
Identity snippets

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This article is a submission for the "30 years of the Erasmus Programme" competition organised by the European Office of Charles University. It was written by Melis Omalar, a Political Science student from Brunel University London, currently hosted by the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University. The formatting of the piece is on purpose.

*Think of this as a chance, a chance to prove them wrong, i told myself
they founded a union to trade trillions and create capital
but for us, this was always about much more - we made this about so much more*

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*where are you from, the first question, after your name. sometimes even before. i have answered it a million times
already. i feel as if i am pressing a button inside my drunk soul when
germanturkishbutistudyinlondon,
i reply so quick i don't think he even realizes i did
you what?
i am german and turkish but i study in london and now i am on erasmus in prague
so i am european, i think but don't say*

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*I think of jack who voted leave and is now on erasmus in helsinki, traveled to sweden over the weekend and is planning
on visiting brussels this one
irony isn't it*

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*the place is getting so crowded that i almost don't spot pam as she enters withanouk
pam is from california but studies in london with me and though she doesn't like beer, she loves prague
she is also currently having an existential crisis as she realised that there is no such thing as free will
i am just sitting in the tram and thinking, i could get up now and leave and travel all of europe, but i don't, she tells me
with a shaking voice as we are on our way to do groceries, we are just so bound by these societal standards, we are
our own prisoners melis
well, i say, the twenties are a confusing time
we are both nineteen*



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so do you think he is cute, kuku?, alice winks at me as she points with her pen
uhm, i don't know, i have only ever been in love with spanish boys
french boys, they just confuse me
we both laugh
i have never been in love
-

how did your presentation go, elvira asks as arielle joins us
oh me non, law is so complicated, my case is really,... what is the word, melis
do you mean relevant
no i mean confusing, all over the place, not easy to understand - is there a word for that?
uhm
what is it about again, tabea asks as she enters with a big bowl of gulasch
the european union
ahhh

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*i have never been to turkey, the girl on the table next to me admits
me neither, i have always wanted to go! where exactly are you from, ferda?
i am from tokat but i study in istanbul
oh nice, what is it like there?, her friend wonders
well, we don't have democracy but we have twitter, and i guess that counts for something
i leave the bar, i don't wanna hear the rest of that talk
turning my back and leaving them back*

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*melis what does transparent mean, alejandra wants to know as we as we are spending sunday at cafedu
it means, i explain, that you do not hide things and are open about what is going on,
what you are planning on doing
okay so, i have always been transparent with you, right?
no, you are honest with me, you use transparent to describe institutions and organisations
oh, she looks disappointed
and so do i*

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*we were discussing this study in class today, quino tells me, that when a natural crisis is about to occur, animals will
know - they will sense - beforehand and flee
is this the case for all animals, i wonder curiously
uhm, i actually don't know, but humans in many parts of the world were able to use this behaviour as a warning sign,
find themselves shelter and...
his voice becomes quite as i recognize the song playing
you gotta swim, don't let yourself sink
just find the horizon
it is not as far as you think*

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*i moved to london, i remember as manina and i are sipping slovakian white wine, three weeks after the leave vote
what was the city like?
it was, i don't know, people were sorry... everyone in london seemed to disagree with the vote and choice the public
had made
i think, she summarizes, the leave vote wasn't against us, it was about them
but i thought, shaking my head, we were done being selfish and stupid?*

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*i have lived in six different countries now, almira remembers
taking master classes is a real challenge but you meet the most interesting people
you said you lived in bosnia, right?
so when we are talking about the un in our class peacekeeping and peacebuilding,
that must be all too real for you...
yeah, she falters, having seeing it first hand, it just..., lacking the words she cuts off
i, i want to tell her, i don't want to see it first hand*

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*okay so, lara summarizes, the goal is to travel as much as possible
we are in the center of europe, everything is so close by
i nod, vienna is four hours away, krakow six, kiev is basically around the next corner
my point exactly
so, i smirk, where are we off to next?
no borders, no limits, no partition*

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*we are connected now, he whispers as his lips touch mine
eyes closed, open door, snow falling
we were always connected
open your eyes
i wish we had done this earlier
i wonder why we are so scared of making connections
i only have best intentions, he winks
i wish i could say the same about myself
russian men are something else, let me tell you*

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*where are you from, i ask as we walk towards our faculty
i was born in bulgaria but we moved to bucharest when i was a kid and now i am on erasmus in prague, he smiles
as we cross the street
so you are european, i think but don't say*

*so i am european, he says
and what about you melis, he asks as the door opens
me? i am european, too, big smile across both our faces
-
proving them wrong*