

AUTUMN EDITION: TRANSFORMATION

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Autumn Edition of the Erato's Magazine. This is the first edition of this new Year - how exciting!

The Theme for this Edition is "Transformation". It was chosen due to its fitting Nature to the Season and the major Holiday Halloween! Just as the Weather and the Colour of Leaves transform, so does Life and the Magazine. So expect to find many works in this Edition - Poetic, Prose and Essays as well as Images, all about one Aspect or another of the Concept of "Transformation"

Have fun reading!

-Erato's Magazine Committee

Autumn 2024

AUTUMN EDITION: TRANSFORMATION

Contents of this Edition

Poems - by Mia Wynters

All the Sunsets They Will Miss - by Berke

Terrifying Transformation - by E. M. J. A. Swart

Structuralism and Transculturality - by Dung Ly

What is going on in Turkey? - by Balca

Dutch Poem - by LH

Soon it will be Next Year - by Ceara

Butterfly - by Miri

Costumes? - by Chloe Broodbank

Incorrigible Scoundrels by the Sea - by Dung Ly

Can Relationships Actually Change? - by Balca

From Student to Scholar - by Dung Ly

Maze of Magnets - by Thirza

Humanities' Finest - by Dung Ly

Band-Aid Revolution - by Flore Spekman

Crystal Tears

Water turns into ice
Like sparks into life
Like life into stories
Stories full of fights
Into tears
And on a cold winter's night
Tears too turn into i c e



Sands of Time

As ice turns into water
The kind of water that floods your favourite place
As sparks turn into fire
The kind of fire that sets the trees ablaze
As your breath turns into air
The kind of air that's filled with greys
And the sands of time are running out
Is it too late to start now?

All the Sunsets They Will Miss

The elders of the island were busy with the torches. Amara stood atop a pyre of driftwood; her hands bound tightly behind her back. There was a flower necklace around her neck, once a symbol of her life, now felt like a noose of its own. She scanned the angry faces of the people who sentenced her to death. Their eyes once filled with wonder, now blamed her for the destruction of their little paradise.

An elder stepped forward, holding a parchment—Amara’s sentence. It was rolled up and tied with a thin string that you tied so easily but got angry at yourself because you tied it so tight. The usual.

As she awaited her end, memories of the past months flooded her mind. In the 18th century, on a forgotten corner of the Indonesian Archipelago, lay an island with five thousand or so people. It was nestled among shallow reefs and narrow channels. Sailing near was mostly impossible for ships big enough to roam the oceans, but it didn’t matter for them, as they thought the seas went only as far as the horizon. They called themselves the People, and their island the Island. Because when you believe you’re the sole occupants of the world, naming yourself seems redundant.

Life moved at a peaceful pace, apart from the occasional disappearances. It was a dangerous world if you went too deep into the forest, too far into the sea, too late to your home. Nonetheless, their little town flourished with life. Art and craftsmanship filled the streets, Amara’s flower shop at the heart of it all. She spent most of her long life experimenting with seeds and creating gardens.

To understand a country, you followed the money, however, to understand a town, you followed the flowers. She was able to observe the anatomy of the island from the front rows. Flowers were woven into everything; funerals, schools, lovers, politicians. The island hadn’t yet known politics, but in each corner of the universe, every life-form somehow managed to create what could only be described as a right-wing party. Their destiny was to get elected at the worst times possible. This small group of islanders was against something called ‘immigration’. This was a bit odd, because, well, there was no one else.

In their secluded corner of the world, the islanders followed the same religion whether they liked it or not. They worshipped two gods—the Sun and the Sea—and believed that each sunrise and sunset were their gods coming together in love, giving birth to the next day. Witnessing these sacred moments was considered a grave sin that could invite divine wrath. Therefore, as the sunset approached, everyone retreated indoors, drawing thick curtains and praying for the Sun’s safe return. Consequently, none of the islanders had ever seen the night sky.

The elders, including Amara's father, ruled the island. Nobody questioned their authority as they were chosen by the gods. Yet, in a society where knowledge was passed down from generation to generation, history and tradition were fragile. One mistake there, one change here, you had a history that was completely made up. A tradition of thousands of years might have just been a typo.

On an insignificant day, her father followed the oldest tradition. His passing had been expected, but it was still sad. The elders organised the funeral, adorned with Amara's vibrant flowers at his resting place. For weeks, the people mourned, praying for his soul day and night.

A few months later, as Amara tended to her father's beloved plants in his chambers, she made a discovery. While carefully nurturing a fern, her shoes brushed against a loose floorboard. Intrigued, she pried it open to reveal a small metal box. She gently lifted it onto her father's desk. She knew she should've consulted the elders, but her curiosity was already moving her hesitant hands. Little did she know, that by opening the box, she unknowingly set the course for her fate.

Inside were journals and maps, some old, some recent. Confusion washed over her as she unrolled one of the maps. She couldn't understand what kind of a map this was. Everything was weird. She traced the unfamiliar coastlines with her finger. This didn't look like their island at all. Amara's heart began to race. She reached for another map, then another, each one revealing more of a world she'd never known existed. Mountains longer than she could fathom, lands stretching beyond the horizon, and towns – so many towns– marked with strange symbols and names she couldn't pronounce. With trembling hands, she picked up one of the journals. Her father's handwriting filled the worn yellow pages. It was full of entries that were far apart from each other. Some had years in between. She opened one of the bookmarks:

“Year 54, Day 196:

New outsider ships came close to our shores tonight. They have a different flag, not the three stripes. They still don't know we're here. However, the world grows smaller by the day, and I fear our isolation cannot last forever.”

Amara's mind reeled. Ships? Flags? She picked up another journal:

“Year 32, Day 4:

One, in exchange for grain, and new seeds for Amara's sixth birthday.

One, in exchange for books.

Three, in exchange for new maps, and their silence.

Three what? Whose silence? What do we trade in return? Amara wondered as she sat amidst the scattered maps and journals. She picked up a letter from the pile that looked pretty recent.

“My dearest Amara,

If you’re reading this, the burden of truth is now yours. Forgive me for the lies and the world we concealed from you. We did it to protect ourselves. Yet, in my fear, I question whether our actions do more harm than good. There are other people living across the waves. Many more. They are disgusting savages who call themselves empires. They seek to plunder and destroy our island as they have ruined their own. Each night, as the sun sets and rises again, when the tides swell and waters rise, a passage fills for outsider ships to navigate near our shores. They remain unaware of our existence, and our only option is to hide. Also, there is one more thing you should know. Please don’t blame us. We discovered the outsiders’ islands and made a deal to buy their silence.

They asked for spices, gold, and slaves.

We didn’t have spices.

We didn’t have gold.”

The words hit her like a storm. The disappearances—the people who went missing—suddenly made horrifying sense.

“It’s a burden that I’ve carried to my grave. May you have the wisdom I lacked, and the courage to face whatever comes. Remember, my flower, even in the harshest soil, life finds a way to bloom.

With all my love,

Father”

Tears blurred Amara’s vision as she clutched the letter to her chest. The foundations of her world had crumbled and the weight of this secret pressed down on her. Could she live a life built on the suffering of others? Was it right to let her people live in blissful ignorance?

Days passed as Amara wandered the island, the vibrant colours of her flowers now muted against the grey fog of her thoughts. What were once familiar paths now felt strange, and every face she saw reminded the innocence that hid a terrible reality. She knew she couldn’t keep this to herself; people deserved the truth.

One afternoon, Amara gathered a small group of trusted friends in her shop. “I have something to show you,” she began, her voice steady despite the turmoil within. “These maps, these journals—they reveal a life beyond our shores. Our elders have kept them hidden from us, but also kept us hidden from them. They even sacrificed islanders to maintain this secrecy. Beyond the horizon, there is so much more.”

Confusion clouded their faces. “Are you certain, Amara?” they asked. “Why would the elders hide this?” Amara explained her father’s final letter, her voice trembling with emotion. “Our history is more than our stories,” she said, spreading the maps across the table. “Look here” she continued, tracing the coastlines. “These are real places, real people. Imagine what else might be out there—science, art, knowledge that could help us thrive. We can’t hide from the world forever,” looking at each friend, “but we can meet it on our own terms.”

Her friends exchanged uncertain glances. For them, the idea of people beyond the sea was a revelation as unnerving as discovering life on another planet. “Even if what you’re saying is true,” one friend ventured hesitantly, “if we reach out to them, won’t we anger the gods?”

Amara understood their hesitation. “Our curiosity doesn’t have to conflict with our traditions. We can honour our gods and still seek wisdom from beyond.”

Several meetings followed. A few brave islanders, moved by her conviction, also started to spread the word in secret. Hidden corners of the island became meeting places, where hushed conversations about the outside world grew. The people, though hesitant, began to sense the possibilities, and with it, a growing desire to make their presence known.

One night, beneath the cover of darkness, the people gathered on the beach without the elders. It was the first time they had gazed upon the stars, their brilliance both beautiful and haunting, like lost souls hanging from the purgatory. It was pitch black apart from their flickering torches. And to their surprise, the gods—the Sun and the Sea—were nowhere to be seen, leaving the night sky empty and vast.

Here, they were alone. Here, they decided their own destiny.

Following their plan, they built great fires on the shore, flames leaping skyward—an optimistic beacon. It was a welcome signal for anyone to see. They were prepared to meet the unknown with courage. Standing at the forefront, Amara’s heart beat wildly as she spoke. “Tonight, we open our eyes and lift the veil,” she declared. “Let this light be a sign of peace—and a gesture of kinship.”

Weeks passed uneasily. Some hoped the outsiders had seen their signal; others began to doubt, convinced that Amara had lied to them all along. At the end of the third week, under a full moon, dark sails appeared on the horizon. Islanders watched with a mixture of anticipation and dread as the outsiders approached their shores.

Well, as it obviously turned out, hope isn’t a survival mechanism. The outsiders civilised the island in a couple of weeks. All of Amara’s flowers were trampled underfoot by people wearing funny hats. History repeated itself.

As Amara's memories drifted away, the elder's solemn voice reading her sentence pulled her back to the present moment. A heavy silence settled over the crowd—no one spoke, not even the children. The only other sound was the relentless crashing of waves against the shore.

Amara's hands were tied with a thin string. The kind of string that you tied up so easily but got angry at yourself because you tied it so tight. The usual. Maybe too usual. Maybe you shouldn't tie every string this tight just because you can. For sometimes, no matter how hard you try, you cannot untie what has been bound.

The islanders blamed her for everything. It was fair, she understood. Amara did what she thought was right. She deeply cared, sometimes too much, without thinking about the consequences. She felt like a parent, but as it turns out, not everyone should be one. Her kids have now grown up and hated her.

While meeting her people's gaze one last time, she couldn't think of anything nice to say. Fear swam in their eyes, but beneath it, maybe also a spark of something else—a knowledge that could never be unlearned, a horizon that could never be unseen. Perhaps one day, they'd face new sunsets, explore other lands, and introduce their culture. But perhaps not. Perhaps not yet.

It was the same for every society. Their collective stories made them the People, but now, their collective fear transformed them into a Nation. Becoming a civilised nation, on the other hand, was about instilling that fear in others. They weren't that civilised yet, but they eventually had to be if they wanted to survive.

As flames climbed around her feet, Amara's voice rose above the crackling fire despite the smoke. "The flowers," her words carried by the salty breeze. "They bloom—even in the harshest soil."

Fire melded with the dying sun as the Nation witnessed her last words.

"You've seen the stars—" she cried out.

They were horrified yet transfixed, as their destroyer, their prophet, their flower-keeper burned.

—and no one can take away from you."

This was the first core memory of their history—a kind of memory no elder could create or destroy. As night swallowed the last embers, the Nation slowly retreated home. Curtains were drawn tight. Not only out of fear of the gods anymore, but to hide from the very real monsters coming beyond the waves.

They would never reclaim their lost innocence. They gained the freedom to dream bigger, but also the realisation that they would never reach any of them. They felt lost, tired, and afraid—like proper adults. Discovering the existence of stars brought the expectation to reach for them. What a terrifying responsibility. They would give anything to go back, despite all the sunsets they'll miss.

Terrifying Transformation

In a top-notch town there is a haunted house from which nauseating noises can be heard from within. The house looks relatively normal for being abandoned: a few broken windows, an old creaky door and when the moon is full, it is the perfect place for a once-a-month ritual.

The ritual starts with the house itself. It transforms as if anticipating a great miracle. The door stops creaking and the glass morphs into something presentable. The light from within glows a soft orange, welcoming the guests that look too fancy to be here.

The guests arrive before midnight in cars so luxurious the brand name does not come to mind. Hooded, they step onto the threshold. Like ghost sheets they float over the pavement and into the house. There are always five of them. The neighbors know better than to look these figures into the eye. They say that Harold from house 4 still hasn't recovered.

What happens inside the house is a secret to all except those attending but a measly mouse had the guts to enlighten us as to what transpires on these nights. They gather in the large living room which is lit by countless candles. Four figures form a circle around a table. The fifth lays down on it.

As one they shed their cloaks, revealing beautiful women. Their locks, long and luscious. Their skin, smooth and sumptuous. The one splayed out on the table, to say it nicely, lacks these qualities. Horrendously hairy and unenviably ugly. But worry not, for they will not remain in this state.

Once old runes are drawn on the unfortunate creature the ritual begins. One stands in front, two on the sides and one at the back. Together they surround their sacrifice. They pass to each other an old wiggly knife and whisper to it before handing it over to the next one. Til the one in front gets the blade back and with a gush of wind she raises it in her hand. Shouting a language long lost.

She slices it from the sacrifices' head to the heart, revealing red muscles, but not going as deep as to kill. The one on her left takes over and moves the knife down the entire left arm. Ripping apart muscles and biceps. The same thing happens on the other side. Then back to the middle again. The one in the back takes over and slices the knife down to the feet. Then up and up again to work on the other leg.

Blood drips down to the floor however the one on the table does not make a sound. For they know the reward is worth the pain. Finally it is done. The knife is pulled from the flesh and the four speak in harmony a sentence that will not be repeated here.

An agonizing minute passes as the body twitches and jolts. A hand springs out from the bereaved beast. A beautiful blueish hand, quickly followed by a shoulder, a head, a torso, hips and luscious legs.

Their sister has been reborn as perfection.

Her hair is haunting and hedonistic. Her complexion, celestial and cherubic. She joins her sisters in their circle. A butterfly reborn or a monster transformed.

Structuralism and transculturality: a transformation in thinking about cultures?

So I encountered an intellectual conundrum during my present internship. I have the utmost confidence that I will resolve this magnificent conundrum with my great skills as a literary scholar, but in case I am wrong, I am going to pose it here. I like to think that it is an exercise in understanding the basics of literary theory as I learned it years ago, so I added a bibliography to this essay. I will eventually phrase the conundrum later in the essay, but if I had to introduce the two elements of my conundrum off the cuff: structuralism(1) is an approach to cultural analysis asserting the existence of a common structure underneath all cultures, by which they can be understood and explained. Whereas transculturality(2) - basing myself mostly on Wolfgang Iser's famous formulation of transculturality - is an approach to cultures less as entities with an essence that interact, and more as the products of constant interchange between actors; thus mutually creating each other rather than existing and developing independently.

To tell you where the problem is happening: currently I am following an internship at the University of Leiden as part of a research group studying the Johan van Manen collection, housed in Leiden(3). Johan van Manen (1877-1943) (hereafter referred to as J.v.M.) was a Dutch Orientalist and Tibetologist and his collection consists of mostly Tibetan texts, but there are also manuscripts and typescripts in a variety of languages. As J.v.M. was a member of both the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Theosophical society in Adyar, there are also plenty of English texts for me to study – as literary texts. Most of the team studies J.v.M.'s work as part of the former, but my niche in the team is studying the significance of J.v.M.'s work as a Theosophist. To be more specific, I was tasked with drawing up a network of J.v.M.'s fellow intellectuals to understand how his Theosophical work came about: his work published in the Theosophist and those articles found in the collection that relate to this periodical published by the Theosophical Society (hereafter referred to as the T.S.). You may have heard of the nineteenth century Theosophical Society in reference to the occult or in relation to psychic powers. I will refrain from making any snarky comments about any belief in magic powers or weird theories on cosmo- and anthrogenesis(4), but it is important to explain the occult.

1. Many of you may be familiar with the handbook *Literary Theory: The Basics* by Hans Bertens, and I recommend the sections on early structuralism, as I am engaging with the wider intellectual tradition of structuralism as well, as opposed to only structuralism in literary criticism.
2. As for becoming acquainted with transculturality: although I first learned about it during the RMA Comparative Literary studies, I would recommend Wolfgang Iser's article "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" as a short primer, as it is relatively short and enough for understanding this essay.
3. For more information, see the project's website included in the bibliography, which also contains blog posts on the research as it progresses - they are interested in taking on new interns, but I digress.
4. Theories on the creation of the cosmos and humanity respectively.

The Theosophical Society played an important role in introducing Eastern religions and their religious texts to Western audiences. That is not to say they were the first, but at the time of its rise during the 1870's, the West was swept up in an interest in the occult: the divine truth underlying all religions, each of which are only perspectives on it. Like blind man's hands on different parts of an elephant as a certain metaphor goes, but the T.S. was known for reconciling the occult with a scientific perspective on nature to arrive at a true understanding of reality - reconciling all religions with Darwinian theories of evolution(1). This quest for knowledge was driven by the society's three objectives: 1. To promote universal brotherhood without distinction in race, creed, sex, caste or colour; 2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science; 3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

As a literary student I was onboarded for my expertise in researching and interpreting texts and what they do to culture- how they transform it one could say. This means that as the intern I would, amongst other things, be performing close-readings on important texts in the collection so as to tell the team about their significance. Transcultural theory and structuralism are two approaches in my toolbox. And it is the third objective that complicates the main premise of my study: unearthing and studying transcultural phenomena in the van Manen collection.

So the third objective is where the comparative hermeneutics of the T.S. turn into a synthesis, the creation of a Theosophical theory explaining not just the nature of reality but also how different cultures, religions and ethnicities came to be. 'Powers latent in man' does not only refer to psychic powers, but also to features of our intellect; 'unexplained laws of nature' does not only refer to supernatural phenomena, but also to why evolution, cause and effect and karma exist, as the T.S. believed in neither a universe created by a god nor in a creation determined by randomness such as in evolution. In theosophical worldviews(2), cultural differences were the result of reality evolving, manifesting and devolving these features in seven-step sequences. But unlike the formalism of Propp and Jakobson, or the linguistic work of Lévi-Strauss and Saussure, we have the sevenfold evolutionary structures of Blavatsky to explain why different races exist or how their features such as sex, bodies or souls came to manifest in different stages on the same world, as a result of evolution guided by cosmic laws.

1. For contrast, the contemporary Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn fulfilled the niche for pursuing more practical magic as opposed to divine knowledge, although these two things are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
2. There are many Theosophies, only having in common their grounding in the works of H.P. Blavatsky and not much else. Also there is the difference between card-carrying Theosophists and an inspired theosophist.

Of course in practice, Theosophical writings are not always about the cosmos. I have read a great deal of J.v.M.'s publications in the Theosophist and to my mind comes a comparison between the philosophers Lao Tzu(1) and Herakleitos(2), their ideas supposedly being two sides of the same coin, that coin being metaphor for divine truth, but I digress. But important is that one can see how one might perceive this argument as a structuralist argument: if one would assert divine truths to be the essential cause for the meaning making processes of all cultures, then differences can be explained by how cultures interacted with these divine truths.

This is my conundrum: it would seem that, as an older theory of cultural analysis, structuralism ought to be irreconcilable with transculturality, which denies there is a preceding essence to cultures. Instead, cultures produce difference between themselves through what is done on both sides of people exchanging ideas and customs- building culture through interaction, rather than building on divine truths that are the same for everyone. But as a student of literature I am thus faced with explaining the seemingly structuralist approach of J.v.M. to describing religions with my transcultural approach to literature. Explaining a text by what it is categorically not, or so it would seem.

Found within the collection was a typescript, supposedly by J.v.M., which was of a seemingly much deeper commitment to Theosophical theory than his publications in the Theosophist. I do not know if it is legal yet to cite that manuscript here as access to it is regulated by the library of Leiden.

Through a comparison of religious texts, its author illustrated a higher symbol beyond the Hindu AUM(3) symbol to articulate the nature of speech as a product of the spiritual evolution of mankind, thus AUM as a symbol being an emanation of what the T.S. calls the Creative Logos. The confusing thing that seems to happen here is that, on the one hand, J.v.M.'s initial argument seems a structuralist theory to explain the development of speech as a faculty and symbol of cultures across the world, the Hindu symbol standing in relation to it as only one iteration of a divine truth as structure guiding the shape of every culture across the world. On the other hand, we may perhaps have an example here of a transcultural phenomenon, where the T.S. becomes a third space for Hindu symbols and Greek philosophy to transform the understanding of speech between cultures. So to what argument would I commit in a report to my supervisor?

1. A Chinese thinker well known for supposedly having 'written' the Daodejing. See Wikipedia for more.

2. A Greek pre-socratic thinker, his work surviving in fragments but noted for such ideas as 'the unity of opposites' and all things existing as 'becoming rather than through being'. Such ideas are comparable to what is found in the Daodejing on reality. See Wikipedia for more.

3. Also known as OM, it is a Hindu symbol for a sacred sound and denoting an important truth about the cosmos. See Wikipedia for more.

In any case, I did recently formulate a solution to my conundrum: if theosophists embraced structuralism as an approach to comparative religion, then it follows that they first have had to agree on structures to look for. Just like genre can flatten the differences between English or Chinese science-fiction, by imposing an anglophone genre-perspective on two different sets of texts, the same could happen when transplanting religious concepts across their cultures. Imagine your knowledge of divine truth being limited because all perspectives on it were translated into English: like putting all hands on the elephant in the same spot just so you can see all hands, to recycle a metaphor.

So rather than language-specific concepts, they agreed upon researching symbols as the epistemological structure by which to understand the divine. Symbols tend to communicate meaning differently from terms in their native sacred language, so my hypothesis is that Theosophists settled on debates surrounding the proper meaning of divine symbols, derived from the analysis of culturally specific divine symbols, in turn based upon their native language literatures. This is where transculturality becomes visible, as the symbology of Theosophist theory becomes a third space for mutual transformation, where experts in their respective religions and cultures reflect on their understanding of the culturally specific, while creating a new cultural product: symbols that grant insight into divinity. So to conclude, just because our understanding of culture transforms doesn't mean we can't compare old theories to understand literature today: like comparing the caterpillar to a butterfly to understand its life.

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What is going on in Turkey?

The Journey of Being a Woman in a Patriarchal World

The journey of being a woman in a patriarchal world feels like a continuous progression, marked by occasional setbacks. The women's rights movement is almost universal, yet with the recent rise of far-right movements worldwide, women are unfortunately losing some of their rights—and in some cases, their lives. Often, right-wing movements advocate for traditional roles that can't help but be biased due to the political turmoil my country is facing right now.

Being a woman in Turkey has undergone massive changes over the last twenty years. I have been fortunate to be shielded from the misogynistic oppression that many women in my country endure daily. However, we need to make a change quickly. I'm far removed from active violence, yet I feel helpless and scared. I don't want the many women who have died to go unremembered.

Femicide is a serious problem in Turkey today. For non-Turkish people, the violence in Turkey may come as a surprise. Domestic violence against women has been a longstanding issue, often rooted in cultural factors. Unfortunately, some traditions are extremely misogynistic, involving arranged marriages, restrictions on education, and husbands controlling their wives and denying them the right to work. A traditional Turkish saying goes, "Kocan bu, sever de döver de," meaning "He's your husband; he will both love you and beat you." This symbolises a harmful mindset that normalises domestic violence. Honour killings, often committed by male family members, are still tragically common, with young women sometimes murdered by fathers or brothers for perceived dishonour.

Honour killings, often carried out by fathers, brothers, or uncles, are tragically common. Family members may kill their daughters because they believe they aren't "honourable" enough.

The Istanbul Convention, officially known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, was signed by Turkey in 2012. However, Turkey withdrew from the convention in March 2021. This withdrawal has led to an increase in horrific crimes against women, many of which go unnoticed. Most recently, a nineteen-year-old murdered two other nineteen-year-old girls in gruesome ways. He didn't stop there; he even called one of the girls' mothers to tell her where her daughter was, throwing her decapitated head in front of her. He took his own life shortly after. I don't want to mention his name; he isn't worthy. Ayşenur Halil and İlkbâl Uzuner will not be forgotten.

The recent trends in legal judgement and enforcement practices only result in more violence. Court systems often grant leniency to male perpetrators who display "good behaviour" during trials or claim to have been provoked. This can result in reduced sentences or early release, enabling abusers to evade full accountability. Additionally, restraining orders are frequently short-term and violations are rarely prosecuted, which has left women vulnerable to continued abuse.

The abuse escalated after 2021. In 2021, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, a European treaty designed to prevent violence against women, amid pressure from conservative groups and government officials who argued the treaty conflicted with traditional family values. Critics contend this withdrawal has weakened protections, especially as many victims face resistance in accessing justice and protection. While the government claims that alternative legal provisions will adequately address these issues, activists point out that enforcement remains inconsistent. The current government put forward the alimony payments as a big reason why they didn't intend to uphold the Istanbul convention anymore. In their opinion, it encouraged divorce, but from a humanist perspective, it secured freedom for the divorced women and ensured their equality. More traditional families don't want the mother figure to work because they are scared of the sense of security they would feel if they could have their financial freedom. Some conservative groups and officials argued that the Istanbul Convention encouraged divorce and imposed long-term financial obligations on men, which they viewed as burdensome and contrary to family unity.

The disappointing thing is that the Istanbul convention came to be because of violence against women in Turkey. In 2008, Melek Duman took her case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). She was subjected to severe physical and mental abuse by her ex-husband, which was so extreme that she fled her hometown and moved to a different city with her mother. However, her ex-husband found them and murdered Melek's mother. Despite complaining to local authorities over fifty times about her husband, they failed to protect her. At the ECHR, she argued that her country could not protect her from abuse, thus violating her rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly her right to life and to be free from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. The ECHR ruled in favour of Duman, agreeing that Turkey had indeed violated her rights and subsequently enforced the Istanbul Convention upon Turkey through a sanction.

I am feeling trapped. The expectation of change just isn't being fulfilled in my country. I am indignant that people don't have empathy towards the women and children who go through unimaginable horrors. Scared for my friends living in that reality every day, a reality I myself will go back to in December. Ashamed because I get to have a sense of real freedom, leaving the country, writing about my true feelings, feeling almost no danger when I walk in the street alone in the dark. Guilt, because I do feel safe, both in my country and in the Netherlands. The privilege I get to experience shouldn't have to be a privilege. So many women aren't as fortunate; they fear for their lives every day. The law in Turkey, which is supposed to save its people and take care of its women and children, is failing terribly.

What breaks my heart the most is the duality of my country. Turkey once stood for progress and equality under the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk—who granted women the right to work, vote, and pursue education in the 1930s—but the current administration seems intent on reversing these advances. President Erdoğan’s own statements have reinforced gender biases, notably when he said, “You cannot put women and men on an equal footing.”

The differences in values, between modern and traditional lives, are intertwined in such a delicate way that neighbors can have this difference in ideology. The transformation of women’s rights should’ve been progressive; every year, we were supposed to work for equality even more. The recent twenty years have been a transformation in the opposite direction. A president and a government that doesn't see me as a human don’t deserve my respect. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, revolutionised women's rights, granting them the right to work, the right to vote, and, most importantly, encouraging a societal change in attitudes toward women. This was in the 1930s. From liberation, democracy, and equality, my country has found itself in a position where the president claims, “You cannot put women and men on an equal footing.” If I were still living in Turkey as a leftist woman, I wouldn’t have the opportunity to write this freely. Why did I need to move to a new country to build a new life to be able to talk about my feelings? Criticism is not received well from the government to the point where they lock up journalists in jail. My right to live and my freedom of speech are in danger. There has to be a systematic change throughout the government; this cannot go on like this another day. The desire I feel to make their voices heard is nothing compared to the horrors some people have to face.

Women need protection; the law must safeguard us. The solution seems straightforward. It baffles me that the government doesn’t recognize the applicability of a law designed to protect everyone. Laws to protect women have been overlooked and under-enforced.

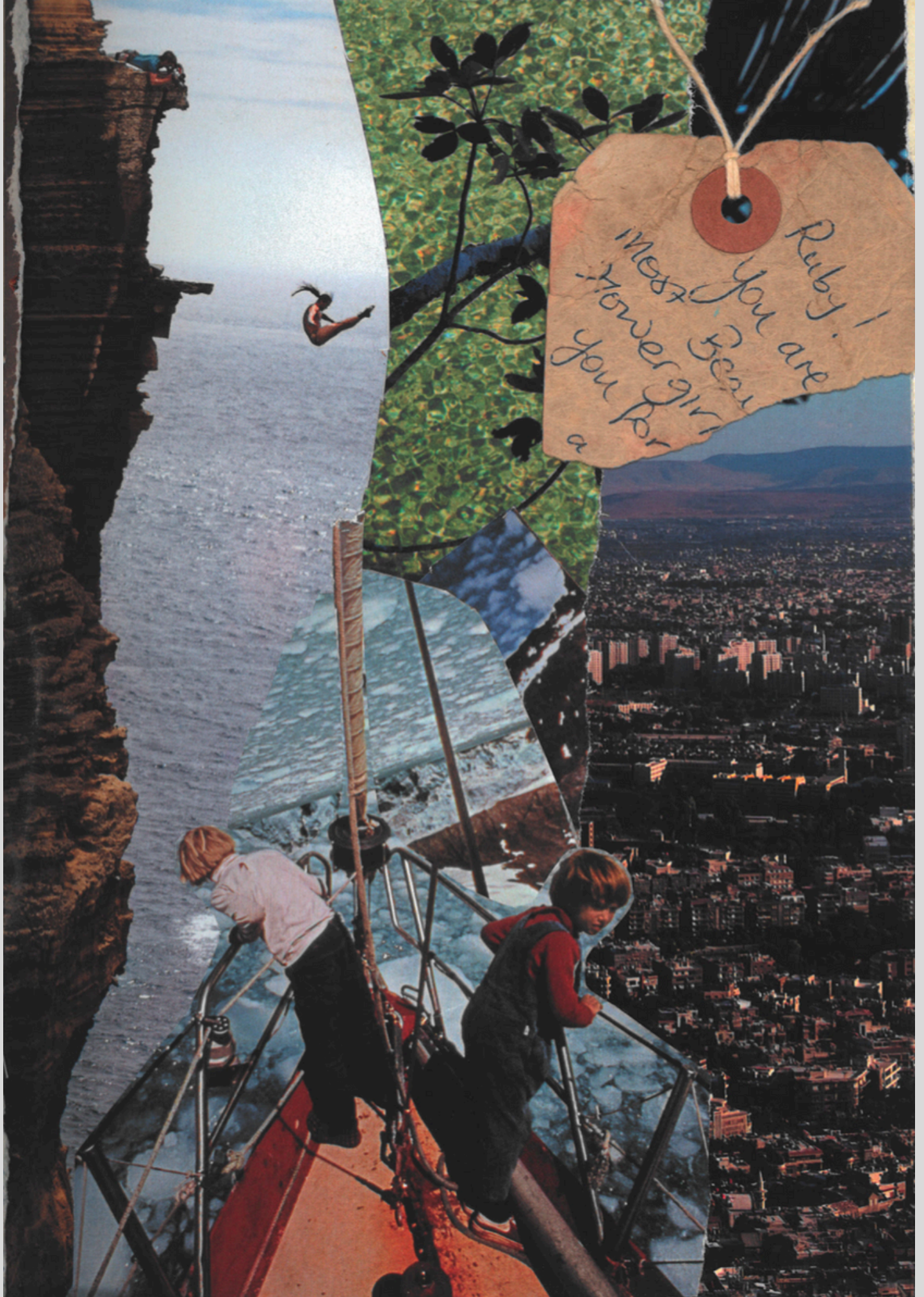
I wish the circumstances were different. I wish I had respect for my country, the one that Atatürk built from the remnants of a corrupt and deposed empire. Today, we seem to be regressing, with murders going unnoticed, as if the slain women are nothing but statistics.

If you want to learn more about the violence against women in Turkey you can visit:

<https://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/3124/we-will-stop-femicides-platform-september-2024-report>

Untitled Dutch Poem

ik leg mijn armen op de wind en ren
mijn voeten tekenen het zand en dagen het water uit
mijn zolen te kietelen
het water een bewegend zacht organisme dat zich naar mij toeschuift- of mij naar
haar
ze glimlacht als de donkere nacht haar kust, en ik aanschouw hoe de zware wolken
haar grens raken
geluiden van golfbewegingen raken water mijn trommelvlies, ik word onderdeel van
de zee
regendruppels glijden over mijn gezicht mijn shirt benen knieën broek schoenen
vangen ze op als de natuur haar cyclus rondom mijn lichaam voltooid en ik
nog steeds met mijn gespreide armen
het toelaat
mijn borst klopt warm, de koude wind scheert tegen mijn nek
de zee belooft mij eeuwigheid en ik besta in dit moment oneindig alsof niks wat ik
ooit - maar ook alles wat ik ooit heb gedaan - heeft geleid tot deze (oorverdovende)
ontmoeting
het liedje spelend in mijn muziekkamer
-dat doet het pas later maar ik probeer me te herinneren dat het dat eerder al deed-
staand op de rand van een zonsopgang
denk ik aan haar en ons en mij en hoe dit alles als een miljoenenlange draad
verbonden is en altijd al is geweest
zij staat achter mij zoals zij dat altijd deed en ze zwaait
ik huppel weer en
ik adem
uit



Soon it will be next Year

Ceara

Butterfly – An Acrostic Poem

Before revealing my true colours, I
Used to be a little thing
That crawls its way through life
That can only dream of learning how to fly
Emerging from that strong embrace
Ready, suddenly, to spread my wings
Flying freely where I choose
Learning new things everyday
You might be surprised what you can do.

Costumes?

The streets were empty. Not surprising, given the late hour and cold breeze. Above a clear starry night, the Moon full and cool amongst pin pricks of light. Down below the streets of the city are empty.

Warmth seeps out of doors, music and lights probe the darkness of the night, reaching only a few feet before being consumed. Decorations cover windows and doorways, cobwebs, pumpkins, fake spiders and orange lights. Halloween is upon us.

Some parties have just started, others have ended. The few people out and about hurry from warm insides to warm buses and back. Few linger in the cold.

Down one side street a group of party goers huddle together, fighting the biting wind and dark cobbles. They hug themselves, their coats providing a little warmth, their costumes beneath, not so much. The group is small, only four, and they stumble about, intoxicated, having left one party and looking for the next. Up above the stars twinkle and the moon shines bright and cold.

The four wander down the side street, past closed shops and parked bicycles. They pass under orange glowing street lamps. Each has a different costume. One is wrapped in bandages, an imitation of an Egyptian Mummy, though her linen covers far less than the Pharaohs. Another has a pair of ears on her head and a flannel shirt around her torso. Her nails painted like claws, a werewolf. A third sports a pointed hat, with a black dress and an old broom. Her face is covered in green paint like the classic Witch she is dressed as. The final party goer wears a black cape and pale white makeup. Her mouth filled with fake fangs like a Vampire's.

As they stumble along, the alcohol warming them up, they feel less cold and one by one stop hugging themselves for warmth. Up above the stars twinkle and the moon shines bright and cold.

The four reach the end of the street and turn left, onto another side alley, this one lined with trees and parked cars. They walk along its center, knowing that no car will appear to disperse them.

As they walk a change starts. The Mummy's bandages, wrapped to entice, begin to lengthen, connecting the bands around their top and bottom into a full torso coverage. The Werewolf's skin starts to itch, little brown hairs sprouting across it beneath their shirt, while the Witch's green face paint fades away, their skin itself growing green, spreading from their soft face to their fingers and toes. While the Vampire's fake fangs fuse with their teeth, plastic turns into cartilage. The group, blissfully unaware, seem immune to the cold, and strut along, coats hanging open, bumping into one another every now and then.

The four of them turn another corner. By now bandages cover the mummies entire body below the neck, as does furr the Werewolf's. The witch's skin is completely green, her dress and hat a dark black with web-like lace. The vampiress has turned a pale white, her lips a crimson red, fangs poking out of her mouth. Each of them feel new sensations. The Werewolf can smell every little detail of her surroundings, from the trees pollen, to the marks of local dogs territory. The Vampire can almost feel the blood coursing through her companions' veins. The witch is aware of the latent magic hanging in the air this occult night and the Mummy can see the auras of lifeforce surrounding every living being.

Yet none seem to have noticed their changes, they instead take their new forms and powers for granted. The witch mounts her broomstick, rising above her companions, while the Werewolf drops on all fours, the better to run and hunt. The Mummy limps along, drawn forward by a desire to consume, as is the Vampiress, who flexes their muscles, ready to become a mist or bat and seek out its next meal.

With a crescendo of howl, hiss, cackle and moan they set off, each in their own direction, ready to conquer and rule this Hallow's Eve.

Incorrigible scoundrels by the Sea: Whale Shark

Part four.

Trigger warnings: obscenity, threats of suicide, (gendered) violence, bullying.

Sati woke up with a gasp from her sleep paralysis, the smell of recycled air rich with cooking oil and diesel exhaust. She got up and slid her way out the surgeon's closet, through the maintenance tunnel towards the submarine's communal kitchen: at one table they were discussing the masculinity of Ur-Edair antiquity; at another they were playing video games. She found her friend Ebele, the sonar's mate, eating her oatmeal with dried strawberries. Unfortunately, she was joined by captain Hanzo, quartermaster Y An and Gadi. Sati hastened to get her lunch.

As she returned, the tables had grown silent and the captain spoke, a black man with a smooth shaven face, only four years older than her. He hadn't finished his breakfast either: oatmeal with fresh pear slices. "Eat, Sati, then you'll talk."

As Sati hastened to eat her oatmeal with the sour grapes she had bought before the voyage, the elderly quartermaster started monologuing. "I remember when I was your age, I almost killed a man in self-defense. It was this soldier from the Realm, who was directing us to this armoured van to separate us from our parents. This was when the Realm had turned my homeland into a Rhino breeding-ground. The militias from neighbouring Bootland were the only ones left- took on the lucrative side-job of evacuating our families."

"Anyways, I had gotten my hands on a grenade and I pulled the pin in the car! I showed them- they stopped and we all just ran for it when we all fled the van. I found the traffickers again and, well you all know the story of why I'd become a Free Sailor... which brings me to you."

The elderly lady took Sati's almost-empty-bowl and began eating. "As I understand it, thanks to you we have another mouth to feed."

"As for the bodies, we will owe the portmaster and our commodore a favour or two each", added the captain.

"All is well that ends well right?" Sati moved to take back the fruit she had bought with her own money.

"The company has already been rationing the communal food – we'd exempted you until now - and the boy has already gotten into several arguments with the crew. Ulagan has promised us that once you awoke, this would stop. If he gets into one more fight, we will sell him to the next trafficker in port and be done with it, while you go for a ten year stint at port Fishgreet once we return to it."

“I’ll take the prison term” she lied, “But that guy was ours according to the code-”

“But you took him in, not Gadi, and you are no true free sailor yet.”

Everyone had gone silent. The captain gave her a glare, who then said: “No one should have to be a grown man’s mom, but Ulagan knows best. As far as I am concerned, should have put you and him in the brig with the corpses and give you the boot at the next port. But since you invoked the code, it is a matter for the quartermaster. And unlike An, I’ll consider attending your Seamanship induction if you make him seaworthy in two weeks- or until the next port.”

“There is also the blood debt of course.” The quartermaster took out a written note.

”As I recall from doing your recordkeeping, you have bought one hundred and fifty gold bars since you were onboarded and hid them somewhere. I’ll check the market prices when we make port, but I think it is fair to hand our comrade Gadi half of them for his pension.”

Sati acquiesced and squeezed out of the kitchen to look for Ulagan, likely patrolling the starboard corridors. But as she cut through one of the plumbing corridors, she heard sobbing: she found Kasih hidden between two septic tanks and sitting on a stack of mail she had contracted for the company. As she quickened towards him, he lashed out.

“Don’t touch me!”

He swung at Sati with a pipe wrench until Sati kicked him. Only after she stepped back with a sore arm did he recognise her.

”You’re not- I thought you had died!”

“No one told you?” Only now she noticed the bruises on his dark skin. “What have you been doing anyway? It’s been weeks right? Can you do shifts on... septic? Electrolysis machines?”

“Ye-yes- yes. Just septic... and diesel engines too. I’m off shift.”

“Yeah well me too.” Sati wanted to speak alone with Ulagan, so she needed to keep him busy. ”You need to get back to your learning sheets. ”

“This black woman and her friends – Ebele, I think – took them from me during lunch. Told me I knew enough. ”

Sati inwardly noted the besties turned bitches that made her day harder. “We’ll go to Ulagan. But you are going to show me what you know on the way there.”

The first stop they made was the panels for the steam pipes that transported heat across the submarine, as the schedule board indicated that control panel 4 had to be checked today. “Alright, as you need to be able to replace any of us if necessary, I’ll see how you handle the temperature controls. Open the panel.” Sati reported their check to the control room and although she could see that he went about the wires and properly checked its voltages, Sati immediately felt uncomfortable at his readings of the plumbing, which she didn’t report just yet.

“Nominal. You got to say nominal when you report them. Now take the thermostat and check whether the pipes actually fill out the formula correctly- you know it right?”

“That is precisely the stuff those people took from me.”

“Suck it up, you can explode at them when we make port.”

Kasih glared at her, but then stared at her.

“Right. I’ll just write it out for you on my notepad.”

Sati let him check two more panels as she took the time to think. She repeated to herself that she had been the cause of several deaths, but it felt like something had forced her to, as she couldn’t possibly have made a well-considered decision on it. Looking at his frown, she imagined it was because she was convinced it was the right thing. Consequently, she imagined she had to correct herself, to be a better person, rather than a dumb or helpless woman living in a pressurised tube.

Looking at the led-lights again, she felt like she was reborn as someone who could perhaps make decisions of life and death.

“What is this second constant? Why isn’t it just merged with the first?”

“Oh that, we are near the pressure hull right? The first one accounts for average background temperature- you measured that right? The second- well, check the temperature behind the panel too. Not in the back, behind.”

Kasih managed to stick the thermostat through the plumbing behind the panel, but expecting a metal clank, he only heard a dull thud, like wood. “Feel it with your hands.”

So he did, and the texture was too smooth to be wood, too warm to be dead. “Bone. Just one but- bigger than my leg!”

“Bigger than you. Sit.” Sati’s first impression was that the guy likely stayed silent when his friends catcalled. She wondered whether she could then know his reaction to getting hazed.

“As you may have heard, before the advent of double-hulls and nuclear power, the admirals of old funded all manner of magic to create boats that could dive deeper. Frames with inscriptions of power, oils to absorb pressure, chanting by the crew to scare water. This used to be a diesel sub, first crewed a century ago by an all-male crew, then salvaged by an all-female crew. ”

“Then the bones...”

“Our drowned secret. Nothing on even the sales certificate. Perhaps some whalers had thought it would have been be a good idea. Few aboard really care to remember except when at the pub.” Then Sati performed an old habit of hers. She took both her hands and felt the bone. But she noticed something was different since her murders: the bone vibrated ever so slightly- heaved ever so slightly.

A radio crackled. “Control room to starboard 11. Check in, over.” The two quickly finished their check. And continued onwards.

“I want to thank you-”

“Don’t. ” And she turned to face him. “I suppose no one wanted to see your guts all over the pier. But I want you to remember that your life will never be worth that of three- no, eight people.”

“No, that is true. But that isn’t what I wanted to ask you.” Kasih chose his words carefully. ”Then what was worth it then?”

When no answer came, Kasih stopped walking to force an answer out of her. Sati glared at him and he moved on.

“Well, in any case, we- you should meet my family someday. Once we’ve made a fuckton of money of course.”

Sati pitied his presumption, but was distracted by the strange offer to meet his family.

Sati thought of what she would tell them: “I was gambling. I wasn’t about to deal in anything for anyone’s life. I didn’t like their attitude so I shot them. It didn’t prove shit to anyone- what I got for it was just your son to teach a real profession.”

And she then asked for his name. And then immediately forgot it.

Can relationships actually change?

Can relationships change? The different phases of a “friendship” the fluidity of relationships:

Phase 1: When we first met, he was shorter than I was. Not in a pathetic way, in a childish way. We were children. He was a little more than I was. Thirteen? We were in middle school. Mistaken for siblings. I looked like his little sister. Don’t know how I feel about that now. I was going through it, Sofia Coppola, Virgin Suicides in a green limelight. He didn’t understand it, how could he? Children don’t know the redness of blood. But even though he didn’t know why it hurt, he knew how to listen. And by listening, you couldn’t even hear what I would say. Not just friends. We were good friends. For that, I was grateful. It was nice to be seen. Two years in the same middle school class. It was like we could talk without talking. Reading minds. His grades were better than mine. I had a feeling he’d go to a better high school. Terrified for our friendship, I managed a way to be happy for him. Don’t know why... I loved him. As a very good friend.

Phase 2: The eighth grade. He was finally taller than me towards the end of the year. This phase of intense friendship changed in the last week of middle school; he got a girlfriend. The first time I saw them together, I remember the emptiness in my stomach. Not because he was now dating someone but because I knew I had to keep my distance. Our relationship was strictly platonic, and I felt obligated to prove it. The transformation felt necessary out of respect for the girlfriend. High school wasn’t that different. The distance did change things when we were apart. The second we were together, it was like nothing had changed. We were both adapting to transformations, the change from being a child to slowly growing up. Growing up together but apart. Seeing each other from time to time, we were exactly the same but different.

Phase 3: My 18th birthday. I got shitfaced. Told him things I don’t even remember clearly, adding that I had a thing for him. He didn’t acknowledge it. I got banished from the friendship, that’s how I refer to this period now, to annoy him. I felt terrible; it was my fault that the friendship was ruined. We drifted apart. I saw him in December, three months after my birthday. In those three months, we almost didn’t talk. We were at a bar, catching up. I hated it. The feelings I had for him, which I forced myself to bury in the time we didn’t see each other, were coming back. It was best if we didn’t see each other. And we didn’t until his birthday in February. We have this unaddressed tradition where we see each other the day before his birthday. It was nice, as nice as it could be. This was a stressful time in my life. My best friend was in the hospital, and they didn’t know what was wrong with her for certain. I remember telling him, “I just have a feeling that she’s going to die.” She did two weeks after we had this conversation.

Phrase 4: The funeral. I held onto him, crying. Even back then, I had this sense of security and safety around him, safe enough to run into his arms when I saw my dead best friend's parents crying in front of her coffin. Thankfully, it was him who was by my side the whole time, to this day, I think about it. About him being there and how different the whole experience would've been if he hadn't come. After the funeral, we didn't talk. I had buried every other feeling I had with my best friend. A long time had passed since I thought about him romantically. I had bigger heartbreaks and other people in my heart. He was busy with whatever, I don't even know... Then, I saw him at his high school graduation three months after the funeral. Didn't tell him I was going beforehand. I went to see another friend graduate, determined to only be there for her. Didn't say anything to him myself. He came up to me; the first thing he said was, "Why didn't you tell me you were coming?". I wanted to say because I thought you wouldn't care, but instead, I said, "I don't know." I didn't talk to him for months after that. We both moved abroad for university. To the same country. At the time, I was happy it wasn't the same town.

Phase 5: For some reason, I had this yearning feeling for the past, a feeling of extreme nostalgia the first winter break of university. I didn't know what he was up to at all. When we were back home, on a night out, we ran into each other. I felt like I was thirteen again. A feeling of excitement and true friendship, talking to him. Happy and bittersweet, sad our friendship had transformed into acquaintanceship. We said we'd see each other when we were back abroad. Took us months, I texted him in May. He answered, "I was just about to text you, yes, I'd love to come." He came over. We had dinner with my friends. Beforehand, I thought through what I wanted to say to him. I needed to get it out of my system, the feelings I had all those years ago. Someone had just rejected me pretty badly, someone I thought was going to be my boyfriend. I thought I didn't have anything else to lose, if he said I didn't care, I wouldn't care because my heart was already broken, at least that was what I told myself. I tried telling him in my student home kitchen, pouring the drinks, but I didn't have the courage yet. We went out to the bar and my friend always went to it. I told him, "I had a huge crush on you when we were younger." He said, "What will happen to our friendship?". I said, "We haven't been friends for a while...". And that was our first kiss...

Phase 6: The whole relationship transformed into something strange. We wouldn't kiss during the day, but we would in the night. We wouldn't talk in the week, on the weekends, he would come over, and we would. I went over to his place once. I tried to talk to him about not being the person I thought he thought I was. The conversation did not turn into something. We both didn't want to date; it was casual. I didn't want to be responsible for certain things, and I was terrified of other stuff. Nothing important happened until June. We say to each other every once in a while, as friends who kiss at night. It was certainly not a relationship, but it wasn't the friendship we used to have. We went back home to Istanbul. The day before we were to see each other, I got the news about a good friend passing away. Two dead friends in two years... I was both startled and horrified. This was the first funeral after my best friend's funeral. I told him I couldn't see him, I had to be at the funeral. He asked if he could join. A surprise. The not-so-relationship was transforming once more.

Phase 7: The funeral and the aftermath was hard, but with him by my side, I didn't feel as lonely. Our second funeral together. He was going on holiday the next day. We weren't going to see each other for a month. I didn't know what he thought about me, and I was too scared to ask him. Plus, I felt like I was initiating everything, and he was just going with it because I was his only option. I felt like I was being used in an unexplainable way, but I was the one using him.

Phase 8: When we reunited in August, the transformation was visible. Major changes happened in our relationship. I wrote him a letter, which resulted in the relationship going in a whole new direction. I thought about it for the whole month of July. I was so opposed to being in a relationship with anyone. I thought concentrating on one person was such a waste of time, a waste of youth, but I was repulsed when I kissed other people after him. If I was to have a try on the healthy relationship rodeo, I wouldn't want it to be with anyone else.

The whole transformation series from thirteen to twenty-one has been a ride. I wouldn't have it any other way. My opinion on friendships escalating to relationships has completely changed. The way I see him has alternated so much in the time I've known him. The connection we have is static; it adapts as we change. Each phase has its own value, its own distinct beauty. The transforming together has been the best part...

In my experience, relationships change as you grow. You take what life gives you and mend it into a road, the road you'll walk on someday. The foundation of our road was built in that one middle school classroom. Now, it's still as the first day, a sort of mind reading going on. He was a good friend who turned into a half-stranger who became my first boyfriend. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

From student to scholar: an RMA perspective

I suppose scholar has always sounded very fantastical to me. Like a familiar thing from fantasy fiction. Or like a distant bit of data responsible for all the papers I needed to read to be able to write the papers I needed to turn in. It remains hard to think of myself as a scholar, just because I studied other people's ideas and have earned a degree or two. I do wish I were naturally talented at reading books and writing interesting things about them; perhaps it would mean an assured income, an assured place in society. I wonder if electricians or logistics managers have that experience of settled socio-economic identity, with time left to think about who they are as family members, as citizens, as hobbyists or as believers in the divine. But regardless of what I think I am, this year I need to own up to it. Studying literature would have been a waste and a disgrace if I were to believe that my studies have been apolitical, creating papers as if my studies only amounted to training a ChatGPT.

Regarding one's scholarly identity, certain professors I spoke with at the RMA did state that, as a professional scholar, you have to develop your own voice in your papers - I would explain it almost like an author and their style, but perhaps it is more a set of interests and ambitions. To some this voice comes more easily if they can draw upon an intimate knowledge of their own cultural background, perhaps even upon personal experiences with systemic violence. I imagine those people write their papers as if they were sailing towards a distant lighthouse, articulating a societal injustice with a glance at a novel, a quick look through the sextant. People who can only critique society through primary and secondary sources are like navigators that ignore the night sky and the sight of land for a map at open sea.

In that regard my studies have been like navigator school. From where I stood as a first-year, there have been quite a few lessons between 'citing Wikipedia' and putting the finger on a particular injustice previously only articulated by a set of favoured novels. But there was a hand-out at the RMA comparative literary studies that I've lost. It is a list of values that we, as scholars of the arts, should practise. I was not so much voiceless so much as I had nothing to say when I started, so to me, truth, integrity, and ambition were new keywords during my studies. The RMA is adept at showing student how the first two values, truth and integrity, are not as self-evident as students may think. For example; it is very much possible to plagiarise by accident. The third value, however, is much more personal and open-ended. Not to mention my own addition to this trinity; I would like to elucidate upon this later, as it very much has to do with developing my own voice, and has surprisingly little to do with delusions of success, or with a career to trust in for one's livelihood.

But my conscience is running out of time. I can complain all day about wanting to just play games all day and have shelter and salary and company. But if you were to put a gun to my head, as a student of literature I would have say this: to speak 'truth' is to have done the required research; to have integrity is to be conscious of your own investments and biases towards what you write; to have ambition is to commit your work to affecting the world for the better. This is hardly evident from the thoughts I had about the papers I turned in, or even visible during the whole of my studies if I tied all my papers together: I was just another student writing for a grade. I suppose that it is, to some degree, excusable; we are all still learning during the BA and the RMA how our opinions are tied up with so much more than our interests.

And I can rephrase these values endlessly. Perhaps I want others to believe in the value of the work I have done to find the truth of something. Perhaps I want others to tell the world something it needs to hear, or perhaps; I want to be a good person. Particularly that last permutation of integrity and ambition is difficult to pin down: how does finishing my studies in any way affect my self-esteem, other than preventing it from going lower? To transform from a student into a scholar is to identify with doing research - with that rush when you put one and one together and just know where your paper is going, after which you suddenly want to hold a presentation to a peer on the spot, pacing in your room - rather than with the job market or the world stage or having a livelihood or even bringing justice into the world. I also enjoy the demanding but peaceful little steps of just taking notes: spending hours putting an intellectual network together by adding up alphabetical entries for example. I am comfortable rephrasing these values as much as I like because I am not afraid anymore of a professor correcting me. After some time, these lofty words become neither cringeworthy nor beyond me, as the work that embodies these values appears as mundane as reading one's roster or choosing courses for the year. I might have gone to the metaphorical navigator school without places to be, but perhaps I cannot help but travel for my livelihood.

And perhaps ultimately, I do want to be a scholar, to know that my life hasn't been wasted. I want to be able to read about indigenous philosophies, think about masculinity in the modern day, write about the effect of glory in literature and what it could articulate in our present day - all that, not for leisure, but purposefully, because it has now become my profession. It is a far cry from the person I was when I started: freshly rejected from art school and choosing this direction just because I did not know where else to go. But it is perhaps time to understand that I am privileged to be able to do these things, rather than forced to by circumstance and the slightest preference. Perhaps a lot of us came to be students of literature because they just liked to read books; perhaps others would have had delusions of grandeur, like me. And there are a host of other reasons.

But I think the transformation is complete when there is the habit of asserting that you are. Not like posting it on social media, but to start standing behind the things you have written, even if it was just for a grade or for a magazine like this. No more "just for a grade"; no more "just to widen my horizons". There is no need to announce to family and close friends that you are a scholar of literature, or a master of the arts as the degree will say. I have gotten into the habit of judging my work for whether it is truly proof of my commitment to doing something about injustice in society. These are perhaps rather big words for a person who has only ever written for a grade and for this magazine. Someone who's articles are perhaps never read because no-one knows me personally.

I hope that glory will find me in my thesis on this topic; to have done something worth remembering, a remembering that is not just done by me alone, but by friends and family. I suppose that in a few months or so, I will find out whether I truly stopped being a student and became a scholar. To have stopped learning because it was necessary, and to have started learning as a way to feel alive. As a way to have a voice and to have left behind a past that I don't want to identify with anymore.

Maze of Magnets

The walls are changing, constantly moving, curving, shifting. It flinches backwards as a part of it flies past its head. When the attraction of one has become too big, the other simply cannot resist, and before one knows, the walls are changed again. It changes its direction once again, a corner has appeared and it turns. By now it has lost count of how many corners appeared right before its eyes, and of how many disappeared.

It follows a gentle curve that turns sharper and sharper. It creates a path around yet another wall, turning so many degrees. The path ahead is straight, now is its chance. It fills its lungs with nauseating air, and runs as fast as it can. When it turns its head for a quick glimpse, the corner it just passed has already disappeared. But looking in front, so has the path it just traversed. It wants more.

The walls are shiny, so very shiny. They look solid until a piece flies away. The walls are a dark silver colour, radiating a coldness throughout the whole space that makes it shiver. They are like a mirror. When it looks in them there is a distorted form. When it looks at a hand it is worse, its fingers are curling and curving just like the walls surrounding it. Sometimes pieces jump from finger to finger, if fingers are still what they are.

It is moving so daintily. It doesn't want to look at the rest of the body. If it looks at the wall it perceives itself, something that feels like the self, but also doesn't. As it turns again it encounters something not seen before. Cones of liquid silver, slowly pulsating over the walls. Large, silver spikes that distort the distorted form even more than it already is. And they make it want more.

The walls look cold, but maybe there is more to them than that. They are still moving, but it seems like they are not shifting as much. The further it goes the more spikes there are, and now it cannot withhold itself any longer. Slowly it reaches out with a hand towards the wall. With the tip of a finger it touches. It wants to jerk back but doesn't. The wall is a liquid. It's attracted to the finger, but it doesn't stick.

As the finger returns the stain becomes visible. It moves so delicately, the silver liquid slowly making its way through its fingerprint. It had never realised fingerprints moved this much, do they always do that? The silver is dancing through, and it's making its way into every crevice on the finger. And as it continues moving, it makes it want more.

The walls are cold to touch, but also smoother than anything ever touched before. The tip of the finger is already covered. The further it walks the more spikes there are, the less the maze moves. Their pulses look so comfortable, a rhythm followed by all. Spikes are coming out of the spikes. It lets the nauseating air fill its lungs once more. Then it sticks a finger in the wall, slowly. It envelops the finger, creeping across it. The liquid wants to have it all. It seeps through the creaks of the uncoordinated skin.

The hand goes in deeper. The inside of the wall feels like nothing seen before. It's cool and soft and smooth and so very kind. A whole arm is in the wall. It's hugging, seeping into pores, telling it everything is always facing north. It really likes the north, but it tells that the one next to it really prefers the south. It loves the liquid next to it so much. The body is not like the liquid, it tells, but it could be, it could be so warm. Slowly the arm leaves the liquid. As it continues its way through the spikes it wants more.

The spikes are so big. There are spikes coming out of them, and out of those, and out of those. The pattern goes on and on and never stops. They are dancing a dance of pulses, pulls and pushes, attracting and repelling. And now it is time to join. It slithers forward. A leg enters and is absorbed, welcomed, warmed. But the rest is still here. They are everywhere but suddenly so far away. The leg is the wonderful silver now. Why can't it be yet? It crawls forward once more, but the body just tumbles like a toy. Everybody loves the leg, they say it's so very nice to them, they say it feels so solid. It also wants to be in them.

Then the fingers touch the spikes, a sigh escapes. It takes one last, disgusting, nauseating breath. Then it sticks its nose in the liquid, its eyes, its mouth, its ears. It slowly flows inside, the organs are filled, then the veins, the nerves. And now it is finally pulsating as well, moving with the warm rhythm. We are one. It is a spike, a fluid, a silver. It doesn't want more.

Humanities' Finest

1

Gift and strife will befall others regardless of me.
My day job is justice for folk I read about you see.
Iconoclasm:
from me epics flee.
Heroes aloft a victory composed by a poet: what about thee?

2

I can't do the math for you; I have no story for art.
Paper and penis are my privilege; I can't take part.
Unprofessional
naming a hero is.
In literature they exist for narrative purposes: platonisms.

3

Statues to Pieterszoon I can see; comfort women too.
But a glimpse can set off folk on a course of justice true.
Participation:
I read about it.
Skill and progress are fleeting sensations that can't be carved in stone, you fool.

4

One day we will all put our skill to the truest test.
When did our rights begin? When will our pedestal be set?
Metamorphosis:
Just do it is all.
From each according to their ability; to each their glory is left.

5

It is not my job to identify the good people.
Yet I study books: find use for figurative heroes.
Iconolatry:
Angels sing free
upon wings of stone. Carved of facts and fiction; free inspiring melody.

Dung Ly



"Take my cut
To bleed you
By the hand
That feeds you"

Band-Aid Revolution

Flore Spekman

Final Remarks and Credits

We hope you have enjoyed reading this Edition of Erato's Magazine.

This year we have four such Editions planned - one per Quarter - and the next one will start Production very soon, so keep an eye out for the Announcement.

Erato's is nothing without the amazing Readers and Writers, who all consume and produce the contents of each Edition. We give a speacial thanks to all who submitted works for this Edition and to Flore Spekman for her amazing work designing this Edition's Cover!

If reading this has inspired you to create your own Contributions, we will return shortly and welcome any and all Submissions!

Otherwise we hope you enjoyed, and wish you a fantabulous Autumn and Winter!

Until next time.

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THANK YOU FOR READING