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Olgaç Bozalp, *Boys photographed in Konya*

The first of Bozalp's photographs that I will describe is titled *Boys photographed in Konya*. It is portrait in format, so taller than it is wide. The photograph, taken in 2019, is from the series *Home: Leaving One for Another*.

Five figures dressed in black at the centre of the photograph look to the camera. They stand on either side, or on top of, a red and white motorised bike, parked in profile. They are in a desert landscape.

The ground beneath the figures is flat ... filling the bottom horizontal third of the composition. Texturally it looks like wet sand ... compressed as if a wave has recently rolled over it. It is similar to wet sand in tone ... the clay-like red of the ground is muted and interspersed with much lighter, grey-ish patches.

A strip of water runs horizontally in the far away distance, close to where the ground becomes the horizon, at the top of the bottom horizontal third of the composition. It is difficult to tell the width of the water due to the perspective and how far away it is, but it does not look like a huge body of water. Above the blue of the water, rocky formations span the horizon of the composition. The formations are faint in the distance, as if they are concealed by a mist or thin cloud.

The blue sky extends from above the rocky formations ... filling the top two horizontal sections of the composition. The pale blue is creamy, almost beige in colour, closer to the horizon, and a cloudless, purer, more piercing blue at the top of the photograph.

The five figures stand at the front of the composition facing towards the photographer. The gap between their feet and the bottom of the photograph is the same size as the gap between the figure on the left, and the left side of

the photograph, and the figure on the right ... and the right side of the photograph.

As the title suggests, these five figures are male. Each one wears a full niqab in black, which covers the face and head, with the fabric arranged to create an opening around their eyes. The head covering extends down over their shoulders, arms and body to their upper thighs. Layered under this is a floor length robe or skirt – again in black – that covers the lower half of their bodies.

From the visible eyes, it seems that the boys are all young ... most likely late teens ... with the exception of one. The skin visible around his eyes is more wrinkled than the four younger eyes that stand around him. At a guess, this man seems to be in his 50s or 60s.

Underneath their loose robes, four of the men show bare feet, ... and their skin is a tanned light brown.

On the left, one of the boys stands slightly stooped, with his body turned a little towards the centre of the photograph ... his eyes closed and deep furrows in his dark eyebrows. Next to him, the second figure stands behind the back wheel of the bike, facing inward to the centre of the composition ... the top of his body stooped forward a little further than the boy I just described. His right eye is open, framed by his dark eyebrow ... his left is concealed by the eye opening of his niqab.

On the right side of the photograph, standing on the seat of the bike is the third figure ... facing towards the left side of the photograph. The material of his robe hangs down in thick folds ... concealing his feet, and the seat area of the bike. His niqab shows his eyes squinting, his nose and cheeks.

The next man stands on the handlebars of the bike, his feet tensed in the action of balancing ... and his left fingers gripping onto the fabric on the left shoulder of the man at the centre. This is the man whose eyes look older than the rest. His body is straight, and turned in to the centre of the composition, with his back to the right. His head tilts forward slightly.

The final figure stands with his feet and shins framing the front wheel of the bike ... his body turned slightly into the centre of the composition and at a

slight diagonal ... with his torso leaning further forward than his legs. The opening in his niqab reveals his eye lashes, and the bridge of his nose.

The light in the photograph shines brightly on the boys from behind the lens of the camera. They each squint at the light. Through the front wheel of the bike long shadows are cast behind the group.

The front wheel of the motorised bike faces the right side of the photograph ... and the back wheel is at the left side of the composition. The bike looks new, and is painted red and white, with black wheels. The name MOBYLETTE is printed on the black leather seat in small white capital letters.

Bozalp says of this project:

“The concept for this project approaches the themes of migration and explores the disparate reasons behind it; whether it be forced migration in communities witnessing an uprising of gentrification or fleeing places of conflict; or simply in search of new opportunity, be it financial or self-expression. This is an ongoing project that started in Konya, Turkey, my hometown, and in collaboration with Raphael Hirsch whom I met after I resettled in the UK over a decade ago.”