New Generation Cafe Culture and the Construction of Urban Bodies

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Abstract

In recent years, the number of Starbucks and similar places and the number of people spending time in these places has been increasing in Turkey. There is an extensive literature on these places and coffee-consumption culture, which has gained widespread acceptance especially among students and the middle classes. However, in this study, we specifically sought to understand how it operates in situations such as the construction of class belonging and the presentation of the self for male and female students at Foundation Universities in Ankara. For this purpose, we designed an ethnographic field study that included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and observation of the social media accounts of 15 female and 15 male Private (Waqf) University students. We completed this field study by reaching a total of 26 students. Our fieldwork showed us that as the leisure activity of coffee consumption is much more than consuming coffee and spending leisure time. These spaces and their consumption culture play a crucial role in the construction of urban, middle-class male and female identities. In this study, in relation to the existing literature on this subject, we have tried to show how coffee consumption constructs representations such as body, subject, and belonging, while not neglecting layers such as gender and urbanity.

Keywords: Coffee-café, conspicuous consumption, body, Ankara city, university students, gender

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Yeni Nesil Cafe Kültürü ve Kentli Bedenlerin İnşaası

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Öz

Son yıllarda ülkemizde Starbucks ve benzeri mekanların ve buralarda vakit geçiren insanların sayısı giderek artmaktadır. Özellikle öğrenciler ve orta sınıflar arasında oldukça yaygın bir kabul gören bu tür mekanlar ve buradaki kahve-tüketim kültürü üzerine geniş sayılabilecek bir literatür var. Bununla birlikte biz bu çalışmada, spesifik olarak, Ankara'da Vakıf Üniversitelerinde öğrenci olan kadın ve erkekler için bu mekanın nasıl bir işlev gördüğünü anlamaya çalıştık. Bu amaçla 15 kadın 15 erkek Vakıf Üniversitesi öğrencisi ile derinlemesine mülakat yapmayı hedefledik. Mülakatlara ek olarak katılımcı gözlem, ve araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin sosyal medya hesaplarının incelenmesini de içeren etnografik bir saha çalışması tasarladık. Tasarladığımız bu sahayı toplam 26 öğrenciye ulaşarak tamamladık. Yapmış olduğumuz saha çalışması bize gösterdi ki, en genel anlamıyla, kahve tüketimi diyebileceğimiz boş zaman aktivitesi, kahve tüketmenin ve boş zaman geçirmenin çok ötesinde bir faaliyet. Bu mekanlar ve bu mekanlara ait tüketim kültürü, kentli, orta-sınıf kadın ve erkek kimliğinin oluşturulmasında oldukça önemli bir yer tutuyor. Bu çalışmada, bu konudaki mevcut literatür ile ilişki içerisinde, kahve tüketiminin; beden, özne, aidiyet gibi temsiliyetleri, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kentlilik gibi katmanları da ıskalamadan nasıl kurduğunu göstermeye çalıştık.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kahve-kafe, gösterişçi tüketim, beden, Ankara şehri, üniversite öğrencileri, toplumsal cinsiyet*

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Introduction

Hattox is right when he says that "*coffee has never been a mere beverage*" (1996, p. 4). Its rapid catalysis with sugar into energy (dePaula and Farah, 2019) made it the morning drink of the working class (London, 2012; Davies, 2022); coffee's colour, smell, ritualistic consumption, and the fact that it provided a reason to display porcelain cups with *Chinamania* or *Porcelainmania* (Curtis, 1988) (which would later become the 5 o'clock tea/coffee time in England) made it attractive to the upper middle classes.

In this respect, it is impossible to tell history and sociology of modernity and post-modernity that does not include coffee when discussing topics such as classes and habitus (Dodson, 2019), colonialism and trade (Koss, 2020), labour and nutrition (Davies, 2022), leisure time (Manderson and Turner, 2006) and leisure time spaces (Widyaningsih, 2021).

Studies on cafés, in terms of their functions, have increased in recent years; for example, fortune-telling cafés (Semerci, Karaman, Yaman, 2022), hookah shops, and coffee houses (Çağlak, 2018) have been studied in many respects. *Starbucks* and its equivalents[5], such as *Yemen, Roberts*, and *Tchibo*, are becoming an integral part of urban culture. Within this context, it seems that the reasons why Starbucks' equivalent places, which have gained an enormous number of regulars among urban people, especially those in the middle-upper income group, or students and white-collar workers under the influence of the middle-class cultural habitus, are preferred so widely by people belonging to this sociocultural structure and the relationship of these preferences with urban culture have not been sufficiently studied, especially in Turkey.

Turkey's coffee consumption seems to have increased remarkably. The country with the highest coffee consumption in the world is Finland with 11.5 kg per capita per year. According to Thcibo's data (Halıcı, 2023), coffee consumption in Turkey has now increased to 1.2 kg per capita per year. In fact, even this is a remarkable amount because 10 years ago, the annual per capita consumption was around 350 grams. The reason for this increase is of course the intense interest of young people in this culture, and if it were possible to look at this consumption pattern demographically, it would

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[5] New generation café is a concept that is also used to describe 3rd generation hybrid cafés. However, here we generally refer to Starbucks and equivalent cafe chains that serve in a different concept than coffee houses called *kahve* and traditional cafes called *kıraathane*.

probably be possible to see that young people living in cities consume coffee close to the world consumption rates. In this respect, it would not be wrong to say that new generation coffee consumption is a kind of youth culture. On the other hand, new generation cafés such as Starbucks, with their relatively expensive menus, are venues that appeal more to Turkey's middle-upper class consumer groups. Young people studying at private universities without scholarships are the most important cross-section of the constructed middle class we are trying to profile, both in terms of their consumption habits and the income status of their families.

The way student groups who can be included in this sociocultural class range spend their time here is the distance between themselves and the imaginary identities they hope to display. This distance is similar to the presentation of the self, which Goffman says, "*The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off*" (Goffman, 1959, p.2).

Coffee consumption and the new generation of cafés is a topic that can be addressed from many perspectives and embodies Turkey's historical periods and current sociological layers. However, the main problem of this study will be to investigate how coffee consumption, café spaces, and café culture affirm and construct urbanity (Yaşar, 2005, p. 237), especially the middle class-urban body, and how these classes differentiate themselves from other social layers, primarily through the identities acquired in these spaces, without missing this historicity (Kırlı, 1999/2000, 2000, 2009) and without ignoring other contemporary layers. Based on this fundamental problem, this study will address three sub-headings through the data obtained in the fieldwork.

These sub-headings are classified in terms of how male and female students function in the space and relate to coffee since one of our sample results is that the perspectives of male and female students on these spaces and coffee culture are not homogeneous.

These sub-headings are classified in terms of how male and female students functionalize the cafe space by drinking coffee. As our findings revealed, the perspectives of male and female students on these places and coffee culture are not homogeneous.

Therefore, the first two classifications relate to the ways how female students display, function, and present their urban, middle-class, and body identities, while the last classification relates to those of male students

The first way female students relate to coffee culture is associated with the idle or chill consumption of conspicuous leisure time in constructing urban and middle-class identity and the class-constitutive function of having such an interval of time.

Therefore, the most significant function of these spaces today is to provide a place for the middle classes or the imaginary middle classes to perform middle-classness; to pretend to have conspicuous leisure time; to make this leisure time visible. According to our study, female students are one of the best consumers of these spaces that classifies space and commodifies time.

In the light of our study, the second central phenomenon we have found out is that such spaces, especially for female students, serve to transform the body itself, as a semiographic image, into both a totem that determines the contours of subjectivity and an amulet that devastates enemies within the performance of ostentatious leisure consumption.

The third section of this study will show that this performance of ostentatious leisure time consumption, which is almost entirely based on an imaginary conception of self/subjectivity, is actually a kind of performance of masculinity for the male students we cross-sectioned.

Method

In-depth interviews were organized with 14 male and 12 female students, aged between 19 and 30, some of whom live with their families and some of whom live separately from their families in residences, houses, or dormitories in Ankara, and these interviews were used in the study through discourse analysis method. While choosing the students to be interviewed, we paid particular attention to criteria that point to an upper-middle class profile, such as the fact that these students study without scholarships in private universities, the neighborhood where their families live, the rent of the dormitory or residence they use as a student house, and the brand of the car they drive, if any. The shortest interview was 18 minutes, the longest was 47 minutes, and the total duration of 26 interviews was 702 minutes. The interviewees were reached by snowball sampling method through key informants who are socially active students studying at private universities and who participate in some student societies there.

All of the interviews were conducted between 1 April and 30 June 2023 in new generation cafés in Kızılay, Çayyolu, and Tunalı, which are frequented by young students, thus strengthening the fieldwork with participant observation.

At a certain point in the study, after realizing that today's coffee consumption culture cannot be considered independent of social media interactions, social media review was added to the tools of the study.

The participants were asked a total of 13 basic questions, four demographic, and nine open-ended semi-structured questions, and from time to time, to deepen the interview, the answers to the questions were expanded with other questions related to the main question.

Finally, the interview excerpts included in the text were coded as female student (FS1, FS2...) and male student (MS1, MS2...) according to the interview order.

The City, Coffee, Leisure, and the Construction of Middle Class

First of all, if we look at cities such as Florence, which was under the control of the Medicis, a mercantile class, later known as the bourgeoisie (Sombart, 1967, 2001a, 2001b), gradually built up a substantial capital accumulation and rapidly transformed it into cultural capital, began to emerge in these cities. This class began to allocate a significant portion of the wealth it acquired to art, architecture and landscape works. In similar periods, cities like Paris (Harvey, 2003), began to transform into visual spaces where architecture, engineering, urban planning, and aesthetics were worked together. Cities gradually became places of spectacle with squares, towers, bridges, landscapes, sculptures, and reliefs (Buck-Morss, 1989, p. 102).

Therefore, exhibition (*pavilion* in French) and display (display-*teşhir*, city-*şehir*, famous-*meşhur* generated from the same roots in Arabic-Turkish) have become one of the essential notions of urbanity as we now understand it, and one of the primary criteria defining the city (Buck-Morss, 1989; Harvey, 2003).

What is exhibited or displayed here is not yet the ordinary human body since in the early stages of modernity, the rich and aristocrats, as Veblen defines in *The Theory of Leisure Class* ([1899] 2007, p. 28), still held the monopoly on bodily display and conspicuous leisure, but manufactured goods also began to be displayed in shopwindows of arcades.

In this period, a new social type emerges: the flaneur. Unlike the working masses, the flaneur is the antithesis of industrial modernity and the root cell of bohemianism as a lazy, vagabond type that loafs, strolling through the streets, tours the shop windows, antique dealers, forgers, and auction houses. Charles Baudelaire first described this typology in detail (Baudelaire, 1972). According to Walter Benjamin (2006, p. 40-41), this social type is a subjectivity inclined to get lost among the masses, a subjectivity that sees the crowds as its home.

The flaneur not only influenced modern man's way of seeing but also made another critical contribution to modernism, which we can call the 'democratization' of leisure, showing that ordinary people can be idle without any religious mediation (for example, Sufi orders in Islam are also slothful, but this is related to religious renunciation of the worldly and body discipline).

According to Veblen ([1899] 2007, p. 9), the rules governing the social division of labour were defined and experienced more rigidly before modernity. Aristocratic families constitute the leisure class whose members are not required to work but depend on their private property and the surplus their vassals produce. According to Veblen, inherited wealth is old money that members of the noble classes are born into, where they can develop a highbrowed culture in leisure activities. That is why the aristocratic families despised the emerging bourgeoise class, whose accumulated wealth was gained via possessor's efforts. In Veblen's words, "*By a further refinement, wealth acquired passively by transmission from ancestors to other antecedents presently becomes even more honorific than wealth acquired by the possessor's own effort*" ([1899] 2007, p, 24).

Accordingly, the social performances of the leisure class are vital to imposing and reinforcing their status and position in society since one's status derives from the judgements of the other members. For instance, aristocratic ladies used to abstain from being sun-tanned and commonly used sun umbrellas to differentiate themselves from the peasants working under the sun. Being white-skinned is a bodily display of social status reinforcing their leisure class position. In our industrialized societies, lying under the sun near lovely beaches, travelling abroad during summer and returning home with a sun tan could also display status. It is not a farmer's tan or redneck (the Turkish expression for farmer's tan is "amele yanığı") who has to work during the summer to pay the bills. Such performances of conspicuous consumption of time, goods and services establish class position.

Except for the carnival periods, ordinary people who worked with their bodies had neither leisure time nor the right to display themselves, and especially with the Protestant understanding, idleness was considered a sin. Therefore, according to Veblen ([1899] 2007, p. 49), one of the most important hallmarks of being upper class in the pre-modern period and of being bourgeois with capitalism is the conspicuous consumption of leisure time.

The flaneur is the first modern type to suspend this prohibition (Benjamin 2006, p. 40-41). The flaneur loaves, wanders, sits in cafés and observes society. This "laziness", sitting and posing, taking a long look at society and shop windows and training the eye leads to two things: firstly, by engaging in low labour-intensive work such as advertising-art, poetry, literature, music, architecture, the flaneur ferments the artistic middle class and acquires the right to conspicuous consumption of leisure time together with other upper classes. Moreover, via these figures the upper classes set the trends of conspicuous consumption in modern times.

Secondly, thanks to the café-bistro consumption culture modelled on the flaneur, it also paved the way for the democratization of leisure time At this point, if we focus a little more on the cafés and their regulars, one of the most important results of our study is that one of the ancient problems of modernity is seeing (Didi-Huberman, 2018; Buck-Morss, 1989) and display (Foucault, 2002). However, this issue of seeing and displaying rather means showing and desiring to see oneself in a certain subjectivity, often showing oneself as something more than oneself (Goffman, 1959, p. 132-133). So, here we come to the relationship between the society of spectacle and popular culture mentioned by thinkers such as Debord (2021), Baudrillard (2022), and Ritzer (2021). These thinkers, for example, have established the relation of places such as McDonalds or Starbucks with the society of the spectacle to a certain extent. For Debord (2021, p. 245), capitalism is a spectacle; what is seen and shown is manufactured by mass media, shaping people's aspirations, thoughts and desires. Pursuing Baudrillard's theoretical line (2022), similar to the famous scene in the film *The Matrix* where the relationship between reality and food is questioned (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999), Starbucks and other mass consumption chains are other simulations of the capitalist economy. However, perhaps because time has passed since these analyses, the society of the spectacle has come to a more specific place with social media, probably because of the cultural differences of Turkey.

However, regarding self-presentation, especially for female students, the most fundamental issue is that one tries to present oneself as middle-class, well-off, and exempt from the world's troubles and holds an urban subjectivity. The fact that these venues are relatively expensive compared to other ventures makes an essential reference to income status and wealth. Hence, the display of oneself in such coffee shops seems to establish a kind of identity belonging to the leisure class with the display of conspicuous consumption of time.

The questions like "*Do you go to hookah cafés?*", "*Why do you come to such places*?" or "*Where do you share photos from*?" we ask to understand people's self-presentation, display, and agency, show us that the way people present themselves is a highly consistent selection algorithm constructed in the patterns between sociocultural habituses.

The agency constructed by this algorithm, especially the female students we interviewed, is a subjectivity that is secular, Western, and urban, applying trends of attractiveness to their body image, concerned with visibility and message, following gourmet places and trends even though they are not gourmets, and associating with authenticity only through this trendiness.

Almost all the female students we talked to go to steak tartar a la turca fast food chains occasionally, but they never share photos from such food stores. On the other hand, new-generation cafés, bowling alleys, digital game centres, gourmet restaurants, and finally, street food spots after pubs at the weekend are the favourite photo-shooting and sharing places of both females and males who participated in our study.

Seven women interviewees say that they reluctantly go to hookah cafés a few times a year, but they care not to share photos from there. Three of the females (FS 2, FS 3, FS 7) did not give a reason; one of them said "*too Arabic (çok Arapça⁶)*" (FS 6), and three of them associated it with "*being Syrian (Suriyelilik)*" (FS 1, FS 8, FS 4).

For example, when we started talking to female students about their social media posts, a significant number of them responded to the question, "*Why don't you post from a çiğköfteci shop (neden çiğköfteciden fotoğraf atmazsınız)*?" with answers such as "*Am I Kezban/ (Kezban mıyım)*?" (FS 2, FS

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⁶ Throughout the study, the Turkish equivalents of quotations that appear to be wrong when written in English or that consist of Turkish idioms are given in parentheses next to the English. The Turkish equivalents of quotations whose meaning is clear are not written.

3) "*Are we Varoş/ (Varoş muyuz)*? " (FS 1) "*It is a place that is not very suitable for my appearance (Bu yerler benim görünüşüme uygun yerler değil)*" (FS 8, FS 6). Hence, these places can only nourish the body but do not articulate the identity and do not overlap with the image of the city in the minds of the middle classes, especially the secular middle-class female students.

When asked what kind of spaces they feel comfortable in, five of the female students said things like "*I go to the places where customers are like me*" (FS 5, FS 7, FS 2) and "*places where we can be ourselves*" (FS 1, FS 3). When we asked them to define what is called *"like me"* or "*self,*" the keywords that emerged point to an educated typology that dresses in certain brands, is well-groomed, likes to apply make-up and goes to the hairdresser, has the same preferences in terms of gestures and facial expressions in terms of clothing style as their peers in Tokyo or London, and uses popular brand phones. This typology is the outward appearance of a middle-class/secular-urban homogenization that is increasingly becoming a global archetype. As a part of the culture industry in the sense that Adorno (2021, p. 16, 37, 48) mentions, Starbucks and similar places are the outward manifestations of the globally created ideal body image (sexuality with tattoos, brands above a specific price range) in popular mass culture. At places, such as Starbucks where people trying to show themselves differently or to differentiate from the 'other' is homogenized, minimizing the distance between people, tables for 1-2 people that fluidize the boundary between the private and the public, global presentation of local products, green, brown and anthracite pastel tones, hipster peaceniks and shabby chic customers are all the elements overtly or sub-textually embedded in the material culture of the space.

The reputation of this urban and secular image from specific spaces through social media interactions helps to add one more thing to the agency of female students: middle-classness. At this point, cafés are a place of conspicuous consumption for ordinary people without any title of nobility. The display, representation and presentation of oneself in cafés, primarily through social media, works in a construct somewhat similar to the conspicuous consumption of leisure time by the upper classes that Veblen mentions in his book [1899] 2007, p. 50-51). Firstly, the constant sharing of posts from cafés is a sign of leisure, which implies middle-class status.

At a certain point in the interviews, we invited the female students we spoke with to reflect and talk about the photographs they disseminated, and what we found was that almost all of the people we spoke to, in line with social media trends, said that they liked to share not their body image but

the object they were together with, the table or the view of it. When they were doing any work or studying, the photographs with their body images were of sports or holidays, and the photos where facial expressions were most clearly visible were those taken while spending time in cafés. While pictures of housework or studying are usually shared with irony or 'drama' sentences, holiday photos are shared with a more 'serious' message; café photos are shared with fewer words (sometimes with an emoji or an ellipsis) to emphasize the visual power of the picture.

Sexy, Survivor, Middle Class Females: *As if They Were Medusa*

The early periods of modernity and the classical period of industrial capitalism were at the same time periods in which people learned to look, and capitalism learned to show the commodity. "*The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli. … — it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life*" (Simmel, [1899] 1903, p., 11-12). In contrast to, Simmel's external and internal stimuli, there is still another matter that is how to show the commodity among thousands of signs and to make it memorable. Therefore, to call a product a commodity, unlike any other product, it has to become both an object of desire/fetish and a network of relations covered with metaphysical veils, as Marx says in *Capital* (1978, p. 45-50). As Simmel ([1900] 2004, p. 87) states, the value of the commodity is composed of relations and encounters.

Simmel ([1899] 1903) and Goffman (1959, 1967) frequently emphasized in their studies that a large part of the relations between people consists of a silent language comprised of gestures, facial expressions, and gaze established through eye contact and its everyday dramaturgy. Therefore, to make this dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959, p. 14) work, modern people look more and more intently into each other's eyes/faces in a way that was frowned upon in ancient times (e.g. still is in Japan).

Therefore, in all these games of looking, seeing, and showing, just as a product becomes a commodity object of desire through the material culture, narrative, images and advertisements surrounding it, a similar process is also valid for the middle classes we observed and the female student café-goers we researched; moreover, in all of the interviews we conducted, different expressions of seeing and (self-)showing (showing oneself, being on the market, making an appearance, being visible, etc.) were mentioned at least once.

At this point, we come to a different matter from the middle-class construction through the conspicuous consumption we explained in the previous section. For the leisure classes mentioned by Veblen ([1899] 2007, p. 155), the primary motivation for conspicuous consumption of time, goods, and services is the acquisition of nobility and honouring. The elite status has to be re-produced through ongoing performances by highbrowed and spiritual material culture.

In the past, displaying one's beauty/handsomeness and wealth was seen as something that invites trouble and activates malevolent forces (Taburoğlu, 2021). This situation contradicts conspicuous consumption as a privilege of nobility. This is because, beyond its physical function, the eye (*nazar*), has been associated with mostly evilish or negative emotions and relations such as envy-malice and this ostentatiousness is an invitation to evil. With this respect, according to Taburoğlu (2021), the reason why the evil eye and evil eye cults have been so ingrained in social life throughout the ages is that the piercing, disruptive, penetrating effect of the eye's gaze is even more penetrative than phallic references (Taburoğlu, 2021). Here, materials such as amulets, which is shown on the one hand and mobilised for the protection of what is shown on the other hand, is another mediator separate from the body. For example, it is customary for Turkmens to wrap a red veil around the head to protect male children from the *Alkarısı* (a shamanic spirit believed to do evil especially to boys because they have no children) (Boratav, 2013); Egyptians used to make amulets by designing lapis lazuli, known as blue stone. The cult of Medusa, which has survived from Ancient Greece to the present day, is like a summary of all these evil eye cults: the snake-haired Medusa does not touch those who look at the owner's property/beauty with affection and envy but stones those who look with envy and hatred (Acar and Bora, 2023).

The evil eye is a tool that eliminates the malevolent power of the gaze and returns the malevolence to its owner; the evil eye is still used as a complimentary decoration. On the other hand, the female students we interviewed seem to have mediated this task of reversing the malevolence of the gaze on their own bodies and the display of the beauty of their bodies.

The beautiful, sexy, successful display of the female body in daily life, which used to be hidden (predominantly female beauty), hidden behind veils, and tried to be protected by amulets or other spiritual mediators, has become a norm with the vast expansion of social media channels.

To put it differently, the female body seems to have taken on the function of turning into stone, which was handed over to Medusa through social media and modern cafés, making her crack with envy. This function works in two ways; firstly, the body is customised and personalised, and the boundaries and coordinates of subjectivity are marked through all these jewellery, tattoos, ornaments, and henna (even ethnic clothing), which in the past meant belonging to a community. In this way, the body is semiographically transformed into a self-referential, boundary-setting, inviolable totem through phrases, like: *only god can judge me*.

For these women who have clear boundaries, moreover, who set boundaries it is extremely important to be a woman in her own right and to be able to survive. This is important as part of the secular republic's ideal of women standing on their feet and participating in employment. But what is more, this image of a woman standing on her own feet must be articulated continuously, primarily through social media interactions, to prevent it from becoming an empty signifier.

Therefore, the photos of the women we interviewed hanging out in the café are one of Veblen's most important indicators of the leisure class's construction of itself through conspicuous consumption. Still, there is another, even more, critical issue, which is that showing oneself or showing oneself in a specific form (things are fine, cheerful, beautiful, carefree, I don't care, smart, successful, cool) is making green with envy performance of a survivor who has made it to Starbucks. Especially among the female participants, envy and enemy-devastating are one of the most basic motivations, and appearing to be standing and surviving in any situation is very important. One of the female students we wanted to talk to about this brought up a TV series that was very popular at the time, "*Do you know, why this tv series name Kızılcık Şerbeti is: that's why, even if you vomit blood, you will keep the tail upright* (*O dizinin adı neden kızılcık şerbeti, işte bu yüzden, kan kussan da kuyruğu dik tutacaksın*)" (FS, 11) The answers to the questions we asked in the form of "*Against whom should the tail be kept upright (kime karşı kuyruğu dik tutacağız)?*" are various, but always against (an)other: this can sometimes be a specific person, for example, an ex-buddy who parted ways, annoying cousins back home, the ex of an ex-boyfriend, the ex-boyfriend himself, etc., but other times it can be someone entirely imaginary. One of the women we interviewed describes the situation as follows:

> A lot of people follow me. Do you think that everyone following you is following you for your good? Even those who seem

friendly are hyenas waiting for someone to stumble so they can gloat? Whether in a good or bad mood, I always share photos of smiling, well-groomed, and glamorous places against those who expect me to be troubled. May those waiting for me to be upset eat out their heart!... (FS 9)

Another woman said: "*There are a lot of malicious people who stalk me, especially against these malicious people; I often post my most beautiful photos on insta, Tik-Tok, etc., so that they go crazy with envy*" (FS 3).

A part of the interview we conducted with a female interviewee on the same issue is as follows:

Researcher: When you go to places like Starbucks, do you share photos/selfies?

Interviewee: Of course.

Researcher: And how often do you do this?

Interviewee: At least 4-5 times a week.

Researcher: What kind of photographs are these? How do you photograph yourself in those photographs? How do you present yourself?

Interviewee: Now that technology has developed. When I go out, I take dozens of photographs from different angles and disseminate the image that best reflects my beauty, radiance, joy, and pleasure.

Researcher: Well, it was abnormal to show oneself like this in the past. How does it make you feel to show yourself in this way?

Interviewee: As you said, that was in the past; now they think that something has happened to me if I don't show myself this way.

Researcher: Well, what happens if they think like that? Don't they call you to ask about you? Don't they want to help you? What's wrong with people thinking like that?

Interviewee: Of course, they would call, but like seeking a knot in a bulrush They wonder if I broke up with my boyfriend. They wonder if I am hospitalized. They wonder if I am getting Botox. Do you understand that even many people closest to me don't want my well-being? That's why these social media messages are my messages. I'm not dead yet, and I'm living well. (FS 11)

At a certain point in our study, after realising that contemporary café culture cannot be considered without social media, we looked at the social media accounts of 13 participants (nine females, four male) who gave permission.

Of course, social media is a field full of direct or indirect message concerns in the most general sense. Some of the messages shared by the females whose social media accounts we analysed, along with their photos, are as follows:

"*I didn't live with your prayer so that I die with your curse(Duanla yaşamadım ki bedduanla öleyim)*", (FS 2) "*Çatla(k)-Patla(k) yusyuvarlak*", (FS 7) "*I will survive*" (shared with Ajda Pekkan arrangement), (FS 7) "*You can only look at me like that*", "*Gossip of the neighborhood (Semtin dedikodusu)*" (FS 5) "*The brunette jumped on the horse/pistols exploded/as the brunette bride was leaving/blond blondes çat çat çaaat… (Esmer ata atladı/ tabancalar patladı/ esmer gelin giderken/ sarışınlar çatladı/ çat çat çaaat*" (shared with Derya Uluğ arrangement) (FS 12)

All this shows us that female students, in particular, use the café space to reinforce strong, beautiful, stylish representations of their own bodies, and thus to appear strong against their real or imagined adversaries.

Men: As if They Were

An attitude of masculinity frequently encountered by those studying the culture of masculinity is that masculinity is a performance stuck between image (desired self) and reality (actual self) (Aydemir, 2007; Hofstede, 2011). Since masculinity is an ontology based on race, performance, and assertion of constantly showing itself more than it is, it inevitably corresponds to a state that is less than it is. So, masculinity exists on a continuum of impossible paths of power (Sancar, 2009), crawling (Selek, 2011), alcoholism (Perrotte, Zamboanga, Kearns, 2020) and sex (Donald, 2012) as a kind of score.

In our fieldwork, we frequently encountered this ontological problem of men. We can say that a significant part of the conversations we had with male students of foundation universities and relatively well-off male students were related to this "*as if*" attitude.

The point where this "*as if*" attitude is most visible is hidden in the discourses of the daily life. All of the male students we asked how often they went to new cafe houses said they went frequently, but 12 of the male students (14 male participants in total) said they did not want to go there.

When we asked why they did not want to go here, we heard four times the 'price-performance equation' phrase, one of the most trendy explana-

tions of consumer choice in the Turkish market discourse in recent days. However, during the conversations, we did not hear this; the corresponding conversations were repeated frequently. For example, one of these conversations is as follows:

> Researcher: How often do you go to Starbucks and similar places?
> Interviewee: I go often, but if I do not go, they are not places I would look for a thousand years, but here we go.
> Researcher: Well, why don't you want to go?
> Interviewee: Let's say price performance. I mean, there was that McDonald's advertisement (they don't write your name on the coffee cups, but they give you the coffee for 5 TL) actually what they say is true, what can we drink here, we pay a lot of money because they write our name on a cardboard box. What is it, bitter coffee, the same in Yemen and McDonald's?
> Researcher: Well, then, why do you keep coming to Starbucks?
> Interviewee: Well, the atmosphere is flocking here for dating purposes; the girls are here, and you can't go online or post photos from here (meaning McDonald's). So it's not about the coffee, it's about the atmosphere, do you understand that? (MS, 7)

The problems that male students have with cafés are not only related to coming to the place but also, as one interviewee put it, "*dressing in a trendy way*" (MS 5).

Most male students say they prefer chatting about Tofaş with friends from the neighbourhood or cousins from their hometown to this café thing. Moreover, they like to post photos of their father's construction sites or with friends from the neighbourhood/hometown (loyal/faithful buddies). For this reason, we are again confronted with a gap between the desired 'self' and the performing 'self' situation similar to that of female students. They describe male-to-male conversations as "*more intimate*" (MS 6, MS 11), "*happy together*" (MS 5), "*I am myself there*" (MS 10), "*I don't feel anyone's judgemental gaze on me*" (MS 4), etc.

As we understand from the study, when we compare female students with male students, female students try to construct an identity by their presence at the venue as they want to be seen, while men can exist appearing in a certain disguise or mask.

When we analyze the issue of a specific disguise, we are greeted by two important archetypes: The first is the barista, and the second is the hipster.

Although the men we interviewed do not openly say they dislike these two typologies, they try to be like them. One of the men we interviewed, referring to baristas, says, "*ride the crest of place*" (MS 3), while another says "*Those with transparent glass frames, Mac computers, and tattoos all over their body seemed to me as sinister*" (MS 12).

Thus, we can assume that a basic understanding of seeing/showing is changing by looking at the interviews given by male students attending foundation universities. In John Berger's famous book *Ways of Seeing* (2008), there is a famous passage about women constructing themselves under the gaze of men:

> A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost con-tinually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping […] She has to survey everything she is and every-thing she does because how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another (Berger, 1990, p.46).
>
> One might simplify this by saying that men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. (Berger, 1990, p. 47).

Berger's analysis of the classical and late periods of modernity does not seem valid, at least as far as our study is concerned; moreover, the roles of seeing/being seen between women and men seem to have changed. Contra-ry to what Berger says, women are now at least trying to construct an identi-ty for themselves from their bodies; they watch and survey not only other women but also men, while men seem to be trying to build an agency for themselves in places and clothes that they think women like under the gaze of women, even if they do not want to do so.

Conclusion

Coffee has always been important in the mercantile period, in the classical period of modernity, and in the era of global capitalism, both as a commodi-ty and as a commodity that establishes class identity. In the recent past,

when discussing mass culture and popular culture, one of the determining topics has been the consumption patterns of coffee and the commercial networks and sales chains that determine these patterns.

Throughout our study, we paid more attention to understanding the function of the new generation cafés among university students, considering the historical and contemporary axes mentioned above.

The sample cluster we formed to conduct our study is the children of middle-upper class families, as they are the children of foundation universities studying without scholarships, and investigating how subjectivities in this frequency resonate with the new generation café culture revealed exciting results.

First, virtual and in-person coffee house experiences of female university students are ongoing social performances vital for imposing and reinforcing their leisure class status and position in society since their status derives from the judgements of the other members. Conspicuous consumption of time, goods and services within new-generation coffee houses and then shooting images for dissemination on Instagram establishes distinction from lower working-class youths.

Second, we have seen that the local equivalent of what thinkers such as Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard, who see popular culture as a kind of spectacle, call spectacle is a space that helps to perform urban, secular, middle-class leisure and idleness for female students attending private universities in Turkey today. Subsequently, we have seen that these spaces and the new generation café culture nourish this middle-class strong woman image through social media interactions, transforming the boundaries of her subjectivity into a totem with semiographic layers and making it unique. In this way, a successful, indestructible survivor and a Medusa identity are built that eats one's heart out with its joy and beauty.

The male students in the frequency we cross-sectioned, on the other hand, do not want to establish their agency through these spaces. What they call self is rather a male only environment with men from the neighborhood, high school, and hometown. These spaces are meaningful for men because they are a way for male students to show themselves as if, or to put it in Berger's (1990) words, they help men position themselves in a certain material culture and a certain subjectivity by watching themselves through the eyes of women.

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