

Dare to Disappoint: How Samanci Sees Her Way Out of Turkey

In her 2015 graphic novel *Dare to Disappoint: Growing Up in Turkey*, artist Özge Samanci cartoons her struggle between seeing herself as others want her to be—mathematical, conservative, religious—to seeing herself as she wants to be. I argue that in telling her story through collage, Samanci asks readers to see afresh also by reading in a manner non-linear. Instead of drawing panels and strips, Samanci does not box in the cartoons, even her words arabesque in waves across the page, often unlimited by speech bubbles. Without horizontal and vertical boxes connecting meaning for us, Samanci encourages her readers to connect the relationships between images and episodes through color, texture, and reoccurring motifs. The pages, lead the eye in loops and turns through the collage of photographs, objects (buttons, receipts, a ruler, a maple leaf), mixed media (watercolor, pen and ink, stamps), and varied styles from realistic to comic. To guide her readers, Samanci adds to her pastiche a talking poster of Jacques Cousteau. As an oceanic explorer, Cousteau links to the color aquamarine, which becomes the character Samanci's signature color. We learn to read the blue of Cousteau as both Samanci's confidence to dive into life and her geographical barrier, as with the Bosphorus Straits, cutting her off in Turkey from Europe and the Western world. My essay maps the several ways Samanci encourages the reader to see or look for visual connections in the pictures of Turkey from the tumultuous 1970s through the 1990s. Ultimately, the sea, which splashes on the cover reflecting a view of Samanci underwater, waves across the final page to spout Samanci air-borne and free, riding the back of a bejeweled Bluefin. Although none have been Turkish, my college students readily connect with *Dare to Disappoint* in the waters of The South, swamped, too, by patriarchy, religious fundamentalism, familial expectations, and a rotten educational system. Given Samanci's perspective, they understand that the same sea could be both a barrier and a bridge.