

# 2021 Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Conference



2021 KEYMAN  
MODERN TURKISH STUDIES  
CONFERENCE

# QUEER CONDITIONS KUIR HALLER

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE  
IN AN AGE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

FRIDAYS, JUNE 4+11+18, 2021  
CHICAGO 9:30AM | ISTANBUL 5:30PM

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED  
<https://bit.ly/kuir-haller>

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## CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION

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Each year, the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program brings together scholars from around the world to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing Turkey from a global perspective. This year the conference's focus will be on Queer and Gender Studies. The primary aim of the conference is to engage with the global debate taking place on intersectionality. More specifically, we are interested in analyzing the role of gender identity and dynamics in facilitating the reproduction of power structures, and in the mobilization of historically marginalized groups seeking to expose, challenge, and ultimately dismantle those structures. By examining emergent forms of these justice-seeking struggles, the conference this year will direct the scholarly gaze on shifting relationships and opportunities for political action in a deeply polarized Turkey.

Feminist scholars of modernity have repeatedly revealed the gendered assumptions that underwrite the abstract citizen as the building block of society. By “sexing” the supposedly unmarked subjects and unmasking their socio-political conditions, we can productively interrogate the normative assumptions of other individuating axes of difference such as race, ethnicity, class and geography. By historicizing patriarchal heteronormativity, we can start to undermine its dominance in our readings of the past and shape current narratives of power.

Some of the questions we seek to answer are: What are the conditions facing queer, feminist and other sexed subjects in contemporary Turkey? How did Turkey get to its current state after the Gezi protests that showed arguably the most intersectional politics in action in the country's recent history? How could attending to these queer conditions help us approach the study of Turkey anew? At a time of profound transformation, framed by graduated authoritarianism and shrinking freedoms in the country, how could sexing the study of Turkey enrich our understanding of its history and its present?

While the geographic focus will be on Turkey, we think of Turkey as a historical reference point, in geographically, culturally and ethnically flexible terms—and not Turkey as nation state with the attendant definition of Turkishness. We encourage further discussion with scholars who specialize in the study of Turkey's contemporary diasporas and ethnic minorities, its broader Middle Eastern and Eastern European context, and other socially and politically cognate regions.

**Queer Conditions/Kuir Haller: Social and Political Change in an Age of Authoritarianism**

**Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program** | Buffett Institute for Global Affairs at Northwestern University

June 4, 11, and 18, 2021

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## CONFERENCE PROGRAM

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**FRIDAY JUNE 4, 2021**

**9:30 AM WELCOME**

**İpek Kocaömer Yosmaoğlu**, Director of Keyman Program and Associate Professor of History, Northwestern University

**Emrah Yıldız**, Crown Junior Chair in Middle East Studies and Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Northwestern University

**9:40 AM – 1:30 PM**

**QUEER CONDITIONS | KUIR HALLER I**

**Discussants: İpek Yosmaoğlu, Northwestern University & Emrah Yıldız, Northwestern University**

Anatomy of Love and Desire in the Late Ottoman Empire | **Seçil Yılmaz, Franklin & Marshall College**

Anachronistic Views of Ottoman Sexualities in Republican Turkey | **İrvin Cemil Schick, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris)**

Queering the Renaissance with the Ottomans | **Abdulhamit Arvas, University of Pennsylvania**

How is *Queer* Understood in Turkey? | **İpek Şahinler, University of Texas at Austin**

Archiving Religious Piety, Activism, and Trans Identity: Towards a Post-secular Transfeminism in Turkey | **Şahin Açıkgöz, University of California, Riverside**

**FRIDAY JUNE 11, 2021**

**9:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

**QUEER CONDITIONS | KUIR HALLER II**

**Discussants: Kerem Öktem, Ca' Foscari University of Venice & Evren Savcı, Yale University**

“Cemetery for the Unknown:” The Material Deathscape of Gender, Ethnic and Religious Margins in Turkey | **Aslı Zengin, Rutgers University-New Brunswick**

Re-orienting Self-defence: Kurdish Politics and Queer Anti-Racist Struggle(s) | **Hakan Sandal-Wilson, University of Cambridge**

*Queer* and *Non-Citizen* in Times of Crisis: LGBTQ Refugees in Turkey | **Elif Sarı, Cornell University**

*Can* and Deviant Attachments: Sexuality, Faith, and Minority Belonging in Turkey | **Ali Yıldırım, University of Minnesota**

Queerly Allied: From Ankara Governorship LGBTI Bans to KuirFest Berlin | **Esra Özban, University of California, Santa Cruz**

Queer Resistance and Bodies in Alliance: Banned Pride Marches in Istanbul (2015-2019) | **Onur F. Özben, Lund University**

## **FRIDAY JUNE 18, 2021**

**9:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

**QUEER CONDITIONS | KUIR HALLER III**

**Discussants: Nadjé Al-Ali, Brown University & Cenk Özbay, Sabancı University**

Reading Rainbows: Children, the LBGT movement and economies of perversion in Erdogan's Turkey | **Emrah Yıldız, Northwestern University**

A Multi-modal Critical Discourse Analysis of Queer Subjectification in Contemporary Turkey | **Eser Selen, Kadir Has University**

Embodiments of Resistance: Queering the Spaces of Nightlife in Istanbul through bodily Interactions | **Aslı Kobaner, Istanbul Technical University**

Fragments of Gender in the "State Effect": *Documenting* Mental Damage in Cases of Sexual Assault | **Tuğçe Ellialtı-Köse, Trent University**

Solidarity Work and Political Action Among the Syrian Women in Southern Turkey | **Seçil Dağtas, University of Waterloo**

**1:30 PM – 2:00 PM**

**BREAK**

**2:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

**QUEER CONDITIONS | KUIR HALLER: ROUNDTABLE**

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## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**Şahin Açıkgöz** is a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow in Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside. They received their Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and LGBTQ Studies from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where they cofounded the Transnational Gender and Sexuality Studies Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshop and were the Mary Fair Croushore Graduate Fellow at the Institute for the Humanities. They are also the recipient of the 2019 Sarah Pettit Doctoral Fellowship in LGBT Studies at Yale University and the Holstein Dissertation Fellowship in Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion at UC Riverside. Their research areas are Queer and Trans Studies in Religion, Global South, Gender and Sexuality in Islamicate Societies, Trans of Color Critique, and Gender Politics in the Middle East.

**Nadje Al-Ali** is Robert Family Professor of International Studies and Professor of Anthropology and Middle East Studies at Brown. Her main research interests revolve around feminist activism and gendered mobilization, mainly with reference to Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey and the Kurdish political movement. Her publications include *What kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (2009, University of California Press, co-authored with Nicola Pratt); *Women and War in the Middle East: Transnational Perspectives* (Zed Books, 2009, co-edited with Nicola Pratt); *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (2007, Zed Books), and *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press 2000). Her co-edited book with Deborah al-Najjar entitled *We are Iraqis: Aesthetics & Politics in a Time of War* (Syracuse University Press) won the 2014 Arab-American book prize for non-fiction. Her most recent publication is a co-edited book (jointly with Deniz Kandiyoti and Kathryn Spellman Poots) is entitled *Gender, Governance & Islam* (University of Edinburgh Press, 2019). Professor Al-Ali is on the advisory board of *kohl: a journal of body and gender research* and has been involved in several feminist organizations and campaigns transnationally.

**Abdulhamit Arvas** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. He received his PhD in English, with additional specialization in Women's and Gender Studies, from Michigan State University. His research and teaching focus on early modern literature and culture, Shakespeare, comparative histories of sexuality and race, queer theory, cross-cultural encounters, and Islam in the Renaissance. Dr. Arvas is currently working on a book project, tentatively titled *A Global Renaissance of Beautiful Boys: Sexuality and Race in Mediterranean Encounters*, which explores representations of abducted boys in early modern English and Ottoman literatures. His publications have appeared in journals including *English Literary Renaissance*, *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, *Shakespeare Survey*, *postmedieval*, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, and in edited collections such as *The Postcolonial World*, *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, *England's Asian Renaissance*, and *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality Before the Modern*.

**Seçil Dağtas** is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Waterloo, research fellow at the Balsillie School of International Affairs and resident fellow at the Nantes Institute for Advanced Study. She obtained her PhD in 2014 from the Department of Anthropology and the Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto, following her MA in

Social Anthropology at York University and her BA in Sociology at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. A political anthropologist, Seçil Dağtaş specializes in the gender politics and secular governance of religious diversity, minority and refugee displacement, religious nationalisms, and the political potential of everyday sociality at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East. Her current work examines the intersections of religion and gender in shaping border politics in Turkey, and probes the political possibilities and limits of solidarity as the condition of urban cohabitation between a diverse group of displaced Syrians and Turkish citizens. Dağtaş's research has been published in journals such as *Cultural Anthropology*, *Anthropological Quarterly*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and *Feminist Studies*.

**Tuğçe Ellialtı-Köse** is an Assistant Professor (LTA) in the Department of Sociology at Trent University, ON, Canada. She received her PhD from Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA in 2020. During her time at Penn, Tuğçe was affiliated with the Alice Paul Center, where she was awarded a Graduate Certificate in the Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Program. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Sociology from Boğaziçi University and her master's degree in Cultural Studies from Sabancı University, İstanbul, Turkey. Her academic interests are in Gender and Sexuality, Law and Society, Violence against Women, Ethnography of the State, and Political Sociology.

In her doctoral dissertation, Tuğçe offered a feminist socio-legal analysis of the sexual assault law with a focus on its three aspects, namely its making, practice, and effects. Based on an extensive fieldwork, which consists of court observations, in-depth interviews, and a close reading of legal texts, she examined the (re)production of normative discourses on femininity, sexuality and morality by exploring the treatment of cases of sexual violence in medico-legal institutions and courts in the wake of legal reforms in Turkey. Tuğçe's publications include an article on the disciplinary discourses of sexual morality on women's pre-marital sexual activity in Turkey, which appeared in the special issue of *Cogito* on Michel Foucault; several op-eds on sexual violence, honor crimes, and women's movements; three encyclopedia entries on child abuse, family violence, and virginity; and a review of the book entitled *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms and Violence against Women* (edited by Lynn Welchman and Sara Hossain). Currently, she is working on two journal articles that are based on her dissertation. She is also a member of Güldünya Yayınları, a feminist publishing collective based in İstanbul, where she made editorial contributions to the Turkish translations of two books, including Angela Davis's latest book *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*.

**Aslı Kobaner** is a composer-improviser and sound artist. Their research and work investigate concepts of noise, affect, embodiment, crossculturality, performativity and transgression in the context of improvisation/noise activities, Metal Studies, contemporary art music and queer studies. At 2010 they received their BA in Audio Design Programme, Composition Department at Yıldız Technical University, and Masters Degree (2017) in Composition at MIAM. They have released several albums including klank.ist and experimental hardcore/metal bands. Throughout their engagement in composition they worked on short movie soundtracks, commissions for contemporary ensembles, video games and

multimedia participating in the 33 Istanbul Film Festival, Marseille-Provence European Capital of Culture Events, 9th International 1001 Documentary film festival, the 4th Mardin Bienal, Bilsart, Istanbul (2018), Artists' Film International 2019/Istanbul Museum for Modern Art, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2019) among other exhibitions in Argentina, Norway, China and Sweden. Their ensemble compositions have been performed by Ensemble Télémaque, Hezarfen Ensemble, Omnibus Ensemble, Artefacts Ensemble and klank.ist ensemble. They also attended masterclasses and workshops of prominent contemporary figures Beat Furrer, Stefan Prins, Kaija Saariaho, Fred Lerdahl, Georg Friedrich Haas, Rebecca Sanders, Richard Barrett, Ute Wassermann, Klaus Lang, Klaas de Vries and İlhan Usmanbaş among others. Currently they continue their research for their dissertation about the queer in contemporary art music and extreme metal as a Ph.D. ABD at Istanbul Technical University, MIAM.

**Kerem Öktem** is Professor of International Relations at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, beginning July 2021. Dr. Öktem has previously held the chair of Southeast European Studies and Modern Turkey at the University of Graz. He is an associate of the Centre of International Studies at the University of Oxford, where he completed his PhD in Political Geography in 2006 and his M St. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies in 2001. Dr. Öktem is an alumni of the Mercator – IPC Fellowship in Turkish Studies and a collaborator of the Mercator foundation in Germany. His research interests include the politics and society of modern Turkey with a particular focus on social movements, minorities, diasporas, and queer rights. He has published several collective volumes and monographs, including *Exit from Democracy: Illiberal governance in Turkey and beyond* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018); *Another empire? A decade of Turkey's foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press (2012); and *Angry Nation: Turkey since 1989* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

**Esra Özban** is a Ph.D. student in Film and Digital Media with a designated emphasis in Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz. Their artistic, curatorial, and scholarly work intersects critical archival practices, sex work, pornography, feminist/queer film cultures among others. Esra holds a BA in Economics from Boğaziçi University and an MA in Film and Screen Studies from Goldsmiths College, University of London.

**Cenk Özbay** is Associate Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Sabancı University. His research and teaching specialties include men and masculinities; gender and sexualities; the body; neoliberalism and globalization; work and labor; the city and mobilities. He is the author of *Queering Sexualities in Turkey: Gay Men, Male Prostitutes and the City* (2017) and co-editor of *The Making of Neoliberal Turkey* (2016), *Kultur Denen Sey: Antropolojik Yaklaşımlar* (2018), and *Yeni Istanbul Calismalari* (2014).

**Onur F. Özben** (he/him) is currently pursuing a MSc in Social Studies of Gender at Lund University in Sweden. His interests include 'conversion therapy', homonationalism, masculinities, LGBTI+ movements as well as sexuality & medicine.

**İpek Şahinler** is a researcher of *queer(ing)* narratives from Turkish and Spanish literatures, and a doctoral student of Comparative Literature at the University of Texas at Austin. She is originally a

translator from Istanbul who has worked with romance languages. In 2017, she received her MSc degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Edinburgh. Her current doctoral research is about the intersections between 20th century Middle Eastern and Latin American Literatures, mainly from the perspective of queer theory. Alongside her studies, she delivers seminars in different cultural venues of Istanbul about what she conceptualizes as “*müphem Türkçe edebiyat*” (*queer Turkish literature*).

**Hakan Sandal-Wilson** (he/him) has recently completed his PhD on Kurdish LGBTI+ activism in modern Turkey at the Centre for Gender Studies, University of Cambridge. His doctoral research focuses on the intersection of ethnic, gender, and sexual identities during times of war and conflict. Being active in LGBTI+ rights activism, his research interests include Gender and Sexuality Studies, Critical Theory, and Political Sociology. He writes about Kurdish and LGBTI+ politics in various newspapers and journals, including *Jadaliyya* and *openDemocracy*. He is also the convener of the ‘Methods in Question: Epistemologies of Gender and Sexuality’ seminar series at the University of Cambridge ([www.methodsinquestion.co.uk](http://www.methodsinquestion.co.uk)).

**Elif Sari** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology, with a graduate minor in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, at Cornell University. She also holds a master’s degree in Near Eastern Studies from NYU. Elif’s research and teaching interests include migration, borders, diasporas, humanitarianism, transnational sexualities, and Middle East Studies as well as collaborative, multimodal, and social justice-oriented approaches to knowledge production. Her current project offers an engaged ethnography of transnational queer asylum from the Middle East to North America by focusing on the experiences of Iranian LGBTQ refugees awaiting in Turkey for resettlement to the US and Canada. Her work has appeared in peer-reviewed journals, [Journal of Lesbian Studies](#) and [Movements](#), and edited volumes, [Lives that Resist Telling](#) (2021), [Queer and Trans Migrations](#) (2020) and [Authoritarianism and Resistance in Turkey](#) (2018). Since 2015, she has also worked as a co-editor of the [Turkey](#) Page at *Jadaliyya* e-zine.

**Evren Savcı** is Assistant Professor of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Yale University. Her first book *Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Islam* (2021, DUP) analyzes sexual politics under contemporary Turkey’s AKP regime with an eye to the travel and translation of sexual political vocabulary. Her second book project tentatively entitled *Failures of Modernization: Polygamy, Islamic Matrimony and Cousin Marriages in the Turkish Republic* turns to these sexual practices that were deemed “uncivilized” and either heavily discouraged or outlawed by the Turkish Republic. Savcı’s work on the intersections of language, knowledge, sexual politics, neoliberalism and religion has appeared in *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Ethnography*, *Sexualities*, *Political Power and Social Theory*, *Theory & Event*, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* and *GLQ*, and in several edited collections.

**İrvin Cemil Schick** holds a PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has taught at Harvard University, MIT, and İstanbul Şehir University, as well as holding guest positions at Boston University, Sabancı University, and Boğaziçi University. He is the author of *The Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse* (1999), *The Fair Circassian: Adventures of an Orientalist Motif* (in Turkish, 2004), and *Writing the Body, Society, and the Universe: On Islam, Gender, and Culture* (in

Turkish, 2011); the editor of *The M. Uğur Derman 65th Birthday Festschrift* (2000), *European Female Captives and their Muslim Masters: Narratives of Captivity in 'Turkish' Lands* (in Turkish, 2005), *Love for the Prophet: The Prophet Muhammad on the 1443th Anniversary of his Birth* (2014), and *The Book of Beauties in a New Style: Encomium for the Merchants and Artisans of Istanbul* (in Turkish, 2017); and the co-editor of *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives* (with E. Ahmet Tonak, 1987), *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History* (with Amila Buturović, 2007), *Calligraphy and Architecture in the Muslim World* (with Mohammad Gharipour, 2013), and *The Principal Figures of Turkish Architecture* (with an editorial board, in Turkish, 2015). His research interests include the Islamic arts of the book; gender, sexuality, and the body in Islam; and animals and the environment in Islam. He is currently working on a second doctorate at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris; his dissertation concerns occult practices in Islam with special emphasis on their legitimation.

**Eser Selen** received her Bachelors (1997) and Masters degree in Fine Arts at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey (1999) and Masters degree in Performance Studies at New York University, US (2002). She had her PhD in Performance Studies at New York University, US (2010). Her research interests include feminisms, performance studies, gender and sexuality, contemporary art, and visual culture. Other than presentations made at national and international conferences, her work appeared in edited volumes and such journals as *Gender, Place, and Culture*, *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, and *International Journal of Communication*. She is also a visual artist whose work encompasses performance art, installation and video. She has exhibited and performed in Europe, the United States, the Middle East and Australia. She currently holds an Associate Professor position at the Visual Communication Design Department at Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey.

**Ali Yıldırım** After graduating from the Media and Psychology Departments, Ali Yıldırım received his master's degree in Cultural Studies at Istanbul Bilgi University. He is currently pursuing PhD in Feminist Studies of the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies department at the University of Minnesota. Driven by his personal stories and the knowledge that comes from his communities, Ali focused on experiences of Alevi LGBT+s in his master's research. In his study, Ali critically approaches the theoretical and political silences inherent in the notions of 'good' minority, kinship, and family without omitting the systematic oppression against the marginalized 'others' in Turkey. Ali describes this research as ongoing, as he continues to delve deep into the intersections of sexuality, faith, minority culture, and belonging in the Turkish context. As an activist and intersectional thinker, Ali also has a growing interest in feminist/queer geography, ethnography, politics of solidarity, and memory.

**Emrah Yıldız** (he/they) is a socio-cultural anthropologist and Crown Junior Chair in Middle East Studies and Assistant Professor of Anthropology & MENA Studies at Northwestern University. His research lies at the intersection of anthropology of pilgrimage and saint visitation in Islam, ethnography of currency and commodity trade in political economy and historiography and ethnography of borders and their states in the Middle East. His first book, *Iranian Pilgrims in Traffic: Religion, Economy and Polity across Borders*, synthesizes these areas of scholarship to chronicle the pathways of a *ziyarat* (saint visitation) route. Often referred to as *Hajj-e Fuqara'* (pilgrimage of the poor) in Iran, this route has shuttled Iranian pilgrims as well as contraband goods such as oil, sugar, tobacco and gold, among bus stations in Iran,

informal bazaars in Turkey, and the Sayyida Zaynab shrine in Syria. Yıldız's dissertation that serves as the basis for the book received [the 2017 Malcolm H. Kerr Award in the Social Sciences](#) from the Middle East Studies Association. The book in progress has been recognized as an [Atelier 2019](#) finalist, and is under contract with the University of California Press. Co-editor of the collection ["Resistance Everywhere:" The Gezi Protests and Dissident Visions of Turkey](#) (2014), Yıldız's latest publications includes a short *Cultural Anthropology* [essay](#) (2020), "Nested (In)securities: Commodity and Currency Circuits in an Iran under Sanctions." At Northwestern he serves as a faculty board member for Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program and as a founding steering committee member of the Colloquium for Global Iran Studies.

**Seçil Yılmaz** is an Assistant Professor of History at Franklin & Marshall College. Yılmaz specializes in the social and political history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Middle East with a focus on medicine, science, and sexuality. Her research concentrates on the social and political implications of syphilis in the late Ottoman Empire by tracing the questions of colonialism, modern governance, biopolitics, and gender. Her other projects include research on the relationship between religion, history of emotions, and contagious diseases in the late Ottoman Empire as well as history of reproductive health technologies and humanitarianism in the modern Middle East. She is currently completing her first book manuscript based on her dissertation "Love in the Time of Syphilis: Medicine and Sex in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1922," which received Middle East Studies Association's Malcom H. Kerr Best Dissertation Award. Her research appeared in the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* and she held the co-curatorship of the podcast series on Women, Gender, and Sex in the Ottoman World at Ottoman History Podcast.

**İpek Yosmaoğlu** started serving as the Director of the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program at the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs in Fall 2019. She is a historian of the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey, and the author of *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood, 1878-1908* (Cornell University Press, 2015). She has received awards and fellowships from the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, the Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, Sabancı University, the Brookings Institute, the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT), the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 2009-2010. She is currently working on a project about the historical evolution of the Ottoman, and subsequently, the Turkish states' minority policies with a focus on Jewish communities from the late nineteenth century until the beginning of the multi-party regime in Turkey in the 1950s. A collected volume she co-edited with Kerem Öktem, "Turkish Jews and Their Diasporas" is scheduled for publication by Palgrave MacMillan in early 2021. İpek is a core faculty member of the Middle East and North African Studies Program (MENA), and also is affiliated with the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies.

**Aslı Zengin** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. Before joining Rutgers, she worked at Brown, Harvard, and Brandeis Universities. Her first book, *Intimacy of Power: Women Prostitutes, Sex Work and Violence in İstanbul*, was published in Turkish. Currently Zengin is completing her second book manuscript *Violent Intimacies: Transgender Lives, Family and the State in Contemporary Turkey*. Zengin has widely published in edited

volumes and peer-review journals, *including Cultural Anthropology, Allegra, Anthropologica, Journal of Middle East Women's Studies and Transgender Studies Quarterly*. Her research lies at the intersection of ethnography of gender non-conforming lives and deaths; Islamic and medico-legal regimes of sex, gender and sexuality; critical studies of violence and sovereignty; as well as transnational aspects of LGBTQ movements in the Middle East with a special focus on Turkey.

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## ABSTRACTS

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Şahin Açıkgöz

### **Archiving Religious Piety, Activism, and Trans Identity: Towards a Post-secular Transfeminism in Turkey**

In this paper, I propose a post-secular transfeminist methodology to interrogate how labels such as “political” and “activist” are deployed in ways that reproduce exclusionary transgender archives in Turkey. To that end, I analyze a section on religion, activism, and spirituality from the activist documentary Proudly Trans in Turkey (2012), which was designed by the South African artist Gabrielle Le Roux in collaboration with Amnesty International Turkey and two Turkish trans organizations, Istanbul LGBTT and Pembe Hayat. On the surface, Le Roux’s activist and collective art project represents the rich diversity and multidimensional aspects of trans religiosity, resistance, and activism in Turkey. However, I argue that the kind of transgender religiosity espoused by this activist project, in particular, and queer scholarship, in general, risks foreclosing the possibility of engaging and rendering visible the ethical self-formation of rural and pious trans people.

Abdulhamit Arvas

### **Queering the Renaissance with the Ottomans**

This talk will offer a comparative exploration of early modern English and Ottoman sexualities on the premise that cross-cultural encounters play a prominent role in producing sexuality, as they mediate and complicate socio-political and cultural concerns and their attendant negotiations. In England, and Europe in general, religious and cultural differences were often mapped onto sexual differences; sodomy as an unnatural, alien, heretical transgression was ubiquitously attributed to the Ottoman lands and persons and became a predominant trope in English representations of the Turks. The projection of stigmatized deviance upon the Ottomans, however, is only one side of the story in exploring sexuality in the Anglo-Ottoman context. The vilified forms of sexuality—sodomy, and its corollary, same-sex male eroticism—were commonplace tropes in Ottoman literature. I will explore how Ottoman sexual discourses infiltrated into English representations and affected the expression of transgressive sexualities in England. What do we realize in the history of sexuality in the West when we look at early modern sexualities from a standpoint located in the Ottoman lands? Is the global Renaissance that includes the Ottomans queerer than what we have thought so far?

Seçil Dağtas, Presenter and primary author; Co-author: Şule Can

### **Solidarity Work and Political Action Among the Syrian Women in Southern Turkey**

The global refugee “crisis” gives new urgency to questions of gender, (non-)citizenship, and women’s political subjectivity in contexts of displacement. This paper adopts and contributes to an intersectional feminist reading of gendered displacement by examining the political possibilities and limits of solidarity among a diverse group of displaced Syrian women and local feminist activists at the southern

borderlands of Turkey. Drawing on fieldwork in Hatay, we focus on Syrian- and Turkish-led women's organizations whose solidarity work entangles organized acts of support, care, and intimacy with ambiguity, mistrust, or mutual indifference. These gendered social spaces, we argue, expand the boundaries of the political, circumvent the double-bind of rights claims, and entail more intricate layers of otherness than are allowed by the state categories of migrant, refugee, and citizen. As such, they reveal the need to rethink feminist politics beyond the rights-, status-, and sect-based politics of identity underpinning the prevailing models of solidarity in Turkey.

Tuğçe Ellialtı-Köse

### **Fragments of Gender in the “State Effect”:*Documenting Mental Damage in Cases of Sexual Assault***

The 21st century started with a wave of legislative reforms that transformed many aspects of law, including the Criminal Code in Turkey. Despite progressive changes in the sexual assault law, however, cases of sexual violence did not meet the expectations, gave rise to a variety of novel issues and questions for women's rights activists and lawyers alike, and increasingly became a matter of public debate in the country. One of the most important, and highly contested, changes that the new code introduced was the article that stated that if the “victim” suffers physical or mental damage as a result of the sexual assault, the sentence is to be aggravated. Based on an extensive fieldwork spanning over four years between 2012 and 2016, I examine “the practice of the law” alongside the production and circulation of expert and scientific knowledges and practices in sexual assault cases. I argue that as a result of the new law, sexual violence came to be redefined as a form of violence that can be traced and evidenced through the examination of the minds of sexual assault survivors, thus is “psychiatrized”. Furthermore, by tracing a set of deliberate “moves” made by the Supreme Court, with a particular attention on its persistent recognition of the Institute of Forensic Medicine as the only institutional authority for the production of forensic reports documenting “mental damage,” I argue how the dictum of objectivity and impartiality followed by a set of state institutions has ended up creating a “state effect” infused by fragments of gender. In other words, I argue that the recourse to gender-based norms around morality, sexuality, and shame, namely honor and chastity, within the context of the contemporary practice of the sexual assault law, is a constitutive part of the gendered process whereby the state reproduces itself as an impartial and objective entity in the eyes of its citizens.

Aslı Kobaner

### **Embodiments of Resistance:*Queering the Spaces of Nightlife in Istanbul through bodily Interactions***

This paper aims to examine the embodied experiences of queer nightlife in today's Istanbul through a number of media including LGBTQ+ parties, panels, interviews and social media. Political potential of nightlife entertainment is explicated by those examples in which queered acts of resistance against hetero-normative codes are observed, experienced or analyzed. In a geography such as Turkey where street-politics is in decline, 'subcultural' scenes may be identified with liberation from oppressive social, economic and political forces, so the instances in question represent an emerging strategy of making gender politics through trans-solidarity parties/concerts, drag shows, lip sync contests, sex toys lotteries and bdsm acts. With the exhibition of an unparalleled cultural musical bonding through interactions of

queer DJs, audiences, queered spaces and the sonic phenomena such as groove and pulse that drive and mood-regulate bodies throughout, the paper eventually claims that resistance lies in the embodied experiences of the participants. The author bases their findings on qualitative data generated from interviews, panel talks, social media, personal observations and experiences as an 'insider' from the scene, as well as employment of a framework from selected readings of related scholars.

1 This subject has been presented as part of a Queer Nightlife Panel called "Reclaim the Floor: Queer Nightlife in Istanbul" at the MIAM Colloquium Fall 2019, Istanbul Technical University. The panel was organized as a roundtable with five presenting participants and a respondent professor.

Esra Özban

### **Queerly Allied: From Ankara Governorship LGBTI Bans to KuirFest Berlin**

On 16 November 2017, Ankara Governorship banned the German LGBTI+ Film Days organized by German Embassy in collaboration with Pink Life QueerFest, the only queer film festival in Turkey, stating those films "could incite hatred and enmity towards another section of society." This was followed by a blanket ban that prohibits all LGBTI events for an *indefinite* period on the grounds of threatening "social sensitivities and sensibilities," "public security," "public health," "public morality," as well as for the "protection of others' rights and freedoms". Based on my long-term engagement with the Pink Life LGBTI Association as an activist and ally, as well as my professional work as Pink Life QueerFest festival organizer, I will explore how queer and trans communities in Turkey and its diasporas have responded to these restrictions and how these restrictions, in turn, have created local and trans-local solidarities and collaborations.

Onur F. Özben

### **Queer Resistance and Bodies in Alliance: Banned Pride Marches in Istanbul (2015-2019)**

Since 2014, there hasn't been a Istanbul Pride March without a ban from the authorities and police intervention. Despite the ban and violence on marches in the last five years, both Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week and Istanbul Trans Pride Week have taken place with separate themes every year. The activists of this queer assemblage employed various tactics and strategies against the government's ban and violence. The proposed paper is based on the critical analysis of press statements, speeches, court cases, performances of the pride marches in Istanbul since 2015. By doing so, it elucidates "productive forces" of queer resistance and alliance that challenge various repressive powers of heteronormativity and patriarchy in Turkey.

İpek Şahinler

### **How is Queer Understood in Turkey?**

With this ethnographic paper I investigate the meaning(s) of the term "queer" in Turkey. To do this, I hark back to my formal and informal experiences in Istanbul between 2017 and 2019 and reflect on the talks, seminars and workshops that I co/organized on queer theory in diverse cultural venues and NGOs. Concomitantly, I raise the following questions: How is the term queer understood? Is it a nameable

category of sexual identity for most people? Can we actually talk about a queer movement in Turkey? Is it being used as part of a critical theory within Turkish academia? Are there any courses on queer theory that people can attend, or any non-commercial, open-to-the-public platforms in which individuals could discuss these issues and raise such concerns?

As part of my endeavor in answering these crucial questions, I go back and resketch the panorama of the workshop in Boysan'ın Evi (Boysan's House) which was an opportunity to engage with people from different backgrounds and to hear their opinions on queer. On the other hand, I focus on the literary seminar series held at SPoD (Social Policies, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association), which helped me trace the lineage of the “minor” within Turkish literature together with my participants. This investigation was particularly valuable since we closely observed the anti-institutional and decolonizing stances within overlooked writings that highly resonated with ideas reflected in the essays of queer theorists such as Butler, Smith, Warner, Edelman and Sullivan. Finally, I analyze the talk I gave on the theoretical dimension of queer in Sabancı University, which spoke to a much more academic audience.

The assemblative framework which built itself organically throughout these two years showed me the advantageous and disadvantageous sides of using queer theory as a method of critical engagement in Turkey. After all, I still believe that there is an urgent need to ask the following question: what does queer mean in Turkey today? Can its political and social presence in Turkey's cultural climate be summarized?

Hakan Sandal-Wilson

### **Re-orienting Self-defence: Kurdish Politics and Queer Anti-Racist Struggle(s)**

The strategies and tactics that queer Kurdish activists employ in Turkey's political climate *vis-à-vis* multiple oppressive structures – including authoritarianism, racism, homophobia, and securitisation – reveal a novel form of resistance. In understanding this multi-sited form of activism, which is radically distinct from some of the fundamental objectives of Euro-centric LGBT+ rights activism, this paper employs semi-structured in-depth interviews with Kurdish queer activists, and discourse analyses of the press releases of Kurdish queer organisations, in addition to related sources from Turkey's oldest LGBTI+ magazine, *Kaos GL*. Drawing insights from postcolonial studies, queer theory and critical theory, this paper employs the concept of *self-defence*, which is one of the core concepts used extensively by the Kurdish movement as well. Self-defence, as a concept, also ties together the transnational histories of resistance. In light of this, the paper examines how queer Kurds develop non-violent self-defence tools within Turkey's political sphere that carry transformative potential.

Elif Sari

### **Queer and Non-Citizen in Times of Crisis: LGBTQ Refugees in Turkey**

While LGBTQ refugees in Turkey have always been at the margins of protection and recognition by the state, their lives have become more precarious in the wake of the 2016 coup attempt. Emergency decree rules framed by legally ambiguous phrases, such as “posing a threat to public order, public security, and public health,” have unevenly targeted LGBTQ refugees, criminalizing their bodies and labor, impeding

their political organizing, and exacerbating unlawful practices of detention and deportation. The effects of increasing authoritarianism in Turkey have been predominantly studied in relation to the citizens' rights and freedoms, dismissing the experiences of migrants and refugees. Based on my ethnographic research with Iranian LGBTQ refugees in Turkey, I explore how profound political transformations in the country have shaped the experiences of LGBTQ refugees who occupy liminal positions not only at the margins of citizenship, but also at the margins of a binary gender system and compulsory heterosexuality.

Irvin Cemil Schick

### **Anachronistic Views of Ottoman Sexualities in Republican Turkey**

History has often been instrumentalized in Republican Turkey, as it has been in many other countries. During the early years of the Republic, history was used (and more often abused) on the one hand to cast aspersions on the recent past, i.e. the late Ottoman Empire, and on the other to glorify the distant past, i.e. the semi-mythical Asiatic warriors from whom today's Turks are supposed to descend and to whom they are supposed to aspire to return. In the last several decades, history has been used (and more often abused) in the service of conservatism (and, more recently, so-called neo-Ottomanism), whereby the western-oriented modernizing Republican elites are denigrated and a semi-mythical Islamic golden age is exalted and put forward as a model to emulate. Sexuality has figured prominently among the tools utilized in the instrumentalization of history: in particular, the supposed omnisexuality of the harem, an orientalist trope readily appropriated by the modernizers, and the supposed pervasiveness of homosexuality in Ottoman society which, given the prominence of homophobia, provides evidence of supposed Ottoman decadence. In this talk I shall discuss Kemalist representations of Ottoman sexuality in the context of prevailing political agendas, emphasizing their continuity from the 1920s to the present; describe the functions of these representations in the light of some comparable cases, notably post-revolutionary France and Regency Britain; and point out the problems the representations in question have posed for the conservative ideologues of the current regime.

Eser Selen

### **A Multi-modal Critical Discourse Analysis of Queer Subjectification in Contemporary Turkey**

This study examines the forms of queer subjectification that have been molded through regular acts of gender and sexuality-based violence against LGBTQ+ citizens as encouraged by the dominant religious and secular discourses in Turkey. Within that context, this presentation explicates the discursive mechanisms at work in the statements that were made by politicians and journalists between the years 2002 and 2018. In those discourses, the qualities attributed to nonheteronormative sexualities, such as perversion and disease, are perhaps the most widespread means of negating the existence of LGBTQ+ citizens and claiming that their lifestyles are "immoral." Based on a case study that incorporates the existing historical and socio-political background, which props up a heteronormative patriarchal culture, this study critically analyzes the discourses that have emerged in a state of moral panic and counter multi-modal discourses regarding queer in/visibilities, dis/appearances, and aversions/subversions in the Turkish socio-political sphere.

Ali Yıldırım

### **Can and Deviant Attachments: Sexuality, Faith, and Minority Belonging in Turkey**

This study brings Alevi and queer worlds in dialogue with each other through an intersectional perspective and offers a critical review of the well-documented but exclusively isolated literature on these two worlds. I challenge and extend existing knowledge as it often presumed cis-heterosexuality and focused on reflections of gendered relationship forms in Alevi belief and practice. While I explore LGBT+ Alevis' liaisons with the Alevi theology that favors a genderless world through the can (literally means soul) discourse, I also draw attention to allegations of sexual deviance that both Alevis and LGBT+ communities have been exposed to in Turkey. Through an attempt to foreground the role of sexuality in determining social discrimination to a certain extent in both spheres, I look for potentials for alternative forms of socio-political solidarity. Reimagining the negotiation among marginalized and minoritized groups, I offer insight into queer attachments and collective visions that emerge from the intersection of sexuality and faith.

Emrah Yıldız

### **Reading Rainbows: Children, the LGBT movement and economies of perversion in Erdogan's Turkey**

Ever since the 2014 Pride that marked the first anniversary of the Gezi Protests with 100,000 strong participants, Istanbul LGBT+ Pride has been persistently banned on dubious religious and security justifications. With other sweeping counter-coup attempt measures that framed all dissident voices in post-2016 context as potential Gulenists, the Erdogan administration consolidated a new political system. In this system, with the banning of LGBT prides, the Erdogan administration also heralded a new era of populist moralism as a building block of his graduated authoritarianism. In this era of graduated authoritarianism, framing LGBT individuals and organizations as actors and acts of perversion was taken to unprecedented levels. While "the LGBT movement" has been constructed as terrorists aided by external forces hellbent on recruiting children into their ranks of perversion, twitter campaigns hashtagged LBTHareketiDurdurulsun continue to read into the rainbow colors in cartoons on state-run television (TRT) a conspiratorial recruitment campaign. This presentation examines these economies of perversion built around LGBT individuals, rainbows, and children's cartoons by extending insights from psychoanalytical interpretations of perversion into the study of sex and gender minorities under authoritarianism. Studying how a variety of actors, queer and otherwise, read and read into rainbows in Turkey proves productive for understanding how LGBT+ and queer individuals negotiate alarmingly shrinking spaces for queer lives under graduated authoritarianism.

Seçil Yılmaz

### **Anatomy of Love and Desire in the Late Ottoman Empire**

Marriage and love were, by far, the most popular themes among the late Ottoman literary and intellectual circles. Ottoman authors articulated agonies and joys of modern life in Ottoman through encounters, confrontations, and negotiations of fictive characters in stories of romance and love. They also reflected in newspaper and magazine columns on anxieties as well as ambitions for the future of the Empire by scrutinizing the means and paths for a healthy population and a project for modern family with gender roles attributed to an envisioned modern man and woman. In an age of epidemics with devastating

impacts on the society, Ottoman physicians actively contributed to the debates on the health of Ottoman population not only through public health narratives but also by also encouraging pro-natalist discourses and practices with new recipes for hygienic and healthy marriages, love, and (hetero)sexuality. This paper provides a glimpse of Ottoman physicians' and psychiatrists' formulations of marriage, love, and sexual desire as a medical phenomenon in the growing medical advice genre addressed to the Ottoman general readership in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As early examples of Ottoman sexology, these hygiene manuals for "married couples and unmarried individuals" reveal the ways in which talking, writing, and even drawing about sex was subsumed by a medical and scientific epistemology and language, insulating the subject of sex from associations with the obscene. Drawing "sex talk" into public hygiene realm by maintaining the objectives and language of advice genre provided scientifically and morally desired ground for Ottoman physicians to establish heterosexuality as the medical and moral normalcy and facilitated defining "love diseases" and sexual deviance as modern pathologies of psychiatry as well as the new (medical) outcasts of the Ottoman society.

Aslı Zengin

### **"Cemetery for the Unknown": The Material Deathscape of Gender, Ethnic and Religious Margins in Turkey**

In my presentation I will examine the mortal topography of social and political margins in Turkey. Specifically, I will focus on "the cemetery for the unknown," where the state buries the bodies of those people who remain unidentified or unclaimed over a certain period of time. In the cemetery for the unknown, the bodies of transgender people, victims of honor crimes, premature babies, Kurdish guerillas, unclaimed refugees, and homeless people are buried together. Bringing together the stories of these unidentified, unclaimed or stolen deaths, I will discuss the contours and limits of different sovereign and intimate claims over the deceased body through the registers of sex/gender transgression, ethnicity, class, and religion.

