



Anthology of 12th year of ITEF
ITEF 2020 - Istanbul International Literature Festival



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Diversity in Unity:

Intercultural Dialogue Through the Waves of Danube*

The unique culture of the Danube river basin has been celebrated by cultural operators and public institutions for a number of years as ‘the Danube Weeks’. These ‘Weeks’ have included various artistic activities across the countries of the Danube region. With this new project of the Hungarian Cultural Center, the scope of content and scale of the types of activities and geography of the ‘Danube Weeks’ will be expanded. With the participation of Turkey, as a country belonging to the historical and cultural sphere of the Danube Region, the ‘Danube’ cultural tradition will grow and strengthen.

Artists and professionals from art, literature and cultural institutions in Turkey and their counterparts in the Danube countries of the EU will find opportunities to meet and work together in collaborative actions.

The project kicks off with a series of activities to be organised under International İstanbul Literature Festival, during which the Danube impact on literature and culture will be discussed. Workshops on creative writing and reading will run at the Festival, with contributions from a range of artists from the Danube countries.

* Implemented by Hungarian Cultural Center
Partners: Turkey Europe Foundation - Kalem Culture Association

In honour of Europe Day on the 9th of May, the project will host various events and cultural performances, gastronomic presentations, and reading sessions in Istanbul. All these activities will bring a little bit of Danube Culture and the Danube people to the city of İstanbul. Furthermore, capacity building activities organized in Budapest, Bucharest and Istanbul will improve the operational as well as the theoretical and informational capacity of the cultural operators.

A major activity of the project is to be a 'Road Show' that will start in Ankara and continue through the Danube countries of Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Germany, and arrive in Brussels just before the closing event.

Diversity in Unity: Intercultural Dialogue Through the Waves of Danube
<http://www.tunadalgali.com/en/home/>





KÜLTÜRLERARASI
DİYALOG
INTERCULTURAL
DIALOGUE

Intercultural dialogue through human history can be seen as cultural exchanges that have come to life in different geographies and societies, in various forms and in various places.

The dialogue may appear in many different guises: through the tone/resonance of a music piece, through the taste of the food we eat, through the common cultural heritage, through dance steps, or through the words of a piece of literature.

The Yunus Emre Institute, as Turkey's lead cultural actor in the international arena, has launched a new Programme with this perspective, which will carry the intercultural dialogue between the EU and Turkey to new dimensions.

The EU-Turkey Intercultural Dialogue Programme provides financial support to projects designed to bring different institutions with different cultural backgrounds together with an aim to enhance mutual understanding and co-operation. The Programme is co-financed by the European Union and Republic of Turkey under the financial cooperation for strengthening civil society. This phase of the Intercultural Dialogue programme has a total budget of €3 million, with nearly 70% of this funding being awarded to four grant projects.

While the British Council, as an architect of one of these grant projects, is working with partners in Greece, Serbia and Turkey to create and strengthen cultural hubs and clusters, the Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes is aiming to produce 'Europe's Neolithic Bridge', a film which will document and share the connected Neolithic heritage of Turkey and the EU.

The Hungarian Cultural Center will organize festivals and activities to bring together cultural operators and citizens around the countries of the River Danube region where the cultural exchange has continued for thousands of years. Moreover, the Institut Francais de Turquie is facilitating up to 26 residencies for artists to exchange experiences in the countries of France, Germany, Netherlands, and Turkey.

During the implementation of this programme, a series of activities will also be carried out to help the Yunus Emre Institute develop further engagement and interaction with the Network of Cultural Institutes in EU (EUNIC) and support Turkey take its place in the European cultural map.

Yunus Emre Institute has been promoting Turkish culture in 48 countries with 58 cultural centres, with all its influences around the world and building new bridges through language, art and cultural exchange activities.

Intercultural diyalogue

<https://icd.yee.org.tr/>



The Yunus Emre Institute was established to promote Turkey, its cultural legacy, Turkish language, its culture and art, and to develop Turkey's relations and fellowships with other countries. The Institute aims to encourage cultural interaction and serve those who want to receive education on Turkish culture, language and art, by concentrating its activities on education, science, and the cultural arts. While the Institution pursues its mission of increasing the recognition, credibility, and prestige of Turkey in the international arena it aims to increase the number of friends who create bonds with Turkey across the world.

As a cultural diplomatic institution, the Yunus Emre Institute was established in 2009, with a HQ in Ulus, Ankara, and opened its first branch abroad in Sarajevo. The Institute currently serves in 48 countries including Europe, Asia, Middle East, East Asia, Africa, and the United States, with a total of 58 active Turkish Cultural Centers. Recently, the Institution began its activities within Hankuk University in Seoul and Trinity College in Dublin and continues establishing new branches in Abuja, Beijing, Toronto, and Buenos Aires. The Institute aims to continue this expansion to 2023, when it expects to have up to 100 Cultural Centres operational.

Besides the Turkish education provided at the Culture Centres, Turcology departments and Turkish education are supported through the cooperation with educational institutions in other countries. The Institute provides a basis for cooperation between universities in Turkey and those abroad, particularly by using the university ties for science diplomacy.

The Yunus Emre Institute regards creating opportunities for interaction and dialogue as a primary mission. To this end, the Institute is implementing many different projects and planning new ones. With all these large scale projects and other activities, the Yunus Emre Institute aims to develop and strengthen connections with other countries. For that, the Institute organises cultural activities at international level and through its wide international network. cooperates with other institutions that contribute to Turkey's cultural diplomacy.

The Institute perceives the Turkey-EU Intercultural Dialogue programme within this framework, supporting, as it does, various international projects to improve and strengthen cultural interaction and relations between Turkey and EU Member States. Additionally, this programme is expected to strengthen the relations between the Yunus Emre Institute and European national culture institutes as well as their umbrella organization EUNIC.

The activities within this Intercultural Dialogue programme are expected to increase the dialogue and exchanges between Turkey and EU countries and contribute to long-term cooperation and partnerships. Raising awareness within Turkey of the contribution of international cultural relations to the prestige and international recognition of Turkey is another goal.

Yunus Emre Institute

<https://www.yee.org.tr/>

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ASLI PERKER



**Bring The Ashes So That
Its Owner Can Enter Heaven**

Translated by James Önder

Alis Hovanisyan quickened her steps. She couldn't turn around to see who was following her but she was certain that she was being followed, ever since she had walked out of the front door of her apartment. As soon as she set foot on the pavement she had felt someone's presence, but fear stopped her from looking around. Then as she crossed the street she noticed the silhouette of a man with a hat reflected in a shop window, she became certain. Now they were walking one before the other. Alis Hovanisyan stopped a few times as if to look at something and realised that the man would be waiting a few steps behind. Then when she started to walk again, she would hear his footsteps following her. From what she could tell from the view in the shop window, he was wearing a long coat, a scarf and heeled shoes and he had his hand in his pockets. And from the sound of his steps he must have had heel irons on his shoes. Not having a problem with being heard meant that he wasn't worried about Alis noticing him. Still she was unable to turn around and face him. She hastily walked towards Harbiye. She was thinking of hailing a taxi but there wasn't a free one. And because she was scared to

turn around she couldn't easily check the traffic. Finally, when she was in front of the Kenter Theater she heard a car horn and turned around and saw an empty cab. She thought she had never moved so fast in her life. Just like in the movies, she threw herself into the car, immediately closed the door and uttered, almost out of breath, 'To the Karlman Arcade.' The driver seemed to have understood his customer's hurry but in his eyes in the rear view mirror it was obvious he hadn't understood the address. 'Sorry, ma'am' he said, 'which arcade?' Alis was still out of breath. Although she very much wanted to, she couldn't bring herself to look at her stalker's face. Also she didn't know if he was still following her. Quite confused, she answered, 'Karlman.' Thank God the driver was patient and politely said 'Sorry, ma'am. I'm afraid I never heard of that place. Where is it?' As they were nearing Taksim he slowed down and asked 'Shall we go straight on?' 'Yes, yes,' Alis Hovanisyan replied, 'It's that, you know, that big gray building. What's its name? You know, going towards Pera Palas.'

'I think you mean Odakule.'

'Yes, that's it.'

'Why not say so?'

'It was called Karlman when I was little. Even after it was pulled down we used to say 'Let's meet at Karlman.' Just stuck in my memory. An old habit I guess, efendi.'

The driver was about to say something but seeing that the woman was looking anxious, and that she was muttering to herself, he decided to let it go. 'You don't have to look for mad people in Istanbul,' he thought to himself. 'These are especially different.' What he meant by 'these' was the non-Muslims. Especially around Kurtuluş, there were many of them getting into his cab. Almost all would address him with 'efendi'. To be honest, they were politer than everyone else, but they wouldn't mind

holding up traffic while waiting for every piece of change. This one was obviously prepared. When they reached the address she gave the exact amount of 6255 liras and said 'Have a nice day' as she quickly got out.

When she got out of the cab, Alis Hovanisyan looked left and right to see if she was still being followed. Another cab had arrived and stopped right behind them. Whoever was inside was paying the fare. The young woman tried to see a face through the dark glass of the cab and the moment she saw the fedora her heart started beating furiously. She immediately faced forward, entered the corridor that linked the rear of Odakule to Beyoglu and started to run. She could hear the clicking footsteps echoing behind her. They didn't seem to be in a hurry. It was as if this mysterious man knew where she was heading. At the end of the corridor she stood for five seconds trying to gather her bearings. Suddenly it was as if her mind had stopped. She couldn't remember if the milliner she always went to was on the left or on the right. Then she turned left and walked. She didn't slow down until she came to the Haco Pulo Arcade. The Beyoglu crowd made her feel safe. It was impossible to know if he was still following her. Here, there were all kinds of noises, clashing into each other, and what is more, it wouldn't be too hard to hide your tracks in the crowd. In order to be less conspicuous, Alis Hovanisyan took off her hat and removed the hairpin that held her hair in place. Thus her silky wavy hair landed on her shoulders. Her raven black hair matched her eyes and they both suited her white skin. Her cheeks had turned red from all the running and the cold. There were few men who wouldn't have fallen for her right now. As she walked across the cobblestones of Haco Pulo's narrow street she finally gathered the courage to look back but she didn't see the man. She quickly dove into the hatmaker's shop on the right.

For years she would come here and have her hats made by this Italian Levantine family. That's why as soon as Maria saw her at the door she dropped whatever she was doing and rushed to meet her. Loyal customers like her were so few. A day would arrive when none of the women in Turkey would wear hats, and she'd be out of work. She was very sure of that. But until then, there was Alis Hovanisyan. With her unique accent she said 'Welcome, Ms. Alis. My, is something wrong? you have taken off your hat.' She looked at the young woman admiringly. She always thought that she was beautiful, but now, she looked completely different, sensual would be the word for it. Alis Hovanisyan touched her hair looking embarrassed which Maria found cute. She even considered calling out to her husband to say 'Look how beautiful Ms. Alis is.' But she noticed the irregularity in her breathing and the anxious look in her eyes. She pulled over a stool and sat the woman down and called out to her husband: 'Dear, Ms. Alis is here. Could you bring a glass of water?' She saw that the young woman had her eyes on the window, but she knew how timid she was therefore she just said 'Everything okay?' Alis Hovanisyan nodded and said 'Yes, okay.' She thought she must have lost him. With one move she gathered her hair behind her and put the hairpin back, the bun looked as if it had been done in front of a mirror. 'Mrs. Maria, today I came here for advice, not for hats.' Maria looked surprised. What advice could this customer who never said more than a few words to her want? Meanwhile, her husband had come from the back of the shop and offered the water to Alis Hovanisyan. He too now waited for what the woman had to say. 'Please,' Maria said, 'hope we can help.'

Alis Hovanisyan opened her bag, took out an envelope and a piece of paper from the envelope. 'This,' she said, 'can you translate this?' The one word she knew in the letter was Paradiso which meant paradise, but the rest was a mystery. As Maria

read the letter out loud she thought how beautiful that language sounded. Then as if keeping time with her head, Maria read the sentence once more. Alis waited patiently. The woman translated: 'Bring the ashes so that its owner can enter heaven.' Alis pouted once again, raised her eyebrows, her eyes on one of the hats, thought about the sentence's meaning. Nothing. 'Does it mean anything to you?' she asked looking at them both. Maria's husband, pleased to be included in the strange game, took the paper saying 'Let me have a look.' He read it out loud as well, then said to his wife 'Look, you read this part wrong.' 'Where?' Maria asked. 'Here,' he pointed to a letter. A heated argument began between husband and wife. 'It can be written like that, but it is read like this.' Alis, not understanding anything, watched them both. Finally, the man turned around and explained to Alis: 'The Turkish is correct but Maria read it correcting the Italian. Because here it's in Florentine Italian. It is actually the same as Italian, but there are a few differences. See this letter here?' He held out the paper, and pointed, 'Here, there's supposed to be the letter 'l' but Florentines may not put it in.' When Alis Hovanisyan suddenly leaped up Maria and her husband jumped back. Alis snatched the paper and put it back in to the envelope which she then put in her handbag. Meanwhile she said 'Thank you, thank you very much.' She had understood the clue, which is why she was so excited. 'Dante!' she said, 'Dante!' Seeing their stupefaction she asked 'Dante, he was from Florence, was he not?' 'Was he?' said the man and looked at his wife. His wife in turn shrugged trying to put across that she knew as much as her husband. Alis Hovanisyan thanked them once more and left. She hadn't put her hat on. She looked around; her follower was nowhere to be seen. She relaxed. Thinking that the man might be walking around Beyoğlu she left the Arcade from the rear entrance. She got in the first taxi she saw and went home. As she got out of the cab in front of her house her eyes scanned the surroundings because after losing her

the man could have returned here. He didn't seem to be around, she swiftly opened the iron door, didn't wait for it to close on its own and pushed it shut and ran up the stairs. When she entered her home she didn't stop to take off her coat and went straight to the living room window. She peek out from behind the curtains and decided that she had lost him.

Alis Hovanisyon picked up *Paradiso*, the third volume of Dante's *Divine Comedy* which she kept in the most visible section of her library, and started to go through the pages. She probably should have guessed right away that the clue was Dante after seeing the word *Paradiso*, and the note written in Italian. At least now she knew what she had to be after. Still, she didn't understand the rest of the note, but she knew what the only thing to do to solve it was.

The next day, Alis Hovanisyan went to the bank and checked her accounts. She was afraid that she might run out of money as she occasionally spent without thinking, but when she went to the bank and looked at her balance she always felt relieved. She drew out enough money and went to a travel agency. Although she travelled abroad frequently she took care not to go to the same agency very often. She didn't want these people to have an idea about her, to become friendly with her, or even to offer her any special offers. The truth is, she was afraid of being pestered. It was obvious that she was single, and if they knew that she had lots of money she could be in all sorts of trouble. The night before had been bad enough. Despite the steel door and numerous locks she had trouble sleeping. She had also left her bedside lamp on, so whenever she drifted asleep she was woken up by it. The first thing that morning, she had gone to the living room and looked out of the window on to the street. The man with the fedora wasn't around when she left the house. Alis Hovanisyan couldn't make any sense of it. That evening, as

she returned home with the ticket in her bag she thought 'Perhaps I imagined him.' Then she thought otherwise. She had after all seen his reflection, heard his footsteps, her mind couldn't be playing tricks like that on her.

'But if it is,' she thought 'the situation is bad.' There was another possibility which was the only reason for her not to call herself mad. Maybe the man was the person who had sent her the note and wanted to be sure she was on the right path. And after that he had stopped following her. Among the possibilities, that one seemed the most likely. She decided not to delve into it any deeper. Besides, when she had returned from Italy, she would have conquered her fear of staying home on her own.

As Alis Hovanisyan descended the steps from the airplane at the small airport in Florence she was surprised by the pleasant weather. The light wind somehow made her feel like crying probably because among all the European cities, Florence had a special place in her heart. She couldn't stay long on the steps for there were other passengers who were waiting behind her. Her suitcase was one of the first to arrive. One of the men waiting with her moved quicker than she did and grabbed it, and was clearly surprised to find it as light as a feather. As usual, Alis Hovanisyan didn't feel the need to explain, so she smiled and thanked the gentleman. Of course she was not going to come to Florence and not buy any clothes from the city's stylish boutiques. She was a lady who cared very much about the way she looked. She liked to dress smartly even for the most simple things. She gave the address of the hotel where she had stayed on previous trips to the taxi driver and leaned back and enjoyed the scenery. It didn't take them long to reach their destination. After the man at the airport and the taxi driver it was now the porter's turn to be surprised by the suitcase's lightness. She didn't think about the injustice of tipping the taxi driver and the porter handsomely

while being quite tight-fisted in Turkey. She entered her room which look down on to a pretty courtyard, the flowers had already bloomed and brought spring. She became filled with joy, she was happy to be here. After a nice shower she lay on the bed and read a few lines and fell into deep sleep.

The following day, after a light breakfast she went to the Florence Library. Only there could she find what she was looking for. Her biggest grief was that she didn't speak any Italian. And most of the Italians didn't speak English or French. After trying to explain herself to the library official she saw its futility and went in front of the Uffizi Museum where there were guides looking for customers. A few had already noticed her looking around and approached her. Alis Hovanisyan kept repeating 'En Français'. Eventually a young Genoese introduced himself in impeccable French. They settled on a price and headed for the library. Alis Hovanisyan asked the youngster to tell the librarian that he was going to translate. The woman nodded. Then Alis placed the note before the woman and told the kid to translate that she was looking for something about this and that she believed that the person whose ashes were being searched for was Dante. The kid read the note at the same time as the librarian, turned to Alis and said 'But of course, I too know what this means' and began to talk:

'Dante was a Florentine but you know that he was banished from Florence. For years he waited to be called back, for his honor to be restored, but that never happened. When he died he was buried in Ravenna which took in him and his works. When the Florentines realised his value after he died they asked for his bones. Ravennians resisted. In XVI Century, when the Florentine Giovanni Di Medici was elected pope he began to put pressure on them to return the bones. The monks of Ravenna, afraid that they would come and take them by force buried a box containing Dante's bones in the wall of a church and swore to keep

it a secret. However, the secret was so well kept that the location of the bones was forgotten. It was lost until 1865, 544 years after Dante's death. Workers who were re-building a church in Ravenna discovered a box in the wall. In it were bones and a worn note which said that they were Dante's. They carefully placed the box on a carpet and took out its contents and examined them. As they placed the bones back in the box they took the dust they believed had fallen off the bones onto the carpet in six separate envelopes, each with a piece of paper with 'These are Dante's ashes' written on it. Florence still said that Dante's remains belonged to it. The envelope full of the ashes was given to Florence as a gift. But five of the envelopes disappeared. One of them was found three years ago on the ceiling of the Senate.'

Alis Hovanisyan listened breathlessly to the boy telling the story. The librarian, realising that she was no longer needed, muttered to herself, sat down and went back to work. Alis Hovanisyan asked: 'So the five envelopes are still missing.' The translator nodded. 'So is there a way to find them?' 'I highly doubt it' said the young Genoese, 'but if you want to find out more I can take you to the Dante Society.'

'First, let's eat' Alis Hovanisyan said. She was hungry but she didn't want to lose the translator kid. After all, it would've been very difficult to find a better friend than a guide who knew the city and its history so well and who also spoke French. 'I'm buying.'

On a side street, in a restaurant where there wasn't a single soul who didn't speak Italian, they had wine in water glasses and ate. Alis was pleased, she was more talkative than usual. If this kid saw her in Istanbul he wouldn't believe she was the same person. Upon learning that her translator knew verses from Dante, she become even more joyful and insisted that he recite them. The hours flew by. They entered the Dante Society just fifteen minutes before it was due to close. They were in luck the

society chairman, Professor Francesco Mazzoni, was there, but as he was about to leave he had no intention of speaking to anyone. Alis Hovanisyan, under the influence of the wine, began pleading in French. She spoke with a chirpiness she had never heard before. Every time she shook her head a part of her hair fell across her eye which pleased the professor more and more. He held out longer hoping to see her loosen all her hair. Eventually he gave in. 'Madame, you are so sweet that it is impossible to say no to you.' Alis Hovanisyan seemed to sober up there and then. But before she had time to be embarrassed or angry with herself the professor invited her and the young man over to some chairs. 'Please, what was it you wanted to ask me?' Alis Hovanisyan told him what she was after and showed him the note, it was the first time she had mentioned these mysterious notes to someone else, and she said that she believed whoever had sent her the note could solve this conundrum. The professor smiled, 'You're right,' he said, 'The person who sent you the notes must know that one way or another you will reach the right person.' Alis Hovanisyan didn't understand. She made an effort to gather her thoughts, if only she hadn't drunk so much wine. After a few minutes, she looked at the professor carefully. She pointed her index finger at him and asked:

'Are you the right person?'

'Yes.'

'So you know where the other envelopes are?'

'Yes.'

'Are you going to tell me?'

'No. I've determined certain dates. When the time comes, they will be discovered one by one and each time they'll make the headlines.' Then he laughed a little scornfully.

'Why did you laugh like that?'

'Because this dust has no value. These aren't ashes, they're dust. Dust on the carpet. What's important is Dante's bones, for that matter Dante, and we shall never have them. But I take pleasure in the poor, stupid Florentines thinking that they have something of value. We are now in need of a genius that we once banished. You see the irony, don't you?'

Alis saw it. For a while she thought about what she had been told. They sat there opposite each other silently. Almost too long to make it seem weird.

'And what about Dante getting into heaven?' she asked, 'Isn't that important?'

The professor answered:

'I'm certain that he'll easily enter heaven, without his ashes.'

ASLI PERKER



Excerpt from Executioner's Graveyard

Translated by Feyza Howell

Isa was sitting in the darkness of the night in front of his cabin. He was leaning on the wall, putting his weight only on the two back legs of the chair; the front legs in the air, his eyes on the stars, and his ears on the sound coming from the little holes on the radio. The story, which was being told by a woman with a hoarse voice, curdled his blood as much as the cool breeze of that spring night.

'The young woman put on her wedding gown with tears in her eyes. The old hands of the neighborhood women were fixing the ends of the skirt, and the young hands were touching the veil with longing and hope. Her cheeks reflected in the mirror which hung on the wall were red because of the make up, her eyes were blood because of crying and her skin was pale, as pale as a limestone. She was praying to God, saying 'God, please, send me a miracle, save me.' Prayer in her lips, she saw her mother coming closer from the reflection in the mirror. The mother held the bride from the shoulders and turned her to herself. Looking in her mother's eyes, she searched desperately for some sign of pity. Instead however her mother looked at her, lips pursed, reached to the veil behind her head, pulled it over her

face, put it between them and both of their looks became foggy. She stepped aside and opened the way for her daughter. The bride walked with small steps alongside the murmured prayers said by the women around. She was parted from the colors of the room behind her veil and rolling down in a dreadful, endless darkness. She, in the front and the women behind, left the house. The whole village had been waiting for this moment while eating and drinking along with the music. When the father of the bride came next to her, the music suddenly stopped. The groom with his grey beard and cap was sitting a couple of feet away. The lust in his eyes had almost created a halo around him. The father took out a long, thick, red ribbon from his pocket. At the same moment the gloomy sound of the bass clarinet let out a cry. A violin with a wrong chord accompanied it. The bride lifting up her arms on her sides waited, trying not to sob. The father put the ribbon on his daughter's waist, wrapping it twice and bow tied it in the front as the tradition demanded. Then taking her arm walked towards the old man waiting for them. The bride sat on the chair reserved for her next to the groom. Now the drums and the clarion joined the rest for a loud music; everybody in the village, like they had agreed from before stood up and started belly dancing. The amusement of others made sure to shadow the young woman's sadness.

After hours of dancing and screaming when the music dropped to violin and the clarinet again everybody understood that it was time to go. A pair of teary eyes accompanied by a pair of lustful ones in the front, the people of the village behind walked towards the newly weds' house. The bride turned her head back like she was looking at the world one last time. Still behind her veil, with a blurry vision, looked for some salvation in her parent's eyes, but saw nothing there. Then she walked through the door with her head down: with the disappeared hopes of the whole world and the shame of the whole humanity in her heart. They closed their door, stood a couple of steps behind it, and while the folks

shuffled their feet to their homes, the groom lifted up her veil. He touched her neck with his cracked fingers. He untied the ribbon with slow movements and put it in his pocket. Right at that moment three knocks on the wood door were heard. The groom, surprised, turned his looks to it. He yelled: 'Who is it?' A voice said: 'We came to take the bride.'

He yelled again 'Go back to your business!' Then the door was knocked three more times and the same words followed: 'We came to take the bride.' The groom yelled: 'Leave before I do something bad!' This time three men appeared in front of the door in the house. In blacks, with their long beards and bright faces. The groom, bewildered, moved back. The bride's body started shaking. The one who stood in the middle extended his hand to her and said:

'Come my daughter.'

'Why?'

'We came here to take you with us.'

'Where?'

'To the other side.'

'For what?'

'Someone is waiting for you there.'

Before the groom's scared looks, the bride walked forward without asking anything else. Slowly. She held the hand that was extended to her and fell in the arms of the man. The man with slow, gentle motion kneeled down, laid the bride on the floor and the three men disappeared as suddenly as they had arrived.

When the groom called for the people of the village, the bride had already died. Nobody knew the reason and they did not question what the groom had told them. From that day on, no young woman in that small town of Tekirdag has been forced to marry someone they don't love.'

Towards the end of the story Isa heard a sound coming from far away. It was the sound of drums. Maybe there was a wedding in Civili, maybe just like in the story, a girl was getting married to a guy she didn't want to. Who knew? He put the front legs of the chair on the ground and raised his ear in the air to hear better. It sounded like the voice was not coming from Civili, but from the other end of the cemetery. Isa had never gone beyond the tree where he buried his money before. As long as he was not forced to, he didn't wonder what there was beyond the distance his short leg let him walk. The tree was almost on the top of the hill, and a slope started right after it. He did not even know if there was another neighbourhood there, but now he was curious to find out. Was there a celebration there? He stood up and started walking slowly. Since he knew the sound in the open air would be misleading, first he went to the gate of the cemetery to make sure it was not coming from Civili. He saw that life in the old neighbourhood was as dull as ever. He continued walking with his one ear raised up in air. He got the flashlight from his cabin and followed the sound. When he reached the end of the cemetery he was sure whatever was going on was on this side. He walked a little bit further and passed the tree. When he reached the top of the hill he looked down with the help of his flashlight, but couldn't see much. Like when a child, traveling by a train passes by the wide fields and mistakes them for the sea, Isa also hesitated for a minute, and thought maybe there was a lake down there. Slowly and carefully he started walking down, trying to see his steps with the flashlight. He stopped once in a while and listened to the sound lingering in the air and changed his route slightly. He was a little scared and regretted not to have come this far before, but the drums were calming the shiver inside. There must have been a celebration somewhere around there, and of course there must have been people. When the sound came really close he put his flashlight in the air and saw a wall almost right in front of him. There was a big, oblong building. He started

looking for the entrance following the light on the wall. Obviously the sound was coming from inside but the small windows on top of the building did not show any light. When he finally reached the front of the building he found a colossal door with chains locked up on it. It must have been empty for a long time, for the sign next to the door was rusty and it was very hard to see what wrote on it. Isa put the light very close to the plate and tried to read. The first letter looked like an 'm.'. The next one looked like a 'g' but he was not sure. The third letter looked like an 'r.' The fourth letter was surely a 'g.' Now he knew that, he went back to the second one and compared it with it. The second was an 'o' in this case. He went to the last letter and recognized the 'e.' He went back and forth on the word and at the end screamed out what he had found with the excitement of a contender of the Wheel of Fortune: 'Morgue!' It didn't take long for the chill to take the place of joy. This was an abandoned morgue, which had not been used for a long time. It belonged to the old, ruined hospital that stood a little bit further. He heard the sound that resembled the drums amidst the ringing in his ears one more time. He raised his head and the light at the same time only to see the pole, which was standing right next to him. It was a flag-pole and a piece of iron was hitting against it with the wind. Isa tried to get away from the building as fast as his legs let him.



What do you fear the most?
Falling from heights.

What do you fear least?
Flying in an airplane.



BARIŞ MÜSTECAPLIOĞLU



The City's Game

Translated by James Önder

'We've been through here before,' said Ahmet. He wiped the mist off the glass of his helmet, looked once again at the displays. Yes, he remembered correctly, it wasn't the first time they had been on this street. He pointed left, Murat who was watching him carefully pulled a lever on the panel and turned them towards that direction.

They had come to this annoying city two days ago. As soon as their space shuttle had landed they got into their comfortable three person car for a reconnaissance ride. Actually, calling the eight-wheeled cigar in which they were a car wasn't quite correct. AR-41 was an amphibious all-terrain vehicle. Though its manoeuver capabilities were limited, it was fast. In a game where winning depended on speed, this feature was nothing to laugh at.

'We are at the final part of the game,' said Hande, though the helmet muffled her voice, the anger was there. 'Our closest rival is half a day behind us. I won't have anything go wrong when we are so close to victory! Read the map properly and stop going in circles.'

Both men looked at each other and shrugged. They were already used to the woman's fussiness. As a mapper she was top notch, which was more than enough for them to ignore her bad aspects.

Ahmet and Murat had been playing together for years. When their team mate got sick at the last minute they found Hande.

Although she was not an experienced player her gift for finding directions and strong memory had been great assets. She was a true adventurer, she had introduced herself as a collector who as she went from planet to planet gathered memories. The greatest reason for her to participate in this game was that it allowed her to see new planets for free, and maybe even win some money.

Murat looked out of the round window of the vehicle, and despite the changing streets the view was the same, metallic skyscrapers on both sides of the road. Most of them rectangular giant masses with tops like pyramids. They had nothing that resembled windows, only randomly placed small holes. They were surrounded by similar looking but shorter buildings. In the first area they wandered, they had come across gray skyscrapers but after a while there were only metallic ones. There wasn't a single shop, park or living being to be seen.

'The damn buildings give me the creeps,' said Ahmet, in a voice only Murat could hear. 'They look like colossal gravestones.'

'You're exaggerating. It's just another abandoned planet, that's all. Just like abandoned people, abandoned cities become sad too.'

Murat thought each city was a giant labyrinth for a foreigner, easy to get lost in without a guide, hard to discover its secrets. That was what made it an ideal location for an exciting game. Without secrets to uncover and spectacular surprises what fun would the games be? Just like when going through a labyrinth they recorded every street they passed into their computer, making

a map of the city. They were discovering it street by street. The goal of the game was simple, they had to find a communications device hidden somewhere in the city before the other teams and declare their victory. They had only one clue, the device was on the roof of a gray building which was in the shadow of a white skyscraper. If they succeeded, they would receive a grand prize paid by the richest people in the universe, the gamers who, from the upper atmosphere of the planet, were witnessing every detail of the event through cameras on their vehicles and helmets. Murat had accepted this years ago, the real players were up there, they were merely pawns. As he owed his luxurious life to this he never made it an issue. The problem was that they hadn't found a single white building yet.

'This place is really getting on my nerves,' muttered Ahmet, as he drove into another street. 'Everywhere looks alike, have you looked at the buildings, no doors. How did those who lived here enter them? By passing through walls?'

'They've got to have doors,' said Murat. 'They probably can't be seen from afar. Remember, we played at many weird other cities too. On planet Germeikon we landed on a big mountain, it took us quite some time to discover the city was made of caves under the mountain. Remember the houses made from seaweed connected to one another with tunnels deep in the lake on Deltotyan, or the city built in giant trees on Zoratin... This place is no weirder than them, at least it has skyscrapers like on Earth.'

'We haven't been there for years, I've almost forgotten the cities there.'

'Overpopulation, traffic, pollution... Nothing worth remembering.'

'Those betting on us are going to win quite a lot this time,' said Hande. 'From what I heard the bets begin at 10.000 galaxy golds.'

‘Then our prize would be high as well,’ laughed Murat. ‘A good reason to cut the chatter and concentrate!’

Though Murat tried to comfort his friend, he couldn’t ignore the gloom that reigned over the city. Each one looking like the one before, the metallic or gray buildings were very depressing.

Cities reflected the life of those who lived in them, the other cities he had mentioned had joy, excitement. Those who built these must have been grim, sad people, if they were people, that is. There wasn’t any information on the game planet prior to the game. Locations were chosen from the farthest reaches of the galaxy, from places which weren’t kept in public records.

Ahmet suddenly sat up straight, Murat noticed it and looked at him. His friend didn’t get excited easily, this kind of state meant that they were either nearing the prize or danger. As a reflex his hand went to his gun, perhaps he had seen a wild animal. It was a common problem in abandoned cities. When he saw a pleased expression of surprise on Ahmet’s face he calmed down, he went beside him to look out the front window to see what it was.

The young man’s surprise wasn’t out of place. Before them was a enormous egg-shaped building. It was completely black and glittered as if polished.

‘I say let’s take a look,’ said Ahmet as he stopped the vehicle. ‘This is the only different building we’ve come across in the city. Perhaps we can find a clue inside. The sooner we leave this planet the better I’ll feel.’

Murat looked at Hande and when he saw that she was excited with the prospect of making a new discovery he acquiesced.

‘Radiation and poison readings are normal. There doesn’t seem to be any danger. Let’s have a look, but be careful. Don’t touch anything unless it’s necessary. First let’s go around the building,

if we don't see a door we won't push it. There may be a security system, better not take any risks.'

They found the door much easier than Murat had anticipated. When there were a few steps left between them and the building a door opened where the egg touched the ground. Two people could easily go through it side by side. The building must have had an automated detector. They turned on the lights on their helmets and entered with guns pointing ahead. Murat was becoming concerned, but one cannot play games without taking a few risks.

The inside of the sphere was pinkish and shiny like its outside. The only difference was that the shininess kept on increasing and diminishing at a certain tempo. Murat thought it was somehow familiar, but couldn't put a finger on it. It was like a word on the tip of his tongue.

'My god,' said Hande, looking at the giant mass rising beneath the pink light. Murat and Ahmet, mesmerized, took a few steps forward. All three had realized at first glance what they were seeing, but waited for each other's reaction as they couldn't believe it to be real.

Inside the sphere were numerous metallic and gray buildings just like outside. The only difference was that they were no higher than one meter. The streets were wide enough to let one person through. Somebody had built a massive model of the city in here.

Stay where you are,' said Hande as she took out her computer from her backpack. 'I'm going to take a closer look.' She rapidly entered commands into the computer and set up a connection with the vehicle. After downloading the map in AR-41's databanks she found the giant egg in the model and using it as a point of reference studied how the streets and buildings were lined up. Finally she looked at the others and said 'Yep, this is

a perfect copy of the city. If we can find what were looking for here we can easily find it outside.'

The three of them spread out and a short while later they found the white skyscrapers. They were near the outer parts of the city, they were arranged sporadically. Only one of them had a gray building near by, close enough to cast a shadow over. After Hande entered the coordinates of the building Murat and Ahmet headed towards where they had come in. This extraordinary place was giving the players the jitters. Something didn't feel right and the final part of a game had never been this easy. When they realised Hande wasn't following them they stopped and looked with questioning eyes.

'I'll be right behind you,' said the young woman with a mysterious expression. Her excitement was obvious even from beneath the helmet. 'I'm a collector, you know. I can't just leave without taking a piece as a memento.'

The young woman, under the amazed gaze of the others, leaned forward and grabbed a small building in the model. It came to her knees and seemed hollow. If it was fastened to the floor it could easily be separated with a laser cutter. When she was able to lift it without difficulty she was pleased that that wouldn't be necessary. At the last moment, she felt a little resistance but was able to tug and break it. While she was doing this she noticed her friends rushing towards her in horror, waving their arms signalling her to stop, but she didn't care. She had found a new piece for her collection and she wasn't about to let it go.

The pink light inside the sphere began to palpitate quicker and stronger. From outside came a loud noise, there was a definite tremor. When Hande leaned on a big metallic skyscraper to stop herself falling she saw a puddle of blue liquid and what looked like three snapped quivering veins where the building had been next to the egg. One of the veins wrapped itself around her arm,

she was covered in a sticky goo. It was tightening around her arm like a furious snake and hurting her. Without thinking, Ahmet ran towards her, drew his gun and let off three shots under the building. The broken vein fell motionless. Hande, terrorized, threw away the building and allowed the men to drag her away.

As they came back out to the light, another surprise awaited them. One of the gray buildings beside the egg was crumbling down, from the same spot as the model. Large pieces of metal were falling everywhere. It was separated from the its base and slid sideways, from the ground beneath it three giant veins lashed out and began to wave around like the arms of an octopus. The surrounding buildings were shaking as if in an earthquake.

Or like a wounded beast.

When this comparison flashed in his mind, Murat realized what the light in the egg reminded him of. It was like a heart-beat.

Wanting only to get away from this nightmare, they ran to the vehicle. Debris from the crumbling building fell around them creating deep holes. Ahmet immediately started the engine, turned the vehicle the other way around, and stepped on it.

The AR-41 shot off like an arrow and left the egg and the falling building behind . The other buildings were still trembling with pain.

After travelling for a while in silence, Hande guiltily looked at the others and asked 'What happened there?' Her voice was riddled with fear. 'I don't understand. That building, those veins... Is this even possible? God, I'm losing it... We're safe now, aren't we?'

Murat first looked at Ahmet, then he gazed out the rear window. Though the tremors continued there was no one following them. They were safe. Still, he was too stunned to think.

'If the city is alive, then who built the buildings?' asked Ahmet, trying to make some sense of it all.

Suddenly the ground before them ripped open, the AR-41's wheels were in the air. After a few seconds of drifting through the air it hit a metal wall and tumbled down into the widening hole. A gray building jutting out of the earth pushed it into the wall, tearing apart everything inside into thousands of pieces. After rising to hundred meters it stopped. The dust slowly drifted down.

The trembling of the other buildings stopped and the pink palpitation of the egg calmed down. The lost had been retrieved and the planet's anger subsided. The city, its pain slowly fading, lapsed into its usual silence.

Meanwhile in another part of the city, the second team's shuttle was landing.

The city was ready for a new game.

ÇİLER İLHAN



Tag

Translated by James Önder

They shot my Ali.

I didn't see any bottles. Have a good look, sir! I swear to God, I didn't see any. Could what you saw be a bottle? No, sir. I didn't see. Look, look, you'll see. I'm not seeing a bottle. We know how to make you see.

They took my boy for a ride in a police car for three hours, beating him all the time. He's only fifteen. He was in such agony that I couldn't even wash his bruised body.

Welcome to the Republic of Gastody. To be taken into custody, press 1. Pressurized water is complimentary, we also provide free truncheon service.

Tag.

What did you expect, buddy? If you're going to march in order to overthrow the government, you have to take into account the risk of being gassed a little.

They shot my Ali.

Let's have an iftar meal on Istiklal, but have a TOMA (riot control vehicle) at the far end of it.

Look, buster, don't stand in front of me. You're annoying me. I'll call the cops.

There's nothing wrong in complaining about each other; you are using your civil rights, that can happen only in developed countries. They say that you-know-who is back in Turkey from the United States.

We won't let our man be victimized.

Sir, they keep banging on pots and pans until morning. I'd like to complain.

Someone grabbed my hair, took me towards the back where the buses are. There were at least thirty hands all over me. They kept on swearing, insulting me.

Tag.

My son, my beautiful son. This isn't a game. Your father says we're serious. Someone's going to get hurt. I beg you, don't go out.

The Turkish police are hardworking!

Enough! It's the nation's turn to speak!

Nation? A few million pontificating on Twitter has suddenly become the nation?

Let me be a strand of your hair...

Where in the world has this ever been seen? Go after anyone screaming 'we're going to overthrow the government', then complain about the water cannons to Reuters; what can the government do, just cross its arms and wait?

My older sister is now a vegetable.

It has been observed that most tweeters 'follow' tweeters that think like themselves.

Wasn't it the army who pulled out the fingernails of young men, who electrified their balls just thirty years ago? We can't

understand, you were the ones who suffered most because of the army, you militarists calling yourselves leftists! You should be ashamed to court revolution, really.

In democracies, democracy doesn't need the army's protection. My friend, I believe that we can no longer talk about a democracy here.

Brothers! It's time for a revolution.

Pretend you're having a revolution, bro. I'm going to have a pizza, then I'll come back.

They shot my Ali.

Men with sticks attacked the forums. We're sick of playing the same old tunes. Isn't there anything new?

How nice. The kids are reading books to the police. How nice. The police are reading books to themselves. Dear citizens! Our park is closed until further notice.

Dear viewers, In a country that spreads across Asia and Europe there are people who suddenly stop and stand. It is believed to be because of a virus.

They attacked the casualty ward!

Dear citizens! Our park is open until further notice.

Comrades! There's something else we don't understand!

While forests are cut down for highways, laws are changed as you sleep, they poke their nose even into the foetus you are carrying, how come you are home and not out on the streets?

Tag.

Nitwits. Instead of orbiting your own ideas why don't you write what we're talking about? Revolutions happen when everyone is spent. We have more than enough butter and flour in our markets.

Dear viewers, the weather forecast for today is gassy and cloudy for some cities.

Tag.

Look kid, how am I supposed to look after you four just by selling simits? You have years before you finish school. Don't talk rubbish and piss me off! I haven't had a shower for a week now, you prick! Do you think they have showers on the bus, or that they drop us off at our homes? Of course I smell, Lord almighty!

Bugger off you jerk!

Football isn't just a game.

All of us are against everything.

This country has really gotten into 3G mode, bravo! Hair, Gas, Custody, my my.

Tag.

Are the games played over the Middle East new? It is no coincidence that all of this is around our borders. The foreign affairs correspondents of the newspapers you so dislike tell it, you should read them a little.

Wake up, looters, hooters whatever! We weren't making it up when we said there were provocateurs among you! Do Molotov cocktails grow in your backyard?

The standing men annoy the non-standing men.

Tag.

Go to your bloody homes, now! Go to your fuckin' homes, we've had enough! We haven't slept in a bed for days because of you lot. Fuck your resistance! Don't gas us, don't gas us! Then how are we suppose to disperse you, huh? Shall I fart like this?!

The police are the people's safe guards. We exist for you. What kind of police are you, you moron! Bend his arm backwards, now

push him towards the patrol car, if he resists his arm will break, that simple!

Good morning. Flowers are blooming, butterflies are in the air, what a beautiful day.

Come on in people, our park is now open. Yeaah, gas time!

Sir, from whom are the police taking orders? Gas the doctors and lawyers especially.

Why the hell are you shooting those damn capsules at the kids' heads, shoot at the ground!

We are the Saturday mothers. We are the Sunday mothers. We are the Monday mothers.

We are mothers! You'll have to walk over our bodies to get to our children!

Arrest that piano! They shot my Ali.

Son, don't go to the park. Your father said that they're going to raid it. You might have an arm broken, eye put out, or worse. I beg you, don't go.

Sir, there were ten million people at our Kurbağalı şelale meeting. They all came willingly, under their own steam! My God, what great love!

At our forum, we'll be discussing how not to be a good citizen.

Dear viewers, In Istanbul, the only city spread across both Asia and Europe, another virus has been spotted. This virus paints whatever it comes across gray, especially stairs.

If a tree has to be cut down, we'll cut it down, if it has to be saved we'll save it. If something is going to resist we'll give the order: #ResistTree!

Tag.

Wasn't it a civil right when we couldn't enter universities, workplaces, receptions as a couple with our headscarves?

God damn you, dad! You shot Berkin, Berkin! He was just going to buy bread, what protest! Is the country saved now? Are you all going to get medals for this? Get out of my way, you're not my father!

We shall have police at every corner of the country. The police will watch over you at universities, hostels, sports games. My people will sleep trouble-free.

Wake up, Berkin. Wake up, my pretty face. Come on, you've slept long enough. Wake up.

Well, they are all elite minded. You ignore millions of people for years, look down on them, close their parties throw them inside and then, 'what's up with them, dear?'

But they shot my Ali!

They didn't shoot him, granny. They didn't shoot him. They beat Ali to death. I kept it from you so that you wouldn't get so worked up.

Excuse me, can I have my hand back please? I was going to hold my daughter's hand and take her to the park...

Madam, the park is closed.

ÇİLER İLHAN



Mahmure's Eyes On the City, and How

Translated by Feyza Howell

It was on one of the hottest days of the summer when I ended up on a street crisscrossed overhead by lines of washing. This was during a scheduled stop of the gourmet coach trip –a birthday present to my husband for a taste of the hundred year old Balat Bakery crispbread. More than replete by then with no room left not even for a single slice of crispbread, and no less curious than my two-year-old daughter, I began pacing the street. And then my stomach began to gurgle: that familiar spookiness mixed with mystery, shivering and inspiration... Perhaps a premonition: that the district which inspired me the most on that wonderful day -when my husband and I sneaked away from our responsibilities to drop in and out of countless little towns within one mega metropolis would turn into a bleeding wound only three days later; a carefree Sunday, hand-in-hand like we did fourteen years earlier. We cannot always predict why we feel what we feel.

It was my Aunt Simla who first drew my attention to Balat. She dragged me along to the Women's Works Library that was engaged in some research on her mother, Turkey's first female mayor as it happens. But for some reason, the image of the day

in the past didn't quite match up to more recent, palate-focused one –because although districts may not change, we do.

That was the day I saw Balat in honest for the first time. The day I couldn't stop myself thinking about the old building that would collapse in a few months, and wondering which astute businessman -or celebrity would have earmarked that decrepit block of flats; I shed silent tears for the folk who'd be left homeless by dawn's early light to make way for the 'gentrification' of their neighbourhood. No amount of action had helped in the slightest in the case of Sulukule, a process I'd followed closely.

We stood at the roof of Balat Culture Centre and stared at the enchanting, distant, another century sight of the Fener Greek Boys' Lycée, gazed at the Galata Tower and the sea from the terrace of the Complex, the vista that would give all the upmarket restaurants famed for their view a run for their money, and drawn a novel-full of inspiration from the Aya Nikola carers who watched TV as they sipped their teas in the church's semi-open sitting room converted from the ground floor; just as we were about to step onto the main road, I was confronted with the less romantic face of Balat and clutched my husband's arm like a little girl: When, that is, the lupine hunger of a pack of early boozers passed by our group, shoulder to shoulder, in white vests and brown plastic slippers.

Yet the trepidation that I forgot within a few minutes grew inside Mahmure, the Bursa migrant who'd settled here, grew inside day by day and turned into a nightmare... Into a house of nightmares where the city trapped and tortured her, sometimes insidiously, at others, drawing screams.

Mahmure had two children too... who moan in their dreams: Have you ever woken up to the sound of your father banging your mother's head against the wall in the middle of the night? We did. Have you ever witnessed the rape of your mother, all

but before your very eyes, when your father returned home, anise on his breath and processed weed in his blood? We have. Has your mother 'run away with' a brute –little different from the brute of a self-styled father- seventeen years her senior, and she then only fourteen? And when she saw there was nowhere left to run, has she wet her hard pillow, trembling all night long? Did your mother fall pregnant with the seed of that affliction she called 'husband' when at her unmarried 'nuptials' at the age of fourteen? And then gave birth, at an age when she herself was still legally a child? Did you ever open your eyes wide in terror every night, facing inwards, 'wonder if our dad might kill our mum tonight?' Was your mother killed by your father, stabbed 47 times, despite the countless times she herself and the neighbours complained to the 'authorities'?

And will we ever remember, whilst we sip our Chianti in Italian restaurants, the ill-fated Mahmure's blood flowing after 47 strokes of the knife, as these two tiny people -one five, the other only one and a half, whom their fathers held by the hand as he turned himself in at the nick grow up in cold orphanages shivering, battered and tattered? The tears of these two tiny people may well wet our goose-down duvets in our dreams just the way they wet themselves, terrified, as they clutched each other in tears as their mother was being knifed in the neck and chest, each stab piercing incurable wounds in their souls and subconscious, in each drop of fresh blood a new trap wrought by fate.

What do the perfidious do, the city who kept silent each time her husband clubbed Mahmure, she shouted in pain, the children trembled in fear, and the spirits of all three cowered in terror; the folk who cheerfully bang up all the usual suspects alongside fourteen-year-old pupils and eighty-year-old grand-mas whose charge sheets might take at least a year to draw up, but who, when it comes to Mahmure, fail to grasp the 'party' by the arm

and lock him up first in the nick, and then in the clinker, insisting on a warrant first? The specialist 'doctors' who issued discharges from the mental hospital within the week, the policemen who laughed in her face instead of helping when she pleaded, 'He's gonna kill me!' 'cos she wasn't modest enough, or the teams who failed to turn up on that dark day she died when she rang both the hospital and the police station, pleading, fey, 'My husband's unwell, please come and get him!'

What are they all doing now? Seeking inspiration in soaps that top the rating with a single rape scene?

Every city is a terror-filled nightmare for every woman and child unless this small-town mindset changes: the assumption of a natural-born right to decide the fate of fruits of rape in the bellies of girls no more than children themselves. The same mindset that releases a division's worth of rapists onto city streets -who needs to remand them in custody- that conjures up some element of consent or provocation in every case of paedophilia, and tries to coerce every womb to blurt out a dozen conscripts for the huge army of the future at whatever cost.

Mahmure's eyes might now be gazing at the entire city up and down from that dark coffin, finally at rest as one neighbour suggested. And how.

DOĞU YÜCEL



Excerpt From The Non-Existents

Translated by Feyza Howell

All became clear: it was the pen they were after! They knew about its power, and wanted to get their hands on it. No idea what they'd use my father's pen for... I looked out the window: all four had taken their places, waiting patiently.

Leaving the office and my unfinished work behind, I exited the building. I began to walk down İstiklal Road towards Tünel. They were following. Pretending to be doing something else all the while. They were reasonably adept at concealing themselves, obviously well trained. Cyclist suddenly changed careers and began handing out leaflets as he followed me all the way down the road. Girl in a Suit peered into shop windows whenever I turned round, and placing one hand to an ear, pressed the earpiece down from time to time just like a secret agent. Who knows what her instructions were? The one that really got on my nerves was Albino, of course; whenever I caught him, he'd be leaning against something, focusing on some random point, ramrod stiff.

The sneakiest part of my plan went into action when I reached Odakule: I had adjusted my walking speed to catch the tram running the length of İstiklal Road; just as I reached Odakule, the

tram would also be passing and I'd leap on board. Timing is my forte after all! And so I did; I was at Odakule at precisely the right time, and leapt on board. And so I succeeded in shaking off Albino, Polo Neck and Suit. Cyclist was still in with a shout; the tram might have been too fast for a pedestrian to keep up with but not beyond the reach of a bike. And him I planned to lose in Tünel.

I alighted in Tünel. I pretended to look into the guitar shop windows. In actual fact I was using the reflections in the glass to spy on the underground train that runs between Tünel and Karaköy. And making minute timing calculations. I knew, having once lived on the Karaköy side, that the train departing from Karaköy arrived at Tünel in two minutes and 50 seconds, and set off on the return leg after a one-minute stop. Five minutes had passed since its departure from Tünel: it would return in one minute's time and depart again one minute after that. Cyclist was kicking his heels around Café Pi, pretending not to be watching me. I reviewed my calculation and took the turn at just the right moment tucked between the guitar shops into the side street famed for its cafés. Tables spread on the pavements suddenly reduced the pedestrian's speed into a crawl. A cyclist would have a very hard time of it on this street. I would then turn through the tall wrought iron gate into the passage famed for its flowers and slightly more upmarket cafés, run and leap onto the train.

This stage also successfully concluded, I dived into the train just as the doors were sliding shut. Cyclist battled with the street full of tables first, and then down and up the steps of the floral passage... The last sight I had of him from the window of the train was running for his life towards the tram stop at Tünel, carrying his bike. I raised my shirt collar on both sides like Cantona, brushed myself down and sneaked a look at my own reflection in the windows of the train moving in the dark. Pasted

on my face was the smugness of an action hero who'd outwitted the bad guys.

... which gave way to disappointment when I alighted in Karaköy: Polo Neck and Suit were already waiting. As if they were a step ahead of me; nerve-wracking, this: was I so predictable? I got worked up, angry with myself; I would give them the slip, of course I would.

I ran the length of Galata Bridge, would have increased the distance between us but for the hook of one of the fishers on the bridge catching my jacket. I went in Sirkeci by Eminönü Mosque. Thinking I could make them lose my trail in the Doğu Bank crowds, I entered through the main entrance, ascended to the fourth floor and then rushed out the ground floor door to the rear, towards the Sirkeci tram stop. I purchased a token and began to wait for the tram. Not a sign of the Terrible Quartet. I boarded the tram by the front door. It wasn't long before I spotted Polo Neck and Suit three carriages down. Give them the benefit of the doubt: they may have taken the tram in Karaköy on a lucky guess. There were only three carriages between us, and the gap was closing by the second.

The tram was packed, which slowed their progress. When the distance between us was reduced to two carriages, and they were stuck in the dead zone between the carriages, I pogo-leapt my way out through the crowd to exit by the nearest door just before it shut. I'd alighted at Beyazıt, and shaken off Polo Neck and Suit. Neither was Cyclist anywhere to be seen. I turned down the street by Istanbul University and began walking towards Unkapanı via the Department of Communications. There was no one around; I was finally at liberty to breathe and think clearly about all that's been happening. One definitive conclusion was that despite all this chase and action, my followers didn't frighten me in the least. Polo Neck, Suit, White Hair and Mountain Bike. Frighten

me, at my age? They'd done nothing to threaten me; all they did was follow. Not the slightest indication they might resort to violence. So why was I running away? Just to show I could! They'd turned me into a proper 'action man!'

I wondered what would ensue if I managed to shake them off entirely. Say I did, and got rid of all four of my tails. They knew my home address, so couldn't go there; OK say I went and stayed at a hotel. And then what? How would I sleep tonight? Didn't I wonder who these people were, why they were after my father's pen, and what secrets the pen harboured in the first place? I couldn't keep running from these questions till all eternity, like I ran from these people, could I?

I made my mind up. I wouldn't run! I would submit so I could learn who the heck they were!



What do you fear most?

Airplanes, above all. No amount of statistics claiming air travel to be safer than coaches can allay my fear. How an airplane can fly in the first place is an enigma as far as I'm concerned. True, death in an air accident is quite cool in some ways, but the inevitability of death in an air accident is daunting. I die a thousand deaths with each take-off and landing. If I have a project on the go, and have to fly somewhere, I'll send as much of the work as I've completed to my close friends.

Say something happened, at least they'll get to read that much of it...

Another thing I fear is deadlines: it begins days, nay, and months before I'm due to hand something in, the magazine or any project I'm working on.

What do you fear least?

I'm not afraid of being on my own. This may be one of the biggest fears of our time. If you believe advertising and films, loneliness is the end of the world, humankind's common fear. There are people who've founded their entire lives on simply not being alone. The majority of the population consists of people who make children lest they die alone, and stay with people they don't love lest they grow old alone. I've no such concerns. True, the idea of losing your loved ones is daunting, but loneliness itself shouldn't be frightening.



ECE ERDOĞUŞ



Escaping Time

Translated by Feyza Howell

The darkness grows like a compounded secret inside you as you think upon it. Your path takes you down the side streets, instead of flowing with the crowd, all the nooks and crannies you can see build up inside. Then that fear the darkness secures. One you well know to be a secret too. Carving new paths to worm its way into your mind.

Admit it: you were not raised on the streets. On the other hand, no one can claim you grew up over-protected, either. More: why do the verbs to grow, and in particular, to be raised, wander in your mind relentlessly, like a lost traveller? Why does a thirty-two-year-old woman, think thoughts –on the streets of an unfamiliar city in the middle of the night she'd not even considered at half her age, instead of thinking about cuddling her own baby?

There's more: why does everything she strives to reach, grab and possess slip from her hand, tongue, eyes and voice relentlessly, like a writer whose mind is overwrought in pursuit of a tale? They all fall, from the skies, windows, peaks and stairways; they all fall after a scream of 'enough!' after being tripped, after

a wish, a letter, a dream or decision... Your fear, a nothing in reality, ends once more.

And so yet another dream flashed and died within you. Because a name popped up on your tongue, from far back in time. At first, it was no more than a single word that appeared in your mind out of nowhere. Even the past would repudiate you, were you to return to reality and confront the reality of that word, in flesh and blood. You'd collapse into the middle of time. Just then the reality of the darkness would suddenly fill you. And your secret would be disclosed, the ropes restraining it flinging left, right and centre. But that name is rising on your tongue, here it is. To dispel your fear, no less. And more: by appearing out of the blue in the middle of another story, it became one of its main characters. The betrayal of yesterday crushing a woman's despair, lack of self-confidence, silence; fear her ultimate destination despite all her smiles.

Turning time into a hole. You want to concrete that time hole in! But where's your move? Are you frightened of squashing time, of appearing instead of being buried, of new faces filling in the breadth of your loneliness, of raising another, having given up on the growing? Of being dragged along, hooked by question marks, of already setting off on yet another journey into whilst on the verge of arriving at another moment, of compliance, fitting in with the nature and done-and-dustedness of time...

And now you arrive, at this junction where you've halted, at the sentence that claims life to be nothing more than a tunnel of fear. And that the unfamiliar city streets you walk are no different than all the alienation within you. There might be little use in crossing over and continuing. You could just stand here until that final moment comes for you. You could end the past here without moving, your face turned towards the sky or the pavement stones. Or you could give your story a sad end: you

could stretch out at the finish of tyre tracks drawn by the skill of a sharply breaking vehicle.

But you choose, instead, to walk time in reverse, step by step. Breaking that suddenly remembered name into moments and spelling it over and over again. To wander anew in the city you'd decided not to return to. You content yourself with selfdeception with the rare few happy moments, even though you know they never can alter the emotion of the story. Admit it, your life can never move beyond sheltering! Forget all those moments you'd memorised like a prayer to defeat the fear within!

The words keep growing in your mouth, striving to find a voice to be freed; you stay silent.

Your face has already reached another wide road; you feel as if you're falling back into that moment of rainbow coloured lights that constantly dazzle you. Your thoughts go back to –not that far just a few minutes earlier, to 'compliance, fitting in with the nature and done-and-dustedness of time'. You take pains to fit in with the rhythm of the crowd.

Another you grows within and wrenches you. Your fear doubles. When the idea of laying it into the arms of time enters your mind, you arrive at the sentence that life is nothing more than inhaling fear. And so your road grows ever longer; you realise you've long ago lost your destination no matter how far you walk.

And it's too late now, you'll never grow up any more. This new character will add acquiescence to your story, instead of hope, it already has, and you know this. Acquiescence. Acquiescence like you'd never rebelled, never feared or run away. Your path takes you down the side streets again, to hide your secret, and to memorise this unfamiliar city once again. In pursuit of a safe breath, and deeper still into the hole of time...



What do you fear most?

I tend to veer sharply between cowardice and courage.

Someone calling out in the middle of the night is enough to unsettle me. So I fear for others constantly. But the worst is the idea that my nearest and dearest might die. The one common theme in my haunting nightmares. And the terror carries on through into the day, too...

What do you fear least?

If I'm uneasy or uncomfortable about something, my emotions dictate my actions. All too often I've no problem with giving up, taking off, confronting the issue or being totally frank; if anything, I inspire myself to so do. I'm convinced of the need to defeat these fears in order to find oneself.



EMRAH POLAT



Arap's Death

Translated by Feyza Howell

The notorious 1970s Hatay Dörtyol strongman Arap Ali was renowned for the power of his wrist as much for that of his pocket in the Southeast. He fed the poor each time he was put behind bars. Even the prison cats grew so fat where he was banged up that their stomachs were rumoured to drag on the ground.

It was on the day he was on his way to visit his elder son Cemil -whom he'd entrusted to a gaol-mate who ran a sleazy joint in Soğukoluk, and who better to teach his son the finer points of the business?- Arap was set upon by two gunmen at a petrol station restaurant on the Adana road. They'd been trailing him all the while. Arap wasn't one to buy it easily, but the gunmen specifically engaged in Istanbul by a rival were seasoned professionals. Fully aware of the brevity of life that awaited the sluggard in this realm, Arap had washed his face and hands as his driver filled up the car, made for a table that commanded the widest view in the station's four-table restaurant and sat down with his back to the wall with the habit of years. Not one for ever eating with his back to the door even at home: so cautious was the fifty-year-old Arap.

As he and his driver waited to be served, two men and a woman entered the restaurant. Arap eyed the men top to toe as he dropped his right hand -too gently for even for his driver to twig from the table, ready to reach for his waist any moment, and sipped the red carrot juice in the glass grasped in his left: these shady types wore no jacket, nor waistcoat. He eyed their waists:

No, the parties looked clean. As they were travelling with a woman, he mistook them to be harmless. And that was the crux of the crafty plan: Convince their prey of their innocuousness.

Arap relaxed a little as he put the glass back down on the table and wiped the juice on his lip and the tip of his nose with the back of his hand, but still stared at the men from the corner of his eye: What always kept him on his toes, after all, etched into his mind during all those chats inside, was the adage that this world was grave also to valiant men who somehow got themselves plugged for nothing.

He could see the woman's back and the men's faces. As Arap and his driver were about to finish their meal, the other group's food arrived. And that's when it all happened: Arap's attention strayed to the waiter opening the door to exit, the two men got to their feet, pointed their pistols at Arap and began firing.

Where had the guns come from?

This was the question on his mind when Arap, despite having taken a few slugs, still dived for shelter under the table and reached for his waist. But the answer he didn't know, and for which he'd pay dearly, lay with the woman who'd passed the guns she'd hidden in her handbag to the men, and Arap none the wiser.

Seeing him sink to his knees, the men made for Arap's table, firing all the while, mindful of the danger posed by the wounded

prey. True, he managed to shoot one in the leg from his position under the table, but it didn't take that long for the fatal bullet to enter Arap's head.

And so it was that yet another valiant Dörtyol strongman breathed his last, fighting to the end.



What do you fear most?

Loneliness.

What do you fear least?

Cognisant of the fact that even those things I might assume I do not fear are defined on the basis of our relationship with fear, there is nothing I am totally free of fearing, either of its own self, or of its possible consequences.



ERCÜMENT CENGİZ



Novel in a Historical Background

Translated by James Önder

Imagine a living room. At its center, a rectangular family table, a few kids on chairs. Clearly it is the weekend. There's a wine glass on the table after all... No television yet. On the radio a song plays but fails to impress me. My father slowly places his glass on the table, and goes back to reading the book in his hand. He reads out loud and we all laugh together. To be honest, I don't really understand much. Perhaps it's because I'm the youngest. I don't understand but I am happy. You can tell from the way my legs are swinging beneath the table. A joyful dinner instead of the usual arguments... In my head I'm trying to decipher the words coming out of father's thick straight lips and mouth which widens as he smiles. At one point he comes to the scene where he describes one of the protagonists' favourite food in juicy details. I want to go quietly to the kitchen and find that food. But I shy away... I make do with a slice of tangerine that is almost dry. Years later I find out that the book my father read at that table was 'The Time Regulation Institute'...

I grew up in such a family, in a house that had a library. And I began my reading adventure by trying to read the books my father used to bring home. My writing adventure began with

writing 'Novel In A Historical Background'. I'm not sure whether it was because my lowest grade in school was history or because I was sick of the 'official history' that plagued the world after nation-states were formed. But we all know that historical novels don't please historians very much. They often scoff at the writers, even get infuriated with them. Of course there are aspects in which they are right because some historians think that history can be learned from history books. So how does one lean back on the past? By reading history books? Listening to tales told by our elders, handed down from one generation to the next? In family conversations? By watching historical movies? By visiting museums? Perhaps all of the above... But there two major factors that will take me on history's journey; novels that not only describe the state of the characters who existed in the past and their state at the time but which also contain characters who bear the soul of the writer and music.

Today people don't learn history solely from history books. Because they don't want to look objectively at their past. Of course we learn from history books where the happenings in the past are told in a cause effect relationship but it is not enough. This is because we wonder about the inner world of those who came before us, how they dressed, talked, the sounds they heard, the smells they sensed. And most of all we want to learn about the human nature of 'ordinary folk' who make history what it is. That's why novels related to history are so valuable. Because the main characteristic that sets literature apart from official history and politics is that it is more human and democratic. The politicians are after their supporters whereas people of literature are after everyone including 'the others'. As novels begin to understand others and tell about them they naturally become politicised. Novelists, especially, can go in and out of every aspect of life and tell all the details. Writers who are honest and have

literary principles want to understand the others and talk about them. Qualified novelists, starting with themselves, uncover every state of mankind. Historical novels that shine a light on the past are valuable as long as they are able to convey the language of the 'other' thanks to their imaginary characters. As we are unable to conceive history just from history books it is a natural consequence that novels related to history are spreading all across the globe. Because in novels based in history we can learn about what happened not from the outside but from the mouths of the characters created by writers. Like Herman Hesse once said this is also a 'spiritual need'.

It is possible to write a novel that cannot be called a historical novel in the general sense, that is based in the past, using it as a texture, that has universal values and talks about the contemporary. This genre could be called 'Novels in historical backgrounds'. My first novel 'Gırnatacı (The Clarinet Player)' was written with this goal. This is because every novel has an issue and every novelist has various issues. Novelists, forcing their imagination, talk about their issues with the fiction they choose. It is possible to lean on the past or stretch out to the present by using an event, a location, a job, even an object from the past, without writing a historical novel. Thus you can make references to the secret, neglected aspects of history, to the state of mankind in the present. But as Pamuk, Eco and Calvino often point out the real difficulty is relaying the past through the mouths of characters that are in the same state as the writer.

The second factor that carries the smell of the past is music. Obviously, the art of the novel is both visual and verbal fictions. Many important writers are also painters, from Goethe to Hesse, from Yahya Kemal to Pamuk. The art of the novel is always deemed a sibling of painting. As Pamuk often mentions, novelists describe many hundreds, thousands of scenes which

come alive as we read novels. To me the art of the novel has a neglected sibling which is music. To my eye novels are like pieces of music. They have introductions, the development of characters, all the ups and downs are connected to a rhythm and let us not forget that life is a rhythm. I think that this is another reason why novels are paired with life. Some novels are like jazz songs whose beginnings and ends we cannot fathom; some novels resemble symphonies that begin as a slow wind and later turn into a hurricane. Some novels are like joyful folk songs. Some are like a melodic hejaz song, you turn over the last page, you get a knot in your throat. It means the description of Ekphrasis paintings or art works in a poetic manner, obviously. There is not yet a name in literature for describing a piece of music or composition with words. For me, in novels with a historical background or historical novels one of the most precious ways about describing characters who lived in the past is to describe the way they feel when listening to a song. Don't you think these words of Tanpınar, who was well acquainted with divan literature and Ottoman music, and who has had festivals dedicated to him for many years, is more than enough for me to think so?

'Music is time dressed.'

GÜLŞAH ELİKBANK



Knights and Humans

Translated by Feyza Howell

The last time I saw him, he was blinking furiously as he prepared to close his eyes for death, holding a pistol to his temple. I knew him better than anyone. Or rather, hadn't yet stopped trusting in my own feelings. I never thought he'd have the heart to pull that trigger. People who love life excessively, who grab every moment of life with both hands like a miracle, fear death. I knew him. My faith in my instincts was even stronger than my trust in him. But he did pull the trigger. Right before my very eyes... The black bullet dived into his skull before I could even shut my eyes, was painted red, took his life in a second and flung itself out. His blue eyes that had been sparkling vibrantly faded inside that second and gave way to a deep loneliness. I'd never seen someone die. I'd never lost someone whom I'd valued, someone I'd shared a certain part of my own life with. Friendship was a novel concept for me. As his life sped past me like a comet, I was nailed to the spot. Did I scream? I don't think so. I was as scared as he'd been. He'd rid himself of his fear by sheltering in death. Not before pouring the venom within into me, though. He'd left me alone with this secret -what he believed to be a secret, rather in the midst of a puddle of blood. When my horrified eyes met

his half-open, terror-stricken stare, everything changed. My trust in him had flown away along with my faith in myself. Should I take pity on someone who chose to be delivered of this maddening secret by dying? Should I mourn his death?

No. But for all that insane stuff he'd told me, I might have rent myself in grief; instead, all I could do for him was to rejoice. He was delivered. I didn't even have the time to lament his sudden death. I had to run away... Because they'd know in a few minutes I'd learnt this secret. Or they might even have already known, but didn't care. Same thing! That's what he said just before he died, before shooting himself before my eyes:

'You'll only have five minutes to get away... And then they will come, and this time for you. To bury this secret with you...' And he'd pulled the trigger before I even had the chance to open my mouth and object. First I thought he was about to shoot me. Then I'd relaxed, deciding he was too scared to kill another human being. The last thing I could imagine was a gun that would explode into his brains. Not that I'd ever had a productive imagination in the first place. I neither had the weird dreams or nightmares he did, nor any interesting theories about the secrets of the universe. Nor, indeed, any time to waste with such rubbish. I, a creature that somehow happened to find life in the womb of a female, never took life terribly seriously. Yet I'd been wrong in this too, just the same way I'd been wrong about everything else. Why was I wasting time with all this contemplation, anyway? They were on their way. I might have at most two minutes left to run away. All right, was it possible to escape them? If that were the case, why would my young friend kill himself? If a scaredy cat like him sought solace in death, nowhere was safe. He told me to reach the gateway. The gateway they used to get to our world. His words, not mine. I knew how different it all was in reality. Would he have abandoned the idea of suicide if I'd been able to

explain it all? Somehow I didn't think so. Sometimes truth far outreaches reality. Denial is far easier than acceptance in this case.

'The gateway is on the pier... Inside the pirate ship moored there a hundred years ago.' Then he stared at me with blue eyes on the verge of insanity and yelled, 'You're stronger than me. If you can withstand them, you can send them back to where they belong, back to hell. Avenge me.' No way could I have guessed at the time his meaning that the vengeance would have been for his death. I was frightened, not of failure, but of killing! I had sworn a full hundred years earlier not to kill. The oath of a Knight Templar is sacrosanct, more sacred even than the Holy Gospel. Were I to break my word and raise my sword against anyone, I'd be the last person I would have to destroy. So death appears to be the end whichever path I choose! That's why my heart's beating madly and my palms sweat. An ordained, wise knight is picked to guide each novice. Each one of us is entrusted with training, raising them to maturity, five more knights before our own days are done. But I, I betrayed my master, and the sword that was entrusted to me. I left both in those far-off lands of my upbringing and ran away to this city. I thought I'd escape my own past by running. Wrong again! Something unfamiliar stirred within me on the day I asked my master, 'I have no wish to kill anyone. Why are we learning to kill instead of to live?' For the first time ever I'd realised I might have a choice. I'd chosen to live and let live. My venerable master had warned me, 'Life does not always give you the choice. What will be, will be. Whom the sharp edge of the sword cuts, or who lives; none of this follows from any of our choices. Never forget Him that is greater than us all. No one escapes his own reality. Neither will you.'

Ignoring his counsel, I sailed on the following morning, leaving my village behind. As soon as my ship approached the shore, I set the masts on fire: no one should sail in her again and reach

the lands I'd left. Only the decks survived. The locals created their own legends, as is the way of these things; the pirate ship tale was just one such. These legends didn't bother me, so long as they kept the locals at bay. Until, that is, someone came up with the idea that the ship was a treasure trove, and convinced the entire populace! Every night a few treasure hunters would try to board the ship, and every night some unseen force would repel them, preventing them from reaching the decks. Magic! Nothing beyond the power of any knight. One of our natural talents that we only resort to in the direst hour of need. I had no choice but deny them access to; a knight's ship is just like a person. They, too, are sensate. And belonging is their most highly developed sense. That is why they yearn to return to the lands they were made in. Of course my ship wanted to return. All it needed was a captain, which is what set off the chain of events that concluded with the death of my young friend.

He, too, had been seduced by my ship: he thought he could get his hands on all the treasures of the world if only he took possession of the ship first. He'd beaten a path to the pier, trying a different method every night to board the vessel. In vain, needless to say. My magic is too strong for ordinary mortals. But that's what caused our present troubles. My ship somehow succeeded in being heard. My old masters came here to rescue it, and fetch me back. And it was their arrival that destroyed his sanity. Or rather, their appearance. I had transformed myself as soon as I arrived here. Something I do every winter: change body like outgrowing a shell. This is my secret, what enabled me to blend in with a new body every year. Making me that much harder to catch, too. But my hiding days had come to an end. I would either fight them -and if I won, betray my own oath to stay here-, or turn myself in and follow them back.

Here they come... I can hear them; only two, but capable of screaming as loud as several companies' worth of troops. Their rattling breaths grate on my ears and red saliva turns my stomach. But I'm no different. I, too, am equipped with all the instincts of savage beasts, the wiliness of a fox. I have to transform in order to fight them. But I don't want to. I've lived in a human body for one hundred years; I'm happy with this shape. I like the way I look. I like breathing in this city, strolling through the streets freely and taking my own decisions. True, when I first arrived, the city was prettier and nature more bounteous. Even humans held stronger values. In time, nature grew wilder, picking quarrels with humans: floods, earthquakes and tornadoes... Human-given names all. For things that are little more than the reflection of nature's fury. But despite all the change and evolution, I love this city, and the creatures that breathe within. Without them, there's no point to life.

It is said, wrongly in my opinion, that the greatest difference between humans and animals is the capacity to reason. No: the only thing that distinguishes humans from all other creatures is the capacity to know love, to completely commit to something. Their ability to survive without enslaving themselves to their commitment... The way they choose to live their own fate! And their capacity to err. No other creature could evade extinction in the face of so many mistakes. We knights pay for the slightest mistake with our lives. Yet humans have the power to compensate for the dozens of mistakes they make every day. And most intriguing still: they're totally unaware of the supernatural trait this power grants them!

What distinguishes them is their ability to choose. To choose to believe or disbelieve. To choose to live or die. Which animal can kill itself? Now I finally understand my young friend. I'm no longer afraid. I choose to live with my own free will, like

humans, and die when the time comes. This time it's my master who errs, not me. He, who'd always said, 'Life does not always give you the choice.'

Now I'm going to prove him wrong.



What do you fear most?

What the creature named human is
capable of doing to its own kind.

What do you fear least?

Children...



HAMDİ KOÇ



Excerpt from 'Naked and Alone'

Translated by Zeynep Beler

I was the first person they called when my uncle died. I couldn't believe it. That can't be, I said. It is, they said, your uncle's dead. I don't mean that he's not dead, I'm sure he is, I just can't believe you called me first, I said. Believe us, they said, we called you first. I stopped and listened to the silence behind the speaker's breath. If it were a lie surely I'd hear a rustle, a stirring, something. They were telling the truth. My uncle was truly dead and they were telling me first. I was very moved. This was the first time in my life I was the first to be consulted about anything.

All right, I said, thank you. I'm flattered. I'll never forget this. Also, my condolences to us all. Life goes on. God give strength to the bereaved and all that. If you'll excuse me I'll go cry a bit now. Good night.

I hung up.

It was nearing midnight. I'd been lying on my bed all evening, contemplating the phone sitting on my belly. I'd nodded off.

I'd just had the phone connected that day, in the afternoon, and hadn't expected it to ring so easily. I couldn't even have dreamed that it would ring that very night. I hadn't given anyone

the number. Even I didn't have it memorized yet. I'm bad at memorizing.

Yet I was hoping that giving the number over and over to some girls I'd just met I would memorize it and that they receiving it over and over wouldn't be able to resist calling me one day. In the end every girl wishes to call someone one day. That someone needs to have a phone. That was me. That was when my phone would ring. When lonely girls, exhausted by waiting and fearing, restraining themselves and self-denying, finally succumbed to their burning, longtime desire.

I'm not used to sleeplessness. On days my wife doesn't come on to me I go to bed at ten and get up at five. I get up and go to work straight away. If my wife doesn't come on to me, that is. Because if it hasn't happened at night she's sure to want it in the morning. I'm not allowed to say no. I know that's why she married me. And I want her to stay married to me. I thought I'd go home first and do my duty. There were no minibuses at that time of the night, but I could easily walk to Çankaya. I could run the flat part till Kavaklıdere if need be. I sweated but that was all right, my wife liked me that way too. Ankara being the hot place that it is. Naturally you get sweaty. I'm a bit peculiar with the way I sweat. The sweat pours down my back and belly, into my underpants, pools there. Other people change their undershirts; I change my underpants. When my mother and I went visiting and she saw me sweat as I ran around with the other children, she'd say, come here dear, let's change your underwear. The other mothers thought she was just saying that, that really I'd wet my pants. My mother wouldn't explain. I don't explain either. That's why I've become accustomed to carrying a briefcase. When people see me carrying a briefcase they think I'm someone serious. Changing my underwear has gradually become a habit. In the apartment, for instance, whenever it strikes my fancy, I take a

pair of underpants from my briefcase and go to the lavatory to change my underpants. Or if there are no footfalls or voices or any other sound around my room I do it in the room in a jiffy. It feels good. I get the feeling of having bathed. It's healthy, too. I'm a spanking clean man. That's the kind of man my wife likes. Her husbands, the ones before me, were all meticulous men. But there was no other like me, she says, never has been, never can be. Of course I don't know, how should I. My wife isn't the type of person to lie. Anyway I'm aware of the effort I put in. I can imagine how I must appear. I've even learned not to fart so I won't get dirty, and so the stink doesn't settle on my skin.

I sweated where I lay. It must have been because I was completely still. It was a June night, hotter than usual. I felt like spending some time with my phone before I left. Then I thought of my uncle. In my grogginess I'd promptly forgotten about the phone call just a while ago. That surprised me.

My uncle is dead. That's all well and good except I don't have an uncle. If I had, he was quite possibly dead. But I don't. They've probably connected the wrong number. Those sleep-deprived, dizzy girls on the night shift at the switchboard. I had told the supervisor, it's a slack operation! Best if a man oversees them, sir, if you see fit. By man I meant myself. For some girls among them were the kind I was seeking: with sudden daring looks that came to their eyes, whose breath quickened, whose hairs shivered when you brushed against them. No vacant positions, the supervisor had said. No need for a position, I'll volunteer, I had wished to say, but hadn't. Now one of those girls had made a mistake! I had to tell the supervisor this and make sure to express the gravity, if not paramount urgency, of the matter.

My phone rang again. This time I was a bit reticent. I knew from the apartment, due to the nature of my job, that strange behavior on the part of the phone might mean someone was listening

in. When a line was tapped it made a certain disturbance in the line, like a tiny needle being stabbed into one's body. Normally it would go unnoticed, but there were times when totally improbable signals could spontaneously occur. Among these were the phone ringing once and then stopping, going into a fit of incessant ringing, or ringing normally although there was no caller. It happened rarely, but it did happen. The average citizen didn't know the reason. We knew.

With reticence I lifted the receiver. Hello, I said.

After a quick rustle I heard the voice of the girl on the switch board.

- Long-distance top priority call for you.

It's them again. My uncle's kin. Despite my protests that I won't take it, don't connect me, I don't have an uncle, I'm confronted with the voice from a while ago.

- Son, it said, why did you hang up?

- You have the wrong number, sir, I said.

The voice paused a second, then drew a short impatient breath.

- Aren't you Mesut?

- I am, I said.

- Mesut, it's Kazım Emmi, your uncle's migrant.

The more the voice talked the thicker its accent became. I thought it must be someone who wasn't used to talking on the phone. He was still overcoming his nervousness.

- Good, that's very good, I wish you a pleasant migration.

- You've got to remember me, man! Mesut?! I've practically watched you grow!

The man's voice sounded to me as if it was mildly offended. So I felt the need to be a tad more polite.

- Kasim Emmi, it must be another Mesut you're looking for.

Yes, I'm Mesut as well, but yours must be more, how shall I say this, real than me. You'd better hang up so you don't waste any more money. Top priority calls will cost you. You'll be flat broke.

He wouldn't listen. I know some people are like that. Uncompromising, incontestable people. You can talk all day and they'd still pick up from where they left off as soon as you've finished, as if you'd never said a thing. My father-in-law, for instance, was one of these. His word was law and that was that. This man must have been around the same age. Watched me grow! My ass! I've never felt myself to have grown. Raised, even less.

- Mesutt?!

This was starting to irritate me.

Emmi, I don't want to have to hang up on you, but my wife is waiting for me and she has the right to be happy, so if you'd just leave me alone I'm going to go about my business. You should give that phone number of yours another check. And try not to be anxious. Whoever's dead is dead.

- Yeah, he's dead. You have to come to the funeral.

Now I was really surprised.

- We're delaying the funeral for you. You must come immediately.

I thought about the poor dead man decaying as he waited forever for me to show up.

- I'll come sometime later on, I said. You go ahead and bury him.

The distance between us caused a default silence of a couple of seconds following our sentences. It gave one time to think. To me, and to him. This time the man drew his breath away from the phone and spoke to someone next to him.

- Says he can't come. Says to bury him.

What the person he spoke to replied, I wasn't able to hear.

But the man relayed it:

- No, you have to come. You're the man of the house now.

You have to wash your uncle.

I was stunned into astonished silence. For the love of god!

The man continued:

- There's no one else to wash the body if you don't come. We can't lay him to rest like that. It would be a sin.

I was hearing the most bizarre things, I was frightened and bewildered. Washing the body! Touching a naked corpse! A corpse that would decay in the time it took me to get there, no less! Ewww! They must be raving mad! They were saying these things without the least bit of self-doubt. Maybe they were mountain people, zealots or something. They had complete unquestioning conviction in what they felt compelled to do. They were dumb and obstinate. Yes, fine, they were also well-meaning.

Man, I thought, I'm so glad I don't have such relations in my life.

- Look here, Kasım Emmi, fuck my uncle, he's lucky he's dead, you're the one I feel bad about, you're about to be bankrupted by this phone bill that's multiplying every second. Why don't you just check that phone number of yours again. Perhaps you asked for Adana but they connected you to Ankara. The girls at the switchboard are usually sleepy at this hour.

- Son, you're the only man in the family, there's no one left on your side except you and your aunt. It's your obligation to come and take responsibility for both the funeral and your land; your duty.

It occurred to me that I'd just heard a very significant word. It changed my outlook on the matter.

- Did you say land? I said.

- Land, he said.

- As in property? As in a plot of, a patch of, or real estate?

- Yeah.

- As in a flat, an apartment, a house, or a store, as well?

- Sure.

The shape of things was changing. Right then I sincerely wished I had an uncle who had died. What more can one ask of life, especially one who is in the situation I'm in? Take responsibility for your land! What a lovely remark. Oh, how I wish I had it so I that could take responsibility for it! But such is my lot. I don't. Then, before I had time to say anything, the man's breath retreated from the phone once more. The person next to him was giving instructions and starting to get mad. He came back on the line.

- Your aunt Münevver says to stop wasting time. We've sent a car to your house. It'll pick you up and bring you here. You have to make the noon prayers.

Aunt Münevver! That phrase slowly stirred something inside me. A name, perhaps a picture, belonging to my childhood, my very earliest days. Maybe not all my relatives had died years ago, even if only one; an uncle may have died recently. My uncle.

Uncle Muvaffak. If they'd all had land and I was to be the first name to come to mind at each of their deaths, I'd wish they were all alive and about to die. I was still young. I really needed the money. I still more or less lived off my wife's money. My wife loved me but since I didn't have money she didn't really take me seriously. I guess Allah has remembered me at last. My mother

used to say, you've come here to bear a hard life but the day your luck turns, it'll turn for good. Perhaps that day was today.

I took a deep breath to calm myself. I thought, let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Maybe they just want to get me to wash the body. Fine, I will, but I'll take the money up front. How much does it pay to wash a body, I wonder? Eww! And how? Do you sponge it down? Soap it? Is it enough to soap it twice? Is it a sin if it's not? I wish my aunt had died instead of my uncle. It's easier to touch the body of a woman. Besides because of my wife I'm used to old women's bodies. We'll see. Maybe by the time I get there my aunt will die as well, and I can wash her first to warm up to the task.

- Whatever's for the best, Kasım Emmi, I said. If that's the way of things, if that's how my aunt sees fit...

-Uh huh! said Kazım Emmi. Well done my boy, come quick. Have a good trip.

He was just about to hang up when I cut in.

- Kasım Emmi, I said, I gotta ask you something.

- Kazım, he said. Huh, ask.

- Kazım Emmi, I said, I'm coming and all, but where to?

- What d'you mean where to?

- I mean, where is this place? This Münevver, is she the Aunt Münevver that's the wife of my uncle Muvaffak and are they still living in Ünye? That's what I'm asking. Basically am I coming to Ünye?

- Sure.

- You're calling from Ünye right now, right?

- Sure.

- So that would mean you have phones in Ünye.

- You bet there are! We have everything here in Ünye.

- So then how are you, I mean are you calling from home, or the post office, or a neighbor or something?

He was calling from my uncle's home, using my uncle's phone. The phone that now belonged to me, if my calculations were correct. I'd come into possession of two phones in one day.

Just like that saying about how money makes money. Good. I could report to both my supervisor and my wife from there anytime I wanted. I'm going to have to handle this complication in person, supervisor sir, or my dear wife, is it alright if I stay here a few more days? Because it was important to keep people informed. It was even more important to ask permission. The most important people are the ones that are most adamant about being treated with importance. The worst thing to do on earth is to just disappear. One should always stay in sight even when avoiding debtors. Be frank, modest and gentle, let others be intolerant. I knew from my father, he owed piles of money to the shopkeepers on the fishmongers' street but since he walked past them every day no one ever tried to throttle him. And if one seemed inclined to, he'd say, give me a few more days, I'll pay my debt, I'll definitely pay part of it even if not all. In this way my father spent his whole life juggling debt, and no one ever said no to him. Of course they hadn't anticipated his sudden death, which is another story.

The sound of a carhorn was coming from the street, I noticed it just then. It was blaring in short bursts. It was an idling car, waiting. I told Kazım Emmi to hold and went out onto the balcony. Downstairs, in front of the apartment, was a red car. A Mercedes! I'd only see one of those a couple of times, around Çankaya at that, and stood for a long time watching it go. A tall thin man stood next to the car, looking up. His face wasn't visible. He saw me. My face wasn't visible either.

- Brother, is that you? he said.

Of course it was me, but since I didn't know who he meant I couldn't reply. I hadn't expected them to come get me so quickly.

How they had found my house was another point of interest. No one on earth knew the location of my house except me.

- I think it's me, I said a second later.

He didn't hear me. He raised his voice and called again.

- Mesut Abi, is that you brother?

The man could bellow like a bear when he wanted to. I was terrified the neighbours would find out I'd come into an inheritance.

- Keep it down, man! I yelled. Who are you?

In the dead silence of morning, our voices echoed mercilessly between Kızılay's tall buildings.

- It's me brother, don't you recognize me? The man asked cheerfully.

Apparently I was supposed to recognize this one too.

- I can't make you out exactly, I said.

- It's me, Allahaşükür! We grew up together, brother!

These people appeared to be obsessed with this growing up business. In the yellow light of the street lamp I thought I glimpsed the young man's expression sink into sepia disappointment.

- Ah, I said with a bear's affectionate rumble. Would you look at that! Allahaşükür, man! Is that really you? I didn't recognize you there for a second, you've grown so much!

Allahaşükür guffawed.

- It's been a long time for sure! I wouldn't recognize you either if I saw you on the street.

Rotten liar. He can't see me now either. I'm in the dark. I'm a shadowy blur. So is he, but he doesn't know it.

- Isn't that right! Same with me.

- Brother, they must have told you already, I'm here to pick you up. We can catch up on the way.

- Of course, of course. Wouldn't I just love to catch up. Wait, I'm coming down.

I went inside. There were a couple more questions I wanted to ask Kazım Emmi. For instance, how much would the travel expenses be? It was hundreds of kilometres away. There's the gas, there's food and drink. I had no money on me. I had no money anywhere else either, for that matter. I checked my pocket and found a ten lira bill, a five lira bill, four one lira bills, and three coins of five kuruş each. If there was a setback and we were stranded I'd have to walk all the way back. I took the receiver off the bed.

- Kazım Emmi, I asked, the boy downstairs has some money on him, right? He wouldn't make me pay the expenses?

No answer.

- Hello, I said, the car is here...

Again, no answer. The line was dead. That or the old man had dropped the phone and run when he heard the mention of money.

The rustle was still there, however. Along with faint, very far-away pieces of conversation infiltrating the line. Perhaps they'd started listening in from day one. My line of work had a side like that to it, it had never been voiced outright but I'd suspected and accepted it. Ultimately I was to use my phone only to talk to women, to flirt, mess around, tease and rendezvous with them.

My supervisor already knew I was crazy about women. There was nothing to be afraid of so long as my wife didn't find out. I hung up. It suddenly seemed to me that I might have dreamed

the past half hour. I wouldn't have doubted its reality if not for the part about the inheritance. But now I wasn't sure. Abruptly I felt detached and as though I'd deceived myself.

The phone happened to go dead just when I was about to make the most crucial speech. I went to the balcony again to make sure. The same car was down there. Its headlights were off. The man wasn't there, the street was completely empty. Perhaps it had caught my eye as I was coming home in the afternoon and I'd dreamed up elaborate fantasies and then later, at night, my mind had played a trick on me.

Sadness! Loneliness!

Utter loneliness!

HİKMET HÜKÜMENOĞLU



Now Pick a City

Translated by Feyza Howell

Make it a big one. Write the name on this sheet but mind you don't show me. Fold it carefully and place it in your pocket. All right, done? Good, I've picked one too. I hope it's not the same as yours, or this won't be any fun at all.

I'll start if you're ready.

If your city were a colour, which one would it be?

C'mon, it's not that hard. All right, let me revise the question.

Say you climbed to the highest point in the city and took a photo (there must be a tower, a skyscraper or something, right?)

Then, erasing all the shapes on the photo, you left only colours behind. And say you took those colours, grouped them, and lined them up (you know a brand-new box of colour pencils, lined up like soldiers, just like that) and then squinting, you stared from a distance...

Done it?

Judging by the way you leap in with a, 'green!' without even thinking about it, you must have picked one of those boring cities with empty parks in the middle.

But look, my answer isn't in the least bit boring: sea blue. A blue that tends towards leaden black at times and sewage yellow at others. But mostly a deep blue. And also construction grey.

And also -in the morning mist and at sunset, in particular-brake light red. (When did I ever say you had to pick just one colour?)

Let's move on if you like.

Multiply your city by two. And again. It still can't be anywhere near as big as mine. Let's not waste time comparing surface areas, let's do a very simple calculation instead. How many hours will it take you to cycle from one end of your city to the other?

Not bad.

If you were to ask me the same question, I'd say better not ask.

Because my city has neither one end, nor the other. It's a city with open ends on either side. No one knows where it begins, or where it ends. (No one cycles much here, at any rate; cars are preferred on the whole. And the occasional four-wheel-drive.) You know the sign that says, 'Welcome to our city, Population: 15 million'? That sign is moved every morning here. Always a little further out, a little further out always. It might be taken back in sleepy-eyed error some mornings, a mistake they rectify immediately the following day. And by the way, fifteen million is some random number, it could be twenty-five or even thirty-five. What does it matter anyway? Shakespeare asked, 'What is a city but the people?' He must have been drunk. God knows. Because what makes a city is its roads. Its shopping centres. Its airports and hotels. Its motorways and traffic. Have you ever heard of 'town traffic'? There must be a reason why they say 'city traffic', right?

I was playing this game with someone else the other day.

Between you and me and the gatepost, he didn't look all that bright. He said, 'What makes a city is its cafés and bookshops.' I told him off, 'Have you always been like this, or are you suffering from a vitamin deficiency, mate?' Didn't go down well. I regretted it, of course. So I moved to a different question at once just to clear the air: 'All right,' I said, 'If you were to sling a camera and a book into a bag, could you get lost in your city for an entire day?' As you can guess, I only threw in the camera and the book to please him. I can't remember his answer, not that it matters much. The thing is, one could get lost in my city for weeks, even months, never mind a single day. One could even leave home one morning and never return. Family and friends might get concerned and search, but in vain. A city should be interesting and a little risky at times. And those cameras, notebooks, books and such: they naturally arouse suspicion. Are you a Japanese tourist, a spy or what? Read a book at home if you must.

Gentlemen don't get lost.

You're sulking, you look bored or something.

We have another game for the easily bored like you: the 'Looking Blindly' game. The rules are very simple. Say you're forced to live in one city, when your heart is set on another. What to do then? First, don't let anyone notice it. Not even yourself.

Throughout your waking hours, only see what you want to see, and look blindly at those you don't.

A cup of strong tea in your hand as you cross the Bosphorus, for instance, on a beautiful day, seagulls and all... You've got the picture. That's the time to face away from scoured hills or unfinished tower blocks, eyesores such as these, all right? Throw some simit to the seagulls if you must.

Then say you're dining out somewhere in Karaköy. Watch Topkapı in the dark. Beautiful. Gaze at the minarets, squint hard if you must and stare at the lights of the Golden Horn. Leave the rest well alone.

And when you get confused playing this game, you could tell yourself this:

'I'm a tour bus that only stops at the finest sights.' If you can convince yourself you live in that picture postcard city, you wouldn't mind even if real life oozes stickily alongside those postcards.

Stare blindly out of the metrobus on your way into work in the morning, for instance. Ask yourself what soap's on TV when hanging your head out of the window of your flat that costs a shed load in rent but fails to reveal a single tree. You want to take the kids out for a picnic on Sunday? Don't. Let them do their homework.

If this is too hard to take, you could always dream of some magnificent and as yet undiscovered corner of the city. See how lovely it makes life when you truly believe, in your heart of hearts, that the wonderful city of your dreams hides in that undiscovered corner.

Sorry, I'm afraid I've been rabbiting on. Why don't you warm up a little? Then we could play together.

İNCİ ARAL



Illusion and Fantasy

Translated by Feyza Howell

The world has both enchanted and frightened humankind from the beginning. The boundaries of daydreams, nurtured by thought, and the power of the imagination exceeded the constantly changing world, existing only in humankind's vital illusions. The source of creativity lies in survival, the illusion of defying nothingness. Literature, like all other arts, was born of instinct, and of a desire to overcome the futility of life. Consequently, every piece of work reflects the traces of its creator's quest for, and viewpoint on, the world.

As the secrets of life and the human soul were analysed throughout the process of modernisation, distinctive voices emerged in literature. Authors of fantastic tales such as Edgar Allan Poe, Kipling, HG Wells, Léon Bloy and Stevenson -to name but a few rose to prominence in what is the foundation of narrative arts: storytelling. These writers, who focused on the fundamental issues and questions of life from hitherto unexplored angles utilised the facilities of the imagination firstly, to understand the known world, and secondly, to overcome a disturbing reality. They produced examples of science fiction, of utopic ideas, of the symbolic and the fantastic in line with their own dreams

and mindsets. They wrote supernatural tales for fun as much as to entertain, to overcome the blandness of life or to seek meaning for their own existence. E Allan Poe, who claimed that 'terror belongs to the soul', infused his tales with terror, mystery, prescience, and gravity. Kafka, on the other hand, created unbearably stifling atmospheres in his tales and novels, focusing on the themes of authority and eternity.

Fantasy writers tended, on the whole, to favour a 'nowhere' standpoint as they displayed their perception, language skills and mastery of structure in order to define the unknowable, and to make the non-existent exist. And most importantly, they demonstrated and proved that the supernatural is nothing more than reality, and that fantasy is another word for the future.

The emergence of fantasy in Turkish literature dates to the mid-seventies, with authors such as Nazlı Eray, Hakan Şenocak and Attila Şenkon enriching our storytelling tradition. Notable names in the younger generation are Yiğit Değer Bengi and Çiler İlhan, whose remarkable output promises much for the future. That being said, the majority of our writers regard the genre with inexplicable hostility. Given the present day profusion of science fiction films, computer games, and interest in mysterious forces, fantasy in our literature clearly lags behind.

Fantasy is significant for the vast probabilities and possibilities it offers for the world and for daydreaming, which help to present reality indirectly, yet effectively. Fantasy also possesses great potential for discovering new powers of imagination appropriate for our time, to overcome the content-poor scenes produced for the average person, and to attract anew the reader to the enchanting world of literature.

The external world has lost its splendour; it is now far more terrifying than ever before. Our fears multiply by the day; judgments made on the reality of the world arouse suspicion in us.

Reigned over by misused virtual toys, we suffocate in an environment reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno* or Kafka's *The Trial*. And yet, with conditions being so ideal, we somehow block our dreams out. How difficult can it be to channel our desire to create -and imagination to vanquish the repugnant scenes of a fair-ground where insipid ready-to-consume fantasies are shoved before us in a visual feast that never satisfies?

Perhaps we've been anaesthetised. We fix our exhausted, apathetic eyes on the box and watch 'live' reports of disaster night after night. We stare at images of war and misery, our compassion eroded. We are blown hither and thither on winds of lies, corruption and crisis amidst ambiguity and ignorance. We live in a banal dreamland in a world that has lost its magic. We know everything to be unreal, yet still enjoy believing. As our senses, thoughts, seeing and existence all change, our imagination grows sterile, and our tongue is paralysed.

A technology slick advertising-centric world creates an arts adverse environment as it plays with our desires. Stories, in the meanwhile, are forced into a more limited content than the potential and aspirations of the genre would allow. The reality we live generated countless difficulties in re-creating reality, questioning not only our writing, but also our allegiances.

Literary genres lend themselves well to describing the evils of today's world. They accomplish this with the aid of a vibrant and profuse supernatural world, the fruit of a sophisticated imagination; that is what empowers the stance against all stylistic and emotional hoodwinkery. Fantasy has the potential to show people their own limitations and the cracks in the world. Provided this more refined criticism of the world can help the mind visualise what had eluded recognition, an imaginative tale enriched with the power of expression has every chance of charming anew.



What do you fear most?

Losing my children; seeing them die. I have a fear of insects,
and of cockroaches in particular!

What do you fear least?

I can't answer this question. We live in a truly terrifying world.
There is so much to fear to a lesser or greater extent. Total fear-
lessness would require extreme courage, which I sadly lack.



MARIO LEVI



Excerpt from 'I've Baked You A Pandispanya'

Translated by Zeynep Beler

A few scenes back in my childhood have never faded from my memory. The sounds and pictures left behind the foggy curtain of the past belong mainly to the summertime, therefore to our house in Erenköy, and its memories, where I used to feel better for not having to go to school. I've returned frequently to those days. In my stories, my dreams, and the parts of my relationships that I've kept to myself. They were all one. I carried that one person into all the other times and places whether or not I wanted to. I was always confronted with the same dream, or in fact, the same lie, and I constantly struggled to understand and explain along these traces.

Childhood, adolescence, days of my youth...when I look into this facet of life now, one of the most magical words of those days comes to my mind. Alikobeni... Have you ever heard of this word? Most peers of mine from a similar language and emotional background must have, I'm sure of it. I'll tell you its meaning, or to be more accurate, the moments that give it the most value. But first, in order to explain myself better to you, I must share with you another scene that belongs to me.

Now imagine a child, around nine, trying to pass time on his own. And the scene in a kitchen, the Friday morning bustle of cooking the way it would have been in almost every Jewish home. The meal had to be prepared before the holy evening of Shabbat that would begin sometime in the afternoon. My grandmother, who had voluntarily and perhaps more than a little obligatorily taken on kitchen duty, was at center stage. Voluntarily, as it was an inevitable decision in order for her to believe she had the upper hand in her battle with my mother for authority of the house. Obligatorily, because my mother didn't know how to cook. And she didn't seem to make an effort to learn. Was she cowed by the fact that her mother-in-law was very skilled? Or perhaps this resignation had only allowed her to conveniently wriggle out of an important duty in the house. I believed these prospects for a long time. When I found out that she was deeply resentful and powerless in having to accept her lot, as she had done other times, I was filled with a pain I still can't extricate myself from. It was too late. Like everyone I had no means to change the past. I might find the means in the stories I was to write and the lives I was to reconstruct within these stories, but that would be of no use to me or anyone else. I wasn't just distraught for her, but also for myself. For never having understood her and at the same time, for having to admit that I'd never be one of those men that took pride in their mothers' cooking. Had I surreptitiously taken an interest in cooking in order to cover up this deficit? The very question is provocative. We can let this feeling take us to the beginning of the story. The picture that I want to describe comes from a much-acted-out, much-repeated scene from those years.

The quiet and lonely child of about nine usually sat in a suitable spot on the counter, doggedly and patiently watching his grandmother cook. He had already built himself a world of meal

preparations and smells, to the extent that he knew he could cook, without help and without difficulty, stuffed peppers in olive oil, karniyarik, leek croquettes, aubergine pastries, and even spinach and bean stew. Neither his mother, however, nor his grandmother, nor other immediate relations were aware of this. He too was unaware that what he knew, what he stashed inside himself, would some day come back into his life through the tip of his pen. How could he be aware of it? The future presented to him held neither cookery nor penmanship. But as was the conventional manner, the master had unknowingly passed on the heritage through example. Without having had such a goal. Without the slightest intention or fancy. This was because a woman of such Ottoman upbringing could never abide the idea of a man cooking. It seemed she had taken the events of the scene as a game and not real life. For a child who often felt indifferent towards the outdoors games of his peers, however, this game was being played as a very true story. With all its tastes, colors and smells...

Yet interruptions to the game were still within the bounds of possibility. That would then initiate a different game. On the Friday mornings when my grandmother got into even more of a flap because there would be extra company on Shabbat evening and she would have to cook a larger variety of meals, she didn't like it when I crowded her, as she put it. How could one crowd another on his own? I didn't understand it then, and I don't really understand it now. Who knows for sure what she meant to say. The verdict wasn't decided right away, however, and I'd try to prolong my stay as much as possible even though I could sense my impending expulsion, waiting for her to say the magic sentence. That sentence, the significance of which I'll try to explain to you, containing the word *alíkobení*... 'Get over to Madam Matilda's, you, and ask her for an *alíkobení*...' Madam Matilda could be any neighbor or relative living nearby. Madam Çela, Madam

Roza, Madam Fortune...the addresses and people of the game were interchangeable, so to speak. But the sentence never varied.

‘Get over to Madam Fortune’s, ask her for an *alíkobeni*...’ It goes without saying that I went. With anticipation and joyfulness I tried not to betray. For I knew whatever I encountered wouldn’t disappoint me. The only condition was that, when I rang the doorbell, I clearly stated what I was sent for. ‘Hello Madam Çela, my grandmother sent me here, she said you’re to give me an *alíkobeni*...’ That Madam Çela would then smile meaningfully, her expression one of maternal affection, was very likely, if not downright preordained. Also that I’d then be invited in with a ‘Come on in, pasha, sit down...’ or something of the like. The words varied depending on the houses visited, as did the minute details of expressions. But the feeling was always the same. Always the same tenderness, the same meaningful smile. Only one thing changed, and that was *alíkobeni* itself. *Alíkobeni* could be *borekas* with aubergine or potatoes and cheese, it could be zucchinis with minced meat filling, or *bulemas* pastries, or freshly baked aniseed—therefore dubbed *rakı*-flavored—cookies, or a *pan di Spagna*...*alíkobeni* was whatever had been cooked in the kitchen that day. It meant the double treat of eating at the neighbors’ and sampling the freshly baked meals. You couldn’t miss it for the world. In those days a friend, who ran a clandestine trade in bubble gum football cards and Matchbox cars and was known by the nickname Red Şapat due to his hair color, took the game a step further and began going around to houses at random without having been sent by his mother so he could really get the most out of *alíkobeni*. He also knew the magic words. It didn’t occur to anyone to verify whether he was telling the truth. I remember like yesterday the vicious beating his father, a manufacturer of babies’ dummies whose business was failing a little more each day, gave him when his lie was exposed. They immigrated

to Israel as refugees a year or two later, almost completely penniless. I remember him saying, 'I won't be able to go to any more Beşiktaş games, that's what gets me the most,' as they were leaving. He was attached to his team with all his heart. He had the greatest admiration for Yusuf, whom he claimed to be

'as good as George Best.' We fell out of touch as the years went by. Two years ago we coincidentally ran into each other near the pier in Karaköy. He was the one who recognized me. His hair had fallen out. He had been an ocean-going ship captain on a Russian ship for years. We sat down somewhere and had a chat. His retirement was coming up. He'd married four times. He had a child living in the Crimea, another in Sao Paulo and yet another in Haifa. I couldn't have told how much of it was the truth. To be honest, he gave the impression of still being up to form with his storytelling and lying. At some point he said he could get me good caviar. In fact, he could get me many things. Many things, did I follow...? I followed and I had no doubt he could.

He appeared to have really honed his talents. I asked him how I could get in touch with him and he gave me his card. It only had his name and a cell number. I didn't ask why. Presumably this was sufficient. Perhaps he'd just chosen not to belong to one place any longer. We reminisced about the alikobeni too, of course. We laughed. 'We've become history,' he said. He swallowed. His lips trembled slightly. I didn't pry. Then we got up to leave. It was time for us to go our separate ways. On the way home my alikobeni memories came to my mind afresh. Those homes had each held a different type of conversation as well. Certainly each woman had had her own kind of conversation. I'd noticed it even in those days. I had noticed it but I had not understood for a long time what the things I had lived and experienced had shown me about life. It took years for me to begin to comprehend. And then the scenes I appeared in were no longer as safe

as those. Of the scenes left in my mind from those days the ones acted out by the firecracker Madam Fortüne are the clearest. For she would often tell me racy, erotic stories without a thought for my and her ages. In time I found out that she'd purloined some of the stories from the Arabian Nights and others from Lucrezia Borgia's stories, who in the wake of Madam Fortüne took her scorching place among my childhood heroes. And also that what she knew, she'd learned from Monsieur Hayim, her husband eighteen years her senior. To tell the truth her cooking left much to be desired, though. I would also see in those days that no one woman could have every quality I was searching for, but would fail to accept it for years, surrendering myself to many pointless fantasies.

Madam Fortüne was widowed at a very unexpected time. At some point in the funeral home, she did say some words I could make no sense of: 'I'd just dyed my hair red. I thought he would love it. But he didn't, I could tell. In fact he seemed, I don't know, like he was a little frightened. It was just strange, so strange. As if I had given him some very bad news or...how should I know. I mean, if you touched him he would cry. It's not that he didn't say I was pretty, he did, but his lips were actually trembling. Then he fell ill. In two days, he was gone. It was over, that was it. I am now able to understand a little better why I was told, or rather, entrusted with, this story that was buried in the recesses of my memory, that I've possibly even kept there intentionally. I think I can also see with more clarity the obscure side of the myth Monsieur Hayim had told me on one of our long talks that I'm still not sure I want to recall in their entirety. When he'd heard that I was going to religion classes, he'd asked, 'Do they tell you about Lilith there?' They didn't, I'd said. He'd given me a smile that was both sardonic and sorrowful, and then turned his face away to sit silently for a time. Was he wavering between telling

and not telling? I can ask myself this only now. The likelihood is seriously frightening. But I would have to go into other accounts of our encounters to be able to really explain how I feel. Madam Fortune died a few months after the death of her husband. It was as if someone had done her a wrong turn. Had a curse been put on her home? Considering this possibility and making some of the connections now allows me also to ask this question. I falter. I picture her dissolving into a faraway darkness. Monsieur Hayim is also there looking at me. His smile more affectionate now. He seems to be fearful of being forgotten. I tell him inwardly that I will not. I believe he can hear me. Then I stop. 'Every story has its time,' I say, and go silent.

But I digress. Alikobeni, as you can see, was not only the architect of its tastes but also memories so full of meaning to me. Where was the 'secret'? By the time I learned the truth I had gotten too old to relive these scenes. No one sent me to those women as part of such a game any longer. Would it surprise you now if I told you that this word merely wears the disguise of a sound, but contains the soul of the Turkish language? I was surprised when I first found out. The touch of Ladino, my other native language, had given life to the word. The touch of Ladino, in both the spirit of a very long migration and having already become very much a native of this place, spreading its roots into the soil of this land... Originally, or rather secretly, it was *alikoyni benini*. 'Retain me'—can you hear it? It was a secret password thought up by the mothers, grandmothers, or any of the mostly housebound women of those days when they had too much on their plates and wished to pass their children off to a relation for a while. A game played in the flow of life. A secret game of solidarity and assistance. The humor of it, isn't it subtle? Not to mention warm... but this is just how I feel. Someday, if I can ever venture to tell this story, would I be able to transfer the feeling to someone else? I can't

answer without taking that step first, I know. But to be honest I wouldn't mind constructing a bridge of my words and crossing it with someone I don't know and never will. Perhaps in these comings and goings between kitchens was a life lesson half hidden. After all these years, considering this possibility also makes me feel warm inside.

Do you believe I can get anywhere with this train of thought and what it makes me say? I did, I believed for years. Now memory plays new tricks on me or recalls the past. Hadn't the taste of Madam Çela's unforgettable tezpısti clung to the roof of my mouth as she left for a new life in Batyam, though I'm sure she never knew? When her husband had gotten duped by a cousin of identical title and mixed up in some shady business, he had decided to hastily pack and leave to evade jail, and what was there for her to do but reluctantly follow him and embark on this life-changing path? How can I ever forget the taste of the walnuts, almonds, sesame, semolina and cinnamon melded together in that cake? It had been one of the most delicious alikobeni's. In a sense it didn't disappear completely from my life. Madam Çela had departed as abruptly as the name of the cake she used to cook so well.

Can a connection be made between food and destiny? I was never able to be sure. But to be completely honest, I couldn't discard the possibility. Madam Dayan is the one behind my inquiry. She made a decent liver stew. It was as delicious a dish as it was simple. I've never forgotten the taste of tomatoes in the juices of the liver. It was one of those dishes imprinted on summer days. Perhaps because tomatoes smelled so good then. Nevertheless, the chestnut-flavored lamb roast she called hamim de kastanya or the cheese-stuffed zucchinis she called kuçaras de kalavasa she also prepared to the best of her abilities. I can also conjure her up along with these tastes from her kitchen. She cooked meals

that required handiwork, labor, time, patience, and overall, endurance. And she had it. She was patient, strong, at times a little too keen on detail. Meticulous, on top of it. She's the main reason that in the following years I tried to avoid women who were meticulous and clean to a fault. Can you imagine a woman who frequently warns you not to upset the tassels of the rug, tries to fix them as soon as they fall slightly out of line, and can't help muttering to herself as she does it? Were such challenging meals only to be undertaken by women like her, who tried their best to make life difficult? I'm not sure. Whatever answers are available to such a question, those dishes and all that they conjured up has been imprinted on my life for good.

One can be swept hither and thither when laying stress on rebuilding an entire world out of remembrances. It's possible at any moment to encounter once again those who had appeared to be lost in the darkness. We don't speak of the small light within ourselves for nothing. I didn't tell you about the evocations of *alikhobeni* for nothing either. We have been retained by someone, somewhere...we just never noticed. Yet wasn't life often enriched by what we lived without noticing?

MENEKŞE TOPRAK



The Language of Love

Translated by Feyza Howell

1

She'd never seen such rain in this city. She'd watched the rain a couple of days earlier as it fluttered the fur of the cats huddling under the eaves of her block of flats, cleared İstiklal Road from its flood of humans, and fell overboard from the city steamer's decks onto the sea the colour of pale smoke. Watched it as she got more and more wound up watching the taximeter flip ever higher in the rain-induced traffic jam in that short distance. She'd enjoyed watching the rain pattering on, and flicking off in slender streams, the umbrellas of the people popping into the coffee house nearby as she held vigil at the window. But now they battled through the muddy puddles on the pockmarked tarmac of winding, narrow, grey streets, each of which led to yet another, whilst the dark skies still hungry for more rain –no matter how much they'd already discharged: rain and city folk- gave the impression that rain could easily be the heavens' betrayal of the earth. The large drops that suddenly fell from the wings of a bay window or eaves of a block of flats only served to increase her disquiet. Now the rain on the cramped streets of this city of bright lights, very different from the gloomy, rainy Berlin she'd grown

accustomed to, was dark; it was rag-grey mud. They were edgy and silent. Worse: Aylin was sulking, instead of simply keeping silent. Impossible to tell whether this was a reaction to the menace of these streets they were lost in, or the possible disappointment of the previous night's date. But she was neither close enough to Aylin to ask about the date, nor did she particularly care terribly much. She felt herself to be in a dream world as she watched the windows of houses long in want of a lick of paint, their plaster crumbling, and the flickering, feeble yellow lights behind the bay windows on the first floors, harking back to times of old. Everyone donned the dark muddy colour of these very streets: the children bursting outdoors as soon as the rain stopped, and the adults heading home.

Life was entirely different a few streets from where they lived. And it was highly likely that Mustafa Şahin was a part of this life. He must have been very young then. Perhaps the same age as the man eyeing them warily on the street they'd just turned into: a man stroking his dirty blonde beard, standing at a rotten wooden house door. She recollected her mother saying, 'If only you knew just how handsome your father was!' Yet her mother knew little beyond the fact that he lived in Beyoğlu, on the top floor of a block that overlooked the German church. Or did she know, but refrained from telling more, forgotten perhaps? She'd spent years bewailing: wishing her mother had remembered a little more about this father for her own sake...

The young man's gaze scanned them and the rest of the street with the expression of a someone whose date was late; when they got closer, he fixed his eyes directly on the two women, smarmy, tugging at a non-existent moustache.

Aylin brought her back to her senses, tugging sharply at her arm:

'Best not to hang around here,' she said, an imperceptible tilt of the head indicating the young man opposite. She sounded harsh, and on edge, 'These are menacing places. And it's getting darker. You never know.'

'We could always ask someone which street the church is on. Ask this chap here,' she said, 'There's no one else about.'

'No, no, have you lost your mind? You don't know the people here. Look, he stares like a wolf! You never know.'

'Oh come on, how could he hurt us? Just ask him, why don't you?'

Aylin looked around nervously. Other than two children running away into the distance at the far end, there was no one. It was almost completely dark. Reluctantly, she approached him.

2

Dream

She turns her head towards the void at the end of the street overlooked by the dozens of windows she passes. The green trees crowding at the bottom of the hill, the mosques at the far bank of the Golden Horn whose minarets rise high and the outline of neighbourhoods spilling over the hills are easy to pick out. But trees ought to appear quite dark at this time of the night, in the darkness; not green. She finds herself amongst cypresses and pines when she walks along the narrow path downhill. She can pick out upright stones strewn at random where the trees thin out.

The sound following her whispers, 'The British Military Band're performing at the Small Cemetery.' But what she hears is not a band, it's a doleful violin.

"İstanbullus enjoying themselves" says the owner of the voice, now much closer, walking alongside. She tries to recollect where

she might have met him: his bald head, forehead shining even in this darkness and old, yet healthy and friendly face...

She tries to shake him off by speeding up. Why such doleful music, she wonders, yet it's a lively gipsy tune. The entertainment garden, that popular place. The pretty, leggy Hungarian girls will begin to dance with their troupe soon.

The road appears to grow longer as she walks towards the garden that shines like a ball of light from a distance. She thinks she might have got lost in the intricately winding streets as she tries to find her way amongst the crooked and narrow paths flanked by the trees. She slips on a hard object by one of the tombstones that remind her of minarets, and has to press her palm down on the soft soil to stop herself from falling on her arse. As she pulls her hands towards her feet in preparation to get up, she feels something long and thin. She realises she's holding a bone when she gets up. Startled, she flings it down, and speeds up, nearly running away towards the ever-increasing volume. Her nose identifies a new, dense smell, different from the scents of cypress and pine. Like rotten meat. The baying of wild dogs, nearly by her side...

She finally finds herself in a garden drawn in black pencil, its light a white pastel. People are in constant motion here. She locks eyes with a young man whose sideburns reach all the way to his chin. 'Daddy, daddy!' she shouts out. But how can you be older than your father? No, this is not her father; it's the fine young man who comes to the coffee house every day, friendly, yet indifferent... He comes closer. He reaches out and holds her hand:

'This is our garden of entertainment, everyone's here, look. Come, have fun with us! No young woman should lock herself up in a room on her own, engrossed in the past, in other people's lives... Not healthy, enough to make you sick. Come join people, come have fun!'

A dog passes by, tailed by dozens of others, all emerging from the woods she'd just walked through.

'They're harmless now,' says the old man, 'Now they've got their spoils, these curs.'

A human leg in the mouth of one of the dogs, and a hand in the mouth of another, two fingers dangling... 'Monsters!' she screams. 'No, no, don't worry, they're harmless,' soothes the old man, 'Just the body of a newly interred wretch.' But hadn't she already rid herself of the old man?

'This is a Muslim cemetery, the cemetery of the poor,' repeats the old man, 'They rush to bury their dead in such a hurry that the still juicy corpses of the dispossessed entice the wild dogs here, see.'

NERMİN BEZMEN



Excerpt from 'Kurt Seyt&Shura'

Translated by Pamir Bezmen

The Crimea is a peninsula extending into and surrounded on three sides by the Black Sea. To the North it is connected to the mainland. Thanks to the Krymskie Gory, the Crimean Mountains, protecting it from the cold northerly winds blowing from the barren Russian Empire. These three factors resulted in one of the most temperate climates in Europe. The land was extremely fertile, no tract of it being devoid of vegetation. The highlands were covered by pines cypresses, oleanders, oaks, beeches, alders and birches; on the slopes descending towards the blue sea were some of the finest vineyards in the empire; and on patches of level ground golden wheat ears danced to the 'lodos', the warm southerly winds blowing from Turkey across the Black Sea.

Mirza Mehmet Eminoff was proud of his land. The best golden wheat was harvested on his farm, the best wines of the St. Petersburg and Moscow were made of the zabel and muscat grapes of his vineyards. 1892 was expected to be a good year for the vintners and his produce was almost ripe. He walked around the vines, assessing the quality and gave his prayers of gratitude to Allah, God Almighty. What good quality and productive soil this was: his farms, vineyards, orchards. Of course he had worked

very very hard to develop them as had his forebears since time immemorial. He had heard from his father and grandfather that his family had settled in the Crimea a very long time ago. How long or how many generations ago no one really knew, but the tales he heard from his elders went all the way back to the time when 'Bozkurt', the gray wolf led the nomadic Turkish tribes out of the plateau of Pamir to start their conquest of Asia and prompted the Chinese to build their great wall for protection. During their forays in Europe led by Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun some of these Turkish tribes settled in the Crimea, and during the reign of the Turkish Khazar Emperors experienced almost a millennium of peace, coexisting with Byzantium to the South. Whereas the Asiatic Turks believed in Shamanic Gods, the Khazars had chosen Judaism as their state religion. With the advent of ohammedanizm the Turks of the region converted to Islam. Turks had emerged from the Pamir Plateau as a maternal-isuc, nomadic, Shamanic society encompassing the likes of the warring Amazons, ruling Bilge Hatun and the Goddess Kybele, had in a couple of millennia turned into paternalistic, monotheistic, city dwelling people.

Crimea was annexed by the Ottoman Turks in 1475. The Turkish Tartars who had been living in the area were organised to form the Crimean Khanate as a state of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Bakhche saray was their capital. During the four centuries when the Black Sea was virtually a Turkish lake, the strength of the Ottoman Empire had provided peace and security fort the Crimeans, and the Crimean Khanate had been an outpost against aggression from Russia. The Russians always had a yearning fort he Black Sea and beyond. To invade the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles ad the lands of the Ottoman Empire were an obsession that captivated the imagination of every Czar and Czarine for centruies. The accession to the throne of Peter the First

fueled this desire. Petro, or Peter, The Great or The Crazy, depending on which aspect he was viewed from, had studied the art of seamanship and navigation in Holland, founded a strong navy, joined the Holy Union against the Ottomans, and by invading the Fort of Azak realized the first step toward his dream of descending to the Black Sea. Petro also wanted to annex the Baltic Sea, and attacked the Swedes towards that end. In the beginning he lost heavily. The Swedes advanced all the way into Russian soil. Then their fortunes changed and the Russians invaded Sweden. The Swedish King, Charles the Great, better called Charles the Ironhead, was wounded and took refuge with the Turks by entering Turkish soil in the Crimea. This brought Russian wrath against the Crimeans and as punishment that entered and pillaged the land massacring the villagers. In retaliation the Turkish armies attacked the Russians and surrounded their armies at Prut. Once defeated, Petro the First asked for peace, and Turkish Prime Minister Baltac > Mehmet Pasha, in 1711 granted it, with the stipulation that the fort of Azak be returned to Turkish Sovereignty. This ended the Prut war where the Russian Army could have been totally annihilated.

The Swedes were thus off the hook and the good King Charles the Ironhead returned to his land. As a memento of his sejour in Istanbul he asked for and got the room he had been made a guest at the Topkapi Palace transported to Sweden. He loved his room and used it to the end of his days. It is still being shown to this day at the Swedish National Museum.

The Russians used this breathing time to heal their wounds and in 1736 attacked the Crimea once again. This time they teamed up with Austria, invaded the fort of Azak, then ruthlessly destroyed Bakhche saray, the capital. The Turks retaliated in force, won victories against Austria and Russia and by the treaty of 1739 Crimea was again liberated, the Russians retreated from all

positions, the fort of Azak was raised and its land given to the Russians. Following all this bloodshed Crimea enjoyed 30 peaceful years which ended when Czarina Catherina got megalomaniacal ideas about Crimea, Caucasia the Bosphorus and the Balkans. Initially cautious about entanglement with the Ottoman Turks, she started her plight in the Balkans where she thought Russian hegemony would be easier to establish. Trouble however was to come from a different front. During a foray into Poland, the Russians met with fierce resistance by the nationalists. They pursued them till the Poles took refuge in Turkish soil, the Russians entered and massacred the inhabitants of the village. The Ottomans had no choice but to declare war, and unprepared for such a confrontation lost Wallachia and Moldavia and the Russians crossed the Danube and finally entered the Crimea. The Russian fleet left its base at the Baltic Sea and crossing the Gibraltar reached the Aegean port of Cheshme, where with a surprise attack they burned the Ottoman fleet. It was Ottomans' turn to ask for peace, but this time it did not come cheaply. With the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, the Russians relinquished all the territory they had gained but got the right to keep their fleet in the Black Sea and to exercise religious patronage on the Russian Orthodox population in the Ottoman Empire. Crimea was to become an independent Khanate of Crimea was easy prey for the Russians. With the Russian naval presence right in the Black Sea, the inevitable by the insatiable Czarine Catherina. The fate of the Crimeans was from then on in the hands of the Russians.

Czarina Catherina, Catherine The Great, or 'Matushka', little mother of all the Russians, who had arrived in Russia in 1744 as the fifteen year old, penniless princess Sophia to be wedded to Peter the III. After much toiling and a 'coup d'etat' against him, she had become the fat, vain, nicotine and caffeine addicted gambler of cards and lover of 'vremienchick', 'the man of the moment'

and a despot. And she brought with her new vision. She dreamt of a great Orthodox Empire built partially on Turkish Ottoman land which she would rule together with her grandson Constantine... Byzantium redux. To show her strength and draw European support for her project she organised a big bash for foreign dignitaries. The show cum party on the coast of Crimea which lasted six months had taken her lover Gregory Alexander Potemkin, a subaltern during her coup d'etat, and soon afterwards a general in the Turco Russian war, turned lover and escort, four years to engineer this voyage into dreamland, a fantastic show of 'son et lumiere' designed to impress the foreigners.

1786 saw the founding of the city of Ekaterinoslav, 'Catherina's Glory', by Potemkin, complete with a palace, a silk stocking factory, housing for workers, two hothouses and plans for a university, an academy of music, law courts, an Exchange, textile plants, and to cap it all a cathedral to outshine St. Peter's of Rome.

In January 14, 1787 the three thousand hand-picked guests departed from St. Petersburg with huge troikas, sleighs decorated as palace rooms inside. After touring Russia for four months, in May they boarded an eighty vessel arada at the Dinyeper River, and set sail for Black Sea towards Crime, the *raison d'etre* of the whole shebang. The guests were flabbergasted to see all along the way on the shores of their itinerary, young people in their national costumes singing, dancing merry making, shepherds playing their flutes, Cossack and Tartar soldiers in shining uniforms performing military drills and war games, English gardens under artificial waterfalls, villagers singing under skies lit by firecrackers. In Bakhche saray, where Catherina ascended the throne of the Turkish rulers, Cossacks of the Don and Tartar Turks performed, in great discipline and harmony, battle games the dignitaries had never seen before. During the whole night the flames of an artificial volcano lit the Moorish Gardens. All this show was to

impress the visitors and prepare them for the 'Megalo Idea', the great ideal, in the mind of Catherina. She used the ancient Greek name 'Boristhenes' for Dinyeper. At the port of Kerson, inscribed in Greek, they read 'This is the road to Byzantium.' Finally, at Poltava, the battle of Poltava where Swedish King Charles XII had been defeated by Peter I, was enacted theatrically as if it were a true battle. Then they inspected the Black Sea Fleet founded by Potemkin, in military port of Sivastopol, cannons firing into the night and heard the soldiers lined on board the vessels chant 'Long live our Empress of Pontus Euxinus!' As a Grand Finale.

All this could hardly reflect the true Picture. In four years, Potemkin the one eyed giant had built a huge cardboard theatrical set for his great performance. The guests at the mega tour were surely assessing how this voyage to dreamland was staged. The only people who knew the truth were Gregory Alexander Potemkin and the Crimean Turks of the era. After all that had happened, the conquest, the hurt, the misery, how could the Turks have greeted her with such enthusiasm? That is another mystery to be solved. One person who was indeed taken in by this show was Joseph II of Austria who signed an agreement with Catherine against the Turks, despite the fact that after laying a cornerstone at Ekaterinoslav he had skeptically declared: 'Catherina has laid the first Stone, but I have laid the last!' The Crimean extravaganza Potemkin faked to make his loved one happy, turned into a passion. In 1784 he built a naval base in Sivastopol, and then in 1794 another one in Odessa, thus bringing Russia up to a naval power status in the Black Sea. He was so taken by the military prowess of the Don Cossacks and Crimean Turki that he formed and trained crack divisions of them, directly connected to the Czarina for her own security, thus founding The Czar's own Hussars.

NERMİN YILDIRIM



Excerpt from 'The Map of Hidden Gardens'

Translated by Feyza Howell

Each to one's own

No one could remain unmoved as Nevzat waxed lyrical about inventors and their miraculous inventions. With every name, dozens of questions rushed into my mind. Goodness knows how extraordinary they were, and how merry their worlds must have been in comparison to my humdrum life.

These enchanting thoughts set my mind ablaze with the desire to know as my spirit yearned to experience it all. Then one day I discovered -although I was born into my own life- I could still live theirs. Of course: I could don unfamiliar lives like so many fancy garments, and float from one spirit to the next, never moving from my seat!

It all began when Nevzat appended a long-winded speech with Kutbettin Şirazi, who'd stolen a march on everyone else in deciphering the rainbow. Words sweet as lumps of Turkish delight made me wonder what had inspired the scholar in question to gaze so long at the skies, long enough to analyse the rainbow.

Embroidering those striking colours on a piece of cloth stretched on my frame, I tried to feel like him. Enough, perhaps, to grasp

a little bit of his passion and share his excitement. In the following weeks, whenever I was bored, I gazed long and hard at the skies from my seat under the gazebo persuading myself I was in Tabriz and not in the mansion's garden, I was curing Teküdar as I solved celestial secrets. As if you could become Şirazi by staring at the skies... I gazed so long that -believe it or not, I finally enriched my soul with a little bit of his!

Another time I got hooked on Hezarfen. Sitting on the gazebo sofa, I'd be engrossed in sweet daydreams whenever I got bored with being myself. Eyes wide open, I dreamt in broad daylight I was Hezarfen, master of a thousand sciences, I knew lots. I read Cevheri, watched birds in flight, and mentally designed all types of wings. All with no trouble whatsoever; I never even got up. Climb Galata tower from my seat, for instance: no problem! My cool expression would prompt my mother to tell me to get back to work; her reward would be a gracious smile as if she was one of the crowds cheering me on. One last look at the folk lining up below like coloured beads before closing my eyes and I'd launch myself at the deep blue silk. As I glided rapturously, my father who vanished out of the door after asking how I was -the answer being a matter of indifference to him would be Murad IV. Little did he know he'd soon give me a purse of gold before exiling me all the way to Algiers, threatened by my mighty mind.

Don't misunderstand mate, I've not lost my mind. All I did was to cheer up my exceedingly dull life. Of course I've always known who I am. Also who I am not, and so set my heart on other lives. I knocked on every door, experienced every life and adopted every identity to escape myself. I'd discover electricity one day, and single-handedly compose an entire concerto the following. So I discovered a new continent yesterday after a long journey across the seas? Then I'd pen a novel in Frankish today. At first I only picked real people, donned their souls and

filled the blanks with made up stories. But then I began to create out of nothing, inventing people that never existed and stepping into their shoes.

All my games had to be kept secret, and they were. Otherwise -at best deciding I'd lost my mind people would break their necks to deny me my only bit of fun. So I played all on my own for many years. Never sold a single ticket.

Flummoxed by my apparent tranquillity, my parents had no idea how to interpret it; they couldn't even begin to imagine the inner parade of four seasons. Worried I'd become a recluse since I'd dropped out of school, my father may have believed this to be a just fate. Madame Lefepre threw me together with people my age, dragging me to five o'clock teas or the occasional weekend picnic. Not that I minded, since my game could accompany me anywhere. My mother, concerned about me sickening again, paced up and down in the house and banged on about all those books I'd been reading, her forehead bound with a cotton headscarf like when she had a migraine attack. All this reading would only strain my eyes and addle my brain. Wouldn't it be better to distance myself a little from these books incapable of contributing anything to my family life, and focus on handicrafts instead?

Housekeeper, on the other hand, disagreed: the general consensus may have been depression, but she was convinced this was the work of the kind ones, with whom she was extremely close, and asked them to hold their nasty companions at bay. Since my father had absolutely forbidden her to dabble in demons et al, all such work usually took place in the linen room with my mother's consent. These séances during which no one other than Housekeeper saw or heard anything concluded that a pesky, bored demon had settled on my heart, plaguing me with its games. But its secret was out now. All too soon it would be chastised by its own ilk and sentenced as required. 'Such irritating ones are

hard to bring to heel, yet it is possible nonetheless. Never you worry, child; just recite three Qul Huw Allahu Ehads and one Al hamd'ulillah. Turn mirrors face down at night before bed, and pray silently before getting up in the morning,' she'd say. Then she'd thrust into my hand all manners of prayers, talismans and enchanted grains obtained from hags of strong breath. The more I listened to her, the more I realised I wasn't the only player. Everyone played a game in this life, some openly, others secretly. That was the only way of coping with the ache of wounds sustained in this garden called life.

My favourite children's game is Hide and Seek. It's good to find, but seeking is even better. Hiding is good, but sometimes being found is not bad at all either.

NERMİN YILDIRIM



The Earthquake Room

Translated by Feyza Howell

This was a tiny room. A room covered in newsprint and sheets of paper on the walls and ceiling and everywhere else. The only furniture inside: a small wooden desk, a chair, an old computer and dusty bookshelves. The rest of the space was entirely filled with documents, newspapers, notepapers and books.

The room could have been independent of the rest of the house and it was made even more unnerving by the flecks of dust floating around in the stuffy air. Like the locked rooms in horror films and fairy tales. Like the rooms that hid their masters' important secrets; any hapless stranger who dared open the door would never ever get heal. What popped into the mind was Blue Beard's locked room where he concealed the severed heads of his wives.

I was even more astonished when I approached a little and peered more closely. All these sheets of paper shared a common characteristic. They were all on one single topic: earthquakes. This little room looked like Rıdvan's hiding place for the history of the world's earthquakes. He'd piled newspaper reports, books entire and in sections (some had even lost their binding;

their first twenty pages ripped out, and the books thus forced to start at the point they piqued his interest), and notes he'd taken who knew to what end. I say piled, because they all looked like they'd just been left all over the place at random.

The walls were all papered in similar material. Notes of varying sizes, like memos, stuck to sheets of newspapers covering the walls. But so overpowered were they by the mess that they couldn't possibly function as memos of any sort. I still tried to read the notes I believed Rıdvan had written himself.

'The Biggest Earthquake that Took Place in Turkey Between 1500-1800' This headline in large letters was followed by more information.

'Date: 10 September 1509. Place: The Sea of Marmara. Magnitude: 7.4. Deaths: 5,000. Devastation from Bolu all the way to Edirne. The Seraglio, the Hagia Sophia, Beyazid II Mosque, Fatih Mosque and the Galata Tower all sustained serious damage. The Land Walls collapsed.' Right next to it was a yellowed sheet bearing details on yet another earthquake from way back when:

'Place: Izmir. Date: 10 July 1668. Deaths: 4-5,000. Three quarters of all public areas collapsed. Fourteen mosques collapsed.'

The notes and earthquakes continued, side by side, top to toe, in a terrific jumble. Reading the notes on the walls taught me that in the 9 May 1717 Kayseri earthquake eight thousand died, that in the 20 January 1544 Eastern Anatolian earthquake buried half of Elbistan, that the breaking of the Marmara Fault Line between İzmit and Gelibolu on 22 May 1766 –third day of the Eid al Adha- killed five thousand, and that in the 1894 Istanbul earthquake –known colloquially as the 1310 AR earthquake- the sea first retreated by 200 metres, and then battered the coast in gigantic waves.

I had absolutely no idea where Rıdvan gathered all this data, or how. A very long list was stuck to the wall by the desk. A pretty scary list of earthquakes. A list consisting of hand-written notes stuck one below the other. I got as close as possible and began to read:

20 June 1943 Adapazarı-Hendek Earthquake

5 May 1966 Aydın Earthquake

20 February 1956 Eskişehir Earthquake

13 September 1986 Kalamata-Greece Earthquake

28 February 1970 Gediz Earthquake

6 May 1976 Udine-Italy Earthquake

27 June 1998 Adana-Ceyhan Earthquake

The list carried on in this vein. Rıdvan had filled over a dozen A4 sheets to this end. Unnumbered A4 sheets glued side by side, one above the other, in no particular order. The dates and places approached and moved away. There was no obvious order, neither geographical, nor chronological. And as far as I could make out, the list didn't even follow the order of magnitude. I couldn't work out how, or even why it was made.

All this looked like a trick in terrible taste, done to intimidate the visitor. Records of earthquakes, records of deaths. What a rum thing to do! What was the point of this demented pursuit?

The reason for this bizarre pastime that clearly demanded a good deal of attention became clear when I raised my eyes to the ceiling. The majority of the newspapers covering the ceiling announced the same thing: the 1976 earthquake. The reports may not have been legible, but the headlines clarified it a little. Van,

1976. The earthquake that killed Rıdvan's mother and sister. He'd told me on the day he explained how he'd met Şinasi.

I remembered the day he told me how he'd suddenly stopped teaching and come to Istanbul after the earthquake.

That someone who'd lost a mother and sister to an earthquake might be especially sensitive was to be expected, but this room far outpaced any sensitivity; if anything, it was terrifying. If I didn't know Rıdvan –but did I really?– the sight of this room would have left no doubt at all that he was mentally unhinged.

A little more inspection gave me a headache. This was no place for insomnia. Shutting the door behind me, I left that bizarre world. I made straight for Rıdvan and curled up next to him. I fell asleep, wondering what he did in that little room.



What do you fear most?

The image of ships leaning slightly after dark in the shipyard, the huge, cylindrical, concrete factory warehouses, and gigantic heaps of rubble out of which might leap what unknown monster I couldn't begin to imagine... And another thing is ruins: The devastation left behind by something or someone.

What do you fear least?

So long as it doesn't involve some disaster striking those I love, I'm not frightened of loneliness. Who'd be scared of loneliness when there's heaps of rubble?



OYA BAYDAR



The City is Playful

Translated by James Önder

'The city makes you free' was the motto in medieval times. When villagers escaped the oppression of feudal rulers and settled down in newly established cities, they were hungry and miserable, but at least they were free. The city does not free people anymore; people living in cities look for freedom in plays, because a play is a field of freedom, it is the opposite of 'work', it is not a mission, it has no obligation, it is a voluntary act in which people obey the rules under their own free will, it is an answer to the search of a new trial life that is built in a fictional reality that does not exist in daily life.

At the same time, a play is an attempt to adapt to new rules and a new life. It is a way to get away from cramped environments, where everybody controls everybody, that are shaped by life under the oppression of customs and traditions, it is a way of liberation although it is fictive; just like a city. Both a city and a play make one free; at least we think so. Then a city's own rules and restrictions descend upon us and this time in order to escape the city's rules one takes shelter in a play.

Every kind of play is played in a city. City life is the aggregate of the plays performed, under certain rules, by people who are involved in the most intricate, most complicated relationships. If a city is the center of civilization, the play as a mask is the essential accessory of civilization. In the city people walk around with masks and hide behind masks; city-dwellers are both players of daily life and spectators of it. The performance turns out to be more colourful, more spectacular depending on how big, how magnificent, how fascinating a city is.

Istanbul is a play. Istanbul is a great play that has been performed in front of a wonderful décor for thousands of years. Sometimes a tragedy and sometimes a farce; and now mostly a carnival accompanied by a thousand pieces of cacophonous music.

The city is where real life and play are nested, blended, where real life is transformed into a play and a play into real life. A great crowd of people where in every district, in every corner, in every square a different fancy-dress and mindset ball is being held. A big stage production where the outsiders lose themselves and the locals think of themselves either as the main character or as a bit player. A city where, while a revolution practice is held in the rebellious square, the call to prayer in Muslim districts rises; and becoming more and more scarce, the peels of bells of churches are mixed either with arabesque or belly dance music; the glory of Byzantium is reflected in the purple sky during sunset, while on the Bosphorus, boats sail along between the hills covered with redbud trees; on a stage where the shadows of the newbie skyscrapers cover the wise and experienced palaces, everybody concentrates on his or her own play; a place where people who are crushed under the heavy burden of real life look for freedom and hope: Istanbul...

Istanbul is a stage, a play maker, and a fair where every kind of play can find a place. Here everybody performs his or

her own play. The ghetto boys who play soccer in garbage hills among hovels are either Maradona or Pele. In the middle of the luxury and lushness of the plazas that are frequented to be seen by women and men right out of a fashion magazine, the famous and the unknown play love games. In coffee houses where men are too busy gambling, ladies' gatherings are the scene for coffee fortune-telling. In the stadiums, when hot blooded fans run onto the field, the game and reality, the spectators and the players are all mixed. When traffic stops and wheels no longer turn, all peddlers sell their products with unbelievable tricks. When street gangs get involved in bloody wars in the back streets of poor neighbourhoods or youngsters who are hungry for food, a job and a future quarrel with the police, you watch the game of violence as though you are watching it on screen. And then, you find yourself on a magnificent stage when the sun goes down and the last sunlight vanishes from the silhouette of the city and the minarets of the ancient mosques.

Cities are playful, they encourage people to play games, drag them into games, make games out of reality and create illusions. And especially, if that city is Istanbul...

ÖMER ERDEM



Adam's Apology

Translated by Nazlı Gürkaş

I apologize to three roses; the rose, hyacinth and the thorn
I apologize to three waters; wine, zam-zam and the River in
Eden
I apologize to three cities; Jerusalem, Mecca and Istanbul
I apologize to three sins; death, migration and love
I apologize to three sides with my three mouths,
To the dawn rooster, tooth worm and harnessed horse
And I apologize to the pigeon, hoopoe and crow
I apologize to three lights; the sun, light in water and the moon
I apologize to petrol, olive and soap
I apologize to sound, pen and paper
I apologize to three ears of grain
to the sunflower, opium and wheat
I apologize to my three daughters
Eve, Belkis and Cleopatra

I apologize to my three sons
Ishmael, Jacob and Joseph
I apologize to three sounds and three books
to the revelation, echo and cave
I show the place with my three fingers
I apologize to three slaps, three paws
to the dependent woman and child
I apologize to three weapons
To the arrow, rifle and atom
There are three buttons on my waistcoat
I apologize to my abdomen
I apologize , you see
to the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates
I apologize with my one eyebrow to my two eyes
to the sheep that lost its shepherd
I apologize to three lies
heaven, hell and purgatory
moreover, I apologize
to my son Palestine, to my March flower Damascus
I apologize
to the bitten apple, ripe fig, split pomegranate
'the beginning of odd numbers is 3'
I apologize three times at once to
The race of greed, the race of language and lineage of fire
I apologize, repeating three times

to the poemless poet

to the poemless poet

to the poemless poet

Thus says Adam. He counts stars, nameless stars timeless.

This doesn't seem difficult to Adam. He rests Friday, Saturday
and Sunday.

He drinks water from the fountain. He chews the wheat. He
wipes fig on his forehead. Adam turns and apologizes to Adam

ÖMER ERDEM



Mirage

Translated by Feyza Howell

How many people inhabit my present state one taken out for a
bit of fresh air like a baby by another walking in front, lost in
thought yet another state both baby and lost in thought unde-
fined, unaware of himself one that I've yet to know
sometimes pops up when reading the paper
succumbs to the arrows of the sun
in the steam of the boiling water
hops, gasping for breath
as if he had run over from a distant part of town
unable to find a seat
as if he had witnessed the fall of the Persian empire
his lungs embers of fire
he waits in a queue
to transform into another me
neither a question of bed in his eyes
nor cocking an eyebrow

how many states can a person don in this universe
wherein no horse may dream a tiger's dream
nor a rose blend with the green grass
even if the two grow on the same soil
where in vapour and water behave differently this human, this
endless possibility
becomes one, then another, then another in me from plant to
beast to object to spirit
he becomes all, dons all types just like my state now
eyes tense, like a fantasy cat
looking for a quiet hole for its fur concealed in its paws
looking for a trait, a bit of a safe shade
by the bee-eaters, nettle berries and brotherly thorns
a swaddled baby knows nothing of going too far
as if he knew my state to the right
handing out matches wrapped into paper arrows
saying light these up, burn them
my quieter, my Nestorian state
tells them both to shut up
the world is not evil
the world is not evil
the world is not evil
-even if he never believes the interior voice-
tell me, how many states can a person assume on this earth
my state today out of my state yesterday
amongst thousands of worn jackets

confused, lost its own wrinkles
the voice I'm accustomed to
first sticks in my throat
then leaps over my height, deafening my ears
like smashing against rocks
my hands sometimes mine
my feet rabbit's flesh
a bulrush in the marsh
and yet another state of mine seeping through
settled in the fiery swing
sits down to write a letter to the me of three and thirty years
to come
his tone a sharp sneering scimitar
a summer hat in the searing sun
a fair maid's wrist stretching out to a crystal glass the sky pointed
out to a bird
unaddressed
an unaddressed letter, stark in its void



What do you fear most?
Becoming inured to fear.

What do you fear least?
I've yet to encounter anything that didn't scare me.



YİĞİT BENER



Excerpt from 'The Return of the Spectre'

Translated by Feyza Howell

Neither inside the circle, nor outside... Bang in the middle of the sea!

Picking for my residence Heybeliada,* the island staring Istanbul right in the face yet sufficiently distant, after dozens of years of trying to live in various neighbourhoods of the octopus city was obviously no random choice.

Why Heybeliada?

This tiny island welcomes ferry loads of people descending from the metropolis: wealthy migrants, the summerhouse tenants of few months; day picnickers pouring in from the slums; students decanting their merriment onto the picnic grounds at Değirmenburnu; girls sporting headscarves or miniskirts in their boyfriends' arms, dragging their passion into the shadows of the pines, far from evil eyes; Greeks -some old islanders themselves- circumambulating historical Orthodox churches and monasteries on saints' days; and growing numbers of foreign tourists, albeit not as many as those attracted by the neighbouring Büyükada...**

The multicultural genes of this island debar the bigotry peculiar to the conservatism of small communities. No question here of me getting lost or feeling alienated, either of my own accord, or by someone else's design.

* Halki.

** Prinkipo

Heybeliada is first and foremost the only fulcrum in my life fragmented between over here and the many 'over there's... The place I miss most when I'm over there.

It harbours happy childhood memories: laughter ringing out at uncle Nusret and auntie Necla's, family friends sharing part of our summer holidays... Phaeton trips and the thrill of climbing the wooded hill on donkeys... Enjoying ourselves on rowboats and beaches... Chasing Tonton, the landlord's dog, a curly white ball of wool... Bucketfuls of mackerel I caught off Kaşık Island and the massive tub gurnard accidentally biting on my hook... The taste of those large Değirmenburnu mussels we dived for... The dreams triggered by miniskirts that first tickled my fancy away from childhood...

Not that it's all been a bed of roses since that childhood: the open-air cinema, for instance, was demolished. The sanitarium closed down, burnt down, to be precise. The Navy commandeered the entire eastern shore, including the Şafak beach and restaurant, and closed it all to the public. Nor could you ride a donkey any longer. Official vehicles creeping up in numbers occupied the streets, as if accustoming the islanders to a much bigger and deadlier motorised vehicle invasion. The massive Navy personnel bus shuttling between the sites at opposite ends of the island easily converted Refah Şehitleri Road into a rally piste. A new primary school rose at the bottom of the Priest's Mountain, competing with naval housing in charmlessness, testimony to the anti-aesthetic movement in architecture. And a new naval lycée was erected facing the ferry station: a hideous pile of concrete, a monument to ugliness crushing the elegance of the adjacent historic Naval Mansion.

Thankfully, despite all this environmental pollution that does Heybeliada such an injustice, a stroll along the streets will still be rewarded with fine buildings vying with their neighbours in beauty, wooden mansions, graceful manors, and extraordinary gardens adorned with blossoms in a myriad of colours, oleander and palm trees.

The forest has so far been spared the catastrophe that seared through Burgazada and turned it into a bald mountain, despite the irresponsibility of picnickers persistently barbecuing on dried leaves: imposing -albeit blighted pines still continue to festoon the island...

A gigantic orange-and-blue sea bus stage languishes idly throughout the winter, blocking the embankment where restaurants and cafés line up past the old ferry station now largely abandoned since the Islands-Bostancı line was handed over to commercial boat lines with their pitifully inadequate diminutive stages; anyone struggling to catch sight of the sea behind this wall of ferry and boat stations can still wander over to Değirmenburnu for a decent meal in the shabby country restaurant nestling in the woods, relatively cheaply too... for the time being!

You can still take a grand tour by phaeton and even go for a swim at Çamlımanı, recently revived after being left to its fate for so long. At the other end of the island stands Sadık Bey Beach, sprinkled with too-loud loudspeakers between chaise longues in the shade of the trees, sadly smartened up into the 'Green Beach Club'. Its entrance fee reflects the obvious envy of the newer, smarter and more modern Water Sports Club next door, the members-only club with a swimming pool.

The pickle seller at the entrance to the beach has long since gone, so a refreshing drink of tart juice ladled into thick glasses is no longer available; but there still is an ice cream seller at the corner of Heybeli Mektep and Abbaspasha Streets: the prize at the end of the hot and sweaty climb back from the beach... The Roma Ice Cream facing the ferry station is still as good as ever. And a decent jazz bar opened next to the pink mansion.

Heybeliada thus is a perfect sanctuary for spectres seeking peace like me, offering the opportunity to meet others similarly washed up on these shores. Drop in for a cup of coffee or a glass of sage tea and a good heart-to-heart in waterfront coffee houses.

Clamber up narrow streets towards the hills, or slip amongst the heath shrublands up the Lovers' Lane towards the cemetery, greeting old-time spectres who found peace here in the past...

There's more: the wind whispers a greeting in Greek on the path winding up to the Seminary. Hüsni Arkan's verses sing of our fellow citizens disgracefully banished from their ancestral Halki decades ago, away from this paradise on earth they had created: Spring smoke settles on the Islands / Your breath on my face / So many black Septembers, you've yet to return / Even the winds are shamefaced...

Ultimately it is here on Heybeliada that I feel utterly at home, for perhaps the first time in my life.

I've yet to shrug off my old puzzlement. Thankfully İrfan the contractor and his elder brother Levent, their younger brother Bülent the estate agent and his partner Hüseyin, Yunus the grocer, uncle Ali the greengrocer and his son Kadir, Uğur the fishmonger and Mahmut the butcher, the tradesmen I greet daily are now accustomed to my wide-eyed indecision and mood swings; they might even have accepted me just as I am.

When they sense I'm in a hurry, they hasten to my help. We have a great chat if I'm in a good mood... But when I'm away with the fairies or act timidly like a domestic tourist from the slums on his maiden visit, they leave me alone with a, 'That's just his way...' Never a word, even when I stare blankly and leave their shops without buying a thing.

That's what I love about Heybeliada: familiar and loyal enough to divest me of my sense of alienation whilst respecting my eccentricity...

Neither inside, nor outside the circle... Bang in the middle of the sea!

A shelter whose boundaries are defined, one where I can entrust what pours out to the waves, even when it opens out...

A perfect spectre cocoon.

YUSUF ÇOPUR



The Other Within Us

Translated by James Önder

We can call the totality of values that makes a society a national culture. Broadly speaking art, and specifically literature, are a part of national culture. Literary works are maps of life of the society of which they are a part. Literature, from the most general point to the finest detail, enlivens and reflects in a most detailed way the connection of a society to life, its way of hearing and thinking, its perception of the world and its psychology at historical milestones. The most significant way to discover a nation's moral and material worlds goes through its literary works.

The Function of Literature

In general, attempts to identify the function of literature throughout history are made by highlighting two of its characteristics. While some considered literature as the tool to express personal emotions, experience and excitement, others saw it as a training method to solve social problems. I think both of these 'goals' that are attributed to literature are incomplete. It would be very unfair to oversimplify literature to the level of personal emotions or just to consider it as a tool to solve social problems.

Literature incorporates both of these views but has an independent function as well. The subject of the function of literature brings to mind the issue of literature – reality.

Literary works are fiction. That is why they provide their authors with the opportunity to open up. For example, historical facts are ordinary but they avoid this trait when they are a part of a literary work. They become lively. However, be it either history or any other discipline, every scientific fact can be learnt through books written for that specific discipline. Literary works that are fiction stimulate the reader's imagination and enable him or her to travel to the related field (history, philosophy, etc). This is why literature is effective in heading towards the facts of science rather than telling them.

Literature and Society Prof. Dr. Ramazan Kaplan, who is known for his research and work on the subject, put forth the impossibility of neglecting the concept of 'benefit' when considering literature alongside social notions, and points out that the function of literature is the subject of discussions by antique philosophers as pioneers. Plato is aware of the effects of literature on society and believes that objectionable parts of literary works can influence negatively the education of youngsters. That means that literature has a significant effect on individual and social form. This understanding is still very alive today although its form and qualities have been altered. Whereas for Aristotle, literature is a tool to collect knowledge. As in the case of tragedy, his ridding negative passions from the soul through stimulating pity and fear, thus aiming at the virtuous man is a notable success in the name of literature.

A trustworthy narrator?

Literature is the common memory of families as well as society. This is why, to form a common ground in a family, there is need for commonly read literary works and culture. But, is it

possible to talk about a trustworthy narrator for these literary works and culture? Primarily, since it is art, it is not possible to talk about a trustworthy narrator. The author does not need to stick to reality to create his or her fictive work. Otherwise, what is written is history. At this point, the concept of alternative history comes to mind.

Alternative History Writing

When one talks about alternative history, the following question should be asked. Is there a need to write alternative history?

Besides, history is a science. It must show the truth as a science.

This is why if all truth is written, there is no need for an alternative. There is no alternative to something which is true. The mistakes of history can be amended via science and documents.

Alternative history is open to abuse. In that sense, it is better to focus on truth rather than on alternative history.

Literature focuses on how rather than what In a Radikal Kitap interview with Haldun Hürel, whose works are historical fiction, about his last novel *Kemankeş*, the author made a point by saying that in history, it is more important to focus on 'how' to tell things rather than 'what' to tell.

According to Hürel, someone who writes or reads history has a chance to sympathize with history, rather than fearing it, if he or she can find similarities between today's life and the life at that time. From this point of view, historical novels (and literature for sure) have a very important place in revealing and developing a society's historical consciousness. However, history cannot be learnt from novels, but those novels help people enjoy history.

And when people who start to enjoy these novels develop a sense of curiosity towards history a process of awareness may be

initiated. Besides, a historical novel is never a reflection of history itself. It is only a point where history is fictionalized and interpreted. Although objectivity is of critical importance, all history writings are fiction. Because, history is narrative and as all narrations it reflects a subjective point of view.

Prof. Dr. Kemal Karpat, in his book 'Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Edebiyat ve Toplum (Literature and Society From the Ottoman

Empire to the Present', emphasizes the importance of literature as a sociological tool to reflect social concepts. Thanks to literature, instead of observing society directly, Karpat is able to reach amazing assumptions by only reading a work of a man of letters that put things in a brilliant way and underlines the opportunity to describe social relations, events and structures that took place in history through literary works, especially in social history research.

Literature, thanks to the setup and freedom that it distils from imagination, keeps on telling about human beings and everything related to them, independent of all sciences. Even though the fiction vs reality debate in literature is still going on, its human reality is an indisputable fact. Either as a tool or as a goal, literature will keep on travelling through the capillary vessels of mankind's psychological world which has not been nor ever will be deciphered. Literature, which feeds on the society it lives in and feeds the very same society, will talk about humans and their unchanging issues from generation to generation and will live with us for eternity as the other one within us.

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