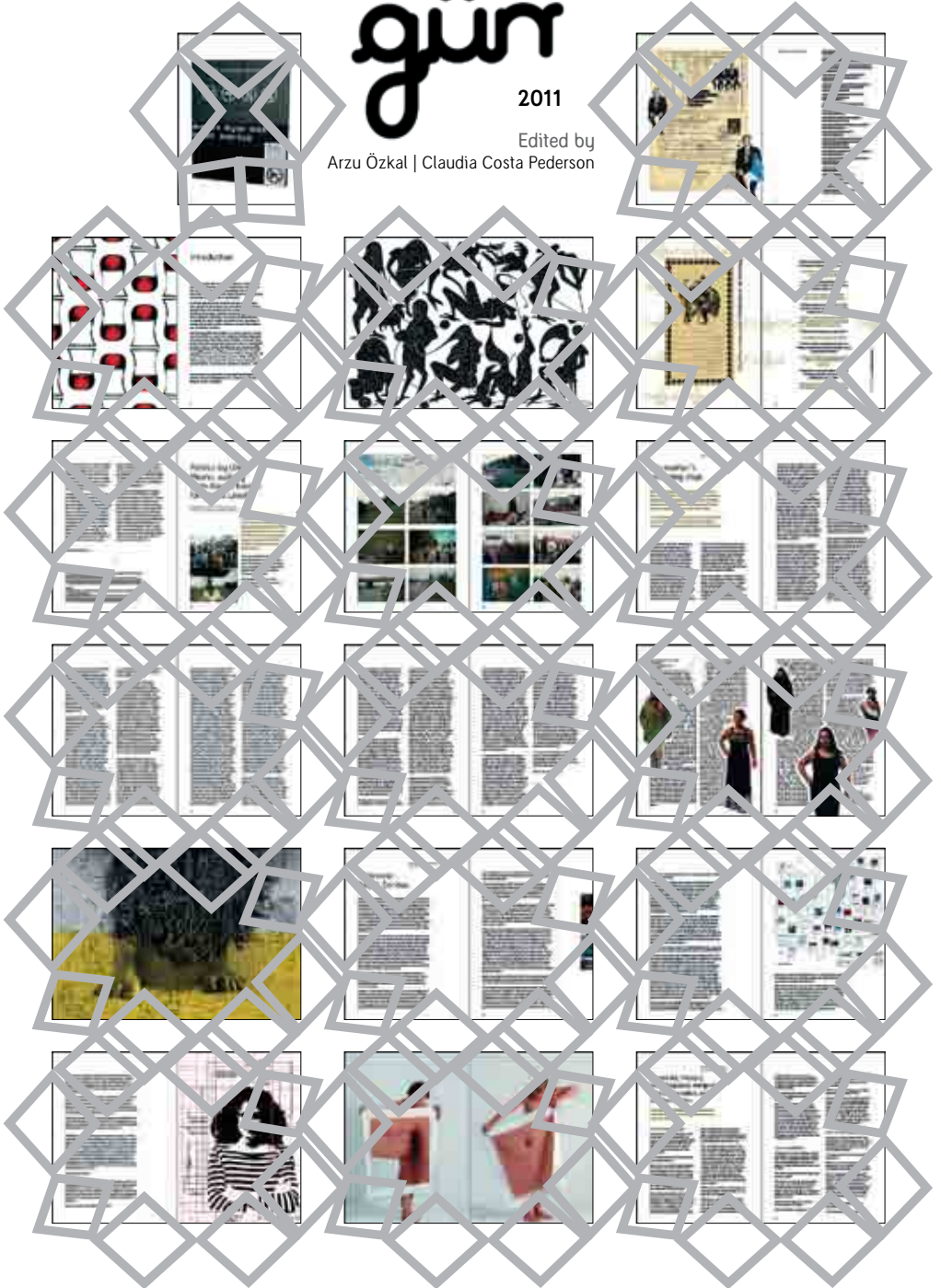


gün

2011

Edited by
Arzu Özkal | Claudia Costa Pederson



← VISITOR CENTER



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Women's Rights N.H.P.
HOURS 9 am-5 pm

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Day; sun; sunlight, sunshine; daytime; today, present; time; age, period; good times; date; at-home day.

A Turkish tradition of women's social gatherings involving conversation, activities and festivities accompanied by the serving of Turkish food.

Editors and Publishers:

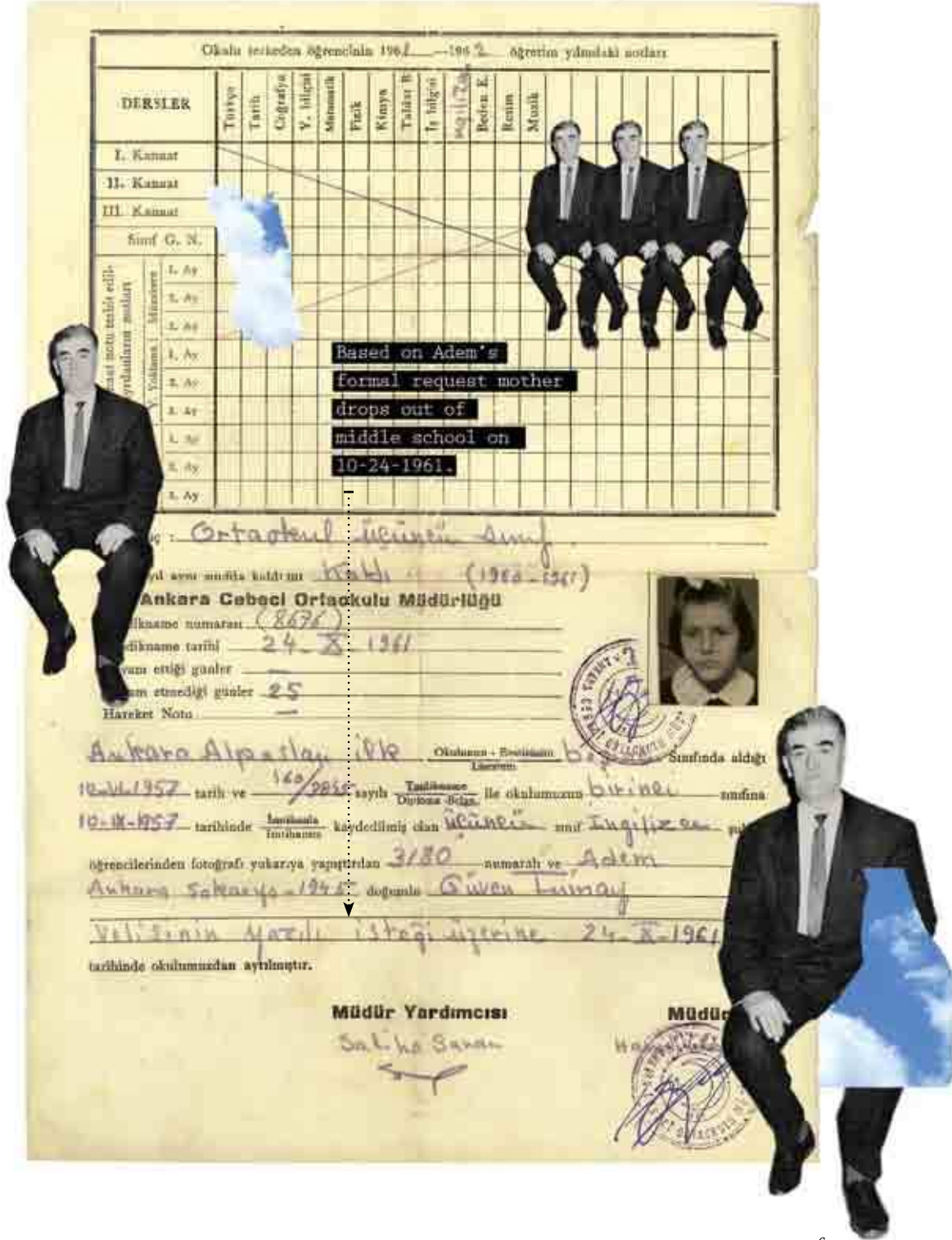
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 7 **Adam /// Adem**
Arzu Özkal
- 9 **Introduction**
Arzu Özkal and Claudia Pederson
- 10-11 **The reason why women can't do poetry is because they try to learn it from balls.**
Özlem Özkal
- 12-14 **Declaration of women's gang /// Çete-i nisvan beyanamesi**
İz Öztat
- 15-17 **Politics by other means, walking from Asia to Europe for Amina Lawal**
Nazmiye Halvaşı
- 18-23 **My mother's receiving days /// Annemin günleri**
Güneli Gün
- 24-25 **Can you spell your name for me?**
Chantal Zakari
- 26-27 **Amazonya**
Özlem Özkal
- 28-32 **Interview with Başak Şenova**
Claudia Pederson
- 33 **She's got so much clit...**
Övül Durmuşoğlu
- 34-35 **Twice into the stream**
Meltem Işık
- 36-40 **Successful, friendly, knowledgeable, marginal, bold, conservative, and creative women.**
Nazenin Tokuşoğlu
- 41-43 **Worship, The mirror, Pattern TrabZONE**
Nilbar Güreş
- 44-49 **Gün as a visiting practice of women in Turkey**
Berna Ekal
- 50-51 **Blue Pink**
Aslı Akıncı Alpert
- 52-54 **Notes on contributors**
- 55 **Image credits**
- 56-57 **Loyalty-Attachment /// Bağlılık**
Nilbar Güreş
- 58-59 **On one's own account /// İç Hesaplar**
Burçak Bingöl





Introduction

Gün consists primarily of a poetic investigation of informal networks of Turkish women and their extension into media culture. The aims are to gain mutual understanding of the conditions impacting women's participation and to activate creative collaboration among women working on related topics.

In Turkish, gün means day, sunshine, daytime, today, present, time, age, period, good times, date, and at-home day. The term is also shorthand for a Turkish tradition of women's social gatherings involving conversation, activities and feasting, part of the cultivation of femininity (*kadınsılık*). Gün does not translate directly to English, but can be roughly conceived to be the equivalent of women-only social networks, and thus associated with the histories of feminism (*feminizm*).

Gün draws parallels between these two points of practice as references from which to conceive the complex conditions framing the cultural positions of Turkish women in Turkey and abroad. In its present form, this gün consists of a group of sixteen women based in Turkey, Europe, and the United States, active in various fields, including performance, design, political activism, literature, photography, electronic arts, visual arts, journalism, ethnography, and music. Gün's conception is in these practices and in contingency with our proposal to consider the term in various dimensions: as a specific relation, a Declaration of Sentiments, and a net + work.

Gün is assembled in preparation to a meeting hosted during ISEA2011, Istanbul, Turkey (14-21 September 2011). A future version will be bilingual (Turkish and English).





Çete-Nisvan Beyannamesi /// Declaration of Women's Gang

Being a wife and a mother are neither commands of nature, nor sacred duties.

Zevcelik ve validelik tabiatın emri ve mukaddes vazife değildir.

Compulsory conscription should be abolished and children should not be claimed by the state.

Mecburiyet-i askeriye kaldırılmalı, evlatlar vatana hibe edilmemelidir.

Morality and nationalism do not free women, instead they instrumentalize women as nation subjects.

Ahlaki ve milli iman kadının hürriyetine değil, içtimai muvazene için vasita haline getirilmesine muavenet eder.

Ethnic nationalism is not patriotism.

Irki milliyetçilik vatanperverlik değildir.

Political rights cannot be attained by voting or parliamentary participation under a single party system.

Tek fırkalı nizamda siyasi haklar meclise girme ve rey verme hakkıyla elde edilemez.

Education should advance individual freedom and will, instead of the motherland and nation.

Maarif, vatan ve milletten ziyade, şahsi hürriyet ve iradeye katkıda bulunmalıdır.

Under the leadership of Nezihe Muhiddin, a group of women attempted to establish the Women's Public Party in 1923, in a clandestine act as women could not vote. They organized under the name, Turkish Woman Union, and published the Turkish Women's Path periodical from July 16, 1925 and August 1, 1927.

The pamphlet you see is a reprint of the one slipped into the fourth issue of August 6, 1925. Pamphlets like this one were inserted in the periodicals before they were sold, and signed Çete-i Nisvan (Women's Gang), to criticize the journal's support for statism, nationalism, militarism and conservative moralism. This pamphlet is not found in public archives. I found it included in two copies of the periodical, which I purchased at an auction. The document is pivotal for rethinking the historiographies of Ottoman women and global anarcho-feminist movements.

İz Öztat, Istanbul 2011

Nezihe Muhiddin önderliğinde 1923 yılında Kadınlar Halk Fırkası adı altında açılmak istenen partiye, kadınların seçilme hakkı olmaması gerekçesiyle izin verilmeyince, Türk Kadın Birliği adı altında örgütlenmiştir ve 16 Temmuz 1925 - 1 Ağustos 1927 tarihleri arasında, Türk Kadın Yolu dergisini yayınlamıştır.

Önceki sayfada gördüğünüz risale, derginin 6 Ağustos 1925 tarihli dördüncü sayısının arasında bulunmuştur. Kendine Çete-i Nisvan adını veren bir grup kadın tarafından, derginin devletçi, milliyetçi, militarist ve ahlakçı duruşunu eleştirilmek üzere, satılmadan önce derginin arasına konduğu tahmin edilmektedir. Bu belgeye kütüphanelerdeki kopyalarda rastlanmadıysa da, bir efemere müzayedesinde alınan iki kopyanın arasında bulunması, bu tahmini destelemektedir. Bu belge, Osmanlı kadın tarihi yazımında çığır açıcı niteliktedir. Umarız Çete-i Nisvan'a dair daha fazla belgeye ulaşmak ve bu anarcho-feminist hareketi su yüzüne çıkartmak mümkün olur.



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Politics by Other Means, walking from Asia to Europe for Amina Lawal

Photographs courtesy of Nazmiye Halvaşi
Text by Arzu Özkal and Claudia Pederson.

On Wednesday, September 18, 2002 at noon, Nazmiye Halvaşi began a protest walk from Ankara to Istanbul, 281.5 miles on foot on behalf of Amina Lawal, a young woman sentenced to death by stoning under muslim law in North Nigeria.



Nazmiye shared every step with the world through her website and blog. Her letter campaign to the mainstream press and government officials invited representatives to take a stand on violence against women.

She was the first person to walk from Ankara to Istanbul in an act of civil disobedience.



My mother's receiving days

When I was growing up, my dad's work took us to cities all over Turkey, some no more than small towns (although on the map they passed for the capital city of the province that bore the same name), where he served as director of public health and welfare.

I first became aware of my mom's "gün" projects when I was not more than five years old, and we lived in Giresun, a picturesque seaside town on the Black Sea.

The province's cash crop was hazelnuts, and the constant annoyance was the battalions of mice who grew fat and sassy on their steady diet of purloined nuts. Aside from various infestations, such as the whipworm that victimized mostly women and children who went about barefoot, allowing the dreaded worm to enter through the soles of their feet, Dad's great worry for the public was tuberculosis, rife in Giresun during those years, perhaps because the local diet was so poor, the mainstay consisting of "kara manca," a murky soup made of red cabbage and water. Before the Second World War went badly for Germans, the hazelnut crop used to go to Germany, mostly, where they had a real taste for the

stuff, but when the demand for the nuts came to an end, times got even worse for the local economy. Anyway, Dad worried over issues like that, but the most pressing one was scraping together enough funds to build a hospital, which Giresun sorely needed but the Republic couldn't afford, while Mom concerned herself with the niceties of their social life.

Mom was a bit like a movie star playing the wife of a high-up civil servant officiating in a provincial town. She was a beauty, she dressed well, she had charming manners, and she wore the most amazing hats she bought on shopping trips to Istanbul. The only woman who outranked Mom was the Governor's wife, a tall and

stately older woman who loved Mom and mentored her judiciously and yet gently with old-world Ottoman finesse. The Governor, whose name was Ibrahim Bozkurt, was also a tall, elegant person, and although he had an aristocrat's temperament, he got along famously with my Dad who had a revolutionary and intemperate nature and could act brashly, even ill-advisedly. That's where Governor Bozkurt came in, saying, "Doctor, calm down!" The Bozkurts had no children, so they adored me. I adored their little white Pomeranian, Jolie, who had been presented to them by some foreign ambassador. While my parents were entertained in the gubernatorial drawing room, Jolie and I ran along the geometrical paths of the formal gardens that stretched all the way down to the Black Sea. No wonder I became a lifelong devotee of that most marvelous breed of dog, and to this day, I can't help delighting in their company.

Anyway, I'm pretty sure it must have been Mrs. Bozkurt who introduced Mom to the idea of designating a formal receiving day, a "gün", a form of "open house", when she'd be able to entertain on the same afternoon every woman who owed her a visit, thereby avoiding being dropped on by visitors any old time, which used to be the way it was for my grandmother's generation before modern Turkey got on its way. It wasn't unusual for my grandmother to put up with friends or relatives who came and stayed for the whole day, or until my grandfather showed up and gave them the hairy eyeball from under his knit eyebrows. It was expected that she should put off her own plans and

feed and entertain whoever dropped in without any notice. I think "gün" was part of the westernization project to be implemented by the civil service wives. For one thing, women like Mom and Mrs. Bozkurt served as role models to local women, as well as leaders to less savvy wives of lesser bureaucrats. Ideas of proper dress and proper comportment could easily be communicated on visiting days, and the etiquette of serving refreshments, the exchange of pleasant-ries, even the art of conversation could be learned. Besides introducing watered down European ways to town, Mom and Mrs. Bozkurt also served as titular heads of the Children's Protection Agency and the Red Crescent Society, respectively, where they showed up to criticize the staff and have their photographs taken with orphans or unfortunates lined up on front steps of state institutions.

On Mom's receiving days, there was a great flurry of activity in the morning, or until the proper time for afternoon visits which must have started around three o'clock, so showing up at two, or even worse at one, was considered gauche as well as embarrassing for all concerned. House cleaned from top to bottom, tea and coffee sets prepared, chocolates bought, cookies made, Mom dressed in silks, and even I put into my best dress (often made over for me from Mom's cast-off finery), the house was ready to receive. Those were the years at the end of World War II, and although Turkey had avoided getting into the fray (thanks to President İnönü's brinkmanship), the country was on rations, and goods were scarce, so no scrap of cloth or food was ever wasted. In our storeroom

sacks of rice, sugar, and wheat and other commodities were put away, in case Soviet Russia decided to make trouble, which they had a bad habit of doing, like invading neighbors, but fortunately Russians were busy elsewhere with their life and death struggle with the Germans. So the rice in the storeroom went wormy, the wheat got weevils, and I suppose the sugar was all right since nothing can grow in that much sweet. I wonder what happened to the compromised grains. Donated perhaps to needy folks too hungry to care.

Anyway, back to the subject of “gün.” Two kinds of cookies were baked in the European style iron stove, called a “kuzine,” that was fired up with hazelnut shells. Both cookie recipes came from Mom’s Aegean tradition; one was melt-in-the-mouth sweet “kurabiye” rolled in powdered sugar, the other was a salty buttery ring rolled in sesame seeds. These would be served later with tea. But first, after the guest or guests sat down and pleasantries were spoken, a candy dish of chocolates wrapped in foil or some sort of hard candy called “akide” would be held in front of each guest, followed by Turkish coffee. Mom favored the white square candy with soft coconut center inside the thin hard shell that was embossed with a crouching lion. I believe that the candy was originally invented in Lyon, France, hence the image of a lion. I liked taking the lion candy out of my mouth and observing the stages of the lion’s image slowly melting in sticky saliva, although this was a much-frowned-on practice that required someone, probably the maid, to rush me into the kitchen and wipe my hands and mouth. Otherwise, I

was as well-behaved a child as the culture required, quietly suffering the boredom of my mother’s “gün.”

Later, after “gün” was over, Mom would relate the peak events of her formal receiving adventures at dinner, delighting Dad with her impressions of awkward moments. There never were any real relationships developed at these ladies’ functions, no secrets divulged, no outrageous remarks made, nor were careers of husbands advanced. I suppose there was gossip, but maybe not, since gossiping was probably not part of the “modernizing” program. Receiving days were for show; they were for returning visits made, for fulfilling social obligations, they were modeled after Western European salons, so they were like empty shells where the substance was gone, leaving behind the form without the dream. But thinking it over now, I must admit the custom of “gün” was not much different from ladies’ club meetings in the US where everything also impinges on correctness and convention.

There must have been exceptions, of course, which I was too young to appreciate back then. I now realize such an exceptional person was Kerime Nadir, a popular novelist at the time, whose novels would today be classified under the genre of “chick-lit.” Her books had the requisite trappings of the popular romance novel, but they also narrated social change, approaching modernity in a positive way. Her work was so much in line with ideas of cultural transformation during the early Republic that her books were probably on Mom’s reading list. Perhaps the two women had met

somewhere, but it was the lady novelist who dropped in at Mom’s “gün” and demanded to be served something strong with her coffee, or at least a liqueur. Perhaps she scandalized the ladies present, but Mom was intrigued with Kerime Nadir’s bohemian ways, and the two women struck up a limited friendship and spent private time together, having morning coffee or going on walks and such. Yet Mom wasn’t above talking behind Kerime Nadir’s back, if only with Dad or Mrs. Bozkurt, relating how the lady novelist kept her clothes and her dirty laundry mixed in a pile in the corner, and how she pulled out of it whatever she needed to wear. I still remember the description of the novelist’s bra straps, so dirty that they had turned brown from body oil. My memory of her is of a brooding woman who had followed her son to Giresun where he was doing his military service. Was there a wink accompanying the word “son”, I don’t know, but now I wonder if Kerime Nadir wasn’t then too young to have a draft age son. It would be fitting if he were her lover, much younger than herself, whom she had followed to Giresun, where the word “son” was the correct euphemism. In her novels, lovers got together quickly, fell into bed, but didn’t get punished for it, as they would have in traditional stories with an Islamic overcast where unauthorized passion has dire consequences. Istanbul bred and schooled in French, Kerime Nadir must have been bored out of her gourd in Giresun (if her son didn’t get a pass out of boot camp), but it was during that period that she wrote her novel, *Gelinlik Kız* (A Girl of Marriage Age), bemoaning the inferior status of women in power and authority relationships.

In my memory there are three “gün” occasions when I had unfortunate experiences. Usually I did not accompany Mom on these visits, but at times, for some reason that always seemed cruel to me, she dragged me along, dressing me in some fancy frock that was supposed to be kept clean and fresh, and a huge organdy bow placed on top of my head. If I was lucky, there would be a cat to play with, or a canary, even a stack of magazines to thumb through; but often there was nothing but talk. How are you? I am well, and you? God be praised, me too. And how is the gentleman? He is well. And the children? They are well too, thank you.

And then, everything went black. The next thing I remember, I was in someone’s arms, being aired out on the balcony. I had passed out, or I had been a little dead. As it was later explained to me, I was poisoned with carbon monoxide from the hostess’ “mangal”, the traditional unvented brass heater, in which the coals had not been properly reduced to embers. We must have been paying a visit to a town lady because people like my parents thought the “mangal” was inefficient and dangerous way to warm oneself, even if one knew what one was doing. Obviously our hostess did not, and I had been the canary in the coalmine.

The second memory is about a gaffe of protocol. At our house, when the candy dish was passed around, Mom just went around the circle, but if there were a child present, she’d always start with the child and insist the child take two pieces. But the protocol was different in some of the more traditional houses; guests were served according to their age or rank. The

hostess would go back and forth across the room, serving the guests in descending order of importance. Well, one day the hostess served everyone but failed to end up with me, the least important person in the room, one with no rank and little age. I didn't even like the sort of candy she was serving, but being left out must have hurt my sense of dignity, and although I remember trying to fight off the emotion, I couldn't help bursting into tears. Someone remarked, oh dear, the child is crying! The hostess, now realizing she'd entirely forgotten me, rushed over with the candy dish, but I refused to take any. It was too late and too little a gesture. Mom, being the diplomat she always was, took a piece for me, saying she'd give it to me later, and she snapped it into her purse, but she let me throw it away when we got home.

The third unfortunate event involved six glass bangles someone had brought Mrs. Bozkurt as a present from India. But the bangles were child's size, and she had no children, so she gave them to me. I was delighted with the color and pure light that shimmered through the glass bangles, each one of them different and yet in sumptuous harmony. I wore them only on dress-up occasions because I was told they were too fragile to wear everyday. Yet on that fateful "gün" visit I was reluctantly taken on, I slipped on some woman's rickety stairs and fell, shattering every glass bangle into brilliant pieces. My grief over the loss was so acute, I had to be taken back home where I could be consoled in private.

The last "gün" memory, one that has to be singled out as the most consequential,

took place at home, although it's not as much a memory as it is a consequence. A woman about Mom's age, a doctor's wife, someone my mother knew only slightly, came "gün" visiting with her son who, as I was told later, was about my age and had a light case of the whooping cough. The boy achieved two objectives that afternoon. First, he bit the hand off Hans, my favorite German-make Bakelite doll, compromising my affection for Hans because looking into his handless arm I could clearly see Hans was hollow. And secondly, as if destroying Hans weren't enough, the boy gave me the whooping cough. All I remember is walking to the window with the boy and watching the traffic, but I guess that was enough for him to let me have it. My Dad couldn't believe a doctor's wife would bring a sick boy to a "gün" where there was a healthy child. Back then there was no vaccine against pertussis, and I came down with the worse case ever, crowing like a rooster and unable to breathe for several minutes, turning blue, and unable to eat or drink without another terrible bout. It got so bad that Dad decided Mom should take me to Ankara where the air is dry and bracing. In Giresun the air was too heavy and damp. Sometimes a change of climate helped to beat the whooping cough. Dad had been afraid for my life.

In Ankara we stayed at the spacious home of my mother's cousin, Sırrı Day, a lovely man who was then the Cabinet Minister of Public Works. It was an extensive household with lots of help and series of formal parties and dinners for "important" people, all lavish because the Minister had married a wealthy heiress for whom money was no object.

Her afternoon "gün" receptions were conducted properly, entertaining women who already knew how to behave, some of them "real" Europeans. Before their soirees, the Minister, in full evening attire, would sit me on his knee and tell me stories full of danger and derring-do, once even reducing me to tears when the peasants killed the wolf at the end. I remember him saying that his sons always loved that story the best, especially the part where the wolf was dead. I wonder now if my tears had something to do with our Governor's last name, Bozkurt, which means Gray Wolf, or whether I was crying because I sympathized with animals. I can only conjecture. My tears wiped away, I would then be put to bed and fall asleep listening to the tinkling of glasses and laughter coming from afar. My cough must have gotten lots better because Mom was in seventh heaven, going to balls and soirees, mingling with people who had already arrived in the "modern" world and able to conduct a "gün" without any lapse of manners.

To top it all, she had been able to persuade her cousin to fund Dad's hospital project out of the Public Works budget, thereby going over the head of Ministry of Health and Welfare, a subterfuge that didn't sit well with Dad's own Minister, a vindictive man who had been Dad's classmate at medical school, and who had never intended for Dad to become a local hero in the first place. The man must have been more of a politician than a doctor; if he couldn't give Giresun a hospital himself, nobody else was going to either, and that was that! In a country where authority is hierarchical, breaking rank is dangerous. After the hospital was built

in Giresun and dedicated to Governor Bozkurt, and even before the ink was dry on the speeches prepared for the occasion, Dad's boss in Ankara found a way to get even with him for getting it done outside Health Ministry's hegemony. He sidelined Dad by appointing him the director of Quarantine Island, which back in the days of the Ottoman Empire used to be where ships with some plague aboard were quarantined and the passengers detained until they were either better or dead; but since such horrific epidemics no longer plagued the world, no ships ever docked at Quarantine Island. It was a dead end job for an energetic reformer like my Dad, sent to a useless post where there was no meaningful medical work, no polite society, and no "gün" receptions, and certainly no decent elementary school. It is said that no good deed shall go unpunished, and Dad, like the wolf in the story, got his punishment at the end by being sent to virtual exile. But that's another story.

It is curious that when I was choosing a pen name for myself, I came up with an assumed last name, Gün, thinking it harmonized well with my real first name, Güneli. What was I thinking?

Güneli Gün, Oberlin, 2011



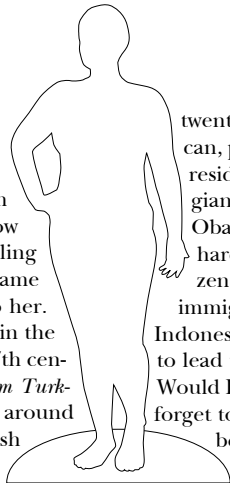
"Can you spell your name for me?"
 "c-h-a-n-t-a-l."
 "What nationality are you?"
 "I am Turkish."

I am trying to be nice, but I am annoyed that she's asked me this. I know what she means. It's confusing; I'm telling her that I am Turkish but my French name is unreadable and awkwardly foreign to her. She doesn't know that Levantines lived in the Ottoman Empire since the 17th century. So I just repeat, "*I am Turkish.*" I've traveled half-way around the world with my Turkish passport.



I am Turkish, I attended a Turkish public elementary school and I recited the Turkish pledge of allegiance every morning. To begin class each day, our teacher would say "*good morning.*" And the entire class of seventy-nine students would reply, "*I am Turkish. I am just. I am a hard worker. My principles are to protect the young and to respect the old, and to love my country and my nation more than my own essence...*" It was fun to yell this refrain at the top of my lungs along with my classmates each day. As a kid it's impossible to grasp the significance of all this. But as an adult I have come to understand that these ritual moments were part of the process of forming my identity.

Later, while in college, traveling back home during the winter break, I spent hours at German airports. Seeing Turkish immigrants working there as cleaners, I felt connected to them. There was no question about my feeling Turkish. Once, in Brussels I missed my connecting flight and the airline had to reroute all the Turkish passengers through France. When we arrived at Lyons our passports were immediately confiscated by the French police who were alarmed that eight Turks had landed with no visas. I refused to speak to them in French. I didn't want to be treated any differently than my compatriots.



I now have been living in the U.S. for twenty-five years. I've married an American, paid my taxes, received my permanent residency card and my child pledges allegiance to a flag that is not mine. Up until Obama's election as the president it was hard to think that I would apply for citizenship. But when the son of an African immigrant, who's spent some time living in Indonesia during his childhood, was elected to lead the U.S. I felt that the time was right. Would I really become an American? Would I forget to be a Turk? Is it possible that I could be both? Maybe. When I read the newspaper I always scan for news about Turkey, and feel proud when there is something positive. When the news is critical I often get defensive, surprising myself that I can feel so protective of a political system that I don't much agree with. "*Yes, there is no true democracy, but...*" "*Yes, the military has a lot of power, but...*"

My father was in the tourism business, I knew how important it was for him to present the country in a good light. He wanted the tourists to come. He wanted them to think that Turkey was a beautiful place with brilliant sunshine. I do too. My father was part of the generation of Levantines that became integrated into the general culture. Earlier most minorities spoke Turkish with a heavy accent, but my father spoke Turkish fluently. His identity was directly connected to his profession. He was in the business of "*selling Turkey*" to travelers. He made Turkey look magical in the colonial image of "*the jewel of the Orient.*" He once transformed a ferry boat into a floating Ottoman harem and organized an evening on the Bosphorus like a scene out of *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. With his dark

something positive. When the news is critical I often get defensive, surprising myself that I can feel so protective of a political system that I don't much agree with. "*Yes, there is no true democracy, but...*" "*Yes, the military has a lot of power, but...*"



Mediterranean skin, brown eyes and beard he looked like an Anatolian man, when, in fact, he was the typical Levantine, deriving from a complex European bloodline: Italian, Austrian, Greek, Maltese —maybe even others that I don't know of.



When my grandfather died I remember my father bringing home a folder full of letters. We found some documents written right before the first World War, by my great grandfather who was living in Ottoman lands. He wrote to several embassies requesting protection for his family from a war that was threatening ethnic minorities. The Ottomans were the only ones to accept them.

For my great grandfather it was a matter of keeping his family safe that determined his nationality. When I think of it this way the issue of nationality seems random, chosen by necessity. But his choice enabled me to be born in Turkey. How amazing it is that my accident of birth ties me so closely to a nation.

During my teenage years things were not so clear for me. In geography class when my best friend, whose mother was German, chose to do a research project on Germany, I chose France. French was my language at home, so I felt a connection to that culture. I could have just as easily chosen to research a project on Italy, my mother's other nationality. My classmates also considered me an outsider. The Turkish minorities, ethnic and religious minorities: the Macedonian Turks, the Anatolian Greeks, the Jews, the Armenians, the Levantines, the Lazzes, the Roma people, the Circassians, the Caucasian Turks, the Kurds, they are all part of an experience that is left out of the official history books, and therefore are eth-



nicities that a whole nation has forgotten. Except for the Kurds, who have received some measure of recognition recently. For an elementary school student, the concept of being a Turk relates to an imaginary idea of a pure Turkish race. So how can a person with a blood lineage as complex as mine fit into this picture of Turkish nationalism? What the new generation is now learning is precisely what the new Republic was against. Mustafa Kemal and those in his circle (who probably had complex blood lineages themselves) recognized that the new Republic would not be a success if there were national divisions.

It was important to define a Turk in the broadest sense independent of ethnicity or religion. That's how my great grandfather became a Turk. The strong patriotic feelings that I developed during my elementary school years are still alive. I cherish the memory of my teacher giving me a Christmas gift in third grade because she recognized me as a Christian Turk. And even though I didn't understand the full meaning of the words in the pledge of allegiance, I loudly recited the last sentence along with my classmates, "*Ne multhu Türkiüm diyene!*"— "*happy is the one who calls himself a Turk!*"— my teacher understood it well.

These were the words that defined Turkish nationalism, a sense that anyone who chose to call herself a Turk, regardless of ethnic background or religion.

I reply back to the lady, and I insist, "*I am a Turk.*" "*Yes, but really, what is your background?*" "*I am a Levantine Turk from Izmir.*"



★
 a version of this text was published in "*The State of Ata: The Contested Imagery of Power in Turkey*" by Mike Mandel & Chantal Zakari, Eighteen Publications, 2010 <http://TheStateOfAta.info>
 photos: Mike Mandel, 2011



Interview: Başak Şenova

Claudia Costa Pederson: In your writings from 2006 you speak of the distinctive character of Turkish digital culture. You say that in many ways it compares to European or perhaps global electronic arts in its focus on questions of networking and interdisciplinarity. Yet, you say that the lack of social networks and audiences in Turkey hampers the development of digital artists, devolving into a situation that fosters competition or in your words “introversion.” You also mention that most of the artists involved are highly trained and technically proficient. The combination of these factors results in exodus, as many artists choose to go abroad. Is this still the case today?

Başak Şenova: More or less yes. The lack of regular subsidies and technical infrastructure still drives the local artists into inventing alternative solutions and ways of producing. In the field of digital arts, for the last 5 years, collaborative projects have given way to individual ones and also commercially supported and organized festivals and/or activities. Subsequently, along with inadequate funding, limited opportunities, and lack of interest, their field of action has become extremely introverted. Thus, this gap motivates these actors more to search for well-established art networks abroad and to give up the local ones. So, there is a serious recognition problem for these artists in Turkey.

In the same vein, the local infrastructure creates an ironical situation for the producers of digital culture: most of the events and exhibitions repeatedly take place in the same venues, are hosted by the same institutions, and are also supported by the same universities.

A subject of controversy is concealed here: if we are talking about alternative economies, autonomy, different ways of networking, alternative modes of production, reacting as multitudes, and tactical approaches, then why can't most of these actors create their own language, space, and audience other than practicing them on the Internet? Then, they are still, indeed, operating parallel to

the contemporary art scene; whether it is a desired position or not, they are dependent on a system that is based on accepted equations and market.

CCP: How are digital artists in Turkey responding to the current situation around internet restrictions? (Please elaborate with examples; for instance you talk about a group like “Casus Production,” which appears to work in the tradition of tactical media or media hackerism--what do they do? are there more groups like this?)

BŞ: “Casus Production”, along with many groups, has disappeared for the last 5 years. For the artists who produce digital culture, autonomy provides a ground for self-criticism, while enabling a critical distance to their fields of research that mostly cover socially and politically engaged issues. Nevertheless, in this country, digital production is mostly considered as a medium, but not as an outcome of a culture.

I think that every artistic formation and movement has its own timing and life span. In the same line of thought, we have drastically changed the activities and the areas of interest of NOMAD*. For instance, I firmly believe that we have completed our goal to introduce ‘sound-art’ to Turkey via projects as such `ctrl_alt_del`, `loosing.ctrl`, `s-network`, `citysense`,...etc. Now, we are working toward archiving and publishing. The same aims are true for Upgrade!Istanbul**. Instead of repeating the same format and the same content over and over again, we are working on processing ‘things’ as a way toward searching for appropriate formats and modes of activity. Both NOMAD and Upgrade!Istanbul seem to be rather idle (compared to the overdrive production rate from between 2002 and 2008) but indeed this is another mode with less immediate output.

Back to your question, as far as I know, there are some Internet based actions, blogs, and groups that are promising, but they are far removed from any kind of artistic concern and/or production.

CCP: In your work you discuss the crossover between artists, free software activists, designers, architects, sound artists, academics, and critics like yourself as an emergent path for the development of digital culture in Turkey. You located their commonalities in a shared interest in questions around urbanity, and even perhaps in the formation of a new urbanite sensibility in the context of globalization and the transformation of Istanbul into a so called



“global city.” What impulses do you see emerge from these collaborations and concerns?

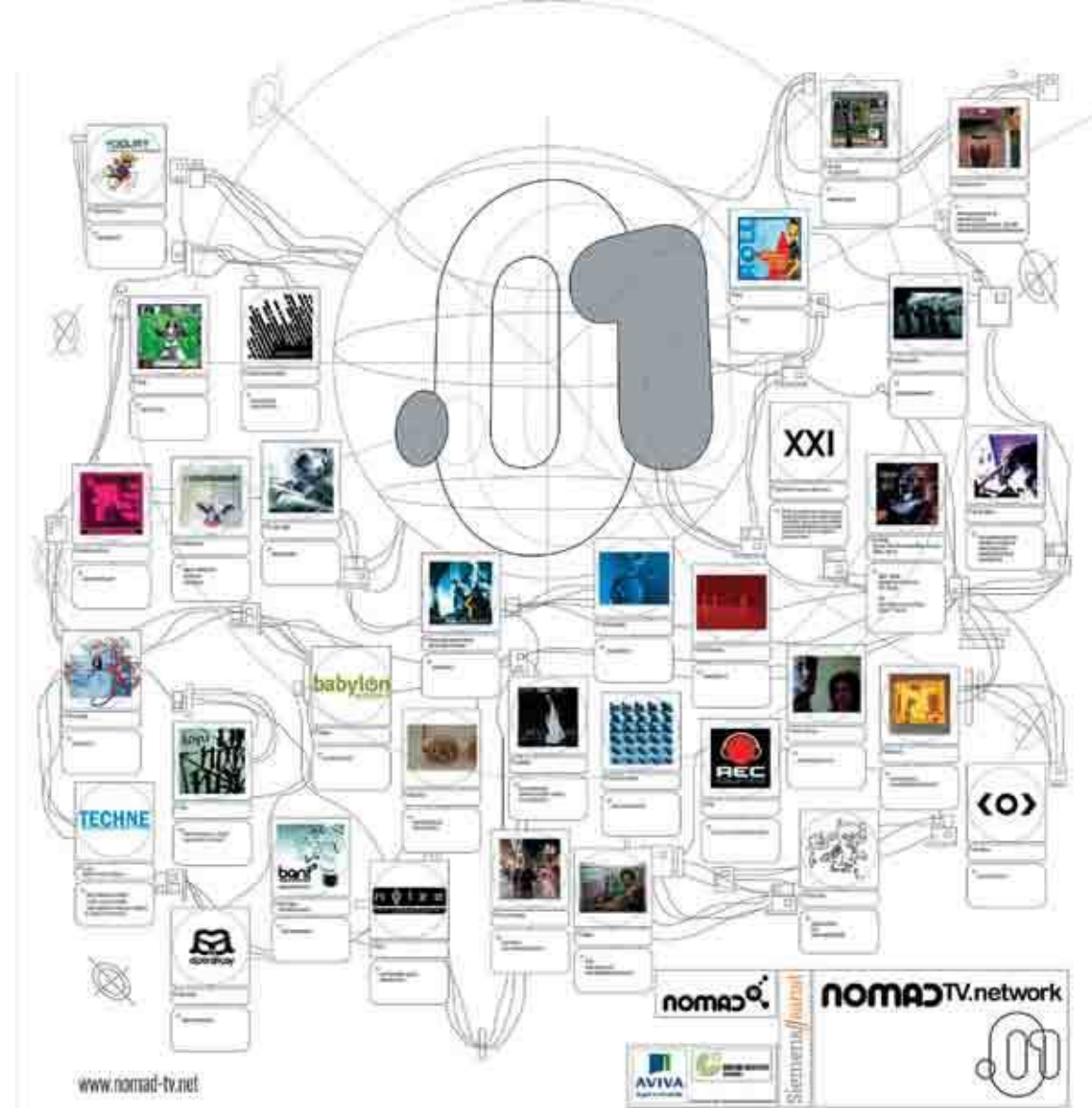
BŞ: Yes, I’ve been talking about a type of cultural production, which has fused into the layers of the city. These productions have been progressing through research and projects by academics, artists, and architects who circulate and have connections with International institutions –especially of contemporary art. They have considered the city as a kind of laboratory, which gives all kinds of data to be processed within the framework of other disciplines. The basis for their research is the city’s polyphonic cultural structure while the fast flow of life covers the historical and geographical characteristics of the city.

Nevertheless, for me, such productions also completed their life span. They worked well by bringing attention-grabbing outputs to read the city and the realities of the city –socially, politically, culturally, psychologically, and economically. In a way, they are now merging with and even (dissolving into) other projects associated with the mainstream contemporary art scene along with architecturally driven social projects by effective local NGOs. Yet, these projects now have the potential to force policy makers and the public to make some change.

CCP: International interest in the Turkish digital scene appears to be on the rise, wouldn’t you agree? What do you attribute this to?

BŞ: For me, the production of digital culture during early 2000s was more interesting, authentic, and urgent. There was an urgency to produce and to deploy digital production with tactical approaches. Now, most of the new productions repeat (not imitate, but repeat) whatever has been going on abroad since the 1960s. For sure, there are still some exceptional active artists such as Burak Arıkan, -_- , Ali Mihrabi, Erhan Muratoğlu, Emra Erkal, Pınar Yoldaş, and a few more; nevertheless, the drive to produce content and to be critical is not there anymore and also all the aforementioned artists (and also myself as a curator who facilitates in the field of digital culture) have been also increasingly active in the main contemporary art scene. So, one cannot talk about digital art as a sole entity anymore. In this context, I wonder about (and question) the scope of this rising international interest.

CCP: In closing, you remarked on the participation of women in initiatives concerning the digital arts. Talk about the role of women within the Turkish art scene, and how this translates in the



specificity of the emerging digital arts? In what roles are women involved and how are women’s experiences reflected in artistic production, if at all? if not, why not?

BŞ: My first initiative and experience in the digital art scene with a focus on ‘women’ dates from 2006, with the HTMLles EXPORT2 project. The project included the travel of five Canadian women artists with practices involving scientific research and detailed technology and a curator to the cities of Belgrade, Sofia and Istanbul by merging local women artists, curators and groups. Through this experience, I was acquainted with the related production of local NGOs along with artist groups and artists.

For instance, in Istanbul, the presentation of the members of Filmmor Women's Film collective (www.filmmor.org) was quite remarkable as it greatly put into view the different feminist perspectives and conditions for women from Turkey and Canada. After this project, I followed the works of most of these women artists and groups.

I also tag on the workshop and project series (such as re-locate or Free Fall) of the Apartment Project as they give a critical space for the women artists to make their research and production public. (www.apartmentproject.com). Also most of the projects by C.U.M.A. (www.c-u-m-a.org) activate urban and rural communities and they give special prominence to women.

I think that women have already had strong and established roles in the contemporary art in Turkey. And as to the digital art scene, despite the capitalist drift, it is still an area that is being shaped by individual efforts and a few supportive institutions.

***NOMAD** is an Istanbul based foundation that aims to examine experimental formations developing in the field of digital art from various disciplinary viewpoints and to develop new forms in this field. NOMAD aims to produce and experiment with new patterns in the digital art sphere by using the lenses of various other disciplines. The main goal of these projects is to establish a productive communication channel that enables access to new resources of information. NOMAD has developed numerous local and international projects, including festivals, exhibitions, performances, multimedia events, experimental film screenings, lectures, panels, and publications since 2002.

<http://nomad-tv.net>

****Upgrade!Istanbul**, as an ongoing network project, aims to create public presence for digital culture in Turkey. Through monthly gatherings for new media artists, academicians, practitioners, curators and other actors of digital culture, Upgrade! Istanbul also links local producers with the active international network groups related to art, technology and culture through 32 nodes all over the globe.

<http://nomad-tv.net/upgradeistanbul>





Successful, friendly, knowledgeable, marginal, bold, conservative, and creative women.

I will share some highlights from interviews with
5 exceptional women on being a working woman.
True, real – life stories...

SUCCESSFUL: ÜMRAN BEBA

World giant PepsiCo chose Ümrán Beba as the manager of their Asian Pacific group, which consists of so called troubled nations. She is the first Turkish woman appointed to this position in a global company which has a turnover of 43 billion dollars.

NT: Did you know that one day you'll be in such position?

ÜB: I have always worked knowing where I'll be in the next 5 years. I had a hard time deciding whether to be a teacher or a businesswoman. I reached this "Global Turkish Woman" status, but I want to do more social work as I grow older.

NT: What would you say about the situation of working women?

ÜB: It is better than before but after a period of time for reasons like marriage, pregnancy, taking care of sick siblings etc. the number of working women decreases. Now there is an increase in the number of women who have hobbies. I support result-oriented flexible working systems.

NT: As a businesswoman are you lucky or do you create your own luck? During your 2 pregnancies, you haven't been let go and your husband has changed his own life for you.

ÜB: There are 5 factors that lead to success. One, self confidence. Two, how you were raised; as a pretty girl to be married or as a potential businesswoman who will contribute to society. Three, spouse selection is very important, like how much he sees life through your eyes... Four, your company's point of view. Five, support. In our culture, after child birth, the elders do their utmost to help which is very important and this custom doesn't exist in Europe. So the answer to your question is yes, and yes.

NT: During your time, the number of working women has raised up to 53%. How did this happen?

ÜB: I made a rule to consider 50% male, 50% female applicants. I had meetings with unit managers who are mostly male discussing how women need more flexible hours. For instance, once a week women

could work from their home. We are starting to focus more on the problems women are facing. A male administrator would never understand the needs of women coworkers.

NT: Do you make a priority for pregnant women or women who have children?

ÜB: I was pregnant at the time I got appointed as General Manager. There were no questions about this promotion. I converted a part of my apartment into my office. When one of my employees tells me she is pregnant and won't be able to work for 4 months, I am supportive. Just as I had the opportunity to spend some one-on-one time with my baby, I want to give the same chance to my employee. I won't listen to any sentence starting with "pregnant already..."

FRIEND: RABIAH MIAN

A Muslim Arab woman who has committed herself to causes of violence and rape. She went to study journalism in London, and later established an association named "Ghalya" which means "Friend" in Turkish.

NT: You have encountered very tragic stories, right?

RM: I met a 12 year old Qatari girl who was raped. She told this to her mother but the incident was kept from her father. Later, this girl set up a new life in England. There, at 23, she was raped by a friend at school.

NT: In these rape cases, are the victims always virgins?

RM: The majority. Virginitiy is very

important in Arab countries. The night of the marriage ceremony, the white linen with the girl's blood stain on it passes from hand to hand.

NT: Do you think being a non-virgin (unmarried) Muslim is bad?

RM: Once, I had to have surgery from my ovaries, and as a consequence of the operation doctors said I could possibly lose my virginity. At the hospital they asked me to sign a document regarding this issue. My mother didn't consent because I had to be a virgin when I get married. I said "How does me being a virgin matter if I die?" and I signed the paper.

KNOWLEDABLE: MUAZZEZ İ. ÇIĞ

I decided to converse about "love" with Sumerologist * Muazzez İlmiye Çığ (A.K.A Living History). She is the sweetest teenage girl ever, only 96 years old, and she has a mischievous side.

** the study of Sumerian culture, language, and history.*

NT: How was the relation between Sumerians and love? Or, did the concept of love exist during that period?

MÇ: For Sumerians, love represented abundance. Because love results in union, which can lead to the creation of life (i.e. child). Love was sacred. Under these conditions "woman" was very important. Women were free to buy, sell, engage in business, stand as voucher; there were women managing the whole weaving industry.

NT: Why do you think there is harassment?

MÇ: Well, that has never happened to

me. When fundamentalism rises, the view that women are sexual objects always arises with it. Nowadays, young girls cover their heads with scarves to find a good husband. Well-employed, well-earning husbands to look after them. “Cover yourself and find a good husband” – Nonsense! When the husband says “get out” or “boş ol!” [3 times] they are divorced. Just like that!

NT: Are women more self-sacrificing in marriages?

MÇ: I’ve travelled a lot and saw that marriage and sacrifice, still continue. Women should educate her husband on that matter; that’s what I did.

NT: What do you think about pre-marital sex?

MÇ: I think it’s good. I didn’t do it, although I was engaged for 3 years. I followed the rules which were established at that time but these days I see some ridiculous ideas about relationships. If it is going to be like this, I think my way is better. There was an artist who stayed married for one night only, what is with that?! [I hate American movies. I don’t think people should be sexually active at the age of 15...as in one watches the movie, has sex and gets pregnant.] In the past, people got married very early to avoid this. Prior to that, the Sumerians found the easiest way, men satisfied themselves at the temples.

NT: Such as brothels?

MÇ: Not exactly, a sacred place; I think about them as a school. There they were taught about sexuality.

MARGINAL: BENNU GEREDE

A woman in her late 30’s with 4 children from 2 separate relationships. She never

says “good morning” before going to the gym first; most importantly she has never given up on love. Outstanding photographer Bennu Gerede talks about her latest love...

NT: What makes you different, why do I want to speak about “love” with you?

BG: I am raising 4 boys from 2 former relationships. I’m a woman standing on her feet, not in need of anyone; I’m a professional photographer, perhaps a tomboy. And I’m still searching for love at 39 despite all the difficulties. After 35, sexuality is at its most rewarding, both physically and spiritually as the awareness of womanhood sets.

NT: Of course you are lucky, there are no taboos in the US. Do you feel you lived every single year to the fullest?

BG: Certainly, I am very lucky. My sex life has always been good. I had great chemistry with all of my partners.

NT: What is the difference between having sex in your 20’s and late 30’s?

BG: Now you know your body much better, what you like, how to make your partner happy... I’m not talking about experience. You can be with thousands of men, have sex a thousand times - it has nothing to do about it. It’s about being more mature and self-knowing. Now or then? Absolutely now, I mean after 35. My best years...

NT: What do men find attractive about you, what draws them to you?

BG: Women always have demands from their husbands or lovers “let’s get married, buy me this, let’s move to that house”. I’ve never asked for anything from anyone in my life. Another reason is my free spirit. At any given moment it can turn also into a nurturing spirit.

BOLD: SINEM D.

Two sisters share the same profession. One is 32 years old, the other one is only 22. They earn their living through erotic shows on the internet. They live with their families, have boyfriends from time to time, but no one knows that they are the same girls asked to “open your legs, caress your breasts, turn your back and do a sexy dance”...

NT: How did you start?

SD: A close friend of mine gave us an ad to a site. She said it works and we decided to give it a try. The site administrators, named “Admin,” offered to do business with us.

NT: Do clients take the time for preliminary acquaintance or do they immediately say “strip”?

SD: When I say “Hi”, the direct response is “Strip!”. So, I play. I dress in several layers, slowly taking each one off. I spend 10 minutes without getting completely naked to have them buy 10 minutes more. But eventually, I do whatever they ask for. Some of them wear masks, I hold the camera down. My picture is fake. I refuse anyone who demands to have the sound on. The ones who do not have girlfriends or can’t make them do whatever they find the satisfaction they need with me.

NT: Couldn’t you find another job? Why would anyone want to have such job? Is it a passion for adventure?

SD: There are people who do it with their lovers. There are men dressed as woman. There are those who need money. I need money. I couldn’t continue my education because of lack of money. I can’t find work. I was earning 500 T.L. (\$299) as a waitress and half of it was going to transportation.

NT: Does anyone from your family

know what you’re doing?

SD: Sometimes they go out of town. Then, we’re free to do as we please. If they’re at home, we lock our doors. We only open them when our mother brings tea or something. I tell them that “To earn money I am breaking the passwords of the phones to collect credit”. They do not understand it, so they won’t say anything. But if they learn about it, they will say “Get out!”.

NT: Don’t you feel ashamed?

SD: I am not ashamed and I don’t see it like prostitution because there is no contact. The woman who cheats on her husband is honorable but I am not, huh?

NT: Do you intend to marry?

SD: I think about it, in my dreams. Last night I said, “I hate men”.

CONSERVATIVE: FATMA ÜNSAL

Fatma Ünsal is a founding member of AKP (the Justice and Development Party, the center-right political party in power founded in 2001 and promoting a neo-liberalist policies and Turkey’s membership in the European Union). She is a leading voice in the ‘veil’ debates. I wanted to meet this hard-hitting, yet soft-spoken woman who challenged the Prime Minister by demanding “Freedom to veil.” I asked her about her stance on the veil, which she defends and I vigorously reject. There were times where our thoughts met, we talked about love as well, even sexuality. She said, “Don’t you be a stranger, nor will I be”.

NT: When and why did you decide to cover your head?

FÜ: I decided on my own, when I was going to the Quran school. I was wearing a scarf when I was at secondary school but

removing it during school hours. In high school, I became conscious, and decided to never remove my scarf in College.

NT: How would you describe your husband's family?

FÜ: Conservative...

NT: Do you think that they would still accept you if you haven't covered your head?

FÜ: Maybe. Also, at that time there were many men thinking just like us, but we were few. A minority question.

NT: What is the most obvious difference between non-veiled and veiled women?

FÜ: Self-control. A veiled woman does not wear heavy make-up and won't 'make-out' on the park bench.

NT: Are you against pre-marital relations?

FÜ: Of course. I think of it as adultery. Marriage legitimizes sexual relations. Outside of marriage, any sort of sexual experience is not appropriate.

NT: You have two sons but what if you had a daughter and she said "I had done something with my boyfriend"?

FÜ: She would be making a big mistake. The same goes for my sons. I learned that one of my sons, a senior in high school kissed a girl and that made me sad. If the girl's parents learn about it! He is putting a loved one in danger.



CREATIVE: SILA

Sila's song "Sevişmeden Uyumayalım (Let's Not Sleep Without Making Love)" was an instant hit. Within a week the single became the number one song on every radio station's list and the most legally downloaded. So, how did this extraordinary song with controversial lyrics come about? In what context did Sila write the song and what was she doing at that time? What is she saying about "Sevişmeden Uyumayalım" ?

NT: Don't you think love exists? Is making love with anyone all the same?

S: Some people live such loveless, heartless lives. My song speaks against meaninglessness and disrespect. "Sevişmeden Uyumayalım" is not a song about sexuality, but about harmony. I know that everyone got the gist.

NT: Lets be smashed, lets disappear and arise... Have you ever got smashed, arose?

S: Well, of course dear, too many times. I was in a long relationship that broke apart, and we were both equally hurt, as in "Neither with you, nor without you" style.

NT: Let's not sleep without making love, let's not die before agreeing ... Is this song "you"?

S: It's me. The believer, bold, pioneer, emotional, complex me. My sun and ascendant signs are both Gemini. So, I am 4 women, like a nightmare.

NT: So, which of those 4 women makes love the best, never sleeps without making love?

S: I guess all of them are good love makers. After all, sex is multiple; it can be soft, it can be hard ... what am I telling you!! I mean to say that I enjoy sensuality.





2

**“Dear women,
Please hang your panties on the front clothes line”**

*“Sevgili kadınlar,
Lütfen donlarınızı en öndeki çamaşır teline asınız.”*

Nilbar Güreş



42



1 (Previous page)
The Mirror, 2010
from the Çırçır series,

C-print
123 x 182 cm

*Courtesy Nilbar Güreş
and Rampa*

2
Worship, 2010
Ibadet

C-print
123 x 182 cm

*Courtesy Nilbar Güreş
and Rampa*

3-4
Pattern TrabZONE
series, 2010

C-print
Diptych
100 x 150 cm (each)

*Courtesy Nilbar Güreş
and Rampa*

3-4

43

Gün as a Visiting Practice of Women in Turkey

The practice of gün (literally 'day') in Turkey as we know it today is a form of formal visiting among women which is distinct from other visiting practices, such as what Benedict (1974) refers as "neighborhood working groups" and "impromptu neighbor visiting".

It usually involves the gathering of a pre-defined group of women (usually involving about 10 women) on a regular basis (usually each month), each time in a different participant's house, accompanied by the contribution from each member of a certain amount of money or gold to be given to the host. In this sense gün is also a form of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCA), defined by Ardener as "an association formed upon a core of participants who make regular contributions to a fund which is given in whole or in part to each contributor in turn" (1996, p.1). Yet, as various researches have shown (Beller-Hann, 1996; Ekal, 2006; Wolbert, 1996), when the concrete experiences of women about gün meetings and the changes in formal visiting practices among women throughout the republican period are considered, we can argue that gün cannot be reduced to a purely economic organization either. In other words, gün

is both a credit association and a social event (Beller-Hann, 1996), but it is also a medium through which certain values associated with femininity and modernization/urbanization are disseminated or practiced among women.

In the absence of more detailed research on the origins of gün practice (Khatip-Chahidi (1996), we can nonetheless look at another form of visiting practice of women in Turkey that attracted the attention of scholars, namely kabul günü or reception day, to see the roots of gün practice. Reception day, as it was seen in the of republican period until late 70s, involved the opening of a house to the visit of women on certain days, where the prestige of the host rose in line with the number of guests attending the invitation. The practice involved 20 to 80 women (depending on the social position of the host) and did not have a set system of rotation. It was an open call to the

women living in the surrounding area, and was not limited to a pre-defined group of women as it is the case in gün meetings. However, even though the characteristics of gün (the rather low number of women involved and the economic aspect) differentiate it from kabul günü, it is still possible to see some continuities between the two. Therefore we might argue that in order to understand how female practices of formal visiting have evolved to shape the contemporary gün practice in Turkey, we should look at the continuities and breaks between these two types of visiting.

Reception day (*Kabul Günü*)

Visiting patterns, be they formal or informal, indeed have for long attracted the interests of scholars and have been discussed in different contexts, like that of potlatch in the Americas or Kula ring in the Oceania, as a specific form of social exchange which was argued to be based on the ideas of "status rivalry" and "reciprocity" that made it different from purely economic exchange. That is, these ideas found in the process of the exchange of goods and services during visits were seen to imply more than the immediate/apparent value of goods and services exchanged. The exchange of goods and services, as well as the practice of visiting itself, were taken more as a medium through which social hierarchies were worked out or a relationship of equality was constructed. As Vinogradov puts it: "social exchange can function to establish a relationship of friendship and equality as well as superordination/subordination. A relation of equality is maintained through strict adherence to

the rules of balanced reciprocity where obligations incurred are repaid in full" (Vinogradov, 1974, p. 7).

Scholars who had worked on kabul günü (reception day) meetings in different small towns in Turkey in the 1970s can be said to have used this framework as well. That is, these scholars mainly looked at this practice's significance in terms of maintaining hierarchies, where participation in reception days was mostly restricted to upper class women and hence was a marker of class difference. Aswad (1974), with respect to her fieldwork in Antakya in 1972, argued that reception days above all served the interests of the elite through its role of retaining the cohesion among the elite and extending its power to other classes. In a similar vein, relying on a fieldwork in southwestern Turkey Peter Benedict (1974) argued that for certain women reception gathering was "the single and most formal mode of interaction in which social distance and ranking are best displayed" (Benedict, 1974, p.34). Following the arguments of these two researchers, Lindisfarne (2002) also emphasized the hierarchical character of the reception days in Eğirdir in comparison to religious gatherings of women (called mevlit) that worked to maintain equality between women from different strata. However, when we look at the early scholarly work on women's practices of visiting in Turkey, we can say that although their arguments are fruitful in terms of demonstrating the hierarchies that are maintained through such visiting practices, they fall short of drawing the links between reception

days and the changes and continuities in the wider gender framework in Turkey throughout the Republican period.

To talk about this framework very briefly, the late Ottoman era to the Republican period paralleled other processes of nation-state formations in the same era and was characterized by a restructuring of gender relations in line with what had been perceived to be a modern way of life. On the one hand, women were encouraged to drop the Islamic veil, appear in public places, work outside home and socialize with men in various occasions, and hence become the “modern faces” of a new society; but on the other hand, they were expected to do so without gaining personal autonomy or without giving up their roles as mothers that would raise the future citizens. With the suppression of the feminist movement of the era, there was indeed no hindrance to the diffusion of such an ideal of “modern” femininity. Reception days, in this sense, became a medium through which the desire for westernization diffused among women of middle classes:

“... the selamlık, which had been strictly for men only and a symbol of relations of the household to the outer world, opened its doors to women. Husband and wife together received their guests in the reception room during the evenings. During the day, when men were out at work, women regularly organized kabul günü or reception days in these rooms, such reception days acted as schools for modernization for middle-class women. Manners, fashion, child-rearing

practices and relations among spouses were discussed in these occasions.” (Özbay, 1999, p. 561)

Ferhunde Özbay, indeed, points to a significant relationship between reception days and the development of the gendered space of home in the Republican period that went hand in hand with the transformation of the harem to the living room and the selamlık to the reception room. The curious difference between other scholars who talk about reception days as an upper class practice and Özbay discussing these as a middle class practice, on the other hand, can be attributed to the differences in period. That is, whereas Özbay mainly talks about urbanized middle classes in the beginning of the Republican period, others mainly study the practice in the 1970s; and contrarily it may very well point to a difference in locality. In any case, the lack of a set system of rotation and the pooling of resources set gün meetings apart from reception days, and the underlining of ideals of femininity (whether Republican or not) constitutes the point of continuity between these two forms of visiting.

Day (Gün)

The 1980s marked a change towards the replacement of reception days with gün (day); however the term reception day continues to be used to refer to gün, which even leads certain authors like Wolbert (1996) to consider gün as shorthand for reception day. However, Wolbert as well considers gün as a distinct form of visiting, which she argues to have come

out with the diffusion of the practice of reception day from the urban elite to the middle classes in the eighties:

“... at the end of the sixties or at the beginning of the seventies, the gün did not even exist in its present day form. At that time the Kabul günü was an institution reserved for the urban elite. In the eighties the politico-economic tendency to favor trade, export and tourism increased the importance of money for social mobility. The chances for advancement which education and migration to the big cities had once offered was not as good as they used to be. As it became increasingly important to earn money the men began to concentrate on this task and left all the duties of family and representation to their wives. It was at this time that the gün which is at issue here came into being.” (Wolbert, 1996, p.188)

As can also be deduced from Wolbert’s account, more women could have the resources to participate in gün meetings in the 80s, as rural to urban migrants of the 60s and 70s have accumulated more capital, widening the urban middle classes. This point becomes clearer if we consider the introduction of resource pooling into gün meetings, which might also be read as a remarkable difference in the way in which social status is considered in these two periods, as gün does not only entail the recognition of the social status of women but is also underlined by the ability to also make an economic contribution to the group.

On the other hand, as far as the inner

dynamics of the meetings is concerned with regards to gün, it might be said that besides ensuring reciprocity by keeping the number of women involved low and by introducing the rule that each woman hosts others once in a cycle, bringing up the mechanism of collecting money or gold served the purpose of creating a more equal environment among the participants. Hence, even though both gün and reception day are based on “balanced reciprocity” (Aswad, 1974), one might argue that the aim to maintain equality is more formally looked for in gün. If we also remember that “the pooling of resources within a framework of mutual obligations and reciprocity gives women a sense of belonging to particular social groups, and thus contributes to the construction of their social identities” (Beller-Hann, 1996, p.129), we can also argue that even though gün consists of a smaller group of participants and is a more diffused practice, it still constitutes a space of status differentiation as reception days of the earlier period did. How their social identities are defined, however, would partly be explicable by status differentiation and require the examination of the ideals of femininity as well. One quick idea would be that gün meetings still continue to embody aspirations to modernity, or the ideal of well-educated and chaste woman (primarily mothers), despite the fact that the 1980s constituted a turn in the way in which gender relations were discussed in Turkey thanks to the rise of the feminist movement, but also with the popular press beginning to discuss women’s sexual liberation and position in the society.

As with the reception days, the ideals of femininity displayed in contemporary gün practice can be seen vis-à-vis gün's formal character. The formal character of gün, which makes it a distinct form of visiting, cannot only be told from the regularity of meetings but the ways in which women get dressed and the food is served (or table manners), also play a role in setting this practice as a formal occasion where the level of formality also vary depending on the status of participants:

“The more privileged a group is socially and financially, the more elaborate and formal their meetings become in terms of the food served and the formalities observed (i.e. style of greeting and clothes worn)” (Beller-Hann, 1996, p.122).

In any case, regardless of degree, women underline the formality of the occasion, for instance, by not wearing slippers and usually bringing with them their own shoes to be worn in the house (sometimes put in hand-made bags with needlework on them); as shoes are usually taken off at the entrance of the houses and the guests are provided with house slippers in Turkey. They also get dressed in their better clothes, which marks these visits as different from daily visits that usually take place among close kin and neighbors, where daily clothing is considered to be sufficient. As for the menu, it is usually possible to find kısır (salad prepared with thin bulgur), mercimek köftesi (lentil-balls), börek (patty) and yaprak sarma (stuffed vine leaves), which require labor to prepare, accompanied by other salads,

deserts, and tea. Women pay considerable attention to keep their house orderly and presentable in these meeting days, as the quality of the food served and the appearance of the house are important dimensions of a successful hosting, which is a way in which conformity to the norms of femininity that change from one period to other is displayed.

As argued by Catherine Bell, formality is “the use of a more limited and rigidly organized set of expressions and gestures, a ‘restricted code’ of communication or behavior in contrast to a more open or ‘elaborated code’ (Bell, 1997, p.139), and hence formalized activities “can communicate complex sociocultural messages very economically, particularly messages about social classification, hierarchical relationships, and the negotiation of identity and position in the social nexus” (Bell, 1997, p.141). Seen from this perspective, it can be proposed here that its formal character is one of the dynamics that play a role in making gün a concrete occasion through which women's position in the social nexus is negotiated with respect to the ideals of femininity, which are laid out, practiced and assessed during the meetings as I argued elsewhere (Ekal, 2006). My fieldwork in two gün groups in Istanbul has shown that certain issues like being a more understanding mother-in-law was brought up by women to cut their ties with what they defined as their “traditional” ways of life and showed their aspiration to lead “modern”, middle-class lives. In this sense, it may very well be argued that a parallel process was taking place in gün meetings to that which Özbay (1999) discussed about

the diffusion of westernization through reception days.

All in all, gün meetings constitute a formal occasion for women where participation requires a certain acceptance, be it based on a given social status or a status attained by conformity to certain ideals of femininity. These ideals, on the other hand, differ from one period to the other and can be read in relation to the wider gender framework of each era. As

for resource pooling, its aim to achieve equality among participants cannot be overlooked. However, whether the goal of equality is achieved or not and whether women still work or not towards gaining superiority over each other is, of course, open to debate and will certainly depend more on the women involved in the group than the structure than I outline here in this article. And so is the intimacy among women in the groups...



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Blue Pink
Blue Pink

Just because I have a name
And I am a man
They recruited me
Though I never wanted
Blue Pink Boy Girl All Human
Blue Pink Boy Girl All Same

Everyone is raving
I wonder what they know
Bus to train
They repeat blue pink
Blue Pink Boy Girl All Human
Blue Pink Boy Girl All Same

Just because I have a name
And I am a woman
They didn't recruit me
I want it or not
Blue Pink Boy Girl All Human
Blue Pink Boy Girl All Same

by Aslı Akıncı Alpert (Ilsa Tamponx)

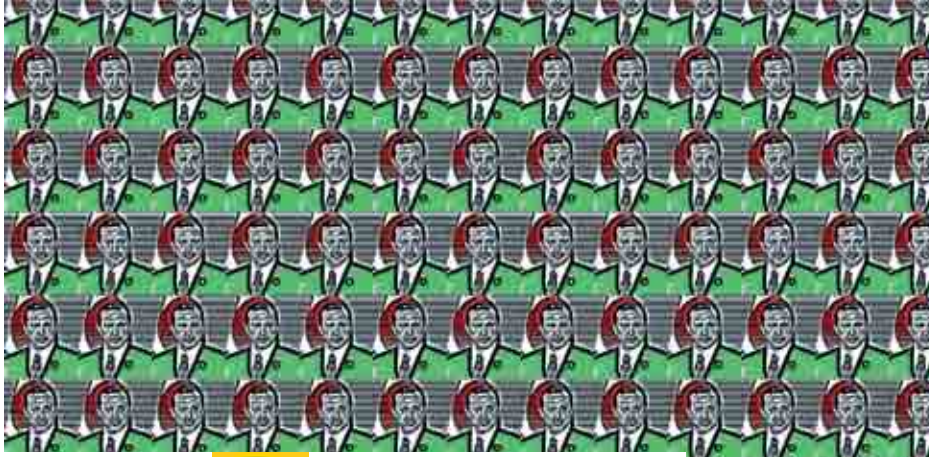
*Mavi Pembe (Blue Pink),
song lyrics, Tamponx
Image courtesy Aslı Akıncı Alpert*

MAVİ PEMBE
MAVİ PEMBE

BAKTIM ADIM VAR DİYE
HEMDE ERKEGİM DİYE
ALDILAR BENİ ASKERE
HİÇTE İSTEMESEMDE
MAVİ PEMBE ERKEK KIZ HEPİMİZDE İNSANIZ
MAVİ ERKEK PEMBE KIZ HEPİMİZDE AYNİYİZ

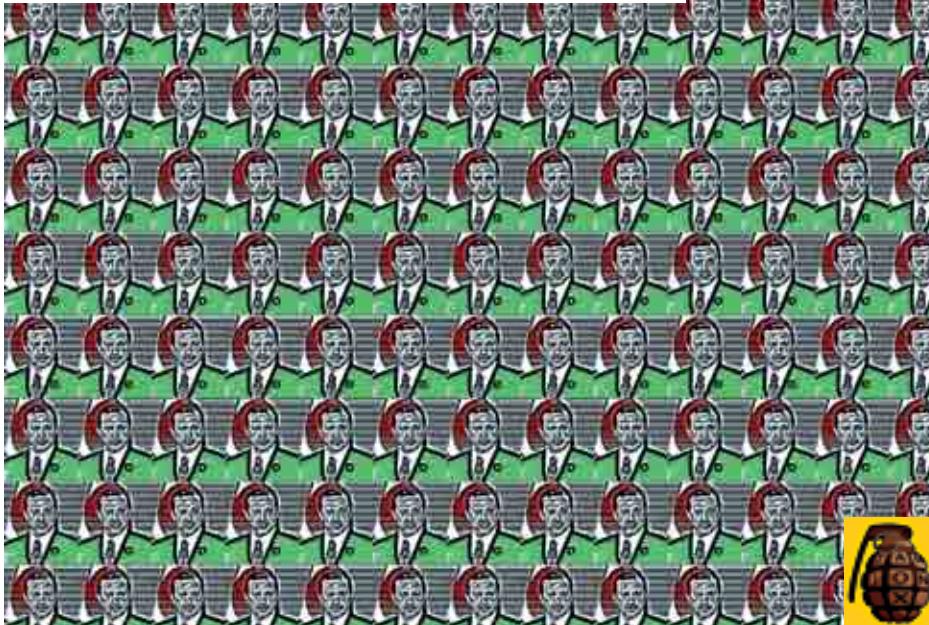
DELİRMİŞ TÜM İNSANLAR
ACEP NEYİN FARKINDALAR
OTOBÜSTEN TRENE
MAVİ PEMBE DİYE DİYE
MAVİ PEMBE ERKEK KIZ HEPİMİZDE İNSANIZ
MAVİ ERKEK PEMBE KIZ HEPİMİZDE AYNİYİZ

BAKTIM ADIM VAR DİYE
HEMDE KADINIM DİYE
ALMADILAR BENİ ASKERE
İTESEMDE İSTEMESEMDE
MAVİ PEMBE ERKEK KIZ HEPİMİZDE İNSANIZ
MAVİ ERKEK PEMBE KIZ HEPİMİZDE AYNİYİZ



Tamponx is an Istanbul-based punk group fronted by Alpert, still active in the city and online connecting to the punk scene in Europe. The now defunct group Spinners was the only all female punk group appearing on the Turkish stage.

See, Tolga Güldal and Sezgin Boynik, editors. An Interrupted History of Punk and Underground Resources in Turkey 1978--1999 (Istanbul, Turkey: BAS, 2011).



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ASLI AKINCI ALPERT is the frontwoman for Tamponx, a punkband based in Istanbul. She is an artist working in various media, including music, sculpture, graffiti, and digital animations. She also works as a propmaker for the film industry in Istanbul.

BURÇAK BİNGÖL (1976-Görece, TR) holds a PhD in Fine Arts from Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. Additionally, she is a graduate of the Ankara State Conservatory, and The New School, New York, where she completed a program in Photography in 2009. She was an Artist-in-Resident at Hunter College, NY, 2006 and at Cura Bodrum, 2010. She is currently an artist-resident at ISCP, New York. She is active as a public speaker and workshop organizer, and as a curator and artist exhibiting her work in four solo and various group shows. Bingöl works with ceramics, photography, and drawings. Her focus is on fragility and alienation as conditions connecting human experiences and mass production and repetition. She currently lives and works in Istanbul.

ÖVÜL DURMUŞOĞLU (born 1978) is a curator and writer who participated in the Critical Studies program at Malmö Art Academy, Malmö (2005-2006). In 2007 Durmusoglu was awarded the Premio Lorenzo Bonaldi Young Curators Award for Data Recovery, GAMeC, Bergamo, 2008, and in 2010 she received a Rave Scholarship to work on a collaborative project of the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa), Stuttgart and the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart. Recent curatorial projects include: Another Country-Eine andere Welt, ifa Galerie Stuttgart, 2010 and ifa-Galerie Berlin, 2010-2011; The New Horizon, STROOM, The Hague, 2010; and My Voice My Weapon of Choice, Kasa Galeri, Istanbul, 2010; Sweet Anticipation, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, 2010-11. Durmusoglu lives and works in Berlin and Istanbul.

BERNA EKAL is a PhD candidate at the social

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GÜNELİ GÜN grew up in Izmir as a boarding student at the private American School for Girls, while her family lived throughout Turkey. She completed her liberal arts education at Hollins College, Virginia, followed by graduate degrees at Iowa Writers' Workshop and Johns Hopkins University. Gün taught at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, at Johns Hopkins and Oberlin College. She is the author of two works of fiction, *Book of Trances*, and *On the Road to Baghdad*, which are translated into a dozen languages and adapted for stage in London at the Sadler's Wells Theater. She is also the translator of Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book* and *The New Life* for which the American Literary Translators Association awarded her a prize. Gün has published criticism and short fiction in numerous publications.

NİLBAR GÜREŞ (born 1977 in Istanbul, Turkey) is a Turkish artist who lives and works in Vienna. In her works Gures explores the female identity, the role of women, the relations between women and their homes and public spaces as well as the relation between women amongst each other. She mainly focuses on the image of Muslim women in Europe. Her works include collages, videos, performances, photographs and objects. Her work has been widely shown and

is included in the Istanbul Biennial of 2011.

NAZMİYE HALVAŞI (born 1956 in Artvin/Savşat/Çayağzı) Halvasi began her political career in 1973 as a member of the Turkish Republican People's Party (CHP) Youth Branch. In 1996, she became group leader of the Independent Women's Coalition at the CHP's women's convention, the first after the September 12 coup. She published her first book "Söz Kadının" (The Voice is Her's) in 1998, and became the first woman candidate for the CHP leadership elections. In 2002, Halvasi attracted attention for Amina Lawal's case with a walk from Ankara to Istanbul in protest of violence against Muslim women. She is currently living in Sweden, where she serves as a member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party. She dedicates her political life to the defense of human rights, women's rights, and the environment.

MELTEM İŞİK was born in Ankara and currently lives and works in Istanbul. She works in sculpture and photography, exploring the ways images of the body are individually and socially mediated, and question the ordinary and the boundaries between private and public. She received a BFA from Bilkent University in Ankara, and a AAS from Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She is currently a MA candidate at Sabancı University in Istanbul. Her work is included in the "Borders Orbits 09" exhibition organized by Siemens Sanat, (13 May-11 June 2011), at the Contemporary Istanbul on 24-27 November 2011, and her first solo show is scheduled for March 2012 at Galeri Nev, Istanbul.

ÖZLEM ÖZKAL Having graduated from METU Industrial Design Department, Özlem Özkal received her M.F.A and Ph.D. degrees from Bilkent University. Her writings on design, cinema and technology were published in various magazines, and her design work ranging from posters to corporate identification systems were exhibited in joint exhibitions. She taught classes in typography, graphic design and basic design in METU, Bilkent University

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ARZU ÖZKAL is a Turkish born media artist and designer. Her practice engages with different interpretations of the body and its relationship to the environment. She raises questions about dogmas, traditions, laws, and patriarchal value systems through videos, public interventions and performances. Özkal received her MFA from the Department of Visual Studies at University at Buffalo (SUNY) and BFA from Bilkent University. Her work has been exhibited broadly in exhibitions and festivals nationally and internationally. Prior to joining San Diego State University as Assistant Professor of Graphic Design in Fall 2011, she spent three years at the Art Department at Oberlin College teaching new media practices.

İZ ÖZTAT born in 1981, lives and works in Istanbul. She completed her MA in visual arts at Sabancı University, Istanbul and her BA in visual arts and cultural studies with Honors at Oberlin College, Ohio, USA. She is a PhD candidate at Yıldız Technical University, İstanbul and teaches at Kadir Has University. Her work has been included in *Second Exhibition*, *Arter* and *When Ideas Become Crime* at Depo, Istanbul. Her solo shows include *READ/ OKU* at PiST, Istanbul (2008), *Love It or Leave It*, Ohio (2005) and *Nothing Disappears Without a Trace*, Ohio (2004). She is the co-founder of the cura bodrum residency in Mugla with Emincan Alemdaroglu. She participated in *unitednationsplaza* (Mexico), *Resartis General Meeting* (Netherlands), *Prishtina Contemporary Art Library Workshop* (Kosovo), *Cairo Residency Symposium* (Egypt), *Gender Trouble Platforms* (Armenia), *Shatana Workshop* (Jordan) and *Transient Spaces* (Lithuania), *Artist to Artist Residency* (London), *Goings On* (Beirut).

CLAUDIA PEDERSON is interested in the connections between media, theory, artistic and social energies. Before focusing on electronic arts, she was involved with

pirate radio and video in collaboration with activists and artists in the Netherlands and Germany. She is currently concluding a doctorate at Cornell University on the work of transnational artists using electronic games and play as vehicles of political and social transformation.

BAŞAK ŞENOVA is a curator and designer based in Istanbul. She studied Literature and Graphic Design (MFA in Graphic Design and Ph.D. in Art, Design and Architecture at Bilkent University) and attended the 7th Curatorial Training Programme of Stichting De Appel, Amsterdam. She writes on art, technology and media, and as a curator since 1995. Senova is the editor of art-ist 6, Kontrol Online Magazine and one of the founding members of NOMAD, as well as the organizer of ctrl_alt_del and Upgrade!Istanbul. She is the curator of the Pavilion of Turkey at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). She lectured at the Communication department of Kadir Has University, Istanbul from 2006-2010.

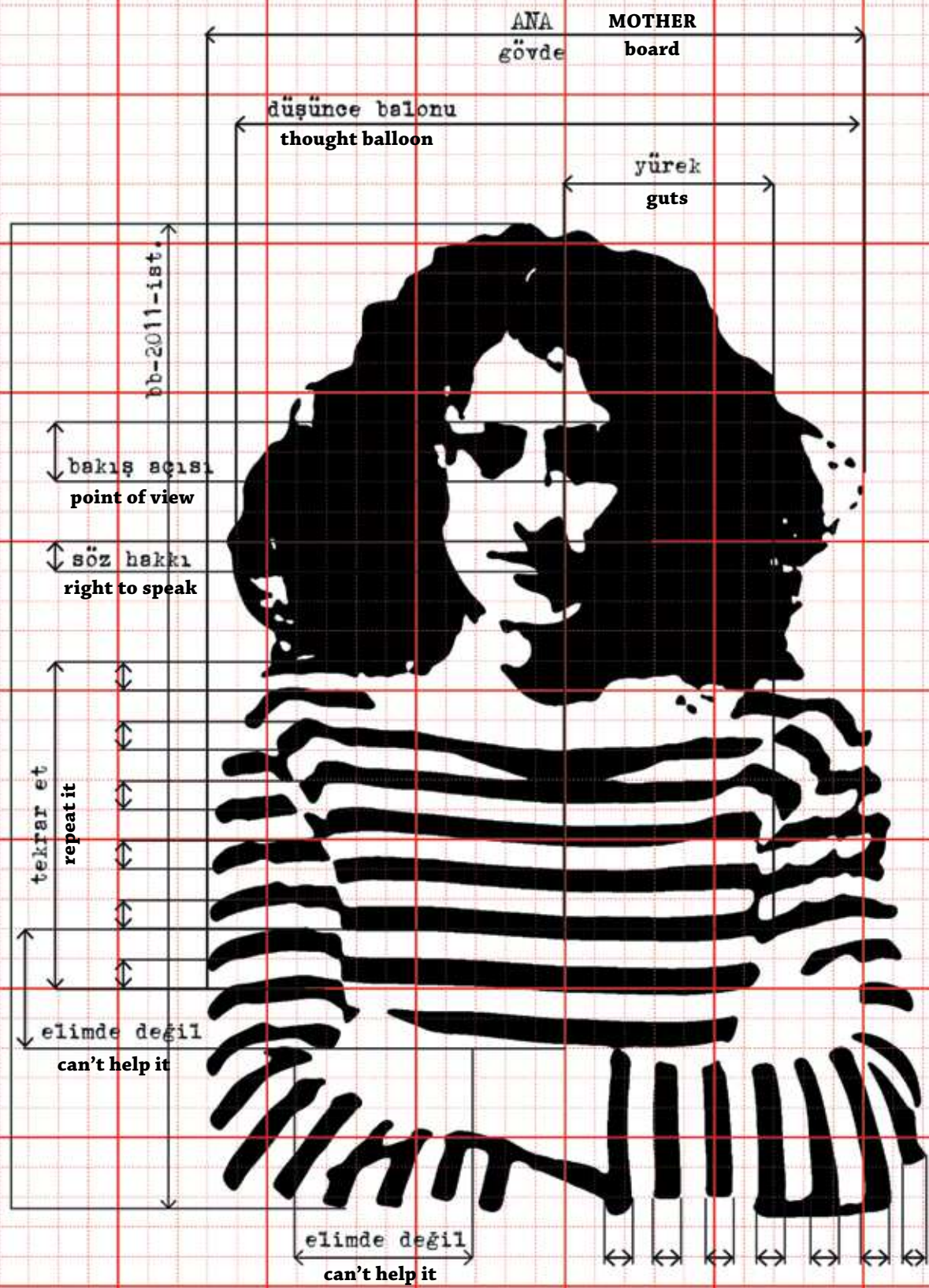
NAZENİN TOKUŞOĞLU (born 1976) studied at Mimar Sinan University in the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning after graduating from TED Ankara College Foundation Schools. She became a reporter for the reality show Teke Tek, produced by Fatih Altaylı for Kanal D., a news correspondent for Kanal D News and Show TV Main News. Tokusoglu directed two documentaries: Yaşasın Okulumuz (Long Live Our School). In collaboration with TOÇEV (Foundation for Educating Children) she travelled to small villages in Eastern Turkey to document the conditions of the schools in the region. Komşum Afrikali (My African Neighbor) is about the life of African immigrants in Istanbul. For the past two years, Nazenin Tokusoglu has been conducting exclusive interviews for HaberTurk's weekend edition.

CHANTAL ZAKARI is a Turkish-Levantine artist and a recent U.S. citizen. She received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She published *The Turk & The Jew*, in 1998 with Mike Mandel, a book based on the web-narrative of the same title, which was launched in 1996. In 2005, using a pseudonym, she self-published *webAffairs*, a documentary of a web community. In 2005, she co-produced with Mandel, *The State of Ata*, a visual book on contemporary Turkey that specifically examines the imagery of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the nation's leader after WWI. Historian and author Etienne Copeaux, defined the book as "an encyclopedic research of the semiology of power relationships in Turkey". She had solo shows in the U.S. and in Turkey and her books are in the collection of Brooklyn Museum of Art, Yale University, Institute of network Cultures, Getty Research Institute, The Kinsey Institute Library and many private collections. She gave book readings/performances in the U.K., Netherlands, Canada and the U.S. Zakari is a professor in the Text and Image Arts Area at The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

IMAGE CREDITS

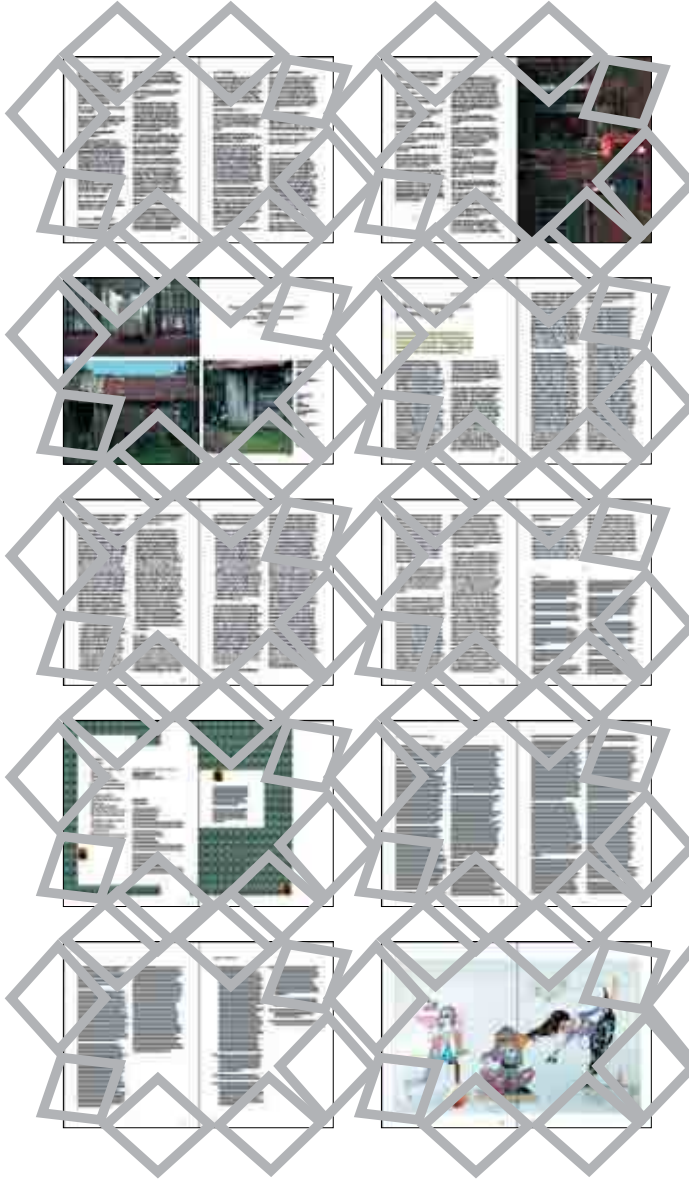
- Page 03:** Plaque at the entrance of The Women's Rights National Historical Park, Seneca Falls, New York, site of the women's convention of 1848. Arzu Özkal and Claudia Costa Pederson. "Although the principal chief of the confederacy was a man, descent ran through the female line, the sister of the chief possessing the power of nominating his successor ...The line of descent, feminine, was especially notable in all tribal relations such as the election of Chiefs, and the Council of Matrons, to which all disputed questions were referred for final adjudication... Not alone the Iroquois but most Indians of North America trace descent in the female line; among some tribes woman enjoys almost the whole legislative authority and in others a prominent share. Lafitte and other Jesuit missionary writers are corroborated in this statement by Schoolcraft, Catlin, Clark, Hubert Bancroft of the Pacific coast, and many students of Indian life and customs." Quoted by Sally Roesch Wagner, "The Iroquois Influence On Women's Rights," in Ron Sakolsky & James Koehnline, eds., *Gone to Croatan, Origins of North American Dropout Culture* (New York: Autonomedia/AK Press, 1993), 228--229.
- Page 06:** "This photomontage includes an official document requesting the removal of my mother from middle school by her father in 1961. I also found the photo of my maternal grandfather in the family archives." Arzu Özkal.
- Page 08:** "Turkish Tea" Designed and silkscreened by David Burnham for Gün.
- Pages 10 and 11:** "I made this illustration after a visit to a bookstore in Ankara. I couldn't find a single poetry book by a woman author at the poetry section. I went to my studio, disappointed, and made this drawing I call, "The reason why women can't do poetry is because they learn it from balls." Özlem Özkal.
- Pages 34 and 35:** "The two images I would like to contribute are from a series called "Twice into the stream," an inquiry into the way we see. They speak of the impossibility of seeing oneself as a complete figure without the help of external devices. I explore the ways we see and perceive our own body, in connection with the ways our body is seen and perceived by other bodies." Meltem Işık.
- Page 31:** NOMAD-TV.NETWORK project poster, designed by Erhan Muratoglu. For more info: <http://nomad-tv.net/network>.
- Page 33:** "She's got so much clit, she don't need no balls" Berlin, Hobrechtstrasse.
- Page 56-57:** Bağlılık/Loyalty-Attachment, Collage, 155 x 253 cm (photo by Reha Ercan) Nilbar Güreş, 2011.





“This document is a significant contribution to the development of a diverse range of feminisms and feminist organizational structures that empower women throughout the world to effectively engage in on-going local, national, and regional ethnic struggles against gender inequality and injustice. Sisterhood is still powerful.”

Steve Kurtz (member, Critical Art Ensemble)



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