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Fantasy and Judgement: Brides' Intimate Talk on Facebook

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Alev Kuruoğlu (University of Southern Denmark) for introducing me to “Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri” and sharing the joy of following the group and developing insights from it on a daily basis. I am grateful to Prof. Belgin Tekce and Prof. Nükhet Sirman for making this study possible as part of a trilogy on fantasies of married lives in Turkey, all of which are published in this issue.

- 1 “The secret of success in marriage”, according to Binali Yıldırım, who was the Prime Minister of Turkey at the time, as he advised the groom in a wedding ceremony which he attended as a witness, is “*itaat et rahat et*” (enjoy the comfort of being obedient).¹ He then turned to the bride, who agreed with the Prime Minister with a smile, and advised her to say “ok” whenever she sees her husband angry, just as her husband says “ok” whenever she gets angry. This is the way to have a good relationship and a long-lasting marriage according to the then Prime Minister.
- 2 In Turkey, a marriage that lasts forever is both the norm and a widely shared desire. This desire, nevertheless, is not easy to fulfil. The complexities of everyday life, the difficulty of relationships formed within marriage, and the changing nature of married life in time make marriage vulnerable to obstacles and crises. The solution to these crises is usually left to women’s efforts. Indeed, the famous Turkish saying *yuvayı dışı kuş yapar* (women make homes) points to these efforts. Even if Yıldırım advised both parties to be patient and obedient, it is usually women who seek the secret of peace and happiness and look for new ways to make things work better in marriage. When I searched for Facebook groups, I couldn’t find a group page on which men look for solutions to problems they have with their wives or girlfriends. On the other hand, there are numerous women’s groups where women seek advice about their romantic relationships, marriage and family relations, as well as about housekeeping, childrearing, keeping the work-home balance, etc. *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* (Brides’ Home

and Trousseau) is such a closed group where Turkish-speaking women exchange their ideas, feelings, and judgements about married life or moving towards marriage.

- 3 This article explores how women express their desire for a happy marriage and how, in response, women's judgement draws the possibility of this happiness through the medium of a Facebook group's wall. The group entitled *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* brings together Turkish-speaking women from different ages and socio-economic status living in various cities of Turkey and abroad. The content of the group page can be described as a constellation of visual and written expressions of fantasies and judgements and which dialogically reinstate the norms of marriage. Elsewhere I developed the concept of the *family regime* to emphasize the family's centrality in the making of the life-worlds of individuals in Turkey (Akınerdem 2019). The family regime which constitutes the basic living structure in Turkey has been an object of study for feminist scholars from various disciplines and many perspectives (Sirman 2005, 2019; Tekçe 2004, 2019; Özar, Yakut-Çakar 2013; Özbay 1985, 2015). In this research, I explore how this regime is enhanced, embraced and negotiated through women's intimate talk on Facebook. Therefore, the aim is to look at the family regime, this time through the lens of social media, with a specific focus on the role of judgement in women's fantasies of being happily married. This article argues that women create intimate relationships within the medium of the Facebook group, narrate their fantasies and open themselves to public judgement, and in this way, adjust their desires to the norm of the family. Therefore, by opening up this judgmental space, fantasy becomes a means to maintaining the family regime within which women are compelled to accept and expect unequal conduct with men, while also inviting men to step into the fantasy of a happy marriage which is set out on the group's wall.
- 4 Through the concept of fantasy, I would like to explore how the intimate talk among the group members take the form of a conversational narrative and, consequently, how the expression of desire in this narrative form, or fantasy, elicits judgements through which women come to terms with the norms of the family. Fantasy entails a "logic of desire" (Cowie 1997, Glynos 2014) and "a narrative form" (Cowie 1997). I argue that marriage entails the fantasy of a happily-ever-after life which is shaped and encouraged by popular narratives – fairy tales, television serials, and alike. Of course, there is a long way to this happily-ever-after life in reality. Unlike popular narratives where the male and female protagonists unite at the end no matter what (Sirman 2019), there is no way to mark the happily-ever-after moment in real life. Yet, the desire for 'happily-ever-after' is the main fantasy with which subjects pursue married lives. This fantasy creates many fantasy scenarios that are embedded in different moments of a relationship: dating, courtship, wedding, having children and providing them with their needs until they get married and have their own lives building a good life for children and marrying them, and finally taking care of each other and maintaining a peaceful companionship in their old age. How to overcome the contradictions and obstacles, how to accomplish these moments properly and how to mark them as memorable moments of a married life are questions which open these fantasies to the judgement of others at various levels in various women's venues ranging from one-to-one conversations to reality television (Akınerdem 2019) and, as I would like to show in this article, on social media.
- 5 Therefore, I suggest, the original happily-ever-after fantasy elicits judgements about how to conduct married life or moving towards marriage. The fantasy of the family or,

in other words, the desire for the normative, enables others to watch, participate and judge this fantasy. Whenever a woman posts on the group's wall talking about her desire for a good relationship or a fantasy scenario, she also invites others' judgements about how a good relationship can be achieved. Women's comments amount to a judgmental register in these intimate dialogues to invite other women to enact the normative order of marriage and the family in every detail of life. I elaborate on this relationship between judgement and fantasy in order to show how women desirously come to terms with family norms, embody the unequal conduct with men in marriage, manage the tension between her family and her (future) husband, and negotiate the limits of these norms with other women within the intimate public of the group. Therefore, I argue, various limits involving family life in Turkey are drawn and negotiated in registers I would like to call judgmental.

Managing Intimate Encounters on Facebook

- 6 The mediation of intimacy through media technologies has been the object of former studies (see Attwood et al. 2017, Barker et al. 2018, Illouz 2007). Like many other social media platforms, Facebook enables intimate talk among strangers through a set of technologies and forms. Intimacy here refers to "emotional closeness" (Kavka, West 2004: 137) which is enabled through "an aspiration for a narrative about something shared" (Berlant 1998: 281) among a group of people. In this case the aspiration which fosters emotional closeness among a group of women from different ages, economic status, cities and regions of Turkey is the scenario of a happily-ever-after marriage.
- 7 Facebook groups, in general, operate as a technology of intimacy. First, if it is a closed group, the group settings allow members who are non-friends to see each others' posts and comments on the group's wall while hiding them from their friend lists which are composed of real-life friends, family members, neighbors, relatives, and so on. Yet, members usually suggest the group to their Facebook friends. As a result, women may also subscribe to the group with reference to other members of the group who are acquaintances in real life. They can even become members of the same group without noticing each other because the algorithm of Facebook enables friends from all spheres of life to find each other (Chambers 2017; Facebook 2011). Therefore, when someone posts on the group's wall, she is aware that it is read by a group of strangers, in addition to the friends she invited to the group, as well as real-life acquaintances who she is unaware are members of the group.
- 8 I usually observe from their conversations that there are women who are relatives or real-life friends. It is also the case that many anonymous users, who are not rare in the group, do not want to be identified by real-life friends and relatives in the group. Therefore, they stay anonymous in the group. It is crucial to underline that Facebook does not encourage and allow full anonymity. One should always use a profile name even if it is anonymized, abbreviated, or fake.² Users are encouraged to set a profile and add as much detail as possible into this profile. In other words, it is not one of those "social media platforms that leverage anonymity as a design choice while allowing people to disclose to a specific audience" (Ma et al. 2016: 3857). If one becomes a member of a group and posts on the group's wall, they should use their own profile name. They can manage who will see their posts, though not the visibility of their

profile. Yet, even if it is not encouraged, if someone would like to hide her real identity, she has to find other solutions like a fake name or using another person's account.

- 9 Women who would not like to disclose themselves on *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* group's wall have several strategies to keep their anonymity. As a general strategy, some women who does not disclose their real names and use a fake profile name on Facebook also post on the group using these nicknames. Some of them use their real name or picture but hide their face while posting pictures in private settings, for example when asking for ideas about a bridal gown. The strictest strategy is to send their questions privately to one of the admins. The admin posts such questions with the title "from an anonymous member" on the group's wall, so that nobody can figure out who wrote the original post.
- 10 Some of the women, on the other hand, use a strategy that demonstrates their desire to keep their reputation while using their real names and profile pictures. I observe many women add their husband's or fiancé's name to theirs and use their photo as their profile picture, as a means to say they are married or engaged, and thus not open to inappropriate encounters in the group or outside. Therefore, sometimes, even if men are not allowed in the group, one can see women posting with a male name.
- 11 Ibrahim (2018) describes online networks as "complicit risk communities where personal information becomes social capital which is traded and exchanged" (p. 51). In other words, according to studies on privacy on social media, users negotiate the costs and benefits of being visible (Tufekci 2008), the state tracks its citizens through their online visibility, and the market commodifies what they can track from this negotiation (Fuchs 2012). Risk at this level can be regarded as disclosing personal information which makes individuals vulnerable to the state's tracking and the market's commodification. According to this framework, the individual is defined as being at risk, especially with a focus on children and youth who may recklessly post on social media. Yet, these studies do not situate the individual in a social context where multiple discourses of security and privacy operate. I argue that privacy is not only about keeping personal information from the market or the state but also has a moral aspect. On the *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* group, not to show one's face, or body in a fancy dress establishes the member's attentiveness to the norm of *mahremiyet*³. Besides, when they use their husband's or fiancé's name next to theirs, they assert how their visibility is dependent on being married. These strategies can be understood as the articulation of "a desire for safe-keeping" (Ahmed 2000), through which women control their own movements. As Ahmed states, "Where 'one' goes or does not go determines what one 'is', or where one is seen to be determines what one is seen to be" (2000: 33). As I pointed out above, the algorithm of Facebook brings those who are related to each other in real life together on lists and group networks. Thus, I argue, these women protect themselves not only from harmful effects of revealing personal information but also from inappropriate appearances in the eyes of their husbands/fiancés/boyfriends, relatives, friends, and the group itself.
- 12 While protecting themselves as moral subjects, it may sound interesting that members engage in intimate talk on the group's wall. Ma et al. explain this with reference to Simmel's thoughts on *the stranger* (1950):

It is somewhat puzzling that people sometimes self-disclose quite intimately to total strangers, such as fellow passengers on a train [47]. As Simmel notes, "the stranger who moves on often receives the most surprising openness-confidences which have the character of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld

from a more closely related person [50].” Such “openness” to strangers compared to “a more closely related person” could potentially have two explanations: the difference in identification (anonymous), or the difference in the relationship to the audience (based on physical proximity). (Ma et al. 2016: 3858).

- 13 In the *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* group, there are two aspects of mediating intimacy: women, anonymous or with their real identities, interact with each other, share the images of their domestic lives and engage in intimate conversation based on the cause/theme of the group. This makes the most intimate aspects of their lives open to the group’s gaze and registers the members of the group as intimate strangers. Second, this gaze ensues public judgement because the members of the group, anonymous or real, strangers or friends and relatives, share the normativity of the family which shape the existing structure of marriage as well as fantasies of happily-married lives.

Fantasy and Judgement

- 14 Elizabeth Cowie (1997) takes cinema as a public form of fantasy and points to the ‘enormous repetition’ and ‘rich diversity’ in cinematic narratives. The repetitive character, according to Cowie, stems from their reference to an original fantasy, and therefore there are few original plots through which cinema tells stories. A myriad of stories with different techniques yet plausible plots unfold in front of the audience and offer them subject positions, or ‘a position of desire’ (Cowie 1997: 140). The original fantasy enables other fantasies which lend diversity to the plausible structure of films and enables audiences to identify with the characters. Glynos (2014) also focuses on the tension between contingency and repetition as the ground where fantasy works. “The role of discursive elements – fantasmatic elements in particular”, according to Glynos, is “to close off from view the idea that there is no ultimate law governing our social relations” (2014: 138-139). Therefore, fantasy operates within the gap between lived experience and desire, in such a way that the former (the contingent) tends to be lived, remembered and narrated through an orientation towards the latter (the fantasmatic).
- 15 This mediation between fantasy and the real/lived becomes possible at two levels. First, as Glynos suggests, by resisting public-official disclosure and thus protecting the subject “against the anxiety associated with radical contingency” (Glynos 2014: 139-140) of the real. Second, I suggest, the mediation of individual desires opens up a gap between fantasy and lived experience in such a way that the lived is judged according to fantasy. At the first level, fantasy is a form that enables an escape from judgement and therefore, according to Glynos, embarrassment and guilt. At the second level, fantasy becomes a measure for judgement, which is the case for the *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* Facebook group. Rather than resisting the visibility of the gap between fantasy and the lived, the fantasy scenarios in the group posts conjure up the norm of the family as the ultimate desire. Thus, I argue, normativity, to some extent, orients and even haunts desire. Women narrate their fantasies in the group and, through judgement, adjust their desires to the confines of normativity. I suggest that, first, taking fantasy as a public, rather than a hidden, aspect of human life; and further, investigating the role of judgement in public fantasies can illuminate this intricate relationship between desire and norm.
- 16 In the next section, I analyze a selection of posts and conversations on the group’s wall. Two main registers involve the constellation of fantasies and judgements which are

expressed through intimate talk and which has a reach to every aspect of private lives. Fantasies of romantic moments as a sign of propriety; and second, advice-seeking posts which involve fantasies of better relationships.

***Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* Facebook Group**

- 17 *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* is a closed Facebook group which is exclusive to women of all ages and marital status. At the time of writing this paper, the number of members of the group was 140,655⁴. The page is managed by a group of admins. These seven admins also post the messages coming from anonymous members on the groups' wall. The group description which is posted on the group's page is as follows:

This is a closed and women-only group and men's requests for membership are rejected. The group's purpose is to talk and therefore please write your comments on the basis of mutual respect those who offend and insult others will be excluded from membership.

UNAUTHORISED ADVERTISING IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN and those who avoid this rule will be excluded from membership

Those who would like to post special advertising please message to the admin Bihter Deniz Yılmaz have a nice chat 😊⁵

- 18 Marriage is related to every aspect of life and thus the posts on the group's wall are as varied as the members of the group. In this respect, the group's frame extends to the whole layer of life within which women live, produce, and feel. Women's posting and sharing of their own questions, stories, and dilemmas motivate others to share theirs and, in this way, diverse and repetitive instances of life are articulated to the fantasy of marriage. Newly-wed women share photos of their bridal dresses, wedding day, and decorations in their new homes. They ask questions about running a house and maintaining relationships with their husband and new relatives. Gift ideas, romantic table settings and zingy surprises are among the most popular threads on the group's wall. There are questions about finding and choosing a spouse, comparing arranged vs. love marriage, or whether the appearance, financial status, or manners matter more in spousal choice. Married women ask for others' ideas about renewing their houses, changing their home appliances, curtains or carpets. Some of them share their experiences and ideas about pregnancy and childcare. Unhappy content is also conventional among the group's posts. Negative feelings arise from women's disappointments about their marriages, sometimes accounts of adultery, abuse, violence or any other kind of discordance within which they feel lonely. Sometimes they even ask for advice on a good divorce lawyer.
- 19 For the purpose of this paper, I narrowed my exploration to posts concerning one-on-one relationships between couples. I specifically selected a set of romantic fantasies and advice-seeking posts among all of the posts which appeared on the group's wall between September-December 2018 and which elicit judgement and fantasy in their own ways.

Fantasies of a Romantic Moment

- 20 Wedding photographs are very popular posts on the group's wall. They very often feel like fragments of Hollywood films and Turkish television serials: Gowns reminiscent of Ottoman dramas, outdoor photo shoots on a seashore or on empty fields which are

fantasies of young couples of being the only two in the whole world. In this form of posts, women are authors of their own romantic love story. The videos and photographs they share, besides being markers of the iconic moments of a (possible) marriage, are objects of a judgmental conversation to which the bride invite others, usually with a warning of not being offensive.

Kızlar sizi sürekli takip ediyorum . Ben de 15 Ekim geliniyim. 5 yılın sonunda kavuştuk. Çok şükür çok güzel hep istediğim hayal ettiğim gibi bir düğünüm oldu. Sizle de paylaşmak istedim. Rabbim bu mutluluğu tatmak isteyen herkese tattırsin 😊 (dış çekim fotoğraflarını alamadığımız için amatör çekimleri paylaşıyorum 😊)



Member 1: Girls I follow you all the time. I am an October 5th bride. We finally have united after five years. Thank God I had a beautiful wedding just like I always imagined. So I wanted to share it with you. I wish God grants the same for everyone who wants to feel this way. 😊 (because we still didn't get the [professional] outdoor photographs I share amateur shootings with you 😊)

Comment 1: Congratulations it seems like a beautiful organization, a beautiful wedding. I wish you to be happy forever inshallah

Member 1: Thank you so much 😊

Comment 2: It seems like your husband does not share the same dream with you.

Member 1: He got confused because of excitement.

Comment 3: I did not like your entrance music. If only it were an upbeat song.

Member 1: Thank you. I chose this music because I find it nostalgic.

POST 1: A post composed of a wedding ceremony video and photographs.

- 21 There are expressions of criticism and dislike as well as supportive and congratulating comments. The objects of judgement in these posts vary from the color of the dress or the music played while the bride and groom enter the venue, to the facial expressions of the bride and groom which are meant to show how they feel at the moment (see Post 1). The bride is expected to organize a genuine happy and cheerful *mise-en-scène*, as well as keeping her fiancé engaged in the groom's role. In this way, I suggest, the bride is

invited to come to terms with a happily-ever-after fantasy by showing her capacity to imagine her own, unique, yet inevitably repetitive fantasy-scenarios.

Member 2: Girls dear fellows hello y'all I'm one of the silent members asking for your help our first anniversary was on the 10th but we were in my husband's home so I couldn't do anything now we are back to our home and would like to do something [to celebrate] how can I set a table a beautiful one for my husband I am waiting for your comments *canlar* [my dears]

Comment: You can put your photographs on the table. Dry rose leaves little candles and you can buy or make a cake, cookies drinks and also prepare assorted food. Also you can choose a gift according to your husband's taste. You can arrange candles on the floor from the door all the way to the room. He can walk beneath the candles. I did something like that.

POST 2: Gift and anniversary ideas

- 22 Questions and posts about the composition of a romantic moment such as a wedding anniversary or making a surprise pregnancy announcement to the husband constitute the second group of posts through which a fantasy *mise-en-scène* is created. A newlywed woman posts a question which is written like speaking face-to-face with a group of friends, and therefore without any punctuation or other formalities of written communication (See Post 2). The answer I quoted above is representative of the tens of comments and ideas and demonstrates how fantasy and normativity are entangled. First, it does not outline the basic rules of an anniversary surprise, which would sound thoroughly normative. Nor does it encourage the bride to find her way in planning the anniversary, and therefore which would have followed registers of empowerment and self-help. Rather, in exquisite detail, the commentator narrates a romantic narrative which covers the gift, the menu, the dry leaves, the candles, and the husband's entrance and walk into the room. She enhances the intimacy of the talk by adding that this was the way she prepared a surprise for her own husband.
- 23 As the cheerful, as well as the critical, comments demonstrate, the bride is responsible for any mis-feeling that would disseminate from the arrangement of her surprise (see Post 1-2). The commentators, in return, are also required to be responsive and not to be offensive. Other members or in some cases admins warn those who criticize too much by reminding them of individual choice and taste, financial difficulties that would limit the possibilities of a fancy celebration, or special conditions of the member who is the target of criticism. Therefore, judgement generates a collective understanding of how the fantasy should be set out. In this way, do's and don'ts are embedded in a fantasy scenario that would replicate other scenarios that were experienced before. The intimacy among these strangers is established by this *repetitive* ethos of *uniquely* romantic moments.
- 24 In both examples, the exchange of photographs, questions, ideas, and experiences are expected
- 25 to register the bride as 'properly' happy, 'capable' of managing a proper and nice wedding according to her social status, and eventually forming a 'good' couple with her husband. In addition, she demonstrates her ability to make the groom step into these fantasy moments. I suggest that the public circulation of photographs and ideas in a closed but crowded women's group shows that they are messages to other women who at some moment in their lives enacted/would enact these fantasy-scenarios which are,

through judgements made in public, articulated as *the norm*. 'This is the way 'we' do it and this is the way 'we' keep doing it' would be the motto of the group.

- 26 I would like to add that in both posts the members did not hide their names and profile pictures from the group. Even if there are many other posts in which women anonymize themselves by covering their faces on the photographs or hide their names, they may feel more comfortable while sharing their questions and romantic moments within the limits of actual expectations. They do not necessarily need to express their desire for 'safe-keeping' (Ahmed 2000) and they do not necessarily feel a need to protect their reputation. Nevertheless, anonymization increases in advice-seeking posts which will be analysed below.

Seeking Advice

- 27 The spectacular romanticism of the group posts cannot hide contradictions and threats in married lives. Apart from fantasies of romantic moments, there are complexities inherent in marriage that require women's care, obedience, and patience. What to expect, how to take care, what to obey, and to what extent to be patient are the questions that are raised in the posts which show the grey or dark sides of marriage and having a romantic relationship leading to marriage, relations which are lived in *mahram* and which are made public through intimate conversation. Questions about the difficulties of running a house, the conflicts with in-laws (issues with the female members of the husband's family: mother-in-law/*kayınvalide*, husband's brother's spouse/*elti*, husband's sister/*görümce*), gifts and financial conflicts (family money, gold and other precious gifts which the groom('s family) is supposed to give to the bride) reveal the fact that bouffant bridal gowns and romantic settings do not suffice to make a fairy tale. The group is one of the nearest advice-seeking media for its members, and therefore whenever they feel that they are in trouble, they access their mobile devices and post on the Facebook group's wall. I analyzed two such cases, one from a non-anonymous (see Post 3) and the other one from an anonymous member.
- 28 A young woman comes to the group's page and asks:

Member 4: Good morning. I need your help. I have been talking to a guy [*konuşmak* is a form of dating in Turkish] for the last three weeks. His family knows about it but mine doesn't. Last night my parents caught me texting and severely beat me. "Let him come and introduce himself to us if he really loves you", they said. And they said they would give me away to someone else who asked for my hand. I said no, I want to marry someone I love. "Then let him come", they said. I told this to him. "How come they caught you, how come you couldn't hide?", he said. Shouldn't he have said "It doesn't matter. We are not doing something bad. I would visit them and introduce myself if it is necessary"? Wouldn't that be the correct response? He didn't even bother to say that. I told him they will marry me off to someone else, "don't be a fool" he said. Why didn't he go mad and say, "how dare they think they can marry off you to someone else?"?

Post 3-1: Seeking advice from a non-anonymous member

- 29 She tells how they got into a lot of trouble including the interference of a common friend which finally led to a break up. She goes on:

Member 4: When he didn't react to my possibility of marrying someone else, I felt that he doesn't love me and blocked him on Whatsapp and Face[book]. "I felt offended because you blocked me," he said, "We've only been together for 3 weeks, what do you expect from me?" He said, "I took such care to [protect you], I didn't come earlier to see you so that people wouldn't talk. I am hearing things about you from someone else." So, I said I didn't know [if we were serious] I didn't want to tell you everything from the very start, there is a time for everything. And would one really question the past of someone they love? Wouldn't one say, the past is the past, what matters to me is the future? I want to fix our relationship, I don't want to break up with him.

Post 3-2: Seeking advice from a non-anonymous member

- 30 Her question entails a long and complicated narrative of conflict within which many parties are positioned against each other: family members, friends, and lovers. However, what is the key issue is her boyfriend's behavior here. It is neither the family nor the involvement of their common friend that should be resolved. Instead, her question involves an 'otherwise' scenario in which the loving boyfriend's behavior is fantasized and his actual behavior is judged against this fantasy at the same time. From the young woman's point of view, the boyfriend's actions would have been deemed proper if he protected his girlfriend against her family, if he came up with the right answers to her questions, and therefore acted in accordance with a happily-ever-after fantasy.
- 31 Lots of judgmental answers and comments follow this post. Many members agree that the boyfriend does not seem to love her. Neither does he care for her, according to the majority of the group members.

Comment 1: My dear, if he loved you and was concerned about losing you he would have come to ask your hand and showed his goodwill. To me, he shouldn't reproach you like a child. It just happened against your will. You should think twice. Maybe this is best for you. And you say you blocked him. Just wait. He will contact you with another phone if he really wants you.

Member 4: Our common friend intervened in our relationship. She told my issues from my past before me as if it is up to her to tell him. Now she is good in the eye of my boyfriend and I am evil. The lad does not want me anymore.

Comment 2: Are you going to ask someone to ask for your hand who you know only for 3 weeks sometimes people do not know each other after living for years in the same house just think carefully and decide accordingly and if you ask my opinion there is nothing to expect from him he didn't even come to see you did you meet online or whatever

Post 3-3: Seeking advice from a non-anonymous member

- 32 In the question quoted above (see Post 3-3), the group member continues to write an 'otherwise' scenario in which being a loving and concerned boyfriend is defined: one who takes his beloved seriously, asks for her hand, and in this way defends her in front of her family by acting properly. Therefore, the conversation between the woman who asks the question and those who answer turns into a judgmental dialogue within which they set the order of feelings and expressions which are compliant with the norms of a courtship leading to marriage and the fantasy of a happily-ever-after scenario. Any other scenario would prove his bad intentions from which the young woman should protect herself. In this way, I suggest, the norm of marriage is reinstated, the family's

attitude towards their daughter, which include violence, is approved or silenced, and the collective fantasy of marriage has once again been inscribed into another scenario.

- 33 In another post, an anonymous member of the group asks the members' opinion about a scenario in which a boyfriend or a husband cannot control his temper (see Post 4). It is expressed as a general problem for women, and it is assumed that some of them have learned how to deal with it. Therefore, the comments in response to her "how to behave" scenario show the limits of desire and confines of normativity at the same time.

Member 5: Girls does your boyfriend or husband yell at you with anger just because of very trivial issues? I am always confused about this kind of behaviour. What should I do, how to behave?

Comment 1: It is really difficult to live with someone like that he just flares up and then down again God helps you what can I say I have the same pain in my neck and there is nothing to do 😞

Comment 2: My man had been just like that before we got married but he learned to control his temper while we were dating, and he became more careful after we got married but on the contrary I turned to be like him after marriage 😞😞

Comment 3: Anyways just say ok and pass over it is a mortal world 😞

Member 5: Girls I feel relieved now. How nice you are all smiling while writing all these comments.

Post 4: Seeking advice from an anonymous member.

- 34 The selected comments in response to the question in Post 4 bring about experiences with ill-tempered men. Among them, there is only one who tells of the bitterness of the situation. The other scenarios, which are derived from lived experiences, talk about the healing effect of marriage and improvement of men by relating to women and by learning to control themselves in the course of courtship leading to marriage. Even if their situation is not improved, in other cases, women learn how not to hear it, how to ignore him and stay patient. In both cases, it is the woman's task to keep the fantasy of marriage working, by investing in their future, by forgiving the past, and by staying patient in the present.
- 35 According to Cowie's definition (1997), fantasy does not belong to a world of endless possibilities which is shaped solely by individual desire. It is confined by meta-narratives or, as she puts it, by an original fantasy. Public fantasies that are mediated through judgements both elicit and delimit women's narratives of desire and therefore teach them to act and to fantasize within the confines of normativity. Therefore, the fantasy of a good relationship involves not (only) hiding a desire which would otherwise embarrass the woman, but also fantasy scenarios of healing and improving the man's bad temper with patience and good conduct.

Conclusion

- 36 My analysis of the *Gelin evleri ve çeyizleri* group defines a contradictory space of intimate conversation where conversational narratives reinstate the norm of the family. By looking at the fantasies of romantic moments, bouffant gowns and advice-seeking questions, I wanted to show how, in these narratives, the happily-ever-after fantasy enables the expression of *the norm* in the guise of *the desired*. The members of the group

embody these norms either by repeating similar fantasies in their unique style or improving their problem-solving skills through unequal conduct with men.

- 37 I also focused on Facebook as a technological medium within which two factors operate for mediating intimacy: women communicate with their real or anonymous identities and develop intimate relationships with other members based on the theme of the group. Through this medium, which accesses the most private moments and spheres of life, women share stories which they desire to end in similar ways. Intimacy allows judgements to reach the very private spheres of domestic and individual life. In other words, they maintain the limits of *mahremiyet* while becoming intimate. These intimate conversations elicit judgements about what to desire, how to desire, and how to make them happen. Through judgements, women define the proper moral subject and invite each other into the limits of this definition. They protect their own reputation and encourage others to be attentive to these limits. They accept male superiority and advise each other to be obedient while also problematizing the level of men's emotional investment in relationships.
- 38 I defined the totality of these stories as a happily-ever-after fantasy. I argue that fantasy operates within the gap between the lived experience and desire, in such a way that the former tends to be lived, remembered and narrated through an orientation towards the latter. Fantasies which are ornamented with gowns, dry leaves, romantic table settings, and outdoor photographs are not contradictory to the negative situations inherent within marriage and the search for advice about problems. Rather, together with other fantasy scenarios, they reveal the fact that desire is inherent in the norm, and the orientation of subjects to a desired destiny is accomplished by framing that desire within a normative register. In the intimate public forum of the Facebook group, I suggest, fantasies proliferate through judgements, and judgements spring from fantasies.

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NOTES

1. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2018/11/19/yildirimdan-damada-tavsiye-itaat-et-rahata-et/>, access date: 07.04.2019.
2. Facebook's (2017) recent white paper about information management also covers its fight against fake subscribers: <https://fbnewsroomus.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/facebook-and-information-operations-v1.pdf>
3. For a detailed definition and discussion on the term *mahremiyet*, see Sehlikoğlu 2015: 236: "Mahremiyet is a word that is not translatable into English, as it simultaneously refers to multiple words in English, including privacy, secrecy, and domesticity.
4. Access date: 05.05.2019
5. Lack of punctuation, combined sentences and emojis are in the original text.

ABSTRACTS

This article explores how women's judgement towards each other draws fantasies for a happy marriage through the medium of a Facebook group's wall. *Gelin Evleri ve Çeyizleri* (Brides' Home and Trousseau) is a closed Facebook group where Turkish-speaking women exchange their ideas, feelings, and judgements about married life. Women, anonymous or with their real identities, use this technological medium to interact with each other, to share images of their domestic lives and to engage in intimate conversation. I followed the posts which appeared on the group's wall from September to December 2018 and narrowed my focus to two categories of posts: first, posts about romantic fantasies and settings, and second, posts which seek advice about one-on-one relationships between couples. Fantasies that are embedded in the conversations on the group's wall are catalysts for judgements. In other words, women come to terms with the norm of the family through fantasies, while also problematizing the level of men's emotional investment in relationships.

INDEX

Keywords: Facebook, marriage, fantasy, judgement, intimacy

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