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Editor's Note:

It was in a bar in Tribeca, a cafe by Central Park, as a twenty-something arts critic in New York City when I first spoke of fictionalizing a cultural review. That was before I ever imagined living in Turkey. As the years passed, I developed my craft to become an editor worthy of merging fiction and criticism.

I came to art criticism by writing about modern dance. The history of dance is pivotal to modernism, toward the contemporary, mass democratization of art as a playhouse laboratory for all to partake and remake the world.

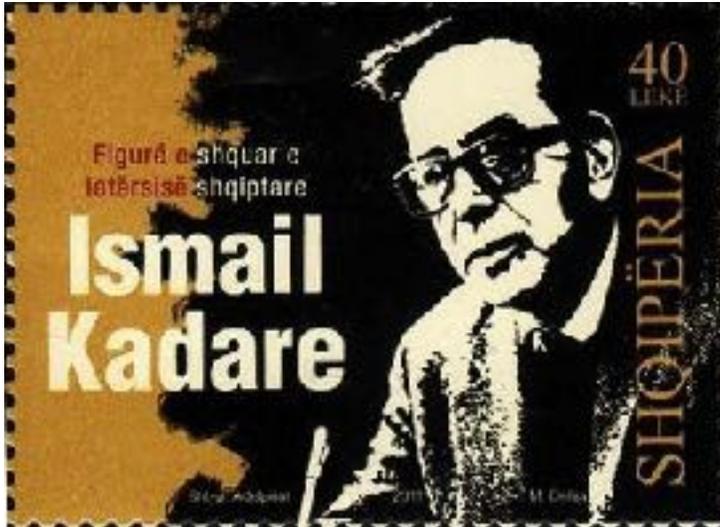
The intellectual direction that I gained could be said to have a reference in the 1917 ballet Parade by Jean Cocteau, employing Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso, and Sergei Diaghilev's dance company the Ballets Russes. While considered as a progenitor of Surrealism, the production crystallized the prehistoric vibrancy of human creativity as a mergence of all art forms, toward a collectivization of being and voice, transcending the cults of individual fame and capital commoditization.

Fictive is a nonviolent act of anti-imperialist internationalism. Literature is a key, seminal ingredient in the making of culture, and identity. The concept of world literature is often attributed to Goethe, who considered literature in many ways to appreciate the transnational, interactivity that the art world enjoys.

In the same breath, I call for literary work to overlap with that of art in the cultural field by foregrounding subjective, fictionalized, voices, character and elements of storytelling in criticism, resisting trends of assimilative globalization, toward local expressions of sovereignty in which open borders do not discriminate based on the geopolitics of territory, but by recognizing every individual as a natural-born citizen of the planet, at home everywhere in a world of equals.

This publication is for the global public, inclusive of all, real and imagined.

Matt H — January 31, 2021



Review: The Traitor's Niche by Ihsan Effendi

It must have been a gust of hashish that wafted from a cracked glass hookah gourd as I tripped over a broken cobblestone on my daily saunter through the second-hand bookseller's market in Beyazid, Fatih, Istanbul. Those

who live under the Genoese tower of Galata and along the Francophile's Grecian avenue of Rue de Pera on the European side of the Golden Horn, such as I, call the Old City *old* rightly, for it has seen its day.

Stumbling, I dropped my best walking stick, made from the core of a walnut tree. It is not a cane - I'm mostly gray under my bowler, but I'm virile as any youth. It bounced off some hobnobbing, fez-festooned fool's foot and landed onto a rock jutting from the sludgy walkway. The impact sent a sliver through the gilded knob, which was engraved in the spirit of my vocation, with my name in block-print type. Back in London, I am a newspaperman of note.

I was a big deal, front and center on the global stage. I have since fallen, spiraled down, ending up back in my festering birthplace, my mother's country. It's a pit of mud at the lowest corner of Europe, where the edge of the continent slopes onto a rasped throat of a strait between two often insufferably overcast, temperamental seas.



The intoxicating hash fumes stung my eyes. I dipped my head under a marble fountain and stared back into its reflective water. I could see, even under the gray sky above, that I was all bloodshot. Who did I see leaving a dingy perfumery: none other than the godawful, ugly mug of the famed headhunter himself, Tundj Hata, in his signature sheepskin cloak.

He seemed in a rush, though I had to let on that I had read about him. Last week, I found the book *The Traitor's Niche*. I noticed its clean white cover, and bought it new from my favorite bookstall owned and run by a Sufi sheikh from the Jerrahi sect's lodge in Karagumruk, named Muzaffer Effendi. He purveys English reads, mysteriously hot off the press, as only the brightest of storefronts hold throughout the United Kingdom.

The gruff misanthrope, the mercenary assassin, the crescent blade of the Sultan himself, Hata, a most unsavory creature, emerged through the haze like I had read, as if surrounded by the mists of the Balkans wildernesses.

He gained notoriety among literati and tattlers alike after his last three captures tingled the spine of the Ottoman dynasty. His last trio of executions began with Bugrahan Pasha, condemned for failing to kill Ali Pasha, who was called Black Ali for his disrepute lingers, made worse by the victories of the Greek rebels he supported, and who were now advancing north from the Peloponnese to tear back the land from some four centuries of Muslim occupation.

Most recently, he decapitated Ali's vanquisher, Hurshid Pasha, whose capital crime remains as mystifying as any other of the sultan's whims, explainable only by the absence of Black Ali's lost treasure in the slimy, octopus-like tentacles of his imperial grasp. The head of the empire's most valued commander sufficed. It is a mockery of logic ridiculous enough to drown any sane man in mortal worry, be he chief eunuch or brewer of tea.



Hata's face had been well-described in *The Traitor's Niche* - the hennaed beard, flaxen face, spawn of the wintry Balkan fog. The account of his headhunting ventures, rendered by Albania's expatriate writer of world renown, one Ismail Kadare of Paris, reaches certain heights of truth, and is a compliment to his literary celebrity, which if I may opine, is greatly served by the politics and exoticism of his Illyrian origins in contrast to the dominant, Anglophone worldview, though no less earned, for the prolific extent of his life's work.

I approached Hata carefully. I knew that to meet his eye was enough to risk life and limb, never mind head and neck. And yet, alas, with all that I had learned, I would never have guessed he had the loose tongue of a wizened flibbertigibbet. Tantalizing rumor just issued like a wet rubber elastic between his teeth, reddened to the tint of blood for his addiction to the all-common stimulant of tea.



L'Égypte, le Caire, la Colonne Torte et la Mosquée d'Ahmed.

“Whatever happened to that rascally, impotent kid, that no-good, two-bit Abdullah, the lucky jobber in the employ of the sultan who guarded the niche where the heads of the traitors you procured for display at Sultanahmet?” I asked Hata, as we both scanned the crowds until our eyes rested on the peak of the Tokmakhan obelisk, and swung back around to each other.

I had rushed to catch him. The book cost me over 100 Turkish liras, 25 American dollars in total from that hard-nosed penny-pinching mystic Muzaffer, just to read about the macabre escapades of Hata and the hard luck megalomania of his victims. I wanted to be sure it wasn't the novel equivalent of fake news.

“Word around town is the boy went mad,” said Hata, at that point still seeming to be a man of few words, whose silence resounded like an echo through a monumental valley.

He turned the other way as to continue on his way, and then stopped. From the corner of his mouth I could see a broad grin spreading across his pasty visage, covered as it was in the barbed fur of his matted beard. “Tea?” he asked.

We walked a few paces, and sat on two square stools, whose seats were woven with bristly twine. With just one sip, Hata began to speak, his tongue lolling, unraveled and undone. He took another sip, tore a chunk of Turkish delight from a dusty tin saucer, and bit it with cracked and mostly absent teeth. His eyes flashed.

It was clear that he had not a few stories under his belt, but the sudden opening up, enough to allow them to pour out like a deluge was surprising. It seemed a knee-jerk reaction to the introduction of scalding water infused with the caffeinating leaf streaming into his gullet.

He then shifted on his stool, and reached into his coat pocket for his chibouk, a long, thin stem of chestnut wood carved into the shape of a curved knife. And it seemed to double for an edge sharp enough to cut a man. By how he held it alone, it looked like the smoker had stabbed not a few of his victims with the diabolical, custom design. He obviously took added pleasure in the combination of tobacco and blood.

“Poor fellah went impotent before loss his mind. Had himself new bride and all they say what looked best prettiest dame this side of the land. I overheard him and doctor blurting out the privacies of his infertile sack, and its droopy entrails that went and hung ‘bout him without a bit of concern to reclaim the pride of his dud manhood,” said Hata, brightening up with excitement over the topic, like the worst gossipmonger, matchmaker auntie in the uptown districts of Istanbul, socializing to old age between forest plantations and waterfront mansions.

“That there doctor done prescribed the return of his little lady’s hairy patch to regrow back, that that would cure his lack of initiative,” Hata cackled, spitting up a

greenish, yellowy mucous into his tea and drinking it up without a flinch of a thought. He packed his chibouk with ink-black hashish and ripped it hard after lighting a match on the rough of his stubbled neck, reddening his skin, lightly bleeding himself in the process that might appear to be all show if it weren't enacted by him, the vilest figure in sight. Dark grey smoke poured from his nostrils and through his thick beard, scenting the quickly intoxicating air. I became a little more intoxicated myself.

“That damn, spoilt chile done hear bout Bugrahan's harem past Trabzon, how them orgies they done make his face like that a tawny golden hue. Abdullah just went red. If that wan't enough then it was the 22-year-old bosomy Vasiliqia who some told was so good at pleasing that 80-and-some-year-old Black Ali that she done make him dry for a spell,” said Hata, pausing to think, unable to resist his lascivious imagination.

“Last straw, that lucky number Vasiliqia done did the same to Hurshid, his conqueror, whose big head I cut right by order of Sultan mister, no one knows why,” said Hata, as he struck another match off a leg of his stool, and drew the rest of the hash in his chibouk with one inhale. Blazes sparked from the bowl as he closed his eyes while he held the rough smoke in his lungs till he looked about to burst.

“If not for sex, then power, and for some us mens they's all the same anyway, why we kill and die. That what happened to the Abdullah, though in his prime. He went off rattling on about being a rebel what fit for the Niche. I ain't even hear a whisper from the superior, it was just plain simple delusions of grandeur that he had,” Hata went on, exuding a pained mixture of diversion and gloom.

“I woulda try talk sense to the boy, what authority give Sultan, more better than to cut him I'se bet. They done sent him to the swamps where they kills wives who cheats. I just thinking on the how she feels, oh his goodly, fresh wife. I got one me own too, you know, ain't just blood and guts here. I got heart too. She make mean stew I tell ya, with her Circassian parentage she told, got mixed with them Aegean

skins. A real catch she is. I a lucky feller,” said Hata, cracking a smile and taking a sip of his second tea, chewing off the last bite of stale Turkish delight.

“That’s right. We keeps to ourselves yet but I go on out to the ends of this here dynastic territory to catch the head of a high and mighty dick wad. I come back with dick, keep the wad. It’s fair. But in you right about young Abdullah, he a casualty of this here done sick old man’s imperial fancy. I seen it with mine eyes. It ain’t going to last not much longer. Them war rebels in Greece threatening humiliate these here Ottoman kings to their last breath. I know it through and through, better than most. I seen it with mine eyes. I seen it, smelled it. It’s a death stench. It’s a head getting hacked off, slowly and painfully, from its writhing body,” said Hata, looking out over the rows of smoggy, soot-born cafes, where teeming packs of news criers who had long lost their voices sat, still as stone, retiring to idleness and death, mute and stoned.

With that, Hata stood up and walked away without saying one more word. He was not the type for listening. He was in a hurry, surely to see his better half. Looking at the musty mob of Sultanahmet, I thought of Kadare’s line, that its square is “like a swimming pool whose water changed every half hour”, that its unearthly momentum is “narcotic”.

The place does inebriate like a pagan spell, with a dizzying, maddening sense of infinity, like a portal where certain elements of time and space are suspended. I am struck by the uncanny premonition that its overfed tourists, fragmented sites, and done up dilapidations will be just about the same in 100 years, even when it’s the 2020s, only the severed heads will have decayed with the memory of an empire dead, without an afterlife.

Ihsan Effendi was an Ottoman-English newspaperman born in 1788. His review of “The Traitor’s Niche” was first published on June, 5 1822 in The Sunday Times of London following the assassination of Ali Pasha in January of that year, an international sensation. He remained exiled in Istanbul after declaring bankruptcy on newspaper row in London.

Review: A Prowl in the Dead of Night by Hana Korneti



“Does someone lurk in the shadows, or are the shadows lurkers themselves?” is the chilling opening line that sets the tone for the rest of Rüya Kızılay’s debut novel, *A Prowl in the Dead of Night*. I am still not sure whether I can qualify my experience of reading the work as suddenly seeing someone I have known for years unzip their

skin to reveal an extra-terrestrial hiding beneath, or as taking a sip of a suspicious looking liquid, to be pleasantly surprised by the lively notes of a home-made herbal liquor. In any case, the book had me in its grips until I swallowed it whole, yet without the ease of consuming some series’ season on Netflix in a day.

The reading was rewarding, but only in so far as I was an active participant in the process: jumping around with the style, lest I be left behind; following Kızılay’s clues, because they subtly and firmly built upon each other; making sense of mysterious metaphors and descriptions that, more than escaping translation, seemed to have been constructed in such a way with purpose, intention, so that only a deserving few feel like they’ve grasped what was meant. Despite demanding my active participation, the subject and style embroiled a strange fantasy world and story so naturally and with such seeming ease, that suspending disbelief occurred without a moment of thought. This only attests to Kızılay’s craftsmanship.

Prowl is set in modern day Istanbul, but an Istanbul below the surface of the Istanbul we know today; the Istanbul below rickety wooden chairs left on corners, within the unnoticed passages sneaking between two buildings, inside municipal cat houses, and in the blue iris of the evil eyes (*nazar boncuğu*) that stand guard over every entrance. Kızılay has foraged in the millennia-old fantasy tradition from

the lands of the Middle East, and has come back with a world that despite all the modern demystification, can still be home to mystery, can still be a land of fairytales, where the space is wide for jinns (genies), dwarves, gelins, women who speak to angels, and the Al Rukh, the giant bird of Sinbad's travels that has taken on the form of Istanbul's most popular bird – the seagull. The story takes us through the journey of Gaya, a fortune teller coming from a long line of women in that trade, in a search for her grandmother who disappeared in Cyprus during the conflict in the 60's.

Although Turkish literature and cinema often possess strong elements of magical realism, this is one of the works that is contemporarily unique in its status of belonging to the fantasy genre without reserve. While in films such as Onur Ünlü's "Sen Aydınlatırsın Geceyi" ("Thou Gild'st the Even") magic is integrated as a part of the mundane, Kızılay's narrative is the story of magic itself, where although the supernatural is the norm, it remains extraordinary. And this, indeed, was surprising – it would seem that Kızılay has taken it upon herself to bring folklore back to the surface of her readers' collective consciousness.

Gaya's communication with cats and other supernatural beings (indeed, the book once and for all proves that cats are supernatural) leads her to believe that her grandmother is still alive and somewhere in Istanbul. This takes the reader through an elaborate and intricate hunt through some of Istanbul's most contrasting neighborhoods – from the conservative atmosphere of Fatih, to the poverty in Tarlabaşı, to the luxury of Pera which spreads mere meters above it, to the hectic streets of Kadıköy, right into a treasure cove hidden below the Bosphorus. The tour leaves anyone passing through Istanbul with the impulse to pay really close attention to oft-neglected details, because the reader can no longer be sure what hides under doormats, behind rainbow-colored staircases, or even in the seemingly empty corners of the metro.

"Is it your own reflection that you see in the water, or is it millions of homeless bits of soul gathered as particles to imitate you, to be a part of something, your field of vision, you, to be recognized, not as the other but as a reflection of oneself, to be something of someone, for a fleeting moment?"

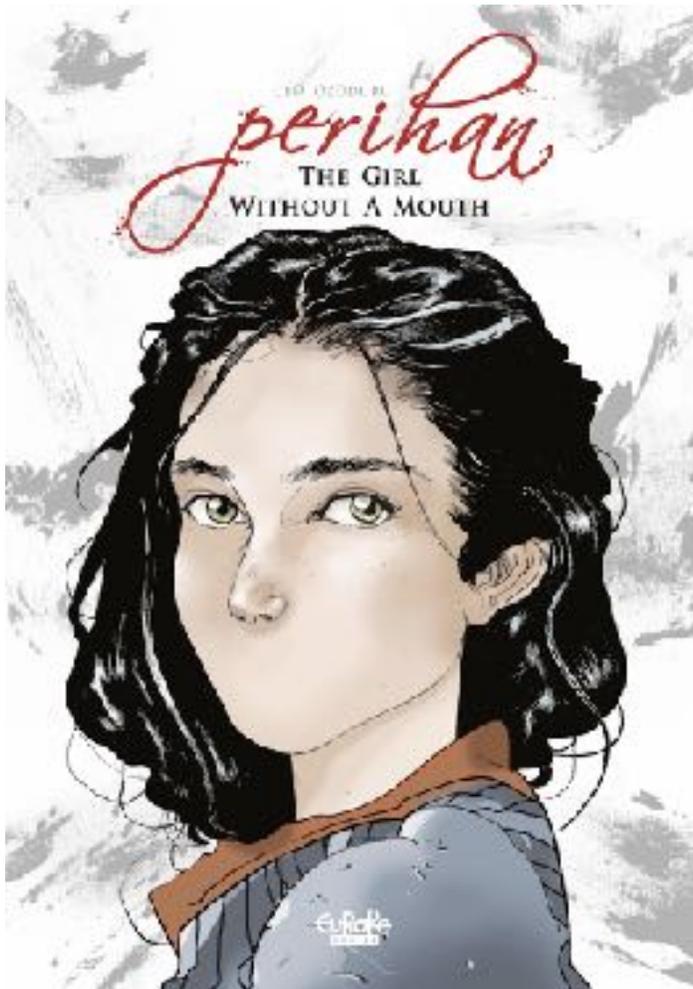
Kızılay keeps playing with the perception of the narrator, Gaya, simultaneously playing with the field of vision of the reader. While the universe is expanding, the reader is constantly reminded that the narrative's worldview is guided, that a speaker's reliability is a fickle matter, and that, essentially, fickleness is oftentimes near the core of the 'human condition'. On the cultural side of things, the unexpected brawls throughout the novel between ifrits and jinns, or gelins and ancient pirates, bring to the surface the shifting form of womanhood in Muslim societies, while interactions between past and present, which builds upon volumes of Turkish literature, question the role of past conflicts in the constructing of the narratives passed on to the future. Yet, another mark of Kızılay's finely tuned writing, is that the themes never distract from the plot or make the story feel too heavy with social cause.

A Prowl in the Dead of Night felt like a book dug up in a second-hand bookstore, a rare find that I would then pass on to my entire group of friends, asking, how is this not grander? Kızılay's debut left me excited to see what she produces next, and until then, I will have Gaya's journey to go back to, time and again, both in print, and on the winding streets of Istanbul.

Hana Korneti is an award-winning author of short fiction based in Skopje. She lived and wrote in Istanbul for many years, earning an MA in Cultural Studies at Sabancı University.

She is currently working on a short story collection, and hopes to one day write a novel bearing an uncanny resemblance to Rüya Kızılay's debut.





Review: Perihan The Girl Without a Mouth, critiqued by Luke Frostick

Perihan The Girl Without a Mouth is a strange and beautiful comic written by artist and scriptwriter Cem Özuduru. This graphic novel should be a treat for comics enthusiasts and could very well be enjoyed by readers who normally avoid the genre.

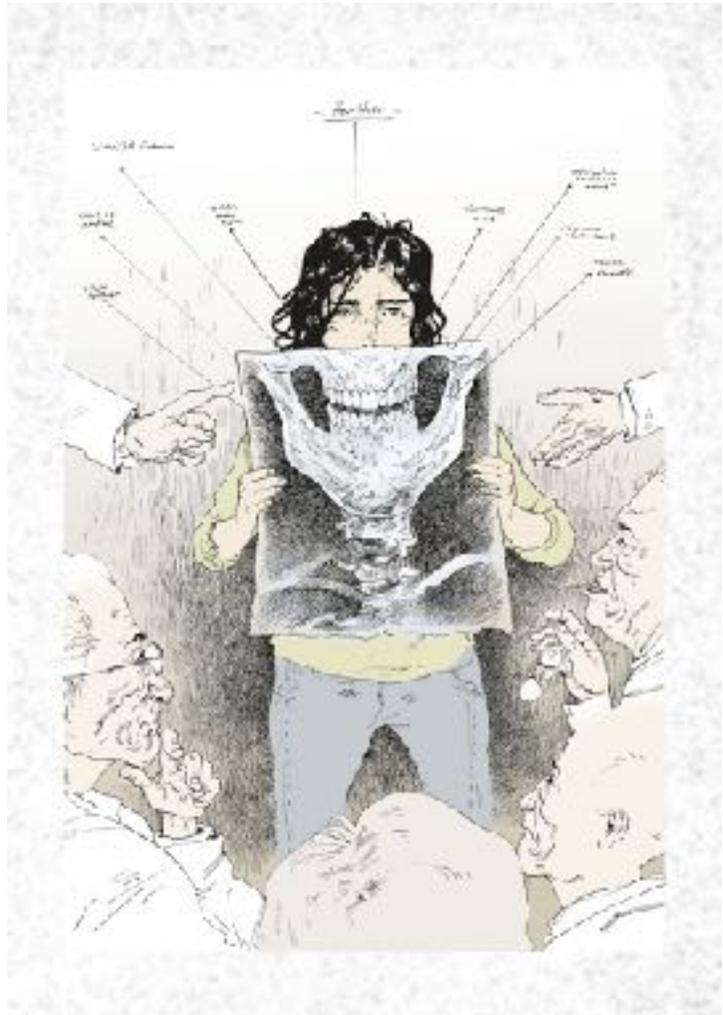
In broad strokes, the whole story is touching and finishes with a real kicker of an ending. The plot starts off when, as the title suggests, Perihan is born without a mouth. Throughout her childhood, she has to undergo a sequence of painful surgeries to correct her mouth.

The story is a very concise look at growing up with and overcoming disability. It takes us through the highs and the lows of recovery. Perihan tastes food for the first time, learns to speak, to sing, to lie and gradually gains a voice of her own. However, she grows up in constant fear of her mouth sealing over again, the new world she gained being taken from her.

The graphic novel also details her friendship with Zehra; a girl of the same age who is also forced into silence not because of a physical disability, but because of the trauma in her life. As Perihan gains her voice, she learns that she can use it to help her friend.

Of course, when you consider a comic, the narrative has to be considered alongside the art. In Perihan *The Girl Without a Mouth*, the style of the art is stronger than the narrative. It is truly beautiful though it will seem a little unusual to readers who are used to American or Japanese comics. It has detailed panels and a slightly muted colour palette, which almost makes you feel that you are looking at old photographs found in a drawer.

Any great comic book has to find a storytelling balance between exposition, prose, dialog and art to tell the story, and I would say that that balance is executed well here. There are some extremely tender moments without any text at all. Moreover, Özüdüru is able to use the panels in the comic to abruptly change the tone of a scene. Moreover, it has some graphic body horror, which is used powerfully.



I think it is a valid critique that the story is not cautious enough, as using body horror as a way to talk about people with physical disability is insensitive, that only by getting her mouth fixed could she live a normal life. The writer could have got around this issue if they had been clearer about the source of Perihan's problems and by showing more of how she learned to cope with her condition and not be defined by it.

In fact the entire book suffers from a lack of clarity. Özüdüru leaves some important scenes to the readers' imagination. This can be a bold and powerful way of telling a story, in some places in the story it works. However, in other instances

it doesn't, and important context and sequences are left out. I felt that the short page count of the book worked against it. Some character development, plot points and side characters could have done with a bit more space to be fully realised, to pack the emotional punch they could have had. The same is true for the thematic material.

The story could be seen as playing with a couple of extended metaphors, for example Perihan's missing mouth, and her learning to speak resonates with a coming-of-age story, or Perihan's condition could be taken as commentary on how women's voices are often marginalised. The graphic novel never really developed those themes and sometimes took them in directions that didn't totally make sense to me. A bit more space in the book to fully flesh out these ideas would have improved it in my opinion. That being said, a story that makes you wish for more is always doing something right.

Incidentally, this comic is published by Europe Comics who specialise in publishing more obscure comics. They have a couple of titles by Turkish writers and artists and are working with a Turkish agency, Akan Ajans, to bring out more in the future. I'm looking forward to seeing what they come up with.

Even if you are not looking for Turkish graphic novels, Europe comics is a really great resource for people want something outside the Japanese- and American-dominated mainstream. How many comic book fans reading this can honestly say that they have read a Polish comic?

To conclude, Perihan The Girl Without a Mouth, didn't totally work for me, I felt that greater clarity both in the narrative and the metaphors that the story is trying to build would have been really helpful. It is nonetheless an interesting piece of writing and fabulous piece of art. It is a unique enough experience that I feel confident recommending it.

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.



Interview: Renan Koen, “Positive Resistance

Renan Koen is a Turkish-Jewish concert pianist, music therapist and public educator. Since the release of her 2015 album, “Holocaust Remembrance / Before Sleep”, she has toured the world lecturing on the Holocaust, specifically Theresienstadt and the composers interned there with youth groups, and recently to a global audience in January at the UN Headquarters in NYC for International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Earlier in her career, she released, “Lost Traces, Hidden Memories” (2014), an album of Ladino music, inspired by her heritage, raised among the Sephardic communities of Istanbul. During government-imposed quarantines, she performed a series of online concerts via the Twitter account of the Turkish Jewish Community Association (@tyabuditoplumu), who also supports her educational efforts in collaboration with Everlasting Hope: Gustav Mahler & Terezin Composers

FictiveMag.com spoke with Ms. Koen at a cafe in Istanbul not far from where she attended secondary school in the affluent neighborhood of Nisantasi. She discussed her project, “March of the Music”, in which she has brought her students to Theresienstadt annually since 2018 to enact what she calls, “Positive Resistance”, by responding creatively to tyranny by performing concerts, composing music, making art and writing essays about their experiences appreciating the music history of the ghetto and

concentration camp where Gideon Klein, Pavel Haas, Viktor Ullman, and Zikmund Schul wrote compositions and eventually perished in the Holocaust.

How did you first learn about Theresienstadt?

Of course I knew about the Holocaust. I heard about Theresienstadt. I was fascinated that some [music] production was going on. That some composers, or some musicians were still playing or composing. This caught my attention a lot.

As a European citizen, also, because the Holocaust was not spoken [about] enough, I didn't know much about it, the camps, how many were there, the conditions. I only knew of Auschwitz, [in my] early career. I started to search about this, which composers, which works, and then composers I learned quickly. The list of the works I learned quickly. But I couldn't get the scores quickly. The scores weren't ready or they were publishing very few. It took years.



What was the turning point for you in your discovery of music composed in Theresienstadt?

In 2011, when I came back home from Bodrum, I found a Pavel Haas piano suite in my mailbox. It was like a miracle moment for me. It was [written] before the camp, when he was excluded from public, because these composers, like every other Jew in Europe they were excluded from the the wider community, from schools, public

places, and everything. He composed this during this time. I opened the envelope. I was so excited.

I started to practice, and then a few days later I received a choral work by Zikmund Schul which was composed in 1941. It was [written] before Theresienstadt. Most were from Schott Music, from Germany. When I read about the text in the choral work about Zikmund Schul it was so fascinating because it was hard times and he used a Shabbat text in this choral work, a prayer, but only as a text, not as a melody.



It was something about, ‘God, if you did that to us, so you know better than us, so you have a plan, so we have to submit. We’re in your plan. We surrender to you.’ I was in shock, how, in these circumstances, he could compose. I established a choir for a concert in 2011. I played the Pavel Haas piano suite. They sang this choir work. I accompanied.

How has this cultural advocacy impacted Turkey’s Jewish community?

I found a story about a survivor who was my friend’s uncle. He left to Turkey during the First World War, to evade the army. He went to France. In the Second World War, they caught him and put him in Drancy [concentration camp]. He had a journal there.

My friend gave it to me, and also exposed his story in the Neve Shalom Synagogue for International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, in 2011. It was a big coincidence, this man’s grandson was visiting Istanbul for the first time and we didn’t know he was coming, and he came and he saw his grandfather like this, and he didn’t know his story. It was a big deal for everything. It happened in 2011.

What led you to continue this work?

In 2015 I got many scores, choir scores and piano scores. One of them, Gideon Klein's piano sonata I couldn't find it from Schott Music, or from London or from the Terezin Institute, so what I did was I listened to who played it before in YouTube. I made a list of pianists and started to search for them on Facebook I found somebody. I contacted an Italian conductor and pianist and he sent me the score.

What was the significance of these Jewish composers for music history? To what aesthetic or cultural movements did they contribute?

As for Gideon Klein, for example, he was born in 1919. He was a great pianist. He was very talented. He went to Prague Conservatory for the composition class. He studied with Alois Hába, a great composer, and one of the pioneers of microtonal music, also the teacher of [Turkish composer] Necil Kazım Akses. Alois Hába was a school by himself. He was the school.

Gideon Klein studied with him, and philosophy and musicology at Charles University. I think he was a genius. His contribution was a lot. It could have been more. He died when he was 26. It's a loss for European music history as well. He's one of the continuations of the microtonal music school. His music is microtonal music, with very rich textures. He was very young. I only have one of his works, a Piano Sonata, which is especially very angry.

Would you say that their music was a reflection of Jewish life?

They didn't know Jewish life in Central Europe. They didn't know Jewish religion. They were just European, culturally cultivated people. And when they went to

Theresienstadt, there they learned about Jewish music, and Jewish culture and Jewish religion.

As for the musical part, they found a book there. There was a book in Theresienstadt published in Berlin. The book contained Jewish religious music and also the Jewish folk music. So, that's how they started to compose music there. They established a chorus, and started to arrange the religious music and also the folk music for the chorus. That's how they started.

And then the chorus expanded with women. Viktor Ullman and Gideon Klein found a piano in the ghetto and secretively they brought it to the barracks and Gideon Klein repaired it and they started to compose.

Are there recordings of the Theresienstadt composers?

There was a clarinetist and doctor, George Horner, he escaped to America and he was very successful. He played with Yo-Yo Ma. He tells stories about Gideon Klein. They were neighbors in Moravia. He knew Gideon Klein. When he saw him, he was always going to their barracks to listen to him. He said in his speeches that he was practicing and practicing and practicing a piano concerto and it was never enough for him. But nobody could record it of course.

Have you taken a different approach to your performance and recording of music composed in Theresienstadt?

No, I never tried to do something different. But I tried to understand it a lot, the musical context. I was thinking a lot. That's why I wanted to play in Theresienstadt. I wanted to hear, when I was playing the sound of the environment, how quiet it was, the sound of trees, the smell.

I wanted to hear and of course it's not the same, because the population is not the same, but still I wanted to hear that. When I played there, I gave a concert in Theresienstadt, I really understood better, more deeply. I understood the tempos more, the pace of life, how they walked, where they walked.

Please describe more about Theresienstadt.

Terezin was in Czechoslovakia back then, of course. It is very close to Prague, about 45 minutes by car. It's a small city. It's a historical city, as everywhere else in the Czech Republic, named by Maria Theresa, that's why it's Terez-in. During the First World War, all of the soldiers were there and they said it was a very cheerful city. All of the bars, the soldiers, they knew how to enjoy life. It was very, very cheerful.

Because of the German territories, the Nazis invaded there in 1940 and they established this ghetto and prison, which they called a small fortress. In 1941 it was ready, and people started to be deported there, and they, of course, changed the

name. They named it

Theresienstadt, because they Germanized it.

Between this invasion and the ghetto life it's still like a ghost city.



Here in Turkey how were the receptions to the concerts for Before Sleep?

In Turkey, and elsewhere, people are not very cautious about the Holocaust, still. It's amazing. Sometimes I come across survivors' children, in Brazil, for example.

Most didn't know about the Holocaust, and Terezin especially, but a lady approached me after the concert and said, 'You know, you're telling really true stories about Theresienstadt because my mother was a survivor,' and she told me everything that you're telling now. Sometimes people approach me as survivors' children. But most people aren't aware of the Holocaust.

Is there anything unique to your experiences performing this music and teaching about the Holocaust in Turkey?

I can not associate this music with countries, as a performer. As a musician, for me, it's very important to make them alive, to bring this music and reality to life also. [My] Ladino [album, Lost Traces, Hidden Memories] came first. But eleven months after, this [Holocaust Remembrance / Before Sleep album] came.

When I was preparing the concert in February, 2015, I decided to have another one in Istanbul, the Izmir Jewish community proposed this concert. I told myself if I'm going to play it in Izmir why not start from Istanbul, because Istanbul is a very important place to play. I started to talk to people to do that, and suddenly realized that it's such a pity that it will not be permanent, that it will finish in one concert.

Immediately, I started to work on that. I immediately had the answers from sponsors. It was an express procedure [Laughs]. I immediately had the reaction from the label company, so I started and it was a very quick process. It's a heavy work. It's a book also. It came out very quickly.

Did you have the idea to add an educational initiative from the beginning?

When I say the concert [for Before Sleep], it's always a lecture concert. I never play without an explanation. I start from the Holocaust. It depends on the audience, if they don't know anything about the Holocaust I start from the beginning; how the Holocaust happened, what does it mean, what Hitler did, how

countries were involved. And then I come to Terezin the city, and Theresienstadt, the circumstances, and the composers, and the works, something like that.

In April, there will be a lecture concert. I prepared an educational program for young people, age range from 14 to 17. I sometimes go to 11 years old too, if they're ready. I use another story for that also. I go to the universities also. The aim, the goal, the target group is 14 to 17 years old, young people.

I go to non-Jewish schools in Turkey and abroad. And I tell the story. It's answering questions, interaction. My goal is to [reach] Turkey, not only Istanbul. I sometimes go to Jewish schools, but I prefer not to because the non-Jewish kids are more important for me because the Jewish schools can reach the source of the history, they can learn and they learn. The other one doesn't know about this.

When you were growing up, what was the development of your awareness of the Holocaust?

It was poor, very poor. Of course, I knew it because the Jewish youth clubs were teaching us about this and we had once a year the Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, we always commemorate the Holocaust. I knew but I didn't know the details. My primary school was right here in Şişli Terakki Lisesi. For middle school, I started to go to the conservatory.

Did you meet any survivors while in school?

No.

During your class for young people, do you also perform a concert?

I can't say a concert, but I play during the educational program. I start to tell about the Holocaust, with the question, 'How many of you know about the Holocaust?' None, or few. 'Do you know what the Second World War is?' Yes. 'Did you hear about Hitler?' They say, Yes.

They haven't usually heard the word, Holocaust?

No, or genocide. And then, I start to tell about the Holocaust, Second World War, how the Second World War started, how it developed, why the Jewish people were targeted, what was Hitler's ideology about this, how he developed this ideology, and how many plans he tried to kill all the Jewish people, and how the Final Solution plan worked through camps.

I specifically tell about Theresienstadt, and then I start to tell about the composers, their life before the war, before the camp and in the camp, and how they were deported to death camps, and their works. And then I say, 'Let me speak with music now. Listen to music from the camp. But it will be your turn to speak after this.'

And then I go to the piano and I invite them to the piano, because I want them to see the notes, because the Gideon Klein scores are a little bit like handwriting still, like manuscripts. I ask what did you feel about this, what do you think about this, how did this piece make you feel? This turns into a dialogue. They speak. They love to share. They share a lot.

Are these usually more affluent, wealthier schools?

No. I go to all kinds of schools. For example, in Brazil I went to the favelas.

Do you experience some negativity?

No, never. In Berlin, I had an interesting experience. I went to Turkish schools. Aziz Nesin School, a pilot school of bilingual education, in German and Turkish. They are very religious families' children. I went there, and they were very ready for Theresienstadt because their history teacher told them about the Holocaust and about Theresienstadt specifically because there were children's art productions there in Theresienstadt.

So they knew about it, but they felt so much shame on behalf of Hitler. When they saw me, because the teacher told them that I'm Jewish. It was the first time for them, 11 to 12 year old children, they were all red, because of what Hitler did to Jewish people, all of the bad words, and not only Hitler but people, neighbors to neighbors. They were all red and they could not even look at me. We started about how I felt about this.

It was in Turkish. They couldn't directly ask me. But the teacher told me that the children are very curious about how you feel about this and how is your life in Turkey. What does it mean to be a Jew. When they saw me that I'm very friendly and I don't have bad feelings about my life and that I'm honest with them, they started to talk with me and at the end they hugged me and didn't want to let me go. It was a powerful experience.

Did you also perform?

Yes, but I always prefer the music room, not the stage with them.

These compositions that you chose for Before Sleep, were they written at Theresienstadt camp?

Yes.

Was this music Nazi propaganda? Or did the German officers not know that they were writing music?

They didn't know. But just last summer, I didn't know this information either. I had been informed by a survivor that the Nazi officers were afraid to be in the camp all the time. So they were a little bit outside. Now there is a Terezin Cultural House, it was the Nazi's officers building. They were in the building most of the time. They didn't know. It was not completely prohibited in Terezin. Certain styles of music were prohibited, such as jazz, or music for themselves was prohibited. The Nazis wanted them to compose something. It was not completely prohibited. But jazz music was prohibited for sure. And when they shot the propaganda movie there, Nazi officers did a fake atmosphere there, and they built up, for the movie, a jazz club.

How did these scores survive?

As for the Gideon Klein's sonata, for example, he gave to his sister who was in Theresienstadt also. And his sister survived so the sonata survived. And Viktor Ullman's piano sonata, he wanted to bring all the scores with him to Auschwitz and people told him don't do it. He left it in Theresienstadt and somebody found it in

Theresienstadt. Pavel Haas's choral works, because one of them was dedicated to somebody in the camp, and these people survived and moved to Israel. That's how we have it. Most of the time it's lost by the way.



In the context of the UN presentation, for example, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, do you feel like there's a certain narrative that is confining you, or placing you, or are you simply addressing a genuine need for more people to learn about the Holocaust?

If you're asking me what it's like to work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they're very respectful about this issue. They don't relate it to anything else. They don't instrumentalize the issue. This is very important for me.

On the topic of genocide, there's a tension especially in terms of Turkish-European-American relations.

The Holocaust is a very unique thing, and unique method. The Holocaust is incomparable with other tragedies, I think.

Why is Holocaust education urgent today?

First of all, the history itself is very twisted somehow. History has to be taught to young people very honestly. Each of us has some difficulties in life, and I want the students to find their strong points in themselves, how they're strong, in which fields they could be talented and how they can face their own difficulties in life.

If individually a person is not at peace, the community can't be at peace, that's why it's very important to tell this history very transparently. And the second part of my education is to find their strong points. What I do, once a year in August, I take the students to Terezin. I started with two and last year was four. This year, if it's not cancelled from coronavirus it will be more this year. I bring them to Terezin and I do the guide. We are part of a festival, and they meet other musicians or other musicologists. They listen. I organize a meeting with a survivor too. They speak with a survivor and I ask them to produce something for me, according to either their education or talents. They produce something, but it's serious, musical work, essays or articles, or they draw something. I promote their works to the world.

One of them composed a really great work, and one of them wrote an article. The work [of music] has been played last year. We did a world premiere here in the Italian synagogue [in Istanbul]. The article I published in Salom newspaper. This year, one of them was from the Istanbul University Conservatory, which is a Western music education. One was from ITU Turkish Music Conservatory. They finished composing. One was a violinist from an orchestra, from Mimar Sinan University. He was in love with the Gideon Klein trio. He said, 'I want to play this with a trio.' I said, 'Okay, make your own trio and let me see it and I will give you the score afterwards.' He tried and he tried and he did it.

The trio comes every Friday to my house and they practice in my house. It's a string trio. The other one was a student from the German school, interesting young lady and she's now writing about this. She's very talented with writing. I reached other music from Warsaw Ghetto, Josima Feldschuh's piano works. Josima Feldschuh was a star pianist in the Warsaw Ghetto. When she was 14 she died and she composed in the Warsaw Ghetto 18 musical works. I've been introduced to Josima's stepsister in New York, and her niece gave me the manuscripts of her. So I'm going to play a little bit of the music from the beginning to open the concert, because I have to open the concert.

The world premiere of these works will be played. The violinist and his trio will play Gideon Klein's string trio. It will be at the Italian synagogue. Just before that we will record an album with Gideon Klein's trio, last year's composition students' works, and also the new composition students' works. There will be four works on the album.

I will promote this album of course. I already made a deal with an Italian label, Sheva Collection, because their distribution are very wide. They were with Naxos in the USA, incredible. So they have distribution in Europe, England, and the Far East, and also with Naxos in America. That's the next record project. It's not only my project, but their works.

I named this educational program “Positive Resistance Through Holocaust Reality”. These students actions where I bring students every year to Terezin is the March of the Music. So, it will be outcomes from March of the Music, two years works’ from March of the Music.

What do their compositions sounds like?

Contemporary music. Very interesting work. It’s really contemporary. They’re in their 20s.

I like this idea of Positive Resistance?

I created these terms. I have the copyright now. [Laughs].

How do you define Positive Resistance?

Because they composed music in the camp, in the ghetto, and they produced something through their talents and creativity. They stayed very healthy, healthier than the others. How did they do that? Because they connected with their souls. They worked and they practiced. We saw it in Pavel Haas’s choral works. He composed a work for a male chorus. He a text from the Tehillim and composed a chorus for it. It says in the text, ‘Don’t cry, don’t complain, work.’”

It says in the musicology text that he did that for solidarity. They chose to be on their creative side. They composed, and created this solidarity in the camp and encouraged others to compose as well and stayed healthier. I named all of these things that they did as Positive Resistance. Also, I define it the other way around. All of the persecutions and violations are negative resistance, some kind of pressure. And they answered this pressure, this violence, positively, as resisters, positive resisters.



Art Photographer MAKHism on queer refugee life from Iran to Turkey

MAKHism is a queer art photographer from Iran. At 31, he gained official refugee status from the UNHCR in Ankara in 2015, the year he fled from Tehran, where he faced oppression as an openly gay man. Unable to leave Turkey when Trump's "Muslim Ban" coincided with his asylum claim, he lived in the "satellite city" of Denizli in central Anatolia, where some 5,000 Iranian refugees are permitted to reside in accordance with Turkish immigration.

In 2019, he was without a work permit, waiting for the resolution of his third-country resettlement case, unable to leave Denizli without permission from the local police. In the last weekend of January, he went to Istanbul for the seventh time, with a document allowing only a few days for the duration of the QueerFest, where he participated as the festival's photographer, also producing a documentary film on the minority refugee experience in Turkey.

He spoke with FictiveMag.com at a restaurant in Pera, outside of Kiraathane Literature House (Edebiyat Evi) on a Friday evening, before an event in which an Iranian migrant textile worker spoke about the oppressions they face as an illegally employed queer asylum seeker in Turkey. As the sun fell over the Golden Horn behind us, MAKHism held back tears when speaking about how his mother stood up for him to the end, before he left, and how his three older sisters also helped him transition into exile.



Fashionably dressed, and sporting long dreadlocks, he looked forward to moving to Canada, where he has now called home for just over a month. He has shown his photography in three exhibitions in Turkey, including for a pro-LGBTQI+ exhibition held to coincide with Turkey's banned Pride March. At the time, he felt he had already spent his best years as a refugee in Turkey, unable to set down roots or form lasting relationships while waiting to hear back from the UNHCR.

I want to learn about your situation, what is happening here for you.

In September, I finished my fourth year [in Turkey, in 2019]. How many months have passed since then? It's now four years and a half [that I'm here], since 2015.

At that time, in 2015, you had just come to Turkey?

I came here [to Turkey] in 2015, in September, as a refugee. I didn't come here to travel and after that become a refugee. I came to Turkey for my first time, and directly, as a refugee.

Which part of Iran are you from?

Tehran, the capital.

Would you share why you left?

I'm homosexual. I'm gay. In our culture, most families don't accept these feelings, this gender. My father is so religious. I'm the only boy in my family, the last child of my family. I have three sisters. All of them are married. I was the last one. My father believed I should marry. When I finished my university, my father tried to push me to marry. At that time I didn't have a job. I tried to find a job.

I was a photographer at that time [too]. I started to have a private studio. This is forbidden in Iran too, because I'm a man and the government doesn't accept me as a photographer to take pictures of women. For that, I should hire women to take a picture. And I'm not into that, because I love to take pictures by myself, not to have another person to take pictures of women.

We made a private studio, and my father didn't know about these activities. I worked in that studio for two years. After that, my father asked me about my job, and tried to pressure me to marry. Sometimes my father went to the bank to choose a cashier. He said, "Okay, this one is good for you." He brought me to see women. They are not objects. We should talk together. Because of this I rejected my father.

After this, my father tried to find a girl from family and friends for me. My father told me, "I'll give you one of my houses. I'll give you one of my cars. I'll give you my bank account, and I'll give you one of my stores to make money. What's your problem?" I was so shocked. My father is a very rich person. There wasn't any

excuse to decline it, because if I declined, he would ask, “What is your problem? You have money, a house, you should have a woman.”

At this time I hadn't come out to my mother. Only one of my sister knew about my sexual orientation, because when I was fifteen years old, I went to the psychologist. I was so religious too. I prayed to God. I had this feeling and I didn't have any knowledge about my feelings at the time. And I went to the psychologist.

The psychologist gave me a lot of pills, like Citrolin to make me happy. I started to use them. And after that time, I tried to kill myself, because it was so strange to me. I didn't see anyone around me who had these feelings. I read some religious books. It is written in Islam and the Quran that I should be killed. I was rejected by my religion.

I was so shocked. I said, “Okay, I'm a Muslim. I pray to God, and the God told me you should be killed.” I was so shocked. I said, “You should leave this religion, or I should kill myself.” This is the reason that I started to use these pills, that maybe I would come back as a normal person. My doctor in those times was such a religious person and told me I should look at women more or see pornography of women to make me more comfortable with women.

I was shocked. I said, “Oh God, I'm not into women, I'm into men, what did you do to me?” Those were such dark years with myself. When I started to use the pills it made me weaker. One night, I was so depressed about my feelings that I ate about 10 pills one time. I fell asleep and when I woke up I was shaking. I thought when I woke up that I was dead, in another world. Then, I woke up and saw myself. All of my body was shaking. The time was about 3AM.

I was fifteen years old. I went to my sister's room. My sister was awake. She saw me in that position, and covered me. She asked, “What happened?” I told her, “I committed suicide. I think I'm a homosexual. The doctor gave me medicine to make me straight.” My sister laughed at me, and she told me, “Yeah. It's okay, I'm a lesbian too.” [Laughs]. It was a lie. She's a psychologist too. She just wanted to support me in that feeling. She said, “It's okay, I'm a lesbian too. I have a

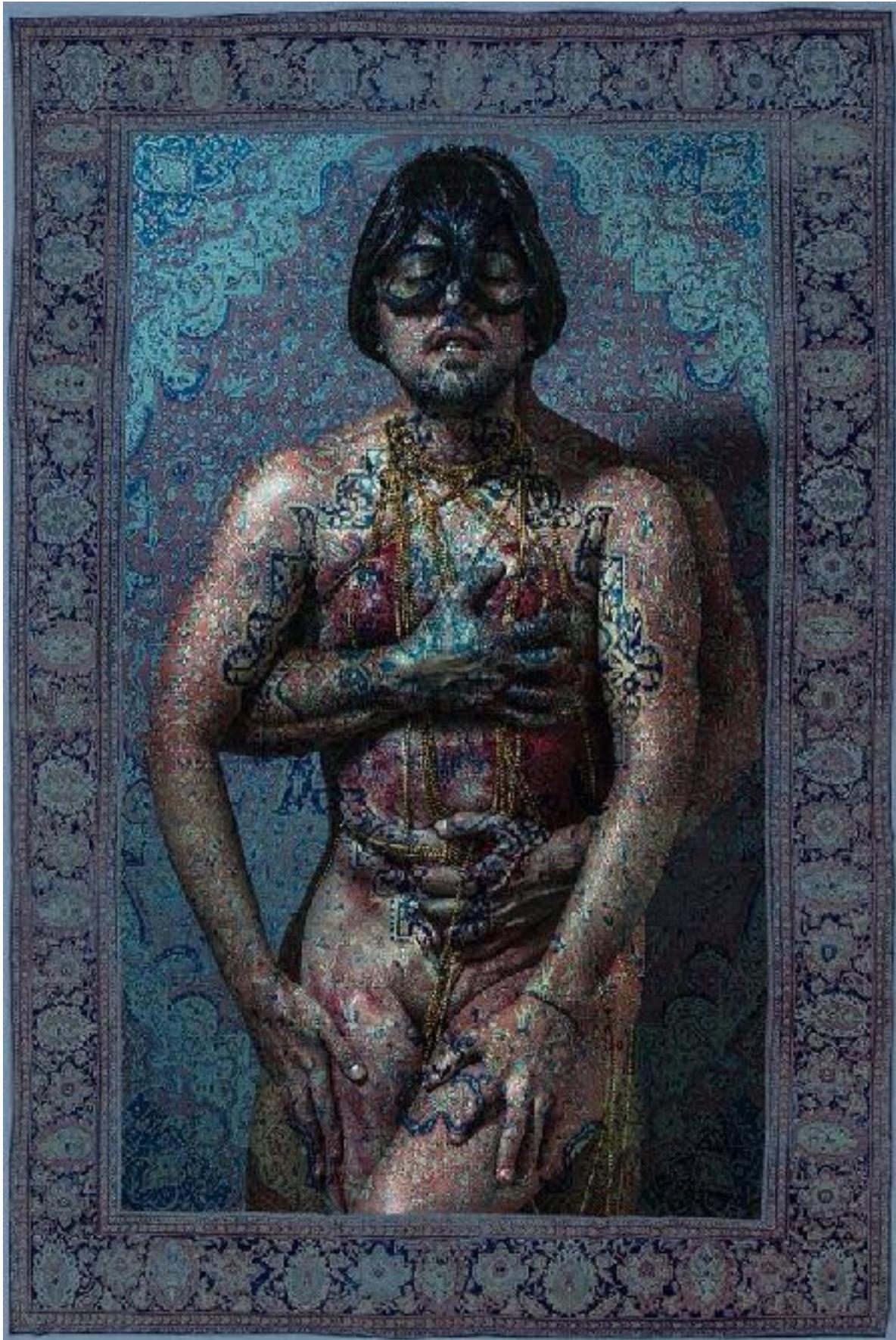
connection with gays too. You are not alone in the world. There's a lot of people in the world like you."

From that time, I started to live. Before that time, it was completely dark. And after that, it goes to gray [laughs]. After that I started to have a connection with people. Then, ten years later, my father pushed me to get married. My mother came to me after I was pressured by my father. She came to me and told me that she didn't know anyone about me. I think, this is my belief, that every mother of homosexual children, they know the difference. There's a difference. They are not the same. When I was a child, I was playing with girls,

painting. I didn't go outside to play with boys, but made something with my sister. My mother knows. There's a difference.

When my father started pushing for me to be married, my mother said, "No. He doesn't want to marry. He wants to be educated more." Me and my mother were in front of my father, and my father pressured my mother too, to make me agree to marry. One day, my father and my mother fought too much. They fought with body contact, because my mother stood in front of my father and told him, "He doesn't





want to marry.” My father started fighting.

I was traveling for my photography. When I arrived, my sister said, “You shouldn’t go home. You should come to our home, because your mother is here. I saw my mother in such a bad position. She was damaged in the face, and the body. That was one year before I came here, 2014. We left the house with my mother, without anything. After one week, I told my mother my feelings. And my mother was so shocked. I told her, “I destroyed your life because of me. I was feeling so bad, because you protected me but you didn’t know about my sexual orientation.

And after 32 years, they did not divorce, but they separated. She’s 68 years old now. She is living alone. All of my sisters are married. My mother was very depressed at that time in the last year when I was in Iran.

When I left my house and went into the street, I was depressed and had the feeling that maybe my father would find me in the street and try to attack me. I thought of something bad every time I stayed in the house. I started to use the medicine again and the doctor told me I had bipolar. He gave me a lot of pills, bipolar medication. After one year my mother told me, “Iran is not good for you. It is better to leave Iran.” In those weak times, with my mother’s support, I left Iran. I left Iran with my friends helping. I went to Denizli, and four years passed.

How did you get to Denizli?

With my passport, officially. I just bought a ticket. I went to Ankara the first day. I took a ticket to Ankara. When I arrived to Ankara one of my friends had come from Denizli to Ankara because he knows Turkish. He brought me to the UNHCR office. I went there and made an application, and chose Denizli city without any knowledge, because two of my friends were there. It was my first time coming to Turkey.

Now, I’m 31. That was 4 years ago. I passed my golden age as a refugee. My abilities have calmed down. I took pictures all the time, self-portraits. I would upload one collection each month onto my Instagram account. When I came to Turkey, it went to each year, one picture. You know about the depression. “Why should I

come here? Why is there no progress to leave? What about earning money?” It’s a refugee sickness, and my abilities calmed down too much.

So, your last year in Iran you lived with your mother?

Yes. It was my golden time.

How did you begin in photography? Did you study photography?



Yes, I graduated with [a degree in] graphic design from a university in the southwest of Tehran. After that I felt that it wasn’t enough for me. My mother gave me a camera as a gift and I started to take pictures and went to the University of Tehran to receive a license in photography. I try to mix these two arts together, graphic design and photography.

Are you staying active at least, despite suffering depression?

In Iran, photography doesn’t earn that much money. Most of the time I earned money from decoration design. Photography in Iran for men is not forbidden, but

most of photography is forbidden. You can do wedding photography legally, or fashion design. The only way for photography for us is event photography. I just did some projects for money, most for experience. But when I came here, I started to do more to earn money, but photography is just my hobby. Most of the money I earn is from painting and decoration.

What is your experience with the “satellite city” policy? Did you have to acquire permission to travel from Denizli to Istanbul, for example?

Yes, yes. Actually, we can't go out of Denizli without the permission of the police.

How does that work exactly?

Actually we can't get out of Denizli without the permission of the police. The police won't let us leave Denizli without permission. If some police finds us and asks us, “What are you doing here?” And asks us, “Where is your permission?” If we don't have it, it's so risky. Maybe they attack us. Every time I came to Istanbul from Denizli I came with permission from the police. They need the paper, the signature. For example, QueerFest and these companies have a paper to sign and the police accept it.

A normal person can't give us permission, an invitation. This happen in the past two years, because a lot of Iranian people came to Turkey and Denizli and the police rule changed. There is more security. In the past, when we go to the police to ask permission to visit family they would give it easily. But now, they ask you, “Where do you want to go? How many days? No.” But because a company pays for hotel bills, and a lawyer, they give permission.

What type of documents, for example, do you require going from the UNHCR to Denizli, and now when you leave your satellite city?

There's an interview the first time you arrive at UNHCR. They ask you, “Why did you leave your country?” You should write a paragraph. And question number two is, “If you go back to your country what will happen to you?” If you answer this question acceptably they start working on your process.

Your case was accepted to begin the refugee resettlement process?

I told them that if I went back to Iran, there wouldn't be peace. It would be stressful, maybe my father would find me. My father would never accept my sexuality.

How do you feel about the satellite city policy? Is it unjust? How might it be changed?

I think all of the problems come from the world powers, like America. When we arrived in Turkey, there were a lot of refugees from Syria. Okay, people from countries at war should be protected first, to go to the third country. Because of them, we stayed for one year. And after that Trump came, and Trump is anti-LGBTQ, and started banning Persian people. There is not another reason.

After a time, when you are stuck somewhere without any protection from the government, for example, we don't have permission to work in Turkey. The police made this law. Why? Because we are refugee? Why shouldn't we earn money? These rules automatically make people go into illegal work, working in hiding. It's because of the government. Why can't you hire refugees? For example, there's a lot of people with a lot of abilities in my city. There's a sculptor, doctor, dentist, director, musician, chef. They could make some places for refugees in the community.

If they tell people, "Okay, we can hire these people." Maybe with a little less payment they can make new jobs. Most people in my city, Denizli, have depression because they don't have a job. What should they do?

How does it feel in the community and as an individual, to be in the city and to have to go to the police when you want to leave?

It's like a jail, but in a jail you enter with a crime. But we came to the city without any crime, and the jail is the size of a city. It's not a room, or a yard. After four years, it becomes small, like a jail. There are not interesting places in the city and you shouldn't leave without permission.

How is life in Denizli? Are there certain pockets where people go, centers, locations where people hang out? What's going on there in terms of the Iranian community? Having been there for years, you must have seen how life goes, how people try to enjoy.

Denizli is a little bit of a religious city, close-minded. You see a lot

of women in hijab there. With my appearance, people look at me so much. This is the reason I hide myself in the house, and don't go in the street, because of my appearance. They might look at you and attack you if they're anti-homosexuality and anti-trans.

The people in Denizli try to make community for themselves without any rules. There are a lot of Iranians in Denizli who make parties, events, guided tours to other cities. But there aren't any rules inside that. All of the people have a dark, depressive side. There aren't jobs. Some people are trying to make food at home and sell it without permission, make clothes. There is underground living in Denizli so much. You can't trust people so easily.

Many people try to have a group of close friends, like a family. After two years I haven't tried to have a connection with people because it's too dark. They stick there without any news from UNHCR. Most of them are depressed.



Have you tried to switch cities?

No, because, the police of Denizli are so sensitive about this. I wanted to change my city to Yalova, near Istanbul. It's smaller than Denizli. If I go to Yalova I should be living in Istanbul, but it's hard to go there, because for Istanbul I should have medical problems, or to find a job with someone who hasn't found anyone else with my abilities, and they write the paper that I give to the police, saying, "I searched a lot and we didn't find anyone else with these abilities. We need to hire this person. Maybe, 50/50 the police lets me move from Denizli to Istanbul. But in my situation right now, it's so risky, because this movement needs a lot of movement.

In Denizli maybe we earn money daily, because there aren't fixed jobs. We think, "Okay, I should earn money for this week only." Not more than one month. You should be so lucky to find a job with a monthly payment, something like that. After four years, as I'm waiting for my visa and all of my process to finish, now to change my city like this is so risky.

If I come back to the time of two years ago, or three years ago, yes maybe I could do that, because in Istanbul there's a lot of work for me, painting on the wall, photography. But in Denizli there are no such jobs. There is only one gallery for government exhibitions. They don't have knowledge about art.

Do refugees in Yalova need permission to come to Istanbul?

They can [leave without permission], but in this last year, after the bombing attack in Istanbul two years ago, the police were more sensitive about refugee people. They started making more security. One of my friends was living in Yalova with a house in Istanbul and he told me that when he tried to take a boat back home there was some police checking the way. They asked, "Who are you?" And they took his ID card. Now is so risky. Because here there is a lot of pressure. This is enough for us. We're thinking, "What happened to my life?"

Have you seen the QueerFest in Denizli over the years?

Last year, they came to Denizli.

You saw it in Denizli first?

Yes. This is my first time in QueerFest in Istanbul. A month ago I was in the “Istanbul art show” at Hilton Hotel. I joined the exhibition as a photographer. It was such a good experience for me. One year before that I was in the “Sınırsız” [Boundary / Less] exhibition at Kiraathane, for gay pride.

I showed the forbidden pictures from Iran, when I took a lot of queer art of myself, as a self-portrait and it was forbidden in Iran. I was stressed to upload it in my accounts. I showed these in three exhibitions [in Turkey]. The first one was in Denizli. You can see them on my Instagram [@makhism].

When was the first time you came to Istanbul from Denizli?

I came the second year I was in Turkey, to visit my family. After that I haven't visited them, because my mother's passport is expired, and my father hasn't signed to let her see me. I did not see her for two years.



Now, you're waiting for the UNHCR to resolve your case?

Now, I'm just waiting for my medical insurance, because it's expired. After eight months it expires. When I last took out medical insurance two years ago, they told me that I would be in the US between two weeks and two months. And they didn't give me a ticket. My depression started in those times, two years ago when Trump came.

Do you know, you pack all of your stuff. I was waiting, waiting for my flight. You can't make plans for your future in Turkey. You can't buy anything. For two years I feel like this if I want to go somewhere, or start working somewhere. For example, I lost a great job because of my situation. I told them, "I'm waiting for my flight." They told me, "What is your situation in Turkey?" I tried to tell them the truth. I said, "I'm waiting for my flight for two years. I don't know when." They said, "Okay, if we hire you, it's too risky for us, maybe next week you should go. What would we do?"

All of my roots have dried. For two years, I'm just trying to live in the moment without any plans for the future. I try to talk to myself, saying, "Okay, just catch the moment. Don't make a plan for yourself, because there isn't..."

So, at anytime you could be contacted to receive your ticket?

Yes, maybe this week. I don't know exactly. I called UNHCR to ask, "Please give me a time? Give me a time to plan my life. I should know, I'm human. I should know about my future. Okay, if you don't want me to go to America, for how many years should I stay waiting, waiting?"

I lost one of my relationships because of this situation. I was falling in love deeply and so happy about this feeling. And when we started to make a plan to live, he told me, "You don't know about your future. Maybe next week you will go. I can't have a relationship with you. It's better to cut it with you." What he said was true. I left my family. I'm such a relationship person. I can't meet guys one by one to have a connection. I prefer to have one person in my life. I said, "Okay, you should change your life because of this situation."

Is there a film, or event, at QueerFest that you're looking forward to?

I'm making a documentary. It's good for me. Two Iranian refugees, [including] a transsexual person, are introducing the festival. I tried to make a movie with them, coming out of Denizli, and returning exactly to the permitted time. And the name of the documentary is "Izin". It's the name of the permission [policy] in Turkey. In Turkish, it's "Izin" [which literally means permit in English]. You should come out and come back again to the jail.

I borrowed this [camera] because I don't have a camera to make a movie. This is a go pro and there isn't any LCD. I just take a movie and it's maybe shaking. [Laughs]. I should edit it well.

Are you following specific individuals for the documentary narrative?

Yes, my four friends, when we come out and we go back. Not at the police office, because it's forbidden to make a movie [there]. When I received this [camera], it was two hours before our flight to Istanbul. The manager of the festival sent it to me. I chose three of my friends for the festival and asked them to permit us, that we're coming with them to make a documentary, and take some pictures for your events. They accepted. I hope it becomes a queer movie for the next QueerFest, about the [satellite city] situation.

Do you know, when you are in jail, the owner of the jail gives you food, a place to sleep, and you don't need money. But [in a satellite city] you are in jail and you should work without permission, and if you don't work you don't have money. You can't leave the jail. This is such a bad situation.

When you request to leave the city, how long does it take for them to respond and process your permission?

When they see your schedule, for example this festival wants us for five days. So they add one day for going, one day for returning on the permission. It's for seven days. At the airport they see our "izin" [permit]. "Okay, where is your izin? Okay, you can go." Our ID card for Turkey doesn't work in this moment. They are writing

on the back of our ID card that it is only valid in Denizli. It's not for other cities. You should attach the [permission] paper.

It takes a day just for this [izin, permission slip]. We go to the police office at 5AM, and stand in line. At 8AM the office is open. We receive a number. We return at 10AM. They receive our documents and papers. They tell us, "Go and wait for your 'izin'." This time, we received it before 12PM. We were shocked at how quick it was. Before, we waited till 6PM. For a whole day [at a time] we waited for a piece of paper. There are a lot of Syrian and Afghan families.

After four years, I was telling one of my friends, I'm waiting for the day when I can get rid of this refugee thinking. What is life without this feeling? Is it peaceful or not? Is it kind or not? I am just waiting for this feeling. What will happen to me? For example, the day after tomorrow we should come back to Denizli. Everything comes back again, the dark side of the people, the depression. When we came to Istanbul it's like bringing children to kindergarten or Luna Park [laughs].

How many times have you left Denizli?

I left Denizli three times for exhibitions; two times for ICMC [International Catholic Migration Commission], interviewing for the embassy of America, one time for medical [issues], one time for visiting my family. Only seven times have I come to Istanbul in four years. And every time I have to get permission.

How many Iranians do you think are in Denizli?

Maybe 5,000, or more.

How many came to the festival from Denizli?

Just five of us. Shaya, Fahrیمان, Mouna, Artin and I.

I was talking to a young woman from Kabul and she told me of how people from Iran come overland to Turkey.

Yes, most of the Persian people, Iranian people, come without passports, walking, without permission, by the mountains. Two of my friends came out of Iran like this.

How do you feel to be in a similar situation with Syrian people, and with Afghan people? Afghan people speak a language similar to Persian, yes?

Yes, we can understand [Afghans], but they speak like the older Persian. Actually, they speak right Persian. They speak a Parsi and Urdu mixture. After a time, the Farsi language became modern, and received a lot of words from French and English, but when Afghan people speak in front of us we can recognize what they say. There are a lot of the same words.

Do you have feelings about the fact that Syrians are able to move around within Turkey, but everyone else seeking asylum in the country is not?

There is a bad feeling. Syrian families receive money from the Turkish government, for each person. It is maybe more than 700 liras each month. The government of Turkey gives them money. But they don't give any money, not one lira to the Iranian people. And most Turkish people think that we receive the money too. They look at us like this. I answered for Turkish people several times. They ask, "You came here and receive the money from our government. You receive our money. Why did you come here?" I said, "Sorry, we didn't receive even one lira."

The only thing the government gives us is a 30% discount for medical insurance, but we should pay for it. There isn't anything else. We don't have permission to work. We don't have permission to go out of our city. Iranian people have parties every weekend. You can see a lot of party events in Denizli made by Iranian people. But you can't see one party for Afghan people, or Syrian people. There's a lot of Persian nights in our city. The Turkish people look at us like this, that we have fun, we don't have problems.

But don't you know this is the style of Persians. They earn money to spend it for fun to make themselves happy. When you see the Persian, Afghan and Syrian, you can recognize which one is Persian, but it's only by appearance because maybe that

Persian person doesn't have a home, no ceiling over their head or food. But they try to keep their appearance well. This is a problem, how the Turkish people judge us. The Persian people in my city rent a car and go on vacation. They are refugees, they go without permission. They think the luxury living is so important. Every week, they have pictures [laughs]. I'm not into this style but I see it a lot.

Do you see African refugees as well in Denizli?

Not so much. There are some African university students in Denizli, but most of them are in Istanbul.

When the festival goes to Denizli, does it change the community atmosphere? Do many people go?

Only LGBTI+ people come, maybe from Turkey, and of Denizli. It's so small. It's three days. They rent a cinema salon, or event salon.

As you say, there are some 5,000 Iranian refugees in Denizli, and there are many issues besides LGBTI+ that have caused them to leave Iran.

Yes, there are religious refugees, political refugees. We have a lot of LGBTI+ in Turkey, but they hide themselves. They didn't come out to the community. You can't see all of them at these events. They hide themselves. You don't know who is a refugee. I have a lot of LGBTI+ friends in Denizli, but we don't know most of them because of the security issues. They hide.

My understanding of LGBTI+ issues in Iran is that the government can execute homosexual people by law. How much was that a part of your case for asylum? You left because of family issues not because of government issues? Is there a connection?

The government doesn't accept us. There is a rule in Iran, in Islam, if you two or three adult persons see you in the act of [gay] sex they can go to a lawyer and say they had sex together and after that, when the lawyer accepts it, they can kill you. They can punish you with a whip. This is forbidden, completely forbidden.

We don't have any rights as LGBTI+ in Iran, they can do anything to us, maybe we go to jail, because they don't accept us. I didn't promote my artworks as queer art. When I started taking pictures as queer art, I didn't know anything about queer art, but I did it. After a time, I saw that there are a lot of people doing it this way. I was shocked and afraid of the government. If the government told me, "Why you take this?" What should I do?

The basic thing is we are afraid of the government. When you have a problem with your family you can't have a good relationship with the government. I can't rent a house by myself in Iran, because no one would rent me a house, because I'm a single boy. Maybe if I have a lot of money to just give to the owner, extra money, two times more, maybe like this. But if you want to have a single home, they ask, "What do you do in your home?" This is our culture.

Are you planning more exhibitions with your photos?

Here, I don't have [plans]. I just promote all of my artworks from Iran. I just give them to exhibitions to show them. I don't give new ones, because I don't have resources here. And it's not reasonable for me to buy them just for shooting. This is the reason I don't have any new collections. But I'm trying to paint. Maybe I'll join as a painter in the next [exhibition]. But you know to create art needs a clear mind. Now, if I'm painting, all of my painting goes into a deep depression, dark side, and maybe no one wants to buy my painting, because it's so dark. First of all, I really need a clear mind. And after that, create something.



Political Scientist V. Probkin on Media in Russian, Turkish, English



Vasiliy Probkin is a political scientist in Ankara. He is a “Polyglot”, which, at Fictive means a reader of three or more languages. He was educated in Russian, his mother tongue and grew up in Ankara, where he became fluent in Turkish, and, as a global citizen, English.

While facing potential statelessness in the process of attaining Turkish citizenship, an ordeal that his parents suffered as immigrants in Turkey from the USSR, he refers to Hannah Arendt, who said, to paraphrase, that to simply be human, stripped of national citizenship, is to have no human rights.

Probkin spoke with FictiveMag.com about the existence and suppression of independent voices in the state-run Russian and Turkish media landscapes in contrast with the English-language international press, where freedom of expression, while valued, is

drowned under biased content-saturation under the sways of capitalist consumerism and majoritarian populism.

Avoiding the generalization of language as indicative of its home nation's politics, he explains why it is crucial to focus on culture more than language when discussing inconsistencies in purportedly objective media coverage across various linguistic perspectives, emphasizing how media literacy requires an understanding of audience, despite linguistic, etymological veils.

There are finer political and cultural nuances to the Russian, Turkish, and English languages than that expressed by their respective news media. Probkin compared specific media coverages across these three language barriers, with special consideration to such newsworthy literary figures as Jamal Khashoggi, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and Orhan Pamuk with Istanbul as a constant theme in the background.

Let's start with the Russian media landscape. For example, as I am a unilingual reader of English, how would you contextualize Russia Today, or other English-language Russian media, in terms of cultural or linguistic bias?

Russia Today doesn't address Russians. *Russia Today* addresses the Western world. I read outlets that are read by Russians in Russia. When you punch in Istanbul as a keyword [into Russian outlets produced for Russians in Russia], you get a few things. I saw a few articles on Orhan Pamuk. The Khashoggi case, for example, reflects discrepancies in coverage from Russian, Turkish and English sources.

I recently read pieces about Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn [following the 100th year anniversary of his birth on December 11, 2018], and [the Soviet dissident] Lyudmila Alexeyeva by Masha Gessen, who I follow. She's an interesting investigative journalist. Looking at what is said about Lyudmila is interesting because she's a prominent human rights activist in Russia, and in the Western world she has symbolic value because she opposed the communist regime. I did a search on her

in the Turkish media. I haven't found a single thing, which is interesting because a few days ago [December 10] was the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I'm not seeing any sources or reviews on cultural products that come up in both the Russian and Turkish media. I'm sure that there wouldn't be a problem finding things in the English media that overlap in the Russian and Turkish media, but it's hard to find the three of them overlapping.

There is a general conversation to be had about language and media considering Russian, Turkish and English-language perspectives without necessarily requiring more research than to reflect on the daily consumption of media in these three languages.

When I read I have an aesthetic eye for language. I follow Masha Gessen in the *The New Yorker* as well and I notice how the editorial language is very different from *The New York Times*, for example. Language is one thing, coverage another. How might you compare the cultures of harsh, intensive state-run media infrastructures as they exist in Russia and Turkey with that of English-language media sources from England or America?

In our age, when most have access to independent, English-language media sources online, state-run Russian and Turkish media sources are only occupying a slice of the media landscape, but how effective is this in the context of a global readership of Western media? It does make a difference, of course, I imagine, as truly independent, native media sources are invaluable in Russia and Turkey.

Russia and Turkey are similar because the state has a monopoly over the media. What that does is it raises the value of spoken words. Criticizing the state has much more value. Because the media and the freedom of opinion, of expression, is repressed in Russia and Turkey, those words or ideas that make their way through this repression, this wall, this barrier, they have a lot of value.

Those who are prepared to listen, and who seek these opinions, this criticism, they listen. They ask questions and when they stumble on these ideas, they take it as an answer. That tends to resonate. You have this sort of double dynamic. On the one hand, the ideas are repressed, so they are not present in the media landscape, but at the same time that makes the ideas that do make it into the landscape much more valuable than they would have been.

In an open society, in American media, anyone can say anything, but anything can be lost or drowned in that sea of ideas and opinions. In one way, by establishing or attaining a good degree of freedom of expression, some ideas might get lost. People might not pay attention. In a sense that's one way of censoring opinions and ideas.

I was reading Nabokov's lectures on Russian literature delivered in English when he was in the U.S., he was making this distinction between positive censorship and negative censorship. Negative censorship tells you what not to write. It basically says that you can't write about this, so nobody writes about it.

If you can't write about human rights, or of the human rights activist Lyudmila, for example, then there's a message or signal that goes through the state-run media that you shouldn't speak of this figure, and journalists won't speak of it. That's negative censorship. But there's also positive censorship, when journalists are told what to write.

That throws me off, the wording, "positive censorship".

They tell you what to say. They give you content.

I understand, like in Russian news agencies, which selectively republishes, and reposts content.

Yes, or more generally, when the authority projects a particular substance that is to be mediated to the population. When that happens there are certain things that get published and republished and certain things that don't. Silence is significant there. In the Khashoggi case the first thing that comes to my mind is geopolitics. You'll see all of the state-run media outlets [in Russia] covering it but doing it in

such a way so as not to block channels of possible political and economic interaction with Saudi Arabia. They present it in such a light that does not speak of it as a terrible murder by an authoritarian regime that goes unchallenged, but rather it's pushed in a light that enables the portrayal of Russian-Saudi relations in the future positively.

In Turkey, it's a bit different because here, Turkey is pushing for regional leadership. And given its position, one of the ways of doing that is to make reference to values that are dominant in the west. Suddenly there is criticism of the murder of Khashoggi, but this criticism is inconsistent. I think there are 73 journalists jailed in Turkey and in total in the world I think there are 290 journalists jailed, something along those lines*. In order to be consistent with this criticism, it needs to be applied to all cases of violence. In Russia, on the other hand, there is much less ground for such criticism by the state. But these are the outer layers, the obvious geopolitical dynamics.

I am more interested in the contrast in between the lines, between the multiple takes. You get that when you look at the assumptions in the coverage. There it gets trickier.

[*The latest report by the Committee to Protect Journalists, published Dec. 13, 2018, has found that there are at least 251 journalists in the world currently jailed in relation to their work, and that Turkey is the worst jailer, imprisoning at least 68 journalists.]

At the website of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, an article published in 2014 listed 20 Russian news outlets that would likely be shut down by the prevailing regime. How accurate was this analysis?

The first one on the list, *Ekho Moskvy*, the “Echo of Moscow”, will never be axed. That's a station that I listen to everyday. Like I said, this is one of those places where [independent] ideas make their way to the people who are listening. However, there is an interesting thing. *Ekho Moskvy* is one of the central [Russian] radio stations, obviously it's located in Moscow. It's considered to be the voice of the opposition. At the same time, it features other voices. They have this claim to

objectivity, but 60 to 70 percent of this station is owned by Gazprom, which is the state oil company. You could question how independent it might be, but such questioning needs to proceed carefully, keeping in mind the contextual dynamics.

We live in a world where values like freedom of expression have a lot of weight. Russia is situated in this globalized world. It has to move within it. When Russia, rightly so, gets criticized for repressing opinions especially those of the opposition, what the state can do here is point at this radio station, *Ekho Moskvy* and say [to the West], 'You speak of us repressing freedom of expression but we have this channel here which can speak all at once'. It's sort of used as a way of legitimating the regime. It goes way beyond the regime, because you have to consider the people there. The way that these things are framed is there's an authoritarian regime, there's Putin, and him and his cronies are repressing the Russian nation, the Russian people and if there were free elections things would be very different, he would go and things would be well. But it goes much deeper than that. What if people don't want to listen, right?

It comes to this issue of dialogue, or lack of it. You can see the same thing in Turkey. People don't talk to each other. They don't have conversations in which they express different views that might oppose each other. They don't talk these things out. If you don't agree with someone you go to your own corner and you sit there and you think with those who are like-minded, who think like you. I don't live in Russia. These are the observations I've made here in Turkey but in Russia it's likely similar.

Also, one thing that I was noticing, which supports what I just said. One day I was listening to *Ekho Moskvy* and there was this program. They were doing a survey. The people were invited to call this station, to share their opinion on the nature of American and Russian relations. This one caller said that Russians are much better because they have a soul, and Americans don't. He was talking about it in terms of degree, that Russians have more soul, and Americans they don't, or they have less. When you start framing it like that, in a moral, or even theological framework, there's no possibility of you having a conversation with the other side.

Who said that exactly?

It was a random caller who happened to be listening to the program. He called the program in order to share his opinion, his view.

That's interesting when you think of the relationship between religion and politics and how that creates an authoritarian, fundamentalist, extreme right, and how that culture thrives on ignorance, and then, at the same time, how it feeds into the capture of the press by the state, and how that functions in the US or the UK, where there very much is that political-religious complex in power but the media plays its role.

How do we compare English-language, Western media versus that produced in Russian and Turkish? The latter two are a different ballgame so to speak. As a reader of all three, how much do you depend on the independence of voices in the English language versus what would be known by the local, national perspectives in Russian and Turkish?

I depend on them quite a bit when it comes to understanding the changing relationship between state and society. One of the main tasks of the media is to bring to light constantly emerging issues in society, and it is the task of the government to act upon the developments. I think that it is safe to say that the Western media is in the position of carrying out that task, although it seems to be increasingly difficult for it to withstand the pressure of big business that attempts to reproduce a state of affairs that is favourable to its existence, and the market that demands a spectacle instead of a continuous and consistent coverage of pressing issues.

In Russia and Turkey the main threat to independent media comes from the partisan authority with concentrated and centralised power in the state organs that increasingly permeates the fabric of the society. *Novaya gazeta* is one of the alternative media outlets in Russia. So is *Gazete Duvar* or *Diken* in Turkey. I follow them daily. They are significant because they bring relevant and pressing issues to light. To think of these issues is already to begin acting upon them. So naturally, I depend on them all the more as I try to stay in touch with the social realities.

But in being dependent on the independence of a given media outlet in a given country, it is important to know exactly what the outlet is relatively independent from.

When we read into news pieces written by individuals, original content in other words, on the same themes, such as a topic in *Novaya gazeta*, *Hurriyet*, and the *Washington Post*, for example, there are clear biases considering how people act within their first languages, their national perspectives.

Khashoggi's final column was expressly about press freedom. But in the Russian and Turkish media, his voice is co-opted. It's not about press freedom in Russian and Turkish media. It's about politics with Saudi Arabia, serving justice to the killers, etc. Whereas in Western media it's practically a press freedom campaign. It could also be advantageous to critique the Russian, English and Turkish content published by Turkey's pro-government, national newspaper *Sabah*.

The New Times is an opposition channel [in Russia]. It recently got a fine of 22 million rubles [320,000 USD, for failing to notify authorities on time of receiving foreign funding], which it's dealing with right now. They had to close down the agency, but the internet version is working and they are active.

I saw an article about [Aleksandr] Solzhenitsyn by a columnist who I really enjoy reading, Andrey Vladimirovich Kolesnikov. The article is titled, "Who is Mr. Solzhenitsyn?". It is important to look at the way that these different countries remember Solzhenitsyn. This article [by Kolesnikov] is perfect for that. From here we get the perspective of the current Russian view of Solzhenitsyn, who is himself a figure of anti-authoritarian protest. From here we get an idea of how the opposition in Russia positions itself historically.

And then, for example, if you look at an article that was written by a Turkish columnist knowing the audience they're writing for, we see a manifestation of this opposition spirit in Turkey. Although I don't think that we can speak of a single consistent opposition here. We have to take into account the different ways that

figures symbolising the opposition spirit are remembered in different countries, by writers of different dispositions.

Talking again about discrepancies in Turkish, Russian and English-language media, basic, topical keywords shared by these three linguistic perspectives would revolve around the Khashoggi case, perhaps Orhan Pamuk and his literature, or Istanbul as a city in general.

It's not as simple as to say that Russians see it like that, or Turkish see it like that, because Russians themselves are not homogenous, or Turks, or anyone. You also need to give the background of who is involved, and who the audience is in these countries.

As a reader of English-language media exclusively, what I want to better apprehend is the multilingual culture in which we live, and an appreciation for not only people who read in multiple languages, but for these languages themselves with respect to something that we can express as a quality, or character of them and their cultures, even in dry news writing.

I pay a lot of attention to etymology. It's an important aspect to understanding people from a different culture, and how they came to where they are. Looking into etymology gives you clues as to the narratives behind how people came to think the way they think. When it comes to these things, I don't have a comprehensive view, or a comprehensive framework. I just usually catch these little details.

One of them is the word *yabancı* in Turkish. When you translate it into English, it gives you the word "foreigner". But if you look at the word, *yabancı*, it derives from *yaban*, and if you translate *yaban* into English through a dictionary it will give you the word, "wilderness". If it's an adjective it will be, "wild". In that sense, *yabancı* is not a foreigner, but a savage. This can be read as a reference to an antagonism of civilisations. The foreigner is a savage. These are the little things I'm talking about.

For the 16th Istanbul Biennial, the curator, Nicolas Bourriaud, wanted people to reclaim the concept of the savage, by reimagining the role of the artists as that of a savage, or the individualist as the savage. His concept is based on the exoticism of the other in a postmodern worldview in which each person lives in and originates from their own estranged, hyper-contemporary social reality. And currently in Istanbul, the Sakıp Sabancı Museum is exhibiting a show dedicated to the Russian Avant-garde. This is a historic exhibition for Istanbul. It features writers of art theory, such as Vladimir Tatlin. Are you aware of the work of Tatlin?

Of course, [Vladimir] Tatlin, of the famous Tatlin tower that was never built, the symbol of the Third International

I wonder, how accurate is Google translate with Russian?

It's good. I was just reading an article by the political analyst Ian Bremmer [president of the Eurasia Group]. It's a very short article, "Why You Should Learn Cultures, Not Languages", in which he was making the point that in about ten years, Google translate will become so good that you will not need an interpreter, or a translator anymore. Google translate is really good.

Bremmer has a point but he doesn't say directly how people should talk to each other, how to communicate with people who are different from them, because there is this dynamic in our contemporary world.

Technology is advancing in such a way that the distance between people is much shorter. We see all of these different people on a daily basis, but we don't know how to talk to these differences. There's a physical proximity at the expense of a dialogue with that which is not known, which is the point of a dialogue, to know the other.

It's important to think critically and start dialogues about the relationship between multilingualism and globalized media, especially for people like me who don't necessarily see through the cultural veil because I'm not literate in more than one language. It doesn't come

natural to me to prioritize the importance of culture and audience over language, for example.

We tend to paint these broad pictures based on the identity of a language group, or a national group. I think that's why I wanted to focus on language more than nationalism per say. Even a Russian language journal in America, or England or anywhere in the world, or in Turkish anywhere in the world would provide some insight.

Snob.ru is a good website, and *Republic.ru* has really interesting articles, but you have to pay a 71 USD [about 4,880 rubles] subscription fee to read their articles, which is expensive especially if you have to convert it to Turkish liras. Given the fact that piracy is something that thrives in Russia, I would think that I wouldn't have such a hard time reading these articles. Sometimes there are shared accounts. Snob and Republic are a couple of [Russian] outlets that show the extent to which there is a production of knowledge independent of the state in Russia. A similar thing is happening in Turkey with *Bianet.org* and *Gazete Duvar*.

Novaya gazeta is a very good outlet in terms of content quality. There is one literary critic there who I follow, Dmitry Bykov, who, in October of 2017, was interviewed in the *LA Review of Books*. He frequently writes in the opinion section [of *Novaya gazeta*]. He's at the intersection of politics and culture. He sometimes writes these satirical poems that criticize not just the regime but the current state of affairs in general, what's wrong with the society. He does it in a very smart way.

Bykov is also a columnist [at *Novaya gazeta*]. The other day I read an article of his in Russian that was talking about Harry Potter, and how Harry Potter constitutes a narrative that grasps the transhistorical aspect of existence, of how things play out. He was talking about it as a narrative that parallels the Bible.

I wonder how the Turkish media is talking about this history of the Russian avant-garde in the context of this exhibition, and how this history is also written about in Russian media today, compared with how related topics are covered in Western English-language sources in the UK and US for example.

I was thinking of tying all of these points together through the topic of the avant-garde. Here we speak of dreaming of the future, thinking of an alternative. An alternative has this progressive context, a progressive notion attached to it. Conservatives would not dream of the future, they would be happy where they are or where they used to be.

Last year was the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. In that context, the avant-garde was widely discussed. The question is how these different countries and the different segments within them, through their respective languages, approach the idea of change (or lack of it).

I wonder how Turkish critics and audiences of this exhibition understand, or have understood that this was a defining impetus for the progenitors of the Russian avant-garde. What word did you use? Approaching the idea of freedom, liberation?

None of those words, but it's interesting how those were the associations you made in your mind. It was about change, the idea of political change.

I immediately jumped to typical globalized, American political slogans.

Freedom, liberation... [laughs]. That's an interesting point, because everyone speaks of freedom, but there are different kinds of content attached to that word. There's an interesting conception by Michael Freeden, a political theorist. He has this conception called "decontestation" of something, which basically means rendering something uncontested, universalizing a particular definition of a word that can otherwise have other definitions.

That might bring us back to etymology, to appreciate more progressive, pluralistic interpretations of geopolitics and international culture through an appreciation of multilingual literacy.



Istanbul, and the Early Signs You Should Get a Divorce

by Hana Korneti



Opi is now nearing her 83rd birthday. She wasn't always 82. I remember her 70s and 60s, and I have heard a great deal about the preceding decades of her life. When I asked her if she had been to Istanbul at any point of her travels, she said no, and then yes!, oh, it was awful.

I sat next to her bed. She doesn't get out of it much on these cold days. Her head was poking out of a pile of blankets like an

aged dandelion from a small, colourful mound of earth. She can't write anymore, and has a tough time holding books as well, her fingers turned to stubs, can't do anything with these things anymore. I suggested that it must be the blood pressure, or zinc, or something. She showed me some leg exercises. She asked for peach compote. She ate it alongside vegetable rice.

Her eating habits have always stunned me. Her cooking habits do that to me, as well. She'll make the best stew (by accident, she'd claim), and then serve a dessert which also happens to contain a ridiculous ingredient like peppers, because she didn't know what else to do with them. That's why I developed this new technique when visiting over the years. She'd ask are you hungry? And I'd say, oh no, just ate,

why, whatchu got? And then I'd decide, pressure-free and on the pretense of being full, whether I'm going to brave through what's offered or not.

She started telling me about Istanbul. I am not able to give a fully faithful reconstruction, because she went off on a lot of tangents, about people (and it didn't help that she has friends and family all over the Balkans), places, adjacent memories...

She had told me, anyway, that she lost interest in reading and television and conversations. She likes to dwell on the past, and reevaluate her life, situations, choices. I got a taste of that during these recollections. Still, where pertaining to the story, I will try to follow her train of thought as much as I can. It skips around chronologically, as stories that have transcended time and become bubbles of memory often do. The names are altered to preserve the privacy of any remaining descendants.

We were with Stanisha, his wife Nada, and their daughter, maybe? Was she born then...? No, she wasn't, and Lukash, of course. He

had stolen my identification card, I didn't want to take a credit from the earthquake. Lukash was Opi's ex-husband. In 1963, there was an earthquake in Skopje. Opi and Lukash had been living in Tetovo from 1960 to 1965, so they didn't suffer any damages from the earthquake. However, she was registered on her ID as a resident of Skopje. Following the earthquake, residents of Skopje could apply for grants from the government for repairs. We didn't suffer any damages, I didn't want to take the free credit. He couldn't convince her to do it, so he stole her ID to apply for a grant and buy a Škoda.



Somehow, he managed to get the credit and buy the car. It was about the time that they also decided to move back to Skopje. Lukash had been wanting to move, although the Tetovo courthouse that Opi worked at as a judge was sad to see her go. She had just finished initiating a large donation from the Tetovo courthouse employees for earthquake repairs (we all agreed to donate unanimously, but they badmouthed me afterwards, ha ha). Lukash wanted an executive position as a director, and his friends in Skopje had found him a job per those requirements.

He had been a very crafty man. For instance, although he had spent the entire month that he was drafted in the partisans ill and bed-ridden, he still managed to reap all the benefits of being in the army, such as getting an apartment, a job, and all the approving societal nods and flirty smiles that come with liberating a land from the Axis powers (specifically, German Nazis and Bulgarian fascists).

Once they were back in Skopje, Opi received a court summons for unrightfully claiming an earthquake grant. At the same time, she was invited to work in the Ministry of Justice. She had told them that there was a lawsuit against her, but they said, who doesn't. So she went to the courthouse and told the officials, I am registered on my ID as a Skopje resident, so technically there was no legal breach. However, I harmed justice and the integrity of my duty as a ministry lawyer: it was not a legal but a moral mistake, I took a credit without suffering damages. She didn't tell them about Lukash (no use, and besides, I could have stood up to him more vigorously!), and asked for the strictest punishment. The officials laughed bewildered, scratched their heads, now there's something we've never heard before, reaffirmed that there was no legal breach, and bid her farewell.

So anyway – the Škoda (which was itself feeling uneasy about the circumstances of its purchase) is how they got to Istanbul in 1964. Lukash, always on the lookout for a lucrative opportunity, had heard that black pepper and tea were all the rage in Turkey. Him and Stanisha, his friend, packed bags this big, she shows me with arms spread wide open, of tea and black pepper in the trunk of the car, and took their wives on a “holiday” to Istanbul.



The car was stopped at the Greek border, where customs officers asked the young couples if they had any goods to report. Lukash and Stanisha claimed there was nothing. I'm assuming that customs officers from all over the world recognize something in the temper of hardened technically-not-but-probably-crooks like Lukash, because one raised eyebrow later, they were looking at the huge bags in the trunk.

The customs control asked is this nothing? But to balance things out, I'm also assuming that it's within the temper of hardened technically-not-but-probably-crooks like

Lukash to weasel out of situations just like this one. It's all about mutual evolution.

That's how Lukash convinced them that they were going to sell the stuff in Turkey, not Greece, would never do that, so the customs officers only sealed the bags, and gave them a piece of advice – if you have any trouble at the Turkish border, just give some tea to their customs officers. And so they did – by bribing the Turkish

custom officers with some black tea, they managed to arrive in Istanbul right on schedule.

Their plan was to camp on the beach in Istanbul (that's as specific as my Opi cared to be). At the camp, Opi found many friends from Macedonia – a director of a Tetovo textile factory, childhood friends, and this resulted in detailed accounts of each of their individual backgrounds several generations back and also laterally (from whence they came and also who they didn't speak to for 15 years on account of unfairly divided inheritance/ideological spouts/ whose farmland the fence is wronging, etc.) which I will omit, for everyone's sake.

They informed her that swimming was advised against, for it had been one of those periods where the sea was under the rule of a certain wind, and as anyone who has lived in Istanbul knows, some local folk love to attribute everything that goes wrong – from illness to heartbreak – to Lodos, the northern wind. I sometimes wonder if it isn't a shtick they do to perpetuate folklore and mysticism – but if that's the case, I appreciate it more.

Without the welcoming bosom of the sea, the four travelers were forced to do what simple landlubbers do all the time, which is to go for a walk. But the walk didn't quite have the same adrenaline appeal as swimming in uncertain waters, so the two men went to gamble to remedy the lack of excitement.

You may not be surprised to learn that Lukash was a bona fide gambler. Bona fide not so much in skill as in sheer determination. As in, he'll gamble until he loses his money, his wife's money, and maybe even his opponent's money in an absurd twist of fate which occurs only when someone happens to be a financial black hole who stubbornly gambles nonetheless. Nada, Stanisha's wife, decided to join them because she thought she could walk around while they gamble. Opi stayed in the camp to sunbathe, plant her toes in the sand, and spend time with her friends.

The afternoon passed, evening came, the night grew dark. The three of them hadn't come back, and Opi was all alone, beginning to worry. And being all alone in the tent was disturbing, too. Where were they, I wondered, and I was still young, relatively, I was twenty-eight, and we married when I was twenty-six. They did not

come back that night, and she told her friends at the camp, who were going back to Skopje the next morning, take me with you.

They did the same in Thessaloniki, you know. We spent one night in Thessaloniki on our way to Istanbul. Lukash and Stanisha found gamblers at the hotel where we stayed; they spent the whole night with them. I went to visit relatives in the city, came back to the hotel room angry, but there was nothing I could do.



The gamblers and their unwitting “hostage” came back early in the morning at the campsite. Nada had suffered the night worse than Opi did – Lukash and Stanisha had locked her in the car outside the casino and left her there alone the entire night. Vagabonds rocked the car and pounded on it on several occasions. Nada got the worst deal that night. After screaming at Lukash for some time, Opi told him that she is going back to Skopje with her friends. He told her go, but we will never see each other again.

At this point, Opi stopped and looked at my contorted expression. She looked a little guilty but at peace with her decision. I knew that no good could come out of that marriage (she actually said “I won’t see any hayir out of it,” using the word “hayir,” an Ottoman word that survived in modern day Macedonian, and means prosperity and fortune), but I wasn’t ready for a separation. She had decided to stay in Istanbul with her husband. It wasn’t until I found out that he is spending our money on other women that I left. We got divorced an entire thirteen years into the marriage. It was ‘75- or was it ‘76? I was forty. Haven’t I told you about our first New Year’s Eve?

The interjection that followed was basically a variation of the theme that crept into countless retellings of episodes belonging to her married life, except in a modified setting. A group of couples went to a mountain resort to celebrate New Year’s Eve. The women thought they would dance the night away. The men had other plans. They locked their wives and girlfriends up in a room and gambled the night away instead.

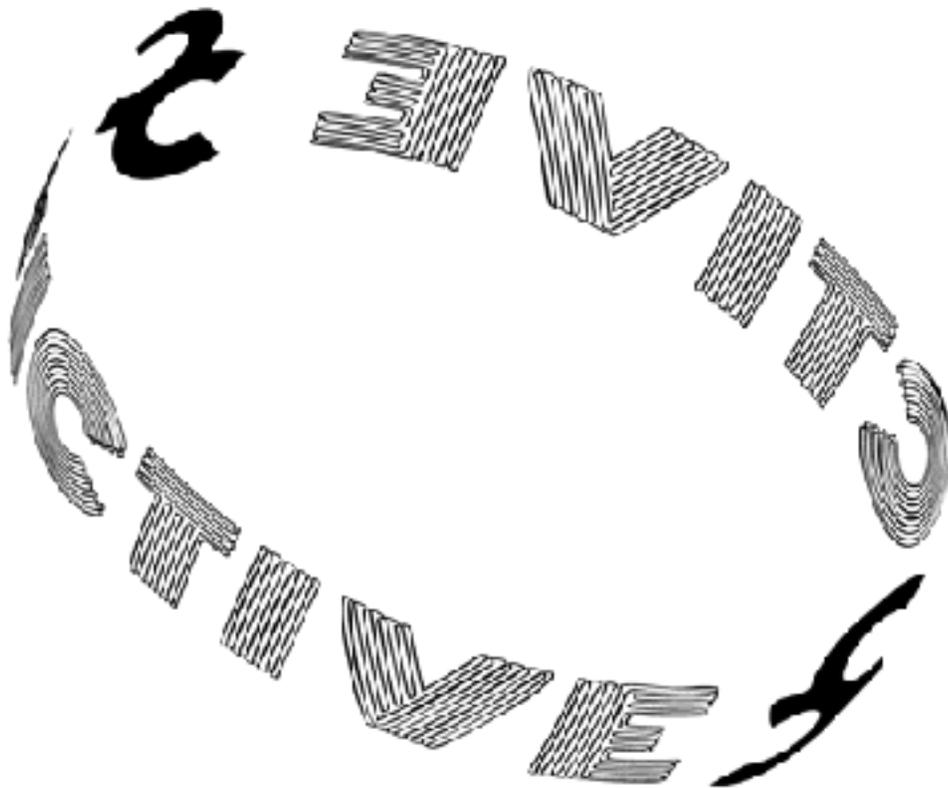
They stayed in Istanbul for a week. The wind lasts when it takes hold, we couldn’t swim at all, waves, you know. Opi’s classmates from Kochani (a Macedonian city famous for producing delicious rice) found out she was in Istanbul, and she was thrilled at the opportunity to see them – Meliha, Cezmi, and Ali. She spent the week sunbathing; they saw Kapali Carsi, Topkapi palace, and she found even more friends in the city. Some friends, a couple, asked her to watch their daughter as they sauntered around the Carsi all together: the daughter was a high school student, a little curvy, and oftentimes prey to vendors that would pinch her bare arms.

Well, what happened with the tea and the black pepper? I asked her. They managed to do something about the tea in Istanbul, but a lot of the black pepper was left in the trunk when we were going back. We went through Bulgaria to visit my relatives, and left them some of it. I could hear the distant sound of Lukash’s heart breaking at not being able to turn a profit from that left-over black pepper. Having to gift it to not even real relatives, but in-laws. Who knows though, maybe

the relatives in Bulgaria were left scratching their heads over some missing silverware. Probably not, of course, but who knows.

Opi tells me, she has now been happily divorced for forty-three years. She sets down her emptied cup of Turkish coffee on the chair next to her bed (thank God you don't fill up only half the cup like your mother, what is that, two sips!), leans back onto her pillow, smiles at the ceiling and shakes her head.

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Lost Ruminations of a Master-Forger by Andrew Bell



Han van Meegeren was a Dutch painter who became notorious for his near-authentic forgeries of the Old Masters and Renaissance-style oil paintings. In the midst of a failing art career, he resorted to crafting forgeries, and many of his most profitable fakes were sold off as original Vermeers.

In a twist of fate, he was forced to confess to his fraud after he was charged with selling an “original” Vermeer to the Nazi Hermann Göring. A spectacular trial ensued

where van Meegeren had to prove to a Dutch court that he in fact painted the Vermeer sold to Göring by performing his forge-craft in front of court-appointed witnesses.

He succeeded, and was subsequently acquitted, saving him from the death penalty, though he was convicted of a lesser charge of fraud and sentenced to one year in prison.

Van Meegeren would die before he could serve his jail sentence, however, due to complications arising from a bacchanalian lifestyle and multiple chemical addictions.

In a recently discovered text, hidden away in the floorboards of one of the many properties he bought as his wealth accumulated and his eccentricities became debilitating, this Dutch master-forgery expresses a previously unknown infatuation with derivatives and outlines his understanding of life.

I've always been a pretty good bullshitter. And that has, I think, made me pretty good at sifting through all the bullshit to find out where the truth is. And the truth is, there's a whole lot of bullshit in this world. So walk softly and carry a long brush.



The gift of discernment comes with the burden of bullshit that weighs heavy and fucks you from angles you never knew existed. Quantum angles that are two places at once, leaving you reeling and begging for Pythagorean theorems or Newtonian apples.

I got poor marks in geometry in high school—it was by far my worst subject for some reason. Loved calculus. The idea of infinitely approaching an imagined limit seemed to mirror the exponential acceleration of bullshit we've been stepping in ever since some asshole figured out how to stick a grain-seed in

the ground, grow it, cut it, eat it and repeat until walls go up, trenches are dug, and everyone's trapped and gluttonous and shooting at each other with exploding

things and crying “My God, Not Yours!” or “Our State, Not Theirs!” But maybe the bullshit is imagined and the limit is real. It’s really pretty hard to tell.

All I can say is that you should be pretty well-versed in something in order to really understand its opposite, if there even is one. I’ve actually come to realize that most of life is just a process of approaching or falling away from certain idealized states. “Real” or “Fake”, for example, are just words that can be interpreted differently by different people in different languages in different societies.

The ideas behind the words themselves represent imagined limits, and just like on a growth curve, we do our best to plot points that are increasingly accurate approximations of how quickly we’re moving through the infinity between Three, Two, One and the imagined Zero of our ideals. Substitute Real/Fake with Love/Hate, Happy/Sad, Doubtful/Certain, or Humble/Proud—it doesn’t ultimately matter.

What I’m trying to say is that all of these dichotomies—these dichotomies that seem to represent a core binary in the human psyche—they are, at base, imaginary. What’s real is the effect they have as we plot our points ever closer, from 1 to .1 to .001 to .0001 to .00001, et cetera [1]. Yet because we believe in them, these ideals, they also actually do become real. A placebo or nocebo effect, if you will. The whole of human existence sometimes seems as paradoxical and mobius as the concept of Zero; we have created something for nothing.

The word “derivative” has always fascinated me. In mathematics, derivatives are ways of expressing how different variables relate to each other in a continuum. In the classic example of position vs. time, the first derivative of position with respect to time is speed, while the second derivative of position is acceleration.

Put differently, derivatives give us the instantaneous rate of change at a point—a point we’re trying to grasp at as things move past it at differing speeds. Derivatives help us to approximate, to account for error and project continuity. They allow us to understand a moment within an eternity, and make possible things like cruise control systems and temperature control. Nicolas Minorsky’s Proportional Integral Derivative (PID) Theory has been fundamental to the past few decades of

industrial development since he proposed it back in 1922. I believe I sold him or his son-in-law a particularly elegant and exactingly-aged Rembrandt [2].

Then there's the financial term for "derivative". In finance—an economic branch of thought which represents, to me, our collective irresponsibility and gluttony — a derivative is basically a contract between two or more parties [3]. The money value of that contract is derived from the fluctuations in an underlying asset like a commodity, a stock, a bond, or really anything else that could be perceived as valuable or impacting the value of other things. It should come as no big surprise that derivatives in finance function very similarly to how they do in mathematics; they help us to approximate, to account for error and project continuity.

Just like in PID theory, where derivatives allow for the error correction and estimation required for applications like temperature and cruise control, the financial risk of an asset can be controlled through the approximation of its value at a certain point within the fluctuating continuum of the market.

This allows for speculation, or "futures", where things can be bought and sold not for their present, fixed-point worth, but for what they may be worth. In this sense, the derivative exists as a kind of lifeline. Swim towards the abyss, intrepid investors! But know your pursuit of the unknown is anchored in a mathematically calibrated fail-safe that will crank you back from the Zero limit. There are obviously some problems that can arise from this blinding reliance on flotsam-with-rubbery-strings-attached-to-mainland-limbs-keeping-us-from-plummeting-over-the-edge-of-the-falls.

In my own "great" nation of Holland, derivatives were involved in a particularly humorous and catastrophic event involving flowers. Tulip Mania, as they've called it. In or around 1634, tulips were all the rage in Holland. Bulbs brought from Turkey, where they grew native, were selling for tens of thousands of today's dollars each [4]. Such lunacy was driven by derivative contracts that allowed investors to buy more than they could afford. Prices went up and up and up as the value of a plant was assumed to accelerate infinitely towards some inconceivable, imagined limit.

Eventually, after a few years, the bubble burst, and a single tulip bulb was effectively worthless [5]. Despite this, the mathematical and financial efficacy of the derivative maintained; the market never hit Zero, never disappeared to nothing—tulip bulbs were still worth something to someone, however insignificant the monetary amount. Life went on; the bubble reinflated elsewhere.

We then come to a more basic understanding of “derivative”, where it simply means “originating from or “influenced by”. Linguistically

speaking, the word “derivative” derives from the Latin *derivare*. Similarly, my “great” native Dutch derives from the Germanic languages, which themselves are derivatives of the more ancient Indo-European tongues that share Neolithic roots across continents. Schools of thought also derive from previous ones. There would be no Darwin without the moral philosophers like Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant and the like. And religion! Would we have Christianity without Judaism? Protestantism without Catholicism? Each new form derives from a previous, is a new point along the continuum.

In art too, we may certainly say the same. From cave walls to Egyptian tombs to Grecian urns to Romanesque to Gothic to Renaissance to the Old Masters and beyond into a surrealist / cubist future that will, I think, begin to disassemble and



dissolve into indiscernible nonsense—each preceding form is a derivative of its accumulations.

But then there is the cynical derivative, the one meaning “unoriginal” or “copied” or “tired” or “try something new, goddamnit”. This is the word that many unforgiving critics attributed to my early style as I attempted to make a name for myself as a fresh-faced adolescent recently dropped out of architecture school (to the dismay of my nagging late father) [6].

Forgive me if I’m wrong, but I feel as though there should be more regard for the history of art, for the curved acceleration towards now that’s made the present possible. It seems to me that there is a tendency now to project towards some abstract future without any real understanding of the traditions of the past.

It is in the Old Masters of Art’s recent past that I originally attempted to enunciate my craft. The realistic poses of milk maids or common workers, or the intimate windows into domestic home life imbued with the auras of daily tasks, have forever inspired me. Their presence and forthcomingness was an endless spring of life from which inspiration was continual and without pretense. There was never any need for unnecessary layers of interpretation; the mere sight of the scene was interpretation enough, as bodies flowed into setting and language became realized through posture, burden, and the spatial accommodation of Other.

One needs only to look to Vermeer for the true realization of the simple-yet-textured embodiment of this ideal. In his works rests an inescapable confrontation between oil and flesh, where an exacting



combination of pigments aligns precisely with an exacting perception of the simple, scenic act. Human plus our created nature, presented in portrait as we attempt to wrest life from the mundane.

Of course, these scenes have really only existed to me in the abstract renderings of others. Maybe this is why my critics have exhausted their vocabularies deriding my original works as tired auditions, though I would argue until my lungs bled that such auditions were entirely authentic and indicative of a sensibility that could be replicated without end in infinite iterations, without seeming to become tired, because of the inherent value of their simple and Christ-like surrenderings to the everyday struggles of our present, chained, commodified inability to free ourselves from the walls of a society we've built so soundly around our selves.

But still, I never truly realized my full potential until I understood how to tear down these walls. And that realization became housed in the fact that I could take from my own periphery the focus of the Masters' own work and promulgate it in novel ways. By forfeiting my own name and taking on that of Vermeer, as I've been able to do so successfully until this unfortunate present moment, I've been able to transcend the bounds of Art as a Form and mold it into Art as an Act. The Act here, is one of originality housed in replica. Or maybe, replica housed in originality. As the Acts have progressed, it has really been impossible to distinguish between the order of the two, which is more or less the point of the whole endeavor.

The Act itself necessitates a stage, a set, performers, a director, and, of course, an audience. Let me take you through the process, as concisely as I can, before my time runs out here and I must go and face my Boethian waltz with Providential Law. It can be difficult to differentiate between the components of this process, as they are part of an accelerating continuum that's being sucked into and from some void. But for the sake of the image, I'll do my best to plot points that create as accurate an approximation of the whole mess as possible.

First, the stage. This is a tricky one, because at first glance it would seem obvious that the stage here would be the canvas, the base of operations if you will. But if you peer deeper, it becomes obvious that in my work, the stage is really Art itself.

But then if you peer still deeper, as I have too many times, you come to realize that the stage is really the imagined limits our ideals, which I believe I alluded to earlier. These ideals—the ideal of Art, or Culture, or pornography, or humility, or brazenness, or whatever else—serve as the proving ground for the process, the raised surface in the theatre on which the Act plays out.



Then, the set. I can say here that the set consists of the materials involved in the process. The canvases, which I choose specifically for their 17th century originality. The badger hair brushes used so exquisitely by Vermeer himself. The paints, mixed to chemical precision using the same Lapis Lazulis, white leads, indigos, and

cinnabars as the Old Masters. The phenol formaldehyde hardeners and forays into the oven for baking at specific temperatures to give the works their age and craquelure. The India Ink washes to tie the aging process together in a cohesive and wholly convincing manner.

Next we come to the performers. The performers in the Act are at once the people created from the paints and the buyers and art galleries where they are housed. The first is obvious. The human bodies performing the human act, the scenic act, the mundane household act, the blessed act. Lady Playing a Lute, or Woman Reading Music, or Supper at Emmaus, or Christ with the Adulteress, or any of my other pieces; they are performing their own subtle dances. Yet the buyers and auctioneers and galleries are also dancing their own jigs, are also very much the performers in the whole god-forsaken show, twirling their judgments and upward-tilting noses and fancy galas with expensive champagnes and empty small-talk bullshit.

It would again seem obvious that the director of this whole spectacle would be yours truly, yet in my opinion, that simply isn't the case. The director, really, is History. History and Time. These two forces are the accelerants in the continuum, the bellows stoking the flames that makes the Act compelling and keeps the audience gripped.

And the audience, dear reader. The audience is Han van Meegeren! I am the one gripped to his chair arm watching the whole thing play out! I am the one towards which the whole operation is directed. I am the one most susceptible to its bluster and falls and crescendos and drama and intrigue. The one watching from the nose-bleeds, peeking around a pillar. The one in the front row sweating in anticipation or wet with the performers forcefully exhaled spittle as they dialogue.

But sadly, this whole beautiful act came to an end once it came to light that I had sold one particularly enticing Vermeer to Hermann Göring, the Nazi general now as dead as that goddamn führer himself [7]. Facing the death penalty for aiding and abetting the enemy, I was forced to confess my sins in order to take the lesser charge of forgery.

But alas! My work was too convincing! They couldn't conceive of these works as anything less than original, as anti-derivative. So I was forced to perform a final Act in the court of Law to reveal my process and prove my guilt (or innocence?). An Anti-Act. They kindly provided me with my medicine, and I now sit between sessions where state-appointed observers wait to scrutinize what I assume will be my last work, *Jesus Among the Doctors* [8].



I have no qualms about fooling the Nazis—or anyone else who bought one of my works for that matter. Göring and his ilk were fooling both themselves and their nation, with disastrous results which led to the deaths of millions and the disillusionment of millions more.

I use fooling here not lightly, but more in the sense of the linguistic derivative of “fool”, which in its Latin *follis* means “bellows” or “windbag”, with which blacksmiths of old would stoke their fires to smelt their ores into whatever murderous or useful tools were most profitable. From Latin (via the Old French *fol*), the Middle English *fool* was derived, coming to mean “empty-headed” or “full of air”.

What I mean, I suppose, is that I liken my craft to air. It's all but impossible to pinpoint because it's everywhere around us, yet in order to really understand it, we must curate its presence at fixed points by understanding its makeup, its DNA, its atomic composition.

It will take me painting in front of a crowd of onlookers in a court of Law to prove what otherwise would have passed as Real or Authentic or very-much-not-derivative. It will take scientific method and analysis of my materials and process to prove that it is not, in fact, Vermeer's or any of the other Old Masters which I've managed to create so deftly since my studies in Delft. And this realization has kept me from the gallows.

This Final Anti-Act will, for better or worse, bottle the air and shelve it in the storeroom of a lab somewhere to be forgotten.

A derivative does not discriminate, but rather exists to bring continuity to an otherwise inconceivable whole. This act may well be discriminatory within the context of one point, but in the grander scheme of things, these derivatives help quantify the unquantifiable, help us approach the unknown, assist us in realizing the arc of time and space in ways that we'd be blind to otherwise.

So if they say my art is derivative, then I accept! I am glad to play a part in the Act of realizing the whole by shedding light on the points that make it. And though that whole is as unreal as Zero, I embrace the attempt and will take to my grave the comfort of knowing that I tried.

Though with regard to the Nazis...

...

At this point van Meegeren's elucidations digress into a series of pseudo-racist, most assuredly xenophobic ramblings that are nearly indecipherable and beyond the literary scope of this publication. We do, however, look forward to the continued unearthing of possible texts, as the sheer volume of his boarded paraphernalia, stashed away in various corners of his many properties, comes to light. We thank the Dutch Institute of Irrepressibly Fine Art and the Association of Lost Things for their continued help in this regard.



Endnotes

- [1]** The author seems to have omitted the opposite analogy, where points would expand from 1 to 10 to 100 and onwards towards infinity, making sense of the positive/negative dichotomy thing.
- [2]** Nicolas Minorsky only had one son, so selling a painting to his “son-in-law” would be a highly contentious claim, especially in the 1940s.
- [3]** van Meegeren was notoriously bad with his money, buying multiple properties, spending extravagant sums on drugs and alcohol, and hiding extra cash in random places.
- [4]** This was written sometime between July and December of 1946.
- [5]** Modern analysis of the ‘Tulip Mania’ phenomenon suggests that the event was more limited in scope than previously assumed, and inflated significantly by propagandist and plagiarized accounts of what amounted to nothing more than “a meaningless drinking game”. (Peter Garber, *Famous First Bubbles: The Fundamentals of Early Manias*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.)
- [6]** Ironically (or perhaps fatefully), van Meegeren studied architecture in Delft, the hometown of Johannes Vermeer.
- [7]** Van Meegeren sold “Christ the Adulteress” to Göring, which he traded 137 other looted (and probably original) paintings for.
- [8]** Van Meegeren was addicted to morphine and alcohol towards the end of his life, spiraling further as his wealth acquired from the sale of his forgeries accumulated and his behavior became increasingly erratic and paranoid. Ironically (or fatefully), Hermann Göring was also addicted to morphine.

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Golden Horn by Moujan Ardani

I don't get along so great with dogs, not that I haven't been able to get close to them – just that they are as unbearable as toddlers. I would feel exasperated when they began to run around me in circles, licking parts of my body with their sloppy tongues, or right after their owner exclaims, “Look, you are already friends.” while I'm given a toy or a bone to throw for the dog.

I always thought I was able to throw it somewhere the dog couldn't find, but it was just wishful thinking. In the blink of an eye, the dog grabbed me and begged me to throw it again and again so that it could go and bring the thrown object back, holding it between its jaws, to receive our praise. Pointless act!

However, I accepted all of these fooleries when I became a dog walker; I was an undertaker accustomed to death. I took three or four dogs out everyday, sometimes five to six dogs, sometimes in multiple groups. I had no other option to find the money for the journey which had begun a month ago, and no one knew how long it would continue. I couldn't find any other way to make money in a city where no one knew my language.

As a dog walker you need not communicate with people. The dog owners would just repeat a few rules, such as not to let the dog walk ahead. I hadn't spoke to anyone, I was just like a puppeteer who merely makes puppets perform. A silent show in which no one would talk, that was all barking.

Sometimes I felt that those dogs were walking me. I was the one who held the leash, as it was attached to the collars on their necks, but they were the ones that dragged me wherever they wanted. I was always afraid that one owner would see me and think I was the one tethered to the dogs, that I was ruining their many years of training.

But I had no other choice, the strength of my hands was not as strong, and they were strange creatures. Just as the leash was attached to their collars, their power and desire to reach unknown things multiplied. When they were in groups things got worse, when one of them slowed down or refused to come, or stopped to raise

its leg to urinate, for which they had a special ritual. I had to wait until they shook their bodies and then agreed to continue, and all this happened while the other dogs were struggling to run off.

Though, all of this was nothing compared to being obliged to bend over to take their waste off the ground. The first time, a black dog, whose body was bigger than the rest, stood up, doing what he had to do, and I had to clean the ground. The poop was a little lighter than its body color, first glancing around so I might claim that it belonged to someone else's dog, but I couldn't. No other dog was around.

I took out one of the plastic bags I had in my pocket, and then, as I had to smile at the older woman I saw in the park every day, I knelt down and grabbed that waste and held it in my hand for a few moments. I didn't know what to do with it, I felt its heat was raising my body temperature too, but then I felt I was freezing. It made me want to puke; I cursed and lashed out at the dog.

I was living in Merve and Kemal's apartment then, they were the only ones I knew in Istanbul. I shared just a couch with them. I remember that when I went back I washed my hands many times but still felt the smell. It had penetrated my body. I didn't want to see that dog again, but I had to, the owner made a generous offer.

Among the others, he was the strangest. His skin looked like leather, shining in the sun, with ears that stood up straight. The dog always seemed to be on the lookout. However, his distinctive feature was the marking on his forehead. It looked as if a horn was supposed to grow on his forehead, but it turned into a flat horizontal line on his face. A horn doesn't suit dogs, it's bizarre.

His name was Golden! I always thought how ridiculous it could sound for people who didn't notice the golden line on his forehead, an all-black dog called Golden. It was like when a family wanted a girl but got a boy. For a while they would not cut the child's hair, hang colored clasps on his head, and dress him in girlish clothing.

Though this all changed when you were in front of that dog. That golden marking explained his name. He was an expensive and purebred dog. He was a muscular Doberman in appearance, but not temperamentally. He barely showed his teeth,

nor did he attack strangers and other dogs, you could hardly hear him barking. If he were a human, you could say that he is a loner.

But he caused more trouble than others. The park where I used to walk the dogs had a dog walking trail where I released their chains and let them run until they passed out. The owners expected me to do so. They didn't mention it directly, but I knew that deep in their hearts, they desired a dog-tired creature that would submissively sit next to them and be stroked. All the dogs joyously played by chasing each other, except Golden. He always sat in corners and watched others. If he was in a good mood, he came up to me, stood on his hind legs, put his claws on my chest and tried to lick my head and face. I didn't let him do so.

Though he was stronger, heavier and taller than me. He bit me with his teeth; my hands were full of his scratches. The owner said this was some kind of a play biting or it was his way of showing me his compassion. I simply smiled, thinking about that white envelope that she brought every two days. But I knew that there was no such thing as play biting. It made no sense. The bites were real, and so were the wounds.

I remember that teachers always said there was no difference between students. Or a better example, my mother always said that she loved all of her children equally, and she favored my brother and me alike. Though, as a kid, I remember asking my mother, "Whose life would you save if you had to choose one of us?" "And she was left mute. All these things were nothing more than a claim, an indisputable lie. There is no one in the world who could love two things equally. Because there was no scale to calculate love and say that both were equal. Although as a kid, when they asked me how much you love so-and-so in almost every family gathering, I always said three and showed ten with my fingers. This wrong move overjoyed all of them.

Now, when I think of those dogs, I can only say that neither of them were equal to me. I loved one just a little bit, the other a lot more. And I needed no calculation to admit that I had a strong dislike for that black dog, the dog with which I had to spend most of my time. Every day, I had to pick him up at four o'clock to walk him

around by seven o'clock. It was a while since his owner wanted me to walk him separately.

Walking in the park together, I sometimes felt he was mirroring my actions; namely when I turned my head to the left or the right, or the way I walked. The playground was the only place where he stopped imitating me. I ran so that he would run too, but he went on walking slowly or sometimes he stood and stared at me, his eyes seemed to tell me how ridiculous the game was.

Some days we sat by the sea together and filled all those hours just like that. I rested on the rocky shore, reading a book, and he gazed at the sea in astonishment. I couldn't figure out why I hated him so much, perhaps because he didn't let me feel alone. And I was there to be alone. The other dogs went their own way and came to me every now and then. They barked and wanted to be petted, then pursued their own games. But this one somehow seemed to say, "I am like you."

Maybe he was; he couldn't accomplish what the others expected of him, he could never make a guard dog. Many were terrified by simply seeing his mouth, which only opened to yawn; some people turned back, mothers took their babies' hands and pulled them away, but Golden only glimpsed at them and then stared at the sea again.

One of those days, I was to visit Merve and Kemal in that park. It was a holiday, but dog walking gave me no days off. They came there to spend time with me. Kemal, Merve's brother, was my friend. I got to know him first, and then he asked me to see his sister on a long walk.

At first glance, Merve was a girl with colorful hair that was too long, floral dresses that I would never wear. But she looked cute on these dresses, it seemed that the colors were absorbed into her skin; her skin was like a canvas that the pigments had penetrated, its textile, not a collage in which everything seemed derivative and coerced.

That day, the siblings were lying on grass; I waved my hands toward them, with Golden beside me. The closer I got to them, the more restless the dog became. He

pulled the rope, breathed heavily with his mouth open and his tongue lolling out. Kemal got up and came toward us; he began to bark at him and drool. I had never seen him like that before.

I tried to calm him down, but I failed. Kemal sat down on his knees, gazed into his face, then rested his hand on that golden line, and after a few seconds, the dog relaxed. The three of us went toward Merve and then lied down on the grass. Golden sat somewhere behind us where you could still see the sea.

It was mid-autumn, the wind coming from the Sea of Marmara was no longer so warm and humid enough to make its way into your body molecules and then turn into drops sitting on your skin. Instead, the chill wind hit your face. The shiver, running up my spine, made me feel numb, I didn't feel like moving.

I stared into the sky, listening to the siblings whispering in Turkish. I didn't know a word of Turkish, but I had learned to feel it. I could guess whether they were talking about the past or the future by their breathing sounds and the fluctuations in their vocal tone. The past made them speak with lengthened or drawn-out vowels. They drawled every word and breathed more profoundly or perhaps more pressure came out of their lungs.

But the future, as it hadn't come yet, excited them, or sometimes frightened them or blocked their airways for breathing. I had not yet found the code for the present. People were less likely to talk about the present, past or future happenings are more important. As if the sole purpose of the present tense was to exist so that the past and the future could stand back and forth. I was like a newly blind person there; I had to touch the word to understand them. But I wasn't experienced enough to differentiate a sharp blade from a shard.

It was fun, especially when I was alone among their friends who all spoke Turkish together. Sometimes, though, I was frustrated, like the day when the wind kept erasing all the signs I had flagged and I couldn't guess what they were saying until the sound of Kemal went up a bit, then he stood up and sat down, pointed to Merve's leg and snapped something.

Then he went toward the dog and petted him. Golden remained indifferent. He was still gazing at the sea. “Is he always like that?” Kemal asked me. “Almost always,” I nodded. He shrugged his shoulder, then said goodbye and walked away. The wind had become less intense. The sun was going down; Merve stretched her body and sat, and I did the same.

The sun rays had fallen on her face and now her brown eyes looked reddish. “What did he say?” I asked. “What does he have to say? Nonsense, the same old things about my leg,” she said with laughter, “He says it needs surgery, and he thinks I don't know it myself. He thinks the doctor hasn't said it a thousand times.”

Merve went lame; her leg was broken in a car accident. She had undergone several surgeries, but they weren't effective. It required a metal implant to substitute the unrepairable fracture so she could walk flawlessly. She pretended she didn't care about not being able to walk like the rest of the people, saying it was just a small thing, just like going bald or having facial moles, but I had noticed how she looked at the running girls or how she stared at dancers' legs.

But she would always gather herself immediately and make a gesture of indifference. Sometimes she couldn't fall asleep at night due to leg pain and would sneak into the kitchen to sit on the floor to cool off, saying the pain was hot and had a burning sensation.

The sofa I slept on was close to the kitchen. I had caught her red-handed many times. Then we both sat on that cold floor and talked until morning, telling her things I had never shared with anyone. She spoke English better than anyone I had ever seen there, and I felt lucky for being with her. Though language and words were of no importance those nights. We used to talk for hours, without having to ask the meaning of a word.

We talked freely without worrying about being humiliated, due to stumbling. It was my first experience of a deep friendship with that girl. I always wanted to have a same-gender friendship, but I was scared. Whenever I tried to get close to them, I was hit with invisible bubbles that were around them and made me move farther

and farther away. But this one was different; there was something hidden in her face, voice or behavior that dared me to go for a new adventure, say the unsaid words.

One day, the first week that I stayed with them, we were walking around their neighborhood; and walked past a fruit store. I saw her stealthily picking some oranges in the pockets of her loose dress and then as if she had done nothing wrong, continued talking again. When we got a little farther away, she peeled the oranges one by one and then offered one to me. And we ate them all together, though I was scared to death and looked over my shoulder all the time.

Merve laughed out loud and said I was too scared. I really was. The other day, she stole a book from a mega-bookstore. I was so fearful that my fear caused me to tremble. I paused for a moment when I heard the alarm sounding as we walked out the door. Not until Merve grasped my hand and pulled me towards her did I notice that that sound was only in my head, without an external source.

On the way, she told me she really wanted this book, but it was grossly overpriced, so she had no choice. I couldn't understand, it was strange to me. But a couple of weeks later, when we were passing by the same fruit store, I did the same thing — I was like a kid trying to prove herself to her peers. I didn't have the courage to steal something as big as an orange, so I shoplifted some tangerines and walked away as quickly as possible, and then I just realized I had left Merve behind, so I turned back and saw her walking lamely, smiling. I went back toward her too, but I was so keyed up that the tangerines rolled out of my hand, disappearing down a manhole. I stood still, watching them. I didn't even have the chance to taste them.

Now the tangerine scent was driving me crazy. Merve was peeling one, and then pulled out a slice, pointed to Golden and said, "Give it to him." I said, "it might be harmful to him, don't bother". Then I saw it tossed towards the dog. It hit him on the back, which made him turn his back to us. The sun was going down; its rays had fallen straight on his forehead, that golden line had taken on a magical appearance. It looked like a source of light emanating and seemed to be a fragment apart from the rest of his body.

Merve threw another slice at him; the dog smelled it, and then tasted it on the tip of his tongue but didn't eat it. A bit later, Golden gazed at Merve, approached and stood before her. They stared at each other for a few moments. The world had stopped. I was afraid I wanted to take Golden away, but then the dog bent down and put his head on Merve's leg: the lame one.

On the way back home, as I was walking beside the animal to hand it over to its owner, that image was constantly before my eyes. Then I thought about Merve's leg, if I walked around more dogs, maybe I could help her with the operation costs. I began to work in the morning hours too, I dealt with so many dogs in a single day that I sometimes imagined myself as a dog.

I spent more time with dogs than with humans. I learned the knack to deal with any kind of dog; the jealous dog should get my exclusive attention, the unspayed dog should be kept separate, which meant sacrificing myself. One was allergic to big dogs and attacked them, the other kept howling to be pet. But the most bizarre dog was Golden; he was out of character and always left me in a daze.

One of those days when we sat in our accustomed spot by the sea, I took my eyes off the book for a second, and he was not there. I looked for him everywhere, even went to the dog trail, but he wasn't there. My body was freezing, I started sweating. I went back to the first spot, looked down at the rock where we always sat, there was no beach, there was all rock.

All at once I saw an image of him drowning in the sea, but dogs knew how to swim. A dark thing met my eyes. It was him, staring out to sea on the rocky coast. I called him, turned his head but headed back to the sea again. What would a dog seek from an endless horizon. Why wasn't he fed up with it. No matter how many times I called his name, he refused to acknowledge my presence.

Finally, the sound of the thunderstorm triggered him. The rain had fallen by the time he was at my side. It rained for a week straight. The heavy rain made my business stagnant. No one wanted their dogs out of the house in such rain.

The pain of Merve's leg got even worse, the cold kitchen floor no longer worked. But our nightlife was not abandoned. Now Kemal, who had been jobless for a few days, joined us at night. Sometimes if we got bored, we rose from the ground and stared at railways through a small window to bet on their arrival time. Three days after the beginning of torrential rain Golden's owner asked me to walk the dog. The owner was a bizarre woman - as bizarre as the dog. There was apparently no emotional bond between them. Was it possible? Dogs were supposed to adore their owner, but every time I returned the dog back to his home, he didn't even greet her, jumping, his tail wagging. And the woman never pet the dog on top of the head. She used to open the door halfway, limiting herself by watching the dog from top to toe, and stood aside so that the dog would enter its home. Then she would arrange the next appointment with me.

The park was desolate. The dog and I oddly seemed like two lovers, walking under the rain was one quality of our love. Yet I still couldn't develop any feelings for him. He didn't look as proud and grandiose under the rain. His skin was not shiny anymore, and that golden horn turned brownish. Nothing was like it was before during those rainy days, even the sea. The fog had covered the whole surface and you could only hear waves. Golden and I walked from one end of the park to the other twice or three times daily.

Sometimes, we went to the playground. There was another dog walker who was out to walk a small dog. He always smiled at us, even that little doggy seemed to have a smile on his face but Golden and I took no notice of them. Golden looked for the sea, which he could not see but could smell; and I just wanted to pass the time.

One of those days when we were both walking slowly, Golden began to run at once, the rope slipped out of my hand. The dog was running nonstop, so I went after him. I saw him go through a row of trees behind the playground, there was nothing but a tangerine, and the dog was licking it. I kicked the tangerine away from him. I was only a step away from the leash, so I bent over to grab it, but someone grabbed me from behind.

After a lot of struggling, I could turn my head; there was a man much larger than me, he had worn all black, and he had even covered his face. When I turned around to see Golden, I saw another man with just the same appearance just a little smaller. I was struggling to pull my wrists out of his hands, but I felt my bones would crumble at any moment, and even heard the crunching sound in my ears.

I called Golden several times, but he ignored me. He was there sitting up on his legs and looking at the man. I kicked him with all my power, then I opened my mouth to yell but no sound came out, he put his hand over my mouth to quiet me. I didn't know what they wanted, they said nothing. Then the other man knelt down next to the dog, stroked that golden horn and then lifted the rope from the ground and stood, Golden stood on hind legs too.

I bit the man as hard as I could, and I shook myself out of his grip and attacked the other one, and I grasped the hand that tightly held the rope, I didn't know how I was capable of hitting them. I tried to pull Golden back to my side, but the animal stepped away as if he liked being a witness. Then the man cradled my hand and pushed me back and gazed into my face. For a moment I realized I knew those eyes, and my legs became numb.

The other one punched me in the back and knocked me to the ground in revenge. The rain got heavier. Lying down, drowned in the mud, I saw them leaving. The dog stood there, struck dumb. I tried to stand up but couldn't. I should have dragged myself along the ground as if I was paralyzed; I called out to Golden again and again.

I don't know if Golden really turned his head and glanced at me, or it was all my delusion that I had seen that golden horn for the last time. There had been many times on that trip I wanted to burst into tears, but I had always controlled myself. Then, as I was crawling on the ground, I became alert to the reality, from the sound of my weeping. Perhaps that happy dog walker had also heard something that came up to stand over me.

He helped me to pull myself together; I didn't know how to explain the story. I stood up and looked around dumbly for a few seconds. Then I stroked the pup's

head and went my way. I heard that the dog walker kept calling me but, still, two rounds in our daily walk were left, and I had to leave. I had to go all the way alone, without that black body walking next to me, I preferred to walk side by side with him on the way back home, though he wouldn't even look at me if he wasn't in the mood.

The mud on my head streamed down my face with raindrops. When I reached my destination, I rang the doorbell and sat down on the main staircase. The woman opened the door halfway and waited. When she saw me she came out of the door a little bit. As she was looking at me from a distance, she began to call Golden.

She imagined I was that dog. Then I waved my hands for her. She went back in. I stood up and told her the whole story, word for word. She didn't say anything and slammed the door without waiting for the dog to go inside. I stood behind the door for a few seconds. I heard the woman scream several times and then there was no sound. I have gone into the details of what happened many times. I have kept thinking, I could have risen and run after the two men and asked a passersby to aid me, but I didn't. Perhaps those eyes bewitched me! Several times I asked myself whether they knocked me to the ground, or if I faked falling down.

After that, I walked no dogs again, not that I wouldn't, but no one ever trusted me to leave their dogs to me. I was super lucky that the owner saw me wrecked that day and believed what I said, that the police only asked a few questions and then let me go, that the dog walker found me there in that situation.

Sometimes I dreamed about those dogs; I was lying on the ground and they were licking my head and face. People circled around and watched, I screamed and asked for help, but no one cared. My face was always wet after waking up, I didn't know whether I was sweating, or if it was their saliva on my face.

I never dreamed of Golden, I just once fancied that I saw him in waking mode. Kemal, Merve and I were lounging on the seaside. For a moment I thought a black thing was going up and down in the waves, I got up and called his name a few times. It was a piece of wood, black wood, shining in the sun.

I burst into tears, and then Kemal put his hand on my shoulder. He asked nothing. We merely stared into each other's eye for a moment. Perhaps we had nothing to say. But I decided to ask him the question that never left me in peace. It didn't matter whether or not he would respond but those words had to come out of my mouth. But I couldn't; he seized on the chance and pointed to something at a distance and said: - "Do you see that chokepoint there? Its aerial silhouette forms a horn-like shape. It's called the Golden Horn bay; it is fed by two small streams.

"What's the golden for?" I asked, casting a glance upon the sea.

"It comes from the rich yellow light blazing upon the estuary's waters as the sun sets over the city," Kemal said, staring at the sea.

I turned back and blinked at Merve who was doing postoperative exercises; the replacement surgery was done two or three weeks ago. Now all the pain had disappeared. A surgery scar was the only thing that remained on her leg which might turn out to look like a horn at a distance, glowing in the sunlight.

Moujan Ardani is an Iranian story writer, currently living in Istanbul. After graduation from IT in 2014 she started her career as a writer. She worked as a freelance journalist in Iran for four years and had her stories published in some magazines there. In 2017, one of her stories was awarded in Bahram Sadeghi award which is a prominent literature contest in Iran. Presently, she is working on her short story collection and translating them to English.



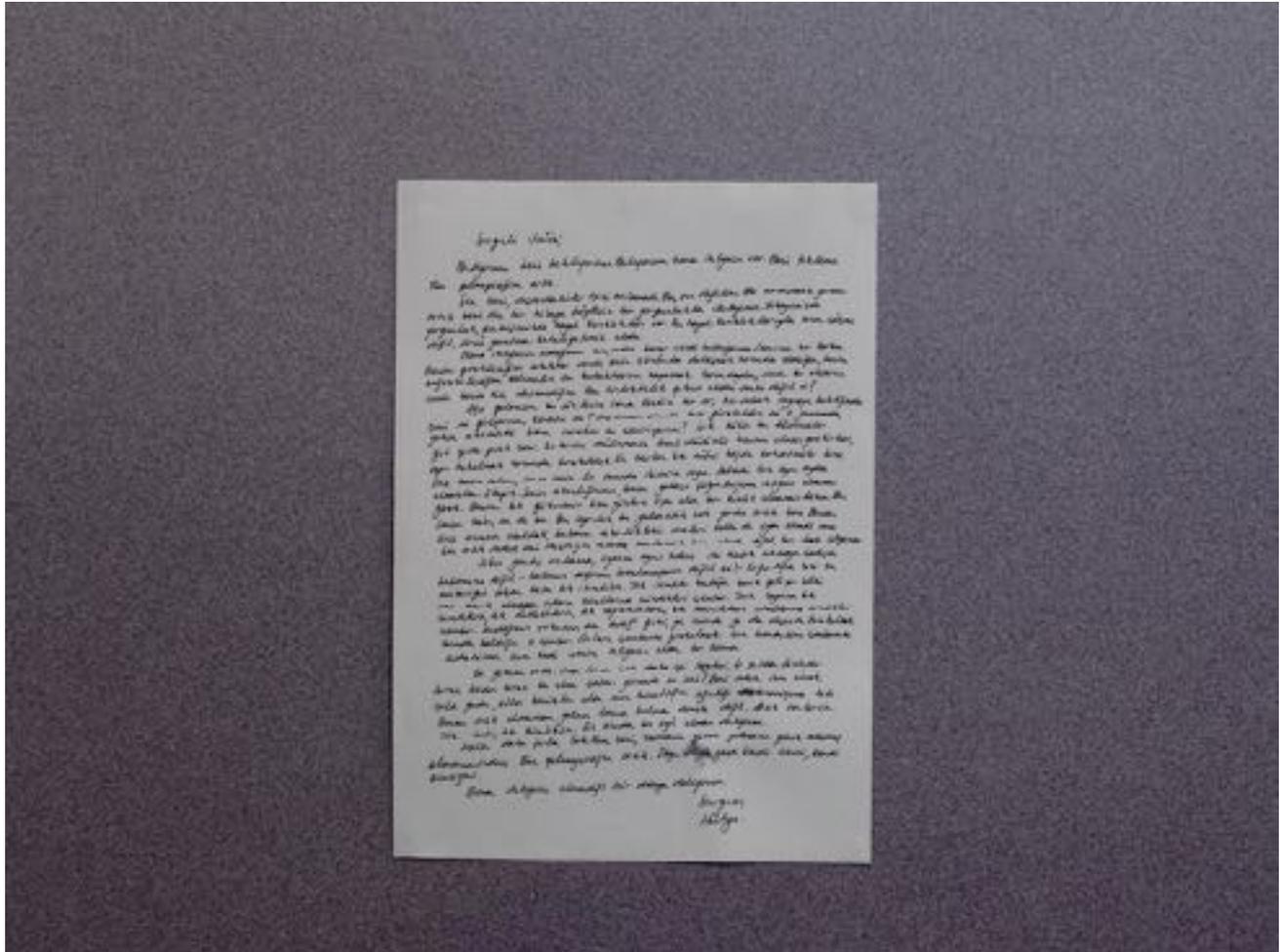
Dear Julia by Larissa Araz



Against the image of Gökçeada island, photographed wrapped in clouds by Larissa Araz, is a letter. Its author is fictional, a character study by Araz who critiqued multiculturalism in Turkey, as minorities, such as Christians, have had to replace their names with Turkish equivalents. The letter, addressed to one Julia, is signed by Hülya, and muses on the emotional impact of the last century of intercultural history in Turkey.

The unsent letter, a curious epistolary literary form, speaks to a kind of nostalgia about histories that have gone unrecorded, everything that might have been. The individual becomes a reflection of the island itself, which until the 1970s was

known by its Greek name, Imbros. The appellation goes back to Homer’s Iliad, in which he wrote of the island, Turkey’s largest, as part of a mythical region where Poseidon’s winged horses stabled.



Dear Julia;

I know you wait for me. I know you need me. Don't wait for me. I won't come.

You didn't understand me and the others didn't understand us. I am not you.

Neither of our stories can keep up with this kind of exhaustion. We have tiredness in our story, disappointment in our past. With this disappointment, we're able to create problems, not solve them.

I don't know who decided that you need me and I don't know his reason. I guess it's a fear. There are some streets that I can enter but you have to avoid, there are some words that I can shout but you have to close your ears and you have an accent that I never get used to. This togetherness seems to become destructive, isn't it?

Don't get offended by my words. Ask yourself, when you look into the mirror every morning, do you see yourself or do you see me? Have you ever seen us side by side in that reflection, or do you turn your face away from me? At the end, these thoughts tear me down. While solidarity must be the only way to think, they forced us to stand apart. But we are far beyond belonging to the same breed.

You minority doesn't have to be in need of my fake majority. My only mission doesn't have to guard our identity against evil eyes. Moreover, I am you and you are me. This separation, this falsity tires me. Perhaps your mother's name at school or your father's name in the military service didn't rebel but I don't want to be your savior name anymore, I want to become one with you.

My resentment is to all people with a single name who force us into this obligation. Perhaps people with a single name sound funny but what's not funny is the circle that they draw to their periphery. Like that great song says, that circle that they force us to stay either in or out of. You need me to enter into their circle and your own name to stay within your circle.

I am out. Believe me, this will be much better. Didn't you get tired of being partially me and partially you for more than 60 years? My departure doesn't mean you'll be alone. From now on, you are one. One mind, one soul. At least, that's my wish. Please don't wait for me anymore; it will just become your defeat against time's show of strength. I won't come. Enjoy your own name.

I wish for a world where you don't need me.

With love,

Hülya.

A Touch in the Dark: Movement Archives from Iran by Melissa Ugolini



WHERE

I woke at 6:30 in the morning with a heavy heart, and a tired mind. An intense year had passed. My whole life had turned upside down. The future could not have seemed less clear, and I had no energy to face it. I pulled myself out of bed while the alarm still rang and closed my suitcase. I then took off to one of the most unexpected and powerful adventures of my life.

Istanbul, city of my passion, where I had settled after descending from London, sliding through Grenada. It never ceases to surprise. At the time of my departure, most of the roads were closed that day and there was no way of finding out which way the bus would take to the airport. I chose to bargain with Mustafa the cabbie. In the hour's drive, we grew quite fond of each other. Talks of Italy, Russian women, alcohol, Turkey and life.

I would say roads are more beautiful when they're empty. At an impasse, I had a vision. I saw beyond the unfortunate, simply connecting to the moment and to the people that life placed on my path. It was a lesson that grew for the next two weeks in Tehran, a netherworld now deeply engraved in my consciousness.

The plane rode smoothly. I watched a movie that had just come out I, Tonya. There is a scene where Tonya is sentenced in court, forbidden to step on the ice ring ever again. It has a very slow buildup. At the beginning the judge lists various fines, but as we get to the end, she realizes she may never skate again. I felt my stomach grip, as tears pushed through my eyelids. We started to pour our desperation out at the same time, Margot Robbie and I. Someone lost a part of herself there.

That's why I went to Iran. My friends and family were pushing me not to go. I would go and share my movement practice in a country where it is forbidden to dance. I could really feel what it was, not being able to do what you are here to do, losing what makes you feel alive, forced to abandon that which makes you who you are. I did not completely know it then, but I would learn it very quickly.

THERE

Tehran is dusty and cream-colored. Tall, snow capped mountains rise on its side, like giants, everlasting, ever-present. I walked through the streets of the Persian capital, smelled scents I never knew existed. I walked through big, green avenues and blissfully tasted and savored a new variety of pleasures, discovering.

It all had a mix of sour, aromatic hints, creating a whole new symphony in my mouth and in my eyes. Only two hours after arriving, and I was faced with a

beautiful truth; women in this country have another strength, a dignity that I have not witnessed anywhere else. Their faces are beautiful, unapologetic, fierce. They appear to have seen so much. It's not mere self-expression, but some silent scream of self-empowerment.

Between waves of profound respect for the women passing by, wearing their Hijab almost as a statement rather than an act of submission, I saw how they struggle to identify themselves with such a statement (as Persian women their cultural heritage comes from another source). These women are not afraid of claiming what is theirs and what is not, not afraid of what they know, of what they think.

And they are the most charismatic women I have ever encountered. But it is not easy and the Man bites hard. Later, when I delivered my classes, I found myself trying to reach out to this dignity and strength, in order to reach for their hearts, both the women and the men, as we were supporting each other in freeing ourselves from our fears, reminding ourselves of our power, dignity and beauty. We were one.

Their bodies struggle to take the space around them, as if they're trapped. I try to find a way in, to make us all connect with our breath, with our source of life. Life is motion and motion allows us to be. Therefore dance is a moment of pure freedom, of unfiltered perception. It is being alive, being who you are even if you do not know it yet. Blissfully shifting through space, present. Aware.

I met Sunny. It was, yes, on a sunny day. That was back in Istanbul, during a friend's dance class, when she approached me and started talking in fluent Italian. She had studied at the Italian High School in Tehran, and had just arrived in Turkey. She would spend seven hard months trying to absorb and learn anything she could about Contemporary Dance.

My memories of her are still striking. She was one of the most committed and hardworking people I had ever met. "In Iran we have nothing like this," she told me. "There are no teachers, no schools and it is forbidden for us to dance." I tried to get the concept into my head. At first, I refused to accept it. And then it began.

A couple years later she started poking me with emails and texts, to organize a Contemporary Dance Workshop in Tehran, from scratch.

She had no studio, no support, a few students and a lot of will power. On top of it all, dance is illegal in Iran. I was not a bit skeptical that we would succeed. We would probably never have a high number of students, which was necessary to sponsor the event. Nevertheless, I had faith in Sunny.



I sent her a couple of videos for a low-profile advertisement. The response was immense. I started to receive emails from people who were buying flights from other cities and missing school to come to my workshop. I felt incredibly humbled and did not quite understand what was going on. Quickly, we ran out of space. I decided to add more classes to my schedule to get in as many people as possible.

I ended up giving class all day, everyday, from morning to night. I stuck to a very strict, 'sleep-eat-dance' cycle. It helped with the actual physical and mental stress I decided to my body through. Who was I to say, 'I am tired'? Encountering such a passionate response, I wanted to satisfy and share my experience with as many people as possible. If this is not the purpose of what we are doing, what is?

A student emailed:



Dear Signorina Ugolini,

Now that I'm writing you this, it's 7 in the morning and I spent last night discussing the necessity of action against thought. Went to bed 4 AM and woke up today with an urge to dance which I haven't had for a while.

So many people might not understand the concept of dancing in your underwear with an unwashed and incredibly sleepy face but can you ever say no to it when it demands you to get up?

Miss Ugolini, dancing in Iran is either non-existent or insulted. I used to live on that non-existent island. No one around me knew anything about dancing at all. But now I've faced the more tragic truth: people who call themselves a dancer, but still have no idea what they're

talking about. A bunch of show-offs that just need to throw their money somewhere, in order to buy pride.

Years ago, when I was in high school, my biggest certain wish was to go to an actual ballet class which I couldn't find anywhere around where I live. Today, having been through all I went through, I learned to look in places I never did before. And now I'm standing here, questioning the essence of every move that I may make and its honesty.

If you've known a young, thirsty mind like mine you will definitely have the kindness to feed it. I need this class. Even though it sounds selfish, I bet I need it more than anyone else who's got into it. I need to watch you move and hear you speak. I need a teacher and I need it right now. If I should only sit in the corner of the class because I couldn't sign up soon enough for my space to work, I will! I am eager to meet you and I hope you would lend me a helping hand.

Impatiently waiting to hear from you,

T.

It was not about me. It just was about them. During our first class in our tiny, underground studio, I looked in their eyes. I saw a variety of emotions, from fear to trust, from shyness to playfulness. I made a big circle. Everybody was dressed in their best, with colorful leggings and sport's bras. I wore a man's pajamas with a whole between my legs. I had not touched my hair since I got out of bed.

Why should they trust me? Who am I to lead them? These thoughts went on in my mind. I decided to ignore them. We started bouncing together in a circle to connect to our heartbeats and to create a new energy, to build a new space together. "It is a safe space," I told them, "our safe space, where nobody comes to see you, where there is no judgement, where you can let go and simply exist, and be who you truly are."

My responsibility was to share with them the necessary tools in order to use their bodies in the healthiest and safest way and to create the right frequency through which they could liberate and trust themselves. It sounds easy, but when you have

forty-eight ladies in the room who struggle to open their legs to create a X shape on the floor it is a different kettle of fish.

During my training and career, my relationship with Dance evolved constantly. I started at a ballet class in my town's school. I was five years old. I went from dreaming of becoming a ballerina to giving up everything in order to pursue academic study. I could never get rid of it. Dance became like a philosophy of life in the awareness that movement IS life.

Descartes will have to excuse me but my motto is 'moveo, ergo sum' (I move, therefore I am). While in school, I was clearly obsessed with perfection and technique. The first big step I took in my life was to realize that perfection lies in the imperfections and that technique is just a tool for us to learn how to connect deeply with our bodies. Our physical selves serve us in the safest and most sophisticated way possible in the act of performing.

I have known a lot of dancers (including myself) who were stuck in the idea of reaching a technical ideal of perfection and in doing so, simply forgot to dance. Technique, discipline and hard work are essential, because they allow us to be able to express and to work with our bodies at our peak, but that is not everything.

As I move along on my path in dance and in life, it seems more and more obvious to me that the whole point of dancing is actually to be and to celebrate the possibility of existing, connecting and communicating. Dance is a celebration of Life and human connection. It allows us to be deeply rooted in the moment, to pulse along with our heartbeats, to feel the strength in our muscles and surrender to the flow of the blood in our veins.

Movement creates energy as life does, and at the same time it is fueled by this energy. During the workshop in Tehran I uncovered the ultimate proof. As the days went by, I had an epiphany about everything, a kind of physical theory of everything. I realized what we were dealing with in those classes. It was not Contemporary Dance Techniques but Life itself.

We started to dance in the name of identity; our own identity, the one that is unique to each one of us, making us all diverse and in this, exactly the same.

The essential part of being an artist is to be able to peel back your outer layers, to uncover your identity, whether consciously or not, whether you like it or not. I could not see that then. When you dance, it is you. You cannot pretend to be anybody else. If you try, you get caught in the delusion that you so desperately want to make the world see. It never works.

As in life, the act of pretending causes dysfunction. You always need to be honest in dance, to create something true and pure, between you and the person watching you. That is the whole point of it, unfiltered communication, connection, co-existence, and finally, celebration. I saw these issues manifest fully for the first time in this workshop.

I knew I had to wear a hijab in Iran. It did not seem such a big deal to me. It was just a piece of cloth that I had to put around my head. But the psychological implications of this act are enormous. I remember clearly a sense of constriction, but also of protection. It takes a lot of guts to be who you are and to state it in a social environment. This piece of cloth around your head somehow helps with that, so that you do not have to deal with it. But there is a price to pay.

I walked past windows, shops, occasionally glancing at the reflection. I could not recognize that figure. It had no shape, no form, no characteristics, no identity. I did not know who that was. It was only at the end of the workshop that S., the organizer, without whose work, effort and dedication none of this would have been possible, told me about a couple of girls who said to her that every night they were crying out loud on their way home because for the first time in their life they were beginning to understand who they were. They were beginning to find their suppressed identity.

These women (and one brave man) suffered a great deal in their lives and they still are as they cope with a regime that is strange to the customs, uses and precepts of the culture they are actually identified with (Persian).

On the last day I had agreed to create a little performance for the workshop participants, and although the conditions were everything but ideal, the realization that we were serving some higher purpose made us endure. To prepare for this final show, I had asked the participants to create a few movement sequences of their own.

While watching them perform their small creations, I was extremely touched as they were totally committed to what they presented, without question, without judgement, without retaining anything; they granted me with the incredibly sincere gift of their performance. Figuratively speaking, they stripped themselves naked in front of me. It was pure beauty.

As we approached the (absolutely informal) performance day, I had more and more people coming to me with a great urge to dance and perform in front of their loved ones, but somehow they were so scared and insecure that once the time came they started to hide behind excuses. A lot of people came to me and told them that they did not feel confident dancing because they were not professionals and they basically did not “look good”.

It was very important for me to hear this because then I had another eureka moment. I saw how there are two types of dancers in the world. One is in love with being a dancer and with all that comes with it, the life, the applause, the status, the tours, the creations and the artistic aura. I do not despise these dancers, I truly admire them and totally understand them. I was like that once too. And then there is basically the rest of us. They are the dancers who are in love with Dance.

It is not only about the ones who have been through so many sacrifices, who even when they truly want to let it go can not, those who do not even turn it into a profession. They are the dancers who are in love with Dance. It could be you, your mum, your hairdresser, your dentist, the IT engineer who gets out of work at 8pm and practices until midnight in a country where dance is forbidden. “These are the true dancers,” I told them. “You are the true dancers. It is not a degree that makes us who we are. It is what we love to do.”

They got ready to go onstage and when I finally convinced them of how beautiful and powerful they were, the owner of the small black box where we performed came in knocked on the door. Surprise, surprise. 'I cannot allow women to perform in front of men in this building! Especially without their headscarves!' he shouted.

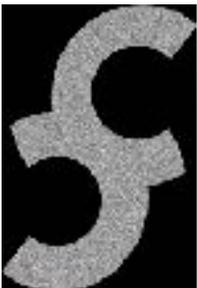
Although I did not speak a word of Persian, I understood enough to know that something was wrong as S. courageously got the situation under control and managed to find a way. Still a couple of girls danced with their heads covered. I encouraged them to do what was comfortable for them. Even forcing to do what I thought was right would still be an enforcement, and in that way I would not be any different from the Regime that I so passionately despised during my trip.

I wish the West would be aware of this detail too. We managed to get our show done. Everybody danced their souls out and it was magical to see these people transcend their bodies and their technical ability to make something real happen onstage. It was a true gift to witness.

HERE

I came back to Turkey with ten kilograms of gifts in my suitcase, with a warm heart and a purpose in life again. Thank you Tehran. Thank you beauties, you know who you are.

Melissa Ugolini was born in Italy in 1989. She graduated from the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds (UK) in 2011 with a First Class Honours Degree, and was granted the Award for Outstanding Achievement. After graduation, Melissa worked with numerous international choreographers like Akram Khan, Anouk Van Dijk, Andonis Foniadakis, Aakash Odedra, Nicolas Cantillon and Laurence Yadi, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Barak Marshall, İhsan Rüstem, Bruno Caverna and Beyhan Murphy, while performing both new creations and repertoire works with Companhia Instavel (Portugal), LamatDance Company (Spain) and James Wilton Dance Company (UK).



Furkan G. "In the Body" by Nazlı Gürlek Hodder

Furkan G. is 11 years old and lives in Kurtuluş, a mixed neighborhood in Istanbul traditionally home to Greek and Armenian Christian minorities, presently housing many low-income families. Having left school, Furkan sells water on the street in Dolapdere, an industrial district divided by an inner-city freeway and surrounded by underground manual labor factories employing Syrians, Africans and Kurds.



In contrast to its gritty urban landscape, many fine arts institutions have cropped up in Dolapdere, such as Dirimart and Pilevneli galleries, and more recently, the new Arter and Evliyagil Museum.

On the 7th of November, the day of Evliyagil's opening of my solo show, "In the Body" (my first public appearance as an artist), Furkan walked into the ground floor gallery of the compact museum with his friend Azat, asking about the works. He shared meticulous comments on each of them. The work that attracted his interest the most was the piece, "Body Is A Portal".

Furkan said that he liked this piece but that he could come up with a better one based on the inspiration he would take from it. I invited him to come back to the gallery in four days to realize his painting.

Furkan created his piece with pastels and paper, which were provided for him. It features three circles representing, in his own terms (from top to bottom) death, prison/infinity and salvation.

He imagined its concept as a visual narrative: "On a nice, calm day while you are sitting at home watching TV and a hole appears all of a sudden dragging you in. Through this hole you come into the space where three circles appear for you to choose a pathway among the three."

Among the color codes on the right hand side, are red, green and blue, defining so-called "bad" areas of death and prison. The color black defines the "good" circle of salvation.

Evliyagil Museum exhibited Furkan's artwork along with mine for the duration of "In the Body". My colleagues at Evliyagil and I started a campaign to support Furkan and his family by selling his drawings. His initial piece, "Hole", sold on the first day of the campaign. Furkan is drawing more now.



Nazlı Gürlek Hodder is invested in developing an embodied aesthetic that reflects the here and now of authentic life experiences in order to speak of freedoms, agency, resistance and empowerment. Through the artistic gestures of healing and resistance, she proposes a return to a desiring, performing, creating body, that is in constant continuation and flow with the rest of life.

Surf by Serra Şensoy



Surf is a Visual Poem (Book and Movie); a phonetic reflection on the identity crisis of alienation from reality after the switch into digital realms where things change with the speed of technological singularity.

It's a subtle satire, a coming of age story in the age of surveillance capitalism. To build a profile is to compromise one's potential self(s), destroying the tension between essence and potentiality, getting stuck in a filter bubble of sameness.

SURF

I am out of words for a while now.

I used to have rushing thoughts through my head; ready and set

Building worlds.

Now I have nothing

But an emotional state of a worm

That's why I have wormholes instead of

a Body and soul

I wonder around,

longing the yellow warm.

so many stimuli going in and out

brains are full of colour and light

not a single day without

a phone app triggering my neurons and I am left out

I surf the internet and beyond

I surf the corners and intersections

Waves of reflections, a journey



Just to find a digital me.

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. She is lead designer at FictiveMag.com



CONTRIBUTORS



Andrew Bell is a freelance writer currently bumming around various parts of Turkey. He is a contributing writer for Berlin-based PANTA Magazine and New York City / Istanbul-based SOUR Studio



Hana Korneti is an award-winning author of short fiction based in Skopje. She lived and wrote in Istanbul for many years, earning an MA in Cultural Studies at Sabancı University. She is currently working on a short story collection, and hopes to one day write a novel bearing an uncanny resemblance to Rüya Kızılay's debut.



Larissa Araz (Istanbul, 1990) began her studies at NYU's Steinhardt Media, Communication and Culture and completed her undergraduate studies at the Department of Media and Visual Arts at Koç University in 2014. Through a personal viewpoint, Araz focuses on the topics of history, identity, memory and belonging that are included or not included in social memory. Araz is also running Poşe, the independent artist initiative she founded in 2018. Dear Julia is a fictive letter, written as part of the show, Words Don't Come Easy.



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



MAKHism was born in Tebran, Iran in 1987. After graduating from high school with a special degree in computer graphics, he received an associate degree in graphic design in 2006. He started his undergraduate studies in photography at the University of Fine Arts in Tebran in 2010, realizing his deep interest in self-portraiture.



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Foniadakis, Aakash Odedra, Nicolas Cantillon and Laurence Yadi, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Barak Marshall, İhsan Rüstem, Bruno Caverna and Beyhan Murphy, while performing both new creations and repertoire works with Companhia Instàvel (Portugal), LamatDance Company (Spain) and James Wilton Dance Company (UK).

Moujan Ardani is an Iranian story writer, currently living in Istanbul. After graduation from IT in 2014 she started her career as a writer. She worked as a freelance journalist in Iran for



four years and had her stories published in some magazines there. In 2017, one of her stories was awarded in Bahram Sadeghi award which is a prominent literature contest in Iran. Presently, she is working on her short story collection and translating them to English.



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Renan Koen is a Turkish-Jewish concert pianist, music therapist and public educator. Since the release of her 2015 album, "Holocaust Remembrance / Before Sleep", she has toured the world lecturing on the Holocaust, specifically Theresienstadt and the composers interned there with youth groups, and recently to a global audience in January at the UN Headquarters in NYC for International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



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. She is the lead designer at Fictive.



Matt A Hanson is the founding editor of Fictive. He is a freelance journalist and art writer based in Istanbul, where he contributes to artnet News, Tablet Magazine, Words Without Borders, Al-Monitor, forthcoming for the Jewish Review of Books and others. He is an editor of artist books and exhibition texts for Arter, Dirimart, Pera Museum, and Yapı Kredi Publications, with collaborations featuring poet and painter Lale Müldür and artist and writer Deniz Gül. For an art writing series by SAHA Association, he wrote an autobiographical essay.

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A Touch in the Dark: Movement Archives from Iran by Melissa Ugolini

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Furkan G. "In The Body"

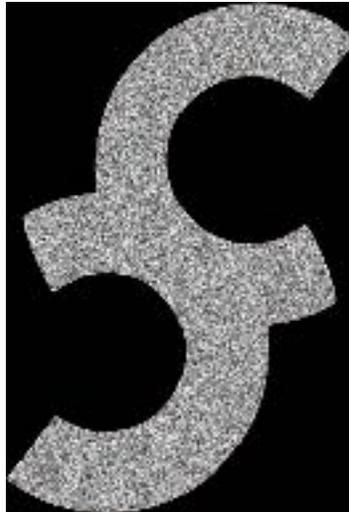
47. Furkan G. "Hole" (2020), pastels on paper. 100 x 70 cm

48. Nazlı Gürlek Hodder. "Body is A Portal" (2020). Acrylic on unprimed canvas

Surf by Serra Şensoy

49. Serra Şensoy, major project, poster (book)

50. Serra Şensoy, major project, mock up of book



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