Love Letters

Love Letters is an exchange of letters and poems between two collaborators, work partners but also good friends who used to share the same city but departed due to personal decisions. As the co-founders of Collective Çukurcuma, Mine Kaplangi and Naz Cuguoglu have been experimenting on collective writing in recent years. For this special issue they write Love Letters to one another.

Essay / Mine Kaplangı December 31, 2022

Slugs having Sex

Video of Slugs having Sex

Birthday

Like slugs having sex

on a strip on shiny mucus
with twisting bodies
moon-lit and impossible

Your life on the magic carpet.

never ready to go on the high mountain
and too late for pizzas or holding hands

And we are in a car, Father.

though my hands are on the wheel
you are the one in the driver’s seat
what an odd coincidence.

With a rear window reflecting only ghosts

from the past
And a side window looking only at
its very own self

Destined for small accidents

here and there
though nobody dies
not yet.

Abracadabra or a nightmare?

marshes, London, summer 2022.jpg **[1]**



[2]
Marshes, London, summer 2022

13.06.2022
Almost full moon, a breezy London afternoon

Dear N.,

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I MISSED WRITING TO YOU AND YOUR GHOSTS. [Yes, capitals!

Enough with this interior-due to external, therefore internalized-pressure of writing beautifully, evenly!] You have been the closest ghost friend of my still-yet-to-be-figured out private diary life, from long voice messages to long emails. I miss you, dearly. I cannot wait to meet the-current-you; the smell of your anxiety, the pen you use to underline your favorite lines in books, your companion bird at the park, your favorite getting-ready song, the soup you like to boil because you love how it keeps you full and warm on cold and busy nights...

A lot happened in between, yet we stayed at the same distance, we were so far away, an 'ocean atlas' distanced[1] further away from each other yet your silhouette appears in every polaroid photo I take in the garden of the house I live in. It is not my house; houses don't belong to us, therefore there is no point in trying to own them, trying to kill ourselves working to afford them. Spaces are temporary, and they have their own rules and expectations which will reflect their personalities; whatever you do with that space, change furniture, or change colors, won't reflect you as you run like a river. House is solid — well of course for privileged ones — while we are all liquid, fluid, unsettled. Like *Água Viva*,[2] like how we return to our bedrocks to remind us why we were fascinated by them in the first place.

Now we found each other looking into the depths of Clarice Lispector's gaze; trying to remember the power of telling your story with the words familiar to you, the tone you feel comfortable with, the competency of being bold and loud. God doesn't exist yet even she would know how much I waited for us to write together freely. Without shame, without losing time in and around the confusing labyrinths of our submarines.

And there she goes... I listened to Fran [Lock] today at an experimental poetry reading event, I was serving the drinks, proud of my sobriety, thinking about which wine I would choose to drink if I were one of the guests of the event, like the one who sits in the right corner of the room, alone. She has read a few pages from her book called *Hyena! Jackal! Dog!* [3].

'Hyena's laugh is not the rubberised whoop of expelled air: it is a sudden glitch in her sloping form as she dips beneath the yardarm. It is often silent. A kind of *presto!* A kind of splayed *cadabra!* In its sudden flux she has been known to turn textile, become a rush mat flattened out for welcome.'

This [experience] was a gesture! I do not need gutsy signs to embrace our duties for each other and the sake of writing [freely] but signs are quite repetitious and sovereign at the moment; difficult to ignore those, you know what I mean. After watching a performance called *Practical Encyclopaedia* by Lenio Kaklea [4], I was mesmerized by her presence, gaze, and willingness to accept her flaws and vulnerability, here comes the Q&A! And there was my sign! Oh dear goddess of wine leaves, give me the strength to focus and enjoy every moment of this wonderful creature to guide our way, before I turn to my phone to record everything, take photos, text to you, and miss the entire moment!! Lenio is from Greece, and English is not her mother tongue, yet through her spiritual and emotional journey into performance, dance, and live art, clearly she finds a place for her own kind. How she articulates herself, the tone of her voice, and how she uses and reuses and creates [new] words is empowering and welcoming. She doesn't let anyone think that there is a possibility that she might misspell a word in English, oh no, the only possibility is the word is lost that it needs light for its path and she generously provides it. She makes up new words, pronounces them how she feels right about them, and uses them in sentences for us to understand their purposes, and we do. I pray for the day we have her strong back when we talk, my dear N., AMEN!

The last thing I want to do is take more time of your life that needs to be filled with lust, passion, wonders, love, and care for whatever is left from our souls that we kept for ourselves and didn't give to the systems of boxification. FUCK all boxes, all box-shaped borders, limitations!

You need your roses, your mornings, and your infectious waves of laughter!

And we need your words [insert rose emoji]

Until next time, my dear friend
L X O X V X E

M.

A159F354-FE47-413E-9236-9BD3D7798927 2.JPG **[5]**


I'LL LOVE YOU
FOREVER AND A DAY
AND A COUPLE OF HOURS MORE
MICHAEL E. HENDERSON
"ANDE"

Memorial Grove, San Francisco

Birdshit

Resisting becoming statistics

for your institution

My identity will flow

around the hard-edged
boxes to be clicked
in online surveys

Lingering between not local enough

and excessively international.
things will finally get emotional

And the loud bird will continue

to be loud
in the garden

Because one might empty

the lungs from inside
out
when

It’s a condition of disturbance

the doctor will say.

A business — this is what

it is not.

Historically it never was.

21.06.2022

Istanbul Airport
Waiting for boarding with 350 other passengers

Dear N.,

I stayed a few days in our hometown this week. Words from the last poetry you sent me shifted their meanings with the warm winds; while looking at the streets that felt familiar yet looked like strangers, the condition of disturbance echoed.

My body reacts to memories; even my migraine attack was different,
my white hair resisted the beauty complex of the city and stayed with the seagull fights.

I also met another bird, not a loud one but familiar, like a bird you would follow for days.

BilinmeyeneDoğru_04.06.2022_005 (1).jpg **[7]**



[8]
Still image from Agnieszka Polska's The Thousand-Year Plan installation
Salt, Into the Unknown Exhibition (28.05-14.08.2022)
Courtesy Mustafa Haznezi

While watching the videos and trying to cool off in a chilly space of *Into the Unknown* exhibition[3] this bluebird from Agnieszka Polska's *The Thousand-Year Plan* (2020, 27'54") video installation distracted me, A LOT. There was A LOT to follow, feel, and embrace in that dark room, yet I was stuck with the resistance of that blue bird with a little fire on its head, taking up all the space bravely on the giant screens. There are many ways of watching, experiencing, and looking at art videos, but I'm mostly interested in the uncontrollable, intuitive ones. Polska's video takes place in the post-WWII years, mainly interested in the magical, overwhelming aspects of living in this new era of electrification. Yet the work is about the feelings of that time, era, that village, those people, birds, and the air, and I strangely found myself taking the bird as a bird from a Sims game, sitting next to Agnes Varda,[4] listening to our words but hoping to have a silent moment for itself. The bird's calmness and the protagonists' anxiousness make you cry immediately. I wondered what you would feel if you had watched this video in this room with us?

I have been wandering around the city, enjoying the 'free' time that you usually need to pay to have; collecting stories, and imagining alternative portals where we managed to be together for a few hours. As the river is running from Berlin, the weed is from the enchanted forests, the sound piece is written in deep oceans, and you are speaking in a language I can’t reckon yet follow its melody. Your hair smells like salty water; the wind is coming from a heatwave reminding us how stupid we are to think this is not the apocalypse.

It feels odd to re-think the After-Hope program nowadays.[5] Funny enough if there are no wildfires,

no coughing, the world must be fine, right? Oh my ladies, we are boiling in cold waters, and will be only half eaten because we are tasteless. Black coffee was the only thing that made me feel quite special this morning; reflection is the fuel of the broken planes, leaving a tooth behind for the city to bury me while I'm gone.

Phantom Limb[6]

My left foot never arrived here.

The fact is
she
Never survived the journey.

stuck somewhere between
Continents

she lingered
ached for a soil that never was.

a nostalgia
a thought
in the form of wishful thinking,

nothing more
if nothing less

And it is true
she missed the encore
like a hasty river does

Ears

at home

Who decides eyes and teeth to be separated

from the rest of the human body?

it must be the same guy

blocking the stage
last night

Just a broken thought
in pieces

And the noise
KMRU makes[7]

So loud
blocking sight

humorous as death

a crescendo
in the middle of the desert
resembling loud machines in the sky

and a surpassing disaster
but not like on the fleet week
rather like the one
that makes one boil water
thinking scarcity
and human violence

the one that made
my body tremble once
in Berlin

because it is often not about proximity
but the distance

at least for the one
that is alien
legally and illegally

but that is another story
the fact is when my body arrived
as did my eyes and teeth
sharp
and moist.

my left foot

oh she went missing.

there was no one to witness
because to witness
is to remember.

and one can
easily pretend-play
or look

away

Here
we forget.

IMG_2788 2.JPG **[9]**



[10]Fog filling the valley, Headlands Center for the Arts

Note: Collective Cukurcuma Curatorial Collective is a curatorial collective experimenting with collaborative thinking practices through reading group meetings, writing workshops, and international multi-venue exhibitions. This text, commissioned by Tohu Magazine and curator Tuce Erel, consists of letters by Mine Kaplangi and poetry by Naz Cuguoglu—the collective's co-founders, responding to each other with love on their minds.

- 1. Naz and I have been living in cities with an ocean between them for three years now; the ocean became an atlas, a collage book, and a diary for us. It reminds me of the Ocean Atlas work, an underwater sculpture located in Nassau by artist/diver Jason deCaires which depicts a young girl carrying the weight of the ocean above her (a nod to the Greek myth about Atlas, who held up the heavens).
- 2. https://collectivecukurcuma.com/2022/06/22/agua-viva/ [11]
- 3. https://saltonline.org/en/2426/into-the-unknown?home [12]
- 4. Agnes Varda: From Here to There (2011) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2125012/ [13]
- 5. Collective Cukurcuma Reading Group for Asian Art Museum's After-Hope program: https://collectivecukurcuma.com/2020/12/10/after-hope-reading-group/ [14]
- 6. "Phantom Limb" exhibition curated by Naz Cuguoğlu, and featuring work by Headlands' 2021-22 Graduate Fellows: https://www.headlands.org/event/phantom-limb/ [15]
- 7. https://www.thelab.org/projects/2022/3/29/fennesz-amp-kmru [16]

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[3] https://www.pamenarpress.com/product-page/hyena-jackal-dog

[4] https://www.onassis.org/people/lenio-kaklea-
[5] https://www.tohumagazine.com/file/a159f354-fe47-413e-9236-9bd3d7798927-2jpg-0
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[14] https://collectivecukurcuma.com/2020/12/10/after-hope-reading-group/
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