

Thyssen-Bornemisza
Art Contemporary /
ARTER / TANAS



Tactics
of
Invisibility

Tactics of Invisibility
Contemporary
Artistic Positions
from Turkey

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Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln

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Appendix

Invisibly Visible
Daniela Zyman

The invisible is not the non visible. The lines and traces of the invisible are within the visible, not in a separate reality, apart from the here and now. And yet, the term refers to a removal, a repression, an elsewhere and to an operation which interferes in the “distribution of the sensible”. It suggests a displacement, evacuation, translation, by shifting the limits of reality, the realm of the known and the unseen within the common, the ordinary.

In the Notes for *The Visible and the Invisible*, the last unfinished opus by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “invisible is:

- 1) what is not actually visible, but could be (hidden or inactual aspect of the thing-hidden thing, situated “elsewhere”-“Here” and “elsewhere”)
- 2) what, relative to the visible, could nevertheless not be seen as a thing (the existentials of the visible, its dimensions, its non-figurative inner framework)
- 3) what exists only as tactile or kinesthetically, etc.
- 4) the *lekta*, the *Cogito*” (VI, 257; Notes for *The Visible and the Invisible* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

The “elsewhere-within-here, or -there”— to use the paradoxical construction/turn coined by the artist and theoretician Trinh T. Minh-ha (In: *Other than myself/my other self. Travellers’ tales: narratives of home and displacement*. By George Robertson, p 11)— resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s first definition of the invisible. It is here as it unfolds in front of the gaze, yet it actualizes an elsewhere, an inactual aspect that is hidden, not here, missing or alternatively, it reveals the withdrawal of what we think is still there, but isn’t.

We have proposed to retrace the many paths of invisibility in the context of contemporary artistic production from Turkey and its diaspora. Within the last decades, art from Turkey and artists with a Turkish (migrational) background have become highly visible in the contemporary art scene, in part because of the international success of the Istanbul Biennial. A recurring issue within these presentations became the question of identity: how to deal with the construction of otherness, of difference, in a context in which “identity” seemed to be highly determined by societal transformation in Turkey, the redrawing of notions of modernism, and antagonistic definitions of East and West within the European consciousness. The practices that seemed best suited to address such crucial issues on an artistic level were practices of visibility and representation. These seemed appropriate to engender questions about the potentiality of self-determined modes of representation, the search for a “lost” identity, or the ironic subversion of cultural clichés. By focusing on these crucial questions, artists have established critical practices that seem particularly adept at engaging with political issues.

Tactics of Invisibility is an extension of these examinations but also proposes a slightly provocative take on the regime of the visible in the contempo-

rary condition, in which visibility seems no longer to be a means of emancipation but rather the qualification of a social order of controlled and mediated conformism. The temporary suspension of the representational (or the representation of a subject) thus allows to focus on that which is invisible or has disappeared—and is possibly hidden or suppressed—or to conceptualize underlying mechanisms of repression within today's political ecologies. We suggest to think of this tradition as an aesthetic of the invisible and to question its potential as a tactic of intervening into ready-made identity constructs and the commodification of subjectivities.

Therefore, it is important to point out, that an “aesthetic of invisibility” is precisely an attempt at not visualizing, at excavating and defiantly approaching its potential to not render unseen, hollow and disappeared. When and if it consists of an attenuation or elimination of the visible, so in order to reverse or to recuperate the withdrawn from the field of perception, even if temporarily. What could possibly be said about the very different and polarizing artistic contributions to this exhibition by Nevin Aladağ, Kutluğ Ataman, Cevdet Ereğ, Ayşe Erkmen, Esra Ersen, İnci Eviner, Nilbar Güreş, Hafriyat, Ali Kazma, Ahmet Ögüt, Füsün Onur, Sarkis, Hale Tenger, Nasan Tur, and xurban_collective is that each one in its own ways bypasses the possibility of creating an object or image of representation of the withdrawn, the absent, the invisible. Alternately, the issues related to invisibilities, disappearances and camouflaging have been addressed through various analytic, conceptual and other artistic methods, which we have described the provisional headings of *Masks and Camouflaging*; *Haunting Absences and Dissolutions* within *Diasporic Cultures*. Of course, there are many other concepts and approaches which can be introduced, such as – to name a few: the ghost, the haunted, the uncanny, evacuation, obstruction, “speaking objects”, minorization, doubling, stealth, detournement, overexposure, the symptomized, etc...

While each work is examined extensively in the various essays of the catalogue, we will explore selected artworks under these aspects. As the motif of aesthetics of invisibility rests on various theoretical and semantic moves that struggle with or resist the representational politics of visibility, the exemplary positions problematize acutely such concepts and productively relocate the antagonism between visibility and invisibility despite their different focus and sensibilities.

Masking is an attempt at performing subjectivities that are different from those aspects of the private self which are publicly revealed, made seen and are being identified as the “subject”. The mask hides, or replaces one's face and expressions, but at the same times allows for the articulation of a “voice behind the mask”. “Speaking through the mask” is thus also speaking another's voice. Similarly, the camouflaging or masquerading of the body “points to two subjects, namely the one it means and the one it conceals” (Fischer-Lichte, *Semiotik* 1:108). Moreover, in the nexus of masquerade and perform-

ance, a reconceived, reconfigured body plays a transgressive role.

Nilbar Gures' work displays (in a very general sense) seemingly inappropriate or over-signified feminine behavior as a strategic masquerade, a compensatory gesture or resistant articulation in the negotiation for power. The activities performed by a group of women in *Unknown Sports* represents an assault on the sense of social order, by transgressing the boundary of the permissible and thereby revealing their ambiguity vis-a-vis the roles assigned to them. The artifice of femininity, the protagonists' costuming with colorful clothing, the enactment of gendered posings and domestic or cosmetic occupations, mobilizes the construct of their identities within their restrictive social contexts. The seemingly playful acts of gymnastics create a “space of public appearance” (Hanna Arendt), rather than simply displaying bodies (privately) rehearsing their abilities. The feminine “strategic enactment” (Arendt) is both a masquerade of social identity and an exploration of the tactics of (in)visibility in public space.

The “modulations of identity” which are associated with the stabilizing effects of a mask, can have a reverse effect, when the mask or the costume is connoted by difference and otherness. In Esra Ersen's “I am Turkish, I am Honest, I am Diligent...” the wearing of Turkish school uniforms by non-Turkish children (in Germany, Austria, Korea, or in other places) plays with such processes of transferral. The uniforms emphasize and indeed exhume, in their own ambiguity, a culture's ambiguities about itself and the other. This double ambiguity comes into effect in Ersen's workshop with schoolchildren, re-enacted in several different contexts. As the title derives from an oath taken at Turkish schools at regular intervals, the work expresses the artist's own ambiguity with a patriotic practice and indoctrination imposed onto children in Turkey. In all public and some private schools, children are asked once a week, some even daily, to gather in the school's courtyard to participate in an act of national devotion: singing the national anthem, rising the flag, and reciting the pledge which includes a declaration of faith to the nation and to Turkishness are elements of this ritual (or nationalist) act.

Uniform policies are widely put into practice in Turkey. As such dress codes seem antiquated and repressive in other contexts, the wearing of school costumes represents a unsettling challenge to children (age 7 to 10) brought up with the rights as to personal dress and appearance. In order to record the “effects” on the participants', they were asked to keep a diary during that time. Their personal notes and statements – printed unto the uniforms in the installation - reflect feelings of anxiety and bewilderment, but also the steady process of acceptance and identification. Being in an another's “skin” can lead to a differentiated examination of stereotypes and negotiations with a foreign habitus.

The splitting of the sense of “reality” into an actualized and a repressed or compensated subjectivity may also result from various altered states of consciousness, as described in mystical or spiritualist reports, which divulge

the absence of a presence or assertively establish the existence of ghosts and the undead. The ghostly or haunted figure destabilizes fixed relationships between real and unreal, present and absent and can enact a whole vocabulary of possible significations. Ghosts endlessly evade and defer meaning, they are simultaneously visible and invisible (leaving behind “traces”); they exist through a chain of substitutions and mediations and they point, by virtue of their own insubstantiality, to the constructed nature of existence.

In Kutlug Ataman’s work, language and long streams of talk, narrated by the protagonists around which his video installations are developed form the body of his extensive artistic oeuvre. In *Twelve*, six individuals speak of their lives and recount the stories of their rebirth, previous incarnations and lives, the relationship to their past and current relatives, the circumstances of their violent deaths and their beliefs in God and religion. They belong to the Shiite Arab community, which embraces the tradition of reincarnation. “Their belief is that a single life is not sufficient for a soul to grow, hence a soul has to come back to life repeatedly. When someone dies, his or her soul will pass to a newborn in a few years. Death never occurs.” (Ataman)

In some sense, one is not confronted with a series of “confessions”, but rather with “fabulations”, to use the terminology developed by Gilles Deleuze to describe the creation of lasting and persisting “legends” in the sense of self-conscious articulations of language that are presented either as the expression of a minority, or as the expression of a certain distance which is created with respect to the language of the majority. What is presented in *Twelve* is neither a comprehensive “history” nor a unifying linear form, as is usually practiced in film and documentary. Rather, the individual stories form fragments, shards, singular readings of individual pasts, also compulsive and repetitive revisitations of the complex webs of relationships within multi-layered family and social structures but at the same time they reflect their minoritarian position with Islam and their contested position vis a vis the “authentic” faith. The protagonists present “realities that are inherently about their own refabrication. It is in a way like documenting a performance, but in this case the performance is claimed to be true life and not narrative.” (Ataman)

The distant echoes of an unnamed and unidentified ghost reappear in Ayse Erkmen’s new work developed for T-B A21. While the work takes the shape of a 9-channel sound installation, it weaves together threads of many repressed and imaginary narratives extracted from the genius loci. Drawing on various fictionalized and historic reports on the lives of various former occupants of Palais Erdödy (the current home of T-B A21), *Ghost* is informed by the presences of Countess Anna Maria Erdödy, her encounters and love affair to Ludwig van Beethoven and the tragic fate of her daughter Mimi. While it is a historical fact that Beethoven has dedicated various musical compositions to Countess Erdödy, including the musical new year’s greeting “Glück, Glück zum Neuen Jahr” (WoO 176), other facts remain speculative. The infamous letters to Immortal Beloved or the identity of the portrait found in

Beethoven’s private belongings might or might not be addressed to or represent the Countess. The sketchy biographic information on Anna Maria Erdödy and her daughter portrait the dramatic fate of women at the beginning of the 19th century struggling for self-empowerment, artistic patronage and social status beyond marital rank leading to opium and substances abuse, episodes of confinement (convent), police investigation related to the mysterious death of Anna Maria’s son, the loss of guardianship over her daughter, nervous disorder and other similarly tragic developments. The fact that “it was the music-loving countess who encouraged noble Viennese patrons to provide financial means for Beethoven, enabling him to choose Vienna as his adopted city”, as well as that two of her former properties, the Erdödy palace in Budapest (today the Music Institute of the Hungarian Academy) and her country residence in Alt-Jedlesee (Beethoven Memorial, today in Floridsdorf, Vienna) both house music institutions point to the exceptional role the countess must have played in artistic circles of her time.

Erkmen’s audio-installation is as much an homage to these infelicitous personalities as it is a form of disclosing, unearthing of meanings and relationships; an archaeology of a site and the resurrection of traces secured and excavated from a specific situation. The found context is being appropriated, as is the musical fragment which she has chosen for diffusion in the 9-channel speaker system. They represent an intellectual public domain - referring to ideas, information and works that are “publicly available” - intangible to private ownership and/or which are available for use by the general public.

Directing the gaze at that which is no longer visible, revealing the withdrawal of a referent which has been mutated, vandalized, publicly disfigured and resurrecting performatively aspects of an invisibility are the main concerns of Hafriyat’s newly developed work *A Seventh Man*. While the project consists of an ostensible and contested (as unauthorized and unlawful) removal of an artwork from the public sphere, this deletion of a visual sign represents the revelation of its history and the recording of the many facets that have formed and informed this history. The statue of the Worker, created 1973 by the Turkish sculptor Muzaffer Ertoran has suffered from immediate mutilations after its first erection as it has triggered – through its connotated iconography of a worker holding a sledgehammer - adversary feelings from the various forces within Turkey’s radical political landscape. The civil attacks against the work is “striking evidence of a paradoxical collaboration between the centralist mentality, which supposedly intends to transform society, and local and environmental elements (through indifference on one part and vandalism on the other).” (Murat Akagündüz)

But the statue is a referent of and witness to another, much larger historic shift. It holds the memory / as in memorial / of the *Seventh Man*, a term coined by John Berger and Jean Mohr in 1973 to describe the migrant workers which have been absorbed by the work force of north-western Europe. By 1973, the first wave of immigration has seen nearly 1.5 million Turks, mostly

from rural areas, transferred to the West. The year 1973 also marked a turning-point in the guest-worker policies: A recruitment ban was put into force because of the recession and the return of migrant workers to their country of origin was stimulated by financial means. Nearly 400.000 works returned to their homes, whereas others took advantage of family reunification policies to join their relatives outside Turkey.

This massive shift and movement of people and the interplay between international migration and the social, economic, cultural and family dynamics of migrants is inscribed into the Worker's site in Istanbul's Tophane neighborhood. Departing from Tophane, a port where people and goods have been transported for centuries, or been gathering in front of its National Employment Agency, the neighborhood has a strong symbolic history for Turkish men and women and their (legalized or illegal) chronicles of relocation and reinstitution as Europe's guest workers. It is a site of transit, separation and reinvention, which holds the imaginary of a new and better future but also the disappointments of and rejections from this anticipated global itinerary.

The international migrational shifts, and the ensuing and ongoing ethnic, religious and cultural remodelling of Europe call for a reconsideration of the relations between subjects, their rites and social articulations and places/sites traditionally defined as segregated geographies. The effects of the redistribution of peoples, cultures, tradition and religions are inscribed into the diasporic social spaces produced and created for gathering, worship, communal experiences and many other functions. The research conducted by Nasan Tur in the 9-channel video work "Invisible" and xurban_collective's Evacuation #1: The Sacred Evacuation both examine a specific spatial typology, the mescid, the small prayer rooms set up informally in all types of settings: in office buildings, shopping malls, apartment houses, basements or storage spaces. Tur records the invisible entrances and inconspicuous facades of a number of prayer rooms and cultural institutions in Germany. What they have in common seen within the urban environment is their "invisibility" – the lack of signs, posts, writings and other forms of definitory signage which signals their presence and/or function. These have been removed from the public eye, possibly in an attempt to "move under the surface", to dissipate any sense of difference and to deter any public controversy which might arise as to their presence. In this sense, one can argue that they have become "diasporic spaces", embodying or spatializing the paradoxes of visibility attested to the notion of diaspora.

"The notion of diaspora and visual culture embodies this paradox. A diaspora cannot be seen in any traditional sense and it certainly cannot be represented from the viewpoint of one-point perspective. The nation, by contrast, has long been central to Western visual culture", writes Nicholas Mirzoeff.

By inhabiting standardized and indeterminate spaces within the urban landscape, the mescids have been able to bypass the public discussions and deeply xenophobic outrage targeted at the symbolic spaces of the mosques

(and their offensive minarets). Offering room for spontaneous and seemingly informal appropriation for uses that would otherwise have trouble finding a place in public spaces subjected increasingly to collective scrutiny, the mescids have appropriated spatial models in which they resemble more karate or martial arts centers, internet parlors, bank offices or office spaces rather than religious prayer rooms. The evacuation which is evident in their anonymous exteriors has been researched systematically by xurban_collective with regards to their internal organization and make-up: "These spaces are incomplete and function as a form of evacuation of some of their culturally recognizable artifacts and objects, revealing the 'bare space,' its potential and limitations for democratic participation."

In fact, the prayer rooms of the global city resemble one another like franchised food outlets. They use similar, cheaply produced and globally distributed religious artefacts and decorations. Most of the essential requisites associated with a place for prayer have been simulated through makeshift accessories. The call to prayer, for example, can only be read on digital clocks, the orientation towards Mecca is indicated by the pattern of the carpeting rather than the room's overall orientation, the prayers are not lead by an Imam but performed individually. In fact, they are hybrid spaces that serve social and religious functions equally. It takes no effort to "remove" these accessories, to white-out the religious functions in order to lay bare the generic and formatted space constituting the setting. By visually performing these acts of evacuation and semiotic discharge, xurban_collective directs the attention to the processes of shifting of authority from the centers (of citizenship and democratic representation) to the dislocated, diasporic and evacuated sites, where new identities are constantly being formed and negotiated.

The discussion of these exemplary positions reveal the magnitude and productive potential of the contextual framework of Tactics of Invisibility. The many metaphors used to describe this shifting space between what is and what-is-not (or not-yet or no-longer) reveal the definitory uncertainty of such an endeavor. What seems like a small decalage, can possibly create a space of indeterminacy that calls for much larger reconsiderations. It can possibly offer a form of inquiry that maps moments of discursive rupture and discontinuity, provides a model that can be extended to the study of contemporary place-based and identity-based discourses and cultures.

'Ghosts', in Visual Culture, call up a more complex understanding of seeing and visibility. Haunting is the condition of the impossibility of the opposition of presence and absence. The dialectics of visibility and invisibility in the act of haunting involve a constant negotiation between what we can see and what we cannot. (Nermin Saybasili)

(all quotes without refernces refer to article in the catalog)

Connections Zone: Subjects in Space . . .

GÜLSEN BAL

AND is of course diversity, multiplicity, the destruction of identities. . . .
But diversity and multiplicity are nothing to do with aesthetic wholes . . . or
dialectical schemas. . . . When Godard says everything has two parts . . . he's
not saying it's one or the other, or that one becomes the other, becomes two.
Because multiplicity is never in the terms, however many, nor in all the terms
together, the whole. Multiplicity is precisely in the "and," which is different in
nature from elementary components and collections of them.

—GILLES DELEUZE¹

Well . . . In the articulation of subject positions and difference, how can one
formulate the creative strategies and the creative moment of thinking differ-
ently? This question invites us to engage with existing accounts of the discurs-
ive realm of representation, which is marked with "tactics of invisibility" at
the points of departure.

A subject open to controversy arises here: how can we define the basic ele-
ments of "situational representation" in artistic practice? Relative to the crea-
tive process in this paradigm, how is it possible to characterize the "identity-
form"² in the word *representation*? In this respect, the Deleuzian encounter
does attempt to propagate temporal relationships and reinforces the hegem-
onic relation of subject/object characteristics.

I believe this brings us to the emergence of what describes and traces ar-
tistic practice and incorporates another practice. This engagement entails
addressing the processual intensities that reveal its transformative capacities
mediated by relational models, "which leads to a recreation and a reinvention
of the subject itself"³ beyond representational boundaries. This sets up new
kinds of creative connections while introducing an experimental dynamic in
which the current relational powers are to be problematized.

Before we begin, it is necessary to underline the importance of the bare cir-
cumstances of the internal political situation in Turkey as this would provide
an overarching entry to a discussion outside dialectical mediation. A hidden
but fundamental relationship between today's Turkey and the changes in its
social structure as a result of the swift transformation of marginalized and
excluded elements needs to be addressed in order to study this particular ge-
ography. And here we can also observe what still is "missing," which helps us
to understand what the "yet-to-come" of the present means.

In this stance, the critical moments of a plurality of questions open up to
the question of the political within creative practice. But there also exists a
secondary dissemination. It differentiates itself in relation to other practices,
leaving the door open for attempts to rearticulate generative forces.

What then emerges from the new outlines of the possible, mediated through national identity and nationalist ideology, bearing the weight of historical references to transcultural practices and local elements? What governs these temporary mediation systems beyond their representational boundaries? How is all this manifested within the realm of creative practice and brought into the spaces of art?

I would say that we have to explore all modes of representation, as well as all paths of production in which the possible is engendered. Also, from there, we must engage in rethinking, which reveals a more elementary truth of a world marked out by culturally specific realities.

The Life of the Multitude: Micropolitical Force of Change Un-/Fixing the Subject

So we are proposing to decentre the question of the subject onto the question of subjectivity. Traditionally, the subject was conceived as the ultimate essence of individuation, as a pure, empty, prereflexive apprehension of the world, a nucleus of sensibility, of expressivity—the unifier of states of consciousness.

With subjectivity we place the emphasis instead on the founding instance of intentionality. This involves taking the relation between subject and object by the middle and foregrounding the expressive instance.

—FÉLIX GUATTARI⁴

It is hard to explore how the possibilities of relations between critical engagement and active politics can be relevant to creative practice today; in a way this space defines a search for present and future production. Such connections nevertheless appear to address the flip side of their impossibility, which forces creative practice to go beyond itself into something else. The focus of attention here is consequently to explore what happens when practice transcends its own context through the politics of production.

This not only unfolds the “yesterday-today” transformation but also formulates the special attributes of the complex relational powers that underpin the basic structure of representation. This goes with a new conjunction of transitions in a closely associated context: “being-in-the-world” in between a particular relationship of the subject to the “other.”

The representation and self-representation that allow the formation of new forms of articulation embrace the “other” as the structure of a possible world, sustaining the reality of the self. Its vital sign is difference carried forward to interweave heterogeneous aspects of the experience of living across difference, serving to make symbolic differences visible. This reading resonates: “it is never the other who is a double in the doubling process; it is a self that lives me as the double of the other.”⁵

Consequently the consideration of what is possible takes the form of un-/differentiated “other.” This is a condition of the foundation of objects, and

“perceptual laws affecting the constitution of objects (form-background, etc.), the temporal determination of the subject, and the successive development of worlds, seemed to us to depend on the possible as the structure-Other.”⁶

What remains contentious is the extent to which the difference of *x* from itself rather than the difference between *x* and *y* is conceived. The impact of this on practice is far-reaching since any form of existence takes the form of temporary materializations visible in the identification of “there is no other of the other”; the “other” functions only by the exclusion of a unique “object.” In *Tarrying with the Negative*, Slavoj Žižek suggests that this unique aspect of the “object” is a system and a product, which reinforces the transitory space and shift that determine the routes taken *per se*.

According to Zeigam Azizov: “Because of the collision of subject and object, any form of identifying becomes as an affirmation, becoming complicit. One becomes an agent of this kind of collision and the work registers the formation of new subjectivities expressed in language, place and enunciation. The role of an artist is a very complex activity of carefully considering ‘protocols of power’ and mapping of meaningful strata, since the ‘other’ and/or what one is looking for is hidden within these strata of formation.”⁷

If so, is it still possible to invoke a strategy that takes account of the situations in which the subject has no place? And in addition, what appears to happen within an “I-other” disparity of divergent lines of encounter? Finally, what is still missing in translocal and transnational locations within cultural geography?

Yet what the “other” reveals is still intriguing. After all, in these transformative connections, what is the mechanism for critical engagement of artistic production leading to a multitude of rhizomatically self-transformative pluralistic approaches?

On the Threshold of the Invisible and Intertwining Politics: Places of Transition

Art is any human activity that aims at producing improbable situations, and it is the more artful (artistic) the less probable the situation that it produces.

—VILÉM FLUSSER⁸

But how do we define the political or social dimension of art within this context? What are the parameters since all art and all cultural production is political? Let’s begin with an intricate constituent element in the discourse as one of the emergent forms through which this quest is revealed in the video installation *Twelve* by Kutluğ Ataman.

It appears that Ataman’s work in general creates a space that establishes subjectivity as a mode of production and identifies the heterogeneous transcendental conditions in their manifold modalities. Almost all his works exemplify the initial process of subtraction that is involved in “becoming” and

the space of transition. What comes from this transitional existence is both familiar and completely strange, while this enables the local, historical, and political position to be taken into consideration within a specific relation to an unknown genealogy.

Twelve was filmed in southeastern Turkey and features interviews with six people who believe that they have been reincarnated. It was shot near the border with Syria, in an Arab community that believes that everyone is reborn but that only those who have suffered violent or untimely deaths remember their past lives.

The subject of *Twelve* constitutes a geographical and imaginative crossroads constructed at the border of particular codes and certain meanings through a singular act with very specific types of people, people who often stand out, outside the norm. Each entry also articulates somehow the repressive power of stereotypes. This helps to create a space where cultural objects are produced.

Perhaps in relation to open monolithic entities, another question needs to be raised. The question we have to ask is whether everything is merely a discursive construction. The orientation of this argument manifests itself in “the practices of representation as implicate . . . the position of enunciation.”⁹ It is this hybridity that initiates a process of political thinking that is aware of its own strategy and contingency. What we witness here, however, is “the practices of representation,” constituted in all their heterogeneity or diversity.

This identifies a specific conjunction of social forces with local conditions, which is reproduced within a simultaneous relationship with the in-visible. But what about the inside-outside flux?

In the context of this argument Ataman’s artistic exploration seems to be related to a new conjunction of transition consisting of its potential ubiquity through the multiple systems echoed in “I am an Other.” This is what forms the mechanism of aesthetic judgment as thought in which the possible is engendered. But then, as Christian Kravagna has asked, “to what extent is ‘social action’ political, to what extent does a social interest take the place of the political?”¹⁰ This also brings up a question, a question that I quite often ask: what are the elements that traverse art and its politic?

Different Spaces: A Space of Representation and a Space of Difference . . .

What is at stake here is to recognize the potential, not necessarily the possible, and the possibilities of their transformative potential, and that is “a challenge to the world to exist”¹¹ or to form new ways of living and new modes of being outside those determined mechanisms, linked to a space in which the differences partake in the critique of their conditions of possibility.

Representational schemas cannot lead to individualizing difference, however; rather they differentiate because of some aspect of their intensity and establish the field of individuation, unfolding intensities to enable the constitution of individual differences. The basis of individuation results neither in an “I” nor a “self”¹² and ruptures specific moments of implication within a process in which

the “I” and the “self” transgress each other. The “I” is a form of identity and the “self” a site within “a continuity of resemblances.” Individuation disrupts both the matter of the “self” and the form of the “I” into rhizomatic realizations.¹³

The dynamics of individuation as the basis for antirepresentational closure necessitate further elaboration. In such discourse this essentialized “difference” is given an identity to a constitutive absence beyond dialectical mediation, a point at which it loses the generative force that is given in the concept of productive negation. Here this shift may be characterized within a “structure of symbolic representation.”¹⁴

This approach would be to call for affirmative kinds of subjectivity in which the system forms difference.¹⁵ As Homi Bhabha has stated, there are “multiplicities of subject-positions, endless supplies of subversive ‘specificities,’ ‘localities,’ ‘territories.’ . . . It is the problem of the not-one, the minus in the origin and repetition of cultural signs.”¹⁶

The experience of difference, of predication, that is necessary for the formation of so-called subjectivity is thus drawn into the subject. This takes residual traces of self-identity from the monadic subject, which is always in the process of being produced as a creative force.¹⁷ In combination with existing values beyond negation, this unfolds into a matrix of contingent connections. This is where the politics of recognition provide for the model of dialogical subjectivity to come into existence.

Rethinking points of relation in reference to subject positions and difference, Esra Ersen’s practice lies in a politically critical position while taking a deeper look at other geographies in a related context: “being-in-the-world.” That is revealed in the identity-form, while the work questions how ideological models such as national identity, power, and identification may be transferred. This is what indicates her engagement with social or personal specificities that define the existential ambiguity of the emergence of various local conjunctures.

In the politically challenging installation *Ich bin Türke, bin ehrlich, bin fleißig . . .* (I Am Turkish, I Am Honest, I Am Diligent . . .), Ersen points out what makes symbolic differences visible within a temporary mediation system. The title is borrowed from song that is obligatory in Turkish schools, which shapes the raw power of nation-state ideology behind a precarious political agenda.

In this work Ersen asked a group of Austrian children to wear the traditional Turkish school uniform for a week and then documented their daily impressions. The impact of this was far-reaching since any form of existence takes the form of temporary materializations that serve to make symbolic differences and “demographic politics” visible.

A subject open to controversy arises here: how is it possible today to identify representation that renders the possible “identity-form”? Moreover, “subjectivity, even in its dispersed, ‘multitudinous’ guise, is both deterritorialising and reterritorialising at once, always capable of reproducing the flux of codified desire inherent to contemporary capitalism as much as of undermining or subverting these coded flows in favour of an irruption of the New.”¹⁸

Here lies the ambiguity of the politics of production in which the attributes are a matter of the production of culture's space/place. This is manifested in the "yet-to-come" within the paradigm of "situational representation" and representational politics. This formulation, however, designates their unyielding characteristic, which bears an intriguing proposition.

In mapping out issues in reference to "situational representation" and the possibilities of their "transformative potential," Nilbar Güreş deconstructs ontological priority in that cultural engagement is produced performatively. In Güreş's performance *Unknown Sports*, the confrontation forces one to generate the "production of the subject," in which process and becoming, intervention and creativity are privileged. Yet these issues favor analyzing specific situations through a wide range of their cross-references and resonances, mostly derived from her home country, Turkey. What we witness is a new entry that brings us face to face with the constructs of gender-specific positioning while the issues of intrinsic normalization become unanswerable.

The series of collages also titled *Unknown Sports* provides alternatives to conventional ideas against the backdrop of multilayered hierarchical structures. This is determined by internal rather than external differentiation, a process of internal differentiation in which "being differs with itself immediately, internally. It does not look outside itself for an other or a force of mediation because its difference rises from its very core."¹⁹

Life in/on the Moments of Encounters

Another plateau of engagement is initiated out of a matrix of art and culture at the margin of the art system and suddenly transposed to the center of the system with a power of emergence. In underlining the difficulty of thinking beyond representational constructs, Simon O'Sullivan discusses art as a series of "encounters" that are understood as a "meeting, or collision, between two fields of force, transitory but ultimately transformative. Both of these encounters are precisely moments of production."²⁰ The argument is made for mapping out how fields of critical inquiry are interrelated and can be used to generate forms of criticism.

The elements of encounter are therefore significant, as they are a merging of "movements, ideas, events, entities,"²¹ seeking to undermine the basic structure of the representation of an object by introducing a particular configuration of the relationship of the subject to the "other."

According to xurban_collective, their *Evacuation* series, begun in 2010, investigates "the idea of global social spaces as they relate to the question of distributed localization." The artists' exploration—as in, for example, *Evacuation #1: The Sacred Evacuation*—is concerned with the emergence of a tactical/strategic position. The intention is to explicitly deploy processes to evoke events, capturing the diverse forms of location in order to examine their constitutive components. This engagement entails addressing the proc-

essual intensities, which reveal their transformative capacities as a space for possibilities mediated by relational models, "which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself"²² through uneasy relations and interdependencies. Yet what might such an approach mean?

Their approach presupposes an encounter and events that engage the critical, suggesting alternatives to the new global homogeneity. It focuses attention on problems that concern the local territories and tries to explore different cultural characteristics by means of employing temporary mediation systems. What it seems is happening here, however, is that the moments of sociability and object-producing sociability traverse art and its politics, creating responses within qualitative multiplicities or relational entities in which another plateau of engagement appears: "art is the production of different/ciation."²³

1. Gilles Deleuze, "Three Questions on *Six Times Two*," in *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 44.

2. According to Deleuze: "Representation allows the world of difference to escape . . . infinite representation is inseparable from a law which renders it possible: the form of the concept as an identity-form, which constitutes sometimes, the in-itself of representation (A is A), sometimes the for-itself of representation (I=I). The prefix 're-' in the word representation signifies this conceptual form of the identical which subordinates differences" (*Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], 79).

3. Gilles Deleuze, "Mediators," in *Negotiations*, 131.

4. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 22.

5. Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 98–99.

6. Christian Kravagna, "Working on the Community: Models of Participatory Practice," (1998), http://www.republicart.net/disc/aap/kravagna01_en.htm.

7. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 318.

8. Zeigam Azizov, "Gülen Bal: Struggling with the Other or 'Not I,'" *Worldwide Review*, March 20, 2006, http://worldwidereview.com/archive2/_archive06/00001eaf.htm.

9. Vilém Flusser, "Habit: The True Aesthetic Criterion," in *Writings*, ed. Andreas Ströhl, trans. Erik Eisel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 52.

10. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," in *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye B. Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), 230.

11. Jean Baudrillard, in "Forget Baudrillard: Interview with Sylvère Lotringer," in *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. Mike Gane (London: Routledge, 1993), 122.

12. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 257.

13. *Ibid.*, 257–58.

14. *Ibid.*, 36.

15. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; London: Routledge, 2001), 34.

16. *Ibid.*, 245.

17. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 18.

18. *Ibid.*, 18.

19. *Ibid.*, 16.

20. Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond Representation* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 21.

21. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 13.

22. Deleuze, "Mediators," 13.

23. Hüseyin B. Alptekin and Vasfi Kortun, "Conversation: Yürügeden Çıkan: Bir Başka Beriki" (1991), <http://resmigorus.blogspot.com> (November 29, 2008).

Politics with a Mask: The 'end', the 'origins',
and the possibilities of politics

MELTEM AHISKA

There are a few things that'll move people to pity, a few, but the trouble is, when they've been used several times, they no longer work. Human beings have the horrid capacity of being able to make themselves heartless at will. So it happens, for instance, that a man who sees another man on the street corner with only a stump for an arm will be so shocked the first time that he'll give him sixpence. But the second time, it'll be only a threepenny bit. And if he sees him a third time, he'll hand him over cold-bloodedly to the police.

BERTOLT BRECHT, *The Threepenny Opera*

On my wall hangs a Japanese carving
The mask of an evil demon, decorated with gold lacquer
I observe --
The swollen veins of the forehead, indicating
What a strain it is to be evil
BERTOLT BRECHT

We live in an age of perpetual announcements of the 'end'. Not only conservative theories such as those that talk about the 'end of ideology' or the 'end of history', but also many critical theories engage with 'the end' of 'the world as we know it'. Or as Badiou would say, there is not even a 'world' today:

Yes, today there is no world, there is nothing but a group of singular disconnected situations. There is no world simply because the majority of the planet's inhabitants today do not receive even the gift of a name, of a simple name. When there was class society, proletarian parties (or those presumed to be such), the USSR, the national wars of liberation, etc., no matter which peasant in no matter in what region – just as no matter which worker in no matter what town – could receive a political name. That is not to say that their material situation was better, certainly not, nor that that world was excellent. But symbolic positions existed, and that world was a world. Today, outside of the grand and petty bourgeoisie of the imperial cities, who proclaim themselves to be 'civilization', you have nothing apart from the anonymous and excluded. 'Excluded' is the sole name for those who have no name, just as 'market' is the name of a world which is not a world. In terms of the real, outside of the unremitting undertakings of those who keep thought alive, including political thinking, within a few singular situations, you have nothing apart from the American Army.²

Are we really at 'the end' of 'the world'? If the end has come, surely it has come not with a bang but a whimper—despite all wars and catastrophes—

since we are far from fully conceiving neither the antecedents nor the aftermath with regard to 'the end'. As Bülent Diken argues referring to Bauman, "many people no longer feel that they have control over social development—they experience social change as something that 'happens to' them."³

The sudden upheavals and downfalls in collective fortunes today acquire an eerie likeness to natural catastrophes, though even this comparison looks increasingly like an understatement: as it happens, we have these days better means to anticipate the imminent earthquake or approaching hurricane than to predict the next stock-exchange crash...⁴

It seems that the 'end' is not only about the termination of a certain past, but at the same time the death of the future. If I may join in the current tendency to depict the 'end', I suggest that what is most alarming today is the inability to imagine the present. Modernity has often been associated with an interest to understand the difference, or in other words the change that defines the present, but today the difference of 'our' present is the accelerated and inflated rate of consecutive changes that cancel their unique difference. Together with innumerable anxieties about the future, there exists a strong indifference to changes or even to 'ends' as their number and labels proliferate; and what remains, as sediment, is mostly a blind faith in repetition and sameness. So even the 'ends' do not sound like real ends, akin to Simone Signoret's famous ironic phrase "nostalgia isn't what it used to be". In this situation, among many things concerning the state of humanity and the world, *politics* is significantly at stake.

The 'end' may not be something very new, though. A few decades ago, Hannah Arendt was already talking about a radical loss of the world, a 'worldlessness'. When she wrote about the 'dark times' with reference to Brecht's lines⁵, she was not only pointing to the terrors and horrors of 'our times', but more than that, to a particular situation within which the capacity to understand and act has been mutilated. It is in these times of confusion that "the mind of man wanders in obscurity". The erasure of the world has been simultaneously the erasure of politics. For Arendt, politics is a space of appearances that belongs to the 'world' as a man-made place and oriented to the freedom of human beings. The fatal problem with 'our times' has been the reduction of this world to naturalized needs and the dictates of life, or rather, biological life. The quest for freedom has been hijacked by the desire for survival. Furthermore, the way Brecht had written about the 'dark times' ("Truly, I live in dark times!") introduces a painful dilemma: the poet speaks of a time in which it is hard, if not impossible, to reconcile goodness and wisdom. What seems to be a moderate and good life is "a sign of guilty indifference to horror and suffering, for 'a smooth forehead suggests insensitivity', while on the other hand the path of moral action makes the actor coarse and brutal himself. ('Anger, even against injustice, makes the voice hoarse')"⁶. Therefore, says

David Luban in explaining Brecht's dilemma, "disorder, hunger, uprising, massacre—all come between us and the life we would wish to lead, pushing us steadily away from it".

At this point, I find it necessary to problematize the concept of 'we' that figures in the above paragraphs, in order to repose the question about the paralyzing dilemmas of politics today. If, as Badiou says, "there is no world simply because the majority of the planet's inhabitants today do not receive even the gift of a name, of a simple name"⁸ then we cannot just assume a natural 'we'. The erosion of politics has to be connected to how differences have been first historically (economically, socially and politically) made, and then bulldozed in the representation of 'us'. For a better understanding of this, it is worthwhile revisiting how 'society', particularly national society has been defined and conceived as being *organic*. Arendt's approach is extremely helpful for showing the organic presuppositions of modern national society. In her illuminating work on revolution, Arendt discusses how the men of the French Revolution referred to a *one and indivisible common will* rather than consent, and how they appealed to *heart* and *good faith* rather than the intersubjective procedures of reason. They surrendered the man-made laws to the 'natural' laws that the 'masses' were both driven by and had to obey for life. She depicts the *intimacy* that is constructed within the *organic* society (as opposed to artificial politics) that emphasized unmasking the hidden motives of people. That had been the very ground of terror according to her. "It was always a question of uncovering what had been hidden, of unmasking the disguises, of exposing duplicity and mendacity... The eighteenth-century terror was still enacted in good faith, and if it became boundless it did so only because the hunt for hypocrites is boundless by nature"⁹. 'Being true to your self' became the ideal of the new society. Lionel Trilling also discusses how 'sincerity', which was once a term that defined the quality of objects, became a valued ethical label of human beings in modern society.¹⁰ Therefore, in modern society, the conflicts of the soul were carried unto the public, and because they were insoluble, says Arendt, they became murderous. Similarly the much glorified *compassion* for others on the basis of sincerity resulted in 'wickedness beyond vice', a theme that Brecht had dwelled on in his creative work as we have seen above. "Because compassion abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters, the whole realm of human affairs, are located, it remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence."¹¹

The core political question that lies at the heart of the organic conception of society, as discussed by Arendt, is the notion of *common enemy*. Arendt refers to Rousseau to discuss how the common enemy is required to unify 'the people'. Needless to mention, this has been a persisting feature of all nationalisms. However, the common enemy is not only 'outside'. The unifying power of the common enemy owes its persistence and strength to its presence inside, within each particular person. In other words, according to this con-

ception, each citizen carries within 'himself' both the common enemy and the general interest, and only by fighting against the common enemy within, that is, fighting against the particularistic interest of the self, and embodying the general interest the person becomes a 'true' citizen of the national body politic.¹² Or, in other words, you have to kill the 'alien' in you in order to exist. This is part and parcel of the war against hypocrisy, and the performance of sincerity. And it provides an unending fuel for distinguishing the enemies and 'brothers' within, thus justifying state terror and racism.

The forged 'we' of the national society then, is the very basis of power based not on politics but within the 'social question', in Arendt's terms. Only foreign affairs "can be properly called 'political', while human relations as such constitute 'the social'".¹³ The organic society presupposes the 'organic self' (which Durkheim also posited as an ideal for modern society), which could exist only as part of, and only for the complex organism, the society. 'He' would have to continuously reveal his inner motivations to prove his virtue, thereby affirming the ground set for hunting down others bearing deceitful masks.

The significance of Arendt's arguments for shedding light on the present is indisputable. However, Arendt does not fully discuss the configuration of class exploitation (other than the construction of the 'mass' or the 'people') within the social, and the consequent "worldlessness". She does not attend to the repressed political within the social. But when one looks at critical-historical studies that focus on the formation of modernity at the end of the 19th century, despite the vast gap in time and character, there is a striking parallel to our day. In many settings, one could see *fragmentation* as a political question that resembles today, and that defines the process of class formation under the rubric of the general interest. This is important because the organic society has actually been an ideal, a repressive ideal indeed, yet investing in and deriving from the desire of wholeness of the fragmented working classes. As Maderthaner and Musner argue, within the context of Vienna at the end of the 19th century:

To the lower classes, the discursive field that now surrounds and defines their culture is as little comprehensible as their own existence determined by it. This is accessible to them only as a fragment and becomes an existential and political question. The fragmentary is the form of existence of the popular under modernism, producing at the same time the yearning of the marginalized for wholeness and identity".¹⁴

Today, fragmentation is occurring on a much wider scale, producing uneven temporalities and spaces, within which working classes are globally dispersed and marginalized. On the other hand, the work/desire machine of society differentially captures the 'individuals'. The neo-liberal logic of government of our times continuously develops strategies to assemble and regulate these diverse aspects of the social. Thus, society is more 'synthetic' than 'organic' in its mode of assemblage and governance. However, the 'one and

indivisible common will', although no longer enacted by one solid authority or ideology but through the representations of 'responsible' individuals and corporations, is nevertheless continually evoked. That which is represented as having an organic form is in fact synthetic. The organic rebounds as a persistent metaphor for the social as long as individuals are provoked to search for 'origins' and 'identity' against the threat of fragmentation. They are called to 'sincerely' claim selfhood amidst the vast darkness that cuts through them.

The organic society, then, is fabricated by making the fragments invisible, and even 'nameless.' But the myth of the nameless, or "traceless 'other' of modernity" returns as a mythological moment of mass politics".¹⁵ The 'organic origins' of national society is always haunted by the spectre of the fragment, which should be constantly exorcized. Fascism in its many facets is the ultimate example for this kind of exorcism. Let us remember the proclamation made by the Spanish fascists during the Civil War: "Our regime will make class struggle totally impossible, since all those cooperating in production will constitute an *organic whole* therein. We deplore and shall prevent at all costs *the abuses of partial vested interests*, as well as anarchy in the workforce".¹⁶ Today various nationalisms and 'civilizations' attempt to evoke the 'origins' to recast the organic society despite its fragmentation and doom. The ongoing exorcisms not only waste the nameless, but also leave those with a name with an impossibility to lead a 'good and wise' life in their own name.

Could there be a way beyond the 'organic' for re-imagining politics at 'the end'?

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Let us change the scene. I suggest we look at a certain moment in 'contemporary Turkey'. The Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was shot dead in broad daylight on 19 January 2007 in front of the building (in the centre of Istanbul) where he worked as the chief editor of the Turkish-Armenian journal *Agos*. Within a few hours, people started to gather in front of the *Agos* building. Everybody seemed shocked, and most were in tears. Hrant Dink had written on the 'Armenian question' in the most critical and humanly way, he had opposed clichés on identity, and instead called people to hear the tragic stories of the Turkish-Armenian people who had been killed or exiled since the beginning of 20th century in Turkey. He had invited people to question the fabricated and enforced amnesia of the official ideology, and share memories. He had suggested thinking about ways of not only remembering the past but of talking about the questions of justice and freedom now. He had posed the Armenian question, not in the oft-adopted international context, but as a question of politics belonging to all the people in Turkey. On several occasions he had been accused, threatened, tried and finally penalized by the infamous Code 301 (Insulting Turkishness). Hrant Dink was not the first Turkish-Armenian or the first critical journalist in Turkey to be threatened and assassinated. The court case about his assassination is no different either; it still goes on without much hope for justice. Yet his funeral set a turning point.

There were about 200 thousand people that day at Hrant Dink's funeral. What *appeared* there, in that central space of the city, whatever their motivations for coming to the funeral, a huge crowd of people with masks of Hrant Dink, and with pamphlets that read 'We are all Armenians' and 'We are all Hrant Dink' in Turkish, Armenian and Kurdish. The (mostly) silent crowd embodied a *persona* to testify to the political character of Hrant Dink's assassination, and the hurting and bleeding Armenian question. Turks may have carried pamphlets in Kurdish, and the Kurdish in Armenian, nobody was questioning the internal motivations or even the sincerity of the participants at that point. Each person was identifying with a fragment that disrupted the 'indivisible' organic society, and displaying a dignified sadness to the spectators. Each person was an actor with a mask that claimed the distance to defy the selfhood (the organic self) that has been stuffed with the violence of official history. The 'persona', (a Latin word which signifies the mask ancient actors used to wear in a play), "had two functions: it had to hide, or rather to replace, the actor's own face and countenance, but in a way that would make it possible for *the voice to sound through*".¹⁷ Hrant Dink's funeral was a very important event in Turkey that staged and visualized a different kind of politics beyond the oppressive blackmails of modernity/nationalism. It was one of the rare public events that attempted to come to terms with the repressed history of the country. I find that moment extremely meaningful in terms of imagining new possibilities for politics, a politics with a mask.

Many other people from all camps must have found it equally impressive. The impact of Hrant Dink's funeral was immense. What followed were heated debates about Turkishness and nationalism, and a series of performances with masks in Turkey. First, some young people who called themselves nationalists, during football matches declared themselves to be Oğün Samast—the alleged murderer of Hrant Dink. Soon after there were huge nationalist demonstrations in the big cities of Turkey defending laicism and nationalism against the threats, mostly associated with the AKP in power. As an implicit reply to Hrant Dink masks, the nationalists wore Atatürk masks, and shouted slogans such as "We are all Atatürk". In all these performances, the voice that comes through the mask was significant. Through the mask, it became more apparent that some identified with a murderer, and some symbolically liquidated their bodies and differences by becoming the nation as a *thing* for others (especially 'the West' to see). They wore national flags, and masks of the long dead patriarchal leader re-invoking the 'timeless' origin of the Turkish nation but strangely only through a performance with a mask. They inevitably disrupted the assumed naturalness of the organic society, and revealed the synthetic making up of a nationalist performance.

Politics with a mask prioritizes the space of appearance, and interestingly reveals the synthetic figurations that characterize our society. For example, you are what you appear to be according to the logic of consumption; how people

appear to each other in public, through the mediation of money, which has no soul but deemed as the most 'sublime entity', is already an inevitable dimension of capitalism. However, the neo-liberal government of capitalism also compels people, by the grave moral imperative of being 'true' citizens, to go against deceptive appearances through educating their souls. The organic and synthetic conceptions of the self and society are at a clash. The clash also regards the conflict between *politics* (the opening up of different possibilities in the world) and *anti-politics* (the imperative of sameness and closure). This we see clearly in the examples of public actions with masks cited above. Despite its claims of secularism the nationalist demonstrations in Turkey appeared as a rite of sacrifice for the nation. The particular demands of each person joining the demonstrations were subsumed under the general representation of the national iconography. The new demands could find no world to exist. However in the funeral of Hrant Dink, people were giving a world to an abjected and disposed figure of a minority, testifying to his historical and *particular* presence as an Armenian in Turkey. The differences (of oneself and the other) that have been crushed by 'the general' were re-embodied and re-configured in the public space. If in the former there was a parody of the organic self—paradoxically through self-annihilation under the disguise of national selfhood; in the latter, solidarity with each other was possible without necessarily erasing the singularity of each but through creating a new space to be in the world.¹⁸

Politics with a mask is important because it bears the potential to politicize the already existing 'synthetic' arrangements of the social which are shown either as solely technical or naturally organic, but not political. It has the potential to create a political space for the 'organically' repressed to appear. Even in its usurpation by nationalism, politics with a mask reveals the violence (and the murder) and the sacrifice involved in the forging of the organic. No wonder today's fascists point to the 'mask' as the greatest danger, as the Turkish website titled 'The Masked Threat' aggressively produces lists of names to prove that all the Kurdish 'terrorists' in Turkey are, in fact, originally Armenian, Yezidi or Assyrian.

We may have a certain taste for the organic, especially in the age of genetically modified food, but historically the organic could stand only for the memories of the vanished, especially of the peasants' once organic life. Instead of re-evoking the spectres of the lost wholeness, we may instead try to give life to the spectres of the fragment through a creative political form. This becomes more urgent today. Balibar argues that "the violent processes of exclusion through the quasi-military enforcement of 'security borders'" in Europe, recreates "the figure of the stranger as political enemy".¹⁹ I find Balibar's insight helpful when he says that a 'political space' has to be created. This space does not come about naturally, but would have to be built with deliberate effort and action so that it has an appearance.

The *limits* of compassion to the Other are obvious today, and have also come to a certain 'end'. Just recently in the continuing Ergenekon case²⁰ in

Turkey (a case that is also related to Hrant Dink's assassination), the lawyer Metin Çetinbaş while defending his clients (who were reported to say, "the best Kurd is a dead Kurd") asked rather bluntly: "Is it a crime if one wished the Kurds died?" Neşe Yaşın, in her article²¹, declares that brazen statement to be the biggest crime against humanity. But who cares about humanity today? When all 'natural' masks are tearing apart, when for example, Turkey is futilely trying to hold up the worn-out Western mask, we could put on carefully chosen political masks to invoke the 'common enemy' that we share with the marginalized and the disposed, and say that "We are all undesirables"—as the students in France in May 1968 once announced for supporting Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Or in Turkey, against the nationalist slogan, "When motherland is the main subject, the rest is incidental", one could say: "We are all incidentals". Surely, it would not solve all the ethical and political dilemmas of today, but it could at least question what is in a 'name' in such dark times.

Originally published in the textbook of the 11th International Istanbul Biennial, *What Keeps Mankind Alive?* Eds. What, How and For Whom (WHW) and İlkay Balıç, Istanbul: İKSV, 2009.

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2. Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 121.
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7. *Ibid.*
8. Badiou, p. 121.
9. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 100.
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11. Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 86.
12. Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 78.
13. Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 77.
14. Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner, *Unruly Masses: The Other Side of Fin-de-Siecle Vienna* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), p. 90.
15. Maderthaner and Musner, p. 148.
16. "Guidelines of the Falange, 1934", cited in Alun Kenwood (ed.), *The Spanish Civil War: A Cultural and Historical Reader* (Providence: Berg, 1993), p. 43. (emphasis mine)
17. Arendt 1990: 106, emphasis mine
18. According to Şükrü Argın, the gathering at Hrant Dink's funeral was a significant reversal of representational politics, thus altering the meaning of 'we'. "The majority of the people were not there to represent someone or something, but they were there in *person*, as their *own selves*". However, Argın makes it clear that the participants were not in an effort to declare their own identity; instead, they were tearing down their existing identities in order to show what they refuse to be. Argın finds in this a new possibility for being a subject (a 'post-subject', as he calls it): "being through not being". Şükrü Argın, *Krizden Önce, Krizden Sonra: Yaşlanan İnsanlık, Gençleşen Kapitalizm*, (interviews with Osman Akınhay) (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2009), pp. 120-121.
19. Etienne Balibar, "Europe as Borderland", *Society and Space* 27:2 (2009), p. 202.
20. A court case was opened in 2008 in Turkey to try the active members (ranging from army commanders to professors and journalists) of the illegal organization 'Ergenekon', or 'deep state' in popular terms, which is held responsible for planning *coup d'états*, and being involved in various armed assaults. The court case has been based on the evidence of recently found archives and weapons including bombs and guns, and continues with waves of arrest. Yet the 'Ergenekon case' is highly debated, as there is no consensus regarding the issues and the procedures of the court case.
21. Neşe Yaşın, "Kürtlerin ölmesini istemek en büyük suçtur" (Wishing the death of Kurdish people is the biggest crime), *Birgün* (14 Haziran 2009)



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2010

Performance and video

Courtesy of the artist

Commissioned by

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary
and Vehbi Koç Foundation



1. *When does dance turn political? And do you dance at parties?*

Dance turns political whenever it allows for the possibility of a rupture in the daily fabric of habit. This can happen through sudden and quasi-involuntary burst of energy or creativity in gestures, steps, leaps, or deep stillness, or it can happen through the careful choreographic composition of elements that all of a sudden form an atmospheric saturation where the transmission of an affect creates a transformative effect in the social situation where the dance is taking place -- one needs only to be always aware if such effect is politically progressive and affectively joyful; or politically regressive, reactionary and affectively sad. I dance at parties, but only with my eyes closed.

2. *Can you rely on your intuition, and has it ever created a difficult situation?*

I have learned to rely on my intuition as I got older (and hopefully wiser).

Things got more interesting as I started to listen to my gut-feelings.

It is often the source of inspiration in my art work.

I have to constantly remind myself to listen to my intuition.

When things go wrong or get difficult, I often realise (afterwards) that I have not acted according to my intuition about the situation.

3. *What does tolerance mean to you?*

Usually I am the tolerating one, and I am sick of it. Too much tolerance is self torturing. And it makes you grow a tumor inside. If I had the luxury I wouldn't be tolerant at all. It is not healthy. I really had enough of it, and I think I cannot take it anymore. Too bad..

4. *Have you ever caught yourself harboring prejudices? If so, which ones?*

Bei meinen Reisen nach Palästina und Beirut habe ich mich bei schwersten Vorurteilen ertappt. Durch die Berichterstattung in unseren westlichen Medien war ich der festen Annahme, dass die Städte dort zerstört und ärmlich, die Menschen deprimiert und desolat seien, hatte ein Bild von Autoswracks, Häuserruinen und lauter sichtbaren Spuren von Not erwartet. Nichts davon entspricht der Realität. Wie erschreckend, dass ich mich so leicht hab einfangen lassen von medialen Konstruktionen!

5. *Which country would you much rather not travel to?*

I would say that ultimately it is related to the observation of human rights. It is harder and harder for me to imagine to travel to a country where such rights are violated and where ethnic, religious, or any other form of segregation are being put into practice. Of course this is a debatable position, and I understand that clearly, as there are important arguments in favor of a non-embargo,

6. *Which city would you describe as the world's sexiest? And why?*

I think Taipei is the sexiest city in the world, that is if one can describe cities as being sexy.

for a city to feel exciting & wild it is important to not speak the language, to get lost & be forced to use sign language & a few words of manderin. sign language is not international, then one realizes that sign language does not work and then you are forced to be very creative, make friends because the buddah has a open place for the clumsy big female. also being female you are the third sex, you dont belong to the male/female cultural divide/desirables. the men are scared & at the same time are in awe, attracted & freaked out. all this between the crumbling glam & kitch of the 70's hayday, the new, cold towers & the old shacks turned into hipster boutiques. the artists mostly have day jobs working for the multinationals on the main land, design, engineers, programmers. at night we end up at cafes & bars run by collective artist and musician groups.

7. When would you like to be a woman?

I would like to be a woman when pregnant,giving birth,giving breast,and when having sex.

8. Which luxury are you unable to do without?

Die schiere Begeisterung, die euphorisierende Kraft des Neuen am Ende der Nullerjahre zu vergessen. Luxus ist eine Blume, deren Blüten schnell welken, ich kann auf sie verzichten doch ihr Duft erfüllt mich mit Wehmut, die ich nicht missen mag. Die Sonne am Ende eines langen grauen Tages - aber ist das Luxus? Mein Ferrari und das kleine Blumenbeet neben dem Männecken Piss am Brunnen. Die schonende Abwehr verliebter Frauen.

9. What attracts you physically to other people?

hmmm, what a hard question...its hard for me to feel physically attracted to anyone BEFORE I've felt any kind of warmth in their company. Then I appreciate their eyes first and then smile. And their demeanour.The walk also, theres a lot you can tell from a walk. But actually physically, its the hands and arms for me. Im a sucker for interesting agile hands and the lines that define the muscles in the not too toned arms and a defined back. Mmmmmmm

10. What do you do to stay fit and healthy?

Yoga - 15 Minuten jeden Morgen.

11. What does the idea of love mean to you, and has that changed over time?

I long thought that love was a harbor and that the harbor had to be what life was really about: after all, it was safe and comfortable, and one could stay there for a long time, protected from the tumult of everything irrational and uncontrollable, like the sea. That is, I thought that until I really fell in love for the first time, perhaps, and learned that love could, in fact, instead be that very sea: it was irrational and uncontrollable, indeed, making it dangerous but also transportative, its movements challenging and questioning so many of the usual givens that I thought were stable, but, most importantly, rather than the predict-



able contours of a harbor, bounded by neatly defined limits, love could be, indeed must be, as vast as the sea is vast, infinite and engulfing.

12. What do you feel passionate about?

I am passionate about the world, the world in the twenty-first century, it seems to be continually and perpetually spiralling into global chaos, its attention fixated on the forthcoming lack of energy resources, the imminent destruction of our natural resources, and an insurmountable lack of fecundity.

13. Whom do you support?

Ich unterstütze Menschen, die auch nicht wissen, ob es den einen richtigen Weg gibt; Freunde, die gerade unglücklich sind; Ideen, die nur im Kopf existieren; Leute, die vegetarisch essen; Kunst, die man nicht sieht; Künstler, denen der Kunstmarkt egal ist; Projekte, die die Natur schätzen und schützen.

14. Who is the social majority?

The social majority is the poor, the very poor and the extreme poor.

15. When do you feel part of a minority?

I try very hard not to think about this type of categories, since my whole biographical horizon is determined by this question. Being part of a small language group and region in Europe, the whole dialectic of demography is constantly measured in terms of minority and majority. It also means that it's hard to escape this discussion, cause it's literally part of everyone's everyday practice.

16. Which prejudices about the country from which your parents came do you find most insulting?

Schwer zu sagen, weil das Herkunftsland, Jugoslawien, zerfallen ist. Die Vorurteile, die es vielleicht von Österreich aus gegenüber diesem Gebiet gibt, variieren höchstwahrscheinlich von Nachfolgestaat zu Nachfolgestaat. Rassismen verstecken sich ja oft hinter kulturalistischen oder mit angeblichen geschichtlichen Fakten operierenden Argumentationen. In anderen Worten wird der Blick von einem/r mit Vorurteilen beladenem/n Österreicher/in auf Kroaten/innen anders sein, als auf Serben/innen. Und bei Bosniern/innen wird wiederum die Tatsache, welcher Religion sie angehören, einen Unterschied ausmachen.

Mich regt jedes Vorurteil auf, weil es eben ein "Vor-Urteil" ist, eine Annahme, die vor der Überprüfung dieser, sich als Tatsache etablieren will. Diese scheinbaren Tatsachen erweisen sich in den meisten Fällen, nicht nur im Bezug auf mein bzw. das Herkunftsland meiner Eltern, als nicht oder nicht in diesem Ausmaß der Realität entsprechend.

Das was mich sicher im speziellen in Wien aufgeregt hat, war, wenn Rassismus in der Kunstszene auftrat, die sich ja als frei von solchen Regungen darstellt.

17. Have you ever abused your power? In which situation or in which way?

Wie langweilig, aber ich glaube/hoffe, dass ich noch nie Macht wirklich missbraucht habe. Es gab in den letzten zwei Jahren allerdings, zum ersten mal in meinem Berufsleben, Situationen in denen ich gerne Macht besessen hätte, die ich dann missbrauchen könnte. Vielleicht ist es ganz gut, dass ich diese Macht nicht hatte, denn ich hätte es sicher später bereut... oder vielleicht auch nicht.

18. How do you deal with success?

How to measure success? As you ask me, I don't really know what it is or what scale it have. It's reminds me of a can of the green toy slime, which you take out and play with, it's slips through your fingers and changes shape constantly. The structure is wet, loose and flexible. There is an immediate sensation, but quite soon it becomes boring and ends up in the can again.

19. How much punk do you have left in you?

Solange ich immer wieder etwas ganz Neues ausprobieren kann, erlebe ich auch immer wieder Situationen, die dann jenen minimalen aber eindeutigen Effekt hervorrufen, der brauchbar ist für eine erkennbare Position. Und da kann dann auch noch jeder mitmachen. "Das kannst auch du" war das Motto eines Düsseldorfer Punklabels der späten siebziger Jahre. Daran versuche ich mich zu halten, bei Musik, Texten, Theater oder Oper.

20. Do you sometimes pretend to be someone else?

I used to pretend to be someone else a lot years ago, associated with the feeling that I was not living the life I wanted to live. I was not the person who I wanted to be - my imaginary self. hence self-realization got significance for me in my plot of life. Now I am trying to allow myself to be myself to capture the feeling of what it feels like to be connected with myself, working on being continuous with my mind and body and my relationship to my surroundings - let them be people, friends, acquaintances, concepts, issues, struggles, desires, dreams, fears, thoughts and ideas.. and I think at the times I pretended to be myself I was someone who was failing invisibly from deep down in my heart feeling the ache of lying to others through lying to myself. And who was I, I was just someone pretending to be someone... and that someone was, I think, -at the times of my pretention- was freer than I was. I was someone who conditioned to be happy and welcomed. Now I allow to be how I am when I am like what I am - or at least working on it.

21. Where does friendship end for you?

It ends up for me:
with boredom
I am patronised
there is no respect