

My heart skipped to the beat

of "Songs singing of you/ your name a melody/ like passion, like love/ a moody, sweet lady", through an altogether different youth. Then, we blended in with the blackest of black in places where we were made to surrender. The transvestite rock bars converted from night clubs were just like drugs that exploded, intoxicated, and fizzled out. With the same purposeful expression fixed on the same faces, we adorned an executioner's glance with lives blown out like uninflated balloons. With young gentlemen and ladies too young to drink beer or make love, we searched for common melancholy in all the hide-outs of İstiklal, in the hands of dealers without fingernails, under the swelling jackets of men of dubious identity, dressed up in dark suits, in the bottle-tops with slit edges used as junk pots, in the devil in our blood, in the save-the-universe cult complexion of a dumb-drunken-destitute woman, in the corpse of the child glue-sniffer which lay partly covered with newspaper. We searched but couldn't find.

Yes, every street in Beyoğlu is a bit like Elm Street. The younger generation sticking in their own gravestones on street corners, with the plastic water bottles from their pockets! So why are we grateful?! We have no gods but ourselves! Who knows how many dead we left behind on that long journey starting out at the French Consulate and ending at Tünel in the short underground train?! Here, hydrochloric acid is the best solvent. Everyone in Beyoğlu must have a connection with a 900 phone-in line. Everyone can tell a story. Everyone is a reminder of something. Everyone has a reputation. Everyone is ready to make another reputation. In Beyoğlu, love is duty-bound to sex. Love,

in Beyoğlu, often works overtime at night. Drinking has no brakes. Everything that's pop inclines toward the blues in the early hours. What strikes you is a vampire illusion. Everyone's got to be a bit deluded in Beyoğlu. That's style. For instance, I got to like strawberries in Beyoğlu. I got to like films, I got to like Kurt Cobain in Beyoğlu. That's where I felt bad for the first time. That's where I first made Bad Friends. Where I broke my jaw. Where I lost my first child who was never to be found. Beyoğlu is like a maternity clinic built on a graveyard. An organic enigma dressed in multi-coloured lights!

Watch out, stranger! Don't ever sail into Beyoğlu without a guide! Not everyone's got the balls to get into bed with Beyoğlu! You've got to be both a gentleman/bey and a son/ogul! Here everyone identifies with someone else. Guns are drawn and fired. Being here is being scattered all over the world. Plain-clothes policemen right and left! Radical islamist doner-kebab joints right and left! Junkies right and left! Cats and dogs! Extras at every step! Wine joints, tv, bars, and street cafés at every step! Beyoğlu progresses like a consuming disease! Rather drunk! Staggering, tripping over, stumbling down, then up again without help. Beyoğlu, going down in history on its own!

A pair of bloody scissors is left on each doorstep. Somebody's life apparently swept off to somebody else's. Our garbage quickly dumped off on each other. Maybe this is where socialism will take heart. The families of those who've gone missing in detention will start living here. This is where we'll learn to be humanists once more. The cock that crew out of time can only be a revolutionary who deliberately caused death. Everyone in Beyoğlu believes in revolution as much as in suicide. Everyone in Beyoğlu has been back from the brink of execution. Will everyone please button up!

But we were handsome, soulful children, shattered to pieces, who, without taking leave, let ourselves into the bosom of manly nights. There was always a blind violin-player wandering in the mirrors of our sweating, youthful moustache. We loved alcohol. Cigarettes figured like seagulls on our holders. Everyone was a doctor, attending to love in their centre. Someone, pushing his way through the doctors, called out: "Make way, please make way, I'm ill!"

Every night a plane crashes into Beyoğlu! No one survives from the crew or the passengers. Just when you've approached a mobile food stall to eat bird's meat with pilav, the plane appears in the skies above. The landing gear doesn't work, and the plane comes crashing down on any old lover of yours. The barman who doesn't instantly mix cyanide in your drink is bound to get fired. Beyoğlu is an aquarium, where sharks swim!

Poetry in Beyoğlu is the whisper of an insane genie. At the end of our meetings people ask each other how much more time they've still got to live. Answering calls for courage. People whose hearts have turned into a shred of skin caught in a zipper are pumped into other parts of the city through the arteries like a snowman about to melt. The oxygen you've supplied to others in Beyoğlu comes back to you in tears that bond and flow down Yuksekkaldirim where ageing, beautiful whores, stepping out of the brothel, drown in them.

Our hearts were roughly handled in the joints on the sidestreets, so we used to get together to clear them of charge. We were majestic murderers, proud and confident. We kept falling in love at the matinée or the night show. The person who curled up in our bed in the late hours was definitely not a lover. We loved the persons we made love with, as much as we loved our enemy, and hated them in disgust, as we hated our lover. Using condoms in Beyoğlu was gross insult!

People were stapled to memories. Their eyes poking into a frozen moment, they tried to tease out sense and anxiety. When was poetry ever a mitigating circumstance?! Could've been, possibly. A bright blue teardrop. A bright blue embrace. A bright blue swan. No. Here, blue is the bleeding of a darker, deeper blue. Living in Beyoğlu is symptomatic of AIDS.

They used to come to the forest to protect us. They were skillful, strong, sharp. We offered them our torches, knife-blades, fault lines, and lice. Retreating to our cages in Beyoğlu, the public zoo, we expected to score full points in death and dejection. We had sliced up and devoured our wardens and our mothers. Super heights! Super nonsense! Super-chargers! Beyoğlu is a double-rolled joint wherein lies a scattering of lives. Wherever you go, wherever you live, Beyoğlu is the thing that Cavafy talks about! But can one tell? Hope springs everywhere. And those who lean

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*We were handsome,
soulful children*

on hope are bound to confront Beyoğlu. It's Beyoğlu who'll choose the arms. You'll each count ten paces, then face each other and fire. Pity, though, that yours is a blank round! Beyoğlu will have shot you without mercy!

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