

SHIFTING SHORES

Bihter Sabanoğlu * Miriam Gatt * Paky Vlassopoulou

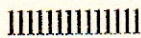
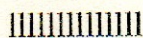
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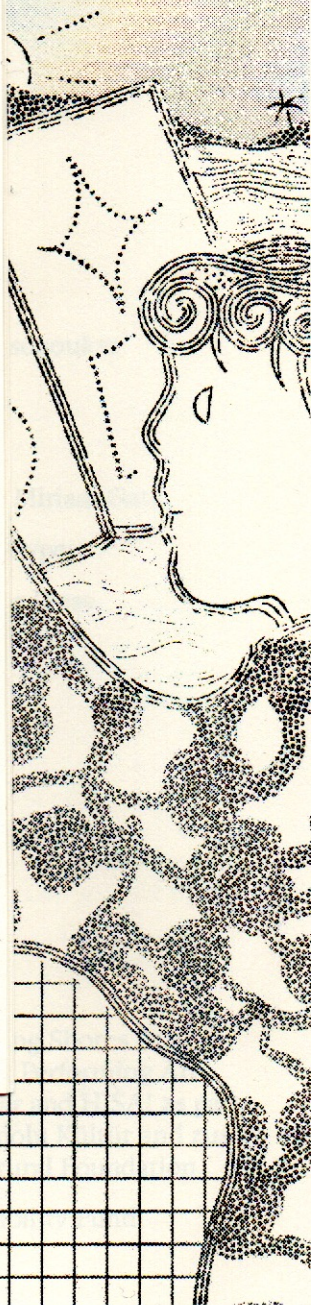


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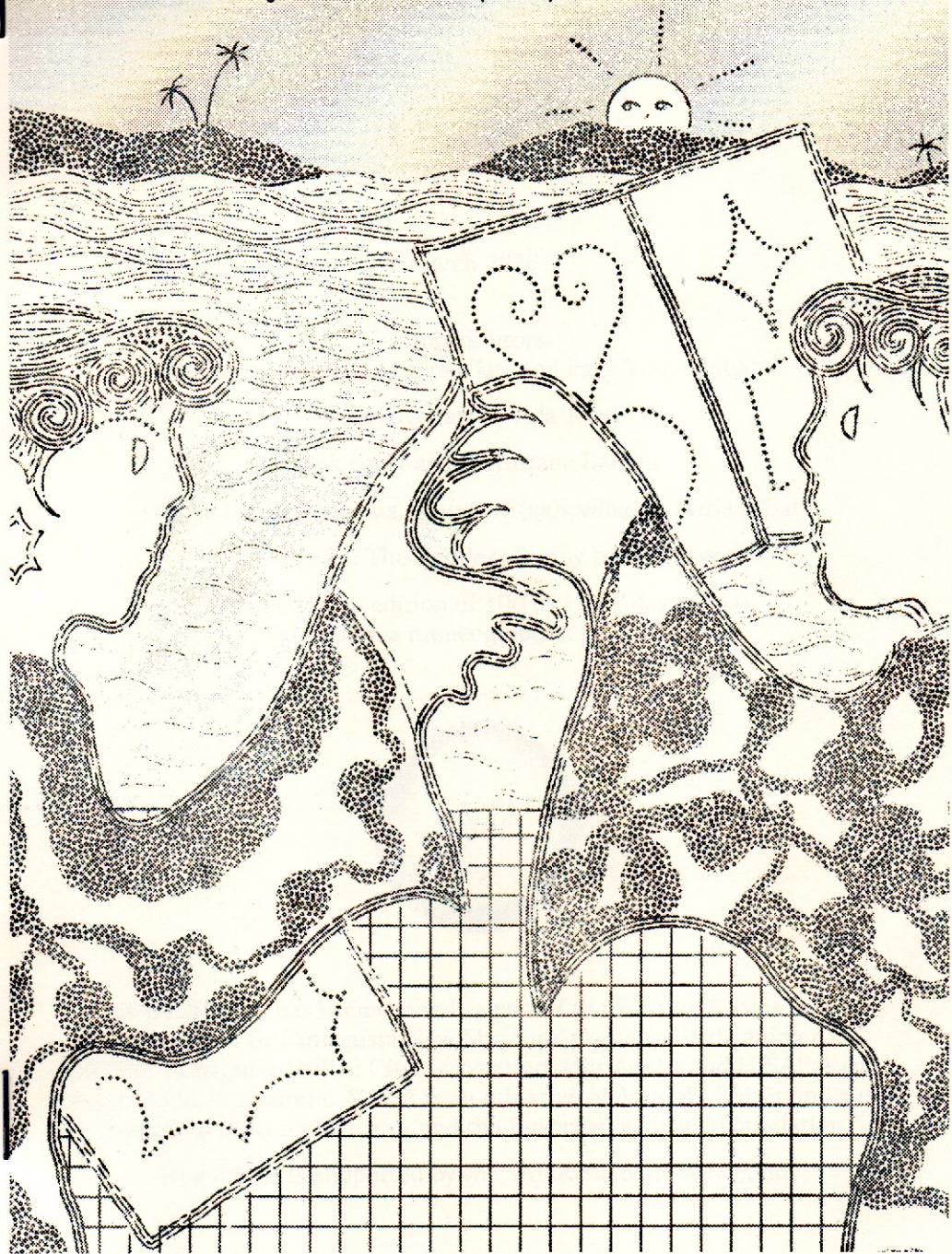
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March 2026

Contributors

Bihter Sabanoğlu, Miriam Gatt and Paky Vlassopoulou

Front cover art by Ada Tüncer

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March 2008

Contributors
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I would like to tell you a story about a man from a village close to here. The man was accompanying the driver of a truck carrying lumber for the construction of a mosque in his village. He wore his best suit sewn in English fabric to look nice for his fellow townspeople. On the way, the truck hit a kid and the driver ran away. The man tried to stop the kid's bleeding, padding the wounds with his clothes. The women working in the field on the side of the road, who knew the kid, saw the accident and came running. The women grabbed pieces of driftwood from the side of the road and started beating the man. Though he was in a lot of pain, the man did not resist. Because he catcalled some women at a pastry shop a week ago. When the women got upset and left, the owner of the shop came and asked what happened. He said the waiter was being inappropriate with the ladies. That waiter ended up losing his job then and there in front of the man's eyes. While the women coming from the field on the side of the road were beating the man senseless, he thought about the waiter and said to himself that he deserved this. Regardless, he said to himself, "Thank god it's yallos"

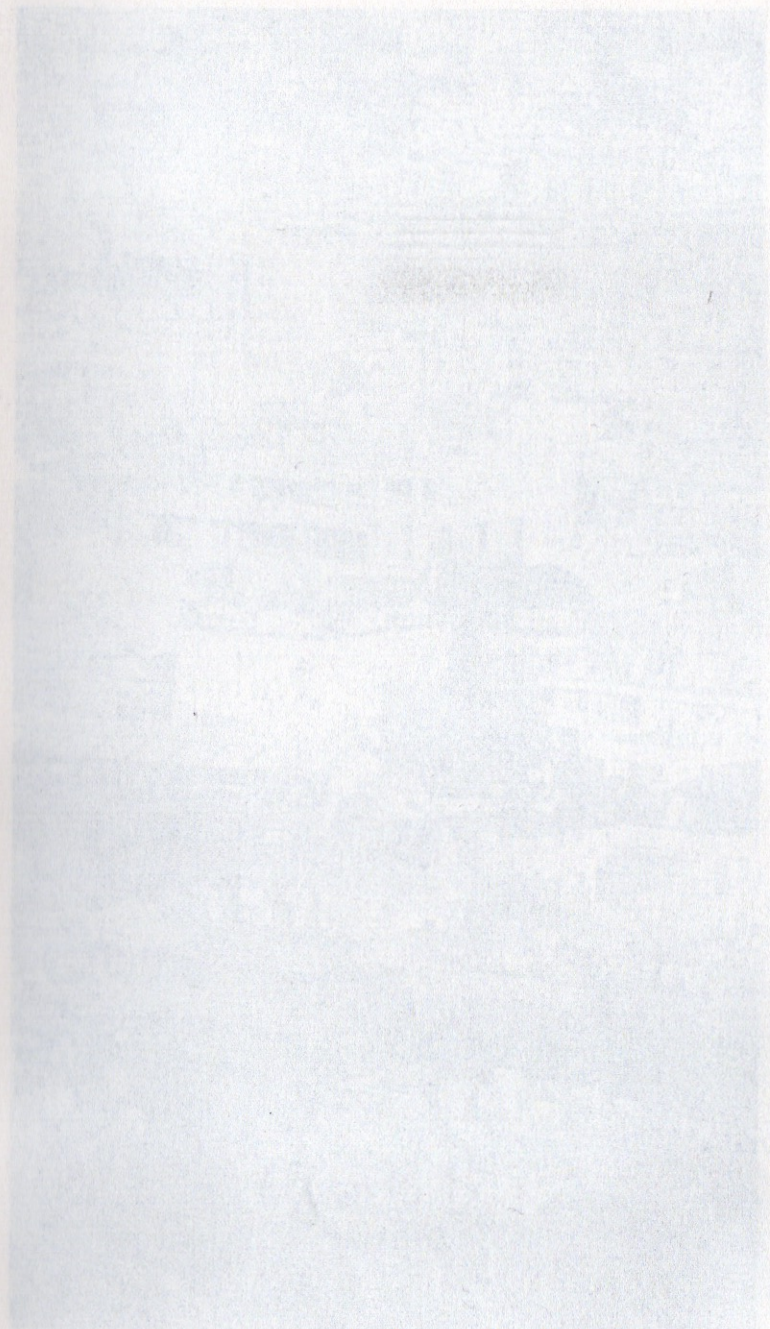
Yallos is the word for driftwood around here. When I asked the origin of it I was told it comes from Greek. When I looked it up, I found the word γαλός, which means coast, apparently. It seemed logical to me, fitting and I didn't dwell on it that much.

To me, this was one of the rare instances of vigilante justice I hope for frequently if not every single day. Some days, I wish for karma to strike and for people who wronged me to be unhappy. I wish the rude guy in the supermarket line would take a fall while walking to his car. I wish my ex's eggs would always be cold, and they could never eat a single warm omelet

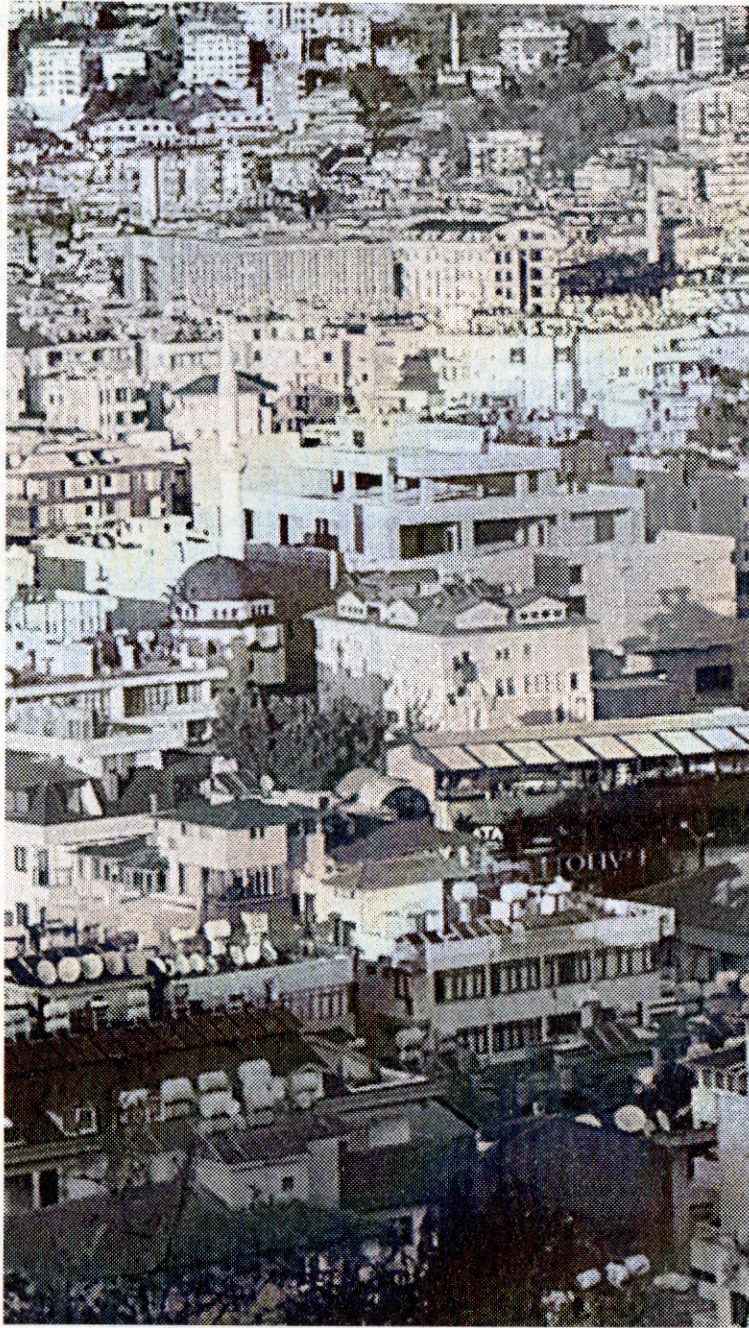
ever. I wish the person who honked at me relentlessly in traffic would get a huge fine 10 minutes from now. I wish the wars to end and the war criminals to be tried in international courts. Sometimes, more often than the others, maybe, I wish my country would also face its colonial past as well, and one day develop a decolonial discourse in my own language so that I won't speak in broken English when I would like to address something. I wish for many things. This time justice came from Turkish peasant women beating up a man with wooden sticks that they call a Greek word. I found it calming, just a tiny bit, but it didn't take long; I forgot all about it and went on wishing for the same things.

Paky, Miriam and Bihter stayed at Hür Adalar, Alanya, for a week to think about the displacement and forced migration of Greek and Turkish-speaking communities in the eastern Mediterranean. This endeavor taken place at Hür Adalar is a part of Shifting Shores, implemented by Famagusta New Museum, Center of Performing Arts MITOS, Famagusta Walled City Association, Hür Adalar and HİSA! departing from a study of shared histories and memories. I feel fortunate enough to get to know every partner and artist and spend time with them. I take so much pride in presenting Paky, Miriam and Bihter's thoughts, pieces, and works that came to be in their time in Alanya.

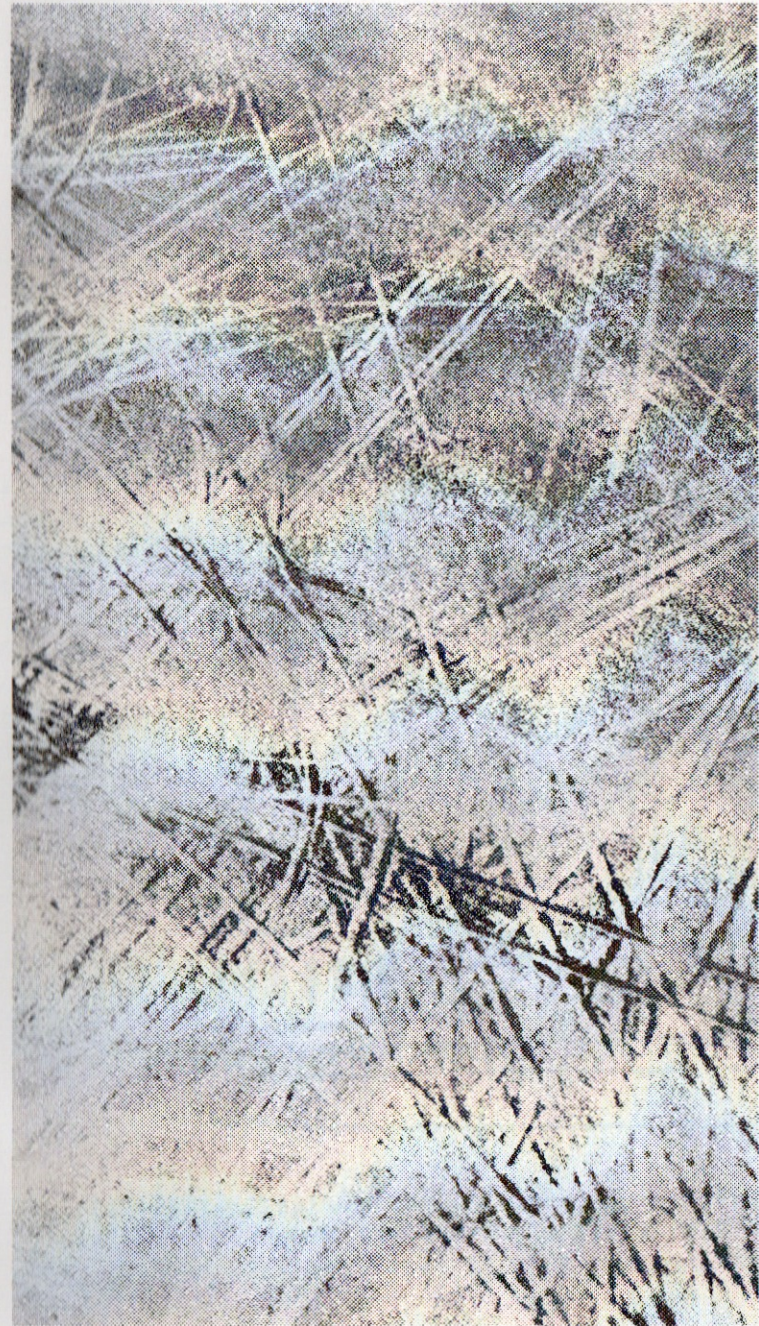
Fatma Belkis
Antalya, 2026



following spread and insert- *Ihtilal* by Paky Vlassopoulou



Alanya 2025



somewhere in Africa during WWII

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FIRST LEAF

κνσελλεσόμενοι μικρῶν τε μεγάλων

φανελλεσόμενοι μικρῶν τε μεγάλων



ἐν πόλιν, πόλιν, πόλεων πασῶν ἐφθαλμῆ ἀκουσθῆ παχκοθιον.
φλαμα ὑπερκοθιον, ἐκκλησιῶν γαλουκέ, πίστεις ἀρηγῆ
φροδοξίας ποθῆ, λόγων μέλημα, κάλου πάντος ἐνδιετήμα
τί μαρτυρήσω σοί; τίνα ὁμοιώσω σε;

FIRST LEAF



My palatial home in Subrahmanya... with manuscripts, I had... My wife... the year 1712

Thought of returning to my country... there, I had... I had... I had...

On an exceptionally windy Saturday... I had... I had...

O City, City, eye of alicities, universal boast, supramundane wonder
wetnurse of churches, leader of the faith, guide of Orthodoxy, beloved
theme of speeches, the abode of every good thing. What shall I
testify to thee? What shall I compare to thee?

Everything has been burned, savagely pillaged, minted, spat upon,
shattered to bits, beaten to a pulp, and smeared with the Latin's
driveling. Herakles' statue was melted to mint worthless coins. I was
nine when I was sent to the City from Chonae. I looked up to my
brother, seventeen years my senior, as if he were Herakles. In our
land, a man did not need strength or military skill to be considered
powerful. Humble, gentle, literature-loving people like me could
also find happiness there.

...the city... the city... the city...

...the city... the city... the city...

...the city... the city... the city...

...the city... the city... the city...

...the city... the city... the city...

...the city... the city... the city...

My palatial home in Sphorakion gleamed with mosaics, but even more with manuscripts. I read Homer, Virgil, Apollonius Rhodius. My wife was pregnant with our fifth child. We had a house in Selymbria where we spent the summer. Then, the Queen of cities fell to the Latins on the twelfth day of the month of April of the seventh indication in the year 6712.

I thought of returning to my hometown. Yet there was no use for my talent there. I did not know how to cultivate land or engage in trade. I knew how to compose orations and mediate in tense disputes among high officials. Chonae would have to remain the blessed seat of my childhood.

On an unexpectedly wintry Saturday, five days after the fall, we left Constantinople forever, unsure where we would end up. I retain a faint recollection of pulling a young girl from the barbarians' hands after much struggle and terror, but I cannot be certain I am not confusing it with a dream, it lingers as a murky and blood-stained daymare.

I have lived in the Nicean lands for two years now, continuing my existence as a relic. My experience, accumulated through years of hard labour and anguish, is passed from hand to hand like an object bargained over in the agora, glanced at unwillingly by unlettered men who could never grasp the true nature of knowledge or the divine.

The Niceans treat us as if we were aliens. My trusted patrons or friends in whom I had placed high hopes, abandoned me. The city is crowded with exiled bureaucrats who have become useless overnight. When I am not ridiculed, I am offered jobs of laughing-stock quality, which I accept only to prevent my family from starving. My soul drifts from one patron to the next, from one position to another. Not like Jason, no. Like the lowliest sailor on the ill-fated Argo. The stones of the Symplegades wait to crush me between them.

The city did not fall when the Latins scaled the walls. It fell when men of goodwill, learning, and generosity perished in exile. The Latins, those haters of the beautiful, destroyed only the flesh of Byzantium. My fellow Roman citizens destroyed its soul.

And thus, noble things were exchanged for petty ones, those works wrought with such devotion were reduced to hollow coins.

ἀνταλλασσόμενοι μικρῶν τὰ μεγάλα καὶ τὰ
δαπάναις πονηθέντα μεγίσταις οὐτιδανῶν
ἀντιδιδόντες κερμάτων.

SECOND LEAF

φ Φούτσιδες, Βαλαάδες, Μεσημέρηδες



ΗΜΕΙΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΚΑΤΑΧΩΡΗΤΑΙΣ
 ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΚΑΤΑΧΩΡΗΣ
 ΑΝΤΙΣΤΑΣΑΝΤΕΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΕΝΕΧΕΙΡΟΝ
 ΤΟΙΣ ΕΝΕΧΕΙΡΟΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΕΝΕΧΕΙΡΟΝ



THIS is the first page of my autobiography written while I waste my years at a vulgar cosmetics shop in Kaleici, Denizli. Why vulgar, you may ask. Because I find that all this emphasis on body hair, black spots, impurities, and calluses to be removed is the very definition of vulgarity. Ah, you might also wonder why a 25-year-old insignificant woman would write an autobiography. Because until now my lineage has spoken only in miramas.

Let me begin with the oldest story I know. It is a foolish tale carried through our family for generations, and my great-grandmother ^{was the one} who passed it to me. She said that centuries ago, when the enemy entered the village and burned every house, one of my ancestors escaped the flames, was seized by the enemy, but was saved by a saint who pulled her from their hands, and somehow found her way to Grevena. Centuries went by, and those Orthodox forebears, living under Ottoman rule, eventually converted to Islam. The elders say a Russo-Turkish war was the cause. They also mention an Albanian pasha whose name I can never remember...

The last thing I know for certain is that my great-great-grandparents were Muslims living on Greek soil, and, in 1923, during the infamous population exchange, they were sent to Honaz, known in the old times as Chonae.

We are called the Vallahades. **THEY** say the name comes from vallahi as if our ancestors wished to declare again and again: "By God, we are Muslims, truly."

Forgive the interruption, a customer has just asked for a fiery red nail polish, 218, and some cold wax for her upper-leg hair, a more delicate region than the lower leg. She neither looked me in the eye nor thanked me. The uncivil are everywhere. Anyway, let me continue.

The first of our family who arrived in Honaz were ridiculed. They were called gavar, although they swore they were Muslims. One great-aunt was spat on in primary school at the age of seven because her Turkish sounded clumsy.

Her mother had been a respected figure in Grevena, known for settling quarrels between stubborn neighbours. She sacrificed a lamb at each Eid and taught her children to play the lute. People sought her out whenever trouble brewed in the neighbourhood: two brothers disputing a boundary stone in the fields, a girl resisting an undesired marriage, a mother demanding the return of her daughter's trousseau. She always wore purple dresses, believing it to be the colour of royalty the colour of the Porphyrogenitus. She claimed that her ancestors had lived in the Poli, that they had been born in a chamber lined with porphyry marble, and that they had fled only when the enemy attacked. I must confess **THAT** she went further and claimed she was the reincarnation of Theodora. Yet none of these regal dreams shielded her daughter from humiliation. She was spat on in an overly crowded classroom in Honaz, surrounded by forty children.

Four generations have passed, I still speak Greek only when I am drunk. My Vallahades friends and I gather sometimes in Göz Park and sing Greek odes when the raki loosens our tongues.

I told you this is the prologue to my autobiography. Before I continue, I must speak of a statue. I saw it in the now-demolished Antalya Museum. I remember a feeling as if my blood were draining away. Before me stood the Archangel Gabriel, with immaculate curls and wings patterned with peacock feathers. His mantle was fastened at the shoulder with a brooch, and his name was chiseled on marble.

As I came closer, I noticed an unexpected alphabet on the disk he held in his right hand. It was Arabic, and the disk bore the word Allah, added centuries after the statue was first carved. I have never seen a clearer image of myself and of the Vallhades.

That is why I will start my tale in Antalya, because only in the shadow of that hybrid angel did I finally recognize the shape of my own fractured lineage.

Bilker Sabanoğlu

Antalya, 2025

original text was written on a typewriter and duplicated on a mimeograph

Bihter Sabanoğlu, born in 1980 in Istanbul, is an author and art critic living between Paris and Istanbul. After completing her education at Notre Dame de Sion French Girls' High School, she pursued English Literature studies at Istanbul University. She earned her master's degree in English Language and Literature from Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle and received training in various disciplines, including Greek and Egyptian epigraphy and Byzantine art history, at the École du Louvre. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate in Byzantine Art History at Sorbonne Paris III University. Her body of work encompasses independent historical research as well as art history, contemporary art, and literature. Her articles and essays have been regularly featured in publications such as *Toplumsal Tarih*, *Yıllık: Annual of Istanbul Studies*, *Art Unlimited*, *Manifold*, *Sanat Kritik*, and *Sanat Dünyamız*. In 2022, she released her debut novel titled *Şüpheli Şeylerin Keşfi*.

Miriam Gatt is passionate about making things mean and finding meaning with others. She self-publishes a series of prayer books, collects rocks, writes modern parables, eats words and hosts workshops. She is also one of the founding members of the publishing initiative Fisherwomxn based in Nicosia, Cyprus.

Paky Vlassopoulou is a visual artist primarily working in sculpture. In recent years her works revolve around the concepts of confinement, care and hospitality, while the themes of shelter and home are recurring in her practice, with clay as a frequently used medium. Her work has been exhibited in leading cultural institutions, including the Sharjah Art Foundation, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMST), Onassis Stegi, Thessaloniki Biennale, Benaki Museum, NEON Foundation & Whitechapel Gallery, and New Museum & DESTE Foundation. Vlassopoulou is an Onassis AiR Fellow and recipient of the ARTWORKS Artists Fellowship by Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). In 2012, together with artists Chrysanthi Koumianaki and Kosmas Nikolaou, she co-founded 3 137, an artist-run space operating in Athens, Greece.

In a letter he wrote to Arza Erhat, the Fisherman of Halicarnassus described the islands, land, and sea between the Aegean and the western Mediterranean as Arşipel, referring to the entire region as "hür adalar," or "the sovereign islands." Is the fantasy of economically liberated sovereign island states amid the ocean of the global economy even possible? Founded in response to this fantasy, Hür Adalar is an artist residency program and publishing initiative.
Hür Adalar is in east Arşipel, in Alanya.



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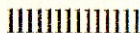
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When the first migrants from Kyme came ashore to settle in this land, they forgot the Greek language and started speaking a foreign language.

*Text from archeological site in Side, Turkey
citing Arrianos (1.12.4)*

Look, we will change everything, all the meanings.

Anne Carson

(un)spelling

Prepare a large piece of dough (suggested recipe in the last pages).

Set a table with everything you will need: dough, flour, paper, pens, forks, knives, almonds, raisins, sesame seeds or other seeds.

Gather around the table.

It was a certain hour of the afternoon and we had agreed to meet at your mother's house and then go swimming. A gentle wind swept across the front yard. You poured fresh lemonade into two glass chalices and placed the book I had lent you on the table between us as an omen for good conversation. You said you enjoyed reading it so much that it made you want to pray.

As we sat sipping lemonade, I thought about asking you what you meant by praying. A flock of birds flew above us and on top of the sea. I thought this must be a sign for something. I had gotten accustomed to thinking things were signs without knowing what the signs were for. I waited for the moment when the sign would reveal its secret meaning and I would jump in fear at how all secrets, when revealed, are in fact simple. Maybe that moment would not come at all or maybe it would come later. But there was no need to wait for it as it would surely come on its own, just like the night comes only when it wishes and not a minute before.

When it wished and not a minute before, night came. We listened to the sound of the waves crushing on the shore. We dug our fingers into the damp sand and wrote words. Difficult words. Long words. Hopeful words. Thankful words. Desperate ones too. We wrote them as they came to us because we were trying to empty ourselves without thinking. Night fell and the tide rose, clearing the shores of writing.

As we watched our words disappear under the laced edges of the waves I thought maybe this was us praying. That night we fell asleep outside. I dreamt of our words being carried outwards by the sea, how they loosened and unspelled themselves. You dreamt of a faceless mass of flesh on the shores, a beautiful decaying giant called language. What do you do when language washes out on your shore?

Pass a piece of dough to each participant.

Ask participants to spend time with the dough while they listen. Explain the tools. They may use forks to form the dough. They may use nuts, seeds and raisins to decorate it etc.

What do you do when language washes out on your shore? In your dream you bit it. You said you felt you were taking a bite of something much larger. You bit into language and it felt like cannibalism. You said everything feels like cannibalism if you think about it too much.

When I moved to Cyprus I didn't understand a word and had to swallow the whole world. We all swallow the whole world at least once. We swallow it word by word to create a reflection of our outsides in our insides. We use this reflection of the world to produce meaning. In order for meaning to function we must have faith in this reflection of the world which we call language. I must have faith in later, faith in simple, faith in outside, faith in and, faith in it too. I must have faith in every single word that makes up this text and that I have swallowed.

The sea was shallow close to the shore. I was swimming on my back, head tilted to the point where I could see the bottom of the Mediterranean upside down. I wanted to swim further in to avoid seeing the bottom. In Maltese we say *ħa noħroġ il-barra* (I am going outside) to mean going deeper into the sea. In Cypriot Greek we say, *εν να φκώ εξω* (I am going outside) to mean going out toward the shore. I back stroked through the waves. I opened my eyes and saw the inverted Mediterranean changing colours, fading into a blackness. This dark bottom of the sea is a mysterious hole into which I often empty myself of words.

Here are some words. As you hear them, let yourself be carried away by their sound. Don't try to grasp them all, choose one that pulls your attention and hold onto it.

faith	soap
fate	envelope
feather	cope
fever	copper
never	stopper
eighth	proper
weight	grasshopper
hate	grass
late	glass
wake	trespass
awake	pass
remake	passing
date	something
day	missing
monday	kissing
sunday	things
tuesday	flings
ashtray	swings
doomsday	sings
okay	clings
that way	wings
this way	rings
sunray	spring
sun	springing
sung	bringing
tongue	flings
stung	things
island	strings
dryland	wings
lung	kings
hope	beings
rope	things
none	

thin	stone
tin	bone
tine	alone
tone	flown
hone	loan
hollow	stone
home	stane
chrome	shane
foam	shall
warm	shell
ward	spell
card	spill
cord	spin
cold	spine
fold	spined
mold	inside
molding	in side
mending	in love
pending	in tend
ending	in port
sleeping	in ward
sleep	word
sheep	words
sheet	
reap	
heap	
heal	
feel	
phone	
gemstone	
ingrown	
grown	
know	

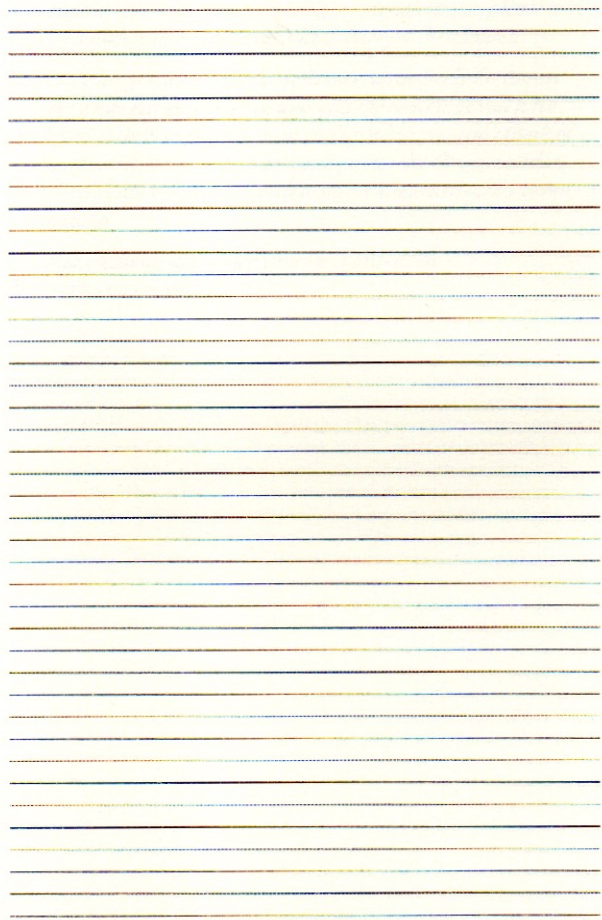
Words don't come easy to me. Often I stutter. I need to restart many times before I find my tiny path. Maybe it is that I have swallowed too many words or maybe it is that I am a woman who sometimes has doubts in language.

I doubt language the most when I recite those frequent prayers. As soon as I say the words "Father" I hesitate and stop. To place faith in that word would be to uphold a creation that includes everything I wish to unmake. For it is through words that our world was created and it is through words that it may be destroyed. I tried replacing the word "Father" with "Mother" countless times and still could not believe what was coming out of my mouth. Then, I replaced the words with the names of people I knew: "J, I abandon myself into your hands." and I asked: Can I give myself to her this way? Do I dare abandon myself like that? Would it be good for me, or even for them? Or do I do that every day, because love always moves in that direction? It is humbling and frightening. It is easier to be with strangers who could not ask a thing from me, in whose hands I did not surrender. The difficulty persists. Right now, I am finding it difficult to say "Do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you." What I am finding easiest to say is the last line: "For you are mine."

But doubt is not the opposite of faith. Faith is a living thing because it walks hand-in-hand with doubt. If there was only certainty and no doubt, there would be no mystery—and therefore no need for faith. So faith in language necessitates doubt in words. It necessitates that I bring the words I have swallowed outside of myself and place them side by side with yours. What does "prayer" mean? What does "p-r-a-y-e-r" mean to you?

"In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God." Lately I wonder who God was speaking to in the beginning. Did he walk through the universe talking to himself, speaking things into existence? Perhaps God prayed everything into being. Yet my words are worn out by so many uses. They appear everywhere and are nowhere. I am trying to unspell these words. To return these words to words. Words going back to words by order of utterance until they become as strong as when first uttered, a burst of light in the mouth of a creator, an infinite word, burning, inseparable.

The beginning is a monologue.
A wanting so strong it produces sound.
A sound so strong,
it produces everything.



Dough recipe:

This is a recipe for a traditional Maltese easter sweet called Figola. You may use any other recipe or a dough of water, salt and flour to make objects that may be preserved.

Ingredients:

550 g plain flour (4 2/3 cups)

225 g cold butter (1 cup)

150 g caster sugar (2/3 cup)

zest of one lemon

zest of one orange

juice of one orange

3 egg yolks

2 tsp vanilla extract

Optional almond filling using the three whites of the eggs:

300 g ground almonds (3 cups)

300 g icing sugar (3 cups)


3 egg whites

1 tsp almond essence

zest of one lemon

1. *In a large bowl mix the flour and the cubed butter to a crumbly mixture.*
2. *Add all the remaining ingredients except the juice of an orange, and mix well.*
3. *Slowly start adding the juice and combine until a smooth soft dough is formed.*
4. *Wrap in cling film and let it rest in the fridge for an hour.*
5. *For the almond filling, add all the ingredients together and mix well to get a paste. Wrap in cling film and refrigerate for an hour.*





Written by Miriam Gatt

Parts of this text are inspired by conversations with
my dear friends Sonia Neidorf & Nicola Mitropoulou

Edited by Ioulita Toumazi & Seta Astreou-Karides

Special thanks to Fatma Belkıs who hosted me in
Alanya at Hür Adalar Residency where I started
writing this prayer book.

This prayer book invites you to ponder on words as something tactile that can be created and de-created.

Rather than treating language as a cannon that fires the outside world into us, how may we practice bringing what lives within us outward? Inspired by Simone Weil's notion of de-creation—the dissolving of the self to make space for the spiritual—it suggests prayer not as a request but as an act of intentionally emptying ourselves from language. This text has been read at multiple workshops hosted by the author and is open to be used and adapted by others who wish to re-enchant words.

