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Sex

by Reyhan Şahin

TRANSIT Your Homeland is Our Nightmare

Translated by Didem Uca

Smack! go my Turkish-German pussy lips. Smack, smack, when I let them flourish and thrive like an outlaw. Smack, smack, smack, when they're wet and feeling boundless pleasure. Splat, splat! Like they are lolling about in a wading pool and squeaking with delight like a rubber duckie.

When women take up space with their punanis, when they speak about their own vulvas, vaginas, pussies, or cunts on their own terms or even pornographically, many view this, figuratively speaking, like squirting. Or when women have penises and speak about them sensually. When a woman speaks about sex, about her own sexual experiences, in a rough manner, not fabric-softened or whitewashed, but rather—smack, in ya face!—confronting you head on with her own snatch. To many, this comes off like facial ejaculation. It is still an absolute social taboo for women to discuss their sexuality outside of a man-made pornographic context, female sexuality that simply does not conform to the objectifying gaze and conventions of men. I term this *Female Sex Speech*. To what extent is Female Sex Speech accepted in our societies?

To many, the open discussion of sexuality via Female Sex Speech feels like a bona fide Ottoman slap in the face. It is quite common to enjoy when a singer moans softly in her songs, like in Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg's "Je t'aime," for one thing, because it was a long time ago (1969), and for another, because it was sung in French. But when a female rapper roughly describes in German how she wants to be satisfied, they suddenly think: "Ohgodohgod, how can she do that? Independent female pleasure!" Her Turkish background plays a decisive role in this indignation, as they expect everything of her—everything but aggressive sexuality. They try to shield themselves from it, holding both hands in front of their faces. "Aaahhh! Help, the monstersnatch is coming!" All for naught. Smack! Pussy-spritz right in the mouth. Like bukkake, but rather than coming from a mélange of dicks, it comes from *one single snatch*. In my case, from a German snatch with a Turkish (im)migration biography. From a *Kanakin* who started from the bottom and now has a Ph.D. From an educational climber who can rap and dole it out. Aka from Dr. Bitch Ray.

When I speak unabashedly about the rage within my pussy, the most common reactions are, "Oh my God, she said cunt!" or, "Why can't she stop putting her cunt in her mouth?" Then they ask, "did she really give her cunt secretions to Oliver Pocher on the show that one time?" In response to my song lyrics, like "Suck it, baby, suck it, bitch / Now I want cunt instead of a hard dick..." I have to hear comments like "Oh no, I can't stand it when women talk like that!" And this from women and men from a variety of social classes, but especially the upper classes. Despite the fact that the viewing of vulvas and ventilation of vajayjays has been commonplace since the Greek goddess Demeter's time—these are not recent revelations.

These reactions depend—no surprise—on who emits this coochie-bukkake. In principle, however, it is shocking whenever any woman thematizes her *own* sexuality. There will certainly be people who will not continue reading this text or who already stopped after the first paragraph because they find my language “too vulgar” and cannot stomach Female Sex Speech. Perhaps I would do the same thing if I did not understand the backstory. If I were prudish or could not let artforms be as they are. If I were not so furious about societal conditions and the sexist, tabooing, scandalizing approach to female sexuality. And all this, even today, when everyone thinks that we are oh-so-enlightened.

“Wait, what?” many of you will think, “but none of this is true! What taboo and which scandal? We’re bombarded (or, indeed, cumbarded) with sexuality and pornography in advertisement, film, television, and literature! And many women these days are talking about their sexual experiences.” That’s probably true. I’ll give you that. But what sort of sexuality are we made to tolerate, day in and day out? And where does it come from? Let’s take a look.

I do not need to describe the sexism in advertising, which is already the constant object of feminist critique. It is also common knowledge that films and TV shows overwhelmingly portray the stories of men rather than *her*stories and that self-determined female sexuality is rarely portrayed, if at all. The eternally sexualizing tabloids are self-explanatory. And literature? Well, sure, since Charlotte Roche’s *Wetlands* [*Feuchtgebiete*] and E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades of Grey*, many have grown accustomed to books on sex by and featuring women. Or so one could at least claim. But what kind of sex books are these exactly? Are they about the sexualities of their respective authors?

No, never directly. These are novels, so there is always a big gap between the sexuality of the author and that of her protagonist. The reader is not supposed to directly relate sexuality to the author. Fiction allows for a more open and honest discussion of some issues, particularly with regard to taboos. Thus, a certain kind of interpretative space granting anonymity and abstraction is also always maintained. Where, though, does this leave space for women to engage directly and honestly with their own sexuality? Even today, we’re still getting a raw deal.

An unmediated thematization of women’s sexuality, whether by female authors, artists, singers, rappers, or anchors, is and remains taboo, even today. Unless these women conform to men’s conceptions of female sexuality in which they, for example, play the pretty moppet or the shrinking violet, just how cis men like it. When it comes to a woman who is also a woman of color, then it’s all over! Exotic fantasies come into play because so many are aroused by the notion of fucking an Exotic Woman.

How about the representation and self-staging of women on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram? Yes, there are definitely some women who do not conform to beauty standards and also dare to speak about their own sexualities. But they can probably be counted on one hand. Add to this the censorship of nipples and vaginas of people read as female, but not of dick pics. I can still remember how often my sex rap songs were censored on YouTube, Facebook, and Vimeo, while male rappers’ songs about ‘ass-fucking’ women and other intensely sexist songs were always given free reign online. It turns out that authentic female sexuality needs to grow a giant pair of ovaries to be allowed to exist, let alone be accepted.

And isn't the power to have unrestricted access to Sex Speech closely related to the feminism trend and commercialization of feminist themes? The more commercially successful a woman is, the more she is granted the agency to speak about sex. The acceptance of so-called "Pussyhat Feminism" from the U.S. would have been completely unthinkable in Germany ten years ago. Twelve years ago, I was sensationalized and stigmatized in the media for my decision to speak openly about my "cunt" [*Votze*] as a means to reclaim this word and make women impervious to its negative appropriation. Calling my music label "Vagina Style" alone caused a huge commotion, whereas in the English-speaking rap scene, artists like Beyoncé and Nicki Minaj are able to evade the censorship that otherwise silences Female Sex Speech. Even well-behaved, harmless, white women have been known to adopt a certain kind of Sex Speech slang in order to be cool and/or to imitate a "brazen," "rebellious" feminism. But this (often quite insincere) form feels like Sex Speech Lite to me. Because somehow it has still not managed to enter the dimension of critical feminism that I would expect from it.

Female sexuality must be analyzed through an intersectional lens. We know the effects of multiple discrimination. People can be racialized and marginalized on the basis of their gender, ethnic background, or appearance—and sometimes all of these at once. So, for instance, a Muslim woman who wears a headscarf and grows up in a non-Muslim majority society faces marginalization and discrimination not only because of her ethnic background (e.g. Turkish, Kurdish, or Arab) and her religious affiliation (visible, among other reasons, due to her headscarf), but also because she is gendered as female. She may be marginalized once more within her own particular Muslim community because she wears a fashionable or relatively revealing style of headscarf.

Whether they wear headscarves or not, many women face the harsh judgment of the outside world when they get dolled up or wear makeup. They are ogled by their colleagues and constantly asked questions about their personal lives because they are assumed to be promiscuous, which piques others' curiosity. I, too, am constantly subjected to lookistⁱ discrimination and exclusion, particularly because of my flashy, promiscuous, and unconventional way of dressing and/or my unusual makeup. Even today, a well put-together woman in academia who wears makeup and stylish clothing is presumed to be an incompetent scholar.

There are thus many examples of intersectional discrimination. And yet, to return to our topic of discussion, there still remains an important means of discrimination that has until now been overlooked in both the popular and academic discourse: Female Sex Speech. The stigma of sex as an interSEXional form of discrimination is the most invisible of all. You can never prove it. No one has studied it. But it is omnipresent and clings to you your whole life. It clings to you like a case of the clap you can never quite kick.

Sociologist Erving Goffman describes stigmatization as a kind of link between a characteristic and a stereotype. The stigma is the point at which the virtual and the actual—that is, the true social identity of a stigmatized person—diverge. In the case of Female Sex Speech, it seems that there is an extreme form of divergence at play, much like splayed legs baring a squirting cunt. It's such a drag when a person who has been discredited due to their stigmatized sexuality reveals other, wholly irreconcilable personal attributes, such as a serious occupation, a special hobby, or a particular cultural background. Plus sex, sex, sex! That really turns them off. Because there is just no way all of this could fit together!

A phenomenon particular to Female Sex Speech is that it provokes the most extreme reactions. It not only incites maximum hate speech, but also seems to trigger male rape fantasies. As though there were a formula that read: Female Sex Speech = Shitstorm¹⁰ + Rape Culture Activation. I could fill books with hateful rape culture comments: “Dumb slut, you need to get fucked to death with a hard dick” sets a mind-bogglingly imaginative standard for what can be found in countless permutations.

Women of Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab backgrounds who stay true to and may even speak about their own sexualities are not only stigmatized because they break from traditional gender norms, but also because they then do not conform to white German notions of “Oriental” gender roles. Usually this leads white men to two possible courses of action: Either they want to free the Turkish and/or Muslim woman—since she herself is not in a position to do so (just as the Christian male crusaders wanted to free the “Oriental princess”), or they pretend to be an expert outsider on “Turkish culture” and remind her that this “would absolutely not be allowed in your own cultural milieu!”

I have had the constant pleasure of reading comment threads on social media declaring my actions “inappropriate for a Turkish woman!” For me, this is nothing other than Sex-Based Orientalism driven by stereotypes and prejudices. Because no one is interested in learning that many Turkish, Iranian, and Kurdish women speak very openly about their sexuality within their private circles—although such an assertion would probably merely serve to arouse further exotic fantasies in white men.

Sex-Based Orientalism always emerges in a majority society’s ascriptions imposed on (im)migrant women—and in particular, those socialized as Muslim, Turkish, Kurdish, or Arab—whenever sexuality is referenced in any way. And even when it isn’t, these women will be associated with sex somehow, don’t you worry! Whether it’s because they wear headscarves that incite sexual fantasies or because they dress promiscuously—which is viewed by white German observers as incongruous—or because they talk about sex or even because of the ineffable multiplicity they represent in reality. Apparently, every single lousy swine is interested in the fucking sexuality of these women! Many would love nothing more than to peep through the keyhole while these women are undressing or having sex. This is Orientalist voyeurism par excellence à la the Ottoman harem. *I* would love nothing more than to stick a knitting needle through the keyhole and holler, “Ciao! The Orient Sexpress has left the station!”

My favorite question (which I still often hear even today) about my song lyrics is: “What do your parents have to say about all this?!” I get this question not only from journalists, but also from scholars, people I meet randomly, or in general, from anyone confronted with me and my art for the first time. I have long-since stopped responding with, “Why should my parents have anything to say about it?” because I already know that behind their question lies a morbid curiosity and a preconceived notion of strict, religious Turkish parents who forbid their daughters from ever doing anything. This prejudice must, absolutely, be confirmed, which is why they ask this question until they are blue in the balls.

In the beginning, I often had to swallow my own question in response, which was: “What do your parents have to say about your ignorant, prejudiced questions? Would they do the exact same thing?” They probably would. Today my response is short and sweet: “Nothing, I’m grown and my parents are no longer involved in my affairs.” I decided long ago to stop explaining anything more to these people, because doing so robs me of my

energy and accomplishes nothing. Because, ultimately, it is not really about sexuality at all; it is merely meant to provide a means of self-affirming their perceptions of others. Or it is about Orientalist voyeurism, about learning something new about the objectified Turkish woman. I would rather spend my precious time on my pussytive self-care. At least she gives me something in return.

Smack goes my pussy. Smack, smack, when she feels good and can spread out. When she feels safe and knows that she still has untold thousands of orgasms ahead of her. And, until then, my pussy lips will continue to flutter and thrive without hiding or forcing themselves to conform to any norms. Because my *Kanak*-pussy needs space—a ton, a fuckton of space! And, inside this German realm, she will always take it up, no matter what others have to say or think about it!

ⁱ Lookism represents the structural discrimination and exclusion of people on the basis of preordained forms of physical appearance, body, clothing, and looks.