the End of Life, a metaphysical novel about the meaning of life and death, or a meta-novel that engages with the works of Tezer Özlü's most favorite three writers: Kafka, Pavese and Svevo while trying to travel to their cities and visit their homes. As in her first novel, in Journey to the End of Life a literal journey embeds a search for meaning which can only be grasped through encounters with death and its acceptance as part of daily life.

I ask because I wonder why she would have been translated into German and French but not into English until now?

Historically there has been a lot more interest in Turkish literature in Europe, but the way it works in is this: someone falls in love with a text and tries to get it translated as a passion project. There's no systematic program of translation. Getting Tezer Özlü translated into English was my student Dilara Alemdar's mission because she loves Tezer Özlü.

Are there comparable contemporary, living writers?

Aslı Erdoğan comes to mind in Turkish literature, for example, with The City in Crimson Cloak, which takes place in Brazil. A Turkish physics graduate student goes to Rio to do a Ph.D., but is trapped in her house, and is completely alienated from the rest of the world. She only hears the disembodied voice of her mother who calls frequently to say she'll be traveling to Russia. She finally goes out only to be murdered in a favela. The novel

presents a conundrum because we have to grapple with the fact that if she's dead, who is the "I" narrating the rest of her story.

This novel reminds me of Tezer Özlü's works because it also tells of an inner metaphysical journey by a character in search of her life's meaning and the journey has to cross death, has to go into the Underworld to get to its end. The novel starts with an epigraph from Celan: "YOU were my death/You I could hold/When all fell away from me." Like Tezer Özlü's works, it is narrated in a lyrical inner voice, but it is a lot more difficult to decipher what actually happens in this novel, which is not the case in Tezer Özlü's narratives.

How does Tezer Özlü fit into your coursework over the years, considering the other writers your students would mostly focus on?

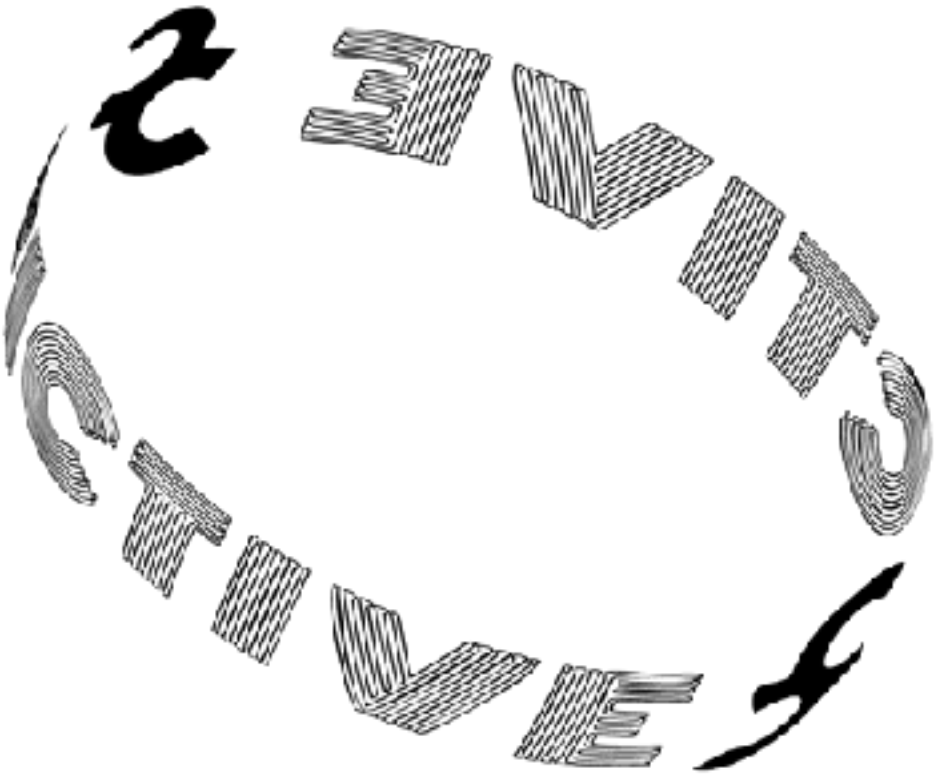
Tezer Özlü would fit into various reading lists: one, for example, of Turkish women writers that may start from Halide Edib and end with Latife Tekin and Aslı Erdoğan. We can include her in the study of the Turkish Buildingsroman or in a class on experiments in the form of the novel in comparison with the novels of Bilge Karasu and Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar or in course on the "depression novel" whose protagonist is usually male as in Oğuz Atay's Tutunamayanlar. The reading list of Turkish authors in the U.S. is a limited one, which translation only partially expands.

However, there's a lag between between what people actually read and what is studied academically even in Turkey. Tezer Özlü is beloved by readers. The copy I have of Cold Nights of Childhood is from the 21st printing of its Yapı Kredi publication, but she hasn't yet established a strong foothold in Turkish academia, either. However, the upside is that it usually takes one dissertation before an author is embraced as an academic subject of study. Exhibit A for this is the case of Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, who is currently a subject of serious study in both the U.S. and Turkey.

Do you think of the quality of Tezer Özlü's writing as on par with the greatest Turkish writers, in terms of craft?

Yes. Her writing is deceptively clear. Her friend Leyla Erbil says she has the gift of seeming accessible, and dispensing with the distance between the reader and writer. Yet, despite honestly laying out everything in her life, she also holds

back some details so that the explanation- not- given tugs at your heart and the mystery not completely grasped, keeps you thinking about what she means. She uses the tropes of light and darkness; of coldness and warmth as road signs of growth toward self-consciousness. She skillfully weaves scenes of nature and scenes from the city as contrasting pieces of a puzzle. These are experienced in different coordinates of linear time, but in her narrative, they become co-existent and contemporary, representing a growing consciousness that encompasses all times as co-terminus and as parts of each other.



Traces by Pullahs

artwork by Erdal Inci

Energy flow is crucial, now more than ever. My explorations of sound and logos have led to potent ideas and oscillations. I interpret the re-creation of locales, situations, memories and moments through music.

My work is primarily concerned with emotions frozen in time. I am influenced by the idea of morphing digital textures into organic spatial soundings, as a detailed approach to awarenesses.

'Falling' begins as a resonant portrait of disappearence, followed by an abstract escalation into a sequentially-unique, biophilic state.

TRACES

Pullahs is the project name of Gurur Gelen's heavily ambient influenced, organic electronic music. His sound is characterized by its spaciousness and dark timbre. He is defying and recreating ideas of genre from the past and present. He blends acoustic instruments and field recordings with digital material, restructuring meaning, against the norm. He currently resides in Istanbul, exploring new variables of composition, sound art & multimedia design through creative coding.

An Italian in Istanbul by Luke Frostick

Dj Nio in Istanbul

Federico Rosa, aka DJ Nio, manages to be energetic and chill at the same time. As we talk about his multimedia project Mamma Li Turki!, he has multiple thoughts about his work and tries to express them all at the same time, but speaks with a laid-back Italian accent and is wrapped up in a comfortable hoodie of his own design.

Nio first experienced Istanbul in 2016, a tremulous year in Turkey's modern history, with some of the worst terrorist attacks in a decade and the attempted coup. Nio explained to me that during this time, a lot of friends and relatives in Italy were concerned about his safety, in particular his mother. The Mamma Li Turki! project started out as a way of explaining Turkey and Istanbul to her, to reassure her that Istanbul was safe and life was like life anywhere else. I

asked him if he thinks it worked and he said that she seemed to understand the country and the city better. He mentioned that she preferred the photographic and the video elements of the project.

That's a shame because, although the project is multimedia, the meat of it is musical. The collection currently stands at 2-beat tapes and an EP. It is a smooth playlist of lo-fi hiphop and chillhop that samples Turkish jazz and old pop songs, the sounds of the streets, the ferries and some of the characters of the city.

I asked him to walk me through his process and he said that the first thing about being a hip-hop producer is going to the flea markets and second-hand shops to find dusty vinyls, a process he refers to as 'digging in the crates.' He mostly gets Turkish pop music and jazz from the 60s, 70s and 80s. Then, to simplify the process somewhat, he re-records them, cuts the parts he wants and adds to the beat with kick and snares or hi-hats to produce something new. He says Turkey has some of the richest music on earth and that his own work is all about discovering old music and giving it new life.

His beat tapes also include the sounds of the streets and spoken elements. Anybody who attended the Spoken Word Istanbul scene before the pandemic is going to recognise a few of the characters in there. In the interest of disclosure, I should say that my voice has also been sampled. The overall effect is a musical landscape of Istanbul that captures the spirit of the place, lively, chaotic, but also peaceful.

The more broad multimedia segment project includes a documentary and a photo book. The video is up on YouTube and is mostly Nio laying out his ideas about the project along with some beautiful shots of Istanbul.

When talking about the photography, Nio tells me that the original idea behind it was to photograph the graffiti of Istanbul. He found that during the process of shooting graffiti he was capturing people in those photographs and realised that they were as, if not more, interesting to him than the graffiti. So his subject shifted from street art to taking shots that captured life in Istanbul.

Originally, the photographs were just for his mother and Instagram, but other photographers convinced him that there was value in putting some of his work into a book. I agree. Though some of the shots are a bit rough, for instance a photo of a young, covered woman firing an airgun has an errant hand reaching for a water bottle in the frame, messing up an otherwise interesting composition. However, as a collection, they capture a certain side of Istanbul, the weird contradictions that you stumble across while walking the backstreets of the city.

More than anything else he has a particular eye for the metropolitan district of Beyoğlu and especially its conflicted and diverse quarter of Tarlabasi. When talking about feedback, Nio mentioned that he received critique from a Turkish citizen who accused him of making Istanbul seem "Arabic" by taking photographs of Tarlabasi, which feature prominently in the collection. In addition to the anti-Arabism, the commenter is also wrong about the value of capturing Tarlabasi, a place that is changing fast, despite the district's stubborn resistance to gentrification.

However, it will not be long until the scenes that Nio has collected in his book will be lost forever. Nio is sensitive to changes and mentions how even the street he lives on has changed so much in the last few years. Moreover, he says that cataloguing some of the changes in Tarlabasi is very much part of what he is trying to do. This is probably just the Istanbul local in me, but it feels somewhat appropriate that a Genovese guy is working so hard to capture the beauty of Beyoğlu.

Do the various parts of the Mamma Li Turki! multimedia project harmonise? Broadly yes. The photobook and the music both try to capture the same sense of Istanbul, becoming old, forgotten, as the overlooked parts of the city, but giving them new life. It's rather marvellous.

MammaLiTurki (Beat Tape Chapter 1)

Luke Frostick is a writer based in Istanbul. He is the editor of the Bosphorus Review of Books. He writes for Duvar English and the Three Crows Magazine. His latest fiction publication is a short story in the Vampire Connoisseur anthology.

Sea Peoples by William Benker

"Sea Peoples" was produced six months into lockdown. I was looking ahead to a time when we might all be able to go outside again. The pandemic still seemed surreal at that time, similar to the way shark attacks in New England are surreal. After six months of quarantine I realized how much I wanted to see people.

Filming the scene in the ocean was the easiest to act. I kept thinking I might get attacked by a shark while acting like I was. This probably reflects my feelings towards the ocean.

SEA PEOPLES

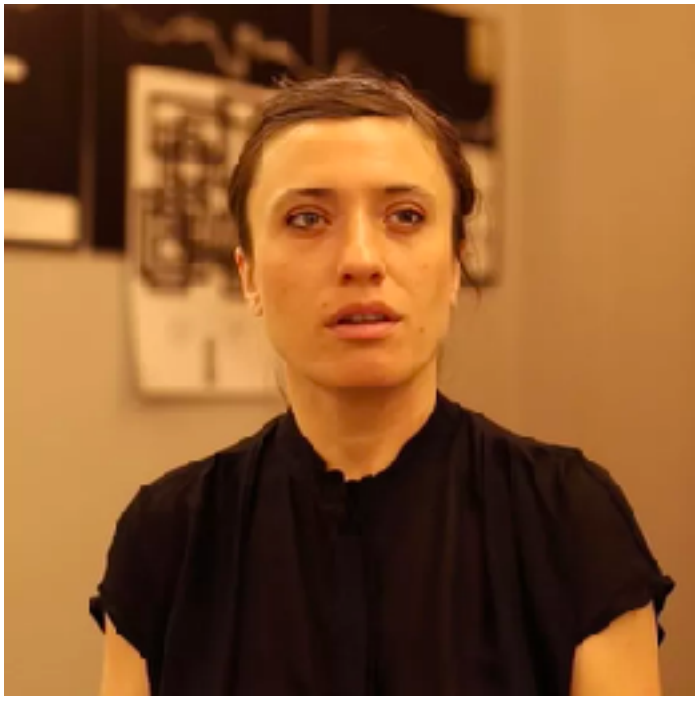
William Benker is a filmmaker in Boston

Contributors

Ece Eldek is a multi-disciplinary visual artist and poet. In her artistic practice; she mainly uses video, sound, photography, poetry, installation and performance. She tends to combine writing and visual works. Eldek graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Graphic Art and Design. Ece Eldek has participated in various exhibitions in Turkey and abroad, her poems were published in distinct publications and she has taken part in numerous art initiatives as founding partner.

Merve Pehlivan is a writer and founder of Spoken Word Istanbul.

Augustino Lucano is South Sudanese. He was a refugee, student, social worker, and president of his own not-for-profit NGO. In 2015, Lucano received his a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Dalhousie University in New Brunswick, Canada. He also holds a Social Work Diploma from Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta. He worked as a Multicultural Support Worker, and a family Support Counsellor in Calgary, connecting students and families of new immigrants with community resources.



Deniz Gül is a Turkish contemporary artist, conceptual sculptor and writer. Born in 1982, in Izmir (Smyrna), she is acknowledged for her work that subverts language; for Gül, language not only performs as text, but as sculpture and space as well. Her narrative exhibitions speak of structure, composition, form, and consequence. Her text work accompanies her exhibitions throughout. Gül's books and exhibitions are titled, Loyelow (2016), B.I.M.A.B.K.R. (2013), 5 Person Bufet (2011), Meydan (2020), and Scratch and Surface (2021) Gül's latest solo show, held at SALT Galata. She resides and works in Istanbul.

Alex Butler is a nurse in the operating rooms at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, specializing in the trauma and oncology unit. He is an avid reader and writer, living in Somerville, where he enjoys cooking with his wife, Allison.

Andrew Bell is a freelance writer.

Luke Frostick is a writer based in Istanbul. He is the editor of the Bosphorus Review of Books. He writes for Duvar English and the Three Crows Magazine. His latest fiction publication is a short story in the Vampire Connoisseur anthology.

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William Benker is a filmmaker in Boston

Serra Şensoy is a 3D artist/ multi-media designer currently based in Istanbul. She recently graduated from University for Creative Arts, completing studies with a Graphic Design: Visual communication BA in 2020. She defines her design practice as a playground that signifies playfulness, experimentation, exploration, and research. “Playground” is also meant to function as a gateway to contribute to potential futures by design thinking and by maintaining ethical values as a designer; making conscious choices in the area of work and study. Her current work is heavily influenced by media cultures and futurism as well as language; codes, and metaphors. She produces experimental video art and 3D animation as her practice alongside research as well as editorial and motion graphic design as a freelancer. She is lead designer at Fictive.