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DOI
10.4324/9781003690733-7

Publication date
2025

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Amsterdam Diaries, Life Writing and Identity

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Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Özkan, I. B., & van Hasselt, L. (2025). Art, Love, Freedom: The Amsterdam Diaries of Işık Tüzüner. In M. Rensen, L. Vermeer, L. van Hasselt, & E. Hoegen (Eds.), *Amsterdam Diaries, Life Writing and Identity: Urban Lives* (pp. 113-129). Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003690733-7

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7. Art, Love, Freedom: The Amsterdam Diaries of Işık Tüzüner

Irem Burcu Özkan Hoeijmakers and Laura van Hasselt

Abstract: Turkish-born artist Işık Tüzüner (b. 1954) moved to Amsterdam in 1975 after falling in love with a Dutchman. She has donated twenty trilingual (Turkish–English–Dutch) diaries to Atria and shared eleven more with researchers, supplemented by two interviews. Central to this chapter are Tüzüner's experiences as a migrant artist in Amsterdam, both in relation to her self-image and her image of the city. Using Gabriele Rippl's framework, her identity reflects both an "in-between migrant" and a "cosmopolitan traveller," but, ultimately, she defines herself as an Amsterdammer. While maintaining ties to her Turkish heritage, she embraces Amsterdam's liberal atmosphere, shaping her artistic and personal identity. Despite moments of displacement, she finds belonging in a city she associates with art, love and freedom.

Keywords: migrant; artist; sculpture; Turkey; cosmopolitan; twentieth century

"Işık Tüzüner, the diary writer"[1]

Diaries are among the most intimate objects that we own. Like the variety of our inner worlds, our diaries can also exist in many forms. After all, "it is very difficult to say anything about diaries, which is true for all of them."[2] Some consist of written entries only, others are decorated with drawings, photos or clippings. For some, diary writing is a sort of literary

1 "Günlük yazarı Işık Tüzüner." Diary of Işık Tüzüner 2009B, personal archive Tüzüner.

2 Eckhard Kuhn-Osius, "Making Loose Ends Meet: Private Journals in the Public Realm," *The German Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1981): 166.

Rensen, Marleen, Leonieke Vermeer, Laura van Hasselt and Ernestine Hoegen, eds. *Amsterdam Diaries, Life Writing and Identity: Urban Lives*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2025.
DOI 10.4324/9781003690733-7

Fig. 7.1. Işık Tüzüner at her exam exhibition. Rietveld Academy, 1979, Amsterdam. Exhibited artworks: *To Concentrate* (sculpture) and *Tamam* (on the wall).
photo: Tony Andreas

activity, and others use their diaries as nothing more than a simple tool of daily reflection.[3] And some others, like Işık Tüzüner, do everything all at once.

From 1980 until the present, Işık has irregularly kept expressive, trilingual diaries about her life as an independent artist in Amsterdam. Over the years, she has donated twenty of these to the Atria Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History.[4] Our chapter is based on this diverse collection of egodocuments, supplemented with eleven diaries which are still in Tüzüner's

3 Cinthia Gannet, *Gender and the Journal: Diaries and Academic Discourse* (State University of New York Press, 1992), 99.

4 Atria EGO 192; Biographical file: 4749.

personal archive and two interviews.[5] We aim to explore the experiences of Işık Tüzüner as a migrant artist in Amsterdam, both in relation to her self-image and her image of the city. In the *Handbook of Autobiography*, Gabriele Rippl distinguished two recurring main themes in the self-construction of the migrant's identity: either the "immigrant struggling with an in-between identity" or the "sophisticated cosmopolitan traveller at ease around the globe."[6] Does Turkish-Amsterdammer Işık Tüzüner fit into either of these categories, and how does she portray herself in relation to the city she has chosen to live in?

Flipping through Işık's diaries is a stimulating experience as you never know what to expect on the next page. It may be an entry written in three different languages on one page, a drawing, a letter to a dear friend, a newspaper clipping or an old picture of her—directly looking into your eyes. In general, each diary is assumed to contain more than one genre;[7] when it comes to Işık's case, one can lose count. When we met with Işık for two different interviews, we associated her with her colourful diaries at first sight. Everything she does is a form of artistic expression.

Artist without Borders

"Amsterdam is the city I love. I left my life in Istanbul to come here for happiness."[8] This is a recurring sentence in Işık's diaries. Her Amsterdam life started in 1975. This was in the middle of a period of mass migration from Turkey to the Netherlands and other Western European countries. Yet Işık is incomparable to the thousands of men who came to Amsterdam in the 1960s and 1970s as so-called "guest workers," many of whom lived in the barracks of "Camp Atatürk" in the northern, industrial area of the city.[9]

5 Interviews held by Özkan and Van Hasselt at Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, 8 December 2023 and 13 February 2024.

6 Gabriele Rippl, "Autobiography in the Globalised World," in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, ed. Martina Wagner-Edelgraaf (De Gruyter, 2019), 1270.

7 Rebecca Hogan, "Engendered Autobiographies: The Diary as a Feminine Form," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 14, no. 2 (1991): 97.

8 "Amsterdam sevdiğim şehirdir. İstanbul'daki yaşantımı bırakıp buraya geldim mutluluk için." Personal archive, 2011.

9 Laura van Hasselt and Vinnie van der Linde, "Hoe woonden de eerste gastarbeiders?" *Ons Amsterdam* (2011): 450–51; Erhan Tuskan and Jaap Vogel, *Lied uit den Vreemde. Brieven en foto's van Turkse migranten 1964–1975* (Aksant, 2004), 116–25. Initially, nearly all "guest workers" in the Netherlands were men, but after the 1974 law of family reunification, many women and children joined them.

She was an artist—and still is at the time of writing. As a female artist from Turkey, she was an "exotic" novelty in 1970s Amsterdam.[10]

Işık Tüzüner was born in 1954 in Gölcük, a rural district in the northern part of Turkey. Her father was a lawyer at the local tax authorities. Her mother was an artist and a teacher: Ayhan Öner taught drawing at a training college for girls, of which she eventually became the director. When Işık was eleven years old the family moved to Istanbul.[11] In 1971 she followed in her mother's footsteps by joining the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts, where she specialized in sculpture. Despite partaking in a sculpture exhibition at the Istanbul Festival in 1975, she did not complete her studies there, because she suddenly decided to move to Amsterdam.

When asked why, her answer is simple: "This is a love story."[12] Işık was nineteen years old, when she met a young Dutchman in Istanbul: Jan van Rooij. The adventurous dental student had driven all the way from Holland on his motorcycle. He swept her off her feet. Having seen her at work in the Istanbul Art Academy, he persuaded her to follow him back to Amsterdam and to apply to the Rietveld Academy. Işık did not hesitate and sold her works to pay for a two-day train ticket to the Netherlands. It was a risky decision with far-reaching consequences. Looking back, she says: "I left my country, my friends, my family, all." But she doesn't show any regrets, on the contrary: she felt liberated. Nearly half a century later she proudly recalls: "I told them: I'm going my own way."[13]

The impulsive move to Amsterdam was a huge gamble. But her talent was recognized and she was indeed admitted to the renowned Rietveld Academy. The atmosphere was very different from the more traditional education at the Turkish art schools.[14] The Amsterdam art academy was a breeding ground for unconventional artists. In the late 1970s, when Işık studied at the Rietveld Academy, it served as a meeting place for what was to become the "Nieuwe Wilden" movement (Young Wild Ones). The group included young artists such as Peter Klashorst, Rob Scholte and Sandra Derks, who were to become popular in the 1980s.[15] Although Işık was never

10 The first student from Turkey to attend a Dutch art academy was Esma Yigitoglu, in 1961 in Rotterdam. Rosemarie Buikema and Maaike Meijer, *Kunsten in beweging. Cultuur en migratie in Nederland 1980–2000* (SDU, 2004), 99.

11 Tjaal Aeckerlin and Rachma el Kouaa, *Een koffer vol herinneringen. 38 portretten van vertellers uit 38 landen* (Stichting Welzijn Zeeburg, 2012), 54–56.

12 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 00:12:53.

13 Ibid., 00:14:24.

14 Buikema and Meijer, *Kunsten in beweging*, 99–100.

15 Amanda Wasielewski, *From City Space to Cyberspace: Art, Squatting, and Internet Culture in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 77.

formally part of this or any other artistic movement, her work is related to the neo-expressionism of these Dutch artists. Her career was off to a successful start. Her first exhibition was at Amstelpark in 1978, when she was still a student.

The Amsterdam art academy did not only bring artistic inspiration. Işık fell in love with her sculpture teacher, Tony Andreas (1944–2019).[16] The relationship with Jan had not lasted. There were to be many more men in her life, but sculptor Tony was her greatest love. Looking back, she fondly calls him a "beatnik," after the American cult writer Jack Kerouac.[17] They shared a hippie, non-materialistic way of life. He was ten years her senior, had a great network and helped her find her way in the Dutch art world. They got married in 1976 and lived and worked together first in an artist building complex in the Red-Light District and then in a studio at Prinsengracht 469, until their divorce in 1989.[18]

She graduated in 1979 and a year later she participated in a group exhibition of female artists at the Museum Fodor in Amsterdam and the Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht (*1+1=11*). In the same year, she received a grant to study at the renowned St Martin's School of Art and Chelsea School of Art, both in London. She came back to Amsterdam in 1981 and became a part-time teacher at the Royal Academy in Den Bosch and the Rietveld Academy. Teaching provided her with a small but steady income and left her enough time to work on her own art projects. Her work, which was related to constructivism and minimal art, was popular with the institutions. From the mid-1980s Işık started making colourful sculptures out of waste material. She first used the term "urban art" and in the 1990s the term "post art," to criticize consumer society in general and the commercial art world in particular. Her works were acquired by major Dutch art museums, such as the Kröller Müller, the Haags Gemeentemuseum (now the Kunstmuseum) and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.[19] She also had works exhibited in Istanbul and in Belgium.

Işık recalls that she was often framed as an "*allochtoon*," as foreigners of all kinds were called in the Netherlands until recently. The word, which derives from Greek, literally means "coming from different soil." Işık, like

16 His name lives on in the Tony Andreas Fund, which financially supports young artists in pursuing education abroad in the field of spatial and three-dimensional art.

17 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 00:17:42.

18 "İnanmayacaksın ama buradaki yaşam Türkiyedekinden farklı değil. Herkes nerede olursa olsun zevklerin, mutluluğun ve her şeyin bedelini ödemek zorunluluğunda." Personal archive, 1980.

19 Buikema and Meijer, *Kunsten in beweging*, 107–8.

many other artists, has always been ambivalent about this division between Dutch "natives" ("*autochtonen*") and immigrants. On the one hand, to be classified an "*allochtoon*" could help to acquire specific grants or exhibition possibilities. On the other hand, the label "*allochtoon*" was often seen as an unwanted mark of "otherness," of being valued for the wrong reasons, of not *really* belonging. Işık wanted to be seen as an international artist, not as a specifically non-Western one.

In an interview in 1991 she claimed: "I'm Turkish. But I don't make Turkish art." At the same time, she acknowledged that her Turkish roots were visible in her art: "Of course the exotic of my images does have to do with my background. But that also goes for the spiritual, the poetic, the mystical."[20] Işık creates different aspects of life for herself and this includes her identity: "I am both Turkish and Dutch. You build your own identity; you make it yours."[21] She becomes upset when the identity she constructs does not correspond to the identity the outside world sometimes assigns her. During our interview, she gave an example of this: "They said to me, I was really disappointed, I won't be in the group of international artists but *allochtonen*. I said, what are you talking about? I am trying to be an international artist." In her diary she wrote: "I keep existing in the Netherlands as a Turkish artist."[22]

In 1991 she had a solo exhibition at De Librije in Zwolle, titled *Kunst moet positief zijn* (Art has to be positive). In reviews her works were described as just that: positive, colourful and exuberant.[23] But Tüzüner's work was not solely positive. One of the reasons she started to work with painted cardboard boxes was to criticize the Dutch habit of classifying everyone in a specific box, in her case labelled "*allochtoon*." In a typical combination of Dutch and English she explains: "Holland is *een hokjescultuur*. Everybody has been in somewhere *hokje*" [sic].[24] This way of pigeonholing was in sharp contrast with the freedom she had always associated with Amsterdam. For instance: "I love living in Amsterdam, I love being free."[25] One page in her 1991 diary stands out. In big letters, there is only one word, written twice: "Özgürlük, Özgürlük" ("Freedom, Freedom").[26]

20 Ed Wingen, "Işık Tüzüner: "Kunst moet positief zijn," *De Telegraaf*, 16 August 1991, T15.

21 "Ben Türk gibi ve Hollandalı. Kendine göre kimlik oluşturuyorsun, alıp kendine mal edeceksin." Personal archive, 2000.

22 "Türk sanatçı olarak Hollanda'da varlığımı sürdürüyorum.' Personal archive, 2009A.

23 E.g. Janneke Wesseling, "Karton met 'positieve' boodschap," *NRC Handelsblad*, 6 August 1991, 6.

24 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 00:11:20.

25 "Amsterdam'da yaşamayı ve özgür olmayı seviyorum." Personal archive, 1998–2000.

26 Personal archive, 1989–2008.

Işık's Concept of a Diary

People have different reasons for keeping a diary. During our first interview with Işık, one of our first questions was about her motivation to write one. She first mentions the benefit of scheduling. "I was a very active artist," she says.[27] Moreover, she also confirms that she sees it as a "way to communicate to the world, like her art," and ultimately as "a form of art."[28]

Keeping a diary is one thing; donating it is of a completely different order. When the diaries are donated to an open archive, their ownership is shared with a "semi-public realm."[29] It is not a common practice, considering that usually, even the family members of the diary writer are not aware of the existence of a diary.[30] We were very curious about her motivation for donating her diaries to the ATRIA archive. Her answer to that question was inspiring: "I want to leave [the diaries] behind for the new generations."[31] This shows that diary writing is not a solely individual act for Işık, but it is tied strongly to a wish for a societal impact. She wants to be known not just for her art but also for her everyday life and her way of living. Which, in her case, is inseparable from her artistic expression. As she proudly says: "I am an action artist."[32] Neither the diaries donated to ATRIA nor those from her personal archive seem auto-censored either—which is not unusual especially historically in the genre of women's diaries.[33]

One of the most striking features of Işık's diaries is the multilingual character of the writings. She writes in three languages: Turkish, Dutch and English. Most of it is written in Turkish; however, the frequency of switching between the languages is fascinating. We kept tracing the switches while going through the diaries and asked her about it. She did not give a conclusive answer to our question and admitted that these were old diaries and she did not remember why she switched between languages.[34] From

27 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 00:06:06.

28 Ibid., 00:08:06.

29 Suzanne L. Bunkers, "Whose Diary Is It Anyway?: Issues of Agency, Authority, Ownership," *Auto/Biography Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014): 12.

30 Philippe Lejeune and Catherine Bogaert, "The Practice of Writing a Diary," trans. Dagmara Meijers-Troller, in *The Diary: The Epic of Everyday Life*, ed. Batsheva Ben-Amos and Dan Ben-Amos (Indiana University Press, 2020), 25.

31 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 00:01:42.

32 Ibid., 00:33:49.

33 Kathryn Carter, "Feminist Interpretations of the Diary," in *The Diary: The Epic of Everyday Life*, ed. Batsheva Ben-Amos and Dan Ben-Amos (Indiana University Press, 2020), 40.

34 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 13 February 2024, 08:39–08:43.

her answers, we can draw two different conclusions: either there is no real pattern, or there is an unconscious one.

Işık says she reads back her diaries every day. "Questions in the mind, I go back."[35] This shows that she interacts with her diaries rather than just leaving them in a corner of the past. Like most diary writers, Işık is one of her own future readers.[36] She is looking back at them to seek answers to today's questions. This sounds like an excellent way to create consistency between the past and current selves.[37]

After reviewing her writing habits and her perspective on herself as a diary writer, it is time to examine the diaries' content more closely. Once you flip through Işık's diaries, the most frequent emotion you encounter would be "gratitude." This may sound surprising, as for many diary writers, the motivation to write usually comes from darker, more melancholic thoughts and feelings. Not for Işık. Her diaries mostly reflect happiness, good memories, health, joy and gratitude. She is grateful for many different things, her place in the Jordaan being one of those. She regularly mentions the neighbourhood and her own place there as details that give her joy and peace. The following quotes show us the way she shows gratitude for the neighbourhood she lives in:

> I am grateful that I woke up healthy in my home in Jordaan. This sunny day makes me happy; the Autumn sun shines bright.[38]

> I woke up feeling energetic today. I am alive, I am healthy, I do fine. I love people. I love the neighbourhood I live in.[39]

These quotes show that the simple fact of living in the Jordaan neighbourhood makes her happy. She finds joy in living where she lives, and she reflects on this frequently in her diaries and throughout the decades. Jordaan sounds like a happy constant in Işık's life.

Another regular gratitude element in Işık's diaries is her art. She finds joy not just in the product but also in existing as an artist. Being an

35 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 00:40:47.

36 Lejeune and Bogaert, "The Practice of Writing a Diary," 29.

37 Irina Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries?," *The Russian Review* 63, no. 4 (2004): 571–72.

38 "Şükrediyorum ki Jordaan'daki evimde sağlıkla güzel uyandım. Bu güneşli hava içimde mutluluk yaratıyor, sonbaharın güneşi de ayrı parlıyor." Personal archive, 2009A.

39 "Bu sabah canla başla kalktım. Yaşıyorum sıhhatliyim iyiyim. İnsanlara karşı sevgilerim var. Yaşadığım muhiti seviyorum." Personal archive, 2009A.

Amsterdam-based artist seems almost equally essential to her. The following quotes show how appreciative she is for all this:

> I have a studio and a place to live in Amsterdam Hazenstraat. This is a privilege.[40]

> If we can exist as artists in this Dutch society, if we can continue producing our art, if we can help others even, if we are grateful for our good health, if we are full of love, and if we can share this, lucky us.[41]

> Museum accepting my work gave me confidence. I told everyone. It would be nice if one or a couple of my works were accepted every year.[42]

> The exhibition at Arti has started. The opening was lovely. Being or feeling like the special person is a nice feeling.[43]

One other constant source of gratitude for Işık is actually the way she lives her life. She is comfortable in her skin. She writes often how happy she is as she is. Even if she wrote some of these as affirmations, the following quotes make a fact evident: she lives life as seriously as she makes her art. She praised the first day of 2007 as:

> Hooray inspiration, *actie* [action], movement, resistance, strength, balance, spontaneousness, freedom, challenge, and provocation.[44]

> My cardigan, my comfortable clothes. My life in Europe. My own place, my home. I have the strength to manage all.[45]

40 "Amsterdam'da Hazen straat'ta evim de atölyem de var. Bu bir ayrıcalık." Atria, EGO/192, 2009/5.

41 "Bu Hollanda toplumunda yabancı sanatçı olarak var olabiliyorsak, sanatımızı devam ettiriyorsak, hatta başkalarına da yardımcı olabiliyorsak, sağlığımızın yerinde olduğuna şükrediyorsak, sevgiyle doluysak, bunu paylaşabiliyorsak ne mutlu bize." Atria, EGO/192, 2005–6/2.

42 "Bu ara müzeye işimin alınması bana güven verdi. Herkese anlattım. İşte böyle her sene bir iş birkaç iş alınsa iyi olur." Personal archive, 1998–2000.

43 "Arti'deki sergi açıldı. Hoştu. Yani özel kişi olmak öyle hissetmek çok güzel bir his." Personal archive, 1998–2000.

44 "Yaşasın ilham, actie, eylem. Yaşayan ilham, eylem, direnmek, direnç, dengeli hareket, spontane oluş, dirençlilik, özgür, bağsız, meydan okuyucu, provokatör." Atria, EGO/192, 2005/1.

45 "Kendi hırkam kendi rahat giysilerim. Avrupa yaşantım. Kendi yerim ve evim. Hepsini idare edebilecek gücüm var." Atria, EGO/192, 2008/4.

> My whole aim with all these exhibitions, letters, the work and all is for creating new worlds. Humans transform. The freedom of transforming the environment that we take part in. Adding something from yourself. The wish to create a new and free world.[46]

One of the strongest statements she wrote in all these diaries is written on the back of a receipt: "I confess that I live."[47] This short and striking sentence echoes well with this Irina Paperno quote: "As it turns life into text, the diary represents a lasting trace of one's being—an effective defense against annihilation."[48]

If you keep flipping the pages, you see some sadness in the diaries as well. However, these instances are much less frequent than the happy ones. The following selection shows somewhat melancholic moments of reflection. Most of these statements include elements of solitude, foreignness, nostalgia and loss. On one of the days she met with Tony after their divorce, she wrote:

> I came home and cried. I cried in despair. I cried for being lonely, having so few friends, managing everything alone in the Netherlands, for existence in two countries, for fears, loneliness, lovelessness, all the hustle, being a lonely woman in business life, fatigue, exhaustion. I cried for a long time.[49]

We stumble upon memories of loved ones who passed away:

> My mother, Nurser, Esma all took off after living this life. We will, too.[50]

And it is sometimes simply melancholic:

> One longs for the light during the dark, autumn days of Europe, while the winter is closing and people start preparing for Christmas and New Year's.[51]

46 "Benim bütün çabam bu kadar sergiler, mektuplaşmalar, iş veya özel yarattığım yeni dünyalardır. İnsan dönüştürür. Girdiği çevreyi dönüştürme özgürlüğü. Kendinden bir şey koyma. Özgür ve yeni bir dünya kurma arzusu.' Personal archive, 2005.

47 "Yaşadığımı itiraf ediyorum." Personal archive, 98–2000.

48 Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries?," 563.

49 "Eve geldim hep ağladım. Ümitsizdim ağladım. Ağladım yalnızlığıma, dostumun çok az olduğuna, Hollanda'da işleri kendimin yürütebildiğime, iki ülkedeki var oluş, korkular, yalnızlık, aşksızlık, yine işlerle uğraşmak, yalnız iş kadını olmak, yorgunluk, bitkinlik. Ağlama uzun sürdü." Atria, EGO/192, 2009/5.

50 "Annem, Nurser, Esma gittiler yaşayıp. Biz de gideceğiz." Atria, EGO/192, 2009/5.

51 "Avrupanın kışa yaklaşan, Christmas, yeni yıl hazırlıklarının yapıldığı karanlık sonbahar günlerinde insan aydınlığı arıyor." Personal archive, 2009A.

As much as she loved life in Amsterdam, she missed her homeland, especially during winter. From her 1980 diary:

> I have been dreaming about summer during the cold, lonely, dark days of winter. Turkey is a constant longing inside—with the memories, the nature, the sun.[52]

City of Freedom

In a sense, keeping a diary is a natural need for migrants. When all of one's routines are upset, keeping a personal record can help dealing with the deluge of otherness. That is, provided one has the time and the means to do so. According to literary scholar Andrew Hassam, migrants' diaries are "attempts to give a readable form to the literally unsettling experience of migration."[53] This notion is especially relevant to the history of a city like Amsterdam, which was built on migration. Migration, as social historians Jan and Leo Lucassen claim, is no less than the DNA of the Dutch capital.[54] Yet there are few migrants' diaries to be found in the Amsterdam archives, making the daily, personal lives of migrants elusive to urban historians. Işık's diary collection is a valuable exception, all the more so because the diarist is still there to be interviewed.

"My home is Amsterdam and Turkey," writes Işık in 2009.[55] It is no coincidence that she mentions Amsterdam instead of the Netherlands. When asked if she sees a difference between the two, she immediately says yes. "*Vrijheid blijheid*—it is Amsterdam."[56] This famous Dutch expression ("Freedom [is] happiness") touches the core of Işık's ideal of Amsterdam. Artistic freedom, sexual freedom, freedom to live her life without any restraints—that is what she has always sought and often found in Amsterdam. Her diaries are highly personal, yet in this sense they reflect an image of the city which was widely shared since the late 1960s. In his popular history of Amsterdam, the American historian Russell Shorto labelled it "the most liberal city in the world."[57] Although this reputation has come under increasing pressure in the

52 "Kışın soğuk, yalnız, karanlık günlerinde yaz hayalleri kurdum. Türkiye insanın içinde daima yanan özlem oluyor. Hatıralarıyla, tabiat güzelliğiyle, güneşiyle." Personal archive, 1980.

53 Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-Century British Migrants* (Melbourne University Press, 1995), 2–4.

54 Jan and Leo Lucassen, *Migratie als DNA van Amsterdam 1550–2021* (Atlas Contact, 2021).

55 'Evim Türkiye ve Amsterdam dı." Atria, EGO/192, 2009/6.

56 Interview with Işık Tüzüner, 8 December 2023, 01:04:48.

57 Russell Shorto, *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City* (Doubleday, 2013).

last decade, it was very much alive in 1975, when Işık came to Amsterdam. The aura of freedom attracted many other young people to Amsterdam in the late 1960s and in the 1970s.

This idealized image of the city originated around 1965, when the anarchist Provo youth movement started challenging the Amsterdam authorities with playful, mediagenic provocations.[58] As historian James Kennedy has persuasively argued, the following decade of rapid democratization and emancipation in the Netherlands may have been more due to the accommodating attitude of those in power than to the successful activism of young anarchists and reformers.[59] However, Amsterdam was undoubtedly the centre of all sorts of freedom movements, with its legal coffee shops, feminist demonstrations, hippies from all over the world and experimental musical and cultural scene. It was not all love and peace though: in 1975, the year Işık came to Amsterdam, Nieuwmarkt was the site of serious squatter riots.[60]

Her first place in Amsterdam was a student room with Jan, on the Uilenstede campus in the south. In 1976 she moved in with Tony at the Oudezijds Achterburgwal in the central Red-Light District. After eight years they moved to a classier neighbourhood, Prinsengracht. Nowadays, the houses located along Amsterdam's canals are some of the city's most expensive residences, but in the 1980s many of these centuries-old buildings were dilapidated and many were squats. In her diary from 2005–6, she wrote:

> Tony's Amsterdam. Feeling like I am here for him. There is an Amsterdam he introduced to me. Neighbourhoods, places, streets that we have mutual memories in. But I improved this Amsterdam.[61]

This last, self-assured sentence is important. Tony may have been her guide to the city in the beginning, but eventually she became her own "Captain Işık."[62] She felt very sad when with the break-up she did not only lose her husband, but also their shared studio at the Prinsengracht.

> Tony said he would take down the name board. There will no longer be an "Işık Tüzüner–Tony Andreas" board. I will no longer have a Prinsengracht board in Amsterdam.[63]

58 Niek Pas, *Imaazje! De verbeelding van Provo 1965–1967* (Wereldbibliotheek, 2003).

59 James Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw. Nederland in de jaren zestig* (Boom, 1995).

60 Doeko Bosscher, "Na de storm geen stilte," in *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam. Tweestrijd om de hoofdstad 1900–2000*, ed. P. de Rooy (SUN, 2007), 332–33.

61 Atria, EGO/192, 2005–2006/2.

62 One of her diaries is titled *Kapitein Işık's Logboek*. Personal archive, 2004–12.

63 Atria, EGO/192, 2009/6.

But she also valued her new independence. In 1992 she found a new home in Hazenstraat, in Jordaan. Işık often refers to the area in her diaries, always in a positive sense. In the 1970s the old Jordaan area had changed from a monocultural residential area into a multicultural, artistic part of the city which was valued for its freedom and unconventional lifestyles.[64] Even though she frequents many places elsewhere in the city, this is the neighbourhood where she feels most at home. As she notes down in Turkish in her 2009 diary:

> I am home. A morning in Jordaan, a sunny morning, the last sunbeams of the sun are scattering around and making Jordaan more beautiful.

A few pages on, in the same diary, again in Turkish: "I sat in my beautiful window corner in my small room and watched Jordaan."[65] She loves looking out of the window and watching the people walking or cycling past, through the narrow streets of the old quarter. Lauriergracht and Brouwersgracht, at the northern edge of the Jordaan, often feature in her diaries, as does the Suzanne Biederberg Gallery on Oudezijds Voorburgwal 223, where she had many solo exhibitions.

But her life has never been confined to this part of town. With the help of Tony, she found a new studio in 1992 at Nieuwe Teertuinen 17, north of Jordaan (she stayed there until 2013). This is where she opened her own "Passion Art Museum," which she continued online as "Passion TV."[66] One of her favourite pubs is Festina Lente at Looiersgracht, in the heart of Jordaan. She also frequents cafés and concert halls in other parts of Amsterdam, such as De Sputnik Noord, Paradiso and Melkweg. Rock music plays an important role in her life:

> Last night I went to a rock concert at Melkweg. Karma [to] burn, Monster Magnet. It is a privilege to go to a concert on a beautiful day. I love the living city Amsterdam. It makes me happy to take part in its activities. Its narrow streets, rock concerts, little stores make me happy.[67]

64 Tim Verlaan and Aimée Albers, "From Hippies to Yuppies: Marginal Gentrification in Amsterdam's Jordaan and De Pijp Neighbourhoods 1960–1990," *City* 26, no. 2–3 (2022): 502–9.

65 "Güzel cam kenarında oturdum ufak odamda, Jordaan'ı seyrettim." Personal archive, 2009A.

66 "PassionTV! Işık Tüzüner, 1e aflevering (Nederlands)," YouTube, https://youtu.be/8PgRQXa38GU?si=S7cygKxbm-HGlhtS.

67 "Dün gece Melkweg'te rock konserine gittim. Güzel bir yaz gününde konsere gitmek bir ayrıcalıktır. Amsterdam'ın yaşayan rock hayatı. Bu aektivitelerde kendimin de bulunmas beni mutlu ediyor. Amsterdam'ın ufak sokakları, butikleri ve konserleri beni mutlu ediyor." Personal archive, 1990–2008.

The Artists' association Arti et Amicitiae at Rokin also became an important place for her. The longer she lived in Amsterdam, the more the city featured in her work. In 2008 she wrote in her diary: "Amsterdam has been my muse nowadays."[68]

She loves being a local: "I can say that I know Amsterdam very well. It reminds jazz to me [sic]." But feeling at home in Amsterdam is not the same as feeling fully accepted in Dutch society. She remains keenly aware of being seen as a foreigner:

> It is nice that a Dutch artist calls a Turkish one. Not many artists call. I suddenly felt Turkish. There is a foreignness.

To complicate matters, when she visits family and friends in Turkey, she sometimes feels like a foreigner as well. As she wrote in a letter to her friend Nurser: "I am no longer bothered by belonging to two countries. But I don't want to feel weird while in Turkey." There is a sense of not quite belonging in either country. But Işık usually sees her multiple identities as a strength. In 2008 she quite literally gave both cities a place in her home, by setting up two flowerpots: "I named one pot Istanbul and the other Amsterdam. I gave them city names and planted flowers."[69] She feels happy in their midst.

Usually, she was proud to reconcile her Turkish and Amsterdam identities. But in a rare, sad fragment in her 1980 diary, she wrote: "You won't believe but the life here is not very different than the one in Turkey. Wherever you are, you need to pay the price for the pleasures, happiness and everything else."[70]

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined Isık Tüzüner's Amsterdam diaries from the Atria archive and from her personal archive. Based on these twenty-one notebooks and two interviews, we have explored her experiences as a migrant artist in Amsterdam since 1975. The question we set out to answer was, "How does she portray herself in her diaries in relation to the city she has chosen to live in?" While exploring this question, we tried to analyse

68 "Bu ara Amsterdam ilham kaynağı oldu benim için." Personal archive, 2008.

69 "Bir saksı İstanbul, bir saksı Amsterdam. Şehir adları koydum ektim." Personal archive, 2008.

70 "İnanmayacaksın ama buradaki yaşam Türkiyedekinden farklı değil. Herkes nerede olursa olsun zevklerin, mutluluğun ve her şeyin bedelini ödemek zorunluluğunda." Personal archive, 1980.

how Işık as a diary writer fits in with Rippl's two main themes in the self-construction of the migrant's identity.

Rippl distinguishes between the "immigrant struggling with an in-between identity" and the "sophisticated cosmopolitan traveller at ease around the globe." While Işık's diaries show elements of both, we propose that they fall into a third category: that of the migrant who reconciles two national identities by merging them into a local one. On the one hand she feels Turkish, on the other not Dutch but an Amsterdammer. After so many years in the Netherlands, Işık feels regarded as a foreigner when she is back in Turkey. She certainly does not feel very Dutch, wherever she is. But there is one place where she feels deeply at home and that is in the city where she lives: Amsterdam. Whatever flaws it may have, Amsterdam is where she belongs. It is no coincidence that she decided to donate her diaries to an archive based in Amsterdam. As has become evident from several quotes in her diaries, Işık has regularly struggled with an in-between identity like many other migrants. However, according to her diaries she never did so to the point of despair. There have certainly been moments of frustration about not belonging, but these moments do not define her. More often, she has thoroughly enjoyed the combination of coming from Turkey and living as a local in Amsterdam. She emphatically does not want to be seen as an *allochtoon*, someone whose identity is defined by being a foreigner. She portrays herself as an international artist, who has consciously chosen to live and work in Amsterdam.[71] In that sense, the self-construction of her identity would fit more into Rippl's second category: "the sophisticated cosmopolitan traveler at ease around the globe." Yet she is not a typical cosmopolitan who travels the world. Except for her one year as a student in London and a few exhibitions elsewhere in Europe, her focus has very much remained on the Netherlands, specifically on Amsterdam. Thus, the term "cosmopolitan traveller" does not quite fit her self-image either. But the term "Amsterdammer" does.

In one of the interviews, she characterized Amsterdam as *Vrijheid blijheid*—Freedom [is] happiness. Here her sense of the city and of herself overlap, for this is not just a characterization of her ideal Amsterdam, but also of herself as an artist and a human being. It is Amsterdam's reputation as one of the most liberal cities in the world that has always attracted her, ever since she first came here as a hippie in 1975. Even though the city's cultural climate has drastically changed in the last decades, Amsterdam

71 This self-image is confirmed in a photobook on Amsterdammers, *World Citizens en Route*. Işık is photographed next to visual artist Bülent Evren, also a migrant from Turkey. Marian Borsjes, *Wereldburgers onderweg* (self-published, 2024), 133.

is still her ultimate city of freedom. Even if this is no more than an ideal image, it is this ideal that makes her feel at home in Amsterdam. We asked Işık, during one of the interviews, if she travelled back in time and found herself in 1975, would she make the same choice of leaving everything and everyone behind to come to Amsterdam? "Yes," she says, without hesitation.[72]

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