

THE KID SICK IS

Göksu Kunak a.k.a Gucci Chunk

What were your first movements in life that you feel had an impact on your life – personally or professionally?

Being in my first ballet recital, in the back of the blue fairy tutu line – slipping and falling down – my teacher’s face in horror. Road Runner cartoons, Wile E. Coyote dying again and again, and recovering super easily every time. The joy of pogo dancing to punk music as a teenager – being small and trying to bump into sweaty others. David Bowie. Diane Arbus. Amusement parks. My mother’s panic attacks in grocery stores. Playing Helen Keller on stage. How awkward a first kiss can be. Watching Diane Keaton say ‘la-di-da’ in Annie Hall. Cassavetes movies. Discovering I was attracted to both men and women...

Going back even further, although I can’t say I remember it myself: When my mother was pregnant with me, she fell down a flight of stairs. I am sure this was quite the shock for both of us. Once, during a Neo-Reichian therapy session, I touched on the experience. I have always felt very comfortable with being upside down, off balance, and ungrounded when I am moving, even while I was learning to dance.¹

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What was your first memory? What was your first movement in life?

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She was emotional. Tears were about to leak down her face that was reminiscent of the geography of her birthplace: strong expressions with clear lines—must have been related to the fact that in their lands, one had to be tough making quick decisions in order to survive.

I step out onto the balcony and smiled, hoping that I hadn’t interfered, hoping that she and her friend will include me in their remembrance. She does, by looking into my eyes and vigorously revealing the tears.

She was five years old, lying on a divan, pretending to be sick. Her aunt told the men in green uniforms: the kid sick is, it move cannot². They were searching the home; removing all out from the closets, cupboards; looking under the armchairs, inside the frames.

Only the divan remained untouched.

The uniforms couldn’t find anything. Her small body was protecting the Kurdish songs, the Kurdish words hidden beneath her in the cassettes and books. One sentence—the kid is sick—and her laying body saved them.

Some hours earlier, they had seen the shadows approaching, yet the members of the household knew that the uniforms would wait for the darkness to flirt with the haze around the street lights. Though the kid had already recovered, her parents thought it best to declare her still as sick so she would remain lying on top of the divan. Before this, they placed all the banned possibilities and hopes under the layers and on top was her body.

Tears transformed into anger explaining where some of the facial lines had come from. Other memories came into sight. The green-machine devil was about to drag her cousin’s corpse: how the women managed to save the young man’s last existence from those magnificent (!) masculinities, she still doesn’t know. No wonder there is a robust *ağıt* culture in those lands.

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Yesterday an MP gave a speech:

“If my grandfather wouldn’t have invented mathematics, engineering, today, this German, this American...If you would have said this to Trump where he’s in his flat in New York, go and get a bag of breakfast ingredients and calculate—if, say, my grandfather wouldn’t have invented mathematics, science, technology—Trump, Macron go and get a bag of breakfast ingredients and calculate what we’ve had so far, cross my heart, they would have needed a wood as big as a wall.”³

Even in Turkish, it’s impossible to grasp what he meant.

The proliferation of such unbelievable speeches, such ‘no way!’s’ that have been happening in the lands I grew up in make me feel more and more disconnected from there. There were always problems, always racism, however recently things have gotten even more out of control. The MP tries to drag a specific past to a now, to highlight the importance of the Eastern Islamist mathematicians, and bind a lineage with them to create value for today, but he cannot even make a proper sentence to continue his new Islamist-nation building.

Today after the yoga session, a person, who most probably heard me speaking in Turkish with the teacher, came up to me and said *I couldn’t have guessed that you are Turkish. Yes, I speak Turkish*, I said, instead of saying I’m Turkish. *You don’t look like you’re Turkish*, she said. *I am Turkish*, I replied, and paused.

Why didn’t I say I am from Turkey not Turkish? I used to say I’m from Turkey not Turkish as I don’t know what I am exactly; as there are people in Turkey who are not Turkish but they’re citizens of Turkey, like Kurds for instance, and as a sign of respect to them I usually say from Turkey. Why didn’t I say I was from Turkey not Turkish? Because I’m in a foreign country? But can I really consider

myself in a foreign country when I cannot easily or lightheartedly return to my own country right now if I wanted to, and I wouldn’t even feel at home there? But can I really consider myself in a foreign country that I’m desperately waiting to have a permanent residency, that I feel at home in even though I don’t know much about its past? Is a nation still a nation without a past? Why didn’t I say I was from Turkey not Turkish? Would they get it if I said no, I’m not Turkish, but I’m from Turkey? Does this mean in some places I’m Turkish, in some places I’m from Turkey, and in other places, like in Ausländerbehörde, sometimes I’m a nobody trying to become somebody? said no, I’m not Turkish, but I’m from Turkey? Does this mean in some places I’m Turkish, in some places I’m from Turkey, and in other places, like in Ausländerbehörde, sometimes I’m a nobody trying to become somebody?

How tough it must be for a refugee.

Why didn’t I say I am actually not a woman but a non-binary person? I used to say I’m a woman and I used to feel like a woman—not in Turkey, though, as it took me a while to feel like a woman, as it took me a while to be able to even talk about my vagina. But I feel like a nonbinary person, not like a woman anymore. Why didn’t I say I’m actually not a woman but a non-binary person? Because, in a way, I’m still in Turkey when I speak with her or because when my brain speaks in Turkish it automatically links itself to a certain geography? Because I’m unsure if I’d be understood outside a certain group of people in Berlin? But can I really consider myself as a non-binary person when I can be read as a woman and when I can say that I’m a woman in certain cases because I’m in my supposed-to-be-my-country? Because in that country there are so many issues still needing to be resolved around womanhood that I still feel somehow connected to? Because my mom doesn’t know that I’m queer? Does this mean that in some places I’m still a woman and in other places I’m a non-binary person?

How tough it must be for my transgender friends.

In his book, *Disidentifications*, José Esteban Muñoz asks: “Can a self or a personality be crafted without proper identifications?”⁴ Can we ask that kid, who was once forcefully sick, to disidentify – would it be fair enough? Besides acknowledging identification as a survival and resistance tool for some minorities, the writer highlights the vigorous aspect of not identifying with how they would prefer to read you. Could you please not see me as a Turkish woman cause I’m not? Could you not call that woman a man cause she’s not? How simple it is when you put these down on paper, but millions unfortunately still can’t respect that simplicity.

I drag womanhood, but I can also drag whiteness. Despite being from Turkey, and despite the fact that my dad is brown, I’m white. My skin is snow white cause at some point in the history, possibly my great grandfather (on my mother’s side) immigrated from somewhere to Izmir. I have no idea as we Turks are assimilated, as being a Turk is just an idea(I). I’m a white Turk who doesn’t look like a Turk, and I’m a woman who isn’t one, nor feels like one.

What am I?

I was born. I was a Turk. I was a Muslim. I was privileged. I was proud. I was proud to be a Turk. I was a nationalist. I was reading poems dedicated to my flag. I was a Muslim. I was secular. I was a secular Muslim. I was a Kemalist. I was a Kemalist-nationalist-secular Muslim. Then I was an atheist. I was an eco-feminist. I was nothing. Then I changed. I was a cultural immigrant. I was no one. I was a woman. I was a queer feminist. I was a non-binary person. I was a writer. I no one I everyone I the future mother of the nation I the garbage dump for the Nation.

Thinking about these, I hear a whistle – for a moment it stresses me as I fear someone is about to harass.

Some days ago, I was talking with a friend, Astrit, about harassment. He had a sexy netted jumper, fire-patterned boxer shorts, blue classic Buffalo platform sneakers and pendant earrings – he looked sexy! In the subway, a drunken teenage boy wanted to talk with him, but Astrit doesn’t speak German. The boy told him to build more chest muscles. In his supposed-to-be-mockery, you could see how turned on he was. The teenager, performing heterosexuality, couldn’t keep his eyes off of Astrit, and with an absurd language, he could explain his attention. His friend apologised when they were leaving the train – they were polite.

Do they harass, because, actually, they desire to live a life as the victim does?

I’ve experienced harassment on the day of the anti-AfD demonstration that affected me more than any other forms of harassment I’ve encountered this year. I put on Leigh-Bowery-inspired Alexander McQueen makeup: a big red circle around the lips. On the way back home, two men started to talk about me and how they’d fuck my mouth in Turkish, without realising that I could understand them. “What to do in such moments?” asked a trans drag-performer friend during our reading-group session. Besides knowing it’s a broader political problem, my friend has been thinking about how to cope with it in such urgencies. I wonder what else I could do. I

could have gone up to them and asked them: Why? Why are you mean? Why are you bad? Do you lack love? Instead, I passed by, shivering.

Thinking about these next to the canal at Maybachufer Market, the annoying repetitive whistle attracts me. On the other side of the canal, I see a person with black shorts and long hair; topless, limping, continually whistling the same melody over and over again, walking to the right and walking to the left again and again. Despite the aimless walking that registers itself at a certain speed, the whistle is always the same; same odd melody, for 5 seconds and back to the beginning. *dü dü dü dü dü dü dü dü dü dü da. dü dü dü dü dü dü dü dü dü dü da.* Like a Fordist factory machine, or a perfect automaton – strictly productive and strictly purposes to be purposeless. A street jazz band with a guitar and sax starts to play, which makes the person change their rhythm, now they shake themselves. One arm extended to the sky, the other to one side, I'm reminded of the horon dancers from Turkey. Now, one is back to their left-right linear walking. The shaking was only a short vacation, a quick coffee break. Back to work!

Another dancer enters the stage—they're friends—wearing a t-shirt with white stripes on a dark blue background. This person's movements recall hip-hop beats. The moment the friend enters, the performance takes another form. The limping body stops and opens its arms towards us and starts to shout:

Break the Lord, Afraid The Lord x3
(or is it Break the Law, Afraid the Law?)

We all applause.

The contrast between the aimlessness of the repetitive song and how it unfolds in certain crucial moments – like when the jazz band starts or the friend moves – and the dedication to it is magnificent; such a contemporary urban spectacle among the clinking of the wine kiosk I'm sitting at. Like a fan.

One of the most unproductive but necessary objects is a fan. The repetitive turn allows the productivity to continue on an unbearably hot day. A fan is a slow motion sound effect; it's the lazy minority; it's the limping person repetitively whistling and performing out of nowhere. Same with balloons. What is the purpose of a balloon? The time spent blowing one up is the weekend of a 9-to-5 job.

Then I go home and jump into another reality and start doing a butt workout.

Rainbow time!

Rainbows like my pants! a-ha!
Rainbows are so beautiful like your booty!
Four more! It's so easy to lie down and relax, but that's not why we're here!

I recall how we used to learn the so-called 'Exercises of Order' in sports classes. We used to align and listen to the commands of the teacher: with precision we turned right, turned left, walked, stopped – again! We were, say, ten years old and were expected to walk as if we were in the army. We were learning to be in order, to follow commands. In Turkey, sports and gymnastics were crucial tools for

synchronicity of the social rhythms manifesting itself in the national celebrations—for a young and healthy future of the nation in harmony.

They say: LOVE. They say it will solve everything.

In the video of *Maybe Forever* by Meg Stuart and Philipp Gehmacher, Stuart embraces Gehmacher from the back and detaches without moving her arms. There is a mould; the absence of his body stays empty in her arms. With this emptiness, she rests on the floor as if she's hugging a sick or a dead body.⁵

We love to feel immortal. It drags us into a time lag that resembles a staunch imagination – or even a staunch impasse in certain situations – that once you're in, all can slow down, even stop. Without even noticing, your solitude melts into a womb, a darkness. Love is like a leaf: you know at one point it won't be there, but everything is so slow that you don't see it grow or change. Love is a gap, a rupture; a floating feather, a dirty bowl waiting to be washed, a city plan, an image reflecting on the cornea that will soon disappear, an early blossoming tree, a soul that dies and reincarnates.

We mourn. Yet, it's time to walk with the dog and buy groceries.

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This is the first day in four years that I haven't thought of you at all until this moment writing these lines. No tears – instead, I cry for the murdered daughters and sons in myths; I cry for the transgender folks' dead bodies whose breast implants and makeup are removed before a Muslim funeral.

Do you ever feel sad about your past; are you always in the moment; or better in the future as the perfect progressor?

A certain melancholy is rising: you remember the days you didn't help your mother with the dishes. She was newly-divorced and in menopause. You were 14, trying to understand why your friends had stopped talking with you. You will be wounded, and it will never properly heal – you have no idea about that and instead of resting, you lose yourself in the world of butt workouts.

R U READY FOR A DANCER'S BUTT?

Göksu Kunak a.k.a Gucci Chunk is a writer born in Ankara and based in Berlin. Ze performed zir texts and lectures at Batard Brussels 2016 (invited by Tom Engels), Stadtsprachen Festival 2016, Poesie Festival 2017, Fuchsbau Festival 2017, Broken Dimanche Press reading series at Tropez Berlin curated by John Holten, Pioneer Works NYC curated by Belladonna* Collaborative at Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneve as one of the CAMPers invited by Andrea Bellini and Julian Weber. The short book #225 *I thought this would* is published by Belladonna* Collaborative. Zir texts have appeared on the official page of *The Absence of Paths*, the Official Tunisian Pavillion of the 57th Venice Biennial and on the blog *The History of Painting Revisited* in collaboration with Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle for the Fahrelnissa Zeid Retrospective. Invited by Meg Stuart and Maria F. Scaroni, as a part of *City Lights -- a continuous gathering*, ze had the pleasure to perform with amazing female artists of Berlin at the old and renowned theater Hebbel am Ufer. Göksu is one of the co-founders of the blog *Viereinhalbsaetze* that consists of 4.5-sentence-dance-criticism. Ze is working on zir PhD on queer chronopolitics in relation to performance and contemporary dance with Prof. Dr. Bojana Kunst.

1 Kunak, Göksu. Meg Stuart. Mono-kultur #41
2 Written in Turkish syntax. Turkish is not a gendered language, therefore 'it' is used for people as well.

3 "Eğitim komisyonunun AKP'li üyesi: Batı bütün ilimi dedemin kütüphanesinden çaldı ve hepsini katletti." Diken, 4 June 2018, <http://www.diken.com.tr/egitim-komisyonunun-akpli-uyesi-batibutun-ilimi-dedemin-kutuphanesinden-caldi-ve-hepsini-katletti/> Translated by the writer

4 Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Colors and the Performance of Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

5 "MAYBE FOREVER – Meg Stuart & Philipp Gehmacher." Youtube, uploaded by Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods, 13 December 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCE74TFInoM&start_radio=1&list=RDHCE74TFInoM