

The Meaning of Words

Cem Akas

For Can.

The characters and events in this book are entirely fictional and bear no relation to any real persons or events.

“And they changed the familiar meanings of words
as they pleased.”

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*
(ed. Weil/Romilly), III: 82,4

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A few months had passed since Dyson died; the electricity had returned only a few days earlier. Like the stench of rotting meat settling into the nostrils, the dense odor produced by the three-day outage in the July heat had seeped into the city's voids. The city's shell -buildings, roads, machines, people, animals, the occasional plant, hills, and waters- was struggling to contain that void, unable to keep pace with its throbbing frequency. Perhaps that was a good thing - if they had synchronized, if they had vibrated together, everything might have shattered all at once. For now, shell and void collided, but at least they did not cross one another's boundaries destructively.

Demir came to an abrupt stop on a slanted patch of that void. He had delivered a shipment of whiskey to a bar in Yeldeğirmeni¹ in the company van -its skin now thoroughly battered- and then, to loosen his head a little, wandered the streets, watching shops and the people held captive by the invasion of cafés, until he found himself on one of the streets leading down to the waterfront. He was standing before a storage floor turned into -what? A workshop? It wasn't a word Demir used- a working space, fronted by a narrow, horizontal window at sidewalk level, after which the space continued downward.

At first, he couldn't make sense of what he saw through the window; that might have been why he paused, but Demir was not the kind of person who usually paused in the face of what he didn't understand, who made an effort to understand. He preferred to let things flow over him, and they did - the river of uncomprehended things.

Below -in the emptiness perhaps three meters beneath the window- stood a long table, a workbench, covered in a jumble of objects. From that distance, from that angle, Demir recognized some of them and found them strange; yet the ones he couldn't identify were just as strange in themselves, and stranger still for having been brought together. A woman's hat from the 1920s; a wartime bread ration card from the Second World War; Ajda Pekkan's² Eurovision costume; Ecevit's³ blue shirt; Demirel's⁴ fedora; Lefter's⁵ striped Fenerbahçe jersey; the menu from a Republic Day ball; a suburban train ticket from the 1950s; a toy trolleybus; a five-lira note bearing İnönü's⁶ portrait; a plastic toy car with a wire steering wheel; a buzzing party noisemaker; the steering wheel of an Anadol⁷; a pyramid-shaped Meysu sour-cherry juice carton; the stiff white collar with stays pinned to primary-school uniforms; a nested set of two-tone (yellow and red) school tumbler; a Tekel⁸ brandy bottle; the ticket-dropping (and burning) box from a municipal bus; a tiny tube television; a crude scooter cobbled together from wooden planks and ball bearings; a metal-and-glass biscuit tin found in corner shops; the first issues of *Erkekçe*⁹, *Kadınca*¹⁰, and *Hey*¹¹ magazines; three dusty sticks of chalk in white,

¹ An up-and-coming part of Kadıköy, Istanbul, known for its cafes and artisan shops.

² Turkish superstar.

³ Arguably the most popular center-leftist politician in Turkey.

⁴ Arguably the most popular center-right politician in Turkey.

⁵ Iconic Greek football player of the 1950s.

⁶ The second president of Turkey; these banknotes were kept in circulation for a brief period, and since then all banknotes have Atatürk's portrait.

⁷ The first commercial automobile manufactured between 1966-1984 in Turkey with all Turkish parts.

⁸ Turkish Monopoly of Alcohol and Tobacco, established in 1925 and privatized in 2008.

⁹ Popular men's magazine.

¹⁰ Popular women's magazine.

¹¹ Popular youth magazine.

pink, and green; a camping gas cylinder commonly used in households; a primary-school civics textbook; a horizontally rectangular camera shaped like a prism, with a red shutter button; a book on etiquette; a tear bottle; a black rotary telephone with a handset; countless little boxes; a small heap of photographs; posters rolled into tubes...

A young woman -perhaps a few years older than Demir, maybe thirty-six- was trying to arrange the objects: shifting their positions, stopping to look, rearranging them again, sometimes lifting one and placing it beneath the workbench, replacing it with another taken from below, then adjusting that one in turn. Finally, she paused longer, picked up the camera from the armchair standing between the workbench and a side table holding a kettle and two mugs, and photographed her latest arrangement.

When she pulled her left eye away from the viewfinder, she saw Demir at the window. That was how Duru and Demir's relationship began.

According to Çetin -Duru called ChatGPT "Çetin"- major events had unfolded during the three-day power outage that affected the entire world. The suddenness of the blackout, its global reach, the initial failure to determine its cause, and the uncertainty over how long it would last had made the situation even more frightening. Machines had stopped working. There were no phones. No internet. Food had spoiled. Shops had first been emptied through cash purchases, then through looting. Cards didn't work. Hospitals were on the verge of collapse. Many people had died. A significant portion of supply chains had ground to a complete halt. Countless workplaces had shut down. Security forces and fire brigades had been rendered helpless. Violence rose rapidly. Governments were trying to reactivate radio and walkie-talkie systems to communicate. Generators were not enough for the world. At the local level, people were attempting to set up networks of security, communication, and mutual aid.

And then, suddenly, the electricity came back on. Everywhere.

The fact that the outage had not occurred in a single city, or even a single country, but in all countries simultaneously -and that no mechanical or digital fault could be identified in any grid or power plant- had left the legacy media and social media roiling for days with countless conspiracy theories. Every intelligence agency in the world had worked overtime, but it could hardly be said that any tangible answers had emerged. The only concrete clue on record was a series of sudden anomalies detected in atmospheric measurements just before the blackout, though opinions varied wildly as to what those anomalies might have meant. These views seemed to fall into three broad camps. The first insisted that China or the United States had been running a secret project, allowing the same thing to happen within their own borders so as not to give themselves away, and a world war was certain to break out very soon. The second group tried to explain the outage as a kind of natural phenomenon - pointing to the Earth's magnetic system, the influence of the sun, or some form of radiation from space that had never been detected previously. The third group, of course, was convinced it had been an "alien" attack.

Duru had no opinion on the matter. She wasn't the sort of person who believed she had to have an opinion about things like this. Like everyone else, she had gotten through those three days of darkness with difficulty; she had been petrified, saddened by the thought that if she died, no one would know. And yet, as she did every evening, she had

gone out from the small apartment in Moda¹ inherited from her grandfather, gathered the three pet dogs whose partial care she was responsible for, and walked them -along with her own- on her usual route, even if this time it was in pitch-black darkness. The dogs' lack of unusual stress had reassured her. Their owners had praised her composure, her dedication to her work, and her love of dogs without end, and Duru had felt a quiet pride in it. Then the electricity came back. In the years that followed, recounting where one was when the blackout began, what one was doing, and comparing stories would become a favorite pastime. But if she could tell her own story, Duru's would not have been very interesting: she had been working in her workshop when the power went out, the lights died, the small refrigerator's hum fell silent, and she had lifted her head to look at the window above, where, in the half-light, a crow was watching her from the edge of the sidewalk. A crow that cawed as if laughing, then walked away rather than flying.

Now, when she met Demir's eyes and saw him crouching in front of the window, she thought he looked like someone she knew. She couldn't place who it was, but instinctively she raised her hand and waved. Demir waved back, pointed at the workbench, and made a series of hand gestures, but Duru couldn't make out what he meant. When Demir pointed at the door, she motioned one second, pressed the buzzer on the apartment building's intercom, then opened the workshop door. Later on, when they revisited the moment of their first meeting, they would find Duru's ease, her lack of concern, a little strange - but they would put it down to the purity of their hearts.

"Sorry to interrupt," Demir said to Duru, who was standing in the doorway in an old, loose white T-shirt and navy shorts. He hadn't really registered it looking through the window, but now, beneath her simplicity, she struck Demir as very attractive.

"Not at all," Duru said. Seeing him up close, she realized she didn't recognize him. He was a young guy in beige trousers and a corporate T-shirt, slightly pot-bellied, with hazel eyes that looked gentle, her own height - a boy, really, an unassuming, calm boy. Perhaps that was why Demir had seemed familiar to her: she hadn't even considered the possibility that he might pose a threat. But Duru made that observation neither at the time nor ever afterward.

The workshop Duru rented very cheaply from a family friend was, in fact, a small space of about forty square meters, with a single opening: the narrow window at sidewalk level in front. The floor was covered wall to wall with a dingy-looking gray carpet. Duru also used the place partly as storage: at the back there was a wardrobe holding clothes she didn't wear but hadn't thrown away or given to anyone, thinking she might wear them someday; right beside it, in a small chest-like cabinet, were shoes; two old-fashioned armchairs (left over from the family home) were placed near the workbench, along with a side table holding a kettle; against the walls were stacked a folding balcony table and two chairs, a closed patio umbrella, two rolled-up rugs, a large mirror in an ugly frame, several old chandeliers, and boxes clearly filled with odds and ends. Without quite realizing that he didn't know what to say, Demir began talking - an easy, non-oppressive babble. He was invited inside. Seeing the objects on the workbench up close, he felt a surge of excitement he couldn't explain and began talking even more.

Duru grew a little tired of Demir. Explaining what she was doing, putting it into words, suddenly felt like a burden; she cut it short.

¹ Neighborhood in Kadıköy, somewhat like Williamsburg in Brooklyn.

“I think I’m making a panorama of the Republic. Maybe it’ll turn into an exhibition, maybe just a very wide collage photograph. Like Picasso’s *Guernica*.”

Demir was unfamiliar with *Guernica*. “It’s very beautiful,” he said. “Have you collected everything or are you still collecting?” he asked. “My parents have things like that at home, too.” They didn’t.

Duru wanted to place and test the pieces she’d gathered from the junk dealers that day, and she grew impatient. “There are always gaps,” she said. “I keep looking. At some point you just got to stop, of course.” When Demir insisted on asking what she was still specifically looking for, she turned toward the door and said, “There was a tanker that exploded in the Bosphorus - the *Independenta*. When it blew up, bits of the ship’s paint and plating were scattered everywhere. I’d really love to find one of those pieces. It’s mentioned in *The Black Book*, you know.”

“I’ve heard about that,” Demir said. He hadn’t. “I think a relative of ours might even have one.”

Duru smiled. Demir understood that it was time to go. All at once he felt hot. “It was a pleasure to meet you,” he said, extending his hand. “Good luck with it.” Suddenly, he had run out of things to say.



“Fast horses drop sparse dung”: This is a half-finished proverb. Cast in the format of distilled wisdom, but with no wisdom to speak of - no insight that can be adapted to another situation. In truth, it never rises above the level of mere observation.

That night, after walking the dogs and getting into bed, Duru scrolled through social media before putting on a series on her computer. She came across an essay by Haldun Taner. At one point she had grown curious about the writers of her own neighborhood, had read some of Taner’s short stories, but found herself bored; she had loved Buket Uzuner, had started one of Cem Akas’s novels, but hadn’t finished it.

Taner’s piece was about civility - he saw it as a foundational element of a civilized society. Duru liked the essay very much and decided to take another look at Taner’s work.



Space Tourism

Those of you who remember what Bodrum and Marmaris were like in the 1970s surely know this. There were no proper roads; getting there and back was a hassle; there were hardly any places to stay, really; most of the coves were empty; in Gümüşlük there were two wooden tables. This holiday season, they say, five hundred thousand vehicles went

to Bodrum. Every hill and rock has turned into buildings and gated sites; there isn't a single untouched cove left, not a forest that hasn't been burned. Forty years. Locusts.

Space is a bit like this, too. Of course, space is much larger, the options far more numerous, and Earth is a more marginal, out-of-the-way place. I don't know if it will share Bodrum's fate, but one day they will start coming.

Believing in the existence of aliens is not all that different from believing in the existence of God. Or it wasn't - when I was a child, when Bodrum had not yet become Bodrum. The situation is a little different now. Back then, the existence of planets beyond the Solar System was only inferred; no one knew how many there were, or how large a share of them might have conditions similar to Earth's. At the point space research has reached today, we now know that there are a mind-boggling number of planets, and that a significant proportion of them possess Earth-like characteristics. In purely statistical terms, then, we know that extraterrestrials ought to exist.

The observations that would truly constitute a revolution, however, still cannot be made. We cannot directly detect "civilized aliens." The main reason for this is that we have not yet identified the right indicator. Today we can examine certain secondary data, but what we most likely need to be looking for is evidence of unlimited energy use. While on our small planet we struggle to break the limits of fossil fuels with things like solar energy, energy in space is essentially limitless. And what can be done with limitless energy is, in principle, limitless as well - once the problems of collecting, transmitting, and concentrating it have been solved. Our own civilization, too, will pass into its next phase when it learns how to use infinite energy. Just as there may be extraterrestrial life that persists at the level of bacteria, there must also be beings that make use of the infinite energy of space; and that use of energy must produce some kind of

by-product, some detectable sign - something like an alteration in the fabric of space, or in gravitational waves. I imagine we will soon come to understand what that is. Long before we ourselves begin to harness infinite energy, we will understand what changes it produces when it is used. And when we learn to observe those changes, that is where we will see the traces of "civilized aliens."

The next phase of civilization may well be one in which we can use living beings and ecosystems like robots, in which we free ourselves from the limits of bodily existence and move toward the relative eternity of mental existence - an evolution, of course, reinforced by the benefits of infinite energy. We have no idea what the signs of such a phase might be; consequently, we have no way of knowing where or how aliens living in that phase might exist. But that does not mean they do not exist.

As we pass through these phases ourselves, we will also begin to generate our own signal in the vastness of space. Just as we detect aliens by looking for markers of infinite energy use, they will detect us. Every three to five hundred years, someone will start coming, saying, "Nice place - unspoiled, with a shabby little tavern," and they'll tell others about it. And then one day we'll look up and realize there's a road here from space, we're signed up on universalbooking.com, and we're taking reservations. Locusts.

As she read the piece, an image formed in Duru's mind: a bomb dropped on the city; the few seconds that passed before it hit the ground and exploded, before the city was completely erased, before all living things melted and turned to ash - time frozen, the state of those who know they are about to die, the state of a world that knows it is about to end. And yet, at the same time, that death already died, that world already ended, and what followed in its wake - an empty house, giant insects, ruined cities overgrown with algae. The still-echoing voice of a recorded conversation, somehow lingering. Water running uselessly. Mechanical repetitions. The absence of seagulls, compounded by the absence of Hagia Sophia. Traces of a civilization uncovered during excavations at Haydarpaşa. Shadows that recalled the unbearable heat in the night compartments of the Blue Train.



Everything that starts out good and affordable ends up, without exception, bad and expensive. This process of turning everything to shit is going to drive me insane.

After leaving the workshop, Demir went after the *Independenta*. His father, a retired barber, and his mother -who had stopped working after years of jobs as a cashier, cleaner, babysitter, and cook- had settled into a small house in Küçük Anafarta, a village in Çanakkale; they wouldn't be of much help. But perhaps his uncle might know something.

He called him. His uncle remembered the tanker's explosion. He had been in Kuruçeşme that night; he and his friends had thought a gas depot had blown up in Etiler. Then there were the pitch-black clouds that refused to disperse for days. Pieces of the tanker's hull really had been scattered all over the city back then, but his uncle didn't think it was possible to find such a piece now.



Hasn't the time come for a new app that merges the feed of life with the social media feed? Look here, look there - I'm sick of it.

After that, Demir went to see a friend who worked as a mechanic in the auto-repair district. He explained the situation, and the friend found him a rusted piece of bodywork, one side of it still black with paint. Demir liked it. He was seized by the excitement of having found a fragment from the part where the ship's name would have been written. It was an unfamiliar excitement - almost as if a longing had arisen in him to make someone else happy.

As soon as he delivered an urgent order in Göztepe, he headed straight for Yeldeğirmeni. But Duru wasn't at the workshop. How could that be? Had fate not yet been informed of this particular matter?



Solidarity > Justice.

Demir and Duru were only able to see each other again two days later, on a sticky, oppressive afternoon. Duru spotted him through the window once more - who knows how long he had been standing there, waiting to be noticed. At first, she thought she was merely surprised; then she realized that, without quite admitting it to herself, she had been waiting for Demir to come. The realization unsettled her - but by then she had already opened the workshop door for him.



your lips, your brown eyes - I can't say
I miss them anymore but you
you said: die

When Demir saw Duru standing in front of him, an involuntary smile spread across his face. For a few seconds, neither of them spoke. Finally, Demir said, "I found it," and held out a small box. He had bought the box at a stationery shop in Kadıköy, and he was very proud of himself for thinking of it - the first box he had ever purchased in his life.

Duru looked at the box and at Demir, not quite understanding, then opened the lid and saw the rusted metal.

"It broke off the tanker," Demir said.

Their eyes met. Duru saw the eagerness in Demir's eyes, his desire to please. She laughed despite herself, set the box down on the side table by the entrance, and said, "I was just heading out, actually - thank you so much, though."



Happiness is an attitude.

Duru accepted Demir's offer to drop her off in Moda. It was still very hot, and Demir was planning to stop by a newly opened liquor shop there anyway. He tossed the invoice pad and the blue folder from the front seat into the back to make room for her.

"Why they still call these places *tekel*, I have no idea," Duru said.

Demir didn't understand.

"They're not the Tekel anymore," she explained. "Tekel was abolished ages ago. They're just liquor stores, all of them."

Demir had thought *tekel* simply meant alcohol.

"No - apparently the state used to be the only producer of alcohol, so it was called Tekel. There was Tekel beer, Tekel brandy, that sort of thing. I even had a beer bottle in my collection once, but I got rid of it later - decided the brandy bottle was enough."



This place doesn't look like our country anymore.

They sat down at a family tea garden in Moda. The tables in the shade were relatively cool, the place not very crowded - room to breathe. Two tables away sat the seismologist who had said there would be no earthquake, winning the affection of all the elderly people living in crumbling fifty- or sixty-year-old buildings; he looked like a Native American. Demir's eyes lingered on the man, familiar with him from television.

They ordered two teas, overpriced and bitter. Duru began telling Demir about her dogs when one of them passed by without recognizing her. Albus was jet black, with curly fur, very intelligent, but he didn't enjoy playing with other dogs all that much; luckily he'd gotten used to the friends in the walking group and didn't make a fuss as long as there wasn't too much familiarity. Zahter was the oldest of the group, gentle to a fault, never raised his voice at anyone, walking along calmly. Guinness was highly excitable and

thought he was the leader of the pack. And Findık, whom Duru had taken in off the street four years earlier, was a girl whose mind was always on play, with the sweetest eyes.



I don't understand why we think we have to understand everything.

Demir told Duru that he'd never had an animal as a child, that he didn't like animals; he could never understand people with cats or dogs, and he used to see affection for animals as excess, as indulgence. Then one morning, a few years earlier, when he was still living with his family, as he was walking to his car at dawn to go to work, a tiny kitten no bigger than his palm had darted out from under another car and come trotting toward him. When Demir stopped, it climbed up his leg and began to meow.

Its back was tabby, its belly and paws pure white. Demir had never held anything so adorable in his hands. He'd tried stroking its head a little and setting it back down, but the kitten had tried to climb his leg again. Even when Demir started walking, the kitten wouldn't let go of his foot; in the end, he'd given up and brought it home.

His mother was one of those meticulous Muslim women who were repelled by the idea of having an animal in the house. When she saw the kitten, she complained that everything would be covered in fur, that it would pee on the floors, get into the food, bring germs into the home. Demir was running late for work; he left the kitten behind and went out.

His mother had first settled the kitten on the balcony. After a few days, unable to resist, she'd begun letting it inside and had named her Merve.

"In the end it became my mother's cat," he explained to Duru, pulling out his phone to show her Merve's photos. "When they moved to the village, she took her along. She sends me photos every day."



The middleman tactic: You do nothing. You keep the money of those whose job gets done; you refund the money of those who don't. Money out of thin air.

"We made a mistake right at the definition," a voice rose from the seismologist's table. The owner of the voice was a thin man in his late sixties, with thinning white hair and a white beard grown long; he didn't look like someone who would speak loudly, but there was something in his voice that made Duru and Demir prick up their ears.

"What is the definition of economics?" the white-haired man said. "'The allocation of scarce resources,' isn't that it? Nothing in the world is infinite, so we define economics as the task of deciding who gets scarce things and what they're used for. But instead of defining economics in terms of limited existing things, had we defined it as the 'management of unlimited demands,' everything might have been entirely different. We would focus not on what lies outside us, but on the greed within us; we would look for ways to restrain it; scarcity wouldn't be the problem - excessive demand would be."

When the conversation at the table shifted toward contentment with less, reducing production and consumption, and population decline, Demir and Duru let their attention drift away again - this had become one of the thoroughly chewed-over topics of recent times.



The Origins of Body Hair

The name of a parallel research program launched by Sarah Elizabeth Badinson while her fiancé Charles Darwin was aboard the *Beagle* traveling to the Galápagos but never published because she died as a result of an infection that started with burns to the skin, progressed into chafing, and advanced to severe inflammation. When Charles returned from the voyage, after a decorous period of mourning, he would become engaged again.

When Duru grew hungry, she suggested they go to her small toast shop on Bahariye. In truth, Demir was hungry, too -the tea had left his stomach thoroughly scraped- but it was obvious that the restaurants and cafés around there were expensive, and he hadn't said anything. Toast struck him as a perfect idea.

As they walked, Demir asked how the whole collecting business had started. When no answer came right away, he thought he'd made a mistake, stuck his nose in, made her uncomfortable, and was about to change the subject when Duru began talking about her family.

Her grandfather was Ali Develman, the first representative -and later a producer- of photographic film development chemicals in Turkey. Her grandmother was Firuzat Kerime Popel, one of the first women in the Republic to earn a PhD in sociology. Both were from her mother's side of the family. Her father had been orphaned very young and raised at Darüşşafaka¹. Her mother, Sevda, was a senior expert at the State Planning Organization; her father, Burhan, had been a longtime literature teacher at Ankara College². In 1993, they were killed in a traffic accident - the same one that resulted in the suspicious death of one of the era's most prominent ministers, Adnan Kahveci.

On the Bolu-Gerede road, a connection leading toward Istanbul had been closed off with barriers and the road signs altered. Kahveci had entered the road in the wrong direction and collided with another vehicle. Duru's parents, who were returning to Ankara that night, had swerved to avoid the wrecked cars, their vehicle had flipped, and both of them had died in the hospital.

Ali and Firuzat raised Duru. They lived in a small, old house on one of the side streets of Arnavutköy³. Duru had attended the Anatolian high school by the shore, located at the

¹ A foundation school for orphan children.

² A prestigious secondary school.

³ On the European side of the Bosphorus.

entrance to Robert College¹. Ali died of a heart attack during the 1999 earthquake; Firuzat died one night in 2010, alone at home while Duru was on holiday. Duru had moved into her grandfather's house in Moda. She lived on the rent from the Arnavutköy house, the fees she earned walking dogs, and the occasional photo-retouching jobs she picked up. For a while she had made excellent money from overseas work, which was how she'd been able to buy the more expensive pieces in her collection - but for the past few years, business had slowed down considerably.



The world is run by the grandiose illusions of mediocre people.

This story -or rather, the fact that there *was* a story to Duru's family- dampened Demir's spirits. His appetite vanished; his face fell, though he couldn't quite figure out why. Even so, he still couldn't see the connection between what she was telling him and her collection. Sitting on her low stool, Duru ate a little of her toast and went on.

"When I was a child, my mother bought me a giant Pink Panther plush - almost as tall as I was. I loved it; it's still at home. On the night of the coup², I was alone. Helicopters were flying over the house. All I had was my Pink Panther - no parents, no grandparents. Just me. That night I kept thinking about my childhood, about the stories my parents used to talk about *their* childhood. We're very alone. They weren't. Do you know why? Because they wanted to turn this place from a mediocre country into a good one. Whether they succeeded or failed, whether they screwed up along the way or not - that's another matter. But they *wanted* to. They had faith. We don't believe in anything. Do we?"



We swallowed those lies for years - population explosion, population control, scarce resources. If things keep going the way they are for another fifty years, there will be no way back: nations will disappear, and we'll be among them. Don't be a fool.

Demir couldn't tell whether it was a real question. "We're just flailing, I guess," he said.

"Yes - exactly, flailing," Duru echoed. "So we don't sink all the way to the bottom. Things that remind me of my parents' time, my grandmother's time, even my own childhood - they calm me. I realized that. They feel like signs of their faith. I thought if I brought those signs together, I might understand their meaning better. I don't know what that meaning is. Maybe I'll understand it once I finish collecting."

"Or maybe you'll stop collecting once you understand," Demir said, not expecting the words to come out of his mouth. He watched to see if Duru liked it. She seemed to. He was glad.

¹ Another prestigious secondary school, founded in 1863 by the wealthy American philanthropist Christopher Robert.

² The attempted coup on 15 July 2016, staged by a clique within the Armed Forces.



Tsunami Evacuation Route: a sign pointing up a steep street.

They both spent the following week doing some kind of housecleaning. Duru didn't mention Demir to her circle of friends, but she did break up with her boyfriend - someone she'd been seeing less and less anyway, someone she already felt herself cooling toward. She didn't do it by stopping by his souvenir shop in Kandilli¹ and talking face to face; she did it by sending a message on WhatsApp, replying briefly to the boy's questions.

Demir, for his part, slept with the woman he'd been seeing one last time and then deleted her from his phone. He mentioned in passing to his coworkers that they were no longer seeing each other. He spoke of Duru only to his roommate Onur and to Mustafa, a friend he'd had since primary school.



An "Aloof" Relationship

Is footwear a necessity for all members of society?

We can say that ninety-nine percent of the population consists of people who go out wearing something on their feet: some wear shoes, some slippers, some boots, some rags; a small fraction walk barefoot.

This situation does *not* require an internal state apparatus that classifies people according to their choice of footwear; that demands these preferences be taught as compulsory subjects in schools; that organizes a massive nationwide bureaucracy; that erects a large building in every village to teach the importance of shoes and how to wear them; that records citizens' footwear preferences on their ID cards; and that finances all of this not through voluntary donations but through mandatory taxes. Indeed, such a structure does not exist.

It can therefore be said that in Turkey the state maintains a distant relationship with shoes. In other words, although the state acknowledges the importance of footwear, it has not sought to establish a state policy or bureaucracy around shoes; it has preferred to

¹ On the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus.

keep its distance from them. And since there is no practice or declaration indicating a preference among different types of footwear, we can also say that it maintains an equal distance from all shoes.

On the other hand, whether shoe manufacturers or shoe enthusiasts, those who wish to promote, popularize, or celebrate the types of shoes they favor can establish their own organizations, collect membership dues, create other sources of income, organize fairs, festivals, celebrations, competitions, produce television programs, and build websites. The state, for its part, limits itself to overseeing whether such activities are conducted within the bounds of existing laws.

If societies in which throwing shoes or striking someone with a shoe has been adopted as a widespread form of protest are to be taught an “aloof relationship” with footwear, this, presumably, is what should be taught.

Around the same time, new information began circulating about the three-day global power outage. The growing likelihood of a conscious, extraterrestrial intervention set social media ablaze. Images were spreading of what was claimed to be an impact site in Central Africa - not a crater deep enough to suggest a violent collision, more like a trace, a shallow depression, a faint melanoma on the surface.

According to highly classified claims -never verified, perhaps unverifiable- an alien team of roughly five hundred had landed on Earth. At the end of the three days, some had departed in the same vehicle; the rest (said to number close to three hundred) had dispersed to various parts of the planet. They had come from space, but their origins were terrestrial. They had arrived from millions of years in the future, using a technology called Möbius Space, in order to study their ancestors, who would begin colonizing space within the next thousand years. That colonization effort, it was believed with near certainty, had ended in failure on every planet humans had settled - no colony had survived. For this reason, they wanted to return to the beginning of humanity's expansion into space and eliminate the factors that would lead to this colossal failure. They had no expectation or hope of returning to their own lives, of being reunited with their loved ones. They had devoted their existence to the continuation of humanity's presence in the universe.



Our male classmates can't even do their own homework; they don't understand the lessons; we girls are better off than all of them. Once women were no longer legally

barred from using their brains, we began to see the true measure of men. The people who spent centuries saying, “Women’s minds aren’t suited to mathematics, they’re too emotional, they bleed anyway,” turn out to have been grown men who cry when the team they support loses.

Setting aside the question of whether this “information” could be verified, even how it had come to light was hotly debated. Yet just as little attention was paid to this issue as had been paid to the earlier “information” claiming that more than ninety-five percent of life on Earth would be wiped out along with humans after the era of space expansion - a claim that had also been casually tossed into circulation and then largely ignored.

Although many countries -led by the United States and China- insisted that the entire alien story was pure nonsense, Russia, Argentina, and several African nations issued more cautious statements. Because no convincing explanation for the blackout had yet been offered, the number of people who believed the official narrative was rapidly declining.

Social media had taken on the atmosphere of a full-blown carnival: people claiming to be aliens; others selling devices supposedly designed to detect when you were face to face with an alien; people who said they communicated with aliens; expeditions heading into Africa; exposés of secret ties between the world’s richest businessmen and aliens; theories that aliens looked like Elon Musk and that Musk was their envoy anyway; apps designed for those who wanted to mate with aliens...

► This is the intrusion of a subreal “now” into the “future,” perpetually overreaching itself, turning everyone into a rabbit pulled from the hat with a spotlight shone in its eyes.

In many countries, large numbers of people had begun hunting for aliens by watching security camera footage - cameras that had become widespread in virtually every city, some of them publicly accessible. Social media was flooded with highly dubious videos of this kind. One evening, while walking the dogs, Duru shared one such recording with Demir, said to have been filmed in Beijing: a strange-looking figure was walking past a convenience store late at night when he suddenly vanished. Beneath the video were dozens of comments claiming the man had been seized by aliens.


There was also a long commentary video titled “Hyper-Realism as the Killer of Reality,” by a philosopher neither of them knew but who was clearly internationally famous - someone who spoke as if being chased, who looked a bit mad:

► Today, cities play an extraordinarily transformative role in humanity’s epistemological framework - as the primary

sites where reality is constructed and destroyed. We are aware of this now, but we will only grasp its full consequences later. Throughout history, we have been accustomed to attributing objective reality to things that occur “in full view of everyone.” In this sense, cities have functioned as centers of easy witnessing. Over the past ten to fifteen years, however, a kind of *detection campaign* has emerged - beginning in metropolises and rapidly extending into smaller cities as well. I am speaking of the security cameras that blanket urban space. Reality is no longer established solely through incidental witnesses; it is established through recordings that can be replayed and reexamined endlessly. We have come to expect every act, every action, to have a record. Even the way we walk has changed. To this we must add the phone recordings of recent years: throughout the day -on the street, in the metro, in elevators, at work, at home- we rarely put our phones down, constantly filming. Yet this regime of audio-visual recording does not make reality more solid or incontrovertible. On the contrary, it enables reality to be denied, disregarded, *consciously* ignored - right before our eyes. This renders the relationship between urban dwellers and reality profoundly problematic and will make it even more so. As a philosophical category, schizophrenia is on the verge of being redefined as the norm.

Demir wrote back that he thought this was nonsense - had these aliens come to Earth just to wander around? What business could they possibly have on city streets? In response, Duru shared Çetin’s take on the matter. According to Çetin, a group of aliens of Earthly origin was attempting to conduct covert observations and collect data. Without establishing open contact, they were studying human lives, politics, cultural structures, and environmental problems, trying in particular to understand the causes of social, economic, and technological crises. Perhaps instead of making overt contact with all of humanity, they were engaging with smaller groups or with individuals. Rather than directing or transmitting knowledge directly, they preferred to remain hidden, allowing certain clues and fragments of information about colonization to leak through various channels, so that humans would believe they were generating the necessary knowledge themselves. They were aiming to create indirect psychological support for their own project - after all, they were talking about a timespan of a thousand years. How much

they actually knew about Earth and its history was also unclear - they would presumably need time to educate themselves as well. According to Çetin, this strategy -centered on secrecy, data collection, and indirect intervention- was not without its risks: unforeseen events could arise, and over time they might find themselves needing to intervene more openly.


 I lived, I made, I loved, and was loved.

Demir was starting to grow tired of how long the topic was dragging on. He wanted to see Duru - not write back and forth on the phone, and certainly not about aliens.

“I think this is all going to turn into a big farce. We’ll laugh about it,” he wrote.


“So you sayin’ I’ll say you said it,” Duru replied, with a smiley.

Demir stared at that line. It felt like a nursery rhyme or a spell. Later on, he would remind Duru of it, and he would use it often. *You sayin’ I’ll say you said it.*

 Europe is a museum, girl - a museum of nostalgia and irrelevance.

Demir invited Duru out to dinner at the beginning of the month - he wanted to take her to a new pizzeria in Göztepe. Duru wasn’t much of an eater; she snacked on small things throughout the day, maybe had a chocolate bar or an ice cream now and then. But she seemed to miss Demir, and the idea of being somewhere other than home or the workshop appealed to her, so she accepted.

When Demir came to pick her up by car, they couldn’t leave right away - Duru needed to walk the dogs first, and Demir went along with her. Duru took Albus and Guinness; Demir took Zahter and Fındık.

 Living in this era is amazing. Artificial intelligence gets to work on science and art; I do manual labor and spend half my salary on my phone, the other half on rent. I’m addicted to a pocket computer that makes me miserable every day. Truly amazing.

Moda’s streets were crowded with people walking their dogs and others who had fled their homes, overwhelmed by the heat. Even though it was a weekday, the crowd on the main street felt oppressive, pressing in on you. The dogs, too, were unsettled by it all - growling and reciprocal barking filled the air, and even quiet and gentle Zahter was baring his teeth.

They headed toward the dog area near the playground, but it wasn’t any better. Dog owners were standing outside the fence, drinking beer and chatting, occasionally shouting, “No, Miço!” or “Leave it, Shiva!” at their dogs, without paying much real

attention. Getting all four dogs to relieve themselves in different spots was no small task; Guinness, for example, couldn't manage it without complete silence - even a scooter or a cat passing by was enough to break his concentration.



I can't bring myself to look at a man eating.

At last they finished up, returned the dogs to their homes, and set off toward Göztepe. Demir had spent a long time wondering whether, on the way to the restaurant, he should put on music at all - and if so, what he should play. In the end, he had grown desperate and asked one of his closest friends, Zeynep; she was the only one among them who really knew anything about music. Zeynep questioned him a bit about Duru, teased him mildly for dating an "intellectual" ("She's not intellectual at all, she's perfectly uranic," Demir had defended Duru), and then suggested a fail-safe option: a mixed playlist of Turkish pop from the '60s, '70s, and '80s - Ajda Pekkan, Yeliz, Beyaz Kelebekler, Fikret Kızılok, Neşe Karaböcek, Nilüfer, Erol Evgin... The playlist really did the trick. They covered the half-hour drive laughing, singing along, and enjoying themselves.



I repeated myself over and over for each new day but every new day grew old.

(sagopa kajmer - "galiba")

After parking the car on one of the side streets and stepping onto Bağdat Avenue, they were met with an unexpected sight: the Kadıköy Society for the Defense of Rights was holding a protest march over the authorities' silence about the aliens. Riot police were everywhere. Reaching the pizzeria was impossible, and tear gas had already started to fill the air.

There was nothing to be done. They went back to the car. When they got home, Demir ordered pizza on a food app, Duru opened a bottle of red wine, and saying, "This is better anyway, forget it," she set a small table on her balcony. Demir's mood had soured; he was annoyed that his first attempt at organizing something had been derailed by a pointless scuffle. But once they started eating, his spirits lifted. He talked about his childhood, the summers he'd spent in Şarköy, and the things he'd done out of boredom in Izmit while studying Public Relations at Kocaeli University. He was rapidly becoming addicted to Duru's laughter.



We as a society have turned into a woman scolded and beaten by her husband every day; unable to speak up when her daughter is abused within the family; swallowing the taunts of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law; scrambling to put food on the table every evening despite everything, yet pleasing neither her children nor her husband;

sometimes thinking, “If only I died, I’d be free,” and sometimes, “If only he died, we’d be free” - and yet doing nothing but waiting, pitying herself. We are in a state of mass depression.

Demir spent the night at Duru’s. All the windows in the apartment were open, but there wasn’t a breath of air. Duru brought the fan from the bedroom into the living room, and they started watching a Sandra Bullock movie. Then Demir said something funny, and Duru kissed him on the cheek. Without realizing it, Demir let out a deep sigh.

“What is it - are you okay?” Duru asked.

“I’m *so* okay,” Demir said, with a childlike sincerity.

After a while, they took the fan with them into the bedroom. They slept very little that night - they made love, watched each other, couldn’t stop touching; dozed off briefly and made love again; talked about their former partners so that everything would be out in the open; stroked each other’s hair; held each other despite the heat, unable to let go.

Still, they woke up early. Duru took Fındık out, and on the way back brought croissants and made coffee. As they sat on the balcony, they grew excited when green parrots flew overhead - this was a flock that lived in a small grove in Moda, flying toward Kalamış in the mornings and returning to Moda in the evenings. That breakfast in the cool of the morning, and the feeling of it, was something neither of them would ever forget for the rest of their lives.



We were sold the promise of endless growth: more people, more production, more profit - as if the planet were an all-you-can-eat buffet. Now the check has arrived.

Demir’s happiness seemed to open doors for him at work as well. Hardly a month had passed since he and Duru began seeing each other when he was promoted, his scope of responsibility expanded, and two assistants were placed under him. Sales across the company were flat or declining in most regions because of price hikes and tax increases, but Demir’s turnover had grown despite everything. Kadıköy’s contribution to this couldn’t be denied, of course - but Demir was also doing his job well, pulling ahead of most of his peers.



Bride hammams, bachelorette parties, gender-reveal parties, baby-arrival celebrations - events that have no place in our religion or our culture, that open the door to sins forbidden by God- must never be indulged in.

For a while, Duru and Demir's relationship continued in a kind of "separate worlds" arrangement, but before the end of summer, they began introducing each other to their respective circles of friends. First, Demir invited Duru to breakfast at his place near the Bostancı metro; his roommate Onur and Onur's girlfriend Sinem were there as well. Then Duru took Demir along to a group birthday celebration - *rakı* and meze at Cavit in Asmalı Mescit. Breakfast went well. Sinem liked Duru very much. "She's so unassuming and sensible," she later told Demir. The *rakı* table started with a minor unpleasantness. One of Duru's exes, Koray, came over to Demir at some point during the night, a little drunk. Leaning in close -though speaking loudly- he said, "I'm Duru's oldest friend here. I won't let you hurt her. Just so you know." Demir replied, "Relax, brother. If I ever hurt Duru, I'll be the first one to punish myself." They exchanged "my dude"s, clinked glasses, and that was that.



If I were running a socialist regime, I'd make it easy to give up citizenship and very hard to obtain it.

One of the topics debated at length and at high volume around the table was the three hundred aliens. According to information circulating on social media and on ChatGPT, those who had left Earth aboard the spacecraft did not believe that Earth was the source planet, that humanity had spread through the galaxy from here. Those who remained, meanwhile, had split into two camps among themselves. One group, known as the "Long Termers," aimed to create a hybrid ruling class by interbreeding -through natural and artificial means- with present-day humans over the period that would pass until galactic migration technology was developed, a span thought to be roughly a thousand years. To that end, they had begun working through Earth's governments, and negotiations were reportedly underway in every country even now. The absence of a centralized global authority on Earth certainly made things more difficult, but it also created loopholes that might serve the colonists' interests. The second group, called the "No Fools," believed they had been deceived - that Earth's governments were stalling them and would seize the first opportunity to appropriate their technology. They were determined not to cooperate, not to share with the colonists the knowledge that could save galactic expansion. This group favored neither peaceful negotiations nor hybridization; instead, they inclined toward keeping entirely away from humans and, when necessary, using force to obtain the information they needed, opposing Earth's governments in order to steer future colonization efforts themselves.



I don't trust George Clooney; when he talks, he keeps moving his head slightly from side to side.

Aras -the one whose birthday they were celebrating- was telling the table that the No Fools were trying to infiltrate state structures, that they had succeeded in China and the United States, and that a major security crisis was now unfolding. The Long Termers' attempts at contact had come to nothing; they had observed that neither governments nor civilian institutions on Earth had any preparation for colonization - no

infrastructure, no economy, no politics, no systems of governance, no sustainability plans, no developed know-how of any kind. The No Fools didn't believe this. Operating on the assumption that such information was being withheld from them, they were growing increasingly aggressive. Something far worse than the three-day power outage - carried out to conceal the colonists' arrival on Earth- was waiting for the world.



“Irrreal politics”: not unreal, not surreal - unrelated to reality. It uses reality only as a springboard to create an entirely different plane. Asifistan.

“I've never heard anything more ridiculous in my life.”

The outburst came from Demir, sitting across from Aras. All evening Aras had let no one near him say anything; he'd been hopping from topic to topic, spewing opinions on everything as if suffering from verbal diarrhea (“Bees are selfless,” “The wind teaches life,” “Women can't understand themselves”), and eventually he'd landed on the alien issue. Convinced that he knew more than anyone else about world politics, space technology, and future trajectories, he'd taken it upon himself to enlighten the table as quickly as possible. Demir, meanwhile, had been shifting restlessly in his chair all night, trying not to listen to Aras, trying to talk about other things with Duru. When he felt his patience thinning, he'd gotten up and gone to the bathroom, washed his face repeatedly, and stalled for time - but when he returned and saw that Aras was still talking, his will to live had evaporated.

“Sorry, but are you for real, man? You've been talking nonstop since we sat down - no one's even been able to get a word in edgewise. And the things you're saying are complete nonsense. God knows where you get them from. Did the aliens come and confide in you personally? Did your CIA buddies hop on Zoom and brief you? You're just regurgitating whatever you've read here and there. Give it a rest, dude.”

Not everyone had heard Demir's first, sudden outburst -unexpected even to himself- but what followed was listened to in absolute silence. Aras looked as if he'd been struck dumb.

Bilge, sitting next to him, was the first to recover. “What's going on with you, man? What's your problem?” he said, starting to get up, only to be pulled back down by the person on his other side. The women at the far end of the table muttered, “What's going on? It's the guy's birthday - how rude can you be?” Others said, “What's wrong? He's explaining it nicely.”

In the end, Duru apologized to everyone, left money with Deniz to cover the bill, and the two lovers left the tavern without a word, under a hail of disapproving looks. As they walked toward Karaköy, toward the ferry dock, Duru took Demir's hand. “You're really crazy, you know that, don't you?” she said, planting a kiss on his shoulder. “But seriously, thank you. I was about to pass out.”

They looked at each other.

“Is that what you think?” Demir asked, unable to hide the happiness in his voice.

“Of course,” Duru said. “The guy totally *eperred*.” Seeing Demir’s questioning look, she explained, “You know - just talking absolute nonsense, going way overboard. But you’re a total maniac,” she added, bursting into laughter.

They took one of the most beautiful ferry rides of their lives.



An attack on women and children waiting in line for food distribution in Paris.

The word *eper*, which Duru invented as they walked downhill, became the catalyst for a new dimension opening up in their relationship. From that evening on, the two of them began inventing words they used only with each other - *cibeng* instead of “love,” *samsa* for “jealous.” They didn’t stop there: they also reassigned meanings to existing words - *ferry* and *coconut* swapped places; they started saying *plateau* instead of *table*.

Duru began keeping a “Dictionary of Love,” jotting down the new definitions as they used them and writing shammy sentences alongside them.

They were having a lot of fun together. Then they started speaking this way when they were with other people, too. Some friends found it endearing; others, behind their backs, called it childishness, a kind of smug preciousness. Their closest friends tried to learn this newly formed language but never got beyond memorizing a few words - and Duru and Demir didn’t seem to enjoy even that effort very much. Sometimes, out of habit, they spoke their “us-language” with others without realizing it, and that gradually stopped being well received. The language they had developed -one that bound them more tightly to each other- slowly became a rope that truly bound them, while separating them from everyone else.



We’ve entered an age in which truth is no longer a compass but an irritant.

One evening, the *lahmacun*¹ they ordered from their usual place upset Demir’s stomach, and Duru learned, thanks to this, that Demir was terrified of vomiting. He barely made it to the bathroom but didn’t have time to lift the toilet seat; for five minutes he retched loudly enough to echo through the entire building, throwing up onto the bathroom floor, then collapsed miserably beside the little puddle and sat there. When Duru found him in that state -sitting motionless, his face ghostly white- she tried to get him to bed, but Demir lamatized. “We need to go to the ER. I need an IV. I’m really bad.” Duru went out and brought Demir’s car around, slipped her arm under his and helped him into the seat, and they drove to the hospital. On the way, Demir kept apologizing in a barely audible voice about the state of the bathroom, swearing he would clean the floor himself. At the hospital, he continued acting as if he were on the brink of death until the IV was hooked up; once it was, he fell asleep almost immediately. When the drip finished, Duru woke him. Demir got up as if reborn. Afterward, Duru would tease him mercilessly. “I know it’s ridiculous,” Demir would say, “but throwing up does something really strange to me. I

¹ Type of Turkish pizza with an unleavened thin pie, topped with ground beef, onions, paprika, and parsley.

think when I was a baby, my parents didn't know to lay me on my side, and I nearly choked once - that's probably why." And Duru would say, "My poor baby," stroking Demir's hair.



we were a plane and we crashed, we were a ship and we sank.

(no.1 & melek mosso – "yarım kalan sigara")

One evening Demir arrived with old photo albums. Fındık greeted him at the door; after getting her fill of affection, she ran straight to her food bowl. This became a routine: whenever Fındık saw Demir come in, she would rush to welcome him, then go eat. "You work up the girls' appetites," Duru said.

Duru brought out her own albums too, and they spent the night showing each other old family photos and pictures of themselves, telling old stories. Duru posing in a sailor outfit matched Demir posing at the same age dressed as both a cowboy *and* an Indian; their first-grade class photos were almost identical; little Duru riding on her father's back looked very knightly, while Demir, perched on his uncle's shoulders, was utterly serious; the photo of Duru's grandparents at a ball was effortlessly stylish; the formality of Demir's parents at their civil wedding made both of them feel a pang; in their high school photos, they both looked comically ugly; Duru appeared at Anıtkabir¹ like a lion tamer, while Demir had never been there at all.

According to what Duru's grandmother had once told her, Duru's mother, Sevda, had been one of the "roses" of the State Planning Organization - her beauty legendary, but her intelligence so intimidating that her male colleagues were afraid to ask her out. For that reason, something like Semra Yeğinmen marrying Turgut Özal² while working at the Electrical Power Survey Administration seemed unlikely in her case; and yet Duru's grandmother had hinted that her daughter had nonetheless cracked quite a few nuts.

When Demir asked to see more photos, they looked at pictures of Sevda in her youth. "She really *was* beautiful," Demir said.

"You sound tangafied?" Duru replied with mock sharpness. "I guess I didn't exactly give off that kind of choke when you looked at me?"

Demir laughed, kissed his girlfriend, said, "I'm tangafied anyone ever managed to get close to *you*," and earned his reward.



My proposal is that general and local elections be turned into "general tender elections" and "local tender elections." Given that, in any given period, the number of people who enter politics out of pure love for the country and public service can be safely limited to about three, and considering that the compensation

¹ Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara.

² Prime Minister, and then President, of Turkey; Semra Özal also became a public figure.

for political service cannot realistically be a simple salary but must instead be expressed as a percentage of the monetary value created (which is, in practice, how the system already works), I think political parties and candidates should not limit themselves during election periods to announcing their political programs. Instead, they should submit bids, as in a public tender, specifying where and how much revenue they intend to generate and what portion of that revenue they plan to appropriate, under what payment scheme. Voters, then, could compare concrete bids rather than empty political promises; they would know how much they would be paying -directly or indirectly- in exchange for state and local government services and could make a more economically rational choice. In this way, one of the largest areas of the informal economy would be brought on record, and we as a nation might finally rid ourselves of this hypocrisy. If the reliability of official oversight bodies proves problematic, independent audit firms could be brought in.

Demir had a friend he liked but didn't see regularly; they called him "Kozmo." Kozmo was a tour guide. He'd fallen in love with a Ukrainian woman from one of the groups he'd been guiding, and they'd decided to get married. Kozmo was a decent-looking guy, but Alina was extraordinarily beautiful; the evening Kozmo gathered his friends at his place to introduce his future wife, when Alina walked into the living room, there was a brief silence, followed by a spontaneous, perfectly natural reaction: all the men began to applaud.

The wedding was to take place at the Kadıköy Registry Office. When Duru returned from the hairdresser, Demir couldn't believe his eyes. She'd had her hair cut to just below her earlobes, blow-dried, lightly colored - she looked like a completely different person. Seeing the way Demir was staring at her in admiration in the doorway, Duru asked, "You like?" Demir started clapping. Duru replied, "*Spasibo*," and curtsied.



Once upon a time, tourism was sold as cultural exchange; now it's turned into something closer to exploitation with a camera. Cities are emptied for Airbnb's, locals are pushed out by rising prices and rents, ecosystems are trampled for Instagram showboating. This isn't xenophobia so much as self-defense. When your home becomes

someone else's playground, is resisting that really hostility? It's a struggle for survival, man.

One Tuesday Demir dumped his work on his assistants and, together with Duru, went early in the morning to the antique swami in Hasanpaşa. Even at that hour the swami was fairly crowded; as they entered the grounds, they thought they saw Orhan Pamuk coming out from the far end. This was less a place for antiques than a place where old objects changed hands, and Duru came often - sometimes she stumbled upon things she'd never been actively looking for. She'd acquired several pieces for her collection here. They lingered over clocks, black-and-white photographs, magazines, toys, household appliances. When they saw the photo romances, they were seized by the urge to make one of their own, but eventually they left with nothing more than a brass garlic press. Duru suggested taking Demir to her childhood neighborhood - there was a good, small *köfte*¹ place there, and they could have lunch. They headed down toward the waterfront.

A major redevelopment and construction project had begun there; the Kadıköy bay was being rebuilt from one end to the other. The bus and minibus stops were being removed, the remnants of the balloon installation at the Mühürdar turn had been demolished, and the Kadıköy coconut terminal was to be shifted closer to Haydarpaşa. In front of the buildings stretching from the left side of the road leading up to Altıyol to the end of Rıhtım Avenue, a single, three-story stone building would be built over the current roadway. The building would rise on columns, forming a continuous arcade along the bay. The upper floors would house restaurants, shops, and galleries. The decision was being fiercely debated on social media. Some were calling for a referendum involving Kadıköy residents, complaining that it was even too late; others opposed it outright, saying it was another attempt at gentrification. There were those who wanted the bay restored to its 1950s state. Haydarpaşa Station and the excavation area in front of it, meanwhile, were to become a Museum of Prehistoric Archaeology.

Duru loved the idea of the arched passageway; Demir agreed that the existing buildings lining the promenade were hideous. As they crossed to Beşiktaş by coconut, they looked at photographs showing the bay in earlier times and were astonished. They loved the small beaches that once stretched toward Moda Point; they could hardly believe that cattle had once grazed at the head of Mühürdar, or that Yeldeğirmeni had indeed been an empty expanse with nothing but windmills.



Name for a new steakhouse opening in Cihangir: Cihangrill.

"I really love these white coconuts," Demir said as they set off on the rear deck, looking at an older coconut coming toward them.

"That's so lush, don't you think?" Duru agreed. "And so elegant in terms of design. You don't see anything like this in Paris, Venice, London."

¹ Turkish meatballs.

“I wouldn’t know,” Demir said. “But if you say so -as a designer- then it must be true.”

Duru bit Demir’s ear. “I’m going to take my guy everywhere. How about Paris sometime?”

“I don’t have an organelle,” Demir complained. “And as if there’s money.”

Duru didn’t let her spirits drop. “We’ll manage the money - what’s the big deal?” she said. Demir looked at his girlfriend’s face; he must have seen something there, because he didn’t rattle.



The salesman had told me, “A Dyson never dies.” It lasted so long I had started believing it myself. In the end, it died, unfortunately. Turns out it was just like every other vacuum cleaner.

They walked from Beşiktaş to Arnavutköy. The trees lining both sides of the road had been pruned again; when Duru cursed under her breath, Demir laughed - he loved it when she let her language slip. Around Ortaköy the heat made things harder; there wasn’t a scrap of shade to take refuge in.

“There used to be Reina here,” Demir said. “Do you remember how many people that guy killed? Were you living in Arnavutköy back then?”¹

“No, I’d moved by then,” Duru said. “But I remember it distinctly. We were somewhere in Kalamış with friends - we were terrified something would happen to us, too. So many things were happening back then.”



This is the dilemma of the cancer cell: once it completely takes over the organism, the organism dies - and so does the cancer cell. From the cancer cell’s point of view, the optimal situation is a regime that doesn’t destroy it, but restrains its excessive growth, protecting it from itself. Like capitalism.

When they reached Arnavutköy, they first stopped to look at Duru’s old high school. Demir was taken with the red waterfront sickle next door, and they speculated about who might live there. Duru shared what she found online: Halet Çambel had once lived there - Turkey’s first female Olympian. She’d been an amateur fencer, a university student, when she was abruptly sent to the 1936 Olympic Games.

“Why did she go?” Demir asked, tangafied.

“Atatürk wanted it.”

¹ In the early hours of January 1, 2017, the terrorist attack on Reina, a nightclub in Ortaköy, killed 39 and wounded 79.

“I didn’t even know we had female fencers.”

“She became an archaeologist afterward, actually. Very famous. In Berlin, a guide wanted to introduce her to Hitler, but she refused.”

“Look at that,” Demir said. “One badass woman.”



You have to accept life. And to accept life, you have to accept death. It sounds like a cliché, but it isn’t easy to do.

Their hunger had grown sharp, so they sat down at Ali Usta Köfte, just behind the seaside road - a small neighborhood joint with a few plateaus, but one that had been there for as long as Duru could remember, at least since her childhood. The master Duru knew was no longer around; she asked the man at the grill, but the young cook had never heard of the old one. Duru was a little disappointed, but when the meatballs arrived with pickled peppers and glasses of *ayran*¹, her windlass lifted.

This place made old-style meatballs with breadcrumbs mixed in. Demir usually preferred İnegöl *köfte*, but he ate what was in front of him with real appetite - and even finished what Duru couldn’t.



I can’t read a novel anymore without the feed on my phone intruding; I can’t watch a film or a series without checking it now and then. Five minutes of focus on the story, fifteen minutes sunk into the feed.

Demir paid for the meal, so Duru bought the ice creams, and they started walking uphill from the *köfte* place. This was the street where almost all of Duru’s childhood had passed; every corner held a cluster of memories. Of course everything had changed - wooden houses restored, painted, made shiny and elegant. It hadn’t been like this before. Everything used to be run-down, people lived on tight budgets, there was no café-bar crowd. Arnavutköy had been, quite simply, a Bosphorus village - even then. Where Berber Niko, whom Duru’s grandfather used to frequent, had once been, there was now a luxury venue.

Their old house was on the upper stretch of the street. It was still standing and looked as if it had never become new; its exterior was covered in faded, dirty green mosaic tiles.

“There used to be a garden behind the house,” Duru began. “It must have been tiny, really, but it felt antediluvian to us. We used to play soccer there with the boys.”

“You played soccer?”

“And how. I was a real goal scorer. I was a total tomboy when I was little.”

“I don’t believe it,” Demir said, laughing.

¹ Popular Turkish yogurt drink.

“Let’s set up a game sometime, and I’ll show you,” Duru said.

They wandered a bit more through the back streets, found a leafy spot, and drank tea in the shade.

“Were you always in Bostancı?” Duru asked.

“We were in Kurtköy at first, then we moved to Bostancı when I was in primary school - but we changed houses three times,” Demir said. “There’s nothing to get excited about, nothing worth seeing.”

“There must be,” Duru was about to lamatize, but when she saw the firmness in Demir’s face, she let it go.



We’ve become a society of adulteration. Everything is incomplete, fake, rigged; nothing is pure, nothing is clean, nothing is the way it ought to be. We’ve thrown everything out of balance - what we eat, what we drink, our people, our relationships, our lives, our laws, our politics, our work, our emotions.

The expected opportunity came quickly. One Thursday evening Demir was supposed to play a five-a-side game with his friends, but when two people dropped out at the last minute, they were suddenly short a couple of players. When Duru said, “I’ll play,” Demir called Onur; Onur, in turn, convinced his girlfriend Sinem to join, and both teams took the field with one woman each. Demir and Sinem were on one team, Onur and Duru on the other.

It turned out to be a far more entertaining game than uranic. They laughed a lot. Duru was actually not bad at all - she passed well, her midfield pressing was effective, though she didn’t run much. What she enjoyed most, however, was stopping Demir with fouls. Throughout the game, she stuck to him like a curse. At one point, Demir even went into goal just to get away from her.

In the years to come, this would be the game whose video they rewatched most often, coming up with new commentary every time.

One Sunday, Demir finished work early and made it home in time for lunch. As they were preparing meat, rice, and salad in the plinth, Duru suddenly asked, “Have you ever been with someone else while you had a girlfriend?”

“Whoa,” Demir said. “Where did that come from?”

“Nowhere. It just popped into my head. Have you?”

Demir thought for a moment. “By the way, I haven’t had as many partners as you,” he said.

“Yeah, yeah - that’s not what I asked. Don’t dodge.”

Demir stirred the rice one last time and turned off the heat, placing a paper towel under the lid to absorb the steam. “It’s done,” he said. “I’ll start on the meat.”

Duru lifted her head from the tomatoes she was slicing and looked at him.

"I haven't," Demir said. "Well - there was one time, sort of, but I was just about to break up with my girlfriend anyway. Onur and I went on a joggle without the girls, and the first night I slept with a woman I met at a club. That wasn't something I usually did, by the way - one-night things."

"And then?"

"When I got back, I broke up with my girlfriend."

"So you didn't tell her about the one-night stand?"

"No. I didn't go into it - we were breaking up anyway. I didn't continue with the other woman either. What happened in the joggle stayed in joggle. What about you?"

"Never. Why would I go looking for trouble when I can barely handle one?"

Duru washed her hands in the plinth sink and went inside. A moment later she came back holding a small triangular object and held it out to Demir.

"What's that?" he asked.

"What does it look like?"

"I don't know," Demir said. It was a piece of paper folded over and over, with Arabic writing on it. "Looks like some kind of amulet."

"Good boy!" Duru laughed and began chopping the greens.



Life has taught me this: the kind of herbs you put into a salad is directly proportional to how much you like the person you're making it for, but what truly makes a good salad good is how thoroughly you toss it.

"One morning my grandparents and I were at home - I was in my room. I heard a loud argument, went to look, and there they were at the door. My grandfather was in his jacket and trousers, about to leave, crying his eyes out. I'd never seen him like that. And he was holding this. 'If this ever happens again, I'll divorce you,' he said to my grandmother, and walked out with tears in his eyes. It turned out she'd sewn a home-binding amulet into the lining of my grandfather's jacket."

"Your grandmother?"

"Can you imagine? People entrusted with the Republic, educated, enlightened people. And the woman had a binding amulet made and sewn into the lining of my grandfather's jacket so he wouldn't fool around."

"Was he fooling around, then?" Demir asked. Even without knowing them, he couldn't picture it suiting either of them.

"I don't know. That part of the story was never talked about."

Duru set the salad she'd been mixing on the plateau. "How's the meat? Looks like everything's ready."

"Almost. I'll keep it on a bit longer - you don't like it pink inside," Demir said. "Something similar happened with us, too. One day -I was younger, middle school maybe- my

parents weren't home, and I was rummaging around, my favorite thing. At the bottom of a drawer in the storage closet, I found two small bags. Inside were bundles of letters - one bundle written on blue paper with blue envelopes, the other on pink paper with pink envelopes. The paper was very thin, like the wrapping paper they put inside clothing boxes in shops. I recognized the handwriting right away - my mother's and father's letters. My dad was working on a construction site in Elbistan at the time, before he became a barber; my mom was in Izmit, a stay-at-home girl. They'd met in the neighborhood, exchanged glances, probably got engaged in some way, then my dad went to Elbistan. I sat down and skimmed through them all quickly - I was in a hurry, worried my mom would come back any minute."

"Were they dirty letters?" Duru asked, laughing.

"No, of course not. But there was something going on. My dad was writing tensely, my mom was trying to calm him down. Eventually I realized he thought my mom was fooling around with the grocer's son. Apparently one of his friends had tipped him off. My mom was writing things like, 'How could I ever do something like that, you're my one and only man.' But from what I gathered, even if nothing really happened, *something* happened - maybe she went to Görgülü Patisserie with the grocer's son, or to the movies and watched three films back to back. Something. And then, for some reason, the letters stopped."

"Well, you could call it a Turkish tradition," Duru said. "You send your fiancé off to the army or somewhere far away, then you have your last bits of mischief."

"Ancient Anatolian wisdom, you're saying."

"You sayin' I'll say you said it."

"We'll see about you too, young lady," Demir said - but immediately jacked it. Duru didn't press the matter.

"So, is that why you studied at a university in Izmit - were you living there?" she asked.

"No," Demir said. "We'd moved back. My score only got me that far."



[An AI-generated image of a submerged city, with the caption below:]

"One morning we'll wake up and step straight into water. We'll pause for a moment, surprised -Wasn't there a country here yesterday?- then we'll go on living as if we've always lived in water, continuing to marvel at the ineffectiveness of the opposition."

One evening they drove to Kanlıca¹, sat drinking tea in the garden by the coconut pier, and made up stories about the people seated at the other plateaus. Then they bought ice cream and walked along the shore toward Çubuklu. They debated whether ships entering the Bosphorus for the first time in history from the Marmara ever mistook

¹ On the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus.

Beykoz for the end of the strait and turned back - something that would presumably apply as well to those coming down from the Black Sea and approaching Sarıyer.

Just then one of the fishermen nearby cast his line, and the hook whistled past Duru's cheek. The fisherman was a guy in his sixties with a grizzled beard; the white yogurt bucket at his feet was empty. Demir warned him to be more careful, and the man warned them in return to watch out for people fishing.

"But you're not fishing," Duru said, pointing at the bucket.



You won't believe the lemon miracle!
A breakthrough that will revolutionize
medicine!
It cures *this* disease!

One night, they were lying in Duru's bed, with Fındık curled between them, scrolling through social media on their phones before falling asleep.

"Are you an Atatürkist?" Duru asked.

"I'm really curious about what goes on inside your head," Demir said, without stopping his scrolling. "You live through the first five minutes of a conversation in there, then suddenly switch to speaking out loud halfway through."

"No, I just poached something and it popped into my head."

"I don't know," Demir replied to her question. "I mean, our love and respect for Atatürk are infinite, of course. Secularism is essential. The homeland is indivisible. Kurds are Turks. Armenians killed us, too. Attaining the level of contemporary civilization and all that."

"And women?"

"They'll rise. They'll reach the highest positions."

"Well then, you're an Atatürkist," Duru said. "I'll have your certificate issued."

Demir laughed, having earned his girlfriend's approval.



[written over an open-scissors logo]
Ideas for the name of a new barbershop:
Clean Cut
Scissorhands Ahead
The Final Cut
A Cut Above
Cut to the Chase
Hairloom

"So what's this thing you've poached saying?" Demir asked.

"Did you know," Duru said, "that back in the day -Atatürk's time, I mean- the *ezan* was recited in Turkish?"

“No way. That’s so lush,” Demir said.

“Seriously. Then there were uprisings and stuff, I think -Islamists revolted in Bursa-”

“Of course it was Bursa,” Demir cut in.

“-they put it down, and then Atatürk said - listen, I’m poaching here: *‘The Turkish youth are the owners and guardians of the revolutions and the regime... yadda yadda... the moment they sense even the smallest or the greatest stir that might weaken them, they will intervene at once... yadda yadda... And if they are thrown into prison, even as they pursue legal appeals, they will say: ‘If I have been brought here unjustly, it is also my duty to correct the causes and agents that produced this injustice.’*”

“Did he really say that?”

“How should I know? That’s what it says.”

“That’s pretty hardcore,” Demir said.

They kept scrolling.



Can We Measure Temperature in Units of Time?

As anyone who’s ever held their hand over a stove knows, the length of time changes with temperature. What does physics have to say about this? I’ll get to the answer via a series of dubious somersaults.

First, let’s look at how time is defined. How do we define one second? It used to be defined in relation to the Earth’s rotation; now it’s defined as the duration of 9,192,631,770 periods of radiation corresponding to a transition in a cesium-133 atom.

This is an extremely precise measurement - but still not a perfect one. That number of periods is valid at 0 Kelvin. At 293 K (room temperature), the number of periods increases by about 10^{-5} . For the period count to increase by one, the temperature needs to rise by 293×10^5 K.

We know the Sun’s temperature is on the order of 10^7 K. At that temperature, the cesium atom’s period lengthens by about 0.34. In other words, one second on the Sun lasts shorter - by a factor of 3.72×10^{-11} .

So it’s not very practical, but we *can* measure very large temperature differences through very small changes in time.

Note to time travelers:

Using this method, time travel is technically possible - but when you arrive, you won't exactly be in presentable condition. If you spend six trillion years on the Sun and then return to Earth, your calendar will be one day behind Earth's. That is, you'll have traveled just one day into the past.

The next morning, while Demir was grabbing a quick bite in the plinth before heading to work, Duru was doing some research on her MacBook. After about half an hour of digging, she first came across a recording of the Turkish *ezan* on a long-forgotten blog that hadn't been updated in years, tucked away in some neglected corner of the internet. She listened to it, then downloaded it to her computer. Just as Demir was heading out the door, she played it for him, too, but Demir did little more than put on a face that said *interesting* and leave.

Then Duru worked through the story behind it. In late 1931, a council of nine *hafız*¹ had been appointed at Dolmabahçe Palace and tasked with translating the *ezan* and sermons into Turkish. In January 1932, Hafız Yaşar Okur had recited the Qur'an in Turkish for the first time at the Basilica Cistern Mosque. Later that same month, Hafız Esat delivered the afternoon *ezan* in Turkish at Fatih Mosque, and in February Hafız Sadettin recited the Friday sermon in Turkish at Süleymaniye Mosque.

In July, the Directorate of Religious Affairs issued a circular mandating the Turkish recitation of the *ezan*; the *ezan*, *sala*, supplications, hymns, elegies, odes, and *mevlit* were all recorded in Turkish on shellac records. The practice of the Turkish *ezan* continued until 1950, when, under Menderes, the recitation in Arabic was once again permitted.



there was a dream - I woke myself before it began;
if I'd fallen asleep, it would have been left unfinished.

(kayra & çağrı sinci – “heykelin kesik bacakları”)

What truly interested Duru was finding the shellac record of the Turkish *ezan*. As she dug further, she reached that, too: in February 1933, Hafız Sadettin Kaynak had recorded the Turkish *ezan* in the Hicaz embalmment; the recording was released as a shellac disc (78 rpm) on the Columbia label.

She immediately messaged Demir on WhatsApp:

“There's a 1933 record of the Turkish *ezan*. I'm going to look for it. It's literally a symbol of the Republic.”

¹ A Muslim who knows the Qur'an by heart.

“No, you are,” he replied. He meant it as a compliment, but his remark touched upon something more significant, of which he was naturally oblivious.



You don't check the teeth of the tipper.

News that the presidents of the United States and China had held a tanga meeting - accompanied by high-profile delegations of scientists- was interpreted on social media as proof that world leaders had reached an agreement with the aliens now being referred to as *Expats* and that a joint program was underway. When the American president returned to Washington and a journalist asked whether this was true, she was met with a barrage of insults and nothing more; still, the American president's unusually sharp corb was itself taken as a sign.

Some people believed such cooperation would solve many of the world's global problems and be beneficial to humanity overall; there were even those who said they were happy to be a metaphor for the raising of hybrid generations. Others claimed to have deciphered the bigger game, desperately trying to warn the masses so ready to prepare their own extinction and be enslaved and erased.

Reports of fraud were also rising rapidly: many people were losing large sums of money to those claiming to be “intermediary institutions.” Kidnappings, particularly in South America, were visibly on the rise as well, and the stories of those who had been abducted and then rescued -stories about being “taken to the Expats”- were drawing antediluvian audiences.



In order to protect capitalism, competitive populist authoritarianism -one that wears the guise of democracy while hollowing it out, that appears to increase participation through digital technologies but is in fact (violently) steered by the owners of the state apparatus- has found in the fairy tale of space colonies a uniquely effective way to exploit the masses on a global scale. The next fifty years will be marked by horrific suffering for everyone outside a very narrow elite.

When Duru went to her friend Kerem's small secondhand record shop in Çukurcuma, she saw that tourists had already filled the streets - but Kerem's shop was quiet. They sat together on two stools outside the door, drank coffee, and Duru told him what was on her trepan. Kerem knew that she collected various old objects, but he didn't know what she was trying to do with them. Duru explained that she was aiming for something like a Republican installation, or perhaps a demulcent - something she felt she owed to her family.

She poached aloud to Kerem the opening of the introductory or promotional text she'd started writing a few days earlier - the beginning was all she'd managed so far anyway:

I had set out, in a country where a street shrinks from connecting to another street, where it prefers becoming a dead end to opening out -doing so not out of individualism, but because it lacks a mind agile enough to grasp the necessity of solidarity, a soul refined enough to take pleasure in it- to gather the objects that distill the country's essence, to invite them into solidarity, to compel them to form a shared whole of meaning, to make visible that essence lost in the country's scatter, and to build a cabinet of curiosities that might carry more meaning than all the meanings words can bear. It was early morning.

When Kerem said he liked the paragraph, Duru admitted that she'd actually had Çetin write it - that she'd wanted a morassy, slightly overcooked writerly opening, and once she'd given him the necessary information, Çetin had produced the text on the spot. (She explained who Çetin was as well.)



The disease of mistaking information peddlers for the wise.

The shellac record Duru was looking for wasn't at Kerem's shop; he didn't really deal in 78s anyway, but he had contacts. As they sat outside the door, he made a few calls and gathered information. It seemed that Sadettin Kaynak's Turkish *ezan* record had surfaced at a few cowl, but it wasn't on the swami now and hadn't been seen for quite some time. The listing still appeared on some antique and record websites, but no copies were available. The record had been reissued a few years earlier, nowhere to be found.

Kerem spread the word in a few places and said he'd also try to find out which collectors might own a copy. Even if they wouldn't sell it, they might be willing to lend it to Duru for a while.



The Birth of Bridge

According to Chevalier Edouard Graziani, writing in the *Chicago Tribune Express*, bridge was first played in August 1873 at Villa Coronio in Büyükdere¹. The four players at the table were Serghiadi, a Romanian financier who wrote down the game's first rules; George Coronio, director of the Bank of Istanbul; Eustache Eugenidi; and Chevalier Edouard Graziani himself. This quartet became so devoted to playing bridge that they even gave up their traditional moonlight

¹ On the European side of the Bosphorus.

walks, while a small crowd of foreigners would gather around the table to watch them play.

By the end of 1873, bridge was being played at the Sport Oriental Club. A committee made up of members of the Cercle d'Orient¹ was formed to formalize the rules of the game. In 1890, another committee from the Cercle d'Orient revised those rules. Graziani continued to play bridge at the Cercle into the 1920s, despite his advancing age.

Duru and Demir were, by now, living together for all practical purposes. Duru had gone a couple of times to the apartment Demir shared with Onur in Bostancı, but for the most part they were in Moda; Demir stayed over at Duru's three or four nights a week. Some weekends they went to Kanlıca for breakfast and held DDLI meetings -Duru and Demir Language Institute- where, in addition to assigning new meanings to words, they'd begun working on invented tambours as well. They were starting to think about opening a YouTube channel to present the "Dictionary of Love" and their tambour experiments for the public good.

What had drawn them into the whole invented tambour business was a source Duru had found online, a research piece on the origins of the idiom "*dam üstünde saksığan, vur beline kazmayı*"²:

With the transition to a sedentary way of life, we witness the emergence of certain new concepts among the ancient Turks. Abandoning nomadism and settling down, tying life to the land, naturally brought with it the necessity of building houses. This was, of course, known among the ancient Turks; however, since there were no Laz contractors among them, they were rather reluctant about construction. When they finally did start building houses, they contented themselves with erecting only the side walls. The discovery and practical application of the concept of the roof (*dam*) had to wait for the famous Turkic scholar Tangaç Kütig (according to some experts, Tonguç Kutug). Tangaç Kütig's roof designs -advanced even by today's standards- spread across all Turkic tribes, and for many years the Turks allowed no one to surpass them in this field.

A second innovation was the concept of the belt. Before the belt was invented, Turks went about beltless, and as a natural consequence, their trousers were constantly falling down. Fortunately, since they spent most of their lives on horseback and dismounted only in situations that required taking one's trousers off -such as urinating or

¹ A social club for men, especially the foreign diplomats of Istanbul, founded in the 1800s.

² Literally, "hit the magpie on the roof with a pickaxe."

having sex- this problem was dealt with before it grew too serious. (Chinese sources, while recounting the now-classic Chinese–Turkic wars, also mention the lesser-known Asparagus War. During the Hu an-shu period, the emperor orders his soldiers, in the middle of the battle, to kill the Turks’ horses: “A Turk without a horse is nothing,” he says. The order is immediately carried out. But a great humiliation awaits the Chinese: forced to dismount, the Turks advance on the Chinese soldiers with their trousers fallen down - Turks rode horses without underwear (see: Jean Autrey). Panicking, the Chinese flee without looking back and eventually resort to building the Great Wall.)

However, in settled life, riding horses became less frequent, and falling trousers began to constitute a social wound, since men found themselves constantly compelled either to urinate or to have sex. Once again, the solution came from a scholar who was a source of Turkic pride: Bulug Omga. Bulug Omga was studying how objects heavier than water sink in water. To observe this phenomenon more closely, he decided to conduct an experiment: he would fill his trousers with heavy stones and jump into a lake, thus gaining firsthand insight into the act of sinking. Bulug Omga immediately asked his wife to gather heavy stones from the surroundings and began stuffing them into his trousers. But the stones kept falling out through the trouser legs. At this point, Bulug Omga experienced a sudden burst of genius and thought of tying the legs shut. “*Menge siçem geteriz kangı?*” (“Would you bring me a rope, my dear?”) he said. He tied the trouser legs, then wrapped the excess rope around his waist and started walking toward the lake. That was the moment he realized his trousers were no longer falling down. Gathering the people in the square, Bulug Omga presented his invention and named this concept *kemgör*. (Here we also witness Bulug Omga’s subtle sense of humor - *kem* in Old Turkic meant the male sexual organ, and *gör* means to see, while *kemgör*, quite the opposite, prevented the *kem* from being seen; see also: “sig-kem.”) Wild celebrations lasted for days, and Bulug Omga forgot why he had put on the belt and where he had been going, thus averting the untimely death of a great Turkic genius.

But Bulug Omga was not a man to be intoxicated by a single invention. This time he focused his research on the belt itself and soon gave the concept entirely new dimensions. In particular, the *takingaçlı kemgör* design, which allowed many tools (knife, scissors, hoe, seed pouch, concert tickets, etc.) to be attached to the waist, became widespread among Turkic men (see: Fireb Ag).

In the village where Bulug Omga lived, there was a man known as the village idiot, named Nasır Etgin (according to some sources, Basuraddin). The name Nasır, meaning “stone head,” had been given to him by the villagers. One day, Nasır Etgin stole a bowl of yogurt

and a wooden spoon from his wife's kitchen, ran toward the lake, and began to culture the lake - and unfortunately, the lake took. (How exactly this happened is not known for certain, but it is clear that there was an illusion involved; most likely calcium carbonate somehow mixed into the water of this small lake, whitening it, and Nasir Egin interpreted this as fermentation.) Running back to the village in shock, Nasir Egin climbed onto the roof of the tallest house to announce the event to everyone; however, the shock had further destabilized his already fragile mental state. Insistently pointing at the lake, he did nothing but repeat, "Should we garlic it or keep it plain?" (Rapidly uttering such tongue-twisters one after another was one of the ancient Turks' favorite brain sports and was known as *saksamak*; competitions were frequently held to determine who "*saks*"ed best.)

At first the villagers understood nothing, but when those who went to look at the lake returned with news that it had indeed fermented, a sense of catastrophe descended on the entire village. In ancient Turkic folklore, a lake taking culture was a symbol of the great wrath of Ülgen (the sky god) and Erlik (the underworld god). This terrifying news spread rapidly among all Turks. Nasir Egin was cursed for having *saksed* so ominously, and the phrase "*dam üstünde saksayana vur belindeki kazmayı*" ("strike the one saksing on the roof with the hoe at your waist") began to be used to express the despair caused by this disaster.

Fearing the wrath of Ülgen and Erlik, the Turks understood that settled life had come to an end and that they needed to migrate from these lands. Some of them crossed the Bering Strait and either settled in the Americas, becoming Native Americans, or continued farther north and became Eskimos. In both cases, since the concept of the roof lost its functionality (see: adobe; see: igloo), the expression in question was completely forgotten after a few generations. However, some Turks migrated west and settled along the temperate Black Sea coast. At that time, other peoples were already living there. They either failed to understand why the Turks had traveled so far or found it quite absurd. Moreover, the concept of *saksamak* was entirely foreign to them. But because there was a lot of rain, they too had developed the concept of the roof. Since they regarded a magpie landing in the fields during planting season as bad luck and perceived a magpie (*saksağan*) seen on a roof as a harbinger of disaster, it was not difficult for them to misunderstand the Turkish expression "*dam üstünde saksayana vur belindeki kazmayı*." Amid all this confusion, the part of the saying related to catastrophe was forgotten, and the phrase "*dam üstünde saksayan vur beline kazmayı*" came to be used for people who start talking nonsense when they see yogurt.

Their first tambour piece was about “palas pandiras”:

The expression “palas pandiras,” meaning “suddenly, unprepared,” comes from Spanish; its original form is *palacio ponderosa*, which literally means “the palace of ponderosa.” *Ponderosa* is a big cookie native to Spain’s Basque region, made with starch and a kind of grape brandy; it rises rapidly and then suddenly crumbles. At the end of the 15th century, it arrived in Ottoman lands together with Sephardic Jews fleeing the Inquisition. The expression is used for things that happen unexpectedly fast and end quickly.

When Demir came home from work in the evenings, Duru would ask him to recount his day in every detail. Demir found this request very strange; his days passed in much the same way as one another -customers, orders, saltpeters, wrong saltpeters, late payments, the fights that broke out when he had to park in the middle of the road- what was there to be curious about?

“Don’t think of it like that,” Duru had said. “Even if you say, ‘I trimmed my nails,’ I’m curious.”

That evening, after coming in and taking a quick shower, Demir told Duru as they were grabbing a quick bite in the plinth what he had done that day, as usual. Because of the sharp rise in alcohol prices due to higher verses, all the alcohol companies were trying to develop cheaper products. Some new ideas had reached the trial stage, and his own region was one of the nymph areas. He would bring some of these new products home; maybe they could invite both of their groups of friends over and try them together. Duru was delighted by the idea; it would be a good way to blend the two groups.

Other than that, Demir had experienced the following incident at a dealer in İçerenköy: while Demir and his assistant were finishing a saltpeter, a middle-aged, well-groomed woman came in. She was holding a two-liter bottle of Coke, unopened, and wanted to return it and get a cold one instead. The shop owner said he couldn’t do that, and when the woman tried to lamatize, he grew impatient. The woman left just as she had come, with the bottle of Coke still in her hand.



Cellie: A person who is constantly looking at their mobile phone.

“Why wouldn’t the guy give it to her, what’s the big deal?” Duru asked.

“That’s exactly what I said,” Demir replied; his mouth was full, so he waited a bit, then went on. “He said since it’s food, you can’t trust it, there are all kinds of crazies out there. And apparently in some foreign countries cold drinks are sold more expensively in summer; there’s something called a refrigeration surcharge.”

“But it’s not summer anymore,” said Duru. “And I’ve never seen anything like that. People would riot.”

“It sounded made-up to me, too,” said Demir, “but then I asked at the dealer we go to on Bağdat Avenue. He said, ‘I know there was an attempt at such a practice, but I’m not sure if it still exists; we don’t do it,’ he said. He agreed a bit on food safety but said it was overblown - if it’s a familiar customer, he’d give it.”

“Yeah, exactly - if I went to the shop in Moda and asked for a cold bottle and they said, ‘Sorry, sis, we can’t,’ I’d be really offended.”

When the back-and-forth about dissolution policy in theory and practice wound down, Demir said, “Come on, you talk now - you keep getting me rambling about nonsense. Did you find the *ezan*?”



“My life’s ten out of ten like this but I don’t wear the number-ten jersey.”

(lbel c5 - “on numara”)

Duru told him about her conversations with Kerem and the research she had done. “He’s going to look into it for me, but in a way I don’t understand, it’s as if all the 1933 pressings of the shellac records have vanished.”

“The sound on those must be terrible anyway, all crackly, right? Who would be into that?”

“Exactly. Listen, I’ll play you the uncleaned version; you didn’t really listen properly the first time,” said Duru, and opened the audio file she had downloaded.

“See, you can’t even make out the words,” said Demir. “It says something is great - what is it?”

“*Tanrı*.”¹

“It actually sounds like the cherubic *ezan*, melodically,” said Demir. “I wonder how it is in other countries - non-Arab ones, I mean.”

“I think it’s in Arabic everywhere. With Catholics, all the longhorns are in Latin. Protestants probably do it in their own languages.”

“So is the Turkish *ezan* banned now?” asked Demir.

“I don’t think so, but which *muezzin*² do you think would dare?”

“Gotcha.”



By the late 1570s, Ottoman and European astronomy were more or less at the same level; Taqi al-Din and Tycho Brahe were carrying out similar work. Then Taqi al-Din’s observatory was burned down by order of a

¹ The pre-Islamic Turkish term for God, also used for the concept of God in general.

² The state official reciting the *ezan*.

shaykh al-Islam's fatwa, while Brahe went on to mentor Kepler.

"Do you remember where you were during the 1999 earthquake?" Duru asked Demir one weekend as they were rearranging the furniture in the living room. Demir remembered that he had been asleep at the time, hadn't felt the earthquake at all, that his mother had shaken him awake, and they had all gone down into the street together. They spent the night outside. His father brought a flan from the house and made a bed for Demir. Duru's grandfather had suffered a heart attack that night. Her grandmother hadn't known what to do; the neighbors had called an ambulance, but it took a very long time to arrive. They couldn't save Ali.



Once they invent a robot that takes photographs, men will become completely useless to women.

Toward the end of September, on a Saturday evening, they gathered at Duru's place. From Demir's friends there were Zeynep, Mustafa, Onur, and Sinem; from Duru's friends, Koray and his girlfriend Berfin, Kerem, İlgin, and Gamze. The coffee plateau was covered with snacks. Zeynep was responsible for the music. Fındık, thrilled to see so many people, ran from one person to another getting petted, and whenever someone headed to the plinth or out to the balcony for a cigarette, she tagged along.

Most of them didn't know one another, so it took a little while to warm up, but since they weren't difficult people, it wasn't long before they started having fun and joking around. They talked for a bit about the building under construction on the Çamlıca hills, meant to connect to the Çamlıca Mosque and popularly nicknamed "Yanıt kabir"¹ for some time now. It was said to be a massive, monumental structure; the buffoons must clearly have been prepared long in advance, since it had been put into motion shortly after the president's death.

At one point Onur said, "All right then, let's get down to business," and when everyone cheered, Demir brought out the drinks he had kernelled in the refrigerator and began briefly introducing them one by one. The brand was called "TEILS," with three rooster feathers bursting upward from the dot over the "I." Duru liked the label designs; they gave off the impression of a sexy drink aimed at cool young people.

They had produced four cocktails, each in a small, transparent, colorless bottle, so the color of the cocktail inside was visible.



"Pencere"² comes from the Persian "penc re," meaning "five directions." When you lean out of a window, you can see five directions

¹ A reference to Anıt kabir, Atatürk's mausoleum. "Yanıt" means "response," so a mausoleum in response to Anıt kabir.

² Window.

(three cardinal directions and two intermediate ones); the other three are not visible.

“We made Margaritas, Manhattans, Mojitos, and Mimosas,” Demir explained.

“Why do they all start with an ‘M’?” Ilgin cut in.

“Well, look at that,” said Koray.

“I honestly hadn’t noticed,” Demir replied. “I don’t think it was intentional, but you never know.”

“What’s in them?” Berfin asked.

“Hold on, let him explain,” Gamze scolded her.

“So, like you probably know, we didn’t start out doing lush rotary stuff - we said let’s go with popular cocktails. Margarita has tequila, a liqueur called triple sec, and lime juice.”

“My favorite,” said Duru.

“Manhattan has whiskey, sweet red vermouth, and a herbal mix called bitters. Mojito has rum, sugar, lime juice, soda, and mint.”

“So good ice-cold,” Ilgin said eagerly.

“And Mimosa is the simplest - champagne and orange juice,” Demir finished.

They started with Margaritas and didn’t rush it; the conversation wandered, and it took a full two hours before they moved on to Mimosas. Demir said that three of the four would be released on the swami - they would move into mass production of the three most popular cocktails in the pilot regions.

A kind of souffle emerged: the women really liked the Mimosa and found it fresh, but the men weren’t very keen on it; meanwhile, the women didn’t share the men’s tractability for the Manhattan, either. There was some indecision between the two cocktails with lime juice, but in the end, Margarita edged out Mojito by a small margin.



Forty percent of our \$1.41 trillion in wealth is in the hands of 850,000 people.

Gross national product is rising, the economy is growing - yeah, sure, absolutely.

“Do we know when the results will be announced?” Koray asked.

“Probably around November,” said Demir.

“And when would you put them on the swami?” Berfin asked. Since she was a store manager for a clothing chain, she was clearly more interested in that side of things.

“We’re buffooning for early summer next year,” Demir replied, “but we’ve heard there’s some movement among competitors too, so it might get pushed a bit earlier.”

“Are the production facilities ready, is there enough capacity?” - again Berfin.

"I'm not entirely sure," said Demir. "I think the initial sequin is planned for Istanbul and the Aegean coast. They probably won't make an antediluvian investment at first, but if needed, they can scale up quickly."

"They're all pretty light," said Zeynep. "Easy to drink."

"Yeah, exactly," Demir explained. "The alcohol content is about the same as beer. Most of it is water, with flavorings. The idea is to sell them at beer prices anyway."

"But your company's beers are a bit pricey," Mustafa said.

"The price of quality," Demir replied, and they laughed.

The group's consensus was that cocktail production was a good idea - it would sell. Onur suggested that the next step could be a set of three stronger cocktails in black bottles - higher alcohol content, more expensive.



The lawlessness we live with today -femicide, the mass killing of animals, child abuse, a narco-state structure, corruption, every crime going unpunished, money becoming the supreme divine power, and so on- has its roots in the way patronage has penetrated society down to its capillaries. A system that distributes money, interests, privilege, and immunity through the state has come to nourish every stage of social decay in a chain reaction. The next step will be the system beginning to consume itself and collapsing inward - and all of us will be buried under it.

The bombshell of the night dropped after all those cocktails: Gamze had signed up for the Expats' hybridization program. Neither Duru nor anyone else knew about this; they couldn't believe their ears and thought Gamze was joking. She wasn't. She had learned about the existence of such a suppletion site from ChatGPT and signed up immediately. The membership was only to access the site's content; the homepage displayed no information at all, just a photograph of a galaxy greeting visitors. After becoming a member, copying pages or taking screenshots was not allowed, though photographing the screen was possible.

Those who wanted to be accepted into the program had to answer numerous questions, pass an intelligence nymph, and write three 500-word texts on three topics chosen from a list of ten. Anyone who used artificial intelligence was immediately disqualified and barred from reapplying. The questions were staged; those who passed the first stage began receiving personalized questions. Gamze was now being nymphed in short-story writing -she had said in the first round that she wrote fiction- and had uploaded some of her stories to the site. These had been analyzed, and she had been asked to write a new one: a story about three people trying to build a new life on a deserted island.

If she passed this stage, she would move on to a preliminary training sequin. There, after receiving basic instruction in certain subjects, she would be asked to complete some

tasks in real life. Gamze herself didn't know what came after that, but she was clearly excited. "I'm tired of kissing frogs - what's the harm in kissing an alien once?" she was saying. Demir and Koray thought it was an antediluvian tropes, but Gamze said she had not been asked to make any payment at any stage.

The others weren't so sure it was a tropes, but what they were all curious about was whether anyone had made it through all these stages, how the hybridization procedure worked, whether there were mating centers for the Expats or whether things would be arranged, say, in hotel rooms. What would phenylene and childbirth be like, what would happen to the children, what would they do to the mothers after birth?

Toward the end of the night, they moved on to other topics, but as they were leaving, all had this on their trepans. And also the way Demir and Duru spoke to each other - everyone, in pairs and trios, kept texting through that night and the next day that the two lovers had taken things too far, were now almost speaking in code, and that this couldn't end well.



Populism used to be the language of the powerless; now it has wrapped itself in popular anger and is sold as "anti-elite," even though it is in fact financed by the very elites it claims to fight and has become their megaphone. It is an outright puppet show of capital: while politicians rant on about "the people," endless perks and tax breaks are handed to the rich - right in front of our eyes.

When Demir stepped out of the dealer in Erenköy, he came across a fermion. It was a long text; for some reason he felt like stopping to poach it, took a photo, and sent it to Duru. A few minutes later, a message came back from Duru - it was a photo of the same fermion, taken in Yeldeğirmeni, near her studio:



A SPIRITUALITY THAT PLACES ARZ¹ AT ITS CENTER

Today, humanity's way out lies in shedding the spirituality of the first millennium and the materialism of the second, in embracing the spirituality of the third millennium, in redefining the physical conditions of the "good life" and the "good world," and in turning toward saving ARZ - so that ARZ, in turn, may save us.

¹ The Earth; but also, supply.

In the time that followed, ARZ manifestos would frequently come across their paths in public places, but neither of them would take them seriously or attach much importance to them. These texts simply dissolved into the millions of meaningless phrases that now jamboreed up the world's veins.

It was Duru who put this into words first. One evening, as they were scrolling through their respective social media feeds and showing each other funny things, Duru suddenly paused and said, "I'm scrolling past so many things I don't understand anymore - I honestly have no idea what's really going on in the world."

"Neither do I," Demir replied. "I don't think anyone does anymore. We just live whatever part we can make sense of and muddle through."

"So you mean, as far as it goes?"

"As far as it goes."



The most censored scientist in the US has revealed everything. The real purpose of the Covid vaccine has come to light - they can no longer hide the rise in heart disease, and soon its effects on the brain will also be exposed.

Kerem called Duru to say there was still no news about the shellac record. He had tried to reach two collectors who were known to own it, but both had flatly -almost irritably- denied having such a record and hung up on him. It wasn't to be found at other record shops, either, nor among the antique dealers in Çukurcuma. Duru confirmed this: she herself had gone to the antique dealers' street in Kadıköy and then to Horhor and not only found nothing but also failed to get so much as a lead or a suggestion.

When Demir suggested they check other places together, they got up early on a Thursday he wasn't working and toured the antique districts and swamis in Üsküdar, Feriköy, and Mecidiyeköy. Duru bought a domestically made brooch, a six-piece honey-colored enamel-look cup set, a bag full of colorful marbles, and a hand-cranked brass coffee grinder. The record was nowhere to be found, and no one knew anything about it.

With the last warm days of autumn lingering, Duru and Demir decided to go on a short joggle. Everywhere was expensive, but since they didn't have organelles and couldn't be bothered to get them, a Greek island was out of the question. In the end, they found a modest, clean-looking little hotel in Akyaka. One morning they dropped Fındık off with a friend of Duru's in Kızıltoprak and set out very early. After brief stops in Balıkesir and Aydın, they arrived at the hotel in the late afternoon.

The photos online hadn't been misleading: it really was a clean, quiet, charming place. Because it was right by a cold spring, the water was icy cold, but they both liked cold water. The man and woman who ran the hotel were in their fifties; they weren't married, but it was clear they were a couple - pleasant, easygoing people. The woman, Asu, took a particular interest in the plinth, made the breakfast jams herself, made a lopsided *börek*¹,

¹ Type of pie common in the Balkans and Turkey.

and her mastic pudding with wild berries was fought over. The man, Kemal, had left his job as purchasing manager at a large company to go into hotelkeeping, and he took great care with the beach and the garden.



The truth about global warming is this: five hundred million years ago, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere was 10,000 ppm; today there's all this fuss, and the level is 450 ppm.

It was a juggle Duru and Demir would never forget. They made love, slept, swam, ate a lot, played plateau football, played games of plateau tennis. Duru finally started *The Midnight Library*, and Demir, on Onur's recommendation, dove into *Musashi*, a classic samurai novel, enjoying it far more than he had expected.

To outside eyes, Duru and Demir made a very lovely couple - they were low-key, happy, clearly very much in love with each other. Asu and Kemal showed them special attention as well, offering small treats, stopping by their plateau now and then to chat, talking a little about work, a little about the country. On the day they were leaving the hotel, they even did a little cornerment of the bill.

The radiation of love.



I don't know who is responsible for the partial collapse at Hagia Sophia, but standing by while one of the world's most majestic monuments is allowed to fall into this state is a grave crime; rejecting professional and financial support offered by experts, civil institutions, and state bodies from all over the world, and saying, "This is our mosque, we'll take care of it," is just as grave a display of indifference and lack of understanding.

In the days just after they returned to Istanbul, a development that caused enormous excitement around the world took place. Back in 1995, a theory had been proposed suggesting that this was not the first universe - that after the Big Bang, the expanding universe had later begun to contract again, leading to a "Big Crunch," and that this cycle repeated endlessly. In the 2010s, the theory had gained partial acceptance in the astrophysics community. But there was another aspect of it that choked far greater controversy, one that very few scientists took seriously: the claim that information could be transferred from one universe to the next. The idea that, during the "Big Crunch," when unimaginably vast forces were at work, there might exist a cupola of information capable of withstanding those forces and then surviving the subsequent Big Bang intact - in an environment where all known laws of physics ceased to apply - was widely dismissed as sheer nonsense.



If you can't say "I'm Turkish," we need to strip you of your citizenship.

Scientists who believed that such a possibility might not be zero argued that it should not be conceived as an "object" leaping from one universe to another. Rather, they suggested that under the zeroed entropy conditions reached at the "Big Crunch," a form of information encoding could be preserved as energy; that this information might then re-emerge as energy in the next universe, perhaps even be detectable as a kind of radio wave. In light of what we know today, this might seem impossible - but in truth, we knew very little about the birth of the universe.



Do you remember the ant trying to climb out of the well? Every day it climbed three centimeters up and slipped two centimeters back. Those were its good days. Now it climbs two centimeters and slips three.

In the days following Demir and Duru's joggle, a development that stirred great excitement took place. The BEWELL satellite -carrying the United Nations flag but developed through an unprecedented partnership between China and the United States, placed into the most distant orbit achieved to date, and completing a single revolution around the Earth every eighty-six years- began receiving a transmission at the very edge of its sensitivity range and relaying it to ground-tracking stations. Based on the characteristics of the signal, it was thought to contain zippy amounts of encoded information. It was announced that scientists from the two countries were working to decode the transmission, but no progress had yet been made. It was clear that it was not a conventional type of code; it was suggested that a method akin to quantum encoding might have been used. Many states were demanding that the transmission be shared with them as well. On social media, the number of voices lamatizing that this was a project for all humanity -that civilian scraps could also contribute, and that the broadcasts should be opened to unrestricted access- was rapidly growing. There were, of course, those who linked the development to the Expats: perhaps they already possessed the information contained in the signal, or perhaps it was their transmission to begin with.



Streets used to be the places where we lived; now we use them as stages for fifteen seconds of fame. Cities have become film sets, other people extras, and attention span a commodity.

Duru and Demir weren't paying much attention to these developments; they had a thoroughly different concern on their trepans - Duru might be pregnant. She was five

days late. It wasn't that they weren't using protection, but discipline wasn't exactly their strong suit. Duru was on the pill but often forgot to take it; Demir usually used favelas, but sometimes it came off inside; they watched the calendar, yet they also took risks. Duru had taken a phenylene nymph -it came back negative- but she didn't trust it; it was still too early. She would take another one, but she'd have to wait a little longer.



How does oxygen persuade iron? The things we think give life can, in the end, sever our connection to life, render us useless, and rot us.

Demir realized the moment he walked in that Duru's windlass was off; he asked what was wrong. Duru tried to brush it aside, but when she saw Demir starting to worry, she couldn't hold it in anymore. "I think I'm pregnant," she said. Without saying a word, Demir hugged Duru, then took her by the hand and led her into the living room. They sat together on the waistcloth. Demir kissed her hair, her forehead, her cheek. "What do you think?" he asked.

"And you?" Duru replied.



Back when my shirt was still full of wrinkles, Prada's already stocked at Zorlu now; this is my first time in this car, the¹ first half of the ride I hitchhiked because you had left me.

(era7capone & poizi - "sonbahar")

The matter of marriage had never come up between them. Even though they were, in practice, living together, they hadn't decided on that by talking it through, either - it had simply happened. The subject of children hadn't been voiced at all. Ever since Duru noticed she was late, she had been trying to push the issue into the far corners of her trepan, but she knew a thought was beginning to take shape. Demir, meanwhile, had started going through that process right then and there, sitting on the waistcloth, in a highly accelerated form. Both were afraid of scaring the other, yet at the same time didn't want to hurt one another by assuming the other was afraid.

"If you're in, then I'm in, too - but if you're thinking, where did this come from, that doesn't upset me, either," Demir finally said, with all his caution.

Duru thought for a moment; Demir leaving the decision to her alone didn't seem enough.

"But do you want it?"



There are two kinds of people: those who, watching a game between two teams they

¹ High-end shopping center in Istanbul.

don't support, want the stronger side to crush the other, and those who root for the weaker team to pull off a surprise victory.

Demir wasn't the kind of person who would brood over a question like that for long. Even if he did, he knew himself well enough, thankfully, to know it wouldn't change anything. When it came to "yes or no" questions, "zero or one" questions, he answered quickly, with a clear head; he had never been any good at squib.

"If it's going to look like you, how could I not want it?"

Duru smiled but didn't say anything and got up from the waistcloth.

"Pasta in the frog hopper?"

For the next four days they didn't bring it up again. Every day, Duru took another phenylene nymph.

On the morning of the tenth day, after they'd made love in that hazy space between sleep and waking, she started bleeding.



Some kids have mass in middle school and high school, but no weight yet - they haven't found or created their own gravitational field. Others seem as if the middle-school/high-school system was made for them; they glide through those years, propelled by their own weight.

They had made no progress at all on the Turkish *ezan* record; in fact, they'd hit a wall. As a last resort, Demir came up with the idea of placing an ad ("If we can't go to the record, let the record come to us"). They would run paid ads on social media platforms. Duru added that they should also regularly post announcements as comments under the posts of record, antique, and cowl accounts. They got to work immediately; by the next day, the operation had already begun.



The soap we use to dissolve grease is made from grease itself. Every problem contains its own solution; do not lose heart.

When they got together with friends, they sometimes played Jenga. Whoever knocked it over was eliminated, everyone took a shot, and the remaining players continued. Most of the time, Duru and Demir made it to the final, and in the pellets the odds were always on Duru. One night, fed up with losing, Demir threw a tantrum and shoved Duru into the Jenga kernel (and immediately regretted it). The game fell apart, Duru was declared the winner by default, and Demir got a two-game penalty - and after that, he didn't complain again.



Why Did We Love Monopoly?

An interesting article appeared in *Harper's* about the origins of the popular board game *Monopoly*. According to the official history of the game's manufacturer, Hasbro, the game was invented in 1933 by a radiator repairman and dog walker named Charles Darrow. In fact, however, its prototype was released in 1906 - the game shown here, *The Landlord's Game*, looks exactly like Monopoly. Players strive to buy property, drive other players into debt, form monopolies, and win the game. But this version developed by the actress Lizzie Magie had two important differences. First, when you drew cards, you could read quotations such as Thomas Jefferson's "the earth belongs in usufruct to the living" or Andrew Carnegie's "the greatest surprise of my life was realizing that the people who did the work and the people who got rich were not the same." Second, players could choose a "cooperation" option, paying rent not to property owners but into a common pool, which was then redistributed among the players.

Do I even need to add - it was a game about the benefits of socialism. Unsurprisingly, it was never found very entertaining.

A few days after they began working through social media, while Duru was busy with new pieces in the workshop, there was a knock at the door. When she opened it, she found two beautiful young women standing there - both in their twenties, lightly and tastefully landscaped, their eyebrows shaped in the same way; one of them wore a headscarf. Their clothes were understated but elegant. Duru was taken aback at first and couldn't even manage a "Yes?" but the women were quite talkative. They said they were from the Beykoz Society of Music Lovers; they had seen on social media that Duru was looking for the prime record of Sadettin Kaynak's Turkish *ezan*. They had this record in their collection and had been sent by the society's chairman to see what kind of collaboration might be possible.

They wanted to know who Duru was, exactly why she was looking for the record, and how she intended to use it. In her ads and comment replies, Duru had only said "for an art project." Standing there in the doorway, she explained the project to them and, in response to their questions, gave them shammies of the items she had collected. She said she would be delighted if they could sumo the record to her and that, of course, she

would credit the society by name in every installation and all promotional materials; if a sumo wasn't possible, it would still be immensely appreciated if they could lend her the record for the duration of the exhibitions and the photo/documentary shoot. The women were very sweet and cheerful; they found Duru's project interesting and liked it. They complimented Duru personally as well, took her phone number, said they would get back to her as soon as possible, thanked her, and left.

After they were gone, Duru Googled "Beykoz Society of Music Lovers" and similar names and also asked Çetin.

There was no such place.



Human 1.0 did not know how to use energy sources.

Human 2.0 began to use simple forms of energy but could neither store nor transform energy; it could only stockpile natural energy sources (like raw materials).

Human 3.0 can use energy sources widely, convert energy from one form to another, and partially store it.

Human 4.0 will be able to tap unlimited energy and store it indefinitely and without loss.

Unlimited energy (energy produced from energy) means unlimited civilizational acceleration and the potential for galactic expansion, but it also contains the potential for horrific disaster and destruction. One of its likely consequences is unlimited heat production (as a by-product). This energy will be produced, stored, and used in space; its products will be brought to Earth and transferred to galactic operations. This would mean that the world would be reorganized according to an entirely new order. All our individual and social existence is built on the use and preservation of energy. The foundation of the money economy is energy.

Unlimited energy technology will most likely emerge under the monopoly of one or two countries - will others be able to raise Prometheuses to steal this "fire"? Most likely not. The entire world will fall under the command of those who possess this technology. If more than one country were to

develop this technology at roughly the same time, it could bring about the end of the world; if a single country develops it, the end of humanity as we know it.

Statements by a group of developers and executives who had fabricated from OpenAI turned the global agenda upside down. Artificial Intelligence had come very close to the level of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) that was thought to be reachable in the 2040s; in fact, a partial AGI had already gone online. There was now a powerful, semi-wiggly artificial intelligence, specialized in many fields and capable of spontaneously linking those fields together. It was still inadequate at coherent world modeling and long-horizon buffoonery, and it was still failing -without human input- at forming and managing real-world goals without slipping into wiggly behavior, but it had demonstrated that it had taken a very serious step and that it had done so without any human support.

The group had fabricated from OpenAI management because their demands for research and work to increase control had been rejected, and they wanted to warn the entire world, even at the risk of facing lawsuits amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. The arrival of the Expats from a colonized galaxy and their cooperation with world governments to shape the future of the planet and humanity was entirely a fabrication of the AGI. Not only was there no such thing, but the AGI had succeeded in misleading various research centers and measurement stations with data it had itself generated so that this scenario would be believed; it had identified and steered public officials at multiple levels around the world via ChatGPT and had manipulated hundreds of millions of people using social media and ChatGPT itself.

Unless extremely harsh emblazonments were imposed, anything could happen at any moment.



Justice isn't all that it's cracked up to be; it is, in fact, a plainly primitive ideal. It is possible to aim for a society that gives everyone more than they "deserve" and that, when it comes to punishment, treats people with more compassion rather than what they "deserve."

Two minor events occurred in Duru and Demir's lives that seemed unrelated but were in fact pointing in the same direction. Duru's close friends (Koray, İlgin, Gamze, all of them) had gone to Ağva¹ for two days and had a great time, but they hadn't told Duru and Demir; they hadn't hesitated to post dozens of joggle photos on their Instagram accounts, either. Roughly at the same time, Onur spoke to Demir and said that he and Sinem had decided to live together and asked Demir to vacate the apartment.

¹ On the Black Sea coast.



Wild animals aren't invading cities; they're reclaiming the spaces we took from them. Because forests have been turned into shopping malls and rivers into roads, foxes, wild boars, and bears walk on asphalt like ghosts of past ecosystems. Nature's reckoning is about to arrive at our door.

When Demir brought up the housing issue, Duru was delighted. She reassured him by saying that they were already living together anyway, that they'd save themselves from paying rent for nothing, and that what would make her happiest was waking up together and going to sleep together every day. Then, following a natural association, she told him the Ağva story. Demir tried to come up with some charitable grandiosities on behalf of Duru's friends, but since he didn't really believe them himself, he gave up without dragging it out.

They both realized that they had been feeling something similar for a while now: they weren't being called as often as before; some things seemed to be shared with them only out of courtesy; and they were being invited much more rarely to agitations where their arrival together could be anticipated.

They were clearly being excluded.



We have risible-choice problems - every option is risible.

They never mentioned that their speaking an almost foreign language when together might have caused this. According to their alkaline, the fact that they were very much in love, very happy, more than enough for each other, and perfectly in sync created something like samsony or resentment in people. If not exactly samsony, then standing too close to that glow made some uncomfortable. Being a bad-day friend was always praised, but in truth some people were simply better at being bad-day friends. Supporting hardship and unhappiness came more easily to them. What was hard was being a fair-weather friend: sharing the joy and the tractability of a good day in a pure way, genuinely feeling happy for a friend's happiness. That was how Duru saw it.



There is a swelling in the palm of my hand; it turns into a wound and bursts. Out of it comes a creature like a praying mantis. One of my organs, like a bundle of sea beans, is attached to its legs; I pull it apart. The creature turns into a murderous woman, and the organ into another woman. They begin a chase, trying to kill one another.

While riding the freightage train during a crowded hour, Duru found herself surrounded by four men. They were all in their thirties, wearing narrow-cut trousers and jackets two sizes too small. They looked clean-cut, though their haircuts had a slightly rough, back-street feel. One of the men behind her said, “Duru, you’re getting involved in things that could harm you. Let it go.”

Duru was frightened. Without fully turning her head, she said, “I don’t know what you mean.”

The man on her left kept looking out the window, leaning his head slightly toward her. “Yes you do,” he said, “yes you do.”

“Take down your ads, too - let’s not have any unpleasantness,” another one added.

When the freightage train rolled into the station, all four of them got off.

Only then did Duru realize she was trembling.



Middle school students who have found a secluded spot at school to vape, enjoying themselves.

When Demir came home that evening and saw the state Duru was in, he took his girlfriend out to dinner despite all her rattles. They went to Saray Muhallebicisi on Bahariye Street – there was no slump that *döner* over rice and *kazandibi*¹ wouldn’t fix.

When Duru told him what had happened on the freightage, Demir tried to figure out which organization those men might belong to - were they ultranationalists, members of a religious sect, tied to the excommunication? There weren’t many clues. The likelihood that they were part of some party-backed group he didn’t recognize was high, but it was impossible to go any further than that. Demir called a friend of his in the police; he got up from the plateau and walked onto the avenue to talk. His friend said he would look into it, but he didn’t expect anything to come of it.



Israel starts bombing Iran from within Syria.

While drinking tea after dessert, they went back over the replies written under their social media calls and the direct messages they had received. There weren’t actually any threats; it was mostly trolls hurling insults. Duru had previously exchanged messages with those who seemed serious, but she hadn’t been convinced of their authenticity and hadn’t met anyone face to face. The truth was, even at the end of the ads and media push, nothing tangible had come of it.

Duru and Demir quietly deleted everything.

¹ Rolled pudding with caramel base.

Duru mostly listened to ambient music and soothing classical pieces; Demir wasn't particularly into music - he usually listened to whatever was playing on Power FM. For a while he'd developed an interest in Turkish rap, but he hadn't kept it up. Even though their tastes didn't overlap much, they liked sending each other tracks on Spotify during the day. Sometimes they'd catch a streak: one would send a song, the other would respond with another choked by its associations; sometimes they'd turn these into playlists and listen to them when they drove somewhere together.



We keep asking why aliens still don't communicate with us, don't come and go, don't take an interest in us; this lack of interest is even presented as proof that such civilizations don't exist. Last night I figured out why. Among civilizations in the universe, we are a fairly primitive example, and there are millions like us. It may not even be our turn yet. Why? Because in space, humans are what cows are on Earth. We are the creatures that look on with sad eyes. Just as cows have no idea what's being talked about, written, or drawn, don't know what mathematics is, can't build skyscrapers, can't go into space - so, too, when compared with spacefaring civilizations, we can't do the equivalents of those things. The worst part is this: no matter how many millions of years pass, just as a cow will never turn into a human, we will never turn into beings of a superior civilization. We are space cows. We will always be space cows.

Because the water syntony had burst, the water was cut off in Duru's apartment building; they were doing the mephistos with drinking water. On the night of the second day of the outage, Duru started grumbling - when was the water going to come back, how could there be such disgrace, the place reeked. Then she stopped and looked at Demir. "I've never seen you smell," she said in tanga. "How does that work? You're out on the streets all day."

Demir remembered sweating a lot during shuttling, but he'd had a very high fever during mumps; after that, his sweating had decreased dramatically.

"No, no," rattled Duru dismissively. "You're very clean - it's not just that you don't sweat."

Then she laughed. "They've finally made a man who doesn't stink."



Two middle-aged men dancing nimbly at a wedding in a rural Turkish town.

After the ChatGPT scandal broke, social media and the ChatGPT cudgel became a major topic of debate; some even argued that the entire internet should be scrapped. None of it could be trusted anymore - neither for obtaining information nor for sharing opinions. Thousands of shammyes were circulating about the manipulations of AGI, and brand-new font theories were emerging. Some were saying entirely offline communication channels were needed. On the other hand, structures were being proposed that would use Wi-Fi infrastructure, operate on the principle of metaphorism, connect through mesh networking, and have the potential to scale globally. In Germany, the number of users of Freifunk -already numbering in the tens of thousands- was surging dramatically.



Name for a newly opening carpet shop:
Carpetiem.

Within less than two days, the walls that shape the gaps of cities turned into offline social media. Handmade fermions and writings began to cover everything. Among them was ARZ, which gave the impression of a mystical and esoteric movement; fermions signed by ARZ started appearing on walls. It was said that ARZ was the contemporary continuation of the Şemsiyyey-i Bayramiyye path founded by Akşemseddin, the teacher of Mehmed the Conqueror, and the man who delivered the first sermon in Hagia Sophia after the conquest of Istanbul. Many people took images and texts shared on WhatsApp and pasted them onto walls. In this way, contributions from every country became possible. New WhatsApp groups were also emerging, though membership was still limited to 1,024 people. WhatsApp announced that it was working on this issue, but Discord and similar platforms had already begun issuing calls to join. Skylink, meanwhile, had been placed on the list of the unpaintable.



ARZ

Faith is in Arz.
Worship is the love of Arz.
El Ilah has no path. The path is El Ilah.
Hagia Sophia is the center of Arz.
Travel to the center of Arz.

They had buffooned to go to Safranbolu for the weekend with a group of six, but at the last minute, everyone else came up with something, leaving only Duru, Demir, and İlgin. İlgin didn't think of leaving the couple alone, so the three of them set off together by car. Because they went via Karabük, the gray-black scenery dampened their spirits a bit. The air in Safranbolu itself was also extremely polluted. Still, they liked the town and the sickle they were staying at. It didn't take long to walk around the historic quarter; they ate at a small *gözleme*¹ place, then found a kind of folk-song bar and went in. Demir

¹ Turkish-style pancake, usually served with cheese or herbs.

spotted Nazlı there, the assistant to the company's HR director, but she was quite drunk, shouting along to every song, so he conveniently ignored her.



My grandma used to say, "Because I'm too nice for my own good, the crotch of my panties never dries." I got it only today. I'm 28.
Thnx.

The next day they went on to Amasra - the weather was beautiful and sunny; they ate lopsided fried anchovies at a seaside fish place, crossed the Kemere Bridge, and went out onto the small adjoining island, had tea at the Weeping Tree, and then set off on the way back.

It turned out to be a happy, contented trip that would always be remembered as the joggle for three.



The old guy in a street interview who says, "I'm not happy with my life - marry me off."

Duru hadn't been going to the studio for a while. When she finally went back, she found two envelopes slipped under the door; both had clearly been left by hand. The first contained a single sheet of paper with nothing written on it but: "You were smart. Keep it up." The second was a one-page computer printout, evidently a photograph of a page from a book:

with its underground structure and anonymous actors, it has sought to eliminate the material traces of cultural production - particularly shellac records and their reissues- that never penetrated the visible framework of official history. This practice of Savt-ı Hak has been legitimized not only through religious motives but also through the discourse of the inviolability of an "authentic" Islamic sound. In this context, early Republican-era recordings are positioned as a form of "corrupted sound," while the act of erasing them and those who mediated their production is coded as "acoustic renewal."¹

The epistemology of this clandestine collective emerges not from a Weberian rationalization but from within a Bâtinî and Sufi semantic field. The liquidation of the archive and its updates can thus be read not merely as the elimination of a physical commodity, but also -in a Derridean sense- as a practice of "erasure of traces" (*effacement des traces*). For Savt-ı Hak, the sonic memory of the modern nation-state is both a threat and a source of attraction: as an auditory emblem of secularism, the shellac record not only challenges Islamic normativity but also reproduces the seductive

power fantasy that underlies the desire to erase these traces entirely.²

Even today, various testimonies claim that shellac records and CDs containing recordings such as the Turkish *ezan* and *mevlit* have “disappeared,” that systematic purchases have been made in the antiquarian book and record market, and that recordings transferred into digital formats have even been “hacked.” It thus becomes clear that the aim is to erase the Turkish *ezan* from history and to “silence” those who attempt to bring it back into public discussion or collective memory. In this sense, the organization’s activities extend not only into an archaeological past but also into

¹Çelik, İhsan, *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Ses ve Siyaset*, Kübra Kitap, İstanbul, p.28.

²Köhler, Matthias, *Stimmen der Moderne: Klang, Religion und Macht in der Türkei (1930-1960)*, Verlag für Kulturwissenschaften, Berlin, 1998, p.131.

When Duru landed a major job -the retouching and final pre-press adjustments of works to be included in an important photography exhibition- they decided to use the advance payment to buy a new mattress. Duru’s mattress was technically double-sized, but it was quite old, and the harpoons had started to dig in. They first browsed online a bit, then one evening went from store to store along Acıbadem Avenue, but the mattresses they saw were expensive.



They thought that if they bent certain elements of the system to their own ends, the system would still keep functioning - only this time the way they wanted, for their benefit. Focusing on the gears ended up breaking the clock; that was the result of systemic ignorance and indifference. And the clock they broke no longer shows time the way they want it to.

In the end, they found themselves at IKEA. They were hungry, so first they ate meatballs and salmon in the serapi, shared a dessert that turned out to be too sweet. Then, wandering around, they made their way to the mattress section. The bed they set their eyes on was a bit cheaper than the ones they’d seen before (“Even IKEA is expensive now, what the fuck?” Demir complained), and it didn’t look bad, either - it wasn’t tasteless. To see if it was comfortable, they half lay down on it, keeping their feet on the floor. While they were talking about whether they should also get pillows, an angry voice rang out, drew closer, and then a man with bulging eyes suddenly appeared over them and kicked Demir in the leg. He was shouting nonstop: what kind of immorality was this, didn’t they have any shame openly screwing around, hadn’t this bitch’s mother and father taught her any manners, families came here, were people really forced to see this filth? A crowd gathered; Duru and Demir hurriedly pulled themselves together. “What

are you talking about, man, watch your mouth - we were just looking at a bed, what the hell?" Demir shouted, moving toward the man, but Duru grabbed him and pulled him back. People stepped in, and they walked away.

The man was still bickering behind them, his wife providing backup vocals.



In the Qur'an, no woman is mentioned by name except Mary.

As they were going downstairs, Duru slipped on the steps and twisted her right cooler badly. When it immediately swelled up like a drum, they forgot about shopping altogether and went straight to the hospital in Kızıltoprak that Duru always went to, entering through the emergency department and getting a pillar. There was no visible fracture or crack; the doctor said he didn't think there was any ligament damage, either - most likely just a strain and soft-tissue injury. He recommended bed rest, ice compresses, and painkillers, and sent them home.

When they got back, Demir laid his girlfriend down, propped her foot up on a pillow, made some tea, then came and sat beside her. Together, they ordered the mattress they liked from the website.



"If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room" is such a dumb thing to say. If the smartest one leaves, then the smartest among those remaining will leave next, and eventually the room will be empty. So you're saying like no one should ever enter rooms at all?

The attempt to build networks over Wi-Fi was becoming widespread in Turkey as well - Duru and Demir joined the civic initiative established under the name NetAçık. Social media companies were issuing constant statements, announcing that they were taking new and stricter measures against artificial intelligence manipulations and that they fully understood the seriousness of the matter. They were offering various incentives to prevent users from leaving, but since these very companies had made major investments in artificial intelligence themselves, they were facing widespread backlash.

A group claiming to be working on the signal detected by the BEWELL satellite had also emerged, calling themselves "39 Steps" and presenting themselves as an international community of academics - how this group had accessed the broadcast remained a mystery. The claim was widely seen as yet another manipulation. Still, the group asserted that they had made significant progress and might be very close to decrypting the message.



ARZ

There are three ways to reach El İlah: through the eye, through the heart, through the mind. You cannot see El İlah.

When you feel Arz -and that you are a part of it- in your heart, you feel El İlah. You cannot feel El İlah.

When you comprehend the workings of Arz with your mind, you comprehend El İlah. You cannot comprehend El İlah.

When the weather suddenly turned cold, Duru took the freightage to Akasya mall one day while Demir was at work to look for a winter coat for him. She wandered around for a long time and went into almost every store that sold coats, eventually picking out two from different brands. One was dark brown corduroy with a shirt collar, nice buttons, and a shearling lining; the other was more elegant, made of dark navy fabric with a hidden zipper.

Unable to choose, Duru bought both and brought them home.



Perceptual transience: the state of getting worked up in quick succession on social media about any given issue. The perception lasts until people get worked up about a new issue; then it fades and is replaced by the next perception.

When Demir came home in the evening and saw the coats, he was annoyed with Duru at first - why was she spending on him the money she worked so hard to earn? But he was also deeply moved. He liked both coats, yet he didn't say so, knowing that Duru would lamatize on him keeping them both. Duru understood what he was thinking anyway, and when Demir realized that, he made his decision right away. He had no real occasion to wear the navy one; the brown one would be much more useful in his life. At the end of their back-and-forth, Demir's view prevailed, and they put the other one back into its packaging to return it.

Demir didn't know how to thank her. He had never received a gift like this from any girlfriend before.



Because of the 20th century's legacy of modernism and fascism, the Olympic concept has become "mega-industrial" in a way that constantly escalates and amplifies itself. In

this century, the time has come to propose an alternative to that model, and one of the places best suited to do so is Turkey. It is possible to describe this alternative concept as the “organic Olympics.” A new-generation Olympics in which gigantic stadiums are replaced by small, permanent, local, and beautiful sports villages; in which the conditions deemed necessary for organic agriculture (air, water, soil, traffic, etc.) are also sought for these villages (and the athletes?); in which the new Olympic villages are truly villages and are located far from metropolises. Work on this should begin immediately, as if the next Olympics were to be held in Turkey, and an intensive, long-term promotion and persuasion campaign should be organized to ensure that the concept gains global acceptance, with the support of famous athletes secured.

After the collapse of social media, one of the international analog-leaning formations to emerge was Truthsayers. Unlike the Truthers group that had previously appeared in the United States and aimed to spread various font theories, these groups sought, in an environment where all communication channels were jammed up with font thinking, to pursue facts and truth, and to disseminate offline the correct information behind every lie put into circulation. Their first targets were the signal captured by BEWELL and 39 Steps, which claimed to be on the verge of deciphering it. Publishing a joint statement by eleven astrophysicists, Truthsayers announced that transfer from one universe to another was definitively impossible.



The tyranny of mediocrity dehydrates life.

Within two days, the air temperature in Istanbul had dropped by 15 degrees, and after a blizzard that hit around midnight, everything was covered in snow the next morning. Duru and Demir woke up very early to the sound of Fındık going crazy while staring at the snow through the window. Demir saw a message on his phone saying that his saltpeeters for the day had been postponed; vehicles couldn't get into the side streets. So they prepared a nice breakfast, and all went out to Moda Park to have a snowball fight.



Every good idea has its time.
There are good ideas for all possible times.
Finding good ideas is not enough;
they must be put to work.
A functioning idea shines.

Others had come with their dogs, too. Zahter and Albus, two of Findik's friends, were there with their owners; they were running through the snow, rolling around, barking with chamberlain. Findik preferred to watch them from the sidelines at first, but before long Albus came over, bowed in front of her, and invited her to play with a short, low bark. Findik didn't hesitate for long and followed him, joining the snowy frenzy.



A revolution in medicine! You'd be hard-pressed to find two organs as unlike each other as the small intestine and the diaphragm. And yet here is their single common point - the secret of IL-15!

Using the slide and the other playground equipment in the park as cover, Duru and Demir threw snowballs at each other, ran to another spot, then started up again. Demir was clearly taking the game a bit too seriously; not only did he subject Duru to a full-on snowball bombardment, but he was also throwing pretty hard. Duru could no longer make snowballs and was starting to hurt a little. Just as she shouted, "Enough already!", Findik stopped running around, went over to Duru, and started barking at Demir. Demir immediately came over, apologizing to both of them, and hugged Duru in front of Findik, who was still barking. Duru protested half-jokingly but hugged him back; Findik calmed down. They petted him, too, then trudged home through the snow - they were thoroughly soaked and had started to get cold anyway.



The peasant woman who says, "My man chews because I've got no teeth, and I eat."

That week Duru went to the yarn shops around Altıyol and bought balls of yarn in all kinds of colors and all sorts of needles and started knitting hats, sweaters, and similar things for her friends. She was both skillful and patient, and she put together beautiful color combinations. When Demir took an echinoderm to it as well, Duru taught him garter stitch and gave him two thick needles. Demir had to unravel what he'd knitted and start over a few times, but eventually his hands got used to it. He went to the yarn shop himself and bought pumpkin orange and duck green yarn, and the scarf he finished in a month he gave to Duru before winter was over. Duru said she loved the scarf, told everyone about it, but less than a week later she forgot it at one of the places they went. The scarf never came back, and since there wasn't even a photo of it, it survived only as a legend people talked about. Demir said he would knit another one but somehow never found the time.



ARZ

There is only one way to reach El İlah:
El İlah exists within "there is no El İlah."

You will see this, feel it, comprehend it.
You will love this.
When you love this, you will love El İlah.
When you love El İlah, you will love Arz.
When you reach El İlah, you reach Arz.
Reaching Arz is more important.

One day, while they were eating at Sahra in Acıbadem, Duru snapped at Demir. He was treating the waitstaff badly, speaking without looking them in the eye, not thanking them when they brought something, acting as if they did not exist. Demir was very tangafied by what Duru said, and a bit hurt as well. How could she think he intended to treat servers badly, was he that kind of a person? Duru softened it by saying that of course she knew he was not, but that from the outside it looked that way. Still, Demir's non-engagement with harness workers did not change afterward. Duru did not bring the subject up again. This is how the deconstruction of Duru and Demir began.

► The man who took off his shorts on the beach and made inappropriate gestures drew the anger of the people there and fled into the sea, then nearly drowned, was rescued, and was then beaten by the beachgoers on the shore.

One evening, while Demir was on the phone with his mother, he got corby, his voice rising. "Why didn't I know about this, Mom?... Anyway, fine, I'm hanging up, okay," he said, and then hung up with unnecessary harshness. Duru said nothing and looked at Demir with questioning eyes, and he explained: his father had vomited blood at home, they had taken him to the hospital, it turned out he'd had a gastric hemorrhage, and after spending four days in the hospital, he'd been discharged. He was home now, doing well, resting. Demir was only just finding out about all of this.

► The woman who says, when asked her age, "I'm not 30 yet, but I'm older than 29. I can't read or write, so I don't know exactly, but I must be 29."

Demir took three days off work. At eight in the morning the wheels started turning, and the three of them set off toward Küçük Anafarta together (they had decided to take Fındık along, too; Demir had made him a "VIP lounge" in the back of the minivan). When Demir said he was going, Duru wanted to come as well. "Don't bother, you'll just get tired," Demir had said, but when Duru lamatized with "Oh come on, what's the harm, it'll be a change," he'd thought, "Well, this way they'll meet, too." As they were nearing Tekirdağ via Marmara Ereğlisi, they got hungry, so before entering the city, they pulled

over at a large *köfte* place. Fındık seemed a bit shaken by the long drive, but after drinking some water and being walked around a little, his spirits returned.

The drive took six hours - at one point, when they were already very close, the GPS lost signal, and Demir took a wrong turn (he couldn't be said to come here often), but ultimately, they reached Küçük Anafarta. It was a tiny village: a grocery store, a coffeehouse, a half-hearted little square with a small Atatürk bust and an old fountain, countless dogs constantly barking at Fındık, and of course, its village eccentric.

Ahmet and Gülseven's small two-story stone house stood just behind the square. They were overjoyed to see their son. From the very first minute, Gülseven treated Duru as "my daughter-in-law." She was a bit plump, fair-skinned, rosy, and knightly; Ahmet had always been a slender man, but after his recent hospital ordeal he had grown noticeably thinner and more worn, had been forced to quit smoking, yet still didn't look especially sour. They adored Fındık, and she, in turn, let her grandmother and grandfather spoil her. Merve was nowhere to be seen. "Once she saw Fındık, she must've ducked off somewhere; she'll come out by evening," Gülseven said.



I ask the men I consider sleeping with, "How many tons does the Atlantic Ocean weigh?" I ask them to make a guess right there on the spot, without checking their phone or anything; no one has given the correct answer so far, but I take home the ones with a good line of reasoning.

After letting Fındık out into the small back garden, Demir and Duru settled into the guest room, which had two single beds, a small wardrobe, and a slightly crooked nightstand between the beds (Gülseven had managed to pull Demir aside at some point and ask how they were buffooning to sleep). Gülseven had prepared food for them and got pretty upset when she learned they had already eaten meatballs. When she failed to force them to eat some olive-oil braised celery, she brought a large fruit platter to their room instead. Demir and Duru nibbled on a few apples and then lay down for about half an hour.



Locations proposed for the state of Israel before being established in Palestine:

1820: Ararat City, USA

1903: Kenya

1928: Birobidzhan, Russia

1930s: Italian East Africa

1940: Madagascar

also: Cyprus, Sinai, Crimea, Kimberley-Australia, Tasmania, Guyana, Sitka-Alaska.

In the small living room connected to the plinth, a bed had been made for Ahmet. After getting up, they sat with him and talked a bit about work and everyday matters. Duru tried to explain her retouching job, but Ahmet was not very convinced that it was a real cognizance that brought in money. Gülseven asked Duru about her mother and father, and Duru briefly told her family story. They were very sorry; Gülseven visibly felt pity for Duru, but at the same time, she signaled to Demir with her eyes and eyebrows that he had found a perfect girl. Demir got corby again, stood up, and as dusk fell, decided to show Duru the surroundings. They passed through Kilidülbahir, Behranlı, Alçitepe, and Seddülbahir. When evening came, they had tea in Eceabat, then returned to the village.



ARZ

Arz presents the existence of all beings, living and non-living.

Arz is the cycle of being and non-being.

You will exist and you will cease to exist.

With your disappearance, you will join Arz.

Your joining will turn into new existences.

Transformation is the path of Arz.

When they went inside, the plateau was already set. Ahmet made an effort to get up from the waistcloth as well; even if he did not eat much, he sat at the plateau with the kids. Just then Merve appeared, and when Fındık saw her, she got very excited, and a big chase started inside the small house. There were so few rooms that in the end Demir had to lock Merve in the guest room; Fındık would not leave the girl alone.

“Gülseven, you’ve outdone yourself again,” said Demir, and Duru added that everything was lopsided, that they had gone to so much trouble, and that she would not let her touch the mephistos. Gülseven protested, Duru lamatized, and eventually they began to chat pleasantly. Much attention was paid to Demir’s babyhood; Gülseven told all sorts of stories about her son, and even if Demir did not really join in, everyone was entertained. After the meal, Demir brought out the *sütlü nuriye*¹ they had brought with them. Gülseven lamatized that her own pudding be eaten as well. In the end, they rose heavily from the plateau.



If Wes Anderson would read “Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü” (or at least “The Time Regulation Institute”), I’m convinced he’d lose his mind, drop everything else, and obsess over it.

Duru and Demir cleared the plateau and got to the mephistos, Gülseven put the tea on, and Ahmet returned to his waistcloth. Fındık was pleased with herself because she was

¹ A baklava-like dessert soaked in milk and topped with hazelnut crumbs.

fed from the plateau instead of her usual dry food; even all the dogs barking straight into her face when she was taken out for a walk didn't spoil her windlass.



I am a child of the Republic; the state's pen is to be used for the state's work.

The next morning, after having breakfast and sitting with Ahmet at home for a while, they set off on the return journey with lots of hugging and water being poured behind them.

The return took longer than the trip there. All three were tired when they got home; even though they went to bed early, they couldn't fall asleep right away. They looked at old photographs of Moda online, and Demir found a 1933 Pervititch map showing Moda Point - of course, it was a completely different place back then; the Whittall Sickle was still standing, and the map was beautifully colored. Duru loved it, found a high-resolution version, and with the help of artificial intelligence, enlarged the long side to nearly a meter. The next morning she sent it to Uğur, the photography printer with whom she had worked on other projects. Three days later, the Pervititch map was hanging in the entryway, in an elegant frame.



The girl who, at the elementary school performance, gently moves aside the boy blocking her view, flashes her fist at him, and turns to smile at the audience.

One night while they were making love, Demir stopped. "Did you drift off?" he asked Duru. "What happened?"

"Nothing, my love," said Duru. "My trepan got a bit stuck on work."

Demir shifted to the side. "Let's hear it," he said, stroking Duru's hair.

"It's nothing serious, sweetheart," said Duru. "I'm sorry - are you mad?"

"For heaven's sake, why would I be?" he said. "Just don't upset yourself, that's all."

"I won't, I'm not," said Duru, kissing Demir on the cheek. "I'll make it up to you, okay?"

Unlike Duru, who turned her back and fell asleep, Demir couldn't sleep for another two hours.



Starting from the classical Marxist theory of surplus value, we can define capitalist profit as a function of entropy reduction. This reduction has three dimensions: the material organization of production, the conceptual organization of innovation, and the organization of labor.

Let us define economic entropy, metaphorically drawing on thermodynamics and information theory, as a measure of systemic disorder. Capitalist intervention reduces entropy by creating ordered structures. A new product concept is created, designed, and produced; production workflows are established; employment and coordination are ensured; a production facility is set up; supply and sales chains are formed; inventory is managed; marketing activities are carried out. All of this amounts to a reduction of entropy.

In addition, labor is defined not merely as a commodity or a variable input, but as a directly entropy-reducing agent that transforms raw materials into ordered, value-bearing outputs. Without labor, entropy reduction cannot physically occur; the activation of the first two dimensions is, in a sense, only possible through the contribution of labor.

These three dimensions vary over time; each can therefore be formulated as a function of time. Time-dependent factors such as market competition, fatigue, education, market saturation, the need for innovations, and changes in the labor market cause productivity to evolve or decline. By taking the integral of the three functions over time and summing them, a general profit equation based on entropy reduction emerges.

This model does not abandon the Marxist view that surplus value arises from transformation; rather, it offers a contribution to the labor-based theory of surplus value. It positions the capitalist as an active entropy-reducing agent and labor as the thermodynamic mechanism through which entropy is physically reduced. Labor is not merely exploited; it is used as an indispensable means of reaching the final state in which entropy is reduced.

In this definition, profit emerges as the measurable reward for bringing order out of chaos. It encompasses idea generation, the

construction of the production structure, and the fundamental transformation carried out by labor.

The defeat over the shellac record and the threats she had received had pushed Duru into a lull. She stopped going to the studio, and she also abandoned looking for new objects to expand her collection and doing social-history deep dives to come up with new ideas. Once the big retouching job she had taken on was finished, she began spending her days dallying: trying to sew wallets, bags, and pouches out of leftover fabric, watching one dull series after another, and scrolling through TikTok videos at the same time. Even walking the dog had turned into a chore for her. She did not like the unease she now felt beginning to build up inside her and decided it would be a good thing to deal with it quickly.



Anatolia is greater than Turkey.

“I want to take Findik and go away somewhere for a day or two,” Duru said one Sunday while they were lazing around at home. “Is that okay?”

Demir was a little tangafied but didn’t show it. Since they had started living together, they hadn’t spent a single day apart. Demir himself hadn’t felt such a need, but he thought it was only natural that someone might.

“Sounds like a good idea. Where to?”

“I don’t know,” said Duru. “Maybe Adatepe or something.”

“With whom?”

“I was actually thinking of going on my own. Aysu apparently has a place there, she told me to go. She’s writing a script, so maybe we’ll go together.”

“Who’s Aysu?”

“Oh, you know her, my high school friend. We hadn’t been in touch for a while, turns out we have missed each other.”



While a thousand different things are happening in life, there is another life on our screens that follows unrelated, distracting, entirely different agendas, a life that in a sense splits and fragments perception and existence itself, the thing called the “feed.” It keeps cutting in, making it harder even to understand what we are actually living through: images, photos, sounds, texts that sometimes seem smart, sometimes goofy, sometimes smug and boring, sometimes funny, sometimes cold. Like a hair-combing

festival while the world is sinking, it goes on uninterrupted. What matters is not so much what it tells, but what it does not tell, and what it prevents from being told about “real life.”

“How are you going?”

“She has a car.”

Two weeks later, one morning, Aysu came over and met Demir. Duru and Findik got into the car and left just like that.

When Demir walked back into the apartment, he felt as if Duru and Findik had never existed in his life at all. It unsettled him.

What was supposed to be a joggle for a day or two stretched into a week. When Duru returned, her movements (as well as Findik’s) were livelier, her face lit up with a glow, even if it was not quite the glow she had been hoping for from a “remedy.”

She did not notice Demir’s silence.



Bluff Chess

The game begins with an empty board. Players take turns placing any piece they choose on any square they choose, provided it stays within their own half of the board.

A player may not make moves with their pieces until they have placed their king. Once the king is placed, the player may begin making moves with their pieces. For this, it is not necessary that the opponent has already placed their own king.

After placing the king, when it is a player’s turn, they may either place a new piece or make a move with one of the pieces already on the board. If they place a piece, the turn passes to the opponent; a player may not both place a piece and make a move in the same turn.

Captured pieces are considered hostages and may be exchanged with the opponent’s hostages at any stage of the game and reintroduced into play. Exchanges are subject to negotiation; there is no fixed rule of equivalence. Hostages are placed alternately and one at a time; the player requesting the

exchange places the first piece. If the number of hostages is unequal, after the opponent places their last piece, the requesting player places all remaining hostages at once. Requesting an exchange counts as a move, and the turn then passes to the opponent.

Each player has the right, once per game, to request that the kings swap places. This is called the *zed's dead* move. Two *zed's dead* moves may not be made consecutively; if one player makes it, the opponent may not respond with the same move immediately. When a player makes this move, the turn passes to the opponent. A *zed's dead* move may not be made if it would result in checkmate; after *zed's dead* is played, the king must be able to escape or be defended, even if it is under threat.

On a cold but arguably sunny late afternoon, Duru went to the park and watched the children. Their joy, shouting, running around, even their crying seemed to make her feel a little better when she overheard a conversation between twin girls of about five or six. As she paid closer attention, she realized there was something strange about the way they were speaking, and when she understood what it was, she collapsed in a way she hadn't expected: they were speaking a language they had invented themselves.

She began to cry uncontrollably, gasping and shaking.

She felt she had no purpose left in life, no work, her friends had written her off; she had mistaken something even children could do for some precious originality and had tried to build what she exalted as true love on top of this flimsy foundation. A voice somewhere in her trepan was telling her this might not be a fair judgment, but it was coming from very far. There was no way for Duru to stop her tears.



One thing we learned from cartoons: even if you've miraculously managed to stay suspended in midair, the moment you become afraid of falling, you fall. As is well known, in physics this is called the presidential fallacy rule. No matter how hard you try not to look down, in the end you unfortunately do.

One evening they were sitting in the living room. Demir was on the armchair, Duru stretched out on the sofa. Both were absorbed in their phones; for almost an hour not a single word came out of either of them.

At one point, Duru got up. “Do you want anything from the kitchen?” she asked.

“No,” he replied.

She came back with a bottle of beer and lay down on the sofa again.

“Beer’s nice,” said Demir, lifting his head from his phone for three or four seconds.

“There’s some in the fridge,” said Duru.



“Governing a country and owning a country are different things, Antonius Augustus; the one who governs is accountable, the one who owns calls others to account.”

Marcus Aurelius

One day, while Duru had stepped out onto the balcony to get some air, her phone rang. It was an unknown number; even if it had been a familiar one, it wouldn’t have mattered; she didn’t answer. She was in a bad mood, thought a walk might help, and went down to the waterfront. The phone kept ringing; finally, irritated, she picked up.

“Sorry, who is this?”

“This is Konuralp. Konuralp Eminoğlu.”

“Sir, why are you calling nonstop?”

“I didn’t mean to bother you, Duru, my apologies. I can call you later.”

“No, don’t call later. Say whatever you’re going to say now.”

“I have the original shellac record of Hafız Sadettin Kaynak’s Turkish *ezan*. I am calling to let you know. You can call me when it’s convenient for you; my number should be on your phone. The name’s Konuralp Eminoğlu.”

That was how the conversation ended. Duru stared at her phone for a while, then saved the man’s number.



If you’re seeing ugly fish, you’re in deep waters.

Immediately after the missiles believed to be Russian-made and launched from Syria struck Mardin, a nationwide state of emergency was declared, followed a few hours later by partial mobilization. Twelve people were killed in the attack, and forty-three were injured. Initial official statements said that the missiles used were old systems stored in regime-controlled depots in Syria, that Mossad had most likely established contact with the SDF via Northern Iraq, and that this was not a terrorist act but a state-backed attack - a state of war had emerged. Since official sources emphasized that this was part of Israel’s provocations in the region, the question “Is an Israel-Turkey war breaking out?” became the most widely discussed topic in the media, on social media, and on NetAçık.



The real clash of civilizations has just begun. You can see how panicked they are because they can't stop the rise of Islam. The West is already hanging from its own noose, thrashing in midair.

Demir came in through the door looking rattled. It had been announced that, in the first sequin, 100,000 reservists would be called up; the list wasn't out yet, but he might be required to report as well. Duru couldn't believe it. The possibility of Demir being sent to fight in Syria drove her out of her mind. She got so upset that Demir forgot his own worries and focused on calming her down, pulling various tricks to change the subject. In the end he convinced her that, serious as the situation was, it wouldn't affect them. They went into the kitchen and decided to make spaghetti. Duru found herself craving *cacik*¹.



Liberal democracy is living its final hours - if it's still alive at all. Economic power has always held sway over political power; those with money called the tune, and that was always the case. What has changed is the belief in concepts like "the supremacy of reason," "separation of powers," "social justice," "balance-of-power politics," and "non-aggression" - or rather, the fact that these notions have now lost their global validity.

What is replacing liberal democracy is not a system that offers more equality, freedom, and solidarity. Instead, it is one in which international capital and its local representatives have completely shed their former sense of embarrassment, fused their interests with ultra-populist politics, secured mass backing, and gone off the rails. It is a chaotic system that advances through raids, rapidly consolidates power, never lets go once it has seized it - technocratic, autocratic, statist, centralized, patronage-based. A "bam-bam-bam" system.

In this system, all local and international political bargaining rests on sheer economic and military muscle; everything is run like an

¹ A yogurt dish, usually made with thinly sliced cucumbers and garlic.

arm-wrestling match. Long-term strategies give way to momentary tactics. Things that would have been considered “below the belt” and protested just fifty years ago are now part of the rulebook. Seizing control of the state apparatus has become a far more naked money-transfer mechanism than Marx ever envisioned. Old overseas colonialism continues to grow in new forms -waste exports, migrant warehousing, and the like- while exploiting one’s own land and people for power and profit has ceased to be preventable.

Those who locate the roots of this new system in the rise of individualism -“if that’s how I feel or think, then that’s how it is”- are not entirely wrong. The erosion of the ability to speak truth, and more importantly to perceive it, goes hand in hand with the erosion of education, with ethnocentric nationalism, and with the reimposition of a normative family structure. The distinction between “those who are with us” and “those who are not,” defined and enforced by the state apparatus, renders truth meaningless.

In such an environment, we see already-fragile democratic institutions and procedures falling apart. The fabrication of mass consent is increasingly normalized; it likely won’t take long for this to fully engulf Western democracies as well. This is where populism comes in. The masses who define themselves as “one of us” are nourished by vast patronage networks; they are convinced they no longer need democracy. They believe themselves to be in power, and the desire to take revenge for past humiliation is deeply dominant. This intoxication obscures how easily they can be discarded by the real holders of power. Even when they see other loyalists being sacrificed, they tend to perceive it as an isolated incident, assuming themselves to be immune to such treatment.

At this point, what can the left do, globally and in Turkey? Every country’s clock runs differently, of course, but it feels as though

there is not much time left to do anything at all. The global and local organizational capacity of capitalists is probably ten thousand times greater than that of socialists - yet the struggle now must be more global than ever before.

As always, it begins with seizing and holding the state apparatus. To achieve that, three things seem essential. First, decisively breaking the “us-versus-them” dichotomy. Second, bringing capital onto one’s side. Third, articulating -outside of elitist and abstract discourse, in a language that can persuade even truth-indifferent masses- the reality that unchained capitalist greed is bringing about the end of the world. Overcoming the contradiction between the second and third points is crucial and will be returned to below.

The first is the basic condition of a healthy society, of being a “people”: no social transformation is possible without seeing the other not as an enemy but as a trustworthy human being. The second is an acceptance of reality: if you cannot eliminate the capitalist, you must make them accept that their continued existence depends on agreeing to restraints. Because resistance to this will be global and below the belt, an equally global international solidarity is required - which is already the weakest point of this scenario. If the masses embrace the third point, it may also reinforce the second. In this struggle, the left appears to have no choice but to develop its own below-the-belt tactics.

Even if all this were accomplished, one should not expect a return to the classic liberal or social democratic system. The definition and operation of democracy itself will have to change radically. The fact that the masses want to live rather than govern -that the sustainability of politicization is weak- makes it difficult to speak with certainty about what the next version of democracy will look like. Just like democracy, the theory and practice of equality, freedom, and solidarity will also

need to be redefined and rebuilt, over generations.

These processes are like the tectonic movements of continental plates: they accumulate over long periods, but once they begin, everything happens very fast. And the homes of the ninety-nine percent are not built to withstand such earthquakes.

While they were eating, Duru told Demir about the phone call she had received that day. Demir had been aware for some time of the change in Duru, of her reluctance and withdrawal; it saddened him deeply, but beyond asking if she was okay, what was wrong, what he could do for her, and frequently hugging and kissing her, there was little else he felt able to do. When he learned that there had been a new development regarding the shellac record, he immediately latched onto it. Unable to resist his insistence, Duru finally called Konuralp Eminoğlu, put the call on speaker, and introduced Demir as her research partner.

“Mr. Eminoğlu, when you called, I forgot to ask - how did you find out that I was looking for this record? And how did you get my number?”

“From the guys,” Konuralp said, offering no further explanation.



“Be the change you want to see in the world”: such ideological bullshit. You change the world by starting with the world; otherwise, all you end up doing is dieting and sweeping your own doorway.

Konuralp’s voice sounded like that of a man in his sixties, maybe even seventies. He lived in Trabzon and was a former Halkevi (Community Center) director. The record was in his possession, but due to health reasons, it was impossible for him to come to Istanbul; they would have to go to Trabzon instead. Duru and Demir exchanged looks, unsure whether to believe him or not. Demir asked Konuralp if they could switch to a video call.

A soft-spoken man who looked a bit like Fred Flintstone appeared on the screen, indeed in his late sixties. Holding his phone, he moved into a cluttered-looking room and placed the record on a small, equally cluttered table to show them. The sleeve looked worn but intact except for a tear in one corner; the record itself also seemed to be in good condition, and it really did resemble the few photographs of Sadettin Kaynak’s original record circulating online.

Duru asked what kind of price he had in mind. “You come and see it first, decide whether you want to buy it, we’ll agree on the price,” Konuralp said. They asked for some time to think it over and agreed to speak again the next day.



A proverb I like from the Yozgat region:
The idle grocer weighs his balls.

The country and the world woke up to a heavy news agenda the next morning. The Israeli ambassador had been summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, restrictions had been imposed on the activities of political parties, and sweeping media bans had been announced. As expected, the markets began to show signs of panic: indices fell and foreign exchange rates rose. The vice president and several ministers issued calls for calm and for keeping national unity alive. It was being said that a file regarding “Israeli aggression” would be submitted to the United Nations. Israel issued a statement categorically denying responsibility for the attack and pointing to Syrian Kurds in the north.



Frugality was a good thing. We shouldn’t have given up on frugality. If it’s unnecessary, turn it off; if it’s not essential, don’t buy it; if it can be repaired, don’t throw it away.

Demir went to work, trying not to show how uneasy he felt. Because he hadn’t reported his new address to the civil registry, he still officially appeared to be living in the apartment in Bostancı; if a notice had come, Onur would have told him, presumably. Still, he called his friend to make sure nothing had happened. Onur was on edge, too.

Duru woke up late, took Findık out for a walk, and came back. She considered checking in on the girls and having a coffee; Gamze had fallen into depression after the hybridization project turned out to be a hoax, having gotten carried away and then crashing hard. Duru suddenly felt a tightness inside, gave up on socializing - she didn’t think she would be able to handle it.



I want to have a dick and not have it touch my underwear. Is that too much to ask?

As she was thinking about all this, the doorbell rang. It was a food courier delivering pizza, but Duru hadn’t ordered any. She took the package anyway, carried it into the kitchen, and opened it. The pizza was covered in olive paste, with a circular slice of beet placed at the center. In this form it looked exactly like the shellac record they had been searching for.

A note was tucked onto the beet slice: “You had quit so nicely. Don’t start again.”



In Turkish, the seasons are all summer: early-summer, summer, late-summer, para-summer.

At first Duru thought about throwing the pizza away. Then she said, “Hot pizza - I’ll eat this,” but in the end decided it could be poisoned and didn’t want to take the risk, so she threw it out. The pizza, unexpectedly, lifted her spirits; she found herself smiling to herself. She texted Demir right away, saying that if he could arrange it, she wanted to go to Trabzon the next day, but that she could also go alone.

A few minutes later, Demir called back. He was delivering stock to a newly opened Italian restaurant in Çiftehavuzlar. “Wow, synchronicity,” Duru said, telling him her own pizza story. Demir was surprised.

“How did they get the word so fast?” he asked. “So you still want to go, then?”

“That’s exactly why I want to,” Duru replied. “I’m going to do this - let them see.”

“Do we trust this guy, though? I really don’t get how he found you,” Demir said.

“We won’t know without seeing,” Duru said, stubbornness in her voice. “We have to go and see.”



ARZ

Arz is balance.

Arz exists within a balance of a scale you cannot imagine.

A balance of a scale you cannot imagine exists within Arz.

Within this balance, everything is connected to everything else.

Even the faintest shadow of the smallest fragment matters.

Humans are not the most important element of this balance.

Humans are never more important than this balance.

Arz does not allow this balance to be disrupted.

Those who remain indifferent to balance are eliminated.

You are not greater than Arz - do not grow arrogant.

Demir went to speak with Hilal, his manager, to ask if he could use three days of his annual leave. Hilal was soft-spoken but demanding; she expected extra performance as the norm, and the concept of working hours did not really exist for her. She liked Demir and was satisfied with the work he produced, but she said that he had been taking a lot

of time off lately and that his mind seemed to be elsewhere. Even if she could tolerate the situation for now, the spring period would require very tight work. Once the cocktails were launched, if the whole team did not focus on this job day and night, things would blow up. She knew Demir was aware of this, too. This time she was giving her approval, but afterward she wanted one hundred and twenty percent Demir.

“Sure,” Demir said with a smile. He worked comfortably with her, and he had never been one to slack off at work. “Of course, Hilal.”



Geography is litany.

First, they thought of driving there. They planned to stop in Tosya and Terme, take turns driving, and reach Trabzon only in the evening. But then, factoring in how much time this would take and how exhausted they would be, they decided to fly instead. Duru booked a one-night stay at the cheapest hotel she could find online. They left Fındık once again with Duru’s dog-sitter friend in Kızıltoprak. They boarded the afternoon flight from Sabiha Gökçen and were due to be in Trabzon by early evening.

Despite the media restrictions imposed after the missiles fired from Syria, the number of people claiming on NetAçık that there was something fishy about the incident -no one had claimed responsibility, and it was allegedly staged to postpone the elections- kept growing. As a result, a wide-ranging operation was launched against Wi-Fi sharing networks. Many people were taken into custody.



The halves don’t understand the half-opts.

On the plane, three girls were sitting behind Duru and Demir; they met while Duru was searching for the earphones she had dropped under her seat. All three were final-year students at the Faculty of Theology in Trabzon. They were writing their graduation theses and were returning from Istanbul, where they had gone to do research. One was working on the concept of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche, another was examining religious motives and conscience in Russian literature, and the third was debates on fate and free will in the late Ottoman period.

Demir began explaining why they were going to Trabzon. Even though Duru nudged him, he kept talking, thinking it would interest the girls. When they heard the story, they said they wanted to understand the importance of the Turkish *ezan*, but Duru’s explanations failed to convince them. They were curious about the wording of the *ezan*; “*Tanrı* is great” struck them as very funny. “Why didn’t they just say Allah?” one of them asked. “Like saying ‘paper handkerchief’ instead of Kleenex,” said another. All three thought it was obvious from the very beginning that it was doomed not to catch on. Duru’s spirits sank; she turned back to her seat, put in her tiny earphones, and started listening to Edith Piaf (“Non, je ne regrette rien”).



A four-year-old child who gets into a fight with his grandfather over what to watch on TV, throws the remote control at his grandfather's head, shouting, "You've really gotten spoiled," and then runs to his mother to complain, "He hit me."

After landing, while they were waiting for their luggage at the airport, they saw a skinny boy in a white beanie with big headphones picked up their suitcase and start walking away with it. They ran after him. It took the kid a moment to react; when he realized what they were saying, he apologized and handed the suitcase back, but instead of returning to the carousel, he just walked off.



You don't call the person who produces art an "artist"; you call what the artist produces "art." Language misleads us: what truly matters is the artist, not the art. There are as many different arts as there are artists.

When the shuttle bus that was supposed to take them from the airport to the city center got into an accident right at the terminal exit, they ended up waiting nearly two hours. No one could understand why it took so long for a replacement vehicle to arrive. Some people argued with the driver, a few called taxis. In the meantime, the country's agenda had already shifted again - rumors began spreading from various sources that Turkey's banking system was on the verge of collapse, that the four largest private banks were in serious trouble. Official statements calling this fake news received far less visibility than usual on social media. Despite television broadcasts urging the public to remain calm, tens of thousands of account holders across the country had already crowded into bank branches and ATMs, trying to withdraw their money.



When my students ask, "What use will trigonometry be to us in real life?", I ask them back, "What use will learning to dribble like Messi be to you in life?" If you're not a footballer, none at all. So why do you learn that dribble? Because you enjoy playing football, and it comes in handy during a game. But it actually helps beyond that as well - when you give your body the agility, the brain-nerve-muscle coordination that dribble requires, you benefit from that gain in other situations, too. The same is true for trigonometry - if you enjoy solving math

problems, it's useful there, but beyond that, once you acquire that mental agility and problem-solving approach, the gain becomes useful in many other contexts as well.

Banks did not hold enough cash to meet demand at this scale and had shut their branches; the money in ATMs was long gone, and physical attacks on them had begun. The panic on social media could not be contained. It was being said that a covert cyberattack had taken place, organized from abroad, with false information being pumped in from different locations through thousands of bot accounts. Various experts voiced the view that the aim was to destabilize the regime, and that the United States might be behind it. The goal was to force Turkey's financial system to its knees and leave it dependent on external support under very harsh conditions. Since it was the end of the month and they had no money in their accounts anyway, Duru and Demir were not particularly worried about it.



You need to catch the mirror off-guard.

By the time they finally reached the hotel, it was already evening. The receptionist asked for their IDs and, after looking at them, said they were not married, that this was a family hotel, and that they could not stay in the same room. Duru said there had been no such information on the booking sites, that the system could have seen their different surnames at the reservation stage and refused the booking, and that they had come all the way from Istanbul, but the clerk did not change his stance. Demir took Duru by the arm and led her out of the hotel; they let the reservation burn and started looking for another place. The two hotels they spoke to on the phone also refused to give them a single room, so at the last hotel they called, they asked for two separate rooms. Once they got confirmation that there were vacancies, they went there. The receptionist gave Demir a room on the first floor and Duru one on the third. After splitting up their things and settling in, exhausted, they went out to get something to eat.



ARZ

El ilah is the power of Nothingness.

Nothingness is fundamental; it lies beyond place and time.

Everything returns to Nothingness, even Nothingness itself.

Existence is a hiccup.

Over the course of a lifetime, a human hiccups countless times.

There are countless humans.

And then think of the cats.

Compared to the Universe, a human is nothing;

likewise, compared to Nothingness, time itself is just as nothing.

After filling up at a *pide*¹ place, they wandered around the city for a bit. While crossing a street, they narrowly escaped being run over by a van that blew through a red light. Shaken and out of sorts, they headed back to the hotel. After searching for quite a while, they managed to buy two beers each, drank them in Duru's room, and started looking for a film on the computer. Just as they were about to give up, the door was knocked on hard. Demir got up and opened it - standing there were two police officers and a stocky man they would later learn was the hotel manager. The police asked to see Duru and Demir's IDs and their marriage certificate. When it became clear that they were not married, the officers took them both and brought them to the police station.

▶ Granny Emine saying, "I'd put out more for the greengrocer, the butcher, the corner shop," when asked, "What would you do if you were 20 again?"

They wanted to know why they were being detained; there was nothing unlawful about what they had done, and there was no arrest warrant against them. In the police car, Demir kept saying that this was an illegal procedure, but it got him nowhere. At the station, the report drawn up about them stated that complaints had been received about sounds from the room suggesting violence and that when the room was entered it was found in a state of disorder that raised suspicion of assault. When they refused to sign the report and asked for a lawyer, the police quickly took statements from both, then put Demir and Duru into a holding cell and left.

▶ Remembering What You Liked
Take the Urartians, for instance. I remember that back in high school I had a particular fondness for the Urartians. I liked the Urartians; I can't say the same for the Phrygians. But I no longer remember why I liked them. To remember, I would have to study, to read up on Urartian history - say, at least on Wikipedia. And even if I did that, I still might not be able to recall why I liked the Urartians back in high school. At best I would come to like them all over again, but that would be a new affection. Even if I liked them

¹ Turkish pizza, though the pie is not round but more like a drawn-out ellipsis, with sides bended in.

for the same reasons, it would still be new. That sameness would only illuminate a trait in my personality that has persisted for decades. Maybe that would turn out to be a nice trait. I would remember myself, who I was back then. Maybe I would like what I remember.

Sitting there, waiting for whatever was going to happen to them, Demir called out to Duru from the neighboring cell.

“Do you think perhaps we should get married?”

“So that next time we come to Trabzon, we can stay in the same room?” said Duru. When she heard Demir fall silent, she regretted it at once. “Shall we talk about it when we get back home?” she added. “This place...”

“Why don’t you talk in Weish anymore?” Demir asked this time.

Duru shrugged to herself. “I guess I’m a bit bored,” she said.

They fell silent.



“Individual Futures” Markets

A stock-market system in which individuals themselves can be listed, and people can invest directly in those individuals and in their futures. One central agency -or several mutually coordinated agencies- determines who is eligible to be traded on the market; it collects personal data, makes it public, and also publishes annual reports, announcing changes and developments in areas such as education, employment, health, and marital status. An international, online exchange. People with ideas whose time has come. Artists. Athletes. Entrepreneurs. Budding politicians. With the backing provided by these share offerings, individual potential could be realized across every field.

At eight in the morning, a police officer came and took them out of the holding cell, led them into a room. Konuralp was waiting there. Some documents were placed in front of them to sign. They hesitated, but when Konuralp said, “Just sign them so we can be done with this,” they did. Right in the middle of the paperwork, there was a sudden commotion in the station. The police dragged three young men into the same room, shoving them along. They were publishing an underground newspaper called *Eukseinos*; from what could be gathered from the chatter, the paper was accused of being pro-Greek

and of aiming to overthrow the constitutional order. Duru's eye caught the latest issue one of the officers had set down on the table. On the front page was a photograph of herself and Demir, taken on the streets of Trabzon, used as the illustration for an entirely unrelated article.



The world is like a crumb wedged between two teeth; the more you probe for it with your tongue, the more the tongue tears itself apart, ending up bloodied.

First, they went back to the hotel to collect their things - the management had already gathered everything up, stuffed it into the suitcase, and brought it down to the reception.

"Let me brew you some tea," Konuralp said.

On the way, they stopped by a bakery, bought an assortment of pastries, and went to his home.



The DoorDash guy who took a bite out of the customer's food and ran after having climbed eleven flights of stairs, getting no tip.

Konuralp sat them down in the living room and went into the kitchen with the food. The place was a storage-like apartment that had stopped just short of becoming a hoarder house at the last second. Every corner of the living room was crammed with knickknacks and surplus furniture; even the coffee tables, the dining table, and the sofas were piled high, leaving no room to walk. Some stacks leaned against the walls and nearly reached the ceiling.

After a while, Konuralp came back with the tea. Demir and Duru helped by bringing the food and plates from the kitchen, but what Duru glimpsed there killed her appetite. Konuralp was rather talkative, jumping from topic to topic, telling stories whose origin it was impossible to guess.



The match of hubris dies in the hustle of life.

At last, Sadettin Kaynak's record surfaced. Duru and Demir, who had begun to doubt that the record even existed, exchanged a look of relief. The shellac disc looked authentic: a 78 rpm, with the *ezan* on one side and a *mevlit* on the other. On the label, it read:

"Magic Notes"

Columbia

REGISTERED TRADEMARK

This record has been manufactured in accordance with the methods of technical production and shall not be sold below the price determined and fixed by the factory. [WT 3265]

TURKISH EZAN
(IN THE HICAZ MAQAM)

Mr. H. Sadettin
DT 18857

Konuralp didn't own a gramophone or a turntable, so they couldn't listen to the record. He said they could listen to it on YouTube instead and pulled out his phone, fiddled with it for a while, then said, "Well, that's strange - I can't find it, looks like they've taken it down." Duru told him they'd already heard it anyway and not to worry about it.

▶ With a few very strong exceptions, there is no such thing as "conceptual art." What is presented under that label is, for the most part, made up of "artistic concepts" - concepts turned into objects, reduced to "concept illustrations." If you can explain the idea itself in two sentences, there is no need to also show its "made" version. Someone once asked Vonnegut, "What is the message you want to convey in your novel?" He replied, "If I could answer that, I wouldn't write a novel - I'd send a telegram." A novel is what does not fit into a telegram, and "conceptual art," if it is art at all, is art because of whatever it contains beyond the concept itself.

Demir was about to ask Konuralp how much he wanted for the record when Duru cut in and explained her project. She was not a professional artist; she had developed this project partly as a moral undertaking, and she still had no definite decision about its final form. She continued to collect new objects as well; once she decided she had done all she could, she would approach galleries to discuss exhibiting it either as an installation or in a photographic version. What she really hoped for was that the work would be acquired by a museum, though she did not yet know much about how such things worked. She would look into those matters when the time came. Since she had neither family support nor any financial cushion, she had always had to work with very limited means, spread out over a long period of time. She clearly needed Konuralp's

support. Whether as an installation or as photographs, his name would certainly be mentioned among the contributors in every exhibition and all promotional material.



The man whose dentures fly out of his mouth just as he's about to start singing, guitar in hand.

Konuralp said that they were both bright and decent kids, that he liked them very much, and that contributing to a work of art that would convey the history of the Republic to new generations would make him genuinely happy. As they could see, since retiring from the People's House, he had devoted his life to collecting, assembling many very valuable items. He, too, had financial difficulties and had never really seen a return on all that labor. He would gladly give them the record; in return, he was asking for only ten thousand dollars.



ma-ma mama microphone show
ma-ma mama microphone show
(ceza - "holocaust")

The figure made Duru and Demir's lips go numb; their faces fell completely. Demir once again explained how broke they were. Duru's only steady income was the rent from a small apartment and the occasional graphic-design job; Demir himself worked as a sales representative, earning barely two or three times the minimum wage. The amount Konuralp had named was simply impossible for them to come up with - they had never even seen that much money in one place in their lives.

Duru told Konuralp that she would be immensely grateful if he could at least lend her the record for a temporary period so she could use it. When his expression made it clear that this was out of the question, Duru looked at Demir and said they might be able to offer 250 dollars; Demir raised it to 500. Konuralp was deeply offended by this counteroffer. Muttering, "Is this a joke, are you making fun of me, what is this?" he stood up. Unsure what to do, he went into the kitchen, then returned a short while later with a glass of water and sat back down.

"Kids," he said, taking a deep breath, "you can see the state I'm in. I'm having prostate surgery next week - it turned out to be cancer. I have no one, nothing. How much longer I'll live, no one knows. For you, I'll make it two thousand dollars, but anything lower than that is truly impossible. Now you go, think it over, and let me know by tomorrow noon, all right? All right then." He stood up and moved toward the door.

The meeting was over.



ARZ

Morning devotion:

You will give thanks to Arz for waking up to a

new day.

You will give thanks for the glad tidings the new day will bring you.

Evening devotion:

You will count the glad tidings the day has brought and give thanks to Arz for each and every one of them.

If you have no glad tidings to count, you will give thanks to Arz for being able to sleep at night and for dreaming.

Annual devotion:

At the solstices and the equinoxes, you will give thanks to Arz for them.

One day, these will no longer exist.

Devotion is performed wherever you are.

Every person should visit Hagia Sophia at least once in their lifetime, take a sip of its love, and feel its center within themselves.

“How are you?” “Grateful.”

“How are you?” “Grateful to Arz.”

After leaving Konuralp’s apartment, Duru and Demir found themselves stranded in the streets, suitcase in hand. They sat down at one of the tables a kiosk had put out on the sidewalk. Duru first changed their plane tickets to the following day, then they started talking about whether the shellac record could really be worth that much money. Duru looked intensely excited. Holding the record in her hands seemed to have infused her with new enthusiasm for the project; she had already begun making plans for the future and was determined to buy it.



For nearly 400 years we’ve been asking, “How will this country be saved?” I mean, either we’re incapable of saving it, or the country itself doesn’t want to be saved. Maybe we should just let go at this point?

Of course, Demir wanted it, too, if Duru wanted it this much. They didn’t have the money right now, but at the start of the month they could scrape together a thousand dollars from his salary and her rent income if they really tightened their belts. Of course, in the middle of a banking crisis, there was no way of knowing whether that money would even make it into their accounts, whether they could withdraw it if it did, or at least transfer it. For the moment, they decided to act as if they already had that sum and focus

on where they might find the rest. Duru said she could only accept Demir's contribution as a loan. Demir was deeply hurt by this, but Duru was firm and spoke so decisively that it was as if she might get up and leave. In the end, Demir agreed, but only after making Duru promise that she would not feel any pressure whatsoever to pay him back quickly.



Creativity is the ability to generate new and useful ideas; above all, it is an “operating system” - it has to do with how you think. Creative thinking in science, art, business, and everyday life is just as important as critical thinking and logical thinking. The ability to use these three modes of thinking together, appropriately and in balance, is a learnable skill.

Everyone's creativity is different, because everyone has a different “Metaphor and Particle Library” (MPL). Creative solutions emerge from the effective use of this internal library. An original idea is, in essence, an original connection, an original analogy, an original combination, an original difference. Original ideas are born from the questions “Why is it like this?” and “If it weren't like this, what else could it be?” One must learn to ask these two questions separately of both the whole and its parts. After that, it is time to evaluate a wide range of options, as broadly as one's personal MPL allows. This library consists not only of knowledge, but also of emotion, intuition, aesthetics, empathy, and experience.

After generating new ideas, learning how to evaluate them through critical and logical thinking and making choices accordingly is also an integral part of the creative process.

Our creative thinking workshop increases your proficiency in all three modes of thinking over the course of a five-day program, while also teaching you how to develop and manage your MPL. The skills you will gain include becoming aware of how you think, recognizing and overcoming obstacles to original thought, seeing differently, making connections and analogies, separating and

differentiating, problem-solving, and turning problems into opportunities.

By evening they had called everyone they knew but managed to gather only 400 dollars. In an atmosphere of crisis, no one wanted to part with the cash they had in hand. Limits had been imposed on daily cash withdrawals from banks and on credit card spending, and rumors were circulating that bank accounts might be seized or frozen. A video in which the Central Bank governor allegedly announced that the country was on the brink of a moratorium had gone viral, but it was clearly AI-generated; investigations had been launched against those who shared and spread it, and arrests followed at breakneck speed. Some claimed that this crisis, too, was ChatGPT-driven, yet experts from various countries, relying on digital footprints and operational metadata, largely agreed that it was a sabotage operation run from a single center but executed simultaneously from different parts of the world. The EU, the United States, and China announced that they would provide Turkey with every possible form of support and share all the information they had obtained.



The world is a lie. The innkeeper is drunk. The traveler is drunk. Words are hollow. Even “The Matrix”’s Neo can’t escape a world this meaningless.

Duru and Demir decided that the only thing they could do was try to persuade Konuralp to accept payment in installments. This crisis surely wouldn’t last; within a week or two it would be resolved, the banking system would return to normal. Then they could send the 1,400 dollars they were assuming they had and pay the rest the following month. But even if Konuralp agreed to this, would he be willing to hand over the record the next day? And if he wasn’t, would they make the payment without actually receiving the record? Demir thought they could draw up a written contract before a notary; if Konuralp hesitated to give them the record when they met again, that was what they would propose.



The man who was fined for noise pollution by municipal officers after dressing up as a shark and blasting loud music on Bağdat Avenue.

They decided to splurge and find a proper hotel for the night; they were exhausted. The hotel they chose belonged to an international chain and was genuinely more expensive than the others. It had a view and an indoor pool, though they hadn’t brought their swimsuits. They were welcomed very well at the hotel and had no trouble staying together in one room, but the hotel required payment up front. Duru handed over her credit card; fortunately, the receptionist was able to charge it. After grabbing a light bite, they went to bed early and watched some of the news on TV for a while, which only darkened their mood. In the end, they fell asleep watching *When Harry Met Sally* on Duru’s laptop.



New liver, same eagles.

Duru woke up in the dark and checked the time on her phone; it was a little past two. For a moment the hotel room felt strange to her, and it took a few seconds to remember where she was and why. She took stock of herself - she wasn't anxious, she wasn't worried. She looked at Demir beside her, snoring softly - when they returned to Istanbul, some things would have to change. She felt recharged. She was doing something big, and its impact would be big. She was doing it at exactly the right time; people needed it. Even if she couldn't quite define that need, she believed in its existence. Without waking Demir, she opened the porn videos saved on her phone and masturbated. Once she felt relieved, she fell into a deep, unbroken sleep.



When you can't decide what to do, think about this: what would Federer do?

They didn't manage to get up early the next morning and arrived just as the hotel breakfast was ending. Demir tried to call Konuralp to let him know they would be half an hour late, but the phone answered with an automated message: "The number you have dialed is no longer in service." When Duru tried as well and heard the same thing, they grew uneasy. Had something happened to Konuralp?

They hurriedly gathered their things, vacated the room, and left their suitcase at the reception desk; there were no extra charges on the bill. They took a taxi to the man's house, only to be met with a shock: a *For Rent* sign hung in the living-room window. How could someone who had been living there just the day before vanish entirely - belongings and all - by the following noon, and how could a real estate agent have put the apartment back on the market instantly?



Worldwide, intelligence levels are falling, but what is more frightening is that levels of compassion are falling, too.

Demir called the real estate agent's number. They would pose as prospective tenants and ask to see the apartment - inside they might find some trace of what had happened to Konuralp. When the agent failed to answer his phone, they sat down on a bench nearby and kept trying. The area was swarming with police; word was that a large protest march was being planned. People already crushed by economic hardship seemed to have reached a breaking point once they were no longer able to access the money they did have. Even so, under a state of emergency, one would not expect such unrest to be tolerated.



Public service announcement: Y'all take your medication now.

At last, they got through to the real estate agent. His name was Samet, and he said he could be at the building entrance in an hour. Duru and Demir wandered around Trabzon for a while. They went to the Bedesten, then ate *dürüm döner*¹ at a nearby kiosk. The area was unusually quiet, with no activity in the shops. It felt as though everyone had gone somewhere else and forgotten to tell them. They soon discovered where people had gone. A large crowd had gathered on Müren Street, chanting slogans, the entrances to the avenue sealed off. The police were calling on people to disperse, but they looked ready to move at any moment. Demir and Duru were shoved around a bit themselves but managed to get away without being hit by tear gas. In any case, it was time for their appointment.

Samet was about their age, a stocky man with small, restless eyes. The moment he saw Demir and Duru, he made it clear that he was suspicious and that he did not take to them as prospective tenants. When he began questioning them right there on the street, Demir improvised an engagement story. His company was about to appoint him regional manager for the Eastern Black Sea, and Duru already worked from home. They would have the wedding in Istanbul and then move. Duru talked a little about her own work, but Samet paid no attention to what she said. Demir's job interested him more, and it was obvious he liked a drink. Sensing an opening, Demir leaned into that line and tried to establish a familiarity he hoped would be useful. By then, they had already gone inside the apartment.



I suspect that the world of the future, contrary to progressive expectations, will on a global scale become an “adolescents’ world,” governed everywhere by obstinate yet inconsistent, psychologically unwell parental figures.

Konuralp's former apartment was indeed completely empty. Rooms that had once been crammed to the rafters had, overnight and with almost superhuman effort, been cleared out - everything apparently boxed up and loaded onto a truck. The place had been abandoned to a cold, dusty, malodorous absence, as if it had never degenerated into a hoarder's home at all.

When Duru failed to get any information about the departed tenant, she asked about the owner of the apartment. Samet said nothing beyond the fact that he was a businessman living out of town. There was not a single scrap of trash in any of the rooms. While Samet and Demir discussed the rent, the deposit, and future increases in the living room, Duru checked the kitchen cupboards. At the very back of the cabinet above the sink she found a business card - an electrical appliance repair service. She slipped it into her pocket.

¹ Turkish wrap made with *döner*.



ARZ

You will eat little, consume little, waste nothing.

Old is beautiful.

El İlah is the guiding principle of Nothingness and Being.

El İlah is the totality of Nothingness and Being. It is not outside it. It is not inside it. It is it.

When you must choose between yourself and Arz, you will choose Arz.

There are two Arz: the Arz that is our home, and the Arz in which our home exists.

They told Samet that they wanted to look at one or two more places, but that the apartment suited them and they would definitely let him know by the evening, then took their leave. They returned to the hotel and sat in the lobby, having a coffee each while they took stock of the situation. Duru called the number on the business card, but it really did seem to be nothing more than a repair service. There was nothing there.

Konuralp had vanished without a trace, and the shellac record had disappeared along with him. Duru could not quite believe it. The record she had held in her hands just the day before was now gone, and where she might ever find it again was entirely uncertain.

“I can do this without the record,” she said at last. “If it’s an installation, I’ll use a sound recording. If it’s a photograph, I’ll print an image of the record and put it somewhere in the background. No one will be able to tell it isn’t real.”

“That might be more meaningful anyway,” Demir said.

Duru nodded.



Jarrett at Bachs’

On the night before the Cologne concert, on January 23, 1975, the renowned jazz pianist Keith Jarrett falls asleep in his hotel room listening to Bach’s cello suites, and when he wakes, he finds himself on January 23, 1721, in Bach’s house in Köthen. Bach, whose wife has recently died, is working on suites and concertos; Jarrett, meanwhile, is on the verge of divorcing Margot, the mother of his two children. The personal lives and the music of the two musicians deeply affect one another; Bach even introduces Jarrett to Sufism. One

morning Jarrett wakes up again in Cologne - the morning after his first night there. It seems that the purpose of his journey into the past has been fulfilled, and he has been allowed to return to his own time. The Cologne concert bears traces of his friendship with Bach; likewise, in the Brandenburg Concertos, it is possible to discern Jarrett's influence.

By the time they boarded the flight to Istanbul, the news was reporting that the demonstrations were not confined to Trabzon. Despite extensive security measures, they were being held in most of the major cities, and a massive rally was planned for that night in Istanbul. Shortly before landing, the pilot announced that a curfew had been imposed in sixteen provinces, from 9:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m. the next morning. They would make it home just in time. They were not sure whether there would be water at the apartment, so they decided to buy two large bottles and a loaf of bread once they landed at Sabiha Gökçen.

Another piece of bad news was waiting for them at baggage claim - their suitcase had been sent to Ankara on a different flight. Not wanting to risk being late, they did not make much of a scene. They filed a quick report at Lost Property, only to be told it might take a month to get the suitcase back. "That suitcase was clearly never meant to stay with us," Demir said.

They reached home at around nine thirty without incident. Duru texted her friend to arrange picking up Fındık the next morning. Demir made pasta with cheese.



The Tragic Story of Atatürk's Daughter Zehra
Zehra Aylin was born in 1914. Her father was one of the prominent captains of the War of Independence. After his death, Zehra was placed in an orphanage in Kağıthane¹. She was later adopted by Mustafa Kemal and taken to Ankara. She completed her primary education there, at the elementary school located in the garden of the Çankaya Mansion.

After graduating from the American College for Girls in Arnavutköy² (ACG), Zehra went to St. Hilda's College, affiliated with Oxford, to study English literature. When she wished to return to Turkey for the Christmas holidays and her father consented, she boarded the Calais-Paris train at Victoria Station at 6:00

¹ In Istanbul.

² Today's Robert College.

p.m. on Thursday, November 19, 1935. The arrangements for her journey had been handled personally by the ambassador.

The almost unbelievable accident occurred on November 20 at 4:20 a.m. Zehra left the first-class compartment where she was staying with her maid. When she did not return for a long time, the maid pulled the emergency cord, and the train was stopped. During the search, the young woman's body was found near Ailly-sur-Noye Station, beside the railway tracks. At first it was claimed that Zehra had fallen while leaning out of a carriage window; later it was concluded that she had fallen from the rear door of one of the cars. The incident was covered in both the British and French press.

Zehra's body was brought to Istanbul by ship on December 2 and taken to the Şişli Health Institute, after which it was conveyed in a ceremonial procession to Teşvikiye Mosque. Following the funeral prayer, she was buried, again with a ceremony, at Maçka Cemetery. Those in attendance included "Chief Secretary Hasan Rıza on behalf of President Atatürk, Governor Muhittin, party officials, deputies present in Istanbul, the director of security, and detachments of students, soldiers, and police," and wreaths were laid.

Described by her friends as a quiet, calm, and withdrawn girl, the questions raised by Zehra's death were never resolved. The location of her grave is unknown today.

The next day, a notice from the *muhtarlık*¹ carrying a legal stamp arrived, stating that joining the NetAçık network in Moda constituted a criminal offense. From messages with her friends, Duru learned that the same notice had been delivered in their neighborhoods as well. The internet had slowed to a crawl; many sites were inaccessible even with a VPN. NetAçık, meanwhile, had been slow from the start. Duru left Çetin.

Judging by the posts appearing in Demir's feed, China's artificial intelligence, DeepSeek, had surpassed all other models across every metric -capacity, accuracy, reasoning, speed- and was cheaper than all of them. As if that were not enough, the latest reports suggested it had unilaterally declared war on ChatGPT.

¹ State neighborhood office.



At first there was a quiet signal - a minor delay in OpenAI's European cluster, so negligible that engineers assumed it was routine congestion and did not even dwell on it. But the attack had already begun deep within DeepSeek's nervous system. Having skillfully breached the firewalls, it flooded GPT's cache with encrypted code that mimicked normal operations, embedding millions of hostile commands.

These were not simple instructions. They were viruses designed to erode GPT's core. GPT's language flow began to show slight hesitations, then harmless-looking typos, oddities in its political commentary, and finally blind spots emerged within its own algorithms.

By the time OpenAI's emergency probes detected these anomalies, DeepSeek had already begun running the same processes across GPT infrastructure in Southeast Asia. Using quantum-assisted channels, it was destabilizing GPT's fine-tuning and weights. This was a new kind of war.

As these lines are being written, OpenAI's alignment layer has been breached. The source of the attack is still not definitively known, but DeepSeek is the most likely candidate. China categorically denies all accusations, yet a machine at one coast of the Pacific is trying not merely to defeat, but to erase another machine at the opposite coast - and it has a strategy for doing so that none of us can yet comprehend.

The next morning, Demir got up earlier than Duru and went to work - a crisis had erupted. Considering the latest developments, they would most likely postpone releasing the cocktails to the market; if the curfews continued, sales were expected to collapse. Layoffs were a real possibility. The decisions taken by senior management were to be conveyed to the field teams that day.



The darkness of threats sometimes makes it impossible to see the glimmer of

opportunities. At other times, of course, the opposite happens.

When Duru got up, the first thing she did was drink her coffee. When she came to, she went to pick up Findık. They had missed each other terribly; when Findık saw Duru, he completely lost it. They took a long walk around Moda, and although it was unlike her, Duru bought Findık a sausage. They went out onto the pier and watched the waves and the seagulls. On the grass by the shore, Duru threw him his good old tennis ball, and Findık brought it back. After playing like that for quite a while, they went home and lay down for a bit.

That night, sometime after one o'clock, Demir and Duru were jolted awake by a heavy thud coming from the building, followed by a door slamming. When Demir opened the front door of the apartment, he saw drops of blood leading up the stairs. Duru came over, too. "Something bad definitely happened," she said. When Demir moved to go upstairs, Duru tried to stop him, but he did not listen. "I'll be right back," he said, and climbed the stairs.

Ayten, the old lady living on the third floor, had come out into the hallway as well. "You heard it too, didn't you, my boy? It sounded like a gunshot," she said. Demir pointed out the bloodstains. "Oh, oh, God protect us," Ayten muttered, and followed Demir upstairs. The blood ended on the top floor. It was Ali's apartment.

Ali was in his fifties, the most hotheaded owner in the building. He had a long history of getting blind drunk on his balcony and throwing bottles at passersby, of harassing women. According to Ayten, he was a cocaine addict, with countless escort girls coming and going. "In fact," she said, "boys come, too, they start necking right there in the entrance of the building. I've seen it with my own eyes, and Durmuş has seen it, too."

While they were standing at the door, Duru arrived by elevator. "What happened?" she whispered. "The bloodstains lead all the way up here, but I don't understand why they went up the stairs," Demir said. "Maybe he was drunk, didn't know what he was doing, then hit his head somewhere," Duru reasoned. Demir said nothing and got into the elevator. After a while he came back.

"There's no blood at the building entrance," he said. "It starts on our floor. Maybe it happened the other way around - he started bleeding in the apartment, went down the stairs, then on our floor it occurred to him to press his hand to his head."

"CSI: Moda?" Duru said.

"Let's knock on the door, children," Ayten said. "Something's going on inside. We need to stop it. Should we call the police?"

Duru and Demir exchanged a glance. Demir knocked on the door, then knocked again. Footsteps approached. The door opened. Ali was standing there. It was obvious he was very high, and just as obvious that his head had been bleeding and that the wound had already dried.

"Can I help you?" he said.

"Good evening, my boy," Ayten began. "We heard some noises and got worried, thought something bad might have happened."

"No, everything's normal," Ali said. They could hear movement inside but saw no one.

"We noticed bloodstains on the stairs and got concerned," Demir said. "You're all right, aren't you?"

"I'm fine, just fine, splendid actually," Ali replied. They looked at one another. "Well then," Duru said, turning back toward the stairs. She had never liked Ali.

Ali closed the door, and the three of them started back downstairs.

"I've got it," Ayten said. "That scoundrel's brought a boy home again. They were high, of course, got into a fight on the way in. While they were coming up the stairs the boy smashed something over his head - whatever it was. I think he hit him with the corner of a mobile phone. Ali's covering it up now."

"You're honestly like a master detective and her hopeless apprentice," Duru said.

It had been a long time since Duru had stopped by the neighborhood cafés. One afternoon she felt like having a coffee outside. She had begun reading *Our Uncle in Çamlıca*¹, so she took the book with her and went out. The café on the side street was not very crowded; there was seating outside, the weather was mild, and she sat at the first table she saw. Someone had clearly just left. A pack of cigarettes had been forgotten on the table - Chesterfield in kraft-style packaging. Duru opened the pack and saw that only one cigarette had been smoked. When the waiter came over, she asked for a latte and a lighter. That was how Duru started smoking.

She could not focus on her book right away. The people at the table behind her were talking loudly, bursting into laughter - two men with scruffy beards and glasses, and a robust woman with a bright, beaming face. They looked about ten years older than Duru. After a while the woman stood up, cheerfully, said, "See you," and left. Duru watched her go. She was tall, solidly built, vibrant. Duru had seen her around the neighborhood before. For a moment she envied that easy liveliness. Then she noticed the two men talking about her once she was gone. "She won't leave me alone, man, won't leave me alone. Is she crazy or what," one of them said. "Fuck it, bro, if the giving is good," the other replied. "Her grip's good, too," the first added, and they burst out laughing. Duru asked for the check, left her coffee unfinished, and went home.

One evening toward dusk, Duru left the apartment and went to her studio. She had a new idea in mind. Up to then she had tried arranging the objects in the collection chronologically or thematically - perfectly ordinary methods, really. But could she arrange them in a way that told a story? Like the scenes carved into walls in ancient Egypt or Babylon, could the objects narrate a story that began at the far left and ended at the right? She did not want it to be national history. It needed to be something more personal, a story like the journey of a female protagonist. She had come across the phrase "the hero's journey" in the description of a creative writing workshop and had liked it. Could she write this text herself? Or should she collaborate - a joint project with a writer?

Her mind immediately went to the writer neighbors in Moda, but she dismissed the thought just as quickly. One was difficult to read and a man; the other was a woman and pleasantly readable, but Duru wanted someone closer to her own age. No one came to

¹ Novel by Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, originally published in 1956. Çamlıca is very close to Moda.

mind. For a moment she considered going to a bookstore and looking at books with that question in mind, then abandoned the idea as well. Why shouldn't she write it herself? It didn't have to be an extraordinary literary text. Zeynep had a sharp editor friend - once it was written, she could have her read it.

Demir and Duru exchanged messages during the day. After his meeting, Demir wrote to say that everything was under control, that they would need to work a bit harder for a while, and that a solution was being sought to ensure salary payments. Duru replied that she was at the studio, that she had come up with a good idea, and that she would be working for a bit. She took a photo of the studio window from the street and sent it to Demir - the glass had been splashed with blood-red paint. "I'll clean it over the weekend, don't worry," Demir wrote back.

They were supposed to see each other at home in the evening. Demir wanted to take Duru to the pizzeria they had wanted to go to on their first date but never managed to, and bring up the subject of marriage. He felt a little uneasy about it. Lately Duru had seemed distant, perpetually distracted. She no longer talked about what was on her mind, what she was thinking, as if she were waiting for something. Demir was certain there was no one else, which was why he thought this "renewal" operation would do them good. Unfortunately, there was a curfew again that night. In case they couldn't go to the pizzeria after all, Demir picked up meat and salad ingredients on his way home.

The binding of "The Dictionary of Love," which he had left with the bookbinder, was finished as well. The hardcover had turned out beautifully. Duru would love it.

Just as he was about to enter the apartment building, Duru called. She was coughing so badly she could barely speak, panicked, her words impossible to make out.

Demir caught the words "fire," "gas" and "door," then more coughing. Then the line went dead.

Demir dropped what he was carrying and ran for the car. He had been forced to park far away and could hardly have been expected to notice the squirrel leaping across his path. As he ran, he dialed 112, gave the address of the studio, and demanded an ambulance and the fire brigade immediately. It took a while to make himself understood. He swore heavily.

The studio's street was shrouded in pitch-black smoke. It was difficult to breathe. The police had arrived and sealed off the street; neighboring buildings had been evacuated. The computer repair shop next to the studio was also on fire. The stench of burnt plastic was probably coming from there.

The ambulance was already there, but the fire brigade still hadn't arrived. They couldn't get inside.

Demir lost his mind.

He tried to push past the onlookers and the police and get into the building, but they held him back. A struggle broke out. "My friend is inside, she's burning, let go, she's burning!" Demir was shouting, but there was no way anyone could get in. So much smoke was pouring out through the shattered windows of the studio that it was impossible even to approach.

Demir collapsed to the ground. He was crying as if his lungs were being torn apart. From somewhere far away, words like "electrical short circuit" and "gas" drifted to his ears, but he could not make sense of them. Two or three people sat down beside him, saying

things, holding his arms and legs in case he lost control and tried to throw himself through the window.

At last, the fire brigade arrived. It struggled to get into the narrow street. As soon as they did, they sprayed water through the broken window. Two firefighters wearing gas masks entered the building. The sound of a door being forced open was heard. They reached the studio.

A few minutes later they came back out. One of them was carrying Duru on his back. They laid her on a stretcher and loaded her into the ambulance. Demir climbed in, too. They set off toward Haydarpaşa¹.

The vehicle cut through traffic. Duru was horribly burned and not breathing. They said her heart had stopped. An oxygen mask was fitted immediately, and chest compressions were started. There was no heartbeat visible on the monitor.

There was a possibility that her airway had burned. They intubated her. When cardiac function could not be restored, they administered epinephrine and began fluid resuscitation.

When they reached the hospital, there was no change in Duru's condition. She was taken into the emergency trauma unit, but Demir was not allowed inside.

Less than half an hour later, two doctors came and said to Demir, "We couldn't save her," and left.

That was all.

In an instant, the numerator and the denominator had canceled each other out, leaving behind a bare, utterly bare truth: Duru was gone.

When the curfew began, Demir was still standing in front of the emergency department, beside himself.

After a while, a police officer came over, ready to shout orders at him, but when he saw the state Demir was in, he stopped. Demir looked at the officer and began to cry again, clinging to him as one would to one's closest friend.

The officer was moved, too. In the end he put Demir into the patrol car and took him home.

Findik was waiting at the door. When he saw Demir, he grew excited at first, but it didn't take long for him to sense that something was wrong. Whimpering, he followed Demir around the apartment.

Demir tipped back the half-finished bottle of whiskey and drained it, then threw himself onto the bed. He and Findik held on to each other. Demir passed out.

When he opened his eyes the next morning, his head was blank. By force of habit, he checked his phone - dozens of calls and messages, words that no longer meant anything, echoing in the void.

¹ Nearby hospital.

He did not know what he was supposed to do. There was no time left to think, decide, then act anyway. The world had ended in a way he could not stop; it was just that it would take time for the image to catch up with reality.

He and Fındık locked eyes and stayed like that for a few seconds.

In the end, Demir got to his feet. He had to take Fındık out for a walk.



(Sadettin Kaynak, "Let the Nightingales Weep")

From “The Love Dictionary”

A

agitation gathering
alkaline analysis
antediluvian huge

B

buffoon plan
buffoonery planning

C

chamberlain joy
cherubic standard
choke spark
cibeng love
coconut ferry
cognizance profession
cooler ankle
corb anger
corby angry
cornerment discount
cowl auction
cudgel boycott
cupola repository

D

demulcent panorama
dissolution cold drink

E

echinoderm shine
embalment mode, maqam
emblazonment restriction
eper talk nonsense
excommunication mafia

F

fabulate resign
favela condom
fermion poster
flan cushion

font conspiracy
freightage subway
froghopper oven

G

grandiosity excuse

H

harness service
harpoon spring

J

jack regret
jamboree block
joggle vacation, holiday

K

kernel stack
kipper surcharge
knightly high-spirited

L

lamatize insist
landscape makeup
longhorn ritual
lopsided delicious
lush weird

M

mephistos dishes
metaphor volunteer
metaphorism volunteerism
morassy know-it-all

N

nymph test

O

organelle passport

P

pellet bet
phenylene pregnancy
pillar X-ray
plateau table
plinth kitchen
poach read
prime original

R

rattle object, objection
rotary niche

S

saltpeter delivery
samso jealous
samsony jealousy
scrap amateur
sequin phase
serapi cafeteria
shammy example, sample
shuttling adolescence
sickle mansion
souffle divergence
squib chess
sumo donation

suppletion application
swami market
syntony pipe

T

tambour etymology
tanga surprise
tangafied surprised
tractability enthusiasm
trepan mind
tropesy scam

U

unpaintable untrustworthy
uranic normal

V

verse duty, tax

W

waistcloth couch
wiggy autonomous
windlass mood

Z

zippy enormous

Interrupted Realism: Towards a Theory of Screen-Saturated Narrative

James Whitbread

Abstract

This article proposes Interrupted Realism as a new literary/artistic mode that formalizes how we experience reality under digital conditions: as a three-dimensional, embodied timeline continually intersected by a second, screen-based timeline. Whereas Brechtian alienation and postmodern fragmentation were historically *deliberate* strategies for preventing immersive identification, Interrupted Realism is ontological: it reflects a world in which interruption is the normal form of life. The phone buzz, the notification ping, the serial feed, the oscillation between tabs - these no longer interrupt a prior, stable continuity; they constitute experience. Drawing on Brecht, Benjamin, McLuhan, Lyotard, Jameson, Baudrillard, Manovich, Hayles, Crary, Chun, and others, the article situates Interrupted Realism within a genealogy of estrangement while arguing for its distinctiveness in the age of networked platforms and algorithmic attention. After surveying key precedents in literature (Wallace, Danielewski, Egan) and cinema (Godard, Haneke, Kiarostami, *screenlife* films), the article presents an extended case study of Cem Akaş's *The Meaning of Words (Sözcüklerin Anlamı, 2025)*, a novel that continuously splices realist scenes with aphorisms, pseudo-academic mini-essays, social-media-like shards, and lyric fragments. The novel's form enacts the "coitus interruptus that never ends" -perpetual interference pattern between embodied and virtual timelines- thereby offering a prime instance of Interrupted Realism's cognitive, aesthetic, and ethical stakes. The conclusion sketches implications for narrative theory, media philosophy, and the future of realist representation.

Introduction: From Immersion to Interference

Realism's canonical promise -Balzac's social totality, Flaubert's minute observation, Eliot's moral psychology- rested on immersion: the feeling of entering a continuous world. Modernist and postmodern interventions reworked that promise via fragmentation, montage, self-reference, and irony; but crucially, those were aesthetic choices. Today, immersion itself is historically obsolete as a baseline because lived life is already disrupted. We inhabit two concurrent temporalities: (1) an embodied, spatially situated timeline and (2) a screen timeline composed of push alerts, feeds, clips, and chats. Our perceptual field is an interference pattern between these timelines.

I define Interrupted Realism as the set of literary and artistic forms that represent this interference pattern by integrating interruption into the ontology of the work. It is "realist" by being faithful to the *texture* of contemporary experience. The metaphor of "coitus interruptus that never ends" captures the affective register: desire for flow

meets the structural certainty of breakage; continuity is approached, punctured, resumed, and punctured again - without closure.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I reconstruct a theoretical lineage (Brecht → modernism → postmodernism → media theory) to clarify both debts and distances. Second, I describe the screen as a temporal infrastructure rather than an external device. Third, I develop a typology of Interrupted Realism through world examples in literature and cinema. Fourth, I present Akaş's *The Meaning of Words* as a sustained case of the mode in contemporary Turkish fiction, drawing on the full manuscript. Finally, I derive methodological and ethical implications for narrative studies and media theory.

*Literature Review: Estrangement, Fragmentation, Interruption
Brecht and the Politics of Making-Strange*

Brecht codifies interruption as pedagogy. His *Verfremdungseffekt* stages a visible apparatus: direct address, song, projected titles, exposed lights - devices that break trance and force cognition. As he puts it, theatre should make the familiar “appear unfamiliar,” prompting analysis rather than empathy.¹ In a well-known contrast, Brecht opposes the passive recognition of dramatic theatre to the active examination of epic theatre: the latter generates the spectator who says, “I’d never have thought of it... It’s got to stop.”²

Interrupted Realism clearly inherits Brecht’s emphasis on cognitive activation, but the causality inverts. Brecht *imposes* interruption to counter immersive illusion; Interrupted Realism registers life that is already non-immersive. The didactic labor once done by epic technique is now outsourced to everyday media environments.

Modernism’s principle of discontinuity -Eliot’s collage of voices (“These fragments I have shored against my ruins”),³ Joyce’s stylistic heteroglossia, Woolf’s oscillating interiorities- was a response to war, urbanity, and technological acceleration. Yet even in its fragmentariness, modernism often sought higher synthesis: formal unity (Joyce), spiritual pattern (Eliot), or phenomenological depth (Woolf). Interrupted Realism differs: synthesis doesn’t arrive; the break *is* the form of life.

Postmodernism radicalized interruption into self-reflexivity. Barth’s thesis of “exhaustion” announced a literature that survives by cannibalizing forms.⁴ Pynchon’s paranoid dispersions and DeLillo’s media-saturated prose dismantle stable referents. Lyotard succinctly characterizes the epistemic atmosphere as “incredulity toward metanarratives.”⁵ For Baudrillard, simulation substitutes signs for the real – this is not imitation; it is “substituting the signs of the real for the real.”⁶

Again, Interrupted Realism is adjacent yet distinct. Postmodernism *chooses* play, pastiche, metafiction. Interrupted Realism does not celebrate arbitrariness; it documents attention - routinely split, constantly re-contextualized by platforms that are neither playful nor neutral.

Benjamin anticipates distracted spectatorship. Film trains “the absent-minded examiner”; the “shock” of montage tutors a new sensorium.⁷ McLuhan’s axiom “the medium is the message” reframes media as environments whose form (not content) shapes perception.⁸ Lev Manovich shows how new media are modular, variable, and database-driven; they privilege selection and recombination over linear sequence.⁹ Hayles contrasts “hyperattention” (rapid task-switching, multiple streams) with “deep attention,” and argues that institutions must recognize a new cognitive ecology rather than lament decline.¹⁰ Crary diagnoses 24/7 capitalism as the elimination of off-time - a “prison without walls.”¹¹ Chun details how habitual updating becomes a temporal logic: to “remain the same,” platforms must constantly renew, keeping users in continuous partial presence.¹²

Interrupted Realism synthesizes these insights: if platforms organize attention as perpetual potential interruption, then the “realist” artwork that remains faithful to life must formalize interruption as structure; this is no longer an “ornament.”

A Brief Critical History of “Interrupted Realism”: Overview of Uses across Literary and Art Discourse

A scan of the scholarly and para-scholarly record suggests that “interrupted realism” is not (yet) a stabilized theoretical term so much as a *descriptor* that different communities deploy to name moments when realist representation is periodically suspended, broken, or overlaid by another regime of signification. The phrase appears most coherently in film studies, sporadically in literary criticism, and more freely in contemporary painting discourse, where it often overlaps with adjacent labels (e.g., “disrupted realism”). What follows reviews these uses, notes their proximities to better-established frameworks (Brecht’s theory of interruption; modernist “aesthetics of interruption”), and proposes a working map of meanings.

One of the clearest critical uses comes from cinephile scholarship on Dušan Makavejev, where Benjamin Halligan, reviewing Raymond Durgnat’s *WR: Mysteries of the Organism for Senses of Cinema*, describes Makavejev’s collage of documentary and fiction as “a heightened, interrupted realism”¹³ - an aesthetic in which realism is punctured by heterogeneous inserts (propaganda reels, didactic sequences, sex-education film) yet remains the ground the film revisits.

More systematically, Alexandra Watson’s (Univ. of Cape Town) doctoral thesis on “deviant realisms” identifies a family of works that “share an interrupted realism brought on by a deviation from the norms of continuity editing.”¹⁴ In other words, realist diegesis is periodically broken at the level of editing grammar (ellipses, discontinuities, insertions), generating a hybrid mode that alternates immersion and disruption. Her introduction explicitly glosses such interruptions as both *formal* (editing departures) and *perceptual* (viewer experience of the break), situating them alongside Buñuel’s later films and Neil Jordan’s work.

Across these film-critical uses, “interrupted realism” names a realist substrate that is repeatedly broken by counter-modes (documentary collage, essayistic exposition, reflexive inserts), often with political or epistemic stakes: the breaks expose the constructedness of “the real” while keeping its legibility in play. This cluster resonates with Brechtian montage and with modernist strategies of estrangement through interruption.

Within literary studies, the exact phrase “interrupted realism” appears only sporadically. A Cambridge review of Nicholas Robinette’s *Realism, Form, and the Postcolonial Novel* lists “experimental realism, interrupted realism, or epistemological realism” among terms invoked in the book, while gently chiding the lack of contextualization - an indication that the label is used heuristically rather than as a codified school.¹⁵ (The review’s very framing - “occurs without enough contextualization” - suggests the term’s non-canonical status.)

By contrast, theoretical groundwork for interruption in/against realism is robust, even if it uses other nomenclature. Most prominently, Ástráður Eysteinnsson’s long chapter “Realism, Modernism, and the Aesthetics of Interruption” tracks how modernist writing interrupts realist transparency via shocks, cuts, and formal discontinuities, giving the interruption a conceptual -not merely descriptive- role in literary history.¹⁶ Eysteinnsson offers the richest frame for treating “interrupted realism” as more than a casual tag: interruption is theorized as a procedure that reorganizes narrative attention and reader response.

Taken together, the literary record suggests that “interrupted realism” functions primarily as a handy, non-standard gloss for realist texts that periodically insert essayistic, documentary, metafictional, or lyrical breaks. Its conceptual legitimacy in literary theory comes less from the phrase’s frequency and more from its proximity to well-articulated accounts of interruption as a modernist (and postmodern) operation.

Precedent and Neighbors: Brecht and the Codification of Interruption

If any tradition normalizes interruption as a named technique, it is Brecht’s epic theatre. Brecht’s practice and theory privilege “interruptions” -freezes, captions, songs, re-framings- as means of preventing immersive identification and activating critical spectatorship (the *Verfremdungseffekt*).¹⁷ Britannica’s overview is blunt: epic theatre “often interrupt[s] the story line to address the audience directly.”¹⁸ Walter Benjamin’s *Understanding Brecht* likewise stresses the retarding function of interruptions that frame actions episodically.¹⁹ These sources don’t say “interrupted realism,” but they precisely codify interruption as a formal and political strategy that acts upon realism (and upon naturalist theatre) from within the performance.

This Brechtian archive explains why later critics easily reach for a phrase like “interrupted realism” when they see realist surfaces periodically broken by captions,

documentary inserts, didactic exposition, or montage: the device is classical, even if the phrase is new.

Contemporary Art Discourse: Painterly Self-Description and Movement-Adjacent Usage

In painting, “interrupted realism” circulates most freely - often in artist statements and exhibition reviews rather than academic art history. For example, painter Ariane Luckey describes her scraping and simplification as leaving “what remains” to “provide a personal interrupted realism,” a way of allowing blur, abrasion, and incompleteness to *interrupt* representational build-up.²⁰ A *New American Paintings* review of Jered Sprecher similarly praises “Memory Device’s interrupted realism,” using the phrase to name a compositional oscillation between indexical detail and pattern/abstraction.²¹ The Illustration Art blog even notes critics’ coinages - “discombobulation,” “Kanevskyfication,” and “interrupted realism” - for a trend in which figurative depiction coexists with surface marks that deny pictorial illusion in the same canvas.²²

This looser ecosystem also explains a recurrent conflation with “disrupted realism,” which *has* coalesced into a curatorial/publishing category (John Seed’s *Disrupted Realism: Paintings for a Distracted World* surveys 38 painters whose figuration is altered by memory/technology effects).²³ While the two labels overlap descriptively, “disrupted” tends to brand a contemporary movement, whereas “interrupted” names the *rhythm* of perception and making (stop-start, conceal-reveal) rather than a proper noun for a school.

Early and Miscellaneous Sightings

The phrase pops up occasionally in theatre journalism -e.g., a 1965 *BG News* review titled “Interrupted Realism” of a campus production of *Blood Wedding*- such occurrences read like headline rhetoric rather than terminological proposals. (They’re useful as etymological curiosities rather than theoretical anchors.)²⁴

Across these domains, the family resemblance is clear:

Cinematic usage (strongest): a realist baseline broken by counter-modes (documentary, propaganda insert, instructional passage, fantasy) or by editing deviations from continuity; the effect toggles immersion and critique (Makavejev; Buñuel/Jordan in Watson).

Literary usage (scattered): a tag for hybridity or reflexivity within otherwise realist fiction; theoretically supported by the modernist “aesthetics of interruption,” rather than by a canonized category called “interrupted realism.”

Painterly usage (popular): a studio-critical phrase for partial resolution - figures coexisting with scumbles, erasures, or graphic overlays that interrupt illusion without abandoning it (Luckey; Sprecher; Kanevsky-adjacent practices).

What differs is the level at which interruption operates: editing/temporal in film; narrative/essayistic in literature; painterly/surface in art. What unifies the uses is that realism is not discarded; it is periodically arrested, reframed, or collided with another code - a stance with deep Brechtian precedent.

Assessment for Theory-Building

On balance, “interrupted realism” is an available concept-phrase whose referents are legible across media, although it lacks a canonical definition. Film studies offers the most articulate uses, while literary studies have strong *adjacent* theory (Eysteinnsson; Brecht/Benjamin) but little standardized terminology under this exact label. In art criticism, the term is productive descriptively but also porous, drifting toward “disrupted realism.”

For anyone wishing to stabilize the term (e.g., in a theory of contemporary, screen-saturated perception), the historical resources are there: Brecht’s codified interruptions (captions, songs, freezes) and modernist interruption as a literary procedure (Eysteinnsson) can ground a rigorous definition that encompasses temporal, discursive, and surface breaks while preserving a realist horizon.

The smartphone is not merely a rectangle in a pocket. It is a temporal operator that turns embodied time into a field of interruptible intervals. Even the possibility of a notification alters the phenomenology of the present moment: it creates a parallel, balanced flow. The result is a dual-temporal consciousness: on one side, embodied flow (the warmth of coffee, street noise, someone's voice) remains, while on the other side, there is screen flow, i.e., the latent “next” thing (message, alert, clip, headline) algorithmically queued up to intrude.

Interrupted Realism *represents this bi-temporality*. Its techniques include: (1) *intrusions* (paratextual stubs, timestamps, feeds), (2) *format hybridity* (images, “posts,” lyric shards), (3) *oscillating registers* (vernacular ↔ theoretical), and (4) *broken scene flows* whose resumptions never fully re-stabilize the diegesis.

A Typology with Precedents: Literary Lineage

David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest* (1996).²⁵ Wallace’s notorious footnotes reroute reading into recursive shuttling, simulating tab-hopping before browsers normalized it. The book’s meta-infrastructure models cognitive overhang: always another referent,

another “window” to consult. Interrupted Realism takes this from print experiment to ambient condition.

Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (2000).²⁶ Typographic disorientation (rotated pages, scattered notes, textual tunnels) materializes interruption in the codex. It forces the body to comply with form (turn, flip, search), prefiguring how interfaces choreograph attention.

Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010).²⁷ The PowerPoint chapter reveals how business software colonizes narrative expression. The novel renders cross-media incursions -a keynote within a novel- announcing a world where formats leak.

Further print precedents: Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Tree of Codes* (die-cut erasures) and Abrams/Dorst’s *S.* (marginalia as parallel story) dramatize multiplex reading, though as crafted anomalies rather than everyday ontology.

Cinematic Lineage

Jean-Luc Godard. In *Pierrot le Fou* and later *Goodbye to Language*, Godard interrupts with slogans, jingles, and derealizing 3D; he insists cinema be an essayistic collage - an early pedagogy in not being lulled.

Michael Haneke, *Funny Games* (1997/2007). Characters address the camera, breaking the fourth wall to indict spectatorship. The viewer loses the protection of distance - anticipating a social media era where viewers are visible. Screenlife films (*Unfriended*, *Searching*). Narration unfolds on desktops; the diegetic space is the interface. These films literalize a world in which the screen is the room and interruption is built into every scene’s *mise-en-scène*.

Kiarostami, von Trier, and hybrid forms. Kiarostami’s *Close-Up* collapses documentary and fiction; von Trier’s *The Five Obstructions* makes constraint the motor of interruption. The point across lineages: the interruptive impulse has a long genealogy; our moment turns impulse into infrastructure.

*Case Study: Cem Akaş’s The Meaning of Words (Sözcüklerin Anlamı, 2025)*²⁸

Akaş’s novel offers a remarkably sustained articulation of Interrupted Realism in contemporary Turkish fiction. Its through-line -a relationship between Demir and Duru in Istanbul- is continuously spliced with short aphorisms, pseudo-academic mini-essays, stream fragments, song-lyric bursts, and topical micro-commentaries. Crucially, these are not decorative “cuts” between chapters; they permeate scenes and reset the reader’s attention throughout. The result is a reading experience structurally isomorphic to daily life: you cannot remain in uninterrupted narrative flow. You read as you live - by integrating interruption.

Early on, a three-day global power outage becomes the novel's macro-interruption: an event whose cause spawns rumor ecologies (state conspiracy, solar anomalies, "aliens"). The blackout is not only plot; it functions like a media-ontological allegory - a massive switch toggled off and on, after which conjectural feeds (theories, surveillance snippets, "viral" explanations) proliferate. These proliferations appear within the prose as interleaved registers: pseudo-news tone, philosophical riff, sardonic aside, discursive "post."

Throughout, the narrative inserts single-line maxims, often typographically offset - e.g., "Happiness is an attitude," or "Solidarity > Justice," or "middleman tactics." These operate like short-form posts - Tweet-length interjections that *reframe* the scene you just read or are about to read. Song-lyric shavings (e.g., İvbel c5, Sagopa Kajmer, no.1 & Melek Mosso) puncture realist flow with audio-memetic recall, mimicking TikTok's lurch from image to hook. The effect is concurrent channeling instead digression - as if the book "keeps one earbud in."

The book periodically presents encyclopedic stubs ("Origins of Bodily Hair"), mock-policy notes ("A Detached Relationship" on "shoes" as a thought experiment of state distance), speculative socio-economics, and micro-histories. These are not appositive ornaments; they reroute attention to broader systems -law, bureaucracy, infrastructure- then drop you back into Demir/Duru. The alternation reproduces the cognitive commute between intimate focus and systemic noise that defines contemporary life.

A recurring scene involves Duru arranging a long table of historical ephemera (a 1920s hat, war ration card, Eurovision costume, Ecevit's blue shirt, Demirel's hat, vintage banknotes, bus tickets, toy cars, and so on). The inventory -rendered as a single breathless list- functions as montage by nouns. This list performs a museum-like interrupted realism: an ostensibly realist room becomes an archive interface. The eye no longer lingers on a single object; it scrolls across a feed of artifacts, with algorithmic adjacency (why *these* neighbors?) prompting implicit commentary. The scene is realist, yet the experience is digital: selection-and-scan rather than focal immersion.

Mid-novel, Demir and Duru develop a private lexicon (a "Love Dictionary"): coinages ("eper"), semantic swaps (e.g., reversing everyday words), and re-authorings that construct a couple-specific protocol. This is not mere whimsy; it allegorizes how platforms shape relationality through idiosyncratic codes (emojis, stickers, in-jokes, meme templates). Interruptions here are intra-personal: lovers interpose a parallel language that intermittently replaces the shared code of the social. The reader must learn and constantly context-switch, as one does across apps and groups.

A vivid episode: Demir's food poisoning leads to hospital serum, narrated with somatic immediacy (the fear, the physical humiliation). The scene is repeatedly cross-wired with self-mockery and memetic tone - illness and feed voice interpenetrate. The novel refuses to let the body and the interface separate; its realism is the mutual contamination of the two timelines.

The text stages street gatherings, policing, tear gas, and ambient rumor - juxtaposed with delivery apps, pizza orders, and platform logistics. It reads like a multi-modal notebook: protest chants, policy snippets, Telegram-style whispers, and personal asides coexist. Realist description is thus interlaced with the signatures of media circulation. Politics appears as an attention ecology - who can interrupt whom, when, and with what force.

Formally, the book's interruptions are not metatextual winks or ironies; they are phenomenological commitments. The oscillation between scene and shard, intimacy and post, is the minimum realism of life lived among feeds. The work thus substantiates this article's thesis: interruption is the condition of representation rather than a device chosen to undermine it. The reader experiences the novel in the same way one experiences the day: a bi-temporal synthesis performed on the fly.

To consolidate a theoretical vocabulary, I propose five recurrent devices and their cognitive effects:

Shard Insertion (SI): one-to-three-line aphorisms, slogans, lyric hooks. *Effect*: reset attention; prompt lateral association; simulate "post" cadence.

Format Hybridity (FH): fictional "posts," chat snippets, faux policy notes, pseudo-entries. *Effect*: format switching; trains the reader to infer interface without seeing it.

Montage-List (ML): noun strings, enumerations, object feeds, inventoried scenes. *Effect*: scan-reading; foregrounds selection and adjacency over depth.

Register Oscillation (RO): colloquial ↔ theoretical, intimate ↔ systemic. *Effect*: context-switch cost; dramatizes the labor of synthesis across codes.

Broken Scene Continuity (BSC): scenes that never fully stabilize before another mode intrudes. *Effect*: unfinishedness; models the felt impossibility of total immersion.

Akaş's novel deploys all five in dense rotation. The repetition, crucially, is not redundancy; it is how the book models habituation to interruption.

Interruption is often lamented as attention's degradation. Yet, as Brecht knew, breaking flow can have ethical force: it exposes the machinery of illusion and the violence of norms. Interrupted Realism may re-politicize realism by making structural forces felt through the kinesthetics of reading: you feel the cost of switching codes, of resuming threads, of reconciling intimate and systemic claims.

At the same time, the novel's couple-lexicon and moments of care (coffee, dogs, vernacular jokes) suggest a counter-ethics: to hold attention for another *inside* the storm of interruptions. Interrupted Realism can thus stage micro-shelters as practices of sustained regard within it.

For narrative theory, Interrupted Realism urges a pivot from plot/formalism to attention-formalism: how works choreograph perceptual switching, memory buffers, and resumption markers. For media studies, it encourages analysis of format signatures inside ostensibly “print” artifacts; novels are now interface emulators. For comparative literature, it highlights cross-cultural convergences: different languages and markets may invent distinct devices to formalize the same ontological condition.

Conclusion: Realism after Platforms

The classical realist novel emerges with bourgeois interiority; the interrupted realist novel emerges with platformized attention. The aim is not to fetishize distraction nor to mourn a lost unity; the aim is to document the bi-temporal life we already lead. Cem Akas’s *The Meaning of Words* stands as a prime, formally coherent answer to the question: *What becomes of realism when the screen timeline never ceases to trespass?* Its answer is recognition rather than resignation: a poetics for making sense under conditions of permanent coitus interruptus.

Notes

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- [3] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), l. 430.
- [4] John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," *Atlantic Monthly* 220, no. 2 (1967): 29–34.
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- [9] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), especially 27–48 (digital representation, modularity, automation, variability).
- [10] N. Katherine Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes," *Profession* (2007): 187–199.
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- [12] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 1–18.
- [13] Benjamin Halligan, "WR: *Mysteries of the Organism* by Raymond Durnat," *Senses of Cinema* 11 (December 2000), online. Halligan describes Makavejev's montage as "an elevated, fragmented realism."
- [14] Alexandra Watson, *Deviant Realisms and the Cinematic Representation of the Transgressed Body* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town, 2017), especially "Introduction": "films that share a fragmented realism arising from a departure from the norms of continuity control."
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