



Aesthetic Intervention: Kurdish Female Combatants' Artistic Practices (By Özlem Belçim Galip)

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The role of women in armed guerrilla groups and conflicts has been a focal point of feminist scholarship, especially during the last two decades. However, the case of female combatants provides another example of limitations being placed on women's agency in both conflict and peace.

Women had been politically active within separate but interconnected Kurdish national movements in four Kurdish regions (Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria) for almost four decades, but Western society only really became aware of Kurdish women fighters when the YPJ (Yekineyên Parastina Jin, Women's Protection Union), founded in 1999, fought against Daesh in both Iraq and Syria.

Figure 1- An example for Kurdish women guerrillas' images circulated by Western mainstream media.



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The reality is that, especially since the 1990s, those involved in the Kurdish national armed struggle have sought opportunities to express themselves through a variety of different art forms: it hasn't simply been a question of fighting. For instance, a school in the form of a guerrilla camp for cultural activities was set up in 1999 for this purpose, the Şehit Sefkan Kültür ve Sanat Okulu (Martyr Şefkan Culture and Arts School), named after one of the early PKK guerrilla fighters, Celal Ercan (nom de guerre 'Şefkan').

Figure 2- Memoir in the form of fictionalised autobiography of Kurdish woman guerrilla Sorxwîn.

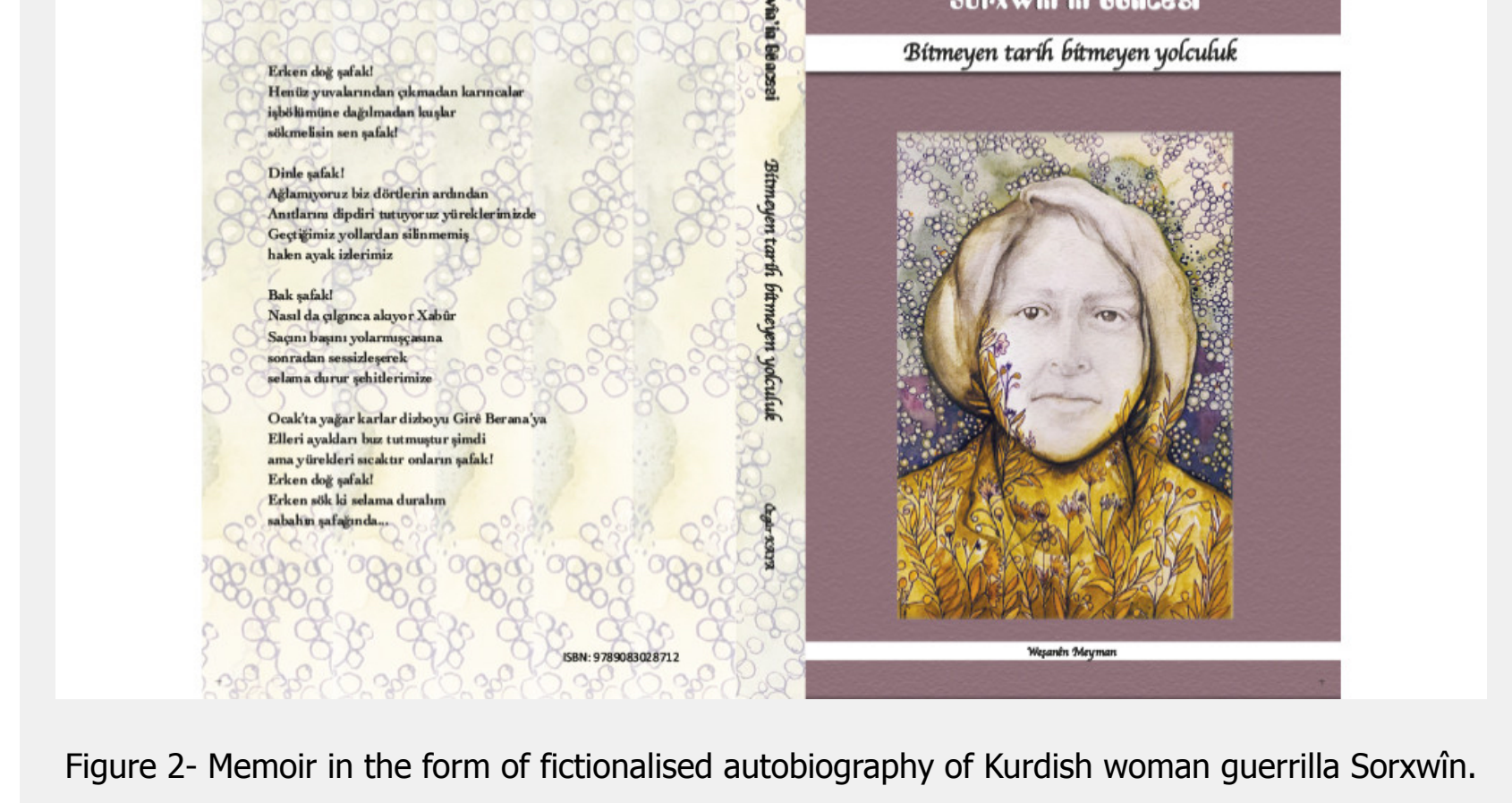


Figure 2- Memoir in the form of fictionalised autobiography of Kurdish woman guerrilla Sorxwîn.

Since the early 1990s, songs and other audio-visual performances recorded and filmed for the purpose of music clips, videos, short films, and feature films in the frontlines and guerrilla units, have been smuggled out and edited within music studios of Kurdish satellite and radio channels mainly based in European cities.

Figure 3- Delila Meyaser, singer and drummer, self-trained in guerrillas' bases, she has both music albums in digital platforms and as in CDs.



Generally speaking, artmaking during warfare is overlooked, downplayed, or denigrated on grounds of biases, lack of subjectivity, and propagandist content or style in artistic productions.

awareness and creativity. Even just bodies, voices, and minds can be sufficient resources to enable artistic creativity to flourish. Thus, it is not that the work of art, in print, paper, and digital form or the "work of art of an experience" (Dewey 1934), is lacking in the battlefields; research open enough to see these works of art as an artistic experience and cultural material is lacking.



Figure 4- A sample of handicraft on rosary and wrist band making by women combatants with the title of "when the guerrilla is not in motion", from ANF website.

Özlem Belçim Galip is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford. She is the author of Imagining Kurdistan: Identity, Culture and Society (I.B. Tauris, 2015) and Civil Society versus State: New Social Movement and Armenian Question in Turkey (Palgrave, 2020).

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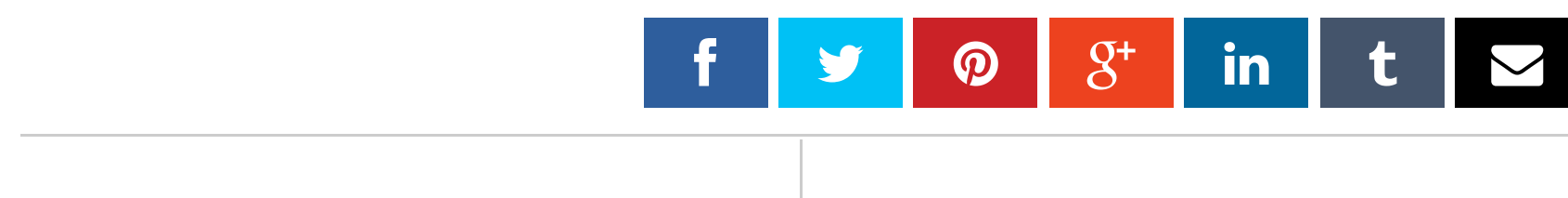
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