

## Fidelity

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*Interviewed by Gülenay Börekci, Habertürk Sunday Supplement, May 2010*

*Change is a concept we support, at the very least in theory, whether out of our cowardice or hypocrisy, however reluctant we might to accept its consequences. Except in love! Most of us cannot even bear the thought of change when it comes to love, and in particular, change in the other party. Why do you think that is? What is it that makes us dread the thought of our beloved changing, makes us worry that we'll vanish altogether, like a candle going out?*

Change is the basic rule of existence; everything changes. Love promises eternity by offering us moments of bliss. It stands at the centre of our desires and determines our future. But it carries no guarantee; the risk of sudden termination is ever present, a fact we all know -just like the inevitability of death- yet rarely accept. We dread loneliness, losing the object of our love or our dreams. Love partially arises out of this fear.

*What precisely is it that we risk in a love affair, the thing we can't bear anyone else to touch or breathe on, the thing we risk humiliating ourselves for, or commit the most serious of crimes for? Do we do this out of 'our great love'?*

We assume mutual possessiveness when it comes to the object of our love: we believe we own as well as belong. A mutual state of acceptance and trust, in other words. The intimacy between two people who share their most secret emotions, soul and body in all their naked truth is singular. What devastates us is the violation of our trust and intimacy by an intruder, disillusionment at confidence betrayed and feeling cheated... because we realise we never owned that person in the first place.

Comment [FH1]: Check

*My understanding of Azra as I read the book was that she wavered in fidelity to herself even as she demanded it as a right. She suffers the worst betrayal of all, but by avoiding reality, she constantly betrays her own self. What's the author's view?*

Betraying her own honour, position, and experience in order to avoid disrupting either the harmony in her life, or the man she loves, and deliberately burying her head in the sand... A trap so many women fall into! I was trying to describe this emotional state that I find pathetic, one I suspect also places the man at the core of her world, repudiates the woman unconditionally, and even a little bit of masochism.

*Ferda, on the other hand, believed fidelity to be a crippling and fatal lie. Do you agree with him?*

The expectation or anticipation of unconditional fidelity provokes lies, hypocrisy and lovelessness. Institutionalising love and familiarity kill the thrill and create contempt. The number of young people who fall out of lust is growing. Sexual energy, however, is creative, it thrives on novelty. Its absence cripples the soul. That is why so many people defy prohibitions. There's no solution; concepts such as family, fidelity and commitment have occupied us since time immemorial.

*I hold the view that excessive devotion and an insistence on unwarranted, unconditional fidelity are a kind of selfishness, a sure-fire way of burdening your loved one with the weight of your own expectations, leading perhaps to inevitable betrayal... Is that how it was for Azra?*

Precisely. This is what I tried to explain and demonstrate in this novel. Excessive devotion whose *raison d'être* is making the other party feel beholden can so easily become tiresome and irritating, and even justify betrayal or desertion.

*Everything is political and all great crimes are somehow related to money. Does this hold true for love, and for crimes of passion?*

On the whole it does. Love, and in particular obsession, are fatal. And if desertion also leads to diminished circumstances, anger and vindictiveness are augmented by despair, a combination that could easily lead to suicide or serious crime such as murder.

*Are you familiar with the character in the film Solaris: he despatches his wife/double into space over and over again, only to find her sitting at his bedside calmly. Why do some women dig their heels in despite all this humiliation?*

Women who make men into their own *raison d'être* actually suffer from a failure to define themselves. Then there are others who cannot risk living alone, hampered by a variety of issues, some of which can be social or economical.

*Continuing the same line of thought, women appear to have problems leaving and also letting go. Like Azra who thinks she might continue to live with the body of her loved one in the bathtub...*

That's correct; countless women are extraordinarily inept at letting go and a whole bunch of men take advantage of their weakness. Azra's situation however is different: Ferda now appears utterly harmless in this state, and as accommodating, obedient, willing to listen and entirely her own in a way he never was when alive. She also subconsciously attempts to delay the inevitable.

*A friend commented that in Fidelity Ferda turns into the devil incarnate with none of the devilish or artistic charm that might explain his allure. İnci Aral virtually creates a metaphoric devil with no saving graces. Would you agree?*

A good comment. There are times when everyone views his or her lover as the devil. Ferda is not evil, but is a total egotist, a charmer and a liar. Such manipulative men who can never be 'owned' are capable of ruining women's lives.

*I wonder if you agree with the French saying, 'no novel can exist without adultery!'*

As the emotion that displays such a variety of intriguing scenes of the human condition, love is the number one resource for the novelist. And forbidden love is one of the most challenging topics of all. Novels arise from life itself, and drama, from a point where everyone believes to be in the right.

*It's very hard for us to enjoy the present in most things, but most of all in love. We live either regretting the past or dreading the future. You, as a writer, are party to the future, certainly that of your characters. How does that empower you?*

Love, being a dream of the future, makes it impossible to live the present. I suspect sex has displaced love in this context. As for me: I don't always start out knowing the full story of my characters, although I have an idea. The more I write the clearer it becomes, and I witness my characters progressing towards their own end. I can't necessarily say this empowers me, quite the opposite in fact: I struggle to proceed and feel each new novel takes several years off my life.

*This is also a novel on writing: Azra writes about desire, fear, pain, cruelty, anticipation and death in her notebook inside prison. My question is to the writer, and to her main character: does writing clear the mind, or does it make everything far more complicated by revealing otherwise invisible details?*

Both...

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