

**SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICS OF
WOMEN-LOVING-WOMEN IN ISTANBUL**

**BAŞAK DURGUN
109611006**

**ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE
CULTURAL STUDIES GRADUATE PROGRAM**

FERDA KESKİN (Thesis Advisor)

2011

İSTANBUL'DA *KADIN SEVEN KADINLARIN* ÖZNELLİĞİ VE POLİTİKASI

**BAŞAK DURGUN
109611006**

**İSTANBUL BİLGİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
KÜLTÜREL İNCELEMELER YÜKSEK LİSANS PROGRAMI**

FERDA KESKİN (Tez Danışmanı)

2011

İSTANBUL'DA *KADIN SEVEN KADINLARIN* ÖZNELLİĞİ VE POLİTİKASI

ÖZET

Bu çalışma ve çalışmanın alanı, kadın seven kadınlar olarak bizlerin kendi toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsellik anlatılarımızda kendini gösteren kaygılar ve korkuları betimlemeyi ve bunlar üstüne düşünmeyi hedef almıştır. Bunu yaparken de, İstanbul'da yerleşik normalizasyon biçimlerini ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca, haz ile ilgili olarak, görmezden gelinmiş yerel direniş pratiklerinin belgelenmesi de istenmiştir. Modernliğin İstanbul'daki benzersiz deneyimi, kadın seven kadınların bedenleri ve hazları üzerinde kendini gösteren bir dizi karmaşa ve çelişkiyi ortaya koymaktadır. Türkiye tarihinde bugünkü modernleşmenin bir eleştirisi açısından önem taşıyan olaylarla, kendi 'sapkın' cinsellikleri ve hazları üzerinden siyaset yapan dokuz kadınla yaptığım söyleşiler arasında bir diyalog kurmaya çalıştım.

Bu çalışmadaki amacım İstanbul'da yaşayan kadın seven kadınlar üstüne bir sunum yapmak, onların 'gizli' hayatlarını açığa çıkarmak değildi. Bunun yerine, bu kendilik deneyiminin anlatısı ve belgelenişi üzerinden tekil deneyimlerin izini sürmeye çalıştım. Bu nedenle, normalliğin akışkan sınırlarıyla, onun düzenlenişiyle başa çıkmak için kullandığımız mekanizmaları, bu kendi üzerindeki çalışmanın yarattığı kaygıları ve korkuları sorunsallaştırdım. Bu alana girerken 'self-reflexive' bir yöntem kullanmayı seçtim ve inanıyorum ki, İstanbul'daki kadın seven kadınların öznelliği üstüne ayrıntılı, betimlemeli ve kendini savunmak zorunda hissetmeyen bir çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsellikle ilgili temiz, steril, düzgün ve

evrenselleřtirici kavramsallařtırmaların istikrarını bozmak aısından ve bu st-anlatıları özerek onlarla baėımızı koparacak yollar bulabilmemiz iin hayati nemdedir.

ABSTRACT

I intend to use this space to describe and reflect on the anxieties and fears that operate within our own narrations of gender and sexuality as women who love women in order to expose forms of normalization localized to Istanbul, Turkey. Moreover, I aspire to document neglected localized resistance practices with respect to pleasure. The unique experience of modernity in Istanbul forms a web of complexities and contradictions that unravel on bodies and pleasures of women loving women. I tried to create a dialogue between conversations I had with nine women who perform politics from and around their own ‘aberrant’ practices of sexuality and pleasure and events in history of Turkey that are pertinent to a critique of modernization today.

My concern in this project is not to do an exposé on women loving women in Istanbul, trying to bring into the light their ‘secret’ lives. Instead, via the narration and documentation of this experience with the self, I tried to track and describe singular experiences. Thereupon, I problematized the mechanisms which we employ to deal with the fluctuating limits of normality, their regulation, the anxieties and fears this self-management creates. I chose to employ a self-reflexive model while engaging in this space and I believe that a detailed, descriptive and unapologetic exploration of subjectivity of women loving women in Istanbul is vital for destabilizing the neat, sterile, clear-cut, universalizing conceptualizations of gender and sexuality; untangling these meta-narratives in order to identify ways to cut our ties from them.

SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICS OF WOMEN-LOVING-WOMEN IN ISTANBUL

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Urgency	16
B. Spaces of exploration	18
i. Space I: Interviews	22
ii. Space II: Socio-political Context; Istanbul and Spaces of Leisure	24
C. Rules of the game	25
i. On and Off the Record	36
II. GLITTERED	39
A. The Climate	42
B. Explosions	56
III. THE TROUBLE WITH SEX	72
IV. ARE YOU A LESBIAN?	109
A. <i>T</i>	115
B. Anxiety of the Scholar	124
C. “I want to eat both the strawberry and the chocolate flavor”	132
D. Experiencing the Space	139
V. CONSTITUTION OF HAPPINESS	156
A. Pride and Shame	161
B. Greatest Evil: Family	182
VI. CONCLUSION	198
Furthermore	200
BIBLIOGRAPHY	202
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	207

I. INTRODUCTION

**“Like gender, sexuality is political.
It is organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage
some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others.
Like the capitalist organization of labor and its distribution of rewards and powers,
the modern sexual system has been the object of political struggle since it emerged
and as it has evolved. But if the disputes between labor and capital are mystified,
sexual conflicts are completely camouflaged.”
(Gayle Rubin¹)**

Time has come to think about women-loving-women in Istanbul.

The (in)visibility of women’s sexuality extends wide and multifaceted. In that space exists a field of relations, posited aberrant and perverse, if not impossible; ignored or highlighted as a titillating play only for men; the owners of able bodies. Stuck amid a bundle of contradictions, women-loving-women actively create subversive spaces and actions to experience their bodies and pleasures together. Significant to this experience is the urban city of Istanbul, the embodiment of crossroads, where different bodies clash, mesh and collapse into each other at an exceptionally high pace. In this project, I intend to describe the anxieties and fears that operate within our narrations of sexuality as women who love women in order to expose forms of normalization localized to Istanbul, Turkey; and document neglected resistance practices with respect to pleasure.

Urban cities provide unique opportunities and also challenges to marginalized groups of people. Nurdan Gürbilek uses the ‘shop window’ metaphor to describe life in Istanbul, especially for the period after the military coup on September 12, 1980². Istanbul also became the shop window itself where we can gaze at Turkey’s project of modernization with all its paradoxes and contradictions. While my intention is not to make this primarily a historical inquiry, a

¹ Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelow, David M. Halperin (NY: Routledge 1993). p. 34.

² Nurdan Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2011).

problematization of the socio-political environment of Turkey is necessary to describe the specific consequences on women and their sexual practices. Therefore, I tried to create a dialogue between life *herstories*³ of women who perform politics from and around their aberrant practices of sexuality and pleasure, and events in history of Turkey that are pertinent to a critique of modernization today. This is not to suggest that there is a stable continuity of experiences that build on top of each other to designate or predict contemporary experience. As Michel Foucault suggests events in thought, events in their singularities, are significant to understand how we become modern subjects. “Discontinuity and reticence do not mean” nor designate “silence or absence”; in fact through this medium is how “many lesbian histories, contradictory, complicated and perhaps uncomfortable, can be told”⁴.

My concern in this project is not to do an exposé on women-loving-women in Istanbul, trying to bring into the light their ‘secret’ lives. As a matter of fact, I stand strongly against such a project for it positions the scholar as the authoritarian, all knowing scientist who has the jurisdiction to interfere and say something about the lives of these aggrieved victims, these exotic and rare subjects. The only expose I support is of the untruthfulness of the persistent claim that there is a truth and a coherence to sex (in which I hope I am able to participate with this project). I also do not intend to tell stories describing how women love other women in Istanbul, though I find such an endeavor necessary especially if it focuses on pleasure and how women use their bodies in order to give and receive pleasure. My intention is to display “the most immediate, the most local power relations at work,” the way “they make possible these kinds of

³ Term borrowed from Zemirah Moffat. Zemirah Moffat, "Queer Giving: an audio-visually guided shared ethnography of Wotever Vision (2003-)" (University of Westminster, 2009). p. 39.

⁴Vicinus Martha, "They Wonder Which Sex I Belong To: The Historical Roots to Modern Lesbian Identity," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* ed. Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelow, David M. Halperin (NY: Routledge, 1993). p. 436.

discourses” and how they are “used to support power relations,”⁵ for women-loving-women.

According to Foucault, an inquiry of subjectivity concerns:

“the instituted models of self-knowledge and their history: How was the subject established at different moments and in different institutional contexts, as a possible, desirable, or even indispensable object of knowledge? How were the experience that one may have of oneself and the knowledge that one forms of oneself organized according to certain schemes? How were these schemes defined, valorized, recommended, imposed?”⁶

As we narrate this experience we have with ourselves we construct and re-construct ourselves. We invent ourselves in front of and against the ‘other’; through dialogues we have with each other as well as with ourselves. We become authors of stories, as we write and re-write ourselves in front of the other, which reveal both what constitutes us as subjects, the anxieties that we allow or reject to become a burden on our daily lives, and as fields of resistance with specific strategies and practices. Through the documenting of this experience with the self and observing the documentation already present, I tried to track experiences of women loving women in Istanbul today. Thereupon, I asked what the mechanisms which we employ to deal with the fluctuating limits of normality, boundaries of abnormality and their regulation are and how we place gender and sexuality in the space of resistance to forms of normalization.

According to Foucault, “the subject as he may appear on the other side of a normative division, becoming an object of knowledge”⁷ is significant for it reveals the mechanism of what he calls “truth games”; “the rules according to which what a subject can say about certain things

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality: 1* [La Volonté de Savoir], trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols., vol. 1, History of Sexuality (London: Penguin Books, 1998). p. 97.

⁶ ———, “Subjectivity and Truth,” in *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books 2000). p. 87.

⁷ Maurice Florence, “Foucault,” in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press).p. 461.

depends on the question of true and false.”⁸. He takes subjectivity to mean “the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself,”⁹ and sexuality has a “privileged” position in this inquiry because

“it was in this connection that through the whole of Christianity, and perhaps beyond, individuals were all called on to recognize themselves as subjects of pleasure, of desire, of lust, of temptation and were urged to deploy, by various means (self examination, spiritual exercises, admission, confession), the game of true and false in regard to themselves and what constitutes the most secret, the most individual part of their subjectivity.”¹⁰.

Unfolding previously undocumented ways of resistance to the forms of normalization of sexuality, consequently, develops a vibrant sensibility, an active discursive realm that continuously interrogates heterosexual hegemony¹¹ and heteronormativity.

In his talk for the “Security and Neoliberalism” panel at the *Doing Queer Studies Now Conference* (referred to as *DQSN* hereafter), Paul Amar said that to him goal of sexuality studies is to “out the formations behind the modern colonial logics of hyper-visible, moralized, criminalized and monstrous subject.”¹² An inquiry into a form of sexual practice that is deemed impermissible, impossible, indecent, deviant, defected, morally perverse, unnatural, monstrous (inhuman), abnormal, pathological exposes the intricate, and complex workings of that which declares and preserves this status to establish its own originality, authority and domination. This requires, albeit impossibly ambitious, problematization of all the fronts (family, religion, state, police, bars and other entertainment avenues, market place, neighborhood, race and class dynamics...etc.) that are present as normalization mechanisms. While the fronts exist as constituting elements for *all* in varying degrees and aspects, the specificity of the case of women-

⁸ Ibid. p. 460.

⁹ Ibid.p. 461.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Judith Butler used the term ‘heterosexual matrix’ to describe the same concept in *Gender Trouble* (1990) however changed it to ‘heterosexual hegemony’ in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) because the word matrix has a totalizing gesture.

¹² Paul Amar, “Security and Neoliberalism” (paper presented at the Doing Queer Studies Now University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010).

loving-women, facilitate forms of resistance that are rarely documented however with fertile subversive potential. A detailed, descriptive and unapologetic exploration of subjectivity of women-loving-women in Istanbul is vital for destabilizing the neat, sterile, clear-cut, universalizing conceptualizations of gender and sexuality; untangle these meta-narratives in order to identify ways to cut our ties from them.

It is not by accident that I borrow from Gayle Rubin's introduction to her highly acclaimed essay "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality"¹³ to begin my introduction. Gayle Rubin began her article with this sentence: "The time has come to think about sex"¹⁴. Nor is it a meaningless gesture towards this essay in particular amongst the plethora of works in the universe of sexuality studies. In the timeline of this project a special edition of the *GLQ* Journal titled *Rethinking Sex* was published. The purpose was to show appreciation and to re-discuss the article signaling its existing significance in the field, almost thirty years after its initial publication in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* in 1984¹⁵ in which Carol Vance collected the papers that were presented in the 1982 Barnard Sex Conference¹⁶. As she reflects back on her own article, she presents to us a climate evidently granting this beginning highly suitable. The feminist sex wars were one of the initial concerns of Rubin in the conception of this essay, rendering it urgent in its historical and cultural specificity. Rubin says that her article that is being celebrated today, received mixed reactions when it was first published; many of which were aggressive and belligerent causing the article to get trapped in the infamous feminist sex wars. It took a long time for the essay to find its rightful canonical

¹³ Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality."

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵ Carole S. Vance, ed. *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Pandora, 1992).

¹⁶ Short for "The Scholar and the Feminist IX: Towards a Politics of Sexuality" which is the ninth conference in the series that began in 1974. Gayle Rubin, "Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 1 (2010). p. 20.

place because of this hostile climate which masked “the essay’s intellectual concerns and scholarly contributions.”¹⁷ On the trail of the recollections of the feminist sex wars and the controversies that surrounded the Barnard College Sex Conference, it is revealed that at the time it was in fact necessary to begin thinking critically about sex. These controversies and the unconstructive, violent and authoritarian conduct of “antiporn orthodoxy”, in Rubin’s terms, “left a bitter legacy for feminism.”¹⁸ In addition to the feminist sex wars¹⁹, Gayle Rubin mentions two other happenings that influenced her writing at that time: “the paradigm shifts then taking place in the study of sexuality” and “the lurking menace of the socially conservative Right, which was gaining increased influence over policy, public discourse, state bureaucracies, and the legal regulation of sexuality in the United States.”²⁰

I focus on these points that give a contextual explanation for this article for it allows me to set the stage for the motivations behind my engagement with sexuality studies and the queer approach. Moreover, it reveals my reasons to focus primarily on women-loving-women in a setting where this scholarship is not developed, although the fields of resistance are multiple, diverse and the dynamics are active. The three pivotal points Rubin focuses on are similarly effective for this project in particular, but also for my participation in academia in general. I would like to begin with the paradigm shifts in the field of contemporary sexuality studies to introduce the approach I use. In “Glittered”, I will go into more detail on the other points in the light of Rubin’s problematization, and the parallels we can observe in Turkey.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 15.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.16.

¹⁹ For further information on the significant moments of crisis caused by antiporn feminists, who are also against Sadomasochism and butch lesbians, during the late 70s until mid 80s, a procession of Barnard-type events that took place and how and where these women continue to influence governmental and international organizations refurbishing heteronormative and moralist authority on sex, one can refer back to this particular article.

²⁰ Rubin, "Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"." p.17

The developments in gender and sexuality studies in the past twenty to thirty years, which are inseparable from the movements in the rest of humanities and social sciences, were seeded in the early 70s and primarily instigated by social construction theories of knowledge. Spawning from ‘social constructionism’, Judith Butler pursued the denaturalization of the forms of knowledge regarding sex, gender and sexuality²¹. When we begin questioning the categories in which “the experience of the body” is made present and enacted, she wrote, we then grasp “what we take to be ‘real,’ what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality.”²² These categories are those that institute “normative violence implied by ideal morphologies of sex”²³ and *heterosexual hegemony*. The questions at the center remain to be “how do normative gender presumptions work to delimit the very field of description that we have for the human? What is the means by which we come to see this delimiting power, and what are the means by which we transform it?”²⁴

Concerned with similar questions, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in *Epistemology of the Closet*²⁵ begins with the following proposal: “many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured – indeed, fractured – by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century”²⁶. Emerging out of this grievance is queer theory which is rooted in the grounds of resistance to heteronormativity; promoting the exploration of possibilities for a new type of relationality, as Michel Foucault articulated, without technologies

²¹ Influenced by Butler, I do not prescribe to the idea that sex and gender are separate and distinct categories; sex setting a certain biological and natural truth. Therefore I generally use sex and gender interchangeably. However for the purpose of presenting the conditions constituted by metanarratives around these conceptions of the body, I do distinguish them for they are used as such in the normative conceptualizations. In fact, on these instances they must be separated to give a clearer picture and to employ the right method to be used to denaturalize each are separate.

²² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 2 ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999; repr., 2). p. xxiv.

²³ Ibid. p. xxi.

²⁴ Ibid. p. xxiii.

²⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

²⁶ Ibid., p.1.

of domination, discipline through surveillance and normalization into docility with regards to both gender and sexuality. It aims to interrupt the claim of essence, substance, coherence and unity that is assumed about practices of sexuality.

Uttered for the first time in conjunction with the word ‘theory’ in the title of an academic conference in 1990 organized by Teresa de Lauretis, the word ‘queer’ was intended to be unsettling, disruptive, and provocative. In his article called “The Normalization of Queer Theory”²⁷ that was published in 2003, David Halperin explains that this was a challenge to the “monolithic, homogenizing discourse of (homo)sexual difference” and the “hegemony of white, male, middle-class models of analysis.”²⁸ While transforming and deconstructing academic studies of sexual behavior, she also aimed to agitate the heterosexual hegemony and the conventional theoretical practices; and “to call attention to everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and sexual pleasure.”²⁹

The trend of reappropriation of insults and degrading slurs is not limited to the homosexual realm. However, queer is the only term that instituted its own episteme, perhaps gaining power from its etymology. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick wrote:

“Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word “queer” itself means *across*—it comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*.”³⁰

Since its emergence around 16th Century, it was used on any number of occasions that indicated some sort of abnormality: worthless, suspicious, eccentric, weird, unusual, oblique. That which was deemed queer, was questionable with regards to its legibility. By 20th Century it had become

²⁷ David Halperin, "The Normalization of Queer Theory," *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2 (2003).

²⁸ Ibid., p. 340.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 340.

³⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994).p. vii

an insult, a dehumanizing, degrading word used to indicate homosexuals, mainly gay men. It continued to indicate something unknown, and therefore strange, and dangerous.

Reappropriated queer was an explicit, unapologetic declaration of difference, and advocacy for sexual pleasure. By the turn of the millennia, however, there emerged a need for a recalibration of the field of queer theory. Queer theory was incorporated as a part of the progressive academia in a very short time, a litany of academic work was produced and made available for speedy consumption. One of the first people to point out the issues that arose with the institutionalization of queer theory was David Halperin in “The Normalization of Queer Theory.” According to him, the speedy integration and assimilation of ‘queer theory’ in academia, while finding lesbian and gay politics and studies at fault for engaging in identity politics, presented queer as a post-identity identity category. However this development not only ignores the marginalized status of lesbian and gay studies at the time of its inception but also undermines its subversivity.

In the 70s, the scholarship of ‘aberrant’ sexualities was not welcomed as positively as other conceptualizations of social construction. In fact some of the work was produced outside of academia as an institution, and the rest received less than deserved rewards if not faced “systematic unemployment or underemployment.”³¹ Gayle Rubin, with incredible modesty and humility, has written many times, stubbornly, about the early scholars of lesbian and gay studies in order to overcome the tendency to forget, neglect, or even vilify the ‘older’ scholars as backwards. In both “Thinking Sex” and in “Blood Under the Bridge” she provides a listing of significant studies that are obscured by the incoming, new and better model of scholarships for sale.

³¹ Rubin, "Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"." p.19.

Additionally, David Halperin commented in “What do Gay Men Want?” that “the practice of foregrounding gay identity and backgrounding gay subjectivity turned out to have a political payoff that we could not afford to despise”³². It is undeniable that in a very short time queer became the “harmless qualifier of theory”³³, a side project for scholars of the already established fields (something that they can use to spice up their work) and the poster child of progressive politics. Its particularly radical and disruptive voice becoming quieter; its dissent settling into a stagnant cocoon.

Halperin was not the only scholar to bring attention to a need for a serious and strong self-reflective analysis. In fact, over the past 10 years there have been numerous pieces from other prominent figures within the field disappointedly reviewing the course queer theory has taken. A distress signal was sent out. *Social Text* and *South Atlantic Quarterly* published special issues in 2005 and 2007 respectively; calling out for a discussion of what remains to be meaningful in queer theory. Titled “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?” the editors of the *Social Text* issue called for a reassessment of “the political utility of queer”³⁴ and a recalibration of what we came to understand as queer studies. Focusing on various issues that affect queer body, the authors that participated in the issue insisted that queer studies remains to be culturally, socially, politically and intellectually relevant and meaningful in “a wide field of social critique.”³⁵ They demanded that queer approached to sex as an “intersectional, not extraneous to other modes of difference” and to consider a “critique in relation to a number of historical emergencies.”³⁶ These were:

³² David Halperin, *What do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk, and Subjectivity* (MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2007).p. 3.

³³ ———, “The Normalization of Queer Theory.” p. 341.

³⁴ David L. Eng and Judith Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction,” *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005). p.1.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p.1.

“the triumph of neoliberalism and the collapse of welfare state; the Bush administrations infinite “war on terrorism” and the acute militarization of state violence; the escalation of U.S. empire building and the clash of religious fundamentalisms, nationalisms, and patriotisms; the devolution of civil society and the erosion of civil rights; the pathologizing of immigrant communities as “terrorist” and racialized populations as “criminal”; the shifting forms of citizenship and migration in a putatively “postidentity” and “postracial” age; the politics of intimacy and the liberal recoding of freedom as secularization, domesticity, and marriage; and the return to “moral values” and “family values” as a prophylactic against political debate, economic redistribution, and cultural dissent.”³⁷

The editors of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, two years later, falsely analyzed this reassessment effort and Halperin’s article mentioned earlier as “a departure from earlier habits of thought” and an indication that queer theory is “rapidly approaching its expiration date.”³⁸ This inaccurate and hasty dismissal of a fairly new practice of knowledge and analysis is an unfortunate apparition of the ever hungry mass consumer culture to the field; devouring anything in front of it without really digesting. Thankfully the contributors chose to emphasize the intersectionality of queer theory and the ever growing possibilities for analysis and critique.

One of such recalibration effort, this time successfully executed, was the *DQSN* conference that took place at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in October of 2010. The conference took two years to plan and prepare, the organizing committee commented. This points directly to one of the most significant points about queer and the studies of sexuality: the complexities and intersectionalities that are characteristics of this type of questioning make it time consuming and cumbersome to work through in order to create even a space for organized discussion. According to many of the participants and attendees like me, the conference was an enormous success in bringing together sufficient amount of diverse voices from all around the field, including creating a mesh of generations. I would like to summarize what was presented in

³⁷ Ibid., p.2.

³⁸ J. Halley and A. Parker, "Introduction," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2007). p. 421.

the “Welcoming and Opening Plenary Session”³⁹ for this roundtable discussion invited those scholars that are deemed (although they themselves contest it) as the creators of the field of Queer Theory; three of whom I refer to for my theoretical and methodological framework in this project frequently: Valerie Traub, Esther Newton, David Halperin and Gayle Rubin. There were several points that were discussed around the questions focusing on the then, now and future of Queer Studies. I would like to focus on what they had to say on the analytics of queer to describe the state of the field and the significance of queer for the project I took on.

It is important to point out the skepticism and ambivalence all of the speakers had towards the term queer. While pointing out the trouble with the term and the field itself, they also mentioned that regardless if the problems with it, it remains politically meaningful. Esther Newton commented that queer began to indicate homosexuality pejoratively in 1960s. In the 50’s, when she was in high school, queers were all the losers: “the girl who had epilepsy” or “the guy who had a recognizably Jewish name.” They were all tormented equally. In the 70’s the word gay came into play, pushing homosexual out. All of a sudden, she said, “you were cool and you were liberated. You weren’t like those old queens and dykes of yesteryear.” And added, it is for that reason she is “skeptical of queer’s claim to represent a vanguard that is supposedly much much different than gay.” David Halperin has a similar concern with the word queer and with one particular claim, which he characterizes as a mythology, that queer theory “rose triumphantly from the devastation of lesbian and gay studies which had been naively invested studying only identities until queer came along questioning identities.” He mentions three different uses of queer which while not fitting together exactly, it is the way it was being used at the end of 80’s which is when queer moved from being pejorative to being affirmative and

³⁹ “Welcoming and Opening Plenary Session”, (paper presented at the Doing Queer Studies Now Conference University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010).

celebratory. Queer was being used as a “defiant, anti-assimilationist, in your face term”; “brand of activism that was defined in part by its opposition to homophobia”; and an “effort to contest an entire field of normativity not just field of sexuality.” Therefore he said that “there is not a great deal to be gained by trying to say what queer really means. Because it means a lot of different things to different people in different contexts. Though perhaps one of the things it means most of all is that it is the term people have not tired of defining for the last 20 years.” According to him, what is important to ask is why this is the case.

This particular point is what I find striking about queer as a term and an approach, and in fact this is where I think its strength is situated. In many of the articles written in an attempt to critique Queer Studies, or in talks or conferences, much like this one, scholars who have been deeply involved in queer indicate the trouble they have with ‘naming’ the field by providing a few different titles, mostly with acronyms that change year to year or from one geography to another one. Gayle Rubin in her commentary as part of the panel did something similar. After listing “lesbian and gay studies” and “LGBTT studies” she used the phrase “whatever studies.” While she was probably using it to indicate the existence of various names for the same field, ‘whatever’ is what makes queer analytically and ontologically significant, still. ‘Whatever’ makes impossible the legibility of queer, allowing multiplied fields of resistance to disperse from it. Whatever here does not mean indifference. In fact, what I mean is its complete opposite; just the way Giorgio Agamben uses in *The Coming Community*⁴⁰ “being such that it always matters.”⁴¹ Whatever signifies the freedom of Being from an identity, and release to “being *such as it is*.”⁴² He wrote:

⁴⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: Theory Out of Bounds, University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

⁴¹ Ibid.p. 1.

⁴² Ibid.

“Such-and-such being is reclaimed from its having this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class (the reds, the French, the Muslims) – and it is reclaimed not for another class nor for the simple generic absence of any belonging, but for its being-*such*, for belonging itself.”⁴³

Whatever singularity is meaningful because it suggests to ‘come as you are’ without being bound by identity categories. A Being *such as it is*, is necessarily devoid of common properties, or identities imposed by sovereignty of an outside entity. Resistance to bonding around a common substance, or a transcendental essence is at the same time the renunciation of sovereignty.

His conception of ‘whatever singularity’ is in dialogue with Jean-Luc Nancy’s deliberation in *The Inoperative Community*⁴⁴ and *Being Singular Plural*⁴⁵. According to Nancy, We, beings in our own singularity exposed to an outside, experience an inclination towards an ‘other’. This potential, that Nancy names *clinamen*, is the condition that “opens up being-in-common”⁴⁶. He wrote:

“Singularity never has the nature or the structure of individuality. Singularity never takes place at the level of atoms, those identifiable if not identical identities; rather it takes place at the level of the *clinamen*, which is unidentifiable.”⁴⁷

The distinction Jean- Luc Nancy makes between singularity and individuality and the significance of this distinction to community is the key concept that renders his thought relevant for queer politics and queer theory. It is this distinction that allows us to conceptualize difference in a way that makes going beyond identity politics possible. Singularity of a being indicates its plurality. “The togetherness of singulars is singularity “itself”. It assembles them insofar as it spaces them; they are “linked” insofar as they are not unified.”⁴⁸ Modern constitution of identity

⁴³ Ibid., p. 1-2.

⁴⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Lisa Garbus Peter Connor, Michael Holland, Simona Sawhey (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2004).

⁴⁵ ———, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’ Byrne (CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶ ———, *The Inoperative Community*. p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 6-7.

⁴⁸ ———, *Being Singular Plural*, p.33.

prevents being from realizing communication and sharing with the other, outside of himself. To treat queer as such would be a misguided analysis. Queer resonates as a disengagement with the demand for coherence and suggests an embodiment of the fluidity and plurality of sexual experiences and practices. The ambiguity of the word queer itself, embraces singularity of beings, which is inseparable from its plurality. Conceptualizing queer as the embodiment of Jean-Luc Nancy's *being singular plural* challenges heteronormativity primarily at the root of regulatory and disciplinary function of identity. Moreover, *being singular plural* paves the path to explore subjectivity outside of morality and psychopathology. I will further develop this concept in dialogue with Tuna Erdem's deliberation on queer and community during our conversation in the last chapter.

In an inquiry into the subjectivity of women-loving-women it is imperative to treat them *as such* (without a series of prescriptive representable identity categorizations; with infinite possibilities of being 'whatever'⁴⁹), and not take the identity categories they represent or have been imposed upon them as their ontological truth. Heterosexual hegemony demands for its own regulatory dominance and claim of originality a state of 'togetherness' (community, society, cult, group, movement) under the boundaries of identity and the illusion of individual autonomy. Therefore we must question 'identity' as a performance and commodity, and sexuality as an affective practice and "what it means to become a neoliberal (sexual) subject."⁵⁰ Studying subjectivity of women-loving-women requires a duello with the constitution of identities, and the problematic that lies within the process. The choices of approaches become extremely important.

⁴⁹ "Whatever singularity must in itself be neither particular nor universal, neither one nor multiple, but such that it "does not scorn being posed with a whatever singular unity"" (Agamben, *The Coming Community*).

⁵⁰ Jasbir Puar, "Ecologies of Sex, Sensation, and Slow Death," *Social Text Journal*, <http://www.socialtextjournal.org/periscope/2010/11/ecologies-of-sex-sensation-and-slow-death.php>.

A. Urgency

There are three points that renders this type of a project in Istanbul urgent for me: the systematic and increasingly violent anti-homosexual sentiments and policy making efforts from the conservative right; and the exploding dynamic of homophilic activities both in academia and non-governmental organization; and the frequent disregard of this strong dynamic from fields of political organizing that one would expect alliance.

During the time period of this project, there were three fronts that became agenda items for LGBTT rights organizations for anti-homosexual remarks and actions: the media, civil society organizations and the minister of state responsible for Women and Family Affairs. In “Glittered”, I will be focusing on a few significant examples out of several because of the large scale of effect they particularly had due to the level of authority they occupy and the widespread reaction they attracted. This exchange reveals the anti-homosexual position of the state and the conservative right; the limits and boundaries concepts like “human rights” and “liberation” come to face even within left politics; and the tendencies of reactions within the LGBTT rights organizations.

Turkey’s left wing politics caught onto the imperialist and orientalist tendencies from within after 1980s. In fact the concept of ‘white Turks’ did not emerge until late ‘90s almost a decade after recognizing the Kurdish struggle. Around the same time, after the 1989 ban on headscarves in schools, this struggle for freedom to wear headscarves entered the arena. A decade later in the 2000s, the left began talking about Armenian genocide. The hardcoded proletariat vs. bourgeoisie focus of the left was penetrated by these ‘minority’ groups, pointing out the intersectionality of the issues regarding race, ethnicity and class categories. Women entered the field during this time as well, however the issues that were put forward were limited

to labor rights and violence and remained as a side dish. LGBTT issues and sexual politics have always been, and continue to remain outside of the circle of alliance. I will further discuss this in relation to crises emerged after anti-homosexual public remarks of a minister of the state responsible for Women and Family Affairs, Selma Aliye Kavaf, and a well known Islamist women columnist and activist Hilal Kaplan in “Glittered.”

At the same time, there is a growing, almost explosive, dynamic in and outside of academia for homophilic studies and activities. First queer conference took place in 2004 at Bogazici University. The second installation of the series, which was focused on trans identities, was held in October of 2010. The year 2010 especially was a fruitful year for academic and cultural LGBTT endeavors. Both David Halperin and Judith Butler came to give lectures as part of the 5th International Anti-homophobia Convergence. For Istanbul Pride, about five thousand people converged on Istiklal Caddesi. Hejvin, the first Kurdish LGBTT focused journal was established. LambdaIstanbul has been putting on film viewing, workshop, lecture, tea party or dance party events every week without delay. KaosGL hosted the first anti-homophobia student convergence (and in 2011 they repeated the event). Most large universities have LGBTT student organizations, official and non-official. A theatre play and an independent movie which has casted predominantly trans –women were released. Although limited to big urban cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Eskisehir, and Diyarbakir, we are definitely talking homosexual in Turkey! As we will see in the following chapter these talks are not immune to the contradictions that surround the local cultural climate.

B. Spaces of exploration

The litany of work that has been produced within the academic field that takes on the responsibility of ‘dealing with’ sexuality (gender studies, lesbian and gay studies, queer studies...etc) has shown a suspicious disregard to women who love women. Annamarie Jagose explores “the structuring mechanisms of lesbian invisibility that produce the lesbian as a negative image, a reversal of the cultural conventions that naturalize (hetero)sexuality as visible”⁵¹ She explained:

“There are at least two answers to this question, the duality of which countermands the ultimate authority of the other. Lesbianism is persistently represented as falling outside sexuality’s visual field because, on the one hand, femininity cannot register, except as a negativity, within a model of desire imagined always as phallogentric and, on the other, homosexual difference, however much it has come to be a trope of radical alterity for modern culture, is not visibly perceptible”⁵².

These two paradigms, often assumed as positioned against each other one being a part of gender matrix and the other of sexuality, in fact demonstrate the duality and therefore complexity of the issue, Jagose wrote. This complicates the task of exploration into this field, requiring the scholar to describe her intention, approach, and methodology in the beginning and to refer back to it every step of the way.

First importance I give is to the use of terms. I deliberately chose to use the term ‘space’ instead of ‘case; ‘anti-homosexual’ instead of ‘homophobia’; ‘sexuality’ instead of ‘sexual orientation’; ‘women-loving-women’ instead of ‘lesbian and bisexual.’ I will first explain these choices and then move onto describing the spaces I chose to explore for this project.

Generally the studies that involve interviews, and/or participant observation, they are called ‘case studies.’ I have both a methodological and emotional problem with the word ‘case.’

⁵¹ Annamarie Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and Logic of Sexual Sequence* (NY: Cornell University, 2002), p. 2.

⁵²Ibid., p. 2.

The use of the word ‘case’ implies the existence of the scholar as a partially objective entity with authority and expertise to insert judgment on her subject, who is a person she forms a certain level of relationship. Instead, throughout this study I am looking for a way to break that illusion and emphasize the subjective position of the scholar, which is why I am working with what is called self-reflexive methodology that I will explain in “The Rules of the Game” section of this chapter. Also, the word ‘space’ is a lot more clear in indicating the importance of spatial and temporal conditions of LGBTT field, and the consideration of the variance and multiplicity of material documentations for such a study. Moreover, I ‘am’ a part of the space I study. Through my participation in activities, or by going to places that cater to LGBTT people as I needed a safe space or when I talked about my academic and politic interests regarding sexuality I formed relationships with women who love other women. As I started my interviews, those who were my acquaintances, became my friends; those that I did not know at all beforehand, became my acquaintances. In fact, they engaged personally with my project and continually asked along the way ‘how it was going.’ With that said, ‘space’ sounds less pejorative, and less objectifying than ‘case.’

Regarding the term ‘homophobia’, I find that it does not fully engage with the severity of conditions. First of all, it is a term that is directly linked to psychopathology. As we are trying to escape its hold on our own behaviors, I find it useless to perpetuate its effect in relation to attitudes toward sexual behaviors. While the term ‘phobia’ is directly linked to the marginalization and exclusion of all sexually aberrant people because it is legitimized by the introduction of fear of the ‘unknown’ into the field, ‘homophobia’ is not sufficient to explain fear’s political utility for the state and its incessant appearance for the functioning of forms of normalization. The fear leads to attitudes and behaviors against the ‘stranger’, in this case the

homosexual. Calling these attitudes and behaviors ‘homophobic’ cuts it short; and also indicates that there is a cure, a fix, a medicine for this condition. These systematic treatments of homosexuals require a stronger signifier, therefore I choose to use ‘anti-homosexual.’

Throughout this project I constantly refer back to essentialism, coherence, substance, stability...etc. and focus all of my arguments against these type of conceptualization of particularly gender and sexuality. Therefore I refrain from using the term ‘sexual orientation’ to refer to people’s sexual behaviors and choices. Orientation indicates an origin, a starting point, and a linear, one way journey to a final destination. One may argue that this is a very limited definition of ‘orientation’ and that it is not necessarily an implication of a determinant experience. However liberal we try to get with the word orientation, it still remains weak in encompassing the multiplicity, and transformability, changeability of sexual behaviors. I prefer to simply use ‘sexuality’ to encompass all kinds of experiences related to sexual pleasure including the non-heteronormative and non-monogamous.

“When we talk about women we are using the same assumptions that the society uses in order to describe bodies of women. We are taking into account those people who are raised to become women and more importantly those who identify as women.”⁵³ This is the same categorization I use in this project to identify women-loving-women. I take into account both elements presented above when identifying the spaces of exploration for my project. I am aware, though, this is not a comprehensive approach. However, the inclusion of trans women or any other identifications that do not fit the categorization above would have caused an expansion in the issues to be discussed which would have been impossible to accomplish in the limited space

⁵³The Swedish Federation for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Rights RFSL, "Kadınlar Arasında," in *LambdaIstanbul*, ed. The Swedish Federation for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Rights (Istanbul2010).

of this project. This in no way should mean that I think trans women cannot and do not also love women. When I write women-loving-women, then, it is all women who fit the above description who love women exclusively or who ‘also’ love women. This opens up the field to lesbians, bisexuals, and queer women.

One more issue to clarify is my use of the term ‘homosexual.’ In the Anglo-American context the word homosexual often has a negative connotation and within conventional activism it is often avoided, or suggested to be avoided. In fact, this word became typological word that allows one to identify how familiar the person is with the LGBTT life and sometimes even his/her political affiliations. This is related to the terms direct reference to medicine. It was the clinical term for behavior that was categorized as an illness until 1973 by the American psychiatric association. In Turkey, the attitudes toward the word ‘*eşcinsel*’, the direct translation of homosexual, is not the same in Turkey. In fact it is the most common terminology used as an umbrella to encompass all LGBTT. There is almost no use of ‘women-loving-women’, very limited use of queer, and frequent use of ‘lesbian’ and ‘bisexual’ however this frequency is usually in spaces that are politically charged. The term ‘*eşcinsel*’ does not have the same derogatory sense as ‘homosexual’ in this context. In order make this distinction I use ‘*eşcinsel*’ when contextually necessary. However this should not indicate that when I use ‘homosexual’ I do it in a negative tone. On the contrary, I believe that these words, like queer, need to be liberated from the ions of hatred and fear they are loaded with.

i. Space I: Interviews

For this project I interviewed nine women; all selected via snowball sampling method. The ages of the women were between twenty and forty-one. I employ the property of historical singularity, conceptualized as “eventualizations”⁵⁴, because nothing, including human body, is fixed in time, and stable. Inspired by Nurdan Gürbilek, I treat the 1980 coup as a fracturing event in history of Turkey (this will further be developed in “Glittered”). For this reason, I made sure my interviewees were either born after the coup, or were still minors during the coup. All live in Istanbul. Two women are Kurdish; four are undergraduate students, one is a graduate student, two are academicians, one is a hostess, one is a club owner. Three women identify as bisexual, five as lesbian, one as queer⁵⁵. However, as we will see in the narrations some of these identifications are not stable, even for the duration of the interviews.

Instead of making up names for the women I interviewed I asked them whether or not they wanted to give me a nickname of their own. For those who did not care if I used their real name, I opted to use the first letter of their names instead of making up names for them myself. This way any cultural and social bias that may emerge in naming people for my project was prevented. The only exception is Tuna Erdem⁵⁶. I use her full name for two reasons: a) it would be deceptive for me to change her name for the sake of a unity in my project when she lives a life that is out and open, and adamantly talks about why such a way of living is necessary; b) I use an article (forthcoming) she wrote for a book project as a reference to clarify some areas regarding subversivity in queer spaces and subcultures in Turkey.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, “Impossible Prison,” in *Sylvère Lotringer*, ed. 1961-1984 Foucault Live: Collected Interviews (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996). p. 277.

⁵⁵ In all of my uses of queer, I do not intend to signify an identity category. I intend to mean just the opposite: unfit to a known category, and behaves in ways that fit only the queer as described previously.

⁵⁶ Tuna Erdem is 41 years old, teaching at a private university.

The tenth woman is me. For the reason that I employ a self-reflexive methodology, as I will explain below, and that I am a part of this space, I include personal experiences, and accounts of my life. I am twenty-eight; a graduate student; was born and have lived in Istanbul for a total of nineteen years with a nine year immigration experience in the U.S. from 2000-2009; and I am queer.

ii. Space II: Socio-political Context; Istanbul and Spaces of Leisure

The period leading up to the coup, and the period right after it is an example of an eruption that changed the cultural climate of Turkey in ways otherwise impossible. The 1980 coup as problematized by Nurdan Gürbilek, brought with it a climate where seemingly contradictory experiences existed at the same time and place. In “Glittered”, I will further discuss her analysis and develop its significance in relation to sexuality of women-loving-women.

I chose to focus this project to Istanbul because urban cities are open to observation and study. It is much easier to find support and archives. There are several bars, cafes, restaurants and other spaces specific to an LGBTT clientele because of the density of the population. In fact there are many LGBTT people who move to the city for this reason. Moreover, the speed of interactions and transformations specific to Istanbul and its geo-political status make it a unique environment to explore.

C. Rules of the game

Specifically speaking for lesbian histories Martha Vicinus makes a point about what might draw a scholar to this type of work: “Despite the weaknesses of all current explanatory models, fragmentary evidence, and ghostly immanences tease scholars. The polymorphous, even amorphous sexuality of women is an invitation to multiple interpretative strategies”⁵⁷. Alternatively, there is a transgressive appeal to engage with what is forbidden and abject, not normal, not good, what is avant-garde and risky, and what escapes definition. This appeal for transgression is present everywhere: “Modern postindustrial societies produce social conditions that seem to foster in their citizens a yearning for escape, exemption, “small vacations from the will itself,” self-loss, transcendence”⁵⁸. What makes it thrilling to study ‘perverse’ sexualities, much like with the physical engagement in it, is its “seductive and unmanageable” properties.

Esther Newton has devoted a series of writing on ethnographies of lesbian and gay communities. Her essay *Just One of the Boys: Lesbians in Cherry Grove, 1960- 1988*⁵⁹ presents carefully selected examples of community building; understanding of collectivity and belonging; economic class and buying power; gender relations; bond and animosity between the gay and lesbian residents of Cherry Grove. She presents in this essay an account of relationalities that work to weaken the claim that there is a condition of unity, a strong coherence amongst women, for being women, and amongst gays and lesbians for their same-sex desire. The assumption of unanimity, and solidarity imposed upon individuals arbitrarily grouped together based on their sexual practices, and their gender collapse at the expansion of Newton’s analysis. The complexities of these relations, the differences of the community members’ approach to each other and to the challenges they face throughout their residency or involvement also generates a

⁵⁷Martha, “They Wonder Which Sex I Belong To: The Historical Roots to Modern Lesbian Identity.” p. 436.

⁵⁸ Halperin, *What do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk, and Subjectivity*.

⁵⁹Segment from her book *Cherry Grove Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town*.

meaningful criticism of the political movements organized around the identity formations based on gender and sexuality. Bidy Martin's analysis is consistent with Newton's observations as well:

"Claims to difference conceived in terms of different identities have operated and continue to operate as interventions in facile assumptions of "sisterhood," assumptions that have tended to mask the operation of white, middle-class, heterosexual womanhood" as the hidden but hegemonic referent. Challenges to the erasure of difference in the name of another identity, however, limit the potential for subversion and critique by recontaining the discursive/institutional operations of "differences" in the discrete categories of individuals, thereby rendering difference a primarily psychological "problem." A number of marginalized communities now face important questions about the possibility of reconceptualizing identity without abandoning it and its strategic deployment all together"⁶⁰.

Esther Newton's use of oral histories as a methodology in her work and her approach in re-constructing a history of gays (meaning all of LGBTT), is highly effective in the instrumentalization of the intersections of gender, class, race, politics, and aesthetics. She acknowledges "how much – almost everything – remains to be done to construct the history of gays in many parts of the world" she delivers three guiding principles she follows: "Be descriptive", "don't be gobbled up" and "don't be separatist."

To be descriptive, she says "we should be asking Who, What, When, Why?" These details will reveal the complexities, contradictions, differences in what is assumed to be one coherent homogenous existence. "It really makes no sense to talk about "*the* lesbian community" or "lesbian history" in abstract generalities. Ideas that "lesbian" equals "lesbian-feminist" or that lesbian history begins in 1969 are just wrong. We need to document the variety of lesbian lives,

⁶⁰ Martin Bidy, "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelow, David M. Halperin (New York Routledge, 1993). p. 275.

past, and present⁶¹”. Newton insists that lesbian history is not just an aspect of “women’s or feminist history.” She added:

“Since at least the turn of the century and perhaps earlier, women in Western cultures have formed named groups based on self-conscious, nominally exclusive sexual orientation, and we who study lesbian cultures should focus primarily on “inverts,” “gay girls,” “bulldaggers,” “dykes,” “lesbian-feminists,” not generic women’s networks or groupings⁶²”.

It remains to be a necessity to be inclusive in this field work in order to not be ‘gobbled up’ and repeat the earlier errors of lesbian and gay studies. Finally, “understanding lesbians means seeing them *in relations to* nations and regions, and to the histories of women as a gender class, of gay men, of socio-economic classes and of American race categories⁶³”. Especially with the recent developments of racial and ethnic struggles, and the redefinition of modernization and democracy, this warning is more timely than ever. Construction of citizenship in Turkey is conceptualized differently than in the Anglo-American context, therefore a localized analysis is imperative.

These points make a project like this one complex, and chaotic. Therefore, I must be careful and specific in the organizational framework I choose to place this subject in an analytical environment. In this section, I would like to expound on the methodology I use and the motivation behind it, outline the framework of this project, and describe its form which is operationally necessary. Without prior knowledge of the rules I set for this project, the content and the style will not come through as clear as I intended.

These women and I collided somehow in spatially and temporally particular and

⁶¹ Esther Newton, "Just One of the Boys: Lesbians in Cherry Grove, 1960-1988," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelove, David M. Halperin (New York Routledge, 1993).538.

⁶²Ibid., p. 538.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 539.

significant ways and touched each other. Some of them did this to help me, some admitted a certain need to speak and for others it was an activist attempt to speak on behalf of herself as a woman who is sexual, perversely so, and not only wants to be noticed but also respected as such. The coming into being of this project especially considering the spatial and temporal conditions surrounding has been in and of itself reflexive. The relations formed between the researcher and her subjects are performances, sometimes dangerously testing the permeability of the limits of their prescribed roles. The scholars who adopt a self-reflexive methodology “see the writing of cultural accounts as a crucial form of knowledge – the troubled, experimental knowledge of a self in jeopardy among others”.⁶⁴

In fact all ethnographic studies are somewhat self-reflexive; requiring the researcher to look back on herself while forming mostly intimate relations with her subjects. The crucial mistake happens when a claim of objectivity, even partial, is made. This type of scholarly ceremony has been put under a critical lens by several of its participants. One such engagement is *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* edited by James Clifford and George Marcus. This collection of essays give an internal critique of the field, signaling a self-reflexive turn in social sciences and humanities as well as painting a particularly subversive picture of interdisciplinary efforts. Clifford wrote in his introduction:

“Ethnography is actively situated *between* powerful systems of meaning. It poses questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes”.⁶⁵

What is critical to me in this description is the last comment that positions this method of analysis not outside of its subject but as part of its construction. Acknowledging this, in this

⁶⁴ James Clifford and George E. Marcus, ed. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Introduction paragraph.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 2-3. Emphasis in the original.

project I do not propose a truth about my corporeal ‘subjects’, women-loving-women, their ‘works’ and the conceptualizations I travel along. In fact, I reject that there can be any telling of truth(s), any claim of substance, essence, and universality in the field of studies related specifically to gender and sexuality. As I belong to no one and no narrative, neither do ‘my subjects.’

Referring to the analysis by Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and Terry Eagleton of the trouble with Western science Clifford wrote that it:

“has excluded certain expressive modes from its legitimate repertoire: rhetoric (in the name of “plain,” transparent signification), fiction (in the name of fact), and subjectivity (in the name of objectivity). The qualities eliminated from science were localized in the category of “literature.” Literary texts were deemed to be metaphoric and allegorical, composed of inventions rather than observed facts; they allowed a wide latitude to the emotions, speculations, and subjective “genius” of their authors.”⁶⁶

Clifford maintains that ethnographic writing is fictional; not to mean as the opposite of truth but to convey “the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive.”⁶⁷ At the end, if there is an end for ethnographic texts are bound to be works in process due to the property of historical singularity of events, we the writers arrange, symbolize, signify the stories we hear and interrupt them with our theoretical conceptualizations to render them meaningful in relation to our paradigms. The stories, the narratives, already constructed and formed especially in the case of in depth interviews where the presence of the observer is effectively obvious, go through the filtering of an author who is bound by the stylistic requirements of academic production. We may exclude, as Clifford indicates, what we identify as “incongruent voices” or through a process of “deploying a consistent manner of quoting, “speaking for,” translating the reality of others”. He added:

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

“Purportedly irrelevant personal or historical circumstances will also be excluded (one cannot tell all). Moreover, the maker (but why only one?) of ethnographic texts cannot avoid expressive tropes, figures, and allegories that select and impose meaning as they translate it. In this view, more Nietzschean than realist or hermeneutic, all constructed truths are made possible by powerful “lies” of exclusion and rhetoric. Even the best ethnographic texts – serious, true fictions – are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control”⁶⁸.

Clifford’s affirmation of partiality in ethnographic study is persistent resistance to the positivistic meta claims and narratives in studies of cultural milieu. While rejecting the practice of exposing what is truthful and therefore verifiable, this focus on partiality, and self reflexivity opens up the field to possibilities that are more descriptive, affective and aesthetical.

The description of the sensual experiences of both the subjects under examination and the researcher, as she reflects back on herself and the happenings (changes, shifts, fractures) through the journey of her research breaks the presupposition that it is possible to produce a truthful conclusion about a cultural entity (a group, an event, a practice) by observing it as if in a lab. In the case of participant-observation method, the impossibility for one to separate herself fully without being affected by her subjects is widely accepted. However these affective experiences are “firmly restrained by the impersonal standards of observation and “objective” distance”⁶⁹.

“Various sophisticated and naive, confessional and analytic, these accounts provide an important forum for the discussion of a wide range of issues, epistemological, existential, and political. The discourse of the cultural analyst can no longer be simply that of the “experienced” observer, describing and interpreting custom. Ethnographic experience and the participant-observation ideal are shown to be problematic. Different textual strategies are attempted. For example, the first person singular (never banned from ethnographies, which were always personal in stylized ways) is deployed according to new conventions. With the “fieldwork account” the rhetoric of experienced objectivity yields to that of the autobiography and the ironic self-portrait. (See Beaujour 1980, Lejeune 1975.) The ethnographer, a character in a fiction, is at center stage.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.13.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

The changes in anthropology, specifically ethnography, which Clifford writes about in order to situate historically and epistemologically the critique in the field, show that the transgression is not isolated and particular to this field. Concentrated critique of the linguistic representations of reality beginning with Ferdinand de Saussure, the emergence of Frankfurt School, and the development of critique of colonialism and modernity mark the general epistemological shift in social sciences and humanities.

“The new histories treat anthropological ideas as enmeshed in local practices and institutional constraints, as contingent and often “political” solutions to cultural problems. They construe science as a social process. They stress the historical discontinuities, as well as not making present knowledge seem temporary, in motion. The authority of a scientific discipline, in this kind of historical account, will always be mediated by claims of rhetoric and power.”⁷¹

Emerging out of the critique of anthropology is also the shattering of the hegemony of the gaze as the observer and collector of evidence leading to truth, and the embracing of all five senses as the relaying mechanisms of experiences⁷². In our research projects, in our articles the things we write reduce lived experiences; those of others or our own are reduced to a single dimension. Our lives are placed on a one dimensional cause and effect string. Whereas culture is three dimensional; in fact four if we count what we cannot touch, see, smell, taste and hear but only feel.

“Cultures do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or the negotiation of a power relationship.”⁷³

The self-reflexive and the more recent affective turn in cultural studies try to salvage culture from becoming one dimensional. Reporting on cultural happenings fully, in its total

⁷¹ Ibid., p.11.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. p.10.

‘Truth’ is impossible; in fact non-existent. How can I write on the ways in which the adventure of this study, and my immersion into academic studies of gender and sexuality has opened me up in my own sociality? This is not only due to being present in activist groups or via my experience with forming a LGBTT group in the university. I have been pulled into the ‘gay world’ and have enjoyed immensely the company of the gay men I met in this journey; this journey that includes my academic and also my more intimate re-migration back to my home country. How do I write on these without pulling away from the necessary focus of this project? How do I describe the effects of these ‘other’ relationships outside of my focus group of nine women, on me as a person, and as a scholar; and the shifts they instigated regarding this project? I do not know. I can only try to include descriptions of moments that shook me up and recharged my motivation for my work and my life.

“Stiffened from long sleep in the background of scholarly life, the scholar’s body yearns to exercise its muscles. Sleepy from long inactivity, it aches to restore its sensibilities. Adrift in a sea of half-lives, it wants to breathe in the pungent odors of social life, to run its palms over the jagged surface of social reality, to hear the wondrous symphonies of social experience, to see the sensuous shapes and colors that fill windows of consciousness. It wants to awaken the imagination and bring scholarship back to “the things themselves. Wants, however, are far from being deeds, for a sensuous awakening is a very tall order in an academy where mind has long been separated from body, sense long severed from sensibility.”⁷⁴

The spaces of exploration I chose to immerse myself necessarily pulls one into a sensual experience. As I write these sentences, I recall breathing light after a long night of dancing; or a snowy night demonstration that ended with a joyful street demonstration, a decadent culture clash; or deciding to take a break from the sterile light of a computer screen to go to a solidarity party after refusing many invitations as the duties of a scholar required and the feeling of

⁷⁴ Paul Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997). p. xi-xii.

recalibration in my bones. I recall these as I type these words in this project; as I sit down every morning to ‘work’, these experiences travel through my body.

These ‘deceptive’ sensibilities are central to spaces I explore; the experiences are not clearly legible and categorizable; the narrations of stories are full of contradictions and the lives are not fixed in time. When Paul Stoller advocates for “Sensuous Scholarship” it is the myth of scientific explanation that he situates himself against. It is those scholars who work within this sensibility that I take as references in my project.

Self-reflexive methodology allows the scholar to open up herself through her subject, and to place into the analytical field the relations she forms and their impact on the project itself. “Cultural *poesis*—and politics—is the constant reconstitution of selves and others through specific exclusions, conventions, and discursive practices.”⁷⁵ Self-reflexivity emphasizes this and relays also the experiences of the researcher and even how her presence impacts the space she studies. Instead of separating the experiences in writing, in this approach we write as we are a part of it. Voice of the author fluctuates between the theoretical authority, observer, participant and subject. In fact at some instances these voices become indistinguishable. Multiplied narrations of self fold onto each other. At times the roles of the interviewee and the interviewer get mixed up.

“Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways. The diverse post- and neo-colonial rules for ethnographic practice do not necessarily encourage “better” cultural accounts. The criteria for judging a good account have never been settled and are changing. But what has emerged from all these ideological shifts, rule changes, and new compromises is the fact that a series of historical pressures have begun to reposition anthropology with respect to its “objects” of study. Anthropology no longer speaks with automatic authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves (“primitive”, “pre-literate”, “without history”).”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, p.24.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 9-10.

Clifford self analyzes the forming of this book and the seminar out of which it came, as lacking many aspects of anthropological studies including those with feminist approach. He then responds to this lack with “Feminism had not contributed much to the theoretical analysis of ethnographies as texts.”⁷⁷ Then he adds:

“Feminism clearly has contributed to anthropological theory. And various female ethnographers, like Annette Weiner (1976), are actively rewriting the masculinist canon. But feminist ethnography has focused either on setting the record straight about women or on revising anthropological categories (for example, the nature/culture opposition). It has not produced either unconventional forms of writing or a developed reflection on ethnographic textuality as such.”⁷⁸

While he is not entirely wrong in this observation, nor in his analysis that this situation requires more thought and that his project’s focus is not wide enough for it, he does ignore two very important figures in anthropology (or should I say LGBTT Anthropology) that contributed to the epistemological shift he himself talks about, and praises: Esther Newton and Gayle Rubin. Both work with LGBTT people, and self-identify as feminists. Moreover, they take these issues to be feminist issues. Even though at the time of this seminar, they may not have produced work on critique of anthropology, within the body of their work they specifically talk about the limits and transgressions in the paradigms and fields they exist in. In fact Esther Newton is regarded as one of the founder’s of ‘gay anthropology’ with her doctorate thesis which was later published as *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* in 1972. Her second book, published in 1993, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town* is a clear demonstration of a self-reflexive methodology. Clifford’s unfortunate ignorance of works such as these presents yet another concrete evidence for how LGBTT work and gay scholars are left

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.20.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.20-21.

on the margins while the more serious researchers become authority, or in Clifford's words:
"people doing "advanced" work."⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.20.

i. On and Off the Record

The format of a recorded interview, however free form, relaxed and safe I try to make it for intimate conversations to happen, and to allow the person speak mostly what she wants to speak that day in that location, the presence of the recorder renders inescapable the assumed positioning of the researcher as the authority to decipher what is narrated. It will never be like as if I were present. It will never be a documentation that tells the ‘Truth’. There will never be a certainty. When a person narrates a section from her life, she both becomes an author of her story, and the listener. As she constructs this story in front of another person, she is able to listen to it and also receive instant feedback that in turn shapes the story being told.

At the same time this illusory and sometimes misleading lens makes it necessary for the scholar to look back on herself. In fact, this project started out with the intention to look back on myself and to get a chance to interrogate and therefore relieve the pressures of normalizing forces off my back. Carrying a life around that is situated in the aesthetic of tides; between geographies provided that they are discussed together become problematic, it is not surprising I place normalization, truth, management of displaced, diasporic identities into the center of my work. Through this process my own story is infinitely and repetitively constructed and interrupted. Moreover, in the case of projects such as these where the researcher is also a part of the explored space the lines between the observer and the observed blur.

When I introduced the interviews I conducted into the discussion here, I used direct quoting where I can. Although translated and therefore have lost some meaning, this method still gives some the chance for the reader to also interact with the story teller. There were instances of conversations where it was not at all possible for me to do this. These are off-record

conversations. Off-record materials I use consist of the experiences I had at some of the functions or meetings that I find significant to this project (relayed without making any identifications); and the conversations I had with these nine women when the recorder was turned off (unless they were bound by confidentiality rules of friendship). Things that are said when there is not a machine following one's words, or when one is not surrounded by the formality of an interview reveal more intimate narrations of anxieties, fears, or excitements.

There is a performance to all of this: from the moment the scholar asks the person whether or not she would like to be interviewed for such a project to the moment she listens, transcribes and interprets the material which is on and off the record but also mixed with observations and impressions that are more sensuous than intellectual. This project not only engages with performativity of gender and sexuality but also performativity of roles we wrap ourselves with and the transformations, the transgressions within. Not only gender and sexuality, but any of our 'realities' are "changeable and revisable."⁸⁰ I move along this project with this axiom. I am in full agreement with Judith Butler's following statement: "Although this insight does not in itself constitute a political revolution, no political revolution is possible without a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real."⁸¹

In her article (to be published this year in an edited book on queer in Turkey) regarding "getting out of line, straying, and to become salient"⁸², Tuna Erdem introduced five axioms on top of which she formulated her article. These are:

- 1) "It is good, important and necessary to have pleasure.
- 2) It is good, important and necessary to be sexually satisfied.

⁸⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. xxiv.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. xxiv.

⁸² Tuna Erdem, "Hizadan Çıkmaya, Yoldan Sapmaya, ve Çıkıntı Olmaya Dair: Kimlik Değil, Cinsellik! Tektip Cinsellik Değil, Cinsel Çeşitlilik!," in *Türkiye Tarihi ve Toplum Üzerine Queer Okumalar* ed. Cüneyt Çakırlar Serkan Delice (İstanbul: Metis Yayınevi, 2012).

- 3) The lack of sexual satisfaction is a serious problem, both individually and socially, that cannot be ignored. And the problems it creates is not limited to sexuality.
- 4) People are different from each other. They take pleasure from different things, and are satisfied by different things. Something that gives pleasure to one person, may disturb another.
- 5) People change. One thing that gave pleasure and satisfaction to a person during a period in her life, in another period may not satisfy her. Things that disturbed a person during a period in her life, in another period may give pleasure.”⁸³

Following these axioms she declared that “unless you find what is written in these items at least plausible enough to say ‘yes...but’, this article cannot convince you otherwise.”⁸⁴ I find it meaningful to end my introduction in a similar manner. What renders this project significant is the possibility of anybody who engages with it to say ‘maybe.’ My intention is not to convince anyone with a ‘Truth’ that is proven by my observations. This is only an offering of a thought process; one that renders me and my ‘subjects’ political. Unless you are ready to say ‘maybe’ to the claims I made in this introduction, the rest of this project will not make any sense to you, and in fact may annoy you.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 1-2 (All originally Turkish articles have been translated by me).

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

II. GLITTERED

On June 27th 2010, I attended my first Pride⁸⁵ Walk in Istanbul⁸⁶.

I almost did not go.

The only people I knew who would be interested in going were the few gay men I met my first few months back in Istanbul. I felt distant, timid, and shy to insert myself in their intimate circle of friends. My friends from my past in Istanbul were not the ‘types’ that would be interested in accompanying me at such an ‘event’, neither were my new friends. They were not ‘like me’; they identified as strictly straight (or so I thought) and/or the politics they prescribed to systematically ignored LGBTTT issues. I wanted to dress up in glamour however I did not know how to leave the house, even the neighborhood I lived in without being questioned by my family wearing anything less than modest. I had school work, and it was hot; the traffic was heavy, I no longer subscribed to the idea that Pride Parades have political utility; my disillusionment in reactionary politics started to creep in; the protests in Istanbul were boring and old-school anyways... My excuses, which came in a stream, were endless; leaving me breathless and defenseless against myself.

The truth was that Pride Walk was the last place I wanted to feel lonely. The state of being I generally cherish as a privilege was making me feel anxious. I went to other walks and

⁸⁵ The pride movement began as a reaction to the violent, dehumanizing treatment of gays by not only the state but also the public. But also it was a field to deliver the demand to experience pleasure the way they want, desire, and see fit to their needs. Sparked in the way of grassroots mobilization in the aftermath of the unconstitutional and violent police raids of the Stonewall Inn in New York City, the annual gay pride parades memorialize the resistance of homosexuals against oppressive police force. The Stonewall Riots, while it was the first example of violent uprising against the anti-homosexual treatment, it was also a class resistance. The Stonewall Inn was an entertainment space for poorer, more marginalized LGBTTTs. This last point is significant for the recent criticism of the gay pride movement which became an avenue for marketing and branding.

⁸⁶ Pride Istanbul is an impressive series of events laid out during a busy and full week which ends with the Pride Walk. In 2011 Pride Istanbul will be organizing its 19th Pride Week, and 9th Pride Walk which started in 2003 with the attendance of 50 people. In 2010 the number of attendees was 3000-4000. The Pride Week in 2010, themed “Caution: There is Family!” in response to Aliye Kavaf’s anti-homosexual comments, was filled with events organized heavily around the idea of family such as art shows, panels, workshops, plays, academic seminars, information sessions, performances, parties, a brunch and even a soccer match. For the first time that year Lambda Istanbul prepared a Pride Book (handed out for free) with recollections from the events, interviews, and articles. The week and the Pride Walk was evaluated as the most powerful, productive, and exciting one Istanbul has experienced since the founding of LAMBDAIstanbul in 1993. <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/>

protests alone in Istanbul however they were not as unnerving as the thought of going to Pride Walk alone. Thankfully I convinced myself that it would be easier to feel lonely than to feel guilty for not being there in solidarity. “If you’re going to talk the talk; then you have to walk the walk” I said to myself; calling out to my ‘conscience’.

On my way, I received a phone call from my mentor, having just arrived to Istanbul informing me that he would also be there. We situate ourselves in the crowd, after finding and greeting the few people we both know (later, throughout the parade/protest I get introduced to most of the young gay intellectuals- the academics, artists, writers, students... etc.), as close as we can to the percussion troupe “Rhythms of Resistance”⁸⁷. While in a completely baffling daze of seeing thousands of people in all colors (mostly pink, purple and rainbow flags), shapes and sizes, it took me a moment to notice the person next to me rubbing my shoulder. Disoriented, surprised and a little bit disturbed I turn to my right only to find that a beautiful woman from the percussion troupe is wiping glitter off her face and onto my shoulder. I had never seen her before until that day, and did not run into her in LGBTT spaces ever since, but her smile is engraved in my mind forever. ‘Glittered’ I walked; shoulder to shoulder with people who happen on each other randomly only because they love and fuck the ‘wrong kind’ of people. I choked in tears a few times; laughed, danced and jumped more often, and screamed at the top of my lungs the most creative chants I had heard in quite some time, including the mimicking of orgasm moans.

Perhaps my reluctance to go was not entirely about loneliness. Perhaps I was ashamed. Not of having the ability fall in love with and/or have sex with women, but of not being entirely

⁸⁷ “Rhythms of Resistance (RoR) is on the road that examines the relationship between art and politics, carnival and protest.”

“Dikkat Aile Var! 18. İstanbul LGBTT Onur Haftası Kitabı,” (Istanbul: Lambdaistanbul, 2010). p.52.

RoR is a transnational network with several diverse examples in many geographies that take to the streets anti-authoritarian forms of relations through music and dance. Formed under this name in the UK in 2000, quickly became a loose transnational network via participation in IMF/World Bank protests and the G8 conventions. They mainly use samba instruments and rhythms as it echoes the afro-resistance that emerged as a mobilization in the 70s from Bahia, Brazil. Smearing the savor of carnival to those converging around them, in Istanbul and elsewhere, they remain a colorful, joyous and vigorous form of resistance and a symbol of struggle that brings to the forefront the principle of being together by reversing the constraints built around us and for us.

‘out’ with it to my extended family nor with anything else that politically and ethically matters to me including my undying resistance to normality and status quo. For someone who is this outspoken about her politics and ethics, and dedicates her life to exploring resistance, this secrecy is awkward and unsettling. Perhaps that which becomes shameful also turns into anger, rage, and remorseful sadness at moments creating a handicap.

In this chapter, I will be presenting the narratives that present obstacles preventing us from experiencing pleasure, painting a picture that necessitates the pride movement in Turkey. Where does surveillance and discipline present itself, and how in Turkey? What are the meta-narratives that set the stage through which the narrations in my interviews are shaped? Moreover, how do the anxieties, fears, worries and shame operate to prevent us from experiencing? What kind of mechanisms do they rely on? Likewise what kind of new mechanisms do they create?

A. The Climate

Nurdan Gürbilek wrote about the contradictions embedded in the cultural climate of Turkey; placing it in the center of a discussion on the paradox modernity in *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey*⁸⁸. The new climate she writes about, the one that came in the aftermath of the military coup of 1980, is one that grants and nurtures many polarities to exist in the same place at the same time; a constituting element of social, cultural, political and economical life. These polarities are more complex and intricate than what could be explained by the dichotomous representation of east and west; the latter always placed at a hierarchical privilege. In effect, this is one of the two main reasons that makes it difficult to provide a cultural critique in Turkey. The common depiction of Turkey as the “bridge” that connects two worlds, the east and the west, is not enough to explain the convolution in the everyday life of a person living here, nor the differences of experiences dependent on the area where one resides, even in the same city. The metaphor of “bridge” inaccurately positions east and west as two opposite worlds. When we look at weapons industry and military training practices the west and the east do not even appear to be two very separate, at least opposite worlds. Moreover, the accomplishment of the impossible task of being the bridge is treated as a duty and a source for national pride which in turn creates a national burden while fueling the problems that arise from these contradictions. The second reason is that changes and transformations happen in Turkey at a really high pace, and the people living here are accustomed to speedy adaptation, that sometimes comes with forgetting past events. Gürbilek opens up with the following passage to introduce the climate:

“True: Turkey is a land of military coups, repressive policies, violation of human rights – but also a land whose cultural pluralism ill suits that picture. Land of the world’s biggest shopping malls, tallest hotels, gaudiest shop windows, but also of inaccessible villages, deserted

⁸⁸ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*.

farmlands, and cities ringed by shanty towns. Land of international biennals, international festivals, international exhibitions, but home to people sunk furiously in nationality. A country where books are banned, seized from bookshelves and destroyed, but where people believe education is the key to every problem and all but fetishize reading. Land of people who for years feared to use the word 'Kurd', only realizing there was a 'Kurdish issue' when children sent off for military service did no return home, but also of people whose favorite pop singers are Kurds. Land of people proud that their republic recognized the legal rights of women at its founding, but who feel constantly threatened by femininity. A country where homosexuals are treated brutally, but homosexual singers are made into icons. Land of strong religious communities where people expect the army to protect them against religion's threat; of people who boast of a great empire's legacy yet lost their ties to that cultural inheritance long ago; of Europhobes who have long felt European and are sick to death of begging at Europe's gate. Land of people who cry they are victims of the West while victimizing their own 'minorities'”⁸⁹

However at the same time, she cautions us against analyzing contradictions as essential and unchanging; nor as entirely unique to Turkey. In fact, according to her especially “those constituted by liberalism and authoritarianism, civilization and barbarism, urbanity and modern *naïveté*” are present as foundational properties in many cultures, “not only those which like Turkey lie beyond the capitalist centre.”⁹⁰ Moreover, even though these contradictions “arise from Turkey’s provincial position in the world, we must not think of the polarities here in isolation from the dynamics shaping the rest of the world, but on the contrary in concert with them.”⁹¹ The challenge here for the critic is to situate these in an analytical framework while making sure to identify and shatter the traps set out by orientalism.

Before I continue I would like to distinguish between what I see as the liberal paradox and the contradictions Gürbilek identifies. She seems to use both terms synonymously, however the contradictions she highlights are unique to those countries which have the periphery status in relation to the founding nations of western civilization, capitalism and colonialism; are in direct diplomatic relation with the said nations, forming alliances in all fronts, including military; and

⁸⁹Ibid. p. 1-2.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 3.

have gone through a period of democratization after some form of dictatorship. These commonalities which define the uniqueness of the contradictions are significant in the analysis of paradoxes of modernity which is what I think Gürbilek means by the contradictions that “lie at the foundation of almost all cultures.”⁹² The contradictions we can identify sharply after the coup in 1980 appeared:

“in several realms at once: political repression and glittering shop windows, terrifying civil war in the east and provincial Turkey on the rise, the practice of torture and the call to individualism, the silence of prohibition and the hunger for speech, cultural standardization and multiculturalism, all shared one stage framed by these two different strategies, which I think still count on one another for survival in Turkey today.”⁹³

According to Gürbilek the main significance is that they “point out the limitations of the liberal strategy”⁹⁴ in Turkey.

It was not until my early twenties that I started learning about the gravity of the coup in 1980, the period leading up to it and what came immediately after with the military regime. My parents participated in the left opposition, have lost friends and mentors on the streets or in jail, had their social, and cultural activities interrupted...etc. Overall, I was raised in a family that suffered the trauma up close and personal. However, while neither they hid their past from us, my brother and I, nor their political leanings changed, they did not talk openly about the coup. They never gave those haunting details; never could go below skin deep. D.⁹⁵ grew up in a family who was also involved in the leftist political activities, much more heavily in fact, before the coup (and after). In fact, because her dad was being sought out for the DevSol trial that began

⁹² Ibid., p. 2-3.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 10-11.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.11.

⁹⁵ D. is 21 years old. Identifies as lesbian. She was born in Bulgaria, where she and her family lived in exile for a year and a half, due to her father's arrest warrant for his alleged involvement with DevSol. Since then she has been living in Istanbul. She is an undergraduate student in a private university, studying history.

in 1981⁹⁶, her parents moved to Bulgaria in 1989, which is why she was born there. She said her family lived as fugitives for a long time. They did move back to Istanbul after a year and a half however her dad (and because of that her mom) still had active arrest warrants. Her dad was arrested when she was four years old, and was jailed for ten years. She got used to living without a dad. After he got out, he and her mom stayed married for five more years, and then got divorced. They used to fight every day, she said. While it affected her in the beginning, she got used to it, much like everything else including financial troubles, however and whenever they came. She has a very patient and relaxed way of telling her fragmented family with lots of trauma caused by the repression of their involvement in political activities⁹⁷.

As I participated in conferences, round tables, conversation groups on the coup in which the efforts to have the coup leaders tried were blossoming during my visits back to Istanbul in early 2000s, I recognized that I was not the only one who was distanced from an event that shaped not only social, cultural and political life but also had direct impact on what is supposed to be the ‘private’ family life. There were many forms of silence regarding the period, but the prevalent sentiment of the youth in these meet-ups remained: “we do not know anything.” The pieces of information that we heard about and read on together formed the fragments of an incomplete picture of a grave trauma. It remains to be like the vine that keeps on growing back even thicker and faster after every chop. So I asked D. how it was in her family; whether or not her mother and father told her about those days in detail. Her experience was entirely different than mine and the people I encountered when I was confronting this past.

⁹⁶ This trial did not come to an end until 2009. 39 people were found guilty of the crime of trying to change the constitution, 129 were acquitted and the charges against 999 dropped due to statute of limitations. "Dev-Sol davasında 29 yıl sonra karar," CnnTürk.

⁹⁷ Her grandfather from her father’s side was someone who provided safe housing for leftist activists in the ‘70s. The entire family was part of this effort. However, when her father was 14, this stopped. She said that her father interprets the psychological problems his siblings endured later on as a consequence of the unexpected, abrupt ending of this involvement.

She said the way her mother told her things from this time period changed according to the conditions or her mood. Sometimes she was sad, and sometimes she affirmed herself for being a strong woman to overcome the trauma. D. said her narration was always about the emotional side. Her dad told everything including the torture he experienced and witnessed while he was in jail. She said his understanding of protecting his child is giving her all the information so that she can act accordingly; not forbidding her without explaining what really happens. She said it was really tough to hear the details sometimes because she was a kid. But her father never held back.

The army used the violent social unrest before the coup to justify government take over. The peace and quiet on the streets, in schools, in neighborhoods and in the government to them meant a series of prohibitions, and suspension of certain citizenship rights with a promise of “establishing ‘economic stability’ on the stage of a society cleansed of all tensions, all protest, and all opposition legal or illegal.”⁹⁸ Gürbilek summarizes their actions as follows:

“In order to ‘place upon sound foundations a democracy unable to control itself’, political parties, political associations and trade unions were shutdown; the constitution was altered. In order to rescue Turkey from ‘deviant ideologies’ and ‘destructive and separatist foci’, dossiers were created on nearly 2 million people; hundreds of thousands were arrested and hastily tried. Over five hundred people were sentenced to death, fifty of them executed; over a hundred died under torture; thousands lost their citizenship. Books, magazines and films were destroyed by the thousand.”⁹⁹

The undocumented tortures, specifically the exponentially rougher conditions, and heavier tortures in prisons where mostly Kurdish political prisoners were kept, voluntary exiles out of fear and other undocumentable actions of the army are tormenting. The trauma of the coup is not

⁹⁸ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p.4.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.4.

limited to the physical. The climate born out of fear, repression and severe retribution has other irrepresentable impact; irrepresentable by numbers, bruises, and/or documents.

In treating the 1980 coup as a fracture, an event causing a rupture in history of The Republic of Turkey, Gürbilek maintains a strong bond to Michel Foucault and his treatment of historical knowledge. As Foucault clarified his approach in an interview, *Truth and Power*¹⁰⁰, he said that the question he is posing is “how is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?”¹⁰¹ He names these moments events and the approach “eventalization” which he conceptualizes as:

“making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all. To show that things weren’t ‘necessary as all that’; it wasn’t as a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn’t self-evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock them up; it wasn’t self-evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through individual examination of bodies; and so on. *A breach of self-evidence, of those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences and practices rest: this is the first theoretico-political function of eventalization.* It means uncovering the procedure of causal multiplication: analysing an event according to the multiple processes that constitute it. As a way of lightening the weight of causality, ‘eventalization’ thus works by constructing around the singular event analyzed as process a ‘polygon’ or rather a ‘polyhedron’ of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite. One has to proceed by progressive, necessarily incomplete saturation.”¹⁰²

Nurdan Gürbilek handles the coup as a fracture, as a singular event which created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of certain transformations that had implications directly related to the emergent conditions. We can say that she eventalizes both the coup and the

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.112.

¹⁰² ———, "Impossible Prison." p. 277.

transformations in relation to each other, but in their own singularity, creating overlapping fields of dispersion.

This concept of eventalization which operates with the property of historical singularity is part of Foucault's understanding of genealogy which he summarized in an interview as: "a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history."¹⁰³ Foucault discussed Nietzsche's genealogy, which he borrowed for his own approach to his life-long work, under three properties of grave importance: against origin, inquires descent and "designates emergence."¹⁰⁴

Origin (*Ursprung*) indicates an essence; elements that are stable, continuous, and natural. The search for origins that traditional history takes on as a duty, "assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession."¹⁰⁵ The originating moment is "the moment of their greatest perfection, when they emerged dazzling from the hands of a creator or in the shadowless light of a first morning."¹⁰⁶ The aim of searching for an origin is to rescue *the* truth from the hands of subjective memory and to restore it in its right place in chronological continuity. Nietzsche places descent (*Herkunft*) in opposition to origin. This approach to historical examination: "permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which-thanks to which, against which-they were formed."¹⁰⁷ Lastly, emergence (*Entstehung*) is the moment when something emanates, disrupting the ongoing climate. It is "the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to

¹⁰³ ———, "Truth and Power." p. 117.

¹⁰⁴ ———, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). p.

83.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

center stage, each in its youthful strength,”¹⁰⁸ and “is always produced through a particular stage of forces.”¹⁰⁹ With that said, “no one is responsible for an emergence; no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the interstice.”¹¹⁰ Instead it appreciates randomness and accidents.

This approach clarifies the central problem with inquiries and analyses of traditional history. It frees the hold of authoritative, prescriptive and regulatory mechanisms it constitutes (and is constituted by) over experiences. Moreover, it nullifies the model of forefather(s), the figures of glory to be idolized, worshipped, and carried on forever as guardians of national identity and spirit. Foucault wrote, “the purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation,” and added “it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us.”¹¹¹ Via genealogy is how history becomes “effective”. Foucault identifies the traits of “effective history” so as to illustrate the choices of method needed for this type of inquiry. It “deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations;”¹¹² “confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference;”¹¹³ “shortens its vision to those things nearest to it-the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies; it unearths the periods of decadence”¹¹⁴ meaning it “studies what is closest, but in an abrupt dispossession, so as to seize it at a distance (an approach similar to that of a doctor who looks closely, who plunges to make a diagnosis and to state its difference);”¹¹⁵ and finally effective affirms “knowledge as perspective”¹¹⁶ and the historians position as reflexive.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.84.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.85.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 95.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 88.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 89-90.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

This is the manner in which Nurdan Gürbilek takes on the task of describing “the new cultural climate of Turkey” in turn making it significant in contextualization of a study into local aberrant sexualities. She successfully manages “to distinguish among events, to differentiate the networks and levels to which they belong, and to reconstitute the lines along which they are connected and engender one another.”¹¹⁷

What makes the coup in 1980 significant and unique amongst the other repressive periods in the history of the republic is that trying to explain it only in terms of repression leaves the story incomplete. Gürbilek wrote:

“What distinguishes this from other repressive periods in Turkey’s recent past, what made it a fracturing point of not only economic and political but also cultural life, is that during those years Turkey became the site of a great transformation which the concept of repression alone cannot explain. Another way to put it is to say that repression came to the fore along with another strategy, apparently its precise opposite, one promising freedom in the cultural sphere.”¹¹⁸

The rapid changes and transformations that took place in Turkey were “displayed on varied fronts of culture” and affected even “how people perceived themselves and how they were named, how they dressed and what they read, in the structure of sentences and the meaning of words, viewing habits and the language of the news.”¹¹⁹

The status of being surrounded and jammed up against systematic normalization processes create anxieties, fluid and alternating, nevertheless infinite and dependent on spatial and temporal conditions. Gürbilek, in the corpus of her works on the Turkish novel, looks for these anxieties in the Turkish context amongst the contradictions inherent to these mechanisms as emerging in novels. Literature is significant

¹¹⁷ ———, “Truth and Power.” p. 114.

¹¹⁸ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 4-5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

“for the reason that it has the strength to deal with disunity, that is the irrevocable component of the space that is called “I”, and the anxiety it causes; that it can tell its story to us by division, more importantly that it tells its story by division; that it can call out to the divided anxious sides that we all have.”¹²⁰

In *Kör Ayna Kayıp Şark*, what she tries to do is not to use novels as documents to prove these anxieties but to

“understand how some themes, figures and images appear to us in archetypal persistency, the anxiety that hides there and how it turns into a pain of narration, at last how this uneasiness determines the horizon of the work, how some works are better than others, harder than others.”¹²¹

The anxieties the authors write about, in and around of which revealing their own and through which “we can view our own anxieties from a certain distance, with a more critical eye.”¹²² And also because these anxieties are inseparable from social and cultural ones we live in. Constructing this project around the idea of exposing the mechanisms that create anxieties, fears, worries and shame in the lives of women-loving-women in Istanbul, I treat the material I use (the interviews, articles and spaces) in this manner. The anxiety of telling collapses with the desire to tell wherein emerges the narration of subjectivity. And what is told reveals the structures surrounding the person. As explained in the introduction, I find this the most sincere way of looking at the narratives created by women-loving-women, and those created around and upon them.

A severe anxiety that is central to living in Turkey is concerned about “concepts such as “westernization”, “national culture”, “cultural identity”.”¹²³ This anxiety is due to the fear of losing against the West: “loosing masculinity, loosing adulthood to the foreigner/the West.”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ ———, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004). p. 13.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 12-13.

¹²² ———, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 15.

¹²³ ———, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark*. p. 9.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.10.

Nurdan Gürbilek explains in her introduction to *Kör Ayna Kayıp Şark*, that the expressions in literature (revealing also the habits in daily language) regarding the relationship between the East and the West have always echoed the terminology used for sexual relationships between a man and a woman. In the beginning, she wrote, the one that would take over, to conquer was the East. That was the masculine identity of the East (and of course the West is the feminine waiting to be taken away). While this has not been abolished completely (in fact it is part of contradictions we live with in Turkey), the East transformed into a powerless masculine, “an old man in love” but more importantly the land became the embodiment of a fertile mother. And the West turned into the seductive woman, sometimes the femme-fatale, but more importantly it became “the conquering son” when it was being identified with the feminine beforehand¹²⁵. She wrote that “the defeat against the West was lived mostly with fear of losing fullness, a sense of inadequacy, the anxiety of getting stuck with being needy; if we say it with a more theoretical expression as a narcissistic injury.”¹²⁶

The process of Westernization for societies that were not present at its inception, those that are in turn situated in the periphery experience it as a “surrender right from the start.”

“Once the world is viewed through western ideals, there will be, on the one hand, local but prosaic, inadequate and ponderously unattractive content; on the other, a content which makes possible the generation of sublime ideals but is derivative; a lack of originality and naturalness, the superficiality and pretentiousness which comes of a subaltern position. ‘On the one hand there is a foreign ideal which makes the other half appear banal and formless; on the other, a local reality which guarantees that the ideal will always be unattainable and appear to be fake.’”¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 11-12.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 13-4.

¹²⁷ ———, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 153.

Conceptualized as a trauma, this belatedness which “begets the original/imitation dichotomy”¹²⁸ appears as a model for the contradictions at hand in relation to the project of modernization in Turkey and the rapid transformations that occurred post 1980s coup. The coup

“presented itself as the return of what was repressed not only by the official public but by the political public of the 1970s as well, and, moreover, as its salvation. Furthermore, it used the 1970s’ politization both as its pretext and its legacy while doing so. For privacy had already been denied, private life long since made unimportant. When the 1970s’ promise of a common life was left unfulfilled, one could not return to a privacy which had lost all value. Now a private life divested of attributes began to spread into the space politics had emptied. Everything was experienced as a kind of discovery: a region long neglected, disrespected, now energized by a vision of itself as free from institutional supervision, was trying to resurface and demand its rightful place in the public realm. All these factors combined to usher Turkey into a belated period of subjectivity, of individuality, of inwardness, all the more vehement for its belatedness.”¹²⁹

This belatedness of modernity, “the thought that accepts from the start its inadequacy in the face of a ‘West which imposes its superiority, a culture that feels itself in the position of a child when confronted by ‘Western ideals’; it is all here.”¹³⁰ This ‘belatedness’ creates a shadow over ‘critique’ that occurs in this country.

In Turkey the general overwhelming discourse in mainstream activist circles is still in sync with what Foucault criticizes as repressive hypothesis. In the articles that criticize executive and judiciary branches of government as well as patriarchy, and heteronormativity, the comments exposed in email groups and facebook activities are all unanimously agree that we are repressed and the West is liberated. The most striking examples of this view that I personally experienced was at the lecture given by David Halperin in May of 2010 at Bogazici University and how even those who have read Foucault and listened to Halperin himself all throughout asked questions along the lines of “as an American gay man what would your advice be to us.”

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 68-69.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 167-168.

This is how we criticize:

“In Turkish criticism it has become a reflex to begin by pointing to an absence. The critic opens with the indispensable statement, ‘We have no philosophy’, or ‘We have no tragedy’, or ‘We do not have a novel’, or ‘We have no criticism’. Here is a criticism which takes its authority from comparison and derives the measure to be applied to a work from that comparison rather than from work itself. It manages to make itself credible by speaking of what ‘others’ have while ‘we’ do not, pointing to an irredeemable absence which demonstrates the inadequacy of its object right from the start.”¹³¹

Nurdan Gürbilek calls this “a reflex of criticism.”¹³² I prefer the term habit, because it does link to a smth that becomes so engraved that sometimes it is impossible to escape and recalls the concept of performativity of discourse as well. Stuck in between lack and loss, criticism in Turkey captures the real problem with originality and authenticity. Nurdan Gürbilek describes two major camps of criticism in Turkey as one referring to absence as lack which carries with it the burden of being a copy, a bad copy; and the other referring to absence as loss which reestablishes Turkishness as containing an essence which has been lost, the authentic self becoming a victim to extraneous forces.

“Criticism in Turkey is caught between snobbish arrogance and provincial pride, between xenophilia and xenophobia, between a cold gaze which throws the object’s inadequacy before the foreign ideal in its face and the complacent warmth of nationalist indignation, nativism as authenticity, and slack Third World emotionalism.”¹³³

Gürbilek seeks a third way that stays clear of the seeping nationalism of the search for a language of our own and the arrogant insult of the lack obsessed westernized oriental. She argues that “the insistence on originality is not, as has been supposed, the way out of the bind, but itself a part of the dilemma.”¹³⁴

“For as long as ‘our self’ is not problematically defined, it remains a past effect merely for show, a few Ottoman motifs, an Eastern atmosphere. It

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 167.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 169.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.173.

is always too late to return to oneself. And more: the call to return is itself an expression of that belatedness.”¹³⁵

That self, that original self is nothing more than a fantasy; at times a utopic idea and fabricated according to one’s own desire. Linked almost always to a savior.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 184.

B. Explosions

Throughout *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey*, Gürbilek conceptualizes the transformations after the coup as several ‘explosions’ that are linked together. The word ‘explosion’ is highly fitting for it explains the speed of these transformations, the large circumference of the dispersion, temporality and historical singularity, the intensity and the importance. These ‘explosions’, *explosion of speech*, *explosion of desire*, *explosion of privatization/private life*, *explosion of Turkishness*, are circular, intertwined and depend on each other for the necessary spark. She sketches the conditions that allow for the emergence of the current ‘discursive practices’ in Turkey, constituting our subjective experiences. According to Foucault a discursive practice “is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function.”¹³⁶ What we observe as cultural ‘facts’ emerge as facts through the “field of discourse.”¹³⁷ Unless we clarify what this field consists of in a particular locality, at a particular time period, we will not get an understanding of how these facts were constructed, what kind of a climate they give rise to, and how subjective experiences are constituted in relation to them.

“Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation.”¹³⁸

Each of these “elements of division” emerge out of their own “conditions of existence”, in combination making up the “system of dispersion” between statements. These conditions are

¹³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (Tavistock Publications, 1972). p. 117.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

called “rules of formation.”¹³⁹ What constitutes subjectivity and how one performs subjective experiences depend on this process.

Formation of objects occurs by the operation of relations between *surfaces of emergence*, *authorities of delimitation* and *planes of specification*. *Surfaces of emergence* are the normative spaces that constitute the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Although what are ‘in’ and ‘out’ depend on the society and the time period of examination, since the emergence of modernity the pattern in Western civilization indicated “family, the immediate social group, the work situation” and also “art with its own normativity, sexuality, penalty” as surfaces with specific boundaries; specific to both the surface itself and to the local dynamics with which it is in an interruptive relationship¹⁴⁰. “Medicine”, the “law, penal law in particular”, “religious authority”, and “literary and art criticism” constitute the *authorities of delimitation*,¹⁴¹ which dictate the rules of permeability of these surfaces. When discussing the cultural climate in Turkey, it is pertinent to include market economy, and the military in this list. The third rule for the formation of objects, *grids of specification*, are the systems that manage the way the objects of discourse “are divided, contrasted, related, regrouped classified, derived from one another”¹⁴² which exist in a field of exteriority to the person. In fact, the relations that produce the conditions for the emergence of an object of discourse are all exterior to that object:

“These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization; and these relations are not present in the object; it is not they that are deployed when the object is being analysed; they do not indicate the web, the immanent rationality, that ideal nervure that reappears totally or in part when one conceives of the object in the truth of its concept. They do not define its internal constitution, but what enables it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to situate itself in relation to them, to define its difference, its

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 42.

irreducibility, and even perhaps its heterogeneity, in short, to be placed in a field of exteriority.”¹⁴³

The relations between these ‘rules’ resemble the intricacy of a well built spider web. At the point of discussion of these relationships what Foucault refers to as *enunciative modalities* emerge. This is in fact where he solidifies the link between forms of normalization and subjectivity. Apart from analyzing the statement produced, under this division he discusses how it is produced; the sites involving this production, the articulation of the statement, and how they generate the authority and sovereignty to article, who receives this authority and his particular relations to these sites.

“In the proposed analysis, instead of referring back to the synthesis or the unifying function of a subject, the various enunciative modalities manifest this dispersion. To the various statuses, the various sites, the various positions that he can occupy or be given when making a discourse. To the discontinuity of the planes from which he speaks. And if these planes are linked by a system of relations, this system is not established by the synthetic activity of a consciousness identical with itself, dumb and anterior to all speech, but by the specificity of a discursive practice. I shall abandon any attempt, therefore, to see discourse as a phenomenon of expression — the verbal translation of a previously established synthesis; instead, I shall look for a field of regularity for various positions of subjectivity. Thus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined.”¹⁴⁴

He seeks “system of occurrence” between concepts, an organization establishes some kind of unity between concepts to be “articulated only against the permanence of problems, the continuity of tradition or the mechanism of influences.”¹⁴⁵ This system involves three elements which are *forms of succession*, *forms of coexistence*, and *procedures of intervention*. It appears via the involved analysis of these elements and through them the normative field regarding the

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 54-55.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

object of discourse is revealed¹⁴⁶. At last, strategies are the themes and theories that are appropriated by discourse forming a regulatory field that suggests

“systematically different ways of treating objects of discourse (of delimiting them, regrouping or separating them, linking them together and making them derive from one another), of arranging forms of enunciation (of choosing them, placing them, constituting series, composing them into great rhetorical unities), of manipulating concepts (of giving them rules for their use, inserting them into regional coherences, and thus constituting conceptual architectures).”¹⁴⁷

These strategies adhere to certain authorities that constitute their field. The non-discursive practices which indicate the field of power relations of a particular discourse, is one of these authorities involving “*the rules and processes of appropriation of discourse*.”¹⁴⁸ Discourse is also a part of an “*economy of discursive constellation*” which “may in fact play the role for a formal system” and also designate the singularity of its domain¹⁴⁹. The most central one to this project, is the “*points of incompatibility*”, “*points of equivalence*” and “*link points of systematization*” which make up the “*points of diffraction*”. According to Foucault, *points of incompatibility* are

“two objects, or two types of enunciation, or two concepts may appear, in the same discursive formation, without being able to enter – under pain of manifest contradiction or inconsequence – the same series of statements. They are then characterized as *points of equivalence*: the two incompatible elements are formed in the same way and on the basis of the same rules; the conditions of their appearance are identical; they are situated at the same level; and instead of constituting a mere defect of coherence, they form an alternative: even if, chronologically speaking, they do not appear at the same time, even if they do not have the same importance, and if they were not equally represented in the population of effective statements, they appear in the form of ‘either...or.’ Lastly, they are characterized as *link points of systematization*: on the basis of each of these equivalent, yet incompatible elements, a coherent series of objects, forms of statement, and concepts has been derived (with, in each series, possible new points of incompatibility).”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 56-63.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 69-70.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 65-6.

In this light, it is observable that Gürbilek makes use of this analytical model in her approach to critiquing the cultural climate in Turkey. The transformations, which Nurdan Gürbilek reduces to ‘explosions,’ incited a new system of dispersion with contradictions unique to Turkey, living at the crossroads. These transformations have a function of “fragmenting and pluralizing culture at the same time.”¹⁵¹

“The fundamental cause of cultural fragmentation was the unraveling of modern identity as it had been constructed for Turkish society by the founding Republican ideology known as Kemalism. Kemalist ideology lost the ability it once possessed to hold differing identities together, whether by way of persuasion or force; in other words, it lost its promise of modernity, its competency in the realm of modernity, its monopoly on modernity.”¹⁵²

With the end of the violent and repressive period of the coup, emerged new media fronts which created new markets such as advertising that notably supported the transformation “into a consumer society, a society of images, a society of desire.”¹⁵³ Through these new fronts people were suggested and encouraged to speak more, and about issues they did not have the chance nor the avenue. Two strategies of power, one that was repressive, violent and prohibitive and the other that was “aiming to encircle by speech rather than silence, to transform rather than prohibit, internalize rather than destroy, tame rather than suppress”¹⁵⁴ started operating side by side. They “came into being each calling upon the other, each dependent upon the other for its effectiveness, each owing its legitimacy to the other.”¹⁵⁵

By the late 80s there was an “explosion of speech”¹⁵⁶, a fitting description of the rapid emergence and massive mediation of cultural production; explosion that came as a consequence, or in fact as a guaranteed promise of the repression of the coup. This explosion contained:

¹⁵¹ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p.80.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.8.

“a demand, a protest against the division of labour between the masters of culture and the masses – ordinary life’s rebellion against the elitist language working to overcome it, in a sense ordinary life’s demand to be culturalized – a demand by the local to express itself more forcefully in the cultural marketplace. Experiences, identities, the peripheral buried there, which had been able to exist within modern cultural identities only in repressed form, really did return in the 1980s with a giant bang.”¹⁵⁷

In the same breath, however, began a speedy categorization a consequence of this ‘explosion of speech’. These categorizations which included sexualities, the heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals, became objects for the new media markets¹⁵⁸. “Groups unable to express themselves within the founding Republican ideology began to speak, groups that had no place in the Kemalist modernizing design.”¹⁵⁹ These groups included all ‘minorities’ including and especially Kurds, Islamist, women and finally homosexuals as well. Therein

“emerged a society in which many things existed because they were shown and to the extent they were seen; they acquired value because they were seen; they acquired value because they were displayed and to the extent they were viewed. It changed the relationship we constructed with the city, especially Istanbul; Istanbul was transformed right before our eyes, step by step, into a site of spectacle.”¹⁶⁰

Istanbul as a ‘site of spectacle’ carries grave importance for marginalized populations, the abnormal, and the rejected. The spectacle allows people to hide behind it and disappear in its glory, escaping the spotlight or to become a part of the spectacle; both provide entrances to the field of the normal. This contradiction remains central to the lives of those who sway from the norm or the majority.

‘Living in a shop window’ is how Gürbilek defines this experience of living in Istanbul. “The resulting anxiety brought people to place an unprecedented distance between themselves and the people and things they viewed, and remain indifferent to them as they never had

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

before.”¹⁶¹ She continued: “people in big cities view unfamiliar things as a kind of game relieving boredom or distress.”¹⁶²

Once the first shopping mall was built in Istanbul, Gürbilek observes that it changed shopping behaviors. When it was “a natural part of city life into an end in itself”, it became a place to travel to; a place people can become “tourists in their own city – by completely wiping out the potential for constructing relations of familiarity with a place.”¹⁶³ As the shopping behaviors change, so do the selling behaviors; in fact they are in a circular relationship, feeding off each other and transforming each other according to the needs of the growing new markets. Advertising and mass marketing strategies take over the way shop keepers relate to its customers as well. Everything becomes a spectacle; sight gains a privileged status amongst the senses we use to travel along in a big city.

“On the one hand, a politics of silence prohibited use of the word ‘Kurd’; on the other, Turkey’s most famous arabesk pop singer in the 1980s was ‘The Emperor’ Ibrahim Tatlis, a Kurdish construction worker who rose to stardom to enjoy all the opportunities wealth in the big city could offer. Turkey’s famed transsexual singer Bulent Ersoy was banned for eight years, prohibited from singing in public; but popular news magazines stubbornly plastered their covers with homosexuals and transsexuals and invited them to confess all to the public. Freedoms were more restricted than ever before, but people had perhaps never felt so free; they tasted a freedom from institutions and the pleasure of surrender to this world, in short the freedom to consume to their heart’s delight.”¹⁶⁴

The provincial, the Kurd, the gypsy, whomever is in higher demand at the time; the abnormal freak, the cross-dresser, the transvestite, the fag... as long as they are on the shop window, part of the spectacle somewhere, they join in our national pride of multiculturalism, the selling point to the western tourist. Outside of that glass box, they exist, still in fear for life if not

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 6-7.

in economical poverty. Borrowing from Georg Simmel's definition of the stranger, Gürbilek writes:

“If the tourist is someone here today and gone tomorrow, the stranger is someone here today who cannot leave tomorrow, someone who cannot go back. This is the stranger in the city to whom arabesk calls. It is the music of those who cannot return to the village, who are no longer villagers but not yet city dwellers. But it is also the music of revolutionaries who spent long years in prison during the 1980s and could not return, when they got out, to the world they had left; music of men and women still imprisoned though set free.”¹⁶⁵

In order to deal with fear of the stranger, one either purges her or swallows and digest; making her alike oneself. According to Zygmunt Bauman this is the emergence of the modern day norm.

The site of spectacle also comes with the opportunities, and the ability to do things one wants to; the dreams she wants to fulfill (or the illusion that she can). Gürbilek does not touch on this in detail, however A.¹⁶⁶ and Ç.K.¹⁶⁷, when explaining their reasons for moving to Istanbul from Van and Diyarbakir respectively, both referred to the doors Istanbul opened up for them (or thought that it would when making the decision to move)¹⁶⁸. Ç.K. moved to Istanbul permanently only a year ago although she had been coming and going since 2005. She moved to the city alone with the funds from turning the gold she collected in high school into cash. She said she researched the life in Istanbul on the internet and thought about it in depth for seven or eight months before moving. There is a sense of pride and accomplishment in the way she tells her story of migrating. While our stories and circumstances are vastly different, I relate to the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶⁶ A. is a 31 years old Kurdish woman from Van. Identifies as a lesbian. She has been living in Istanbul permanently for the past 10 years, though she has lived in Istanbul on and off before that. She owns a lesbian night club in Istanbul. We met up twice. In the first meeting we talked about my project and a little bit about the club she owns. This was not a recorded conversation for I was only introducing my project, however she gave me invaluable insight even then. In the aftermath of our recorded interview, she took me to meet with a friend of hers where while waiting, we had another unrecorded however important conversation about her relationship with her ‘wife’ and their different approaches to their gender, sexuality and the relationship.

¹⁶⁷ Ç.K. is a 26 years old Kurdish woman from Diyarbakir. She had been coming to Istanbul for the past 5-6 years but have been living permanently only for the past year. Works as a host at functions, events...etc. whatever type of job the agency she works with sends her.

¹⁶⁸ The reluctance on pointing to the opportunities the homosexual and Kurds may appraise about life in Istanbul is a consequence of ‘white shame’; a condition we fall into while trying to deal with erasing the position of privilege we may hold.

sense of loneliness migrating creates and the uplifting feeling that comes after realizing that one overcame that or learned how to deal with it (or in my case accepted it as a condition and start enjoying). I listen to her intently, incidentally looking for overlaps.

The central reason for Ç.K. to move to Istanbul is her family. She felt that she cannot live the way she wanted to with her family. She has a very overbearing brother who does not give permission to her to work. She said that she could have had a great career as a hairdresser in Diyarbakir, which is not possible in the present conditions in Istanbul. Once she came to the conclusion that she can never live as a lesbian around her family and cultural surroundings¹⁶⁹ she decided to move.

A. has been here much longer than that. In fact her family initially moved from Van in 50s or 60s. She moved back and forth between Van and Istanbul pretty frequently, she said, because the family business was in Van. After her mother and father moved back to Van permanently, she decided to come back to Istanbul to go to college. “In a place like Van,” she said, “there wasn’t an opportunity to do the things I wanted to do.” “What were those”, I asked. She replied:

“Social activities. That is sports, music... it can be anything. None of these existed in Van. There wasn’t even a straight up place to get guitar lessons, or there wasn’t a place where I can play volleyball. Or I did not believe that Van was a place I could improve my writership.”

I asked whether or not she was able to do what she wanted to in the first place in Istanbul. She told me that she could not.

“Actually, in order to do self-criticism, to be serious about it... everything I was able to do I did in Van. If we compare the amount of books I read in Van to the amount in Istanbul there is a big big difference. Really, I continuously read books in Van. I was doing things. Although the means were limited, I was doing things. I was more active. Also, there is no transportation problem. You live with family. You don’t

¹⁶⁹ She came out to her friends in Diyarbakir a few months before our conversation but not to her family. She does not think that she ever will but also says that she knows they will never abandon her no matter what.

have the trouble of cooking, or earning money. Because you don't have anything to worry you can allocate all your time to yourself. After coming to Istanbul, of course the problem of earning money came up. The problem of transportation, the problem of staying alive... While trying to deal with these, little time is left to read a book, go to the movies. But still it's worth it. Because individual freedom is what freedom is. Individual freedom, and economic freedom. Once you gain these two, you are more comfortable, happier. I am happy that I was able to do these."

Before she opened up a lesbian night club, she worked as a columnist and a reporter for a newspaper in Van. She was also in a ping-pong team. In Istanbul she published a book and wrote articles for a couple magazines. She spent most of her time writing and going to school for Psychology before the club. After the club opened, she said she had very limited time to do many of the things she is interested in.

In the city the one that came later, the one that does not fit the norm experiences a permanent diasporic state. Gürbilek wrote:

"The language we call arabesk offered us sites where we could wander among others, without staying long. Just as these places could be tavernas or meyhanes, they could just as well be political demonstration marches or the 'evenings' 1970s' revolutionaries used to organize. Arabesk is where the before and after cultures of 'the person who comes today and stays tomorrow' are reconciled: both one and the other. And also the place which divides her whence she came and where she now remains, the place where she breaks away from her former culture and resists the new: neither one nor the other."¹⁷⁰

Through the 'language of arabesk' Gürbilek points to a change, particularly in the way people related to desire and the explosive expansion of "run on sex" to all spheres of society. Orhan Gencebay and Ibrahim Tatlıses are the two singers she uses to illustrate this transformation.

Gencebay rose to stardom in the early 70s, although his engagement with music started earlier on as a child. He received sophisticated classical and traditional Turkish music education,

¹⁷⁰ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*, p. 28

leading him to collaborate with various musicians from different genres. Honored as ‘big brother’ he carried on a persona that was solemn and low key. Ibrahim Tatlis is almost his antidote. Kurdish, uneducated, rose to stardom out of the urban waste, the construction site in the late 70s as an actor/singer. His eastern accent became a signature mark, so did his loose, restless energy. He became the king of arabesk in early 80s. “The deprived stepbrother forced for so long to take refuge in a big brother’s justice – crushed under his big brother’s desire, honour and weight – at last cried out: ‘Me too!’”¹⁷¹ Gürbilek wrote.

Gencebay sang “Let this world sink”, “I died at birth”, “Loneliness”, “Game of my fate”, “I couldn’t say”, “guilty conscience”, “shame on you”, “don’t touch”, “you are not alone”; he sang of the “ideal love”, of those lovers that never meet, of those love stories without happy endings, of honesty, of the brave heart, of the hopelessness against the cruelty of people, of this world, but also of the futures without troubles, the days that someone will see even if he cannot. Tatlis, on the other hand, sang “Am I not human?”, “Come on say it”, “Me too”; he sang of “full breasts”, of dark haired, dark skinned women with dark thick eye brows and also of blonde and blue eyed women, of declaring his love¹⁷².

“Gone was the narrative defining desire by the unqualified obstacle before it, thus imbuing it with a totalizing structure which transformed single desires into one great cultural demand, one all-out declaration of defiance (‘Let this world sink’, Gencebay sang). Single wishes, now no longer parts of a totalizing desire, could parade blithely in public, seeking out more concrete, realizable targets for the short term and, now with the luxury of representing only themselves, demand to be satisfied at once.”¹⁷³

Gürbilek used two songs to exemplify the difference in articulation. Gencebay’s “Let this world sink” and Tatlis’ “I want it too.” Gencebay begins his song reciting “For a more

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷² It is important to note here that the songs he released before the explosion of his stardom in the 80s showed similarity to Gencebay’s style. In this light we can also say he became popular with the songs that cried out desire in the 80s representing the transformation of enunciation.

¹⁷³ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 98.

beautiful, happier, just, loving world, for peace and humanity, let this world sing.” He declares his disappointment, his disillusionment with the world, with his fate. “Shame on the one who laughs as she makes the other cry,” he sings. He asks why more trouble and suffering should be his. He is stuck in his troubles, imprisoned by his hopeless love, unfulfilled desires. Tatlis, on the other hand, sings ‘me too’ as he laments how he does not have a lover like the other men. He sings “I also want those apple cheeks; I also want those cherry lips.” His desire has a body, a form. It is not lost in dreams; the dreams that Gencebay damns.

“One derives his energy from the fact that he is not given what he wants, and never will be in this world anyway. The other prefers to demand what he wants despite everything and takes all he can. One speaks with the gravity of desire impossible to satisfy; he stays on the side of transcendence, taking refuge in the dignity of patience. In the other we have the relief of satisfied flesh, of appetite relished before all the world, and finally of the admission that superficiality is not such a bad thing after all. For Tatlis, too, the city is woman; but both the forlorn, honourable male and the unfaithful unattainable female have long since become history. Now the male wants his share of all the bounties of this world, ‘cherry lips’, ‘rose-like breast’, and says so in public.”¹⁷⁴

This does not mean that the period of Gencebay is over and that of Tatlis began. Some of these songs were released around the same time. The importance is that in the aftermath of the coup, through Tatlis’ songs people can outcry their desires, shamelessly in public and with a popularized run on sex. Moreover, by reading these two examples of the same genre we can clearly see the contradictions revealed by the explosions, in this case explosion of desire that Gurbilek focuses on.

Post-1980 transformation in Turkey also settled a “private life industry” which came with a “promise of liberation,”¹⁷⁵ according to Gurbilek. She wrote: “private life opened wide its gates, as if it were freedom itself.”¹⁷⁶ This promise lies at the center of the paradox of modernity.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

Therefore, “it is within the framework of the new term *özel* that one must consider the explosion in private life which began in Turkey in the 1980s.”¹⁷⁷ Regarding the explosion of privatization/private life, Gürbilek wrote:

“Every repressive period, every constraint put upon the life of the street, the workplace, trade unions, political organizations or professional institutions, forces people to withdraw, into the home, into solitude, into the inner world. But what left its stamp on Turkey in this period was not this kind of inward turn, not a withdrawal into privacy. On the contrary, what had long been private was brought into the open; it was transformed into news, information, images.”¹⁷⁸

This shared promise of a better life of the politics of 1970s melted into the promise of a peaceful, liberated and private life. The new media markets speedily took their place in this transformation. “As private life expanded into the space left empty by politics, it found itself encircled by the most public of discourses – the language of news papers and news magazines, television and advertising.”¹⁷⁹ The empty space created by the disappearance of the ideal of building a better life with ‘strangers’, was filled with news reports on how the world outside, the public world that is filled with ‘strangers’ is full of danger. Suburbanization and the ‘rich-white flight’, gated communities, gentrification in touristic centers...etc. all emerged out of this illusion that what is private and sterile is safe and free.

This immediately created an outlet to deliberate limits regarding the ins and the outs of Turkish society. Nurdan Gürbilek identifies the period of 90s with another explosion: “explosion of Turkishness.”¹⁸⁰ This Turkishness Gürbilek works with and uses as the central figure in many of her critiques, is almost an embodiment of the contradictions she identifies as the way of living after the 1980 coup. She wrote:

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

“I speak of a double bind which was from the start shaped in relation to the modern world, a link of double engagement which has always produced antithetical emotions in the cultural sphere, of an abandon and summons to return to the self, an enthrallment and fear of losing the self, admiration of the foreign and xenophobia forced to live side by side in a single soul, a sense of inadequacy and grandiosity, victimhood and defiance, and finally a political-cultural milieu that persists in inciting those feelings. A fate which leads some in Turkey to think of themselves as ‘dandies’ and others as ‘provincials’, continually reproducing the native-foreign antinomy as a defence not only against the world outside but against the world within.”¹⁸¹

In his presentation at Istanbul Seminars 2010, Zygmunt Bauman deliberated on how “strangers are dangers”. He said, it is the uncertainty of their state of being that makes them “discomforting, distorting, disquieting”. They are not friends, nor are they enemies. The impossibility of reading their expressions empowers the fear that rises in ourselves when we are around them. He reiterated Georg Simmel’s definition of a stranger, “who is someone that comes today and does not go away tomorrow”, to signify the permanency of the change the stranger’s arrival brings. According to Bauman, there are two more important functions of strangers, which is part of what makes them dangerous, dealing with *doxa* and history. “Strangers undermine *doxa* because they ask questions that the native will not think about asking”. *Doxa* is unable to survive articulation. It disappears as soon as the question of ‘why are you doing what you are doing’ is asked. Strangers “undermine your certainty, your convictions” Bauman said. They question conventions and normalcy. Strangers also “erase history.” Because of their “proximity” to us, they, immigrants, make it easy for us to find the blame of our social, cultural, economical handicaps. We forget that before they came, these shortcomings existed.

Bauman asserted that “modernity developed two methods to deal with strangers”: eating them or vomiting them. He explained that the symbolic eating occurs with “eating up their differences; imbibing, digesting.” Therefore, “they become a part of our tissue, our way of being

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 15.

in the world.” Vomiting is done by either “removing them to the outside of the border” or “exterminating them”. But both methods in their own areas “collapsed.” Towards the end of his speech he gave an example of a relation to strangers in the format of a contemporary art installation by Miroslaw Balka at the Tate Modern Gallery in London¹⁸². Titled *How It Is*¹⁸³, the installation is of a

“giant grey steel structure holding a vast dark chamber, which in its construction reflects the surrounding architecture of Tate Modern – almost as if the interior space of the Turbine Hall has been turned inside out...Visitors can walk underneath it, listening to the echoing sound of footsteps on steel above, or enter via a ramp into its pitch-black interior.”¹⁸⁴.

Bauman commented that the blackness of the tunnel is “so black that it eats every shade of color” and that “you go two steps after the entry and you are lost.” He portrayed the environment as “maximum, extreme uncertainty.” And relayed that when the participants were asked how they felt, whether or not they felt more safe or more scared, their answers were ambivalent: “They underlined both aspects of the matter. Yes I felt frightened I felt other people around me I was very reassured.” These “hopelessly strange people” become a source of comfort. If we read this chamber as analogous to the city, then that momentary reassurance strangers feel together is the moment of emergence of spore-like and impermanent ‘safe spaces’ for marginalized populations. Some of the most striking examples of these ‘safe’ spaces have been the ones by

¹⁸² Exhibited as part of The Unilever Series at the Tate Modern Turbine Hall from October 13 2009 to April 5 2010. Miroslaw Balka, *How It Is*, 2009. Tate Modern

¹⁸³ In his own rendition of the sculpture, the artist says: “The title is *How It Is*. The inspiration came from Samuel Beckett, the story of him who is crawling in the mud. The mud is a kind of purgatory. In my sculpture the darkness will hold the function of purgatory. People can walk in it. Slowly step by step you start to touch darkness. You will come to the border where you have to say if you want to go farther or not. And touching the subject of disappearing to create the question mark “how far I can go?” ———, “How It Is,” Tate Modern, <http://channel.tate.org.uk/media/47872674001>.

¹⁸⁴ The exhibition is described on the website for Tate Modern as followed: “How It Is alludes to recent Polish history – for example, the ramp at the entrance to the Ghetto in Warsaw, or the trucks which took Jews away to the camps of Treblinka or Auschwitz. By entering the dark space, visitors place considerable trust in the organization, something akin to the risks often taken by immigrants travelling. Balka intends to provide an experience for visitors which is both personal and collective, creating a range of sensory and emotional experiences through sound, contrasting light and shade, individual experience and awareness of others, perhaps provoking feelings of apprehension, excitement or intrigue.” “The Unilever Series: Miroslaw Balka,” <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/unilevermiroslawbalka/default.shtm>.

and for LGBTT people. They are not only safe but also subversive at times; and allow for experiences of relationalities that are transformative.

III. THE TROUBLE WITH SEX

**“In its most serious manifestations, the sexual system is a Kafkaesque nightmare in which unlucky victims become herds of human cattle whose identification, surveillance, apprehension, treatment, incarceration, and punishment produce jobs and self-satisfaction for thousands of vice police, prison officials, psychiatrists, and social workers.”
(Gayle Rubin¹⁸⁵)**

It is made inevitable with mechanism of modernity that the increased interest in sex and sexuality as objects of scientific and public discourse, social constraints and legal limitations exist together. In fact they are in a symbiotic relationship with each other. Where one can speak about sex, who can speak and with what terminology, to whom and which kind of sex are all managed by this relationship. Foucault places this “problem of truth” and the “interplay of truth and sex”¹⁸⁶ to the center of his study and the 18th and 19th Centuries as the period in which they were seeded. Gayle Rubin, like Foucault, identifies the late 19th Century as a time period “in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized” creating consequences that continue to haunt us. The “nineteenth-century moral paroxysms”, she wrote, “have left a deep imprint on attitudes about sex, medical practice, child rearing, parental anxieties, police conduct, and sex law.”¹⁸⁷ The following two examples specific to the conceptualization of women’s body in order to illustrate this point.

The word ‘vagina’ was first used in the English language in 1682 to signify women’s genital canal, taken from the latin word *vagina* which meant sheath. Translator for Pierre Dionis (French surgeon and anatomist) is quoted by Mary Fissel saying that vagina “receives the Sword of the Male, and becomes a case to it, and therefore is call’d the Vagina, that is to say, its

¹⁸⁵ Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." p.22.

¹⁸⁶ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p.57.

¹⁸⁷ Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." p.4.

Sheath”¹⁸⁸. Previously called the ‘neck of the womb’, an important part of woman’s reproductive system was converted from being a part of her body, to being an extension of a man’s. This shift delineates that with the emergence of modernity, conceptualization of women and femininity took a different turn. This is not to say that women were not oppressed, controlled mythicized and devalued previously, however rise of development of the nation-state, birth of anatomy as a medical field, and the spread of Cartesian dualism which opened up the way for femininity and masculinity to be placed at binarily opposing corners have been exceptionally powerful in constructing contemporary conceptualization of ‘being a woman’.

Additionally, Linda McDowell asserts that “women are seen as closer to nature, as irrational, as polluters, as sacred but as inferior because they menstruate and because of their ability to bear children”¹⁸⁹. Lactation and menstruation which sets women apart and signifies the ability to bear children is also a secretion of the body; an impurity; a period of pollution. “There were connotations of powerful pollution connected with the new mother, who might cause grass to die if she stepped on it in her un-churched state” in the seventeenth century. “Women were churched” one month after they give birth¹⁹⁰. Similar examples of the mysterious and destructive power of women is cited by Mary Douglas as well in *Purity and Danger*:

“When pregnant, a Lele woman tries to be considerate about not approaching sick persons lest the proximity of the child in her womb causes coughing or fever to increase.

Among the Nyakyusa a similar belief is recorded. A pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of grain she approaches, because the foetus in her is voracious and snatches it. She must not speak to people who are reaping or brewing without first making a ritual gesture of goodwill to cancel the danger. They speak of the foetus ‘with jaws agape’ snatching food, and explain it by the inevitability of the ‘seed within’ fighting the ‘seed without’.

‘The child in the belly . . . is like a witch; it will damage

¹⁸⁸ Mary Fissel, "Gender and Generation: Representing Reproduction in Early Modern England," in *Sexualities in History*, ed. Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay (New York: Routledge 2002). p. 112.

¹⁸⁹ Linda McDowell, "In and Out of Place: Bodies and Embodiment," in *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). p. 44.

¹⁹⁰ Fissel, "Gender and Generation: Representing Reproduction in Early Modern England." p. 111.

food like witchcraft; beer is spoiled and tastes nasty, food
does not grow, the smith's iron is not easily worked, the
milk is not good.'
Even the father is endangered at war or in the hunt by his wife's
pregnancy”¹⁹¹.

Menstrual blood is also considered as part of a marginal state, just like the fetus. “If the blood had not flowed it would have become a person, so it has the impossible status of a dead person that has never lived”¹⁹². The person in this state, dangerous, ‘marginal’, ‘indefinable’, uncontainable, ‘inaccessible’, unattainable, and ‘inarticulate’; the fetus, the woman that carries the fetus, the woman that pollutes with her secretions are “controlled by ritual which precisely separates her¹⁹³ from her old status, segregates her for a time and then publicly declares her entry to her new status.”¹⁹⁴ To understand pollution, and the states of impurity, Mary Douglas, asserts that these rituals must be explored. The marginal being is constituted with a certain kind of power, unattainable for those who stay within the boundaries of society. The (dangerous) powers they are exposed to on the outside, as they are sent away ritually for being outcasts and also for initiation into manhood, have the potential to kill them, or to recast them as normal¹⁹⁵.

Since then, “the discourse on sex has been multiplied rather than rarefied; and that if it has carried with it taboos and prohibitions, it has also, in a more fundamental way, ensured the solidification and implantation of an entire sexual mosaic.”¹⁹⁶ Here we must return to Gayle Rubin. In “Thinking Sex” she commented on the need for a development of “a radical theory of sex.” Such a framework has the duty to

¹⁹¹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1984). p. 96.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁹³ Mary Douglas refers to the person with a masculine pronoun in her own writing to generalize the condition of being marginal, even though she writes this sentence after using feminine conditions as an example of marginality. For the purposes of this paper the pronouns are replaced with feminine ones.

¹⁹⁴ Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. p. 97.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 96-97.

¹⁹⁶ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 53.

“identify, describe, explain, and denounce erotic injustice and sexual oppression. Such a theory needs refined conceptual tools which can grasp the subject and hold it in view. It must build rich descriptions of sexuality as it exists in a society and history. It requires a convincing critical language that can convey the barbarity of sexual persecution.”¹⁹⁷

She then proceeded to analyze systems of knowledge and thought that stops this progress in its tracks; rendering the project almost unimaginable. She wrote “these assumptions are so pervasive in Western culture that they are rarely questioned.” Sexual essentialism; sex negativity; fallacy of misplaced scale; hierarchical valuation of sex acts; lack of benign sexual variation are the titles under which she developed her thought of what needs to be removed from our common consciousness in order to engage critically with gender and sexuality.

In “Blood Under the Bridge” Gayle Rubin focused on the elements of significance during the time she wrote her acclaimed article. These describe the urgent points in the formation of strategies regarding sex and sexuality. In the introduction, I focused on one of them, “the paradigm shifts then taking place in the study of sexuality” in order to describe the parallel framework I am using in this project. Following will be a summary of the other two elements, “the feminist sex wars”¹⁹⁸ and “the lurking menace of the socially conservative Right, which was gaining increased influence over policy, public discourse, state bureaucracies, and the legal regulation of sexuality in the United States.”¹⁹⁹ This will allow me to set the stage to describe parallel tensions present in Turkey.

Rubin explained the timeline of attacks on her as follows:

“The opposition began a few years before the Barnard conference and continued for more than a decade after. There were some early and, in comparison with later events, relatively mild episodes in the Bay Area in the late 1970s. For example, around 1979, I was scheduled to make a presentation about Michel Foucault on a panel for an informal Marxist – feminist discussion group in Berkeley. Several antiporn members of the

¹⁹⁷ Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” p. 9.

¹⁹⁸ ———, “Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on “Thinking Sex”.” p.15.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.17.

group felt I should not be allowed to speak. After a campaign to have me removed from the panel failed, those opposing my participation boycotted the discussion. In another incident, a local group of gay and lesbian leftists imploded over having invited me to participate on a panel discussion of political differences and similarities between lesbians and gay men.”²⁰⁰

Part of the feminist sex wars took place at The Barnard Sex Conference where she presented this essay for the first time. The anti-porn activists took issue with some of the topics to be presented in workshops, such as “pornography, S/M, and butch/femme — the anti-pornographers’ counterpart to the New Right’s unholy trinity of sex, drugs, and rock ’n’ roll”²⁰¹ and staged an attack on the conference with protests outside of the building and leafleting. Rubin identifies the misinformed attacks on the conference and the content of the workshops one by one in order to problematize a certain attitude within feminism that installs its own morality demanding coherence, and unity based on essential and universal properties of womanhood and manhood and claiming that certain types of sexually pleasing behavior are and can only be tools for female subordination.

Those of us who are studying gender and sexuality in an era that is identified as post-feminist, albeit under false pretenses, would not be shocked to read these accounts. In fact, the amount of the accounts of similar experiences is what made possible the emergence of the critique of feminist theory and its assumption that “there is some existing identity, understood through category of women.”²⁰² But this is not simple business. It is because of that I take ‘contradiction’ as central to the existence of women, both in the flesh and as a conception. It is an inescapable experience, at least for those of us who have been an operative part of Western Civilization, whether in the center or the periphery.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 16-7.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁰² Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. 2.

Women as an identity category enables political representation. Though limited to the field of normalized and conventional politics, it had legal gains which made possible a certain level of protection from systematic discrimination and violence. At the same time however, it perpetuates exactly what the problem was in the first place, the “heterosexual hegemony”²⁰³:

“On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. For feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women. This has seemed obviously important considering the pervasive cultural condition in which women’s lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all.”²⁰⁴

Invisibility of and the misconceptions on women’s sexuality, and the lack of proper documentation is one of the main reason I decided to problematize forms of normalization in relation to experiences and practices of women-loving-women. According to Teresa de Lauretis lesbian representation is linked to sexual *indifference* more than it is to sexual *difference*. More to the point, “in the phallic regime of an asserted sexual difference between man and woman”²⁰⁵ same-sex desire between women is incomprehensible unless viewed with the lens of *indifference*.

““Sexual difference” is the term of a conceptual paradox corresponding to what is in effect a real contradiction in women’s lives: the term, at once, of a sexual *difference* (women are, or want, something difference from men) and of a sexual *indifference* (women are, or want, the same as men).”²⁰⁶

Female sexuality generally constitutes a negative space. Universal destiny of motherhood, and the common treatment of female sexuality not as a part of herself but as an

²⁰³ Ibid., p. xiii.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁰⁵ Teresa de Lauretis, “Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. David M. Halperin M.A.B. Henry Abelove (NY: Routledge, 1993). p. 142.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

object of benefit, and desire for the ‘masculine’, reproduces layers and layers of issues that overarches even the possibility of women-loving-women. Often their existence is not conceptualized enough to be the discarded as immoral, abnormal, perverted, sick...etc. At times it even escapes the disciplinary domain. Female homosexuality “is less the subject of prohibition than of an incredulousness that would deny the space of its possibility”²⁰⁷. Lesbians and bisexual women often disappear from the discursive realm. When they do become visible, it is either considered a phase or a game to satisfy a heterosexual male fetish. This is how female homosexuality differs from male homosexuality. Annamarie Jagose stresses that with the declaration of the difference between the prohibitive practices toward ‘perverse’ sexualities she does not intend to differentiate either burden as the bigger of the two. She writes that both experiences create conditions that “are different tropes for securing a reinforced sense of the licit and the allowable”²⁰⁸. While there are overlapping experiences and practices, and it may even serve as a good political strategy to stand as a united front in some cases, historical, cultural and social singularity of women who love women, and their peculiarities should be considered separately, and in detail so that these differences are not eradicated like they are in the dominant discourse.

Gender deviance is the only way that renders the lesbian visible. In the modern dualist gender system which places masculinity and femininity at opposing corners, any sign of transgression of the codes and roles, which depend on location and historical moment, begets curiosity and pretends to immediately grant insight into the daily life and sexual practices of people. While this can be used in order to facilitate lesbian visibility, and increase the likelihood of the meeting of women who like women, it perpetuates the heterosexual hegemony, and the

²⁰⁷ Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and Logic of Sexual Sequence*. p. 3.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

systematic disciplinary function of gender and sexuality. “Masculinity has persistently been the definitional ambit that enunciates the lesbian as spectacularly visible, lesbianism conventionally becoming legible through female masculinity’s perceived clash of codes”²⁰⁹.

This project itself is situated within this contradiction in addition to the ones it must decipher in the contextual specificity of the cultural climate of Istanbul. With that acknowledgment, it is possible to interrupt and disengage with the constraints of patriarchy, heterosexual hegemony and that of feminism, which mostly failed to account for female homosexual desire, shaping the discourse on our bodies. In her criticism of a current in feminism that universalizes patriarchy, Judith Butler wrote:

“The notion of universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. Where those various contexts have been consulted within such theories, it has been to find “examples” or “illustrations” of a universal principle that is assumed form the start. That form of feminist theorizing has come under criticism for its efforts to colonize and appropriate non-Western cultures to support highly Western notions of oppression, but because they tend as well to construct a “Third World” or even an “Orient” in which gender oppression is subtly explained as symptomatic of an essential , non-Western barbarism.”²¹⁰

It is not surprising that this current of feminism which also contains an ever present tension towards politics of sexuality continues to prevail in Turkey for, as we see with Nurdan Gürbilek’s analysis of the cultural climate, Turkey has its own West and own Third World within its borders. Western centric arrogance in evaluating women’s issues, which takes male oppression and violence towards women as primary, establishes eastern backwardness (lack of education, excess of traditional and non-secular values therefore lack of modernization) as the source of these issues. Butler remarked that “feminist critique ought also to understand how the

²⁰⁹Ibid. p. 3.

²¹⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p.5.

category of “women,” the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought,”²¹¹ along with seeking ways to increase political representation. In order to be represented, Butler argued that the subject, in this case women must be constituted in terms of an exclusion, meaning that there must be others that do not fit this representation and therefore excluded in order to legitimize women as a subject. “These political operations are effectively concealed and naturalized by a political analysis that takes juridical structures as their foundation.”²¹² Moreover, “the effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms.”²¹³ Therefore, it remains to be meaningful to take on Butler’s suggestion to “entertain a radical critique that seeks to free feminist theory from the necessity of having to construct a single or abiding ground which is invariably contested by those identity positions or anti-identity positions that it invariably excludes.”²¹⁴ The instability of assumed coherence of identity based on sexuality, and the multiplicity, transformation, reinvention and reincarnation in women’s behaviors become transparent with an analysis of in depth interviews. Therefore, in this project, I will be looking at approaches that preserve the ‘feminist’ tag as well as those that remain in constant tension with it (queer theory) while keeping in the center a general critique of identity categories and politics that utilize it.

The efforts to discuss these tensions and transgressions fell victim to a strand of feminism that betrays women more than it liberates. The one thing that could have prevented, or at least weaken and delegitimize the attacks on the Barnard sex conference, as Rubin explained, was a long document the planning committee prepared called *Diary of a Conference*, was not released

²¹¹ Ibid., p.4.

²¹² Ibid., p. 3.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 18.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

to the attendees at the conference because the Barnard administration collected and destroyed them out of fear²¹⁵. Minutes from the planning meetings, the program for the conference, a descriptive list of the speakers for the workshops and blank pages for the attendees to take notes were included in this diary, which “was designed to be an archival document, not only of the planning process but also of the day itself.”²¹⁶ More importantly the organizers intended for transparency in the planning and to create intimacy between the organizers, the speakers and the attendees:

“The speakers were asked to send in some kind of graphic to be used as the image on the front of the postcard. The image could reference the workshop topic, but, in the spirit of a diary, it could also be something personal or even merely something each speaker found meaningful, interesting, visually compelling, or amusing.”²¹⁷

These types of practices are the earlier examples of a certain reflexive attitude, and efforts that try to break the authoritarian nature of the relationship between the speaker and those who are spoken to, providing a chance to interact somewhat openly, and exchange feelings (which later became the differentiating characteristic of the field). The feminist sex wars did not allow for an exchange of this kind to occur at the time of this conference. Some of the participants were “singled out for special condemnation because of their allegedly “unfeminist” sexual behaviors or political opinions”²¹⁸ which included Gayle Rubin herself. The accounts of the conference that screamed for its condemnation, and that of the organizers, the speakers and the college for allowing it to take place were unsurprisingly successful in their sensational and dramatic call for moral panic; leaving a legend that overshadowed the significance of this conference in the transformation of the field, as well as contributing to the distress and agitation

²¹⁵ Rubin, "Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"." p. 24.

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 20.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

of those scholars we now praise for opening up a field celebrating transgressions. “Zealotry and unprincipled behavior were acceptable in the service of ‘protecting women.’”²¹⁹

Her insistence on drawing a map of the field and the transformations within reveals how inseparable academia is from politics, especially in the case of sexuality studies. She writes: “While academia did not nurture the early gay and sexuality scholarship, there was nevertheless a dense intellectual and social network that did.”²²⁰ In fact, every scholarship that engages in a critique of forms of normalization in general, and specifically those that document LGBTTT beings and their practices must keep in mind their relationship to politics.

Late eighteenth, early nineteenth century is “the moment where it became understood that it was more efficient and profitable in terms of the economy of power to place people under surveillance than to subject them to some exemplary penalty.”²²¹ While it is necessary to be cautious when using analysis of western culture as a theoretical skeleton for societies that do not fit the operational definition of ‘western’, this critique of modernity and conceptualization of sexuality is significant for the case of Turkey, specifically considering the urban life in Istanbul. What may be problematic is using the idea of confessions for there is not a history of confessions in Turkey as a dominating religious practice. However, Nurdan Gürbilek demonstrated that in the wake of the coup in 1980 what Foucault analyzes as the inheritance of Christian confessionals becomes a part of the discourse on sex as well. She wrote: “what is striking in the Turkish case is that people in a society to which the religious culture of confession is alien would

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

²²⁰ Ibid., p.19.

²²¹ Foucault, "Truth and Power." p. 38.

have been so ready to speak frankly, so lacking in resistance to that modern strategy's interpellation."²²² Confession, according to Foucault:

“plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell.”²²³

The ‘explosion of private life’ in the aftermath of the coup made possible sexuality to explode as well. “Only when sexuality is named as a dark, secret region of life can people be called to bring it out into the light of words.”²²⁴

Foucault lists the mechanisms through which confession became the norm in scientific, legal discourse and then became a part of our daily lives. He identifies 5 mechanisms that employ procedures that valorize the practice of confession for the good of the individual or the society as a whole. These become habitual and performative, constraining our thoughts, disabling us to conceptualize any other way than being out with ‘it’.

Confession became required for clinical observations in order to get to the truth to make correct diagnosis and all the ways to make it happen becomes acceptable “through a clinical codification of the inducement to speak.”²²⁵ The results of the confession is to lead to the treatment of what is ‘wrong’ with the person. Sex is then “placed under the rule of the normal and the pathological.”²²⁶ This solidified inseparability of sexuality from medicine. “Deemed capable of entailing the most varied consequences throughout one's existence”²²⁷ sex became the source of all troubles in an individual's life and those who surround her. Sex is treated as the force that turns the axis of evil. “The limitless dangers that sex varied with it justified the

²²² Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 41.

²²³ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 59.

²²⁴ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 35.

²²⁵ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 65.

²²⁶ Ibid., p.67.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

exhaustive character of the inquisition to which it was subjected.”²²⁸ Sex is defined as evading transparency by nature not only to the observers, but also to the person under observation: “the ways of sex were obscure; it was elusive by nature; its energy and its mechanisms escaped observation, and its causal power was partly clandestine.”²²⁹ Therefore, the questioner the scientist, the doctor had to laboriously make the confession of this secret happen. “The principle of a latency essential to sexuality made it possible to link the forcing of a difficult confession to a scientific practice. It had to be exacted, by force, since it involved something that tried to stay hidden.”²³⁰ With the shift from religious and juridical use of confession to the scientific the observer, the person who receives the confession loses authority to provide anything back to the confessor other. Instead he becomes the impartial entity, backed by science, to produce truth. By extracting information and then revealing the truth in it by interpreting, deciphering it, the listener becomes “the master of truth.”²³¹

“By no longer making the confession a test, but rather a sign, and by making sexuality something to be interpreted the nineteenth century gave itself the possibility of causing the procedures of confession to operate within the regular formation of a scientific discourse.”²³²

Sexuality, “situated at the point of intersection of a technique of confession and a scientific discursivity”, which are held together by specific mechanisms deciphered above, is a domain

“susceptible to pathological processes, and hence one calling for therapeutic or normalizing interventions; a field of meanings to decipher; the site of processes concealed by specific mechanisms; a focus of indefinite causal relations; and an obscure speech (*parole*) that had to be ferreted out and listened to.”²³³

This is how this domain, sexuality, and the way we experience it, come into being.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 66-67.

²³² Ibid., p.67.

²³³ Ibid., p.68.

Gürbilek identifies forms of power in relation to the emergence of sex into the discursive field as a regime in the way Foucault conceptualizes. To solidify her argument she gives an example of a television program called “*Chronic Depression*” in which the moderator invites clinical professionals to speak on the issue of homosexuality as well as homosexuals to speak of their experiences. Therein exists these forms of power at the same time, possibility of which arrived with the period of transformation after the coup²³⁴. The pervert who was made visible in public, on television, is brought to ‘confess’ his wrongs in the hands of the moderator who “used the prohibitive discourse we had come to expect of traditional forms of power.”²³⁵ At the same time he is placed under medical observation and confirmed to have something wrong with him. The ill being, with nothing he can do about his condition, “his misery”²³⁶ speaks of his condition which fluctuates in the same place as something to be prohibited to something to be cured. There is the prohibition, confession, and medicalization all in the same place.

All in the same period, Gürbilek writes, articles that discuss sexual fantasies of the readers, aestheticizing experience” emphasizing an individualistic attitude are published side by side with the publicity material for sex therapy centers’ medical services for the treatment of “‘Premature Ejaculation’ and ‘Sexual Frigidity’” in weekly magazines²³⁷. “Speech illuminating regions once left in the dark, and thereby thought to be freeing, now carried out the surveillance function itself, independent of any authority wishing to know.”²³⁸ She does identify a difference between the West and Turkey:

“In the West, the history of the lifting of the veil from private life was accompanied by the transformation of that zone into an object of systematic, analytical, institutionalized knowledge. The medicalization of sexuality was one of its most striking expressions; sexuality was made

²³⁴ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*. p. 37-40.

²³⁵ Ibid. p. 39.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

the subject of a discipline. But in Turkey, however much the specialists who tried to medicalize sexuality, defining what was normal and what not, were able to make their voices heard in newspapers and weekly magazines, most of them who saw society as a body to be rehabilitated did not hesitate to offer their disciplines in service to the state.”²³⁹

I am in partial disagreement here with Gürbilek, which I think is caused by this essay having been written initially in 1992 and recently translated to be included in this collection. Because while what she says is consistent with some cases of anti-homosexual remarks, there are specialists now who do medicalize sexuality and see that homosexuality can be rehabilitated as a business venture apart from the state.

In her article “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case” Deniz Kandiyoti indicates that the analysis to be done on the relationship of Islam and a specific society must be done in relation to “its broader political project.”²⁴⁰ According to Kandiyoti, the uniqueness of Turkey lies primarily in the fact that Turkey has not experienced colonization through which the colonizers would have justified and valorized their actions referencing the emancipation of women from the heavy hand of Islam. Referencing Sirin Tekeli’s “Women in Turkish Politics” essay she wrote;

“Sirin Tekeli has suggested that women's rights have played a strategic role both against the political and ideological basis of the Ottoman state and in terms of establishing proofs of “democratization” vis-à-vis the West. She argues that singling out women as the group most visibly oppressed by religion, through practices such as veiling, seclusion, and polygamy, was absolutely central to Atatürk's onslaught on the theological state which culminated in the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. (The Caliph was the worldly representative of the Prophet Mohammed. The last Ottoman Sultan was also the last Caliph.) Tekeli interprets the timing of the legislation on women's suffrage in the 1930s, on the other hand, partly as an important attempt on the part of Atatürk to dissociate his single party regime from the European dictatorships of the

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁴⁰ Deniz A. Kandiyoti, “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case,” *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987). p. 321.

time (Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy). In contrast to the "Kinder-Küche-Kirche" ideology of these fascist states, Turkey presented itself as a country electing women to its parliament and thereby symbolically claimed its rightful place among other Western democratic nations."²⁴¹

With the adoption of Turkish civil code in 1926, an imitation of the Swiss Code, polygamy was outlawed; equal rights were given to both partners in the case of a divorce including in manners of child custody. Women were able to vote in local elections in 1930 and in nation elections in 1934²⁴². As Kandiyoti points out these were advances made not through and out of the struggle of women (like the women's suffrage movement) but as a part of the modernization project of the state.

Women's struggle in Turkey did not start in the 80s however the scale of activism grew exponentially, country wide campaigns and mass movements emerged and systematic documentation and archiving efforts gained voice, strength and recognition. The campaigns around which women assembled were predominantly those that problematized violence against women. Various feminist groups formed, as well as women's branches of leftist parties and/or organizations.

"The 1980s were years when feminism advanced in Turkey, when women made more efforts to develop a language of their own and complained that woman was a being without a name; but the domain known as womanhood was more besieged by a politics of speech than ever before, named as a new domain and in a sense discovered."²⁴³

In the beginning of the 90s the anti-militarist and anti-war mobilization began. Then came the "Saturday mothers" who demanded information on their loved ones who disappeared under police custody. After the latest headscarf ban in the late 90s, emerged a movement that demanded the removal of the ban which was faced with a front that included a great deal of

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 320-321.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 320.

²⁴³ Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window.*, p. 12.

women who supported the ban, in the name of women's rights. In the same time period we see the emergence of organizations focusing on LGBTTT issues. I separate the history of the LGBTTT movement in Turkey from the feminist movement because even though the conditions that made these mobilizations possible, and a lot of the demands that are generated from both are the same if not linked, in the majority of feminist circles *eşcinsel* people were ignored, excluded or both. Not only that but also there are no politics of sexuality established within the women's movement in Turkey. "Through feminism we talk about violence, but we don't really talk about our sexuality. We describe the body of women vis-à-vis violence of men," said B.²⁴⁴ She continued to explain that because there are no politics of sexuality, there also are not any mechanisms of resistance specific to sexuality. Another important problem she observed through her volunteer experience in both feminist and LGBTTT is the formation of normativity within these organizations. It is a condition that they cannot overcome, she said.

In that normativity, the trouble is with sex: sex as behavior, sex as the random condition that we are born with; that takes over our entire spectrum of relationships. The International Working Women's Day celebrations and demonstrations in Istanbul; the organization and the execution along with the issues that arise in the aftermath provide an exemplary event to present the way metanarratives of gender and sexuality operate in general in feminist organizations and the tensions that arise from it.

A day before 8th of March 2011, an activist who identifies as a trans woman (SS.) made a public post on facebook of her wish to join the night march and the issues that were raised regarding her attendance. In her case, any use of gendered pronouns is insincere. She is pre-op

²⁴⁴ B. is 34 years old. Identifies as bisexual. She lived in Istanbul on and off since she was 18; when she and her family moved to the city for her college. After undergraduate education she moved to the States for her Masters and Phd. then to England for her post-doc. She moved back for field work for a total of a year and a half in between however it was not until 2009 that she moved back permanently. She now teaches at a private university.

with no intent for any operation, even intake of hormones. She uses two names; one assigned generally to men and the other to women. She sometimes goes with facial hair and does not intend to engage in any hair removal process for any part of her body unless she wants to. This creates one of the biggest issues. When she appears with a beard, she directly enters a field where she has to prove herself as a transwoman. In her note she asked, which waxing center she should go to in order to be in solidarity with women, or which dress she should wear to hide that she has a penis. Her discontent is caused by the rule that the night march must be women only. After many criticisms trans women were included however there always have been an issue of groups of women telling men or those who 'look' like men to leave the march. The proof of one's gender goes through a cisgender profiling system. One passes as woman only if they carry what has been established as feminine aesthetics. Anything seemingly masculine, for example short hair, baggy clothes, and in SS.'s case facial hair is a reason to be doubted and discharged from the field of solidarity. SS. questioned directly for how long must she verify that she is trans, pointing to the hard coded normativity surrounding gender and sexuality in mainstream feminism. E.²⁴⁵ told me in our interview that in this same march there were even accounts of trans women being asked for their IDs to see whether or not they carry pink ID cards which indicate that they are post-op.

The issue raised here regarding the March 8th night walk in 2011 is not specific to that year, nor to that walk (and definitely not to this geography). What is significant for 2011 is that there has been a great deal of discussions around this issue and working groups emerged problematizing feminism from within, especially since the women's commission. SS. joined the walk that night with a poster that read 'Never my beard', a play on words with 'Never my soul.'

²⁴⁵ E. is 20 years old. Identifies as bisexual, "but at the same time queer. I would like to be a part of that umbrella term," she said, and added "but because we still do its politics and because all of our definitions are different, I cannot yet say 'I'm queer'". Studies law at a private university. Was born in and has been living ever since in Istanbul.

She walked along with others that carried posters saying ‘My orchard, I’ll have it spade; my pussy, I’ll have it groped,’²⁴⁶ and another one that read “The feminism I like the most is transfeminism.”

Transfeminism studies was one of the things that a new initiative of women and trans began working on for the past year. One of the texts that they worked on was “Transfeminist Manifesto” written by Emi Koyama²⁴⁷. Emi wrote:

“*Transfeminism* is primarily a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond. It is also open to other queers, intersex people, trans men, non-trans women, non-trans men and others who are sympathetic toward needs of trans women and consider their alliance with trans women to be essential for their liberation.”²⁴⁸

Transfeminism is about reforming existing feminist institutions in order to make them inclusive of trans people. This movement claims and seeks the protection of 1) The right to self-identify and express one’s gender with the expectation of respect and inclusion from society, and without the threat of violence; and 2) The integrity of own body and the “sole right to make decisions” about it without intrusion from any state, medical and/or religious authority²⁴⁹.

“When we make any decisions regarding our gender identity or expression, we cannot escape the fact that we do so in the context of the patriarchal binary gender system. Trans women in particular are encouraged and sometimes required to adopt the traditional definition of femininity in order to be accepted and legitimized by the medical community, which has appointed itself as the arbiter of who is genuinely woman enough and who is not. Trans women often find themselves having to “prove” their womanhood by internalizing gender stereotypes in order to be acknowledged as women or to receive hormonal and surgical interventions. This practice is oppressive to trans and non-trans women alike, as it denies the uniqueness of each women.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ In Turkish it read: ‘*Bağ benim belletirim; Am benim elletirim*’. When I told E. how much I enjoyed the walk that night, especially the colorful posters that began to problematize body politics and sexuality, she said that this particular one created an incredible uproar amongst mainstream feminists, the organizers of the walk.

²⁴⁷ Published in Dicker R, Piepmeyer A, eds. *Catching A Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*. It is also made available online at Emi Koyama’s website: <http://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf>

²⁴⁸ Emi Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” <http://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf>. p. 1.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

What is most important in this manifesto to me is the positioning against the idea of genuinity, realness, authenticity of womanhood (and therefore manhood)²⁵¹. For transfeminism, multiplicity in the ways of being and expression must be celebrated. In fact in this manifesto it is underlined as what will liberate all of ‘us’. The questioning of the ‘realness’ of a being or how much it conforms to the proposed ideal type of that category is approached as being oppressive. Moreover, transfeminism provides criticism of radical feminism of the 70s emphasizing their disregard for race and class differences in experiences of oppression. In that they emphasize the intersectionality of these issues. This vision echoes that of Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* and her focus on performativity and her later conceptualization of precariousness and the necessity of solidarity. As I read through the manifesto I am reminded, again, of her comments regarding feminism:

“The premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipator purposes. Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from “women” whom feminism claims to represent suggest the necessary limits of identity politics. The suggestion that feminism can seek wider representation for a subject that it itself constructs has the ironic consequence that feminist goals risk failure by refusing to take account of the constitutive powers of their own representational claims. This problem is not meliorated thorough an appeal to the category of women for merely “strategic” purposes, for strategies always have meanings that exceed the purposes for which they are intended. In this case, exclusion itself might qualify as such an unintended yet consequential meaning. By conforming to a requirement of representational politics that feminism articulate a stable subject, feminism thus opens itself to charges of gross misrepresentation.”²⁵²

With that said, I am highly doubtful that problematization the *Truth* telling mechanisms out of which emerge material for ‘representation’ and the metanarratives regarding gender and

²⁵¹ “*transfeminism* holds that nobody shall be coerced into or out of personal decisions regarding her or his gender identity or expression in order to be a “real” woman or a “real” man. We also believe that nobody should be coerced into or out of these personal decisions in order to qualify as a “real” feminist.” Ibid., p. 2.

²⁵² Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. 7.

sexuality is possible without a) also problematizing the issue of liberation and b) “taking over existing feminist institutions.”²⁵³ In the end of the manifesto, Emi Koyama wrote that “it is essential for our survival and dignity that we claim our place in feminism, not in a threatening or invasive manner, but in friendly and cooperative ways.”²⁵⁴ While I appreciate fully the critique transfeminism present, I find this position very naïve. When one is up against hardcoded mechanisms rendering us docile, escaping that and at the same time transforming a field that exists within the limits of these mechanisms, it is not likely to be less than bloody.

The working group who focused on this text, *İllet*²⁵⁵, emerged out of the council of women and trans people that formed as a part of the 2010 Pride Week organizing committee, who prepared a brochure titled “Between Women” which was distributed during that week and remained as a reference booklet for the interested. This brochure was originally prepared by the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL) and translated directly by this council not only to bring awareness to love and sex between women but also to go beyond the ordinary, heteronormative understanding of sexualities and intimacies of women. Desire and pleasure centralized; multiplicities and possibilities underlined; language uncensored; this thirty-seven paged brochure remains as the sole example of such an unapologetic, celebratory, sex-positive writing in Turkey²⁵⁶. One by one this brochure eliminates myths about women’s sexuality, specifically focusing on intimacies and sex between women. It specifically

²⁵³ Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto”. p. 9.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p.9.

²⁵⁵ “*İllet* is an autonomy in which lesbian, bisexual, trans-women and trans-men come together,” explained B. It is “defined as a pleasure and resistance autonomy” because it does not focus on activism, lobbying...etc. but more on performance and literature. It formed to fill the need to do “politics of sexuality.” She added that it is a group that problematizes “the relationship between feminism and queer, feminism and sexuality, queer movement and sexuality, both corporeally and theoretically.” Their first workshop was in Eskişehir in 2010 although the group is based in Istanbul. Since then they have been mostly working on literature review and transfeminism studies; feministival, a women only festival week in Istanbul; and workshop developing for the pride week.

²⁵⁶ Although there has been fanzines, their circulation has been highly limited; remaining in particular circles.

addresses women who are aroused by other women however its approach resonates the sex-positive, queer outlook; rendering it not exclusive to women-loving-women.

I would like to switch focus now to the mainstream socio-political climate in Turkey and its slippery relationship to those who practice ‘aberrant’ sexualities. While Turkey was going through its integration into the global capitalist market in the aftermath of the coup, at the same time it was being integrated into the global minority rights discourse through which both the market and the people benefited. The double edged sword of the conventional rights based activism entered the cultural climate with its objects of discourse, articulations, concepts and strategies.

The past decade represent a great deal of efforts collected under the ideals of liberation and democratization. The notion of “minority rights” has been in the center of this mobilization which is experiencing what seems like its peak moment now; with overlapping moments of crisis. The removal of the headscarf ban in the universities which was issued in 1989, the demands to be made concerning the Hrant Dink murder trial, acceptance of Armenian genocide, women’s rights all around but predominantly focused on violence, the removal of forced military service, the coup leaders to be brought to trial, hate speech and hate crimes, education in mother tongue which is only one of the demands of the Kurdish movement, LGBTT rights lobbying primarily about the entrance of ‘sexual orientation’ into the anti-discrimination law...etc. All of this has only one enemy: dominating mentality that is patriarchal, and nationalist. The calls for solidarity, however, between these single movements have not been answered as it was hoped. (Though there still are assemblages of people, ‘weird’ alliances forming around these calls for rights).

On March 7th 2010, a day before International Working Women's Day, an interview with Selma Aliye Kavaf, minister of state responsible for Women and Family Affairs, was published in a newspaper in order to create a profile. In this interview, Kavaf said "I believe that homosexuality is a biological defect, an illness."²⁵⁷ These comments coming from a minister of state received stormy reactions and responses. Below is a listing of publicized reactions that are significant to the discussion of limitations to alliances between rights based activism.

- All LGBTTT organizations staged protests immediately, and called her out to apologize. Some of these protests involved spectacular carnivalesque presence.
- LambdaIstanbul and Pembe Hayat took Kavaf to court, accusing her of insulting LGBTTT people, and encouraging the public toward hatred and hostility. This was supported by fifty-two organizations and political parties, including many of the feminist and socialist organizations, Human Rights Association, Turkish Doctors Legion...etc²⁵⁸.
- A woman representative from the leading political party AKP (Justice and Development Party), same one Kavaf belongs to, Nursuna Memecan criticized her fellow party member²⁵⁹. So did the minister of health.
- BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) co-chair Gülten Kışanak and a representative from CHP (Republican People's Party of Turkey) Çetin Soysal demanded that she apologized from *eşcinsel* people. They both stressed the struggle for equal rights of LGBTTT individuals and that the demands should be heard by everyone²⁶⁰.

²⁵⁷ Faruk Bildirici, "Eşcinsellik Hastalık, Tedavi Edilmeli," Hürriyet Pazar, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/pazar/14031207.asp?gid=59>.

²⁵⁸ Bawer Çakır, "Lambdaistanbul da Kavaf'ı Mahkemeye Verdi," Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/lambdaistanbul_da_kavafi_mahkemeye_verdi.

²⁵⁹ Ali Ekber Ertürk, "AKP'den Memecan, Kavaf'a Tepki Gösterdi: "Talihsiz Sözler"," Akşam http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/akpden_memecan_kavafa_tepki_gosterdi_talihsiz_sozler.

²⁶⁰ Bawer Çakır, "BDP ve CHP: "Kavaf İstifa Etsin!"," Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/bdp_ve_chp_kavaf_istifa_etsin.

- Pyschiatric Association of Turkey Istanbul Chapter president Doğan Şahin also criticized her by commenting: “according our knowledge today, there are absolutely no data indicating that homosexuality is an illness.”²⁶¹ In the same news report, founding member of Kaos GL, the LGBTT organization from Ankara, Ali Erol, said “Aliye Kavaf is neither a medical professional, nor a psychiatrist. With what capacity is she diagnosing that homosexuality is a biological defect.”²⁶²

It appears without saying in this last comment, formation of sex as an object of knowledge, and the medical discourse’s formation of object. A psychiatrist mentions ‘data’ valorizing its authority in terms of making judgments. An activist identifies the *authorities of delimitation* which are qualified to cast that judgment. Both enunciate these truths to counter systematic anti-homosexual disposition, forgetting all too soon that scientific ‘data’ did show homosexuality to be a defect and an illness and it were the ‘medical professionals and psychiatrists’ that collected and produced the interpretation of that data just decades ago. It is forgotten that:

“The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses-or what's in their heads- but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth. It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself.”²⁶³

We hate modernity for objectifying our ‘bodies and pleasures.’ We love modernity and the discourses that emerged through it for now we can be verified, valorized and valued. We hate

²⁶¹ "Kavafa Tepki Yağdı. Utanç Verici, İstifa Etmeli," Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/kavafa_tepki_yagdi_utanc_verici_istifa_etmeli.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Foucault, "Truth and Power." p. 133.

norms. We love to declare how we are not abnormal. We hate contradictions. We exist day in and out within them, voluntarily.

One of the reasons that Kavaf's remarks received such a large scale adverse reaction is that she is a representative of the state revealing the previously unspoken anti-homosexual attitude loud and clear. A minister of the state suggesting that homosexuality is a condition to be treated is alarming when one considers its effects on policy making. At the same time, one must not expect a state minister 'responsible' for women and family, meaning the protection of family and the fertile part of the procreation, the women, to be pro-homosexual. As long as sexuality is reduced to procreation and procreation reduced to the sustainment of the institution of family, and family becomes a duty of the state, we are bound to exist in this tension²⁶⁴.

On the other side of the road, twenty-two mainly Islamist organizations gave a press release in full support of her remarks and even expanding the argument by explaining three arguments regarding homosexuality:

- Homosexuality is not natural. "it is a deviation from biological nature." And that the lack of knowledge in public regarding homosexuality will lead to those with homosexual leanings to be left without help and untreated.
- Homosexuality is an orientation.
- Homosexuality is not an illness, however it is also not normal. This is proved by "solid facts" indicating that there are "most homosexual couples do not want their kids to be oriented this way" and "most women do not choose homosexual partners."²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ In the following chapter, with the introduction of Foucault's *deployment of sexuality*, I will further develop the centrality of family to the problem with sex.

²⁶⁵ "Kavafa destek: Eşcinsellik bir hastalıktır! ," Dünya Bülteni Haber Merkezi, <http://www.dunyabulteni.net/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=108742>.

For the sake of self-reflexivity I feel responsible to note here that when I read this last point, I did abandon all aspects of professionalism in my first reaction. While I still cannot figure out where these ‘solid facts’ came from, and how women not choosing homosexual partners verify the abnormality of homosexuality (women do in fact choose homosexual partners which is exactly the point of this project), the theoretical framework describing heteronormativity was what calmed my nerves.

They solidify their argument at the end by saying that homosexuality is an immoral condition and a sin according to Islam and other divine religions (which are Christianity and Judaism, the only monotheistic religions that Quran accepts) and that as a service to humanity one must stand against the spreading of this abnormality²⁶⁶.

LambdaIstanbul took legal action against the signing parties of this statement to court accusing them of insulting *eşcinsel* people, and encouraging the public toward hatred and hostility. However, the public prosecutors dismissed the case, “evaluating it as freedom of opinion”²⁶⁷. LGBTT organizations distributed this decision via a news report by ANF News Agency. While the news report that does not involve an argument regarding freedom of opinion, the title of the article with the use of ‘-müş’, pluperfect tense, indicates the disagreement with the ruling. In fact, these types of responses came from all around declaring that these remarks do not fit ‘freedom of opinion’ or ‘freedom of speech’ because they show homosexuals as targets. There will always be limits to human rights, exceptions for groups of people demarcated according to which discourse they abide by, as there will also be limits to freedom of speech, creating a tension between these never ending elements or states of exceptions.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ "'Eşcinsellik Hastalığıdır' Sözü Düşünce Özgürlüğümü!," ANF News Agency; Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/escinsellik_hastaliktir_sozu_dusunce_ozgurluguyumus.

This discussion did not end with Kavaf and the supporting press release of the aforementioned letter. On April 3rd 2010²⁶⁸, Hilal Kaplan, a woman Islamist intellectual and a columnist who is known for her strong criticism of the project of modernity in Turkey especially regarding the unfair treatment of Islamists and the headscarf ban, wrote an article which created an environment more or less nullifying whatever bond there was between the freedom to headscarf movement had with the LGBTT rights organizations. Her article was a follow up on the arguments Kavaf's remarks created. Identifying herself as a "Muslim social scientist", she claims that her intent is to present her criticisms regarding the Islamic and the secular discourse regarding the issue. At the end of the article however (and with her further commentary as the controversy unfolded) we can clearly observe that this discursive analysis, and critique was neither her intention, nor end product.

She pointed to the contradiction between the skepticism Islamists have towards Western concepts and their use of the same concepts to declare homosexuality as an illness. Following her criticism we can easily notice her knowledge of Foucault, though with limited and perverse understanding. She commented that the production of knowledge regarding psychiatry and psychology are not free of relations of power. Then she added,

"therefore homosexuality that was once viewed as troubling by relations of power, as homosexual doctors gained power in medicine, and also as it was understood that the incorporation of homosexual life practices into life is not a threat to capitalist production and power relations, homosexuality was removed from the abnormal/pathological category."

These categorizations, according to her, are dependent upon the contingency of that which has power, and therefore we must interrogate these relations before coming to a judgment. First of all, she interprets Foucault's conceptualization of power wrong. Power is not a one way street. Power is everywhere and comes in all directions and not just in a dominating fashion. And

²⁶⁸ Hilâl Kaplan, "İslâm ve eşcinsellik meselesi," Taraf <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/islam-ve-escinsellik-meselesi.htm>.

secondarily, I have to say that she does make a good point about the gains of identity politics in LGBTT activism, and the possible reasons for it. We should not kid ourselves. If we really were a threat that cannot be subdued, we would all be in chains. What she does not realize is that homosexual practices did not need to be integrated into public life. Sex has not been private the way she would like it to be since the emergence of confession.

According to Islam, Kaplan wrote, homosexuality is not an illness, it is a sin. She questions the Islamists who call it an illness on the basis of this ‘fact’: “Is the field of legitimation the concept of sin opens up insufficient?” She maintains that for a Muslim homosexuality can only be discussed in terms of Islam. In which era we stayed this loyal to one discourse, I wonder. And I wonder too, has it ever been possible to clearly separate different discursive fields? If Foucault’s analysis of discursive formations was not enough to make this point, in the next chapter a discussion of *deployment of sexuality* will present a clearer picture.

Muslims struggle for the removal of any temptations for sin, including homosexuality, she wrote; but they must do this in strategies that Islam provides for them. Muslims cannot use the “degrading and excluding” judgments like “illness”, because their duty is to strive to help those who are trying to eliminate the impulse to ‘act’ on homosexual urges. She criticizes the aforementioned letter for legitimating the violent attacks to homosexuals. These attacks and murders are just as grave sins as homosexuality, she wrote. Therefore as someone who is concerned with all things that can bring harm to society, she stands against the struggle for citizenship rights of homosexuals or their demand for legitimacy. But at the same time, because of the same reason she stands against the violence they suffer for being homosexuals. What she really means is that “it is in their nature and they cannot help it.” That should sound familiar to those of us who follow LGBTT rights activism. “God created me this way” or “I did not choose

to be gay” are awfully common quasi self-affirmative declarations. They are only different expressions of the same thing; coming out of the same discursive formation. Tuna Erdem, in her article, wrote that these types of declarations that define sexuality in terms of reproduction, sexual relationships in terms of normative family unities and *eşcinsellik* in essentialist terms are in fact a part of assimilationist politics on the part of LGBTT organizations. She added:

“Certainly, it must be kept in mind that in Turkey there are many lgbtt organizations, these organizations adopt different positions and that in these organizations there can be differences of political views. However, notwithstanding all these differences, there is no doubt that essentialist definition of *eşcinsellik* is accepted altogether. Handling *eşcinsellik* as an unchangeable fact, reacting immediately to the use of the term ‘sexual preference’ are amongst the foundational reflexes of this politics.”²⁶⁹

In fact, we were able to observe clearly these ‘reflexes’ in the responses developed towards Kavaf and Kaplan. On a personal note, once I was even accosted for saying “our sexual choices” by a LGBTT rights activist.

Going back to Hilal Kaplan, at the end of her article, she moves onto the secular responses Kavaf received. She nullifies the insult of homophobia, for she prefers to be called homophobic rather than being against God. Fair enough. But isn’t she forgetting how anti-homosexual attitude is as systematic as the anti-Islamic attitudes? Instead of discussing the systematic similarities of the rule of fear regarding homosexuals and Muslims in society, she chooses to focus only on the reaction that went something like ‘they don’t have to support us as long as they don’t speak much.’ She resents that seculars, and these are the also socialists, liberals, anarchists, feminists, are fine with Muslims when they agree on points of racism,

²⁶⁹ Erdem, "Hizadan Çıkmaya, Yoldan Sapmaya, ve Çıkıntı Olmaya Dair." p. 14.

nationalism, capitalism...etc. However, when it is an issue that they do not agree about, they are asking Muslims to not speak.

Hilal Kaplan and I seem to agree on many points, including this one. Though the agreements I have with her on all her points are followed by many significant 'but's. This one is the most crucial one. It is true that there is a trend in Turkey that demands those we do not agree should stop speaking. Censorship is engraved not just in law but our cultural relations and political criticisms as well. However, to say that homosexuality is something that one must stand against because it is a sin, to say that a Muslim must do everything she can to eliminate avenues for homosexuality to become legitimate, is just another way to say "you should stop talking." Once you declare that you are against my relationship to my body and pleasures, we cannot come to the same table, ever. She ended her article with a claim that to be able to live together we must not erase our differences and that we must not silence each other. I agree again. However, with this article she slammed that door shut.

When the alliance involves an organization that lobbies for the LGBTT rights, or when the solidarity is needed to speak up against anti-homosexual remarks of a minister of state and a newspaper columnist things become slippery; those who normally stand by any other discrimination and minority rights issue disappear. At the same time, with this fracture, we started seeing the anti-Islam stance in the LGBTT movement growing and getting louder. People felt threatened, and betrayed. While religion and homosexuality has never and can never form a total alliance, at least in the political arena the discourse surrounding the rights of the mistreated, the waters were mostly calm, especially like Kaplan said, when we agreed on what we were going to fight against.

The second Hilal Kaplan incident was where everything broke loose. DurDe, an initiative against racism and nationalism, wanted to organize an international conference problematizing hate crimes in April of 2011. They suggested that for the panel on islamophobia, Hilal Kaplan should attend as a speaker. Once the program of the conference was out, all hell broke loose. A monumental social media organizing pressured the initiative, criticizing them for “including a homophobic writer in a conference against hate crimes,” demanding that she is removed from the program. Unfortunately the arguments turned into a tangled mess, reproducing islamophobia, on top of outrageous claims that accused Kaplan of causing trans-murders with what she wrote. Her words were declared a hate crime. It did not end there. Sex and sexuality was once again presented as our true essence. Medicine and psychiatry was once again valorized as the authority to legitimize our experiences. Multiple sexual experiences were held under one identity, equivalent to ethnic identities. Our pleasures were once again surrendered in the name of our ‘rights.’

DurDe, for the reason that they, much like the rest of the left leaning and feminist organizations, do not centralize sexuality in their problematization of the cultural climate denied that Kaplan’s article was anti-homosexual. Otherwise she would not have been invited in the first place to a panel titled “Politics of hate: Islamophobia, Antisemitism, Nationalism”. They did include a panel on “hate crimes against sexual orientations and organizing problems of LGBTT individuals”, however it protected its status as a side issue. After the reactions they asked Hilal Kaplan not to participate and published an ‘explanation’ regarding the issue. In that they wrote:

“For the reasons that the theme of the conference constitutes a topic of grave importance that requires serious responsibility in front of the public; carries an importance beyond persons and institutions and so that

a shadow is not cast over the events, we found it necessary to change the program.”²⁷⁰

There was absolutely no acknowledgement of the root cause of the reactions against Hilal Kaplan and why she was not fit for the panel in the first place. Neither was there an acknowledgement, since the planning of the conference, that the issue of sexuality is one of the constitutive element of the modern nation-state and that it cannot be separated from anti-racist, anti-nationalist forums, especially when the topic is hate-crimes. Until we all admit that politics of hate can also be politics regarding sexuality, we will never be able to form strong alliances in our precariousness.

Though it should not go unnoticed that there was a case Islamophobia that roared out from within the reactions against Hilal Kaplan crisis version one and version two²⁷¹. In Western feminist analysis, Kandiyoti wrote, there is a “tendency to treat Islam as a unitary ideology as a unitary ideology from which practices related to women can be automatically assessed in any given Islamic society.”²⁷² Turkey is a special case in this manner, as Nurdan Gürbilek pointed out, Turkey has constructed a west and an east from within. “Specificity of Islam”²⁷³ is highly complex and a highly contested subject for Turkey. Every analysis, liberationist, Islamist, or modern Kemalist, remains incomplete, contradictory and exclusionary.

²⁷⁰ “Kamuoyuna Açıklama,” *İrkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe DurDe Girişimi ve Sosyal Değişim Derneği*, <http://www.durde.org/2011/04/kamuoyuna-aciklama/#more-3278>.

²⁷¹ Although we talked about it separate from the context of Hilal Kaplan crises, E. mentioned that she fears the current political climate in Turkey (much like B. as an answer to my question on their fears and anxieties) pointing to the overwhelming and increasing presence of religion in the government. She fears that this may even lead to the inception of the shariah law. “There is a new, interesting term ‘the anxious modern’ however I think that the leftists need to start looking at the current politics already. I am not a Kemalist, militarist or nationalist but I am afraid that religion will rule us. For example I can’t go to shows anymore. We are supposed to carry six guns.” In that she refers to new laws increasing the age limit to enter places where alcohol is served and relaxing the gun permit. In our off record conversation, we touched on headscarves. She started out very stern, saying that she thinks that a headscarved woman has no business in law school. Once I presented her with counter arguments, showing her how her position overlaps with those who are anti-homosexual as it points to discrimination based on phobia, she remarked that there is a lot she needs to think about. Her comments regarding this issue calls attention to a) the presence of opposing political views in LGBTT and feminist organizations and b) how common the discrepancy between one’s self definition (queer and anarchist in her case) and their behavior is.

²⁷² Kandiyoti, “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case.” p. 317.

²⁷³ Ibid.

The case of Zenperest²⁷⁴ in this project and the Hilal Kaplan ‘trouble’, combined with the silence of those who are for freedom of religious expression and the relief of the discrimination and suppression imposed by the project of modernity Islamists in the face of Kaplan’s commentary for fear of perpetuating an islamophobia and the diverse responses out of LGBTT organizations, show a moment of crisis and point to a serious inadequacy of all paradigms. The case of Zenperest is especially important for the cultural climate for nothing and no one can categorize and conceptualize this woman and her practices or the lack there of her sexuality. Her body, her actions, her attitude leads to a collapse of meta-narratives that surround this country; indicating another way of analysis one that has never been tried and I dare say a queer critique can only make possible.

Zenperest wears a headscarf; has been since high school. Her family is part of a well known religious community; in fact live in a characteristically Islamist county in Istanbul. She, on the other hand, has been living away from her family since high school. First, she lived in the dormitories of her high school and now she lives in a house she rents with her friends. She characterizes her family as “not that restricting”, “very free.” She said that her religious belief is something that she formed herself. The way her family approached religion is that they feel responsible for teaching them, she and her two sisters, however they never forced either one of them to do anything; including wearing a headscarf. “For example my sister is open,” she said meaning she does not participate in *hijab*. Zenperest started wearing headscarf and participating in *hijab* the day after the high school exams. “It’s a new environment, I wanted people to know me this way. It was something I wanted. I was influenced both by Islam and by the community.”

²⁷⁴ Zenperest found her nickname herself. In Ottoman Turkish, she explained, it means obsessed and/or addicted to women, a womanizer, and immoral person. She was impressed that it is a word used for men and wanted to use it as a nickname regularly to bend the gender orientation of the word. She is a 21 years old undergraduate student of English Literature in a state university. Identifies as lesbian. Was born and have always lived in Istanbul. She has been wearing a headscarf since she was 15.

She postponed it worrying about what people would think. Same with *eşcinsellik*. She is only out to a couple of her friends outside of the activist groups; one of whom is gay. She regards her *eşcinsellik* as something

“between the creator, the Allah I believe in and myself. If I am going to be held accountable for it, it is I who is going to do it. Because this is my point of view, I am at peace with myself; I exist very comfortably. If that weren’t the case I wouldn’t have come out to neither the LGBTT groups nor anyone else.”

She thinks that accepting yourself means “saying it out loud.” When I asked her why this is not the case for heterosexuals (or women who do not wear headscarves) she said that “that is already a given.”

“It is necessary to get in front of the mirror and say it. For example I am a lesbian but I am headscarved. This points to an opposition; lesbian but headscarved. Lesbian and headscarved? This also does not unite. I am an headscarved lesbian, for example, becomes something that puts the two together.”

She places being a lesbian to a more important status. Headscarf in this description of herself becomes an adjective; almost a secondary component. At the same time she said “if I had discovered myself, I wouldn’t have taken this step, because headscarf necessarily becomes something bounding.” Then, I asked her, why do you still practice *hijab*, what still grabs you in this way of living? She replied: “There are many things that renders a woman attractive. I don’t show men myself. I reduce the things that render me attractive. I already do not want them to find me attractive. Also, it gives me peace to do something I know I should.”

This inevitably brought me to ask her about Hilal Kaplan and what she thought about the whole ordeal. At the time of our conversation, the second crisis had not emerged yet. She said she was not aware of the problems that arose a year ago; she did not even know Hilal Kaplan at the time. When I explained her the problem in short, she evaluated it as “even this is a step.” She thinks that it is important because it was not something that was not talked about previously in

Islamist circles. But she does not refrain from saying that she does not agree with her. She reminded me of another headscarved woman columnist, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal. Amidst the crisis surrounding Hilal Kaplan and the imposition of ‘Islam against homosexuality’ as a unitary position for everyone as if all Islamists and all headscarved women carried this judgement, Tuksal’s column on the necessity of solidarity was forgotten.

In 2010, Women’s Rights Organization Against Discrimination (AK-DER)²⁷⁵ began a signature campaign demanding the abolition of headscarf ban. Kaos GL, in order to show solidarity with the campaign (and all others against discrimination and violence as they articulate²⁷⁶) Kaos GL sent a signature in a united front. Once they were informed that some groups found the presence of their signature troubling, they removed it. Following that Tuksal wrote a column regarding the issue. In that she mentioned her gratitude towards many people, especially those that assumingly went against their social and/or social networks. Kaos GL received a special ‘thank you.’ She wrote:

“They supported this campaign as an institution however they removed their signature after the demand was related to them in the name of the campaign. It is praise worthy, their support and their removal of the signature without feeling the need to gossip. But I have to indicate that I find this demand directed at them unjust and discriminatory. No campaign, especially one such as this can select or eliminate their signatories.”²⁷⁷

She added: “There are many people on this list who are even against both religion and headscarf which is a religious command. But they are on this list in order to support this right, to stand against a discrimination.” She ended her column stressing the necessity to be in solidarity,

²⁷⁵ “Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği”

²⁷⁶ “Birlikte Pismeye Kuşkusuz İhtiyacımız Var,” KaosGL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/elbette_birlikte_pismeye_ihtiyacimiz_var.

²⁷⁷ Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, “Birlikte pismeye ihtiyacımız var!,” Star Gazete, <http://www.stargazete.com/yazar/hidayet-sefkatli-tuksal/birlikte-pismeye-ihtiyacimiz-var-haber-247547.htm>.

applauding Kaos GL for not quarrelling in the face of this adversity. “We have the need to ‘cook together’ for a more democratic country.”

Her column began a positive dialogue wherein Yasemin Öz, lawyer and a feminist and LGBTT activist wrote a thank you reply as a witness to the issue on the part of Kaos GL. She reiterated the anti-discrimination position of Kaos GL since its inception and that specifically for the headscarf issue the organization makes it a part of its politics because it “creates constraint and regulation over women’s body.” She explained that Kaos GL approached this issue and some others that they came together with the knowledge of differing opinions and tensions when it comes to religion and *eşcinsellik*. However after hearing about the trouble the signature caused the people in AK-DER (they received overwhelming pressure from groups that can not abide by groups like Kaos GL, including removal of support), they removed their signature in order to prevent further issues. AK-DER suggested that if they do decide to remove their signature as an institution, they can stil sign individually and add that they are affiliated with the group. In fact, after her personal conversation with a lawyer from AK-DER, Fatma Benli, where they discussed the situation summarized above, Hilal Kaplan and another representative from AK-DER also approached Öz mentioning they feel sorry that the signature was removed in the face of the adversity, and talked about continuing the discussion in a different, common ground²⁷⁸. Öz’s article, written before Kaplan crisis version one, presents the wish to come together in solidarity with Islamist organizations in the face of any and all discrimination. Hidayet Tuksal, in her column following week mentioned Öz’s article thanking her and also apologizing for miscommunicating that it was AK-DER who asked for the removal of the signature. The reason that I refer to the the aftermath of Hilal Kaplan’s article and the situation with DurDe as crises is due to the halting effect to the efforts of finding common grounds or ways to create a solid

²⁷⁸ "Birlikte Pişmeye Kuşkusuz İhtiyacımız Var".

presence organizationally in solidarity against constraints and regulations, mainly, of the state. Though perhaps it exemplified the impossibility therein. Sex as long as metanarratives persevere, will continue to cause us *trouble*.

IV. ARE YOU A LESBIAN?

**“Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.”
(Michel Foucault²⁷⁹)**

Originality, realness, authenticity... we are not strangers to these concepts. These demands, which are mainly of the market but have spread out contagiously to all fronts of cultural creations and activities, are foundational to the emergence of the modern subject. Metanarratives surrounding gender and sexuality operate the regulatory and reproductive mechanisms with these demands as well. There is an original woman and an original man. There is a woman like a man (climbing up the corporate ladder), there is man like a woman (stay at home dad). There is the ‘other’ woman like a man (lesbian), and the ‘other’ man like a woman (gay man). There is the former man, now woman (post-op MTF) and then there is the former woman, now man (post-op FTM); passing so ‘successfully’ as their new identities that it ‘shocks’ you. Then there are the demands to fit these categories, to choose one and perform it along the rules set up in a particular society at a particular time. This performance spawns out of “the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself.”²⁸⁰

Moreover, according to Judith Butler’s conceptualization of performativity of gender and sexuality “is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal

²⁷⁹ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 105-106.

²⁸⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. xv.

duration.”²⁸¹ The position I would like to maintain in this chapter is that there is no original woman, no original lesbian; just authenticity in the shape of singularities of women-loving-women.

Yasemin Öz in her testimonial account of the experiences in the everyday life of a lesbian²⁸² explains that as a consequence of heterosexual hegemony as a teenager she felt the need to be male-like. A woman to woman sexual interaction was unimaginable for her, and therefore to legitimize her desire to be with a woman she thought she had to be a man, even though she says “I had no internal desire to be a man and I had no problems with my body”²⁸³.

According to Jagose:

“This liminality is enforced in relation to both the masculinization of desire and its lightning rod, the phallus, and a sex/gender system everywhere underwritten by the alleged self-evidence of the visual difference that enables heterosexual complementarity. Less an absence than a presence that can’t be seen, the lesbian marks the sexuality’s cultural visibility, the barest registration of her possibility in the field of the visible not a failure but a strategy of representation in the maintenance of the ideological bulwark of gendered and sexual hierarchy”²⁸⁴.

In her own analysis of her everyday experiences, underlining the importance of some kind of a community, Yasemin Öz writes that it was meeting other ‘sexual deviants’ which allowed her to define her sexuality, in turn pushing her to think about gender, sexuality and the binary oppositional categories therein, power, domination, and control mechanisms including what Foucault called ‘the government of the self’. Her realization of the effects of these mechanisms being in control at every sphere of her everyday life lead her to make sense out of the internalization process of discipline. She gives examples of how she censored herself during

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. xv.

²⁸² Öz, Yasemin. “Görünmezlik Kısıracından Lezbiyenler.” Ed. Nil Mutluer. *Cinsiyet Halleri: Türkiye’de Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Kesişim Sınırları*.

²⁸³ Ibid., 204.

²⁸⁴ Jagose, Annamarie. *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and Logic of Sexual Sequence*, 3.

conversations about lovers and husbands or when talking about homosexuality in public. The most striking of her verbalization of her experiences as a lesbian woman is when she points to the intersections of gender and sexuality. It is the dress code regulations that seems to have signified her experience. After coming terms with her sexuality, she stops dressing like a boy. However the “disciplinary mechanisms on women” she writes “taught me within which boundaries I can wear clothes that displays femininity”²⁸⁵. Masculinity that is internalized by some women amongst lesbians and practices that she defines as ‘denial of self’ amongst homosexuals made her think more about womanhood and as a reaction she stayed away from clothing that signified masculinity. However later she learned that wearing a tie communicated to others that one was ‘out’. Being a ‘femme lesbian’ made it problematic for her to make her sexuality visible in public to both heterosexuals and homosexuals, because women who have sex with women are assumed to be male-like due to the mistaken correlation between gender and sexuality. A femme lesbian can only “enter the frame of vision *as or with* a lesbian in male body drag.”²⁸⁶

Practices of sexuality, according to Foucault,

“is constituted from and around certain forms of behavior: an experience that conjoins a field of knowledge [*connaissance*] (with its own concepts, theories, diverse disciplines), a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from monstrous, normal from pathological, what is decent from what is not, and so on), and a mode of relation between the individual and himself (which enables him to recognize himself as a sexual subject amid others)”²⁸⁷.

At the point of intersection of knowledge, power and subjectivity are the mechanisms that emerged in eighteenth century marking a change in the conceptualization of sex which continued to develop in the same axis.

²⁸⁵ Öz, Yasemin. “Görünmezlik Kıskaçından Lezbiyenler”, 205.

²⁸⁶ Lauretis, “Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation.” p. 155.

²⁸⁷ Foucault, “Preface to *History of Sexuality*, Volume Two.” *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume I: Ethics*, 200.

“Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for regulations. This is why in the nineteenth century sexuality was sought out in the smallest details of individual existences; it was tracked down in behavior, pursued in dreams; it was suspected of underlying the least follies, it was traced back in to the earliest years of childhood; it became the stamp of individuality – at the same time what enabled one to analyze the latter and what made it possible to master it.”²⁸⁸

The mechanism, albeit evolved, that continue to operate on our lives are *hysterization of women's bodies, pedagogization of children's sex, socialization of procreative behavior, and psychiatrization of perverse pleasure*²⁸⁹ which gave rise to power relations that Foucault assembles under *deployment of sexuality* which was “superimposed” on another system, one that is “of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions.”²⁹⁰

In order to begin a critique of these mechanisms, there needs to be an analysis of power one that is no longer maintained in the monopoly of law is incorrect and suggests that “it is this image that we must break free of, that is, of the theoretical privilege of law and sovereignty, if we wish to analyze power within the concrete and historical framework of its operation. We must construct an analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code”²⁹¹. He rejects the representation of power as what he names “juridico-discursive”²⁹² which dates back to the emergence of “public law” in the Middle Ages²⁹³. The understanding of power as repressive is rooted, and nurtured in the deployment of public law. In order to accomplish an analysis of a “domain formed by relations of power”²⁹⁴, he asserts that we must first rid ourselves of this

²⁸⁸ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1., p.146.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 105.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p.106.

²⁹¹ Ibid. p. 90.

²⁹² Ibid., p.82.

²⁹³ Ibid., p.87.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.82.

notion of power. He lists five primary characteristics of this representation of power which are the five main oppositions he uses throughout his analysis of Western Civilization and modernity.

In this analysis, the relation between power and sex is always negative. It is constituted by “rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage, concealment or mask,” producing experiences of “limit and lack.”²⁹⁵ Sex is placed in a system and an order, dictated by power. It is surrendered into a mechanism that categorizes sex in binaries of “licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden” and a legislative hold maintained through the articulations of “a rule of law”: “The pure form of power resides in the function of the legislator; and its mode of action with regard to sex is of a juridico-discursive character.”²⁹⁶ The articulation therein brings about prohibition and censorship; punishment emerging as a tool to wipe out what is illicit regarding sex. Prohibition demands that you “renounce yourself or suffer the penalty of being suppressed; do not appear if you do not want to disappear.”²⁹⁷ Moreover, censorship:

“links the inexistent, the illicit, and the inexpressible in such a way that each is at the same time the principle and the effect of the others: one must not talk about what is forbidden until it is annulled in reality; what is inexistent has no right to show itself, even in the order of speech where its inexistence is declared; and that which one must keep silent about is banished from reality as the thing that is tabooed above all else.”²⁹⁸

Lastly, in this representation of power there is a conception that it “is exercised in the same way at all levels”; uniform and endless²⁹⁹. This conceptualization of power is the *Logic of Sex* that emerged with modernity: “Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic that henceforth serves as our master key.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p.83.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p.83.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p.84.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p.84.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.84.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.78.

This formulation of power, which dates back to Middle Ages and monarchy, renders it “tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself”³⁰¹ Instead, Foucault suggests to view power as “the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in particular society”³⁰² offering a way to analyze power relations in terms of technologies, freeing it from juridical representation that “takes law as a model and a code”³⁰³ in order to “cut off the head of the king.”³⁰⁴ In that light he gave an account of deployment of sexuality which is the effective form of power in the formation of the modern subject, as a technology of the self. “A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life.”³⁰⁵

Sex, as a technology of the self, was never restricted in the way it is commonly analyzed; and there was no homogeneity among the social strata. In fact the processes differed for all. These two points make it clear that: “deployment of sexuality was not established as a principle of limitation of the pleasures of others what have traditionally been called the “ruling classes.”³⁰⁶ On the contrary, “the primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that “ruled”³⁰⁷. Deployment of sexuality as the most important technology of power that come “in the form of concrete arrangements.”³⁰⁸

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.86.

³⁰² Ibid., p.93.

³⁰³ Ibid., p.90.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 144.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 122.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 123.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p.140.

A. *T*

Through Foucault, we have established that the foundational problem regarding formation of the modern subject is sex which “was constituted as a problem of truth.”³⁰⁹ What I would like to do in this section is to constitute the problem with sex as *Truth*; with a capital *T*.

“‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘regime’ of truth.”³¹⁰

Developing around the question of “what constitutes the subject in its relations to the true, to rules, to itself” Foucault identifies three axes around which a certain behavior becomes a subjective experience: fields of knowledge specific to the behavior itself, set of rules and norms, and “relation to oneself and to others” all of which are historically singular, and therefore fluid³¹¹. This is that analytical space that intersects knowledge, power, subjectivity and truth. A certain behavior becomes a subject and an object of discursive and non-discursive practices which have their own rules to render what is true and what is not. Therein these behaviors are articulated as objects of thought; at the end become a subjective experience.

He categorizes into four techniques, which are inseparable from each other, we use to “develop a knowledge about”³¹² ourselves rendering the self intelligible in accordance with *truth games*. These are:

(1) Technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies

³⁰⁹ “The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth.” Ibid. p. 56.

³¹⁰ ———, “Truth and Power.” P. 133.

³¹¹ ———, “Ethics.” p.202.

³¹² ———, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London Penguin, 2000). p. 224.

of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”³¹³

For the lives of women loving women the process of construction, intelligibility and ordering (characteristics of modernity) of the technologies of the self have specific effects; disperses a spider web of varied experiences regarding their (in)visibility. These processes enable an access to truth of women. Their bodies become an instrument of verification, confirmation and imposition. Their bodies, tangible and as an object of the gaze reflect and decode what is invisible and abstract, however not always intended. In fact, this metaphorical instrumentality is bound by the discursive and non-discursive formations.

Speaking of the constructed gaze through which we ‘see’ those around us; that which is given the authority to distinguish the Truth, Judith Butler wrote: “The moment in which one’s staid and usual cultural perceptions fail, when one cannot with surety read the body that one sees, is precisely the moment when one is no longer sure whether the body encountered is that of a man or a woman.”³¹⁴ A., a butch lesbian, encounters this challenge between the body and its truth dependent upon the decoding mechanisms of this society, in an unexpected place. In our off record conversation she told me that she and her girlfriend have been together for three years, and last year they had a wedding. It appears that they are in a homonormative relationship. When A. questions her dependency on her to do everything from going out for entertainment to visiting her parents, her girlfriend replies that she wants to live her relationship according to the mould of the traditional Turkish family: “I saw it this way from my mother and father.” A.’s girlfriend identifies as heterosexual. A. is the only woman she has ever been with and claims that A. will

³¹³ Ibid., p. 225.

³¹⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*. p. xxiv.

be the last if they ever break up, because she does not find women attractive. She says to A. that she does not view her as a woman or a man; she loves her for who she is. The two anecdotes she told me during this conversation indicates that this is not so and that she is ultimately confused about and stuck in between the heteronormativity she is subject to, and masculinity of the woman she loves.

When A. told me that her girlfriend does not view her as a woman or a man, how does that work I asked; “you live in the same house, and you both bleed once a month.” A. smiled as if I hit the nail on the head. In the beginning, she told me, she would not even want to hear about it. When A. would complain about her cramps, she would say “I don’t even want to think about you like that.” The one thing that culturally marks the becoming woman of a child, becomes an unthinkable, unspeakable subject in her mind, because as a heterosexual woman who does not find women attractive, cannot be ‘married’ to another woman.

When they were at a restaurant once, the server calls A. ‘sir’. When A. talks back to reply the server realizes his ‘mistake’ from the high tone of her voice and apologizes. “If only you hadn’t spoken,” says A.’s girlfriend. A. said that she considered shaving her face so she had a goatee knowing full well how much her girlfriend will like it, but decided not to. She said “I don’t have a problem with being a woman.” But day in and day out, until her girlfriend relieves the hold heteronormativity has over her, she faces the assumed contradiction between the truth of her body and her performance of it. Unlike A., E. voices out her irritation with categories of gender and sexuality and the heterosexual hegemony:

“I do not want the lesbian description. Let’s break these moulds as much as possible. We’ll build them again if we feel the need later. But let there be nothing. Let there be no binaries, let there be no one side winning while the other loses. Let there be no gender.”

In his attempt to do a genealogy of technologies of the self, Foucault identified two significant patterns that he separated as *care of the self* and the *knowledge of the self*. Foucault dates the interest in *care of the self* back to Plato and his dialogue *Alcibiades*. He approaches to the text with a layered analysis of the three elements he observes in the dialogue: “the intersection of political ambition and philosophical love”³¹⁵; the concern with an actual activity “in a specific moment of life”³¹⁶; and the concept of self as the activity of the soul and its care founded in its “divine contemplation.”³¹⁷ While Plato gave a privileged status to the *knowledge of the self* he writes that in the Hellenistic and Greco Roman periods this changes. In fact the *care of the self* “became a common, universal philosophical theme.”³¹⁸ This practice of working on the self, turning to self, and reflection was recommended as a regular activity; a daily preoccupation, or for periods of time. It involved active meditation, studying, reading and preparing for possible future happenings that may disposition a person, writing notes and/or letters. In fact writing became much more important as an activity in the *care of the self*; developing a new experience attentive to details in daily life, activities and feelings of the person, for rhetoric expands the sharing of self³¹⁹.

As the method shifts from oral to writing, so does what *care of the self* means from Plato to the Hellenistic and Greco Roman periods. The shift here is significant to understand how Foucault develops his understanding of aesthetics of existence. *Care of the self* became a universal activity rather than exclusively for preparation of those who were going to engage in politics. Secondly, related to the first point, it became “a way of living for everybody throughout their lives” unlike in Plato where it was bounded to a specific time period, the youth. In relation

³¹⁵ Foucault, "Ethics.", p. 229.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 230.

³¹⁷ Ibid., p.231.

³¹⁸ Ibid.,p.231.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p.230.

to these points, Foucault wrote “a medical model was substituted for Plato’s pedagogical model.”³²⁰ In order to take care of oneself, “one must become the doctor of oneself.”³²¹ This permanent duty is in place “for a certain complete achievement of life”, rather than to prepare, to mature, to be *oneself* for the next stage in life. “This achievement is complete at the moment just prior to death”³²². These two points signal an understanding of fluidity, and possible transformations throughout one’s life in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman period.

Finally, while *knowledge of the self* was a part of the concern in the practice of caring for the self, it was neither the only nor the main one. “In *Alcibiades*, the soul had a mirror relation to itself, which reflects the concept of memory and justifies dialogue as a method of discovering truth in the soul.”³²³ Later, specifically in Stoicism, dialogue disappears, and the silence of the disciple becomes a condition for “acquiring truth.”³²⁴ This new pedagogical practice, “the art of listening,” requires the listening to not only the master but also “the self for the truth within.”³²⁵

Knowledge of the self evolved into a prescribed activity to become fit, and fruitful for society, “fundamental principle” of subject formation, as the individuation and awareness of societal duties, tasks emerged, whereas in Greco-Roman period it “appeared as the consequence of the care of the self.”³²⁶ This development coincides with the manifestation of the “Protestant work ethic” (a term and concept coined by Max Weber).

There are three indications as to why *knowledge of the self* became a duty for the being rather than *care of the self* in modern period:

³²⁰ Ibid., p.235.

³²¹ Ibid., p.235.

³²² Ibid., p.235.

³²³ Ibid., p.235.

³²⁴ Ibid., p.236.

³²⁵ Ibid., p.236.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 228.

- 1) “We find it difficult to base rigorous morality and austere principles on the precept that we should give more care to ourselves than to anything else in the world. We are more inclined to see taking care of ourselves as an immorality, as a means of escape from all possible rules. We inherit the tradition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation. To know oneself was, paradoxically, a means of self-renunciation.”
- 2) “We are the inheritors of a social morality that seeks the rules for acceptable behavior in relations with others. Since the sixteenth century, criticism of established morality has been undertaken in the name of the importance of recognizing and knowing the self.”
- 3) “In theoretical philosophy from Descartes to Husserl, knowledge of the self (the thinking subject) takes on an ever-increasing importance as the first step in the theory of knowledge.”³²⁷

‘I think therefore I am’ is interconnected with ‘I work therefore I am’ which is another way of saying ‘I obey therefore I am.’ These three sentences, as secular as they sound (or have been made) they carry with them certain principals of Christianity.

The two ritualistic codes in Christianity, salvation and confessional, impose upon the being sets of duties that instruct technologies of self that are distinctive and informative of what is to come with modernity. To achieve salvation, one must oblige to “a set of conditions and rules of behavior for a certain transformation of the self.”³²⁸ This duty is not limited to acceptance and obedience. One must also publicly demonstrate her belief in the permanent truth” instructed by the books of God, and acceptance of the obligations, “institutional authority” and its “decisions in matters of truth” that are imposed³²⁹. The obligation to truth is not only external but also internal:

“Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires; and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God, or to others in the community and, hence, to bear public or private witness against oneself.”³³⁰

³²⁷ Ibid., p.228.

³²⁸ Ibid., p.242.

³²⁹ Ibid., p.242.

³³⁰ Ibid., p.242.

Purification of the soul is necessary for the access to truth, and it requires that one recognizes her sins and repent under the direction of a religious authority, publicly. This public recognition was done in different ways over the centuries however it always carried a performance value. What is paradoxical in this ritual is that while it removes the burden of sin, it also exposes the person as the sinner.

This theatrical ritual, *exomologesis*, was intended not for an exposé of the facts of the sin but to push the sinner to embody the sin. According to Foucault there are three models the Christian authors used in the 1st Centuries out of which the model of “martyrdom” was the most significant to explain this paradox³³¹.

“The theories and practices of penance were elaborated around the problem of the men who prefers to dies rather than to compromise or abandon the faith; the way the martyr faces death is the model for the penitent. For the relapsed to be reintegrated into the Church, he must expose himself voluntarily to ritual martyrdom. Penance is the affect of change, of rupture with self, past, and the world.”³³²

This “recognition of facts”³³³ about the self in Christianity is contrasted with the self examination in Stoics: “What was private for the Stoics was public for the Christians.”³³⁴

There happens a shift during the fourth century: the emergence of *exagoreusis*, which resemble the Stoic practices of master-student relationship, however with a constitutive difference that is the requirement of complete obedience and constant divine contemplation³³⁵. In Stoicism, while the relationship of the disciple to her master was essential, it was “instrumental and professional,” not permanent like Christian monastic experiences. “It was founded on the capacity of the master to lead the disciple to a happy and autonomous life through good advice.

³³¹ The other two are “the medical model” where “one must show one’s wounds in order to be cured” and “the tribunal model of judgment” where “one always appeases one’s judge by confessing faults.” Ibid., p. 244.

³³² Ibid., p.245.

³³³ Ibid., p.243

³³⁴ Ibid., p.244.

³³⁵ Ibid., p.245-246.

The relationship would end when the disciple gained access to that life.”³³⁶ However, in Christianity there is no evidence of such separation: “Obedience is complete control of behavior by the master, not a final autonomous state.”³³⁷ This state of obedience does not disappear at the death of one’s master, nor when one becomes the master himself. It is present in any and all activity: “The monk must have the permission of his director to do anything, even die.”³³⁸ The second major difference is the divine contemplation. The technology of self that emerged out of the Christian monastery and became a permanent feature by the fourth Century controlled both the behavior and thought of the person: “It is the obligation of the monk to turn his thoughts continuously to that point which is God and to make sure that his heart is pure enough to see God. The goal is the permanent contemplation of God.”³³⁹

In the two discussed Christian techniques of self examination which is also self exposition, *exomologesis* and *exageuresis*, there is one decisive commonality which is renunciation: “You cannot disclose without renouncing.”³⁴⁰ With modernity there happens another transformation: “From the eighteenth century to the present the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self.”³⁴¹

The mechanisms of reaching one’s own Truth and the following performances of ‘telling’ that truth which is assumed to be the revelation of the secret compartment of the self, work through a multitude of anxieties and aches of their construction and unpermitted transformations. An academic engagement with the narrations of these anxieties and aches complicate the already

³³⁶ Ibid., p.246.

³³⁷ Ibid., p.246.

³³⁸ Ibid., p.246.

³³⁹ Ibid., p.246.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p.249.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p.249.

existing worries of the scholar. The next section takes a break from the theoretical framework to engage with my relationship with my research subject and spaces of exploration.

B. Anxiety of the Scholar

This thesis is surrounded by the anxieties of women I spoke with and of the authors of articles, testimonies...etc. that I find relevant to the stories which I witness in narration. However, from the inception of this project and through the process of writing, it is laced with my own anxieties, fears, both of academic and personal nature. They overlap with that of the spaces I explore, quite expectedly, bringing me to face *myself* with every conversation. The mirror-like effect of these narrations is ongoing with expanding intersectional layers. Moreover, reflecting their stories, making sense out of the details and connecting separate lives of these women in relation to the social, cultural and political climate is a challenge that is fertile with anxieties and doubts. It is like a pot of boiling water; constantly moving, constantly changing form. Just like the subject of this thesis, the tensions I experience in relation to it are not fixed in time. They do not end here like a written work does; with varying degrees I will continue to carry them. What they all have in common is the question of truth, representation and relationality.

What caused the most expansive anxiety for me during this project, and the most crucial one for its livelihood was the question that gives this section its title: “Are you a lesbian?” When I came to the final decision of working on subjectivity of women-loving-women in Istanbul for my master’s thesis, I knew for certain I wanted to (and had to in order to produce a detailed and practical thesis project), conduct interviews. But what was I to do? Ask all the women I see on the street “Excuse me, are you a lesbian?” How was I to pick who I asked? What does a lesbian look like? I was not yet involved in any activist groups, being new in the city. Even though I had been attending events and lectures, I had not exchanged any contact information with anyone. But not all women who love women lived their experiences in activist circles. I tumbled through

these thoughts; got lost for a long time trying to figure out the best way to approach the issue of finding people to talk to regarding their experiences. What seems like the most basic concern, is in fact the most critical and common one. B. talked about similar experiences while conducting her fieldwork in Istanbul.

As a Phd. student in geography, she was working on a thesis concerning the cosmopolitan identification of body and sexuality of women in Beyoğlu district. She said: “Much like in your research, as I was trying to diversify, I ended up speaking to only activist women.” Therefore, she had to limit her work to the discourse of activist women. As she started to question the experience of space in a cosmopolitan area within the field of gender and sexuality studies, she wanted to talk to women experiencing different sexualities, not just heterosexuals. But as it turns out she had no idea how to do this, and just like me she knew no one and was not a part of any type of network. “I was talking to an associate professor I know at the terrace of a café in Taksim. I looked down on the street and asked him ‘What am I going to say? Am I going to ask: pardon me, are you a lesbian?’” She continued:

“What would you do when you go to a lesbian bar? Are you going to say ‘Excuse me I am doing research, can I have a talk with you? I had no method. As I was saying how am I going to go, what am I going to do, I read that book of testimonials of 24 women³⁴². It was nonsense but it was the only thing I could find. In that it was talking about the email group called ‘Bilitis’. I wrote to Bilitis saying I am a researcher. Someone there told me that I need to get a referral from Lambda. She had told me that there are women’s meetings there. I was thinking about when I would go. At the same time, from my networking in the states, I had a geographer friend who told me he knew a guy in Lambda and referred me to him. I went to Lambda to meet him and he also told me to go to the women’s meetings. After my first meeting I started working at Lambda.”³⁴³

³⁴² She is referring to “Eşcinsel Kadınlar: Yirmi Dört Tanıklık.” Serdar Soydan Cenk Özbay, *Eşcinsel Kadınlar: Yirmi Dört Tanıklık* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003). This book is a compilation of interviews done by two academicians from two different fields; sociology and literature. Both men, interviewed these women, all of whom lived in big cities, and organized the transcriptions totaling to twenty-four in late 2002, early 2003. This book of direct transcriptions of intimate interviews is one of the first published works regarding *eşcinsel* women in Turkey.

³⁴³ She also told me that she worked at Amargi, a feminist collective, as well. In fact, at first she was more active there than Lambda.

Similar to B. I found my way in through LambdaIstanbul. When I saw the announcement for the ‘coming out meeting’, I thought the best thing for me to do was to literally ‘come out’ to the activists, and guests in that space as bisexual and as a scholar in the field of gender and sexuality. Until then, I had been avoiding a visit to LambdaIstanbul cultural center, troubled from doubting myself about explaining my sincerity regarding my approach to this project. This feeling of unease and anxiety was due to my own distrust to claims that declare that it is a) necessary b) possible to know, to read, to analyze people in assumed legible and coherent categories. There is a growing and rightful concern in these circles about being used as a Guinea pig by academics. There have been many instances where they have been treated as if they were required to be a part to an academic project, the sublime duty of telling their stories, becoming a solid source of information without receiving any benefit, gift, or feedback. B. also commented on the problematical relationship of the academic to its subject, in this instance ‘victimized minority’; the source of popular and easy material for research and critique.

“The reason that these discussions formed is that for years the university teachers or whatever really used this issue as a Guinea pig to formulate methodology. Because there is not a material for people to read and get information. The second reason is that a person calls Lambda and says ‘I want to interview three trans, five lesbians and two gays.’ As if they are buying apples and pears from the grocer. This discourse tired us out. Trying to change that discourse tired us all. There was a group for academic research in Lambda. I don’t know how that works now. There was an effort in that group to meet with the people one-to-one to change this discourse and to get the written work to Lambda but it of course wore us out. When the homework week approaches, because the topic is so hip these days twenty students come to interview someone. It bores you. Am I going to do my work or am I going to try to tell you something.”

Aware of this condition, I was concerned as well. I did not want anyone to think any less of my intentions regarding this project which is very personal and intimate to me. I wanted to set myself away from the widespread approach to the stigmatized. This brings my reason to use Zemirah Moffat’s doctoral thesis “Queer Giving” as a guide for my own project. It is an

informatory text on how to write a queer academic product not only because how significant and theoretically well formulated her project is but also our purpose coincides to each other. Especially her focus on gift giving; her effort to render her work useful for the space she uses for her study is a significant point to relieve this tension between the academic and her 'subject'³⁴⁴. While explaining her use of self-reflexive methodology she wrote: "The relationship between my academic studies and personal life has been and continues to be intimate."³⁴⁵ One must carry on this type of work with that awareness.

Anxiety of the scholar also lies in the process of telling the story of an 'other'. While this space is one that I am also a part of, due to the nature of scholarship it inadvertently become my other: I am the 'scholar'; 'it' is my 'subject.' B. explained that for further projects she is not interested in working with LGBTT issues. She said that she is not interested in it as a research subject primarily because she is now heavily immersed in the space which, for her, makes it harder to research; knowing too many stories and to be this involved with the people immensely complicates the work of a researcher.

Observer/academic and a part of the community do not fit as well as one would like. This is a space I am a part of with my sexuality. And I felt the need to be around others who have similar experiences without any fear of judgment or suspicion that I feel elsewhere. However as Moffat wrote, the structure of a project like this makes suspicion an inescapable experience: "It was difficult for others and myself to resist the assumption that I was observing and judging."³⁴⁶

This is a work that forces me to face *myself*. It is a work that is constructed to be that way on purpose, from the beginning. One aspect of the project is my effort to work on *myself* and

³⁴⁴ For that reason, I will be distributing my project to LambdaIstanbul and Kaos GL archives.

³⁴⁵ Moffat, "Queer Giving," p. 16.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

separately to grow as a scholar. The other aspect is regarding its political utility. This relationship I have with the project, and academia in general is entirely political. I constantly questioned the political utility of this project (while also reading on the discussions of what political utility means in a 'queer sense') and tried to figure out the best way to render it useful for the field I chose to explore and for myself. For I am still trying to cleanse myself from the understanding that political activity is a duty that defines one's success as a person, I did at times fall into the clasp of 'fear of failure'.

Judith Halberstam, in her article titled "What's that Smell? : Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives"³⁴⁷ talks about the role of the academic and/or the scholar. She maintains her support for "an alliance between the minority academic and the minority subcultural producer"³⁴⁸ on the premise of subversive resistance to hegemony, in our case heterosexual hegemony. Her insistence on the possibilities that exist at the point of interaction between the scholar and the cultural producer (sometimes they can be one in the same, like Moffat; or present an overlap in experiences, exist in a reflexive relationship and feel a need for spatial and temporal connection like myself) is where my primary motivation lies not only for this project but for my investment in academia.

For Halberstam, and for myself academic engagement is inseparable from politics. Therefore;

"Where such alliances exist, academics can play a big role in the construction of queer archives and queer memory, and, furthermore, queer academics can, and some should, participate in the ongoing project of recoding and interpreting queer culture and circulating a sense of its multiplicity and sophistication. The more intellectual records we have of queer culture, the more we contribute to the project of claiming for the

³⁴⁷ Judith Halberstam, "What's that Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (2003).

³⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 318.

subculture the radical cultural work that either gets absorbed into or claimed by mainstream media.”³⁴⁹

She added: “Queer subcultures encourage blurred boundaries between archivists and producers.”³⁵⁰ In addition to allowing for the scholar to permeate the field she studies (or the field to permeate her), a new understanding of subcultures must be inclusive of the commonly ignored non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual groups; it must recognize the existence of new spaces their ephemeral temporality³⁵¹. Moreover, we must free ourselves from the binary understanding of adolescent vs. adult for age relations are also non-normative in queer subcultures. These relationalities present a space away from the life narrative of becoming an adult, building a career, getting married, reproducing...etc.

Though I must continue to stress, while it is perhaps unnecessary at this point, I do not intend to classify my project as a study of a subculture, or that these women-loving-women all live in subversive queer spaces. Some do, some do not. They do however meet on some common experiences; are under similar conditions; misrepresented all of which suggest the need for this study. Halberstam’s genealogy of studies of subcultures indicate a trend of invisibility of women, specifically queer lesbian women; which is paradoxically the strength of the subversivity of these spaces: they ‘illustrate vividly the limits of subcultural theories that omit consideration of sexuality and sexual styles.’³⁵²

It took me by surprise to realize that there is a tension between the two aspects, the personal and political, of my project and that it had been troubling me. I am confronted, with every step, by my relationship with *myself*, and with others; my story, practices, experiences and contradictions; my experiences with immigration and being in between and nowhere at the same

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 318.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 321.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 320.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 320.

time when I think about national belonging. Moreover with this project I exponentially increase my 'risk' of coming out to fields I never thought I would; primarily my family. This particular space still has some dark areas such that it habitually leads me to escape. Enacting a reflexive methodology does not erase these anxieties. However it alleviates the symptoms to a certain extent. But the existence in a greater academia with boundaries and limits while talking about transgressions of those same limits contains that anxiety, feeding it dangerously; putting at risk the coherence of a conclusion. Must there be a conclusion? Perhaps not.

Halberstam in the same article stresses "the death of the expert" in studies of minority subcultures: "Minority subcultures in general tend to be documented by former or current members of the subculture rather than by 'adult' experts."³⁵³ This is the strength of these types of studies and the nurturing factor of their subversivity. There were two challenges I faced regarding this; while they seem paradoxical, they feed off each other. On the one hand my field of study was seen as flimsy, and minor. I was not taken seriously all the time. This attitude was not specific to any one group of people. Even some feminists found that the subject carried less of an importance. The most troubling point regarding this condition is that after you study for hours, days, months, years maybe, an episteme, a theoretical approach, a methodological framework, and try to place in an analytical space to understand, someone can instantly pass over your work by declaring: "Yeah, my aunt is lesbian. I know." On the other hand, there is a trend to glorify the scholar, placing her into the position of authority, not just as someone with ability but also as the only one with power to say something on the subject. The saddest part is that the former situation tires you out so much that you accept the latter with gratitude. In combination, they distance you from your work; and even isolate you.

³⁵³ Ibid., p.321.

Lastly, from the challenge of managing the two poles of denouncing and lauding comes the qualm about making a mistake by falling into the trap of the metanarratives, the paradigms that I am critiquing. In that I chose to make Jean-Luc Nancy's conceptualization of singularity and its political utility as further developed by Giorgio Agamben a part of my methodology and I refer back to it 'in a pinch'.

C. “I want to eat both the strawberry and the chocolate flavor”

Ö.’s³⁵⁴ anxieties were mainly regarding the (dis)ability to narrate herself. She, a literature major as an undergrad, even used that word in our conversation: narration. It is all about the exact narration for her, expressing herself fully. The exactitude she seeks but does not feel like she can achieve is directly related to the approach to self as a coherent substance that can be articulated qualitatively with all its properties. While she is aware of the fragmentations pertaining to the modern subject and the modernist approach to self, this awareness does not always interfere with the anxiety modern subjectivation creates, as it demands but never allows for an exact reflection. This exactitude is really another way to tell the ‘truth’; the impossibility therein escapes recognition in daily life. The lack of an ability to express herself truthfully builds a world of anxiety and fear for Ö.

She never felt perturbed or apprehensive regarding her sexuality; her main fears were about what was to come from the outside related to “being misunderstood”. Following this she said: “This issue of being misunderstood is really bad because every story that does not enter the norm really is a narration. There is nothing more terrifying than the misunderstanding of your own narration. I can never give it the same meaning.” The phrase ‘*yanlış anlaşılma*’ is translated here as ‘being misunderstood’ however when we dissect the phrase, *yanlış* means ‘incorrect, ‘false’; untrue. Even those of us who are well surrounded by anti-essentialist approach to sexuality (Ö. fits this category), and even adopt such a critique sometimes fall desperate due to our anxieties about narration. Outside of our specific theoretical frameworks exist the stronghold of meta-narratives, with a developed language that allow only a certain way of expression.

³⁵⁴ Ö. is 27 years old. Masters student at a private university. Has been living in Istanbul all her life. Identifies as bisexual.

The title of this section, “I want to eat both the strawberry and the chocolate flavor” is something that Ö. said regarding her bisexuality and at the center of her narration anxiety is expressing that she desires, finds pleasure in both men and women. She said “this is as natural to me as the bread I eat,” and “it is the meal I eat everyday.” The metanarratives that place homosexuality at a direct opposite to heterosexuality erase the possibility of bisexuality. “I think that this is my faith,” she said.

“I was never a person who can make a decision. I used to say I want that and I want this too. I do not want to get into a conversation about how bisexuals are all this way. Because the people who say that are really unfair. What is wrong with ‘I want both that and this?’”

The most amicable approach to bisexuality in these terms is that when a woman loves a woman she is a lesbian for that moment. When the same woman loves a man she is heterosexual. While this experience is also possible, for sexuality can change, viewed as a rule it pushes loving, desiring, fucking both men and women at the same time and place out of the realm of possibilities. Ö’s anxiety is a direct consequence of constantly being erased out of the realm of possibilities.

When I asked her to open up more what she means by ‘being misunderstood’, to explain more what it is that can be misunderstood about her she said:

“You do not belong to a generally accepted group. You are separate from women who are hetero or whatever. This is something that brings individuality for me. You are already separate and you are trying to take part as an individual. Because you are an individual, there is only your own language manifesting. I am this, I am that. There is a situation where you redefine yourself. This, willingly or unwillingly, brings with it a big narration. The reason that I do not get along with and feel estranged is essentially caused by the lack of my ability to grasp the stories that exist in each of them. Because there is this thing: I can’t give that meaning. In that narration I can only give partial meaning of my *eşcinsellik* and how I live. The language I use is already not a language that belongs to *eşcinseller*. It already exists in a field of dualities. Either that or this. Not both.”

For her expressing herself is necessary because of not belonging to the normative structure that already exists. “When you are outside of the society you are forced to form that narrative; that definition.” She has a beef with ‘language’. “The language is already a heterosexist language; it does not belong to me,” she said. She uses a different language when she tells her story; it changes relative to the person she is speaking to. This is something that makes her feel isolated; “it is something that pushes a person to become a subject.” In this process she becomes estranged to her own story: “I express myself. As soon as I say it I become estranged.” She continued: “Willingly or unwillingly there happens a distance between that narration and myself. Between the truth of the event, the truth of those practices and language there is always a distance. And this causes losses of meaning. I narrate but I can never give that truth.”

In the same breath she reveals a contradiction in her conceptualization of herself and her experiences caused by the tension between her intimate anxieties and the theoretical engagement she has with critique of modernity. While she is troubled by her inability to tell her ‘truth’ to ‘others’ as she experiences which means ‘as is’ in her explanation, she is also somewhat aware of the necessary impossibility therein. She does not exactly express this in our interview however she did a critique of modernity and the modern subject and mentioned that she develops her understanding of sexuality as ‘singularities’. “There isn’t something called lesbianism, but there are lesbians, for me,” she said. She added:

“I think that what pushes you to an individualization heavily, what inserts you in the paradigm of individualism is a very modern thing. Because the condition of getting out of *gemeinschaft*, the condition of being unable to live it willingly or unwillingly, necessarily is a thing that individualizes someone. You already left community. You are living a modern life. You are in a city. The point in question is not a community, but individuals. And the individual’s own singularity. At the same time you are trying to go into a community of people that are like you. This is what Lambda is for me. A very modern thing. The effort to form a community once again

creates a very ambivalent, ambiguous situation. There is a paradigm in every community. There is a language it produces. I do not understand that language. They have their own culture. It is very possible to talk about a gay culture at this point. Or a transvestite culture. In that community I feel as though I need to become an individual, a singular being. Because it is really estranging.”

On knowledge she has of herself, she said that her knowledge is one that she forms about herself. Certainly there is an overlap with her knowledge and that the ‘community’ (by which she means particular gay and lesbian groups) forms in itself. There are points she agrees with, however there are points she does not which makes her feel isolated. She feels that she belongs in some cases and in others she feels like an outsider.

While she confuses concepts, and mistakes some of the theoretical approaches, what she is trying to critique is the normativity that forms in LGBTTT groups, organizations, and space. While trying to escape norms on the ‘inside’, she is troubled by seeing it on the margins; created a new or recreated and reproduced by those who participate.

The anxiety Ö. has with her own narration and her relationship to others because of being forced to talk about herself as a marginalized person. Z.³⁵⁵ approaches narration, especially related to coming out differently. She said: “Because I am bisexual, not being out completely does not bother me. If I were a lesbian I would have been troubled by it. Because I would not have a boyfriend then.” What she means is that she is not concerned with being closeted, because she has an alternative of having a boyfriend, a person she can be with, a person she can call her ‘significant other’ without dealing with the issues of coming out as ‘abnormal’ especially to her family. This way she is able to hide her marginality behind a boyfriend³⁵⁶.

³⁵⁵ Z. is 22 years old. Undergraduate student at a private university, majoring in Communications. Has been living in Istanbul most of her life. Identifies as bisexual.

³⁵⁶ This hiding space, what Tuna regards as another way of closing up, will come up as an issue Tuna had faced in the next chapter when I discuss the discourse of the closet and coming out practices. Tuna explains with regards to this experience that even when one says one is out, or that she has no problem with her sexuality, it may not be so unless she is completely open and honest.

At the same time she worries about whether or not living a life like ‘this’ (bisexual) is ever possible. “At first I feared that I was a pervert; now I am worried about whether or not I can do it.” When I commented that she is afraid of being in a relationship with a woman, falling in love with a woman and therefore holds back, she agreed. “Yes. Well you also have the choice to be with a man and everybody will accept it. It can provide a peaceful life but whether or not it can provide what you want is arguable.” She continued:

“In a man to man relationship you are a pervert, a fag. In a woman to woman relationship you are erotic; a sex object. Two women make love, and everybody watch! How great! And men take pleasure from this; from two women making love. Essentially a lesbian relationship is not that inverted. For families it is but when you look at it from outside for example at work, say your boss will not fire you but will do perverted things. He will subject you to all sexual harassment because you can make love to a woman.”

Her preoccupation with ‘acceptance’, she said, may lead to her abstaining from a relationship with a woman. That recognition in turn makes her suspicious of her choices of partners. While her concern with the ‘dangers coming from outside’ makes her feel confused about her choices, orientation, feelings, behavior...etc. Ö. and Z. approach to their anxieties with the ‘dangerous outside’. Ö. distances herself, a way to push the danger out of her safety inner circle, while Z. fears the difference of the stranger, and finds comfort in sameness; both are aware of the impossibility therein. The central trouble remains with belonging; belonging to ‘something’ being as yourself, but belonging necessarily brings a mold with it.

In the introduction I quoted Annamarie Jagose to introduce the trouble with (in)visibility regarding homosexuality of women. She wrote that female homosexuality “is less the subject of prohibition than of an incredulousness that would deny the space of its possibility.”³⁵⁷ Z.

³⁵⁷ Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and Logic of Sexual Sequence*. p. 3.

approaches this issue in a different way; strictly separating sexual interaction from falling in love. Lesbian sex is not viewed as perverted, but it is viewed as incomplete she commented, and added that it is not understood when a woman says she is in love with another woman.

“There is a dilemma I live. I can say I am both bisexual and asexual. I never had pleasure sexually. Sex does not mean anything for me. Did I not do it, I did. But it has no benefit for me. If there was not sex for me in my life today, I’d be alright. Therefore I cannot explain to people that I do not make love to this person, I love this person. I do not make love to anyone. There is a limited amount of people who would comprehend when I say ‘I love her.’”

In order to understand what she meant by “sex does not mean anything for me” I stayed on topic, trying to make her explain to me what ‘meaning’ is to her regarding sex. Sex to Z. is not something that she takes pleasure from. She separates sensual touching from sex; sex is something that we do with our genitalia, making love is different. She said:

“In my mind making love is very valuable. Sex is very invaluable but making love... You can make love to a person by looking at them. It is completely an emotional pleasure. You will experience orgasm but emotionally. It may not give you a bodily, physical pleasure to you. If you look at it this way, I made love with a lot of people. But sex does not add anything to me. And I am sorry but I do not fulfill the expectations of many men.”

She explained that people talk about incredible orgasms, “the most amazing bodily pleasure ever” which is something she never experienced with another person, but she does through masturbation. If she is in love with the person, sex gives her a spiritual pleasure, for having made someone happy; therefore “I faked my orgasms a lot, and no one understood yet; neither men nor women,” she said. We talked some more about orgasms which led me to ask her whether or not this was because she puts the pleasure of the other before her own. I could not have been more mistaken.

This brings us to the point in our conversation that does not fit any of the theoretical paradigms I chose to use in this project. However it is a constant in the way women relate to sex;

a lingering issue, a ‘danger’ we build our relationship to sexuality: consent, sexual violence and rape. Z. explained her experience to me after I poked around unknowingly and unsuspecting:

“My first sexual relationship was problematic. It is something some people refer to as rape... I do not like to use that word. In any case, it happened outside of my will. And as of late I have been thinking whether or not this was the reason. Because I hated it then. Maybe, I don’t know. Someone should research it. Maybe on me. The first was this way and after that I never had pleasure.”

Rape, to her, is a hard word to use mainly because she is reminded that she allowed it to happen to her. It is an experience, and issue that she never faced fully. She ran into the person who raped her six or seven years later in school (and continues to because they are students in the same department), received a half-hearted apology that put the blame on both of them being young and not being in their right minds and asked to act like it never happened. She said: “I was in my right mind you idiot! It’s easy for you to say, but I lived this.” In fact she continues to live it, fearing sex and therefore staying clear of ‘serious’ relationships, assuming sex is eventually what is brought to the table then.

Doubts, belonging, hiding out or hiding in, confusion, fear and anxieties of ‘telling’... symptoms of the way some of us experience sexuality. These same feelings are present in the same way in the lives of the same two women when they talk about their experiences with spaces specifically catering to LGBTTT people or lesbian and bisexual women. I dedicated the next section to discuss how our relationship to space (situated or ephemeral) impacts our experiences of sexuality, and vice versa.

D. Experiencing the Space

I focused part of my interviews on the way women-loving-women experience the field I am exploring, whether it is the tools and strategies they use to find partners, or where they hang out for entertainment or how they feel comfortable in their daily lives. In order to open up the significance of the urban spaces for the exploration of experiences of ‘aberrant’ sexualities, in “Thinking Sex” Gayle Rubin focuses on the effects of urbanization on the development of homosexual experience “that includes a self-conscious identity, group solidarity, a literature, a press, and a high level of political activity.”³⁵⁸ She wrote:

“As laborers migrated to work in cities, there were increased opportunities for voluntary communities to form. Homosexuality inclined women and men, who would have been vulnerable and isolated in most pre-industrial villages, began to congregate in small corners of the big cities. Most large nineteenth century cities in Western Europe and North America had areas where men could cruise for other men. Lesbian communities seem to have coalesced more slowly and on a smaller scale. Nevertheless, by the 1890s, there were several cafes in Paris near the Place Pigalle which catered to a lesbian clientele and it is likely that there were similar places in the other major capitals of Western Europe.”³⁵⁹

In Istanbul these types of spaces are concentrated mainly in the district of Beyoğlu; in fact to a very small section of it, a few adjacent streets that connect to Istiklal Street (Amargi, Lambda Istanbul, and the two entertainment spaces with primarily lesbian clientele exist in a 1km. radius). I asked B. who worked on Beyoğlu as experienced by women activists within the framework of cosmopolitan theories how she makes sense out of this. According to her this is due to the active presence of neoliberalism in Beyoğlu. The fragments of Beyoğlu, such as *Asmalı Mescid*, *Nevizade*...etc. after heavy, speedy and continuous gentrification in Beyoğlu, have been taken over by spaces with a profit only focus. The spaces that cater to ‘marginalized’

³⁵⁸ Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." p. 17.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p.17.

populations are confined to a few streets in this one large district with twenty-five neighborhoods.

I would like to stress that I do not intend to classify these spaces we talked about in our conversations as queer (same with the women who graciously contributed their stories and opinions in these conversations, as mentioned previously). Unless space is defined in accordance with the relations experienced within, that are not concrete and stable; that are not all one type; that are incongruous, temporal and ephemeral, there are no queer spaces in Istanbul; and I dare say anywhere in the world. Queer spaces are in effect queer moments. A space is something where forms of relations occur. They are queer moments because there is no guarantee that in that space at another time, even within an hour, something queer, can be lived.

Having the chance to interview the owner of a lesbian night club in Istanbul provided the insight to introduce the significance of space for the lives of people who experience marginalization in everyday life. A. opened the club in 2007, and it stayed open for six to seven months. She had to close it for various reasons but re-opened in March of 2008 and has been open ever since (though the club has changed locations since then, which caused momentary pauses in operation). I asked her what she was thinking when she opened the club; what kind of expectations she had. She replied:

“I used to go out for entertainment. I used to go to gay clubs mostly. I did not feel comfortable at clubs where mostly heterosexuals went. When I went with my girlfriend, I did not feel comfortable. There were problems; people were staring. Some said things like ‘ooo a lesbian.’ To gay clubs, heterosexual thinking people came. People came saying ‘we see gay people, lesbians there’. And this was really disturbing. I felt even more uncomfortable at gay clubs. I wanted a place that only women can come. It does not mean that there shouldn’t be any men. This is not sexism. It isn’t feeling disturbed by men completely. But I wanted there to be a place that women can have fun woman to woman. That’s why. Of course in the beginning I did not think in terms of money. Be there a place like

this. Women come and feel happy. Afterwards it became financial. I started to get along financially through this club. I started thinking much more strategically. If I do this more people will come, if we do this we will get better, if I do this I will earn more money. But I don't look at the club as an operation to earn more money. I earn money from this place but this is not like a furniture store or a shoe store or a hairdresser. It is a special place for me. It's an intellectual thing. Like every life has a philosophy. It's the description of my *eşcinsellik*. A place that belongs to women. I feel happy there. And I see that people are also happy there."

My experience at this club has been similar to the way she described it. Although I had heard about many problems that happen in the club, such as fights and harassment, I personally did not experience any of it. Maybe due to expecting to feel comfortable there from the beginning, I felt comfortable and was able to ignore the presence of factors that may have changed that for me. Or maybe (most likely) the accounts told about this club carry elements of their animosity towards butch women³⁶⁰. The more masculine performing a woman is the more rowdy and stern characteristics are attributed to her. A butch lesbian is therefore intrusive, violent and more likely to disturb, cause annoyance or harass. "Female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing."³⁶¹ A 'cheap' 'bad' 'tacky' copy, that is the low class butch, is considered an enemy from within; much less tolerable than her biological 'other', and sometime even much more dangerous. It still echoes in my mind one of the first reactions I received when I said I was going to visit the night club to hang out, from a woman who was involved with LGBTTT organizing in school while she was an undergraduate: "Eww. That disgusting place!?"

E. was quite upset and confused about witnessing a similar approach in her circle of friends as well. She told me an anecdote:

"The other day I was hanging out with rather close friends of mine and

³⁶⁰ The club has a large butch lesbian clientele as well as, A. told me, a conservative clientele which regards nudity and promiscuity as obscene and vulgar.

³⁶¹ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). p. 1.

this thing happened. ‘We’re going to do an imitation of butch for you’, they said and then they realized an imitation that was tragicomical to me, but very funny for them. The person who was imitating the butch was harassing the other while dancing. I can’t position these things anywhere. We reproduce everything amongst ourselves again, again and again.”

Judith Halberstam denounces this normative approach to ‘different’ embodiments of masculinity in her book, *Female Masculinity*. Female masculinity:

“has been vilified by heterosexist and feminist/womanist programs alike; unlike male femininity, which fulfills a kind of ritual function in male homosocial cultures, female masculinity is generally received by hetero- and homo-normative cultures as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment, as a longing to be and to have a power that is always just out of reach. Within a lesbian context, female masculinity has been situated as the place where patriarchy goes to work on the female psyche and reproduces misogyny within femaleness.”³⁶²

This is a description of the exact problem that appears in the issues surrounding who gets to attend ‘women only’ events, workshops, demonstrations etc. that I mentioned in “Glittered.” Who the subject of ‘womanist’ functions is, and who the real victim is that deserves the affirmation, and empowerment which is supposedly injected in these functions become the apparent questions to be answered.

A similar mindset makes Ö. hesitate going to this club or the other café/bar with specifically lesbian clientele. She explained that she experienced in the past at a lesbian bar now closed and assumes that it is bound to happen in other places too. She describes herself as more feminine, “a chap-stick lesbian” she says, and identifies this as something that puts her in danger in these clubs or bars who have a large butch clientele. She says it is the last thing she wants to experience in a place where she goes to feel comfortable; a safe haven of sorts. Z. also feels disturbed in these spaces. Her concerns are caused by general assumptions she makes regarding *eşcinsel* culture. She said:

“These places have very specific features. There you are outright in the

³⁶² Ibid., p. 9.

market. It is a blatantly *eşcinsel* space and apparently these spaces are scarce and you go there to pick up women. I don't have a need for something like that. There are many places that I can go to drink. I never went to those places. I am curious. But I would rather go there with my girlfriend. I would not want to be like a person on a market shelf."

When I remind her that what she is explaining is not specific to *eşcinsel* and or gay places, that these do happen but they do not necessarily belong there and that in bars and clubs with primarily heterosexual clientele this is also very likely she replied:

"Yes, but I am going to go to these places with this mind set: I'm going to be comfortable there. There are people like me, there are people who don't judge me and therefore let's say I'm going to like it there. Once something like this happens I may not want to go there. And it is already limited. In Europe they are on every corner. In Brussels they are very clear, very open. On every door it says free sex, and there are rainbow flags everywhere. That's why they are very comfortable. You have a choice. Here our choices are very limited and these are things you cannot loose. I will go one day, but I go with someone with me and see... then it's all good."

"Then it is a place you cannot go alone," I commented. "Yes," she said, and added:

"Like I said, I do not want to be put on a shelf there. 'There is a girl there alone.' I do not want to live that because when I do there are going to be arguments, and problems. Maybe I am not going to be able to go to that place again. But I would want to go to a place that I can feel that comfortable."

These are the words of a woman who has never been to any of the lesbian spaces and bars in Istanbul³⁶³, nor any LGBTT activism offices or centers (her political engagement with any group regarding LGBTT issues is solely through her connection in school). There may be several reasons to this. It can be hard to enter a space where one is likely going to find intimate relations between those who have established their presence there previously. This is more so in the case of spaces marginalized populations frequent. The sense of belonging in LGBTT or queer spaces

³⁶³ She said that she met her girlfriend coincidentally. It was not at a particular space. I asked her whether or not she felt the same way about the school LGBTT group she joined, and she said that it was a different experience. She came to meet new people there. And that it is not a foreign space. "You are already in your own space," she said referring to the school territory; "it's like going into your room in your own house."

tend to be fast, and hard to permeate as a ‘newbie’. Also, as a bisexual she may feel like she does not belong to any lesbian spaces like Ö., or fear it because she is not familiar with it. When she speaks on the topic, she clarifies that she does not speak about places like Lambda because she does not know about them. She strictly speaks about bars, clubs and cafes when she says that you can either be treated as ‘fresh meat’ or you can be the stranger, the newbie that causes suspicion (it is not unlikely to experience this in activist spaces as well, though the degree will vary towards either direction). The contradiction is in that she has no problem with going to places with primarily heterosexual clientele alone to try out for the first time. But she is very doubtful and prejudiced about these ‘other’ spaces, although the risk of being disturbed is not heightened like she, and Ö. exaggerate. We are all accustomed to ‘hetero bars’ and know what to do when we feel disturbed or in danger. These ‘other’ bars, to her, may feel like unknown ground. In her relationship to space, peace and safety are primary concerns. Every unknown element create anxiety and hesitation. One of those unknown elements is the women who are there to hit on you. Fear of the unknown, and prejudice towards the unknown and/or the weird, and the abnormal (the masculine women or butch lesbians in these spaces) constantly bounce off each other causing both of these women to come to unprecedented judgments about these places and the people who go there; judgments that they fear other people have towards themselves.

As a response to A. when she told me about her motivation to open the club, I told her how irritated and uneasy I felt dancing with a woman elsewhere and how I appreciated the environment in her club where I was not intruded by ‘curious’ stares. She responded:

“I lived that all the time. And I am very comfortable. What people say is not important. When I go somewhere with my lover, if I feel like kissing her at that moment, I will kiss her. I will hug her. I will hold her hand, look at her. I do this when I walk on Istiklal. Sometimes my girlfriend will say things like ‘people are looking’ but if I want to kiss her at that

moment I kiss her; if I want to hug, I do. For this reason, I do not limit myself in entertainment clubs we go. I live comfortably. Problems occurred. The person who was with me was disturbed. For this reason this club is a place for both people like me and people who think like me to feel comfortable.”³⁶⁴

At first glance, with the club she was able to accomplish this goal. The club has frequent patrons that go nowhere else, week after week. There are those who come every two weeks, once a month or only a few times a year whenever they can. There is an interesting sense of belonging to the club, she explained. Some of the frequents “claimed the club as their own,” she said.

“They used to act like ‘this is my club, this is a lesbian club, I’ll do whatever I want here, I’ll act however I want, this is my place.’ It’s nice and all but sometimes it turns out bad. Because she says ‘I’ll do whatever I want here; DJ play this song!’ or ‘If I don’t have any money, I’ll pay another time, this is my place.’ They saw it as an association. We had to start saying: ‘This is not an association, this is an enterprise.’”

There used to be fights before they set down some rules to address the situation. This strong sense of belonging brought with it a sense of ownership and strangely a destructive impulse.

“There used to be fights. If two hundred people enter the club, one person have definitely been with the lover of another person. Or had a relationship with someone’s best friend, then it ended and had another relationship with you. Things like that. There used to be cliques. People would come in groups of five or ten. There would be different kinds of fights between groups. But we overcame that. Because we showed a strict manner. We told everyone that if fights happen they won’t be allowed inside. For them it’s important being able to come to the club.”

I asked her whether or not there were any issues with the police that could damage that comfort level and unsettle the people who regularly go there. She said that it changes from location to location.

“At first we were on the street where the transvestite houses are located.

³⁶⁴ I asked A. whether or not she has fun in her club still; whether or not she hangs out there. She said that she does have fun sometimes. She does not drink or smoke; nor does she dance. “I just observe people there”, she said. “It is not for the purposes of control. You see man different happenings.” She mentioned how she witnesses two lovers breaking up; or one of them checking out another woman; or a new love budding; or an unrequited love. “Very strange things happen. If you write, you’ll end up with a few books.”

Back then, because the police was on that street all the time, they would come to the club frequently as well. Everyday different cops would come and caused problems. They would ask ‘why are there this many women here. But after a while, it’s been four to five years, they got to know me. There were never any problems inside. Big things like robbery or anything. Because the cops in Beyoğlu always talk to each other, they know where is what. So we don’t have that problem anymore.”

Because there would always be male cops, she had to manage them in a stern way. She said that she would tell them to go inside into the office and that she would collect the identification cards if they needed it. Her management style is always directed towards comfort. Even with the fights that would break sometimes. The club now has a zero tolerance policy for fights and altercations, and she explains this in terms of making people feel more comfortable.

The issue of comfort has a different dimension for Ö.; a consequence that she is not happy with. Loneliness is a central anxiety for Ö. It appears in almost every aspect of her life we talked about. Her prejudice towards lesbian spaces makes her focus more and more on loneliness. This loneliness, according to her, “is something that is peculiar to everyone.” When we had our interview, she had a boyfriend and a ‘fuck buddy’ that was a woman whose company she enjoyed very much and could enjoy anytime she wanted to, unbeknownst to her boyfriend. She said that it is not something that he can handle. She manages this life through a wind of lies.

“I never think about coming out with it. I am not required to give that fight. Let it be private to me. Let it be precious. I would love to share it. I would love for him to be understanding. But if I’m going to have to experience stress because of this every time I go to see this girl, I don’t want it.”

She does not go to activist or entertainment spaces either. She has a very specific reason for not going to Lambda regularly, and that is the sense of ‘community’ there; one with its norms and restrictions she feels she does not fit. The rituals, the norms...etc that are part of that space “are things that I do not want to belong to and I already can’t.” According to her observations in

Lambda there is a specific language (referring to *Lubunca*³⁶⁵), behaviors, activities, styles of speaking such as *madilik*³⁶⁶...etc. When one goes outside of those boundaries, she said that problems occur. She said as if talking to Lambda volunteers “when I come amongst you I have to enter a particular *lubun*³⁶⁷ morality.” At the same time, she said, she appreciates hundred percent the lobbying efforts and the work being done regarding LGBTT rights by organizations such as Lambda. For her Lambda, even from afar, makes her feel less lonely. She also mentioned: “if I were looking for a partner, I would have felt the need to go. Lambda for me is also a place to find partners. If I were looking for partners I would first go to Lambda. I cannot pick up women in bars.” She added: “At a point in my life I want to be with a woman. But I cannot do anything for this. Except for being online, I cannot do anything.”

Regarding what she wants in the future, she said that she wants to live a long-term relationship with a woman.

“I wanna fall in love. I experienced this twice. Both were failures. Because they were platonic. That’s why it took me a while to get over it. I had incredible jealousy fits. I loved a lot. And I was incredibly vicious, got angry and left. She wasn’t going to understand it; I wasn’t going to be able to tell this to her. I don’t want to experience this again. If I find someone, someone that can be ‘the one’ for me, I really want to be in a relationship with her. I believe that not a man but a woman can understand my womanness, my everything. A bisexual like me can understand. It’s going to be easier to share a life with a woman. Someone that can say ‘I understand very well what you are saying’ and make me feel good. It’s not enough to be understanding or tolerant.”

She does not want a cliché lesbian relationship. She hates undertaking heterosexist roles.

“I don’t have the right to oppose it but I by no means want to live something like that. The reason I do not go to spaces is that when I see these adopted roles I retreat. What I am looking for is someone who

³⁶⁵ *Lubunca* is the name of the set of expressions that emerged out of transsexual sex workers attempt to talk between each other without the understanding of their clients, or to talk amongst themselves about their activities in a way that others cannot understand. It is now widely used in LGBTT spaces.

³⁶⁶ In *Lubunca* it means mischief, trouble, malice, and also having a direct attitude without abiding to the rules of courtesy regarding a protuberance. It does not however indicate harmful behavior.

³⁶⁷ *Lubun* is the term used to indicate *eşcinsel*.

thinks like I do. But I also do not want to imprison myself in platonic loves. For this reason, I need to go. I should do it.”

But she does not...

Not long after our interview, her relationship with her “fuck buddy” ended as such, and she broke up with her boyfriend. At a separate conversation we had off record after these developments in her life, she openly asked how to find women partners adding that I would probably know better because I have been interviewing them. And the simple truth is that the women I talked to all have different strategies for this; one even claimed she never had to ‘look for’ partners, “it just happened.” Clearly, though, in the case of Ö. reservations due to groundless prejudices do not help.

It was D. who told me that she never had to look for partners. It just happened, just like the way she ‘found out’ she was a lesbian. In high school, she had her first girlfriend, a short relationship. Then she had another one. She never thought about it or questioned it before. It was not until her parents found out and started asking her questions, that she thought “maybe I am a lesbian.”

She and her girlfriend usually go to ‘hetero places’. I asked her if she ran into any problems she said: “we do kiss but because we don’t do it very openly, the waiters probably don’t see it.”³⁶⁸ But after the pride parade two years ago, at a bar, the waiters warned her friends, two gay men, who were kissing. D. also does not prefer going to lesbian clubs and bars. “Everyone ‘eyes’ each other,” she said. When people stare at her girlfriend while she is with her, she feels uncomfortable.

³⁶⁸ At the time of our interview she was dating a woman who was mostly closeted. She mentioned that they did have some problems regarding her sometimes uncelebratory comments regarding homosexuality. A couple months after this interview, she started dating another woman; someone who is as out as she is, even posted it on facebook.

On the other hand, Zenperest is very curious about these clubs and bars. She spends most of her time at Lambda, but has never been to any of the entertainment spaces. She is somewhat worried about being *kezban*³⁶⁹, even though she thinks that one must go through the period of *kezbanlılık*: “*Kezbanlılık* period is the puberty of *eşcinsellik*. It’s a period when you make mistakes. It’s a natural process. We shouldn’t act like adults. We haven’t lived its maturity yet.”

Regarding lesbian bars and clubs, Zenperest points to a context that I do not focus on this project, however it is important to touch on regarding spaces and how social and economic class is an integral part of its formation. She said that there are stratas in *eşcinsellik*. “And these spaces are where the ‘lower strata’ hangs out. The staratas she is talking about are not specific or particular to *eşcinsellik*. They are not caused by practices of sexuality however they are central to our experiences of sexuality. On the internet³⁷⁰ she met a women (with whom she had a onetime date) who hangs out in these bars. She is a middle school dropout and works at a textile factory. Although she had financial troubles, she left her family home. Zenperest regards this as someone who has accomplished a lot. However, she said, “when we sat down and talked it just doesn’t happen.” With economical class, educational level, social association (long live Bourdieu!) differ the language, styles of expressions, and references we use to convey what we want to say. The way we narrate our story, or even whether or not we feel the need for this narration, differ. In that forms a gap between the educated and uneducated; the activist and the ‘regular’ (or sometimes referred to as ‘conservative’, though this does not mean that activist spaces are free of conservatism, albeit a different form). Zenperest said, “when they go to places like Lambda this person may feel worthless. In reality, it’s their Lambda.”

³⁶⁹ A term used for a person who is callow; inexperienced and naïve.

³⁷⁰ She uses the internet only to meet new people. She prefers to meet up in a social place to continue her friendship. She has a trust issue with the internet. While she is aware the extensive use of the internet to find partners amongst LGTT people, and understands its reasons, she is also perplexed by it.

This polarization was something A. was concerned about as well. At a previous conversation she had mentioned the gap between the ‘activist’ crowd and the more conservative crowd that come to the club. She had said that she really wants the club to be a place where those walls can come down; a place where these polarized groups can communicate. I asked her again about this gap and what she thinks that the club can do. She said that she wants to create an environment where women who are *eşcinsel* but have never “watched an *eşcinsel* movie, read a book on *eşcinsellik*” can come and “experience the *eşcinsel* culture.” She said that there are a lot of conservative women that come to the club. There is a group that got offended because of a poster on the wall of two naked women putting on nail polish on each other’s toes. She said that while she does not understand this reaction, she tries to be tolerant about it. She also told me about the time when a group of women from the activist organizations. They danced all night and by the end of the night they had taken off their shirts. Some of the women in the club drew back to the corner of the club and criticized the women for being too obscene. She wants the club to be a place where these differences, these strong separations can be filed down. Similarly though, the elitist attitude of the more liberal group needs to be filed down as well for there to be the type of communication A. wants to see in the club. The type of communication and sharing A. wants to see emerge in the club requires a level of openness on both ends where no one feels apologetic. To a certain extent, in time, this club may become a space that makes this interaction possible. Because there are very limited lesbian specific places in Istanbul, there is bound to be a mix crowd in one place instead of segregating into different places. As they collide with each other, they may end up finding a way to communicate and share openly as well.

It Ç.K. came to Lambda, it was when she felt distraught and troubled. It was a place for her to alleviate these feelings and her loneliness. It also triggered her coming out to her friends in

Diyarbakir. Her relationship to the entertainment spaces is entirely different than these other women, most likely a consequence of her relationship with Istanbul and how she came to live here. She finds her partners from the clubs or the internet. She said that when you find someone online you have to talk about everything in detail. "You find someone on the internet. You talk for weeks, sometimes months. She either does not open a window³⁷¹, she is embarrassed or hesitates, or you don't know if it's going to be a man. But in a club, you can find a partner in ten minutes." But these are usually sexual partners; one night stands or short term relationships. She commented: "I don't understand this *eşcinsel* community. You look at heteros and they are together for years. Why can't we do it? What is our problem? I want to solve that. For myself too." Heather Love attributes this to tragedy and trauma of homosexual subjectivity:

"tragedy of homosexual subject formation itself; the disapproval of the world makes gays and lesbians into people for who happy romantic love is unthinkable. Homosexual tragedy begins in the world, but it takes root in the person."³⁷²

I asked her whether or not she met someone she could have a long term relationship, and she replied that she did, but it ended. "We had both financial and immaterial problems. Maybe it's because I did not satisfy her in bed." She continued:

"Because I feel like a woman, when I am in bed with a woman I do not want to be the person trying to do things to her all the time. I would want her to do it to me. It's kind of because I find her man-like. It's like in society there is a common phrase 'men do it.' In the rainbow magazine the other day they asked a guy: 'what is a man?' He replied: 'The man is who does it.' Everyone laughed. I also think that way a little bit. Even if she is a woman she is going to be my man. She should do thing to me. I am a little passive. That's why. Both of us should do things. I don't want her to say 'you do everything' after a while. She should do it and I should direct."

It seems all she is trying to say is that she is versatile in bed. But she has been with women who are passive, therefore neither was she satisfied nor does she feel like she was able to satisfy them.

³⁷¹ By window she means video chat.

³⁷² Heather Love, "Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence," *New Formations*, no. 63 (2007). p. 6.

But the only field of expression available to her is gendered; the only terms she can express herself with is the binary gender matrix. As much as she tries to stay as far away as she can from heterosexuals, 'hetero spaces'...etc. she is caught by the hook of heteronormativity.

Constraints in our conceptualization of sex, was an important part of our conversation with Tuna. She shared with me some of the things she witnessed. She mentioned a woman who identified as a lesbian because she is 'active' and thought that she can only be active to women. Then she meets a man and sees that she can be active to him, and she says 'I can be with men too'. She said:

"We're trying to make choices out of very little. That's our problem. We do not have any idea about how wide of a field we are speaking of. And these do not even come out as your essential field of satisfaction. Because you don't have any idea you suppose yourself asexual. A condition that miserable can develop at the end."

Another story she told was about a conversation on sex she came across to in a group mainly of heterosexuals. One of them told the group that she recently had a threesome, one with two women and one man. Although everyone showed interest in the beginning, the interest died down fast.

"They only asked a few questions and the topic seemed like it was about to end. So I asked 'I did not understand anything about what happened there.' I want to know at least these basic things. It was a woman I was talking to. I asked 'were you active to the woman; were you active to the man; was the man active to you?' If I don't know at least this much I don't understand anything. I did not get any answers to my questions because a question like 'what does it mean to be active to a man' was asked to me. They don't know. They have no idea about these concepts. They don't distinguish between active and passive. Because men are always active. I had to explain how a woman can be active to a man."

She is of the opinion that if you have not thought about any of this, the possibilities of sensual and sexual pleasure even the most primitive that is penetration, you have not thought about what you like. Heterosexuality defines sex in very limited terms, therefore, Tuna said, this is not something that is going to happen on its own in bed one night. You have to know what you

enjoy and then negotiate with your partner in advance. Referring to the community she is a part of, one that contains a certain group of people practicing non-heteronormative sexualities and relationships, she said it “opens you up to thinking what you enjoy.” Tuna is interested in Sadomasochism (SM). She utilizes internet sites specific to SM, which is exactly like any other internet sites where one seeks sexual partners. She has a profile where she lists her likes and dislikes, her pleasures and her preferences one by one. Then people ask questions over these items, trying to figure out exactly what they mean. There is a prior negotiation process that clarifies everything beforehand.

“A lot of people come and go. Some come regularly. Right now I have a ‘slave’ who has been coming weekly for the past year and a half, but the others come a few times and then it ends. I experience it in this model. It wasn’t always like that, as you can guess. The internet is a life saver. Due to my age, the internet came into my life late. Before that really it happened the way everyone else finds partners. You met people. You became friends. Then it turned out that they were also interested in it... etc. But when you talk about something this limited, there are few ways to do this. And it’s a huge unknown field. Saying I am interested in SM does not mean I am interested in the same thing. You have to enter it. If you use the *eşcinsel* metaphors, there are actives and passives, there are those who like *balamoz*³⁷³, those who like *manti*³⁷⁴. There are many things like that. Both you are going to find someone who is interested in this in your circle, and in that some who is interested in what you like... It’s not possible. Therefore I say the internet is a splendid place, and nothing else.”

This inevitably brought our conversation to the topic of open relationships and polyamory. Admittingly, I took great pleasure listening to her narrate in such articulation issues and concerns I have been thinking about for a long time now. Tuna’s foundation concern in life is openness. It is not specific to sexuality but all parts of life. In that sexuality, romantic relationships, partnerships...etc. are great spaces to discuss this principle of openness, which opens up a field of overlapping experiences and relationships.

³⁷³ In *lubunca*, it means older men.

³⁷⁴ In *lubunca*, it means young active men.

“When you put all your eggs in one place, you load that relationship with incredible weight, and this means that you do not have any intention to sustain this relationship. That relationship will carry on only until the point it can in that narrowness. It won’t last longer. That relationship rests on consumption. People usually say open relationships, polygamous relationships approach to sexuality in a consuming mindset, but I believe the opposite. The other, in the time frame it has, has no other choice other than consuming till the end whatever you are living. Therefore, really a person, before entering a relationship has only one responsibility and that is having a knowledge about herself. Having thought about it. Having weighed on possibilities. Knowing priorities. One is responsible with knowing things that are ‘sine qua non’; knowing that if ‘that’ doesn’t happen, she will be unhappy. To think that you cannot build a relationship with someone in whom you do not see these exactly, means that we assume there isn’t another formula other than monogamy. Apart from these, in open relationships, things change from couple to couple. For example, after trying many times I realized that the model that I can do is not polygamy. That is what I do is not having more than one partner. I’m going to have a primary partner, and then a other sexual partners. This is my formula. Apart from that, for example, my girlfriend has a different formula. After trials and errors, she said that ‘I do not want to socialize with your sexual partners, your *koli*³⁷⁵.’ That is her rule. Because I find my partners online this is an easy thing. If that was closed to be, we would have been in a predicament. But when you are in an area where all possibilities are open, there is always an exist route. When you are closed off, gradually you are more constrained.”

This is a type of a relationship that cannot handle any time of ‘closedness’, “neither from your other partners nor from the spaces that witness it.” Hence her essential point when it comes to sexuality: openness³⁷⁶. “An open relationship has rules that it has to find for itself but it absolutely has rules.” And this starts with knowing one’s own priorities. “Most of us do not start our lives this way, therefore this is already the hard part. There you’re going to learn by burning your hand which stove you need not brush against.” She returns back to community (which I will discuss in dialogue with her in “Constitution of Happiness”) which allows a person to question herself regarding ‘bodies and pleasures.’

³⁷⁵ In *Lubunca*, it means sexual relations, sex and/or partner.

³⁷⁶ While this is related to the issue of ‘coming out of the closet’; being out, it is not synonymous. Her focus on ‘openness’ encompass all areas of life.

On the topic of open relationships and polyamory, Ö. said: “I was always monogamous but my bisexuality pushed me to poly.” But essentially she is interested in a monogamous relationship, and at his point in her life she hopes it will be with a woman. She said “I experienced the most amazing love towards women.” Z. also enjoys monogamy, but at the same time comfortable relationships; less serious, less committed. In her opinion monogamy is more beautiful; it is something that indicates that her partner does not see her as a sex object. And B. while her current partnership was adamantly against monogamy when it started, as it started getting serious, fears about losing each other and jealousy entered the relationship. While they are more comfortable around limits and boundaries that a lot of homonormative couples are not, she said that they are not thinking about experiencing a polyamorous relationship.

The multiplicity of relationships to and views about space as environments and space as the relationalities of women-loving-women in Istanbul narrated in this section clarifies once again the impossibility of coherence in forms of sexualities. Forms of normalizations, anxieties, fears, hesitations, hasty assumptions and prejudices along with forms of resistance unfold right in front of us in different shapes. Space, therefore, is central to practices or the lack thereof, sexuality.

V. CONSTITUTION OF HAPPINESS

“The “right” to life, to one’s body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or “alienations,” the “right” to rediscover what one is and all that one can be, this “right” – which the classical juridical system was utterly incapable of comprehending – was the political response to all these new procedures of power which did not derive, either, from the traditional right of sovereignty.”³⁷⁷

Ann Chetkovich in *An Archive of Feelings*, begins to explain her book and her project with a reflection on a song by ‘Le Tigre’, an electroclash band based in New York with songs that focus on feminism, queer and left-wing politics. The cries of survival echoing in the chorus of “You gotta keep on living” and the experience of surroundings with the audience at a live show brings her motivation in beginning this project onto the surface. She wrote: “If I were to “follow the trail of breadcrumbs in my head” (to quote Kathleen Hanna) and try to tell the story of how I come to write this book, I would probably start not with trauma but with depression. Or to use less clinical terms feeling bad.”³⁷⁸ This ‘feeling bad’, the appearance of sorrow is a necessary element for and of the lives of the abnormal, in this case women who practice aberrant sexualities in whatever degree.’ What gives us pleasure, necessarily places us in the arms of sorrow.

In this chapter, I look for these feelings, bad feelings, fears, anxieties and sorrow inscribed into the experiences of women loving women, and aim to map out how sexuality is an affective practice, and politics of which has a complex relationship to happiness. In that I focus on 1) processes and practices of coming out as they create feelings of pride and shame, not always easily distinguished as separate; commonly occurring at the same time; 2) family as it

³⁷⁷ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 145.

³⁷⁸ Ann Chetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). p. 2.

dominates the experience of coming out and in relation to that becomes a constitutive element of our happiness.

Emergence of modernity brought with it contractarianism wherein the political authority of the government in service of the nation-state, is given by the will of the people. The early conceptualizations of the ‘social contract’ lead us to two documents which we refer to in excess when we talk about ‘our rights’, and sometimes unknowingly as it is become constitutive element of ‘the modern man’: *The United States Declaration of Independence* (signed in 1776 on July 4th which is celebrated as Independence Day) and France’s *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (signed in 1789). In the U.S. Declaration “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” constitute “the unalienable rights of man.” Similarly, in the French document, the National Assembly in the light of the “incontestable principles” of the declaration “shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all.” Our happiness as individual citizens are to be establish and protected in the frame of the constitution, a contract we sign with the people who are to represent us. While in Turkey the well being of the nation state and that of the people as the servants of the state is put before individual happiness, when we talk about ‘our rights’ we refer to the principles of the documents introduced above, those that “made an essentially normalizing power acceptable.”³⁷⁹

Happiness is directly related to anxiety because it is fragile, impermanent, unstable, vulnerable and a forever fantasy. In her introduction to the ‘happiness’ edition of *New Formations*, Sara Ahmed wrote that:

“Rather than assuming happiness is simply found in ‘happy persons,’ we can consider how claims to happiness make certain forms of personhood valuable. Attributions of happiness might be how social norms and ideals

³⁷⁹ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 144.

become affective, as if relative proximity to those norms and ideals creates happiness. Lauren Berlant has called such a fantasy of happiness a ‘stupid’ form of optimism: ‘the faith that adjustment to certain forms or practices of living and thinking will secure one’s happiness’.”³⁸⁰

The fear of losing, the condition of never being given the chance to have it, and the frustration with constantly striving for something that is never going to ‘happen’ stabilize anxiety as a way of living. In the framework of this project this value changes in a major way with the means to live away from family, the means to go to a university, a bar; and the means to learn English to have access to the increasing literature on subversive sexualities that may help develop a common language reflect thoughts and feelings, and allow one to read books to understand the current debates on sexuality so that they do not feel alone, disturbed and wrong. These means do not guarantee happiness; they only change and/or complicate the circumstances through which we narrate our stories. It is in that complexity that I try to make sense out of ‘constitution of happiness’ in these narrations. “Happiness might acquire its hold by being given as an essential truth, as ‘something’ that we have already consented to in the very direction of our wants,”³⁸¹ wrote Sara Ahmed. I am after the affects of that hold and the contradictions that direction allows to emerge. In that hunt, I try to keep in mind the specificity of modernity to the conceptualization of happiness and its transformation.

“The idea of modernity – with its suggestions of progress, rationality, and technological advance – is intimately bound up with backwardness. The association of progress and regress is a function not only of the failure of so many of modernity’s key projects but also of the reliance of the concept of modernity on excluded, denigrated, or superseded others.”³⁸²

³⁸⁰ Sara Ahmed, "The Happiness Turn," *New Formations* 63(2007). p. 10

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁸² Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007). p. 5.

With this in mind, Heather Love looks at “figures of backwardness as allegories of historical experience”³⁸³ such as those in the books of Walter Pater, Willa Cather, Radclyffe Hall and Sylvia Townsend Warner. These are the texts that “turn their backs on the future” unlike the “contemporary gay, lesbian, and queer critics” who evaluate these figures as “isolated and longing for a future community.”³⁸⁴ That future community signifying the space in which the homosexual will finally feel happy. Mainstream LGBTTT resistance and dissent is built around the hope for happiness; for that paradise, that utopic future to come³⁸⁵. “Because homosexuality is so closely associated with disappointment and depression, being happy signifies participation in the coming era of gay possibility.”³⁸⁶ For the reason that “a great deal of anti-gay propaganda still feeds on the assumption that homosexuality is tragic” Heather Love finds it highly significant to focus on “queer unhappiness.”³⁸⁷ Walter Benjamin’s “angel of history” is a central figure in her conceptualization of ‘backwardness’ as being “an emblem of resistance to the forward march of progress.”³⁸⁸ In “Theses on the Philosophy of History” Benjamin wrote:

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”³⁸⁹

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p.8.

³⁸⁵ “It gets better” project that was started as a reaction to the back to back suicides of American teenagers in 2010 is a direct example of this.

³⁸⁶ Love, “Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence.” p. 3.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p.11.

³⁸⁸ ———, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. p. 147

³⁸⁹ Walter Benjamin, “Thesis on the Philosophy of History ” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007). p. 257.

There is that storm tugging at, pulling forcefully his wings to the paradise, the future. There is that 'progress' bringing forth 'heaven' as it imposes itself upon the idea of freedom and happiness. In this chapter, I try to map out the relationship of 'pride' in coming out and its necessary component 'shame', and the institution of family to this modern conceptualization of progress as it constructs happiness.

A. Pride and Shame

Central component to the modern subject is the ability to identify itself; be itself and declare it in front of and against the 'others'. This self is one that owns reason; that is lawful, progressive, moral, and concerned with achievement. This self always strives to be happy. The lack of such happiness is regarded as unhealthy. Knowledge of oneself, in terms of essential properties, is produced as the only route to 'good life', and the declaration, confession of that core, stable, essential self is a source of happiness and pride. Once sex emerged as that necessary, and constant constitutive element of oneself, transgressions of the norm of sex was regarded as wrong, criminal, sick...etc., the confession became a step in rehabilitation and healing; which later transformed into a way to categorize and therefore render the people legible hence subject to technologies of the self and mechanisms of control.

It's an intricate mess, a spider web made of sharp glass if it were ever possible, this business of 'telling the truth about oneself'. As an in your face declaration of 'I am a lesbian' is really a way to say 'So what?' It operates as a strategy to resist the physical and emotional violence one becomes a victim to soon as the secret of her transgression of the norm is 'out'. It is a way to counteract the shame and guilt one is regulated by. Once it becomes an indication of realness (unless you are out, you are not truly a lesbian!), an element that augments victimization (a forever victim of repression you are, unless you come out!) and/or a sign of dignity, courage and power held over one's head as a reminder of continuous failure (you are impotent if you are in the closet!), the insurrectory force, the resistance it once held disappears in the field of shame it creates. The affects of the discourse of the closet travel between pride and shame.

In the interviews I tried to make coming out stories a central component, through which one hears different narrations of subject formations, relationships and positions regarding the gay

closet. B. had told me in an off-record conversation that she was late in coming out. I reminded her that conversation in the recorded interview and asked her how she came out to herself and others; and what made her think that she was 'late'. It was not until she was 27-28 that she said out loud that she was bisexual, she explained. She had started thinking about it when she was 22 in college.

"I had an idea in my mind; I started noticing it. But it wasn't something I was able to name. Because we don't have an example in our daily life. There doesn't need to be a role model, an Ellen DeGeneres type but there is nothing that is talked about in the open. You don't know what a lesbian looks like, what a bisexual looks like. I continuously had boyfriends. One ends, the other starts. I even had five at one time. But this wasn't something I could make sense of. I had told my boyfriend. He did worse than beating me at school. Then I forgot about it. After that, once the college was over I went to the States for my masters. When the first year was about to end, I went to New York to visit a friend and to talk to NYU for doctorate programs. I had started to scan schools. A girl friend of my friend came over the night we went out. She was a lesbian. After a few drinks we got close, of course, but my friend was not leaving us alone. Because of that we had only kissed. For five months after that I thought about that girl. Not that dense, but it was there. After that I started crushing on some of the girls who were my students. I never thought about any of this in depth then. Following these I had a 3-4 year long relationship. We were together for a long time and we were very close. While still in a relationship I came back to Istanbul for field work."

That is when she started meeting a lot of gays, lesbians and trans people. Still it took a little while for her to reach the women. Everyone she knew was referring her to gay men for advice on the fieldwork. "Gays hate lesbians," she says semi-jokingly. "They would all say 'there is this lesbian but I don't like her'." Once she did connect to some, though, they took her to lesbian spaces, events...etc., where she started meeting more people, feeling much more comfortable. She met her first girlfriend this way. She remembered that when she first saw her, she was not sure whether or not she was a man or a woman.

When she returned to the States after her fieldwork, she came out to her colleagues at a conference where she was presenting her work. She said that because everyone always thought

that she would get married and have kids very soon, gossip ensued. Her advisor commented that it was because she was young. In any case, she was relatively out when she lived in the States, however in Istanbul that changed. At the university that she teaches, she witnessed that someone did not get hired to be the department head because he was openly gay. She finds that she has more need to be closeted here, mainly with her family and her work environment. She has two facebook accounts, for example. One is strictly for school networks and students and the other is for social networks where she is out. Even then, she said, “as much as I try to hold my tongue, I still can’t stay too closeted.”

There are many anxieties and fears that surround ‘coming out’. B. fears for her job security and familial relationships. On the other side of the coin, when she began being present in LGBTTT spaces, she felt ashamed not having come out earlier in her life. As if it meant that she was a fool for not knowing who she was, for not discovering herself earlier... As if there is that core self defined by her sexuality; a stable, substantial core held still in time and history. The question that pops in my mind is whether or not the thought of the possibility that her sexuality could have shifted; what gives her pleasure could have changed, or started giving her more pleasure as she learned more about it and met more people with overlapping pleasures. In the face of the heterosexual hegemony we are already failures; damaged and or monstrous. The discourse of the closet feeds on the demand for Truth on both sides, however. The sense of incompleteness and belatedness remains even when we are out with our abnormalities. On the one side we become on one side subject to rehabilitation. On the other side we are finally a property to be moulded into proper lesbians.

Fear of alienation is another source of anxiety at the threshold of the closet. Ç.K. fears that people are going to think of hear badly, and exclude her. She said: “Before saying something

to a person I want to be certain. I don't want to lose that person just because I am a lesbian. I am not going to hurt her. But she will think that way.” When she first started coming out she was excluded and treated adversely by her friends. Most of them cut their ties with her. While she says she does not want to lose someone for being a lesbian, she is also angry. She said she will never friend heterosexuals again or hang out in any spaces that do not cater specifically to *eşcinseller*. She feels remorse, guilt and shame along with anger and resistance. For her Lambda or the lesbian clubs and bars became a real safe haven, where she can both pick up girls but also feel comfortable; feel like she belongs.

After our interview, some of these feelings have changed. Neither people nor relationships stand still in time. In the aftermath of particular altercations, she felt like there were people in the activist circle that excluded her. While she continued to attend events and visit spaces she mentioned the feeling of alienation. She was very defensive; signaling how hurt she was witnessing this. We did not exchange any details on the issue, just expression of feelings. At the core of the problem lies, I think, the implicit issue of social, cultural and economic class. There are bound to be irreconcilable differences between styles of communication and expression between Ç.K. who is a high school graduate from Diyarbakır; new to Istanbul without any mechanism (yet) to make sense out of its cosmopolitan ways and mind numbingly uncategorizable level of diversity and the city activist, has had some college education and/or a graduate student with economic privilege if not from family, from social networks. These differences are ignored when they are not mentioned as a way to shame the other for being uneducated, on the one hand; for being an elitist on the other.

When Ç.K. was younger, she also had issues with exclusion and alienation. In high school, somehow people understood/thought that she was a lesbian, even though she never came

out, never had a girl friend. During that time she noticed that she liked women but could never voice out her feelings. “I thought I was wrong,” she said.

“I was someone who was branded as a lesbian without doing anything. Without touching, only when I was trying to do something good for someone. I saw her as a friend first. Later came the crush. I never thought anything sexual about her, or thought that she could be my lover. Because I was in the closet.”

Once she was ‘branded’ every time there was an argument, people made jokes about her being a lesbian; calling her names. She characterizes her school life as constraining. I asked her whether or not this experience led her to identify herself as a lesbian, and she said no. She used to have boyfriends to hide behind. She would never let them touch her, or even hold her hand. She only accepted them so that she did not feel like a “third wheel” when she and her friends went out. “I came out to myself completely when I came to Lambda. I made gay friends here and we painted the town red. That’s how it happened. Before that I couldn’t tell myself. I knew myself but how could I explain this to another. That’s important to me.”

This anxiety of narrating oneself is not uncommon; Ö. feels similarly when she talks about ‘expressing herself correctly.’ But in this case, in Ç.K.’s life, the anxiety is related to confession; that is the revelation of a secret that she keeps to protect herself emotionally. While this feeling still persists, she started experiencing something else which emerged after she moved to Istanbul and started being more comfortable in LGBTT spaces. She wants to be visible. She wants people to know that she is a lesbian (while at the same time fears them). She told me that sometimes her friends criticize her for acting too obvious, or calling them ‘gay’ loudly on the street, not using *Lubunca* all the time. They criticize her for outing them when it is not safe. She disagrees.

“I am trying to be visible, I want society to see us. I say ‘walk, you dirty gay’ jokingly. People look. Let them know he is gay. For example that man may be living without know what gay is. The other night at home I

was telling that I licked a woman's vagina. They told me to say *putka* instead of vagina. While I am trying to be visible in society, it makes me sad that my friends aren't."

Lubunca allows us to speak up, between each other, still in secrecy when we need to be. But it can function to push us into even more silence and/or alienation. It shifts back and forth. Ç.K. is well aware of this paradox when she talks about visibility.

Having to be in the closet a lot of times, according to Ç.K., renders us self-sacrificing. She told me how frustrated she sometimes gets at work when women touch her and kiss her. "They hold me because I am a woman. But it disturbs me if it's someone I really don't like. I don't reflect anything about myself. If I did the same to her, but she knew I am a lesbian she would react differently." She constantly feels the need to manage herself and others in hetero spaces or at work which apparently irritates her and tires her out.

Ö. feels the need to be around other people who are *eşcinsel* from time to time for similar reasons. There is a comforting element to being around people who assumingly will not judge one because of being gay³⁹⁰. She said:

"During periods of my life I have to have *eşcinsel* friends. This is something that makes me feel good. It doesn't have to be women. The university regarding this was very helpful. I am in this environment because of the university activism."

Ö. came out as bisexual via her involvement in the formation of the first legal LGBTT student organization in a university. "Before that I first faced myself. I knew that I was bisexual for a long time. I never made it into an identity and tell people. I only told to really close friends." She had to come out to the entire country in the period of explosive publicity and mediatization after the organization formed and was accepted by the university. The excitement she and her friends

³⁹⁰ I cannot ignore that this is not the case for all sexualities. The practices, such as SM are at times alienated even in gay spaces.

from the organization had in the beginning melted into a pool of concern, worry and anxiety with the responses and reactions they received. They were simply overwhelmed.

As soon as the information was released there was an explosion in the media in which everyone wanted to get an interview with the group. They strategized; split the group up to give interviews to the institutions they somewhat trusted. The interview she gave with another person was published in the front page of a major newspaper with her picture which was unexpected. “There was both an incredible pride and an incredible fear. After all this is a country where gays are murdered left and right,” she said. She received a lot of hate mail; the school’s student organization office received a lot of phone calls for more interview requests. She was also afraid that her father was going to find out. Went through an entire period of hiding out; staying at her mother’s house, not answering phones. Because “it’s something he cannot accept.” She was afraid that even if he did not see the paper, their far relatives will notice it and call him up. As a matter of fact, although her father did not find out she did receive a phone call from a relative she never met before. Knowing that this might happen she said she

“developed a strategy. I was going to tell them that the newspaper conveyed everything wrong. My friends were forming a LGBTT organization. I am from the feminist organization. They asked for support and I gave it to them. The fact that I am an *eşcinsel* is not even in question. And that’s what I told the guy on the phone. That they wanted help from a heterosexual and as a heterosexual I helped them.”

The reply she received from the person who called made her realize what kind of trouble they were in. He asked her whether or not she wanted to mediatize this mistake; and if she does he would like to do an interview with her because “this is a scandal.” A similar offer came from a well-regarded teacher at school. They hadn’t met before, but after the interview was published, she came up to her and asked her whether or not the agency she works with can have an interview as well. She regards this period as a very alienating one.

On the other hand this was an occasion that motivated her to come out to her mother and grandmother. “One does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive console, and reconcile.”³⁹¹ The constant feeling of betraying another when you do not feel like you can tell them this ‘little thing’ about yourself is because of this property of confession. These are the field of emotions Ö., like many others when they come out to their families, go through. She explained:

“I bought the newspaper. Going to keep it. I’m looking at it and it pleases me. I went home. I said ‘look mom, I’m in the newspaper.’ She put on her glasses right away, looked at it and said ‘what is this.’ She waited for an explanation. I said ‘this is my situation, I am bisexual; I am *eşcinsel*. Because of the traumas she went through in her life, she was scared that I was going to be branded. Then she got curious and asked. And I told her that I could fall in love with women as well and that this has nothing to do with sexuality. I said to her that whatever I can live with a man, I can also live with a woman. She asked me ‘you are saying this but did you experience something like this before. I said yes. Because I had slept with the daughter of one of her close friends. We grew up together like sisters. We spent our entire childhood together. It happened when we went for a visit. ‘How could something like that happen’ she reacted. Then ‘these things happen when little’ she reacted. I told her I am able to distinguish the two. After the shock she said ‘ok, that’s fine; it’ll pass.’ I said ‘this is my life, this is who I am.’ She dropped the subject by saying ok.”

Everyone in her family she was able to come out reacted differently. The common element was an initial shock with the demand for proof (“have you ever done it?”) through which came a variety of reactions that deflated as time went on. Possibly ignored, or not taken too seriously. Through this whole endeavor, Ö. felt like very lonely. She said that none of her friends showed any support. “Everyone acted like it wasn’t there. They acted as if this event never happened. “I needed support desperately. I was left alone. They stayed silent.” There are tones of disappointment and resentment in her voice. She pulled herself away from the school

³⁹¹ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 61-62.

organization, especially after the prompt by school administration to stop their activities and operations for a while. Her conversation with a representative of the administration escalated to covert threats towards the students who were involved. After the explosion left itself to silence, they decided to put on at least one event, with their own means. Towards the end of the school year they organized a coming out party. Ö. recalls two anarchists attending the party to show support and to give protection if anything adverse happens. She said that this gesture was very important for her; that it made her very happy because it indicates a liberation from introversion of this type of activism.

In “Happiness in a Society of Individuals” Zygmunt Bauman wrote:

“Once cast as individuals, we are encouraged to actively seek social recognition for what has been pre-interpreted as our individual choices: namely the forms of life which we, the individual, (whether by choice or by default) are practising. Social recognition means acceptance that an individual, in practising a particular form of life, is leading a worthy and decent life, and, on this ground, deserves the respect that is owed and offered to other worthy and decent people.”³⁹²

An individual experiences yet another binary system of categorization. On the one hand there is the worthiness, dignity, decency that comes with social recognition and on the other “denial of dignity: humiliation.”³⁹³ It is a paradoxical system. The denial of social recognition to an individual is really the denial of her individuality. She grows up with the proverbial large neon ‘Be Yourself’ sign flashing everywhere around her. But then she is told/shown with whatever means possible (from exclusion to physical violence) that she cannot be herself. She cannot be the individual she told she should become.

“This feeling of humiliation breeds resentment. And in a society of individuals such as ours, this is perhaps the most venomous and implacable variety of resentment a person may feel - and the most common cause of conflict, dissent, rebellion and thirst for revenge.”³⁹⁴

³⁹² Zygmunt Bauman, “Happiness in a society of individuals,” *Soundings* (2008), p. 22.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

In the stories narrated up until now, resentment is not this clear, this certain. It is mixed with the inclination of a being to the outside, sadly experienced as a wish to belong. The contradictions in Ç.K.'s narration of her thoughts about coming out and exclusion present a case of the complexities in affect. There is a sense of rebellion and revenge in her narrative. "They can't exclude me, I'll exclude them," she said when she talked about how she does not friend heterosexuals (same anger was towards the people she felt alienation in the activist network as well). Similarly a feeling of dissent when she talks publicly about going down on a girl, or yelling 'gay' to her friend even when she knows she may be crossing the boundaries of those around her. But these instances are always when she is with others who are lesbian, gay or trans; when she has a common ground, a sense of belonging. When she is at work, or meeting a new person, that is when she is alone, because her 'abnormality' is something that she can hide as a 'femme' lesbian, she chooses to hide it; fearing denial, humiliation, exclusion...etc. Same fear, same anxiety, makes Ö. feel incredibly excited, happy and grateful to an even a little show of support from an 'outsider'. It does not occur to her at that moment that an anarchist not showing support would be an anomaly not the other way around.

D. came out to her family unexpectedly, when she was unprepared as well. While it did not involve a public announcement like Ö.'s process, it involved a lot of turmoil, and a lot of disappointment which I discussed in "Glittered." Although she had a girlfriend, it was not until her mom asking her 'are you that way' that she started thinking of it as an identity. It was not until when somebody else was trying to 'know' her by placing her into known categories (which are at the same time open to manipulation). D. said "I never felt like I should say it. I only say it when the topic arises. Of course it affects my life but I don't want to prioritize it. I don't want

people to think of me as a lesbian. I want them to think of me as D.” That is where the resentment really builds up. When someone does not think of a person *as such* there is also an erasure effect. Some people react to this and find ways to counteract it in many forms of activism, some people just sink into a ‘well of loneliness’, others extract themselves from their current living quarters, thereafter happening upon subversive communities. There are countless forms of reactions one gives to denial of recognition, dependent upon many contextual factors, but always bouncing off the walls of pride on one side and shame on the other.

Zenperest leads a dual life. Outside of the LGBTTT activist circle she only came out two of her ‘hetero’ friends: one is an Armenian friend of hers from school and the other one is also in the religious community her family is a part of. She said “to me it’s harder to come out to someone who grew up in Turkey with Muslim doctrine.” She explained that it is because “while we are supposed to be prejudiced towards each other, she is going to look at me as a human being.” And she added: “because she doesn’t know how it passes in Islam she is going to judge less.” I asked her how she came out to her friend from the religious community with these thoughts in her mind. She said that she knew it was someone who would be more or less ‘understanding’ and someone that she could trust.

“I made her guess. I said to her: ‘Something is troubling me. Something I haven’t been able to say for a long time. I made a decision. I made a decision on something about myself. Guess what?’ She asked me: ‘Is it about you being mannish?’ I replied: ‘Just the opposite. It’s about me being more feminine.’”

Her friend’s reaction was not negative however she regards it as a temporary situation; something that Zenperest is going to leave behind after sleeping with a few women. She said to her as someone who is familiar with the her religious community: “you are at an age where you

can make your own decisions. But you must protect yourself. You must be an even more closed off person.”

It is also easier to come out to men, Zenperest thinks. “When you come out to a woman, she may suppose that she is a target.” She fears that a woman would question her past action or even treat her as a pervert. D. had a few experiences where women she was friends before they learned she is a lesbian, started questioning her behavior in the past, in one case doubting the ‘purity’ and ‘innocence’ of her hug.

For Zenperest coming out, at least to LGBTT spaces, was an “emancipation.” She explained:

“When I came out to my best friend, I thought I was not going to come out to anybody else. I used to say to him ‘you are the first and the last person.’ But in time something like this happened: the woman I was in love with was seeing other men all the time, and experiencing emotional stuff but I am always alone. We experience a bunch of things together in the form of friendships, beautiful things, but the bond she forms with her boyfriends is very different. What if I don’t come out and this goes like this...what if I can never forget her. Or yes I forgot that woman, I gave up...Am I always going to be alone. When I looked ahead like this there is always a lonely life in front of me. Yes I love living alone. I love going to the movies alone but there are times when a person feels the need for a romantic relationship. When you think about these things at your loneliest moment, it pushes you into a depression in a chaotic way. I thought about that and decided to come out.”

I asked her if she thinks of being out as a guarantee for not being alone and necessary to be happy. She said that she finds meeting online and forming a relationship that way very strange. She prefers becoming friends in a face-to-face social environment and then thinking about a romantic relationship. For that reason, she said, “being out is like a guarantee for not getting lonely. It’s important to form relationships with people like me.”

It is not something that she does very often, talking to people like she does with me about her feelings and thoughts regarding her sexuality. Until about a year ago, she could not talk to anybody; not just about being a lesbian but about her feelings in general. She said “it’s because

of not being able to express myself not having accepted myself. I hadn't come to terms with being a lesbian; I couldn't name it. With that, I also couldn't come to terms with any of my feelings." By coming out to herself, and then within a year coming out to the activist circle both in school and the city wide LGBTT movement, she started getting more comfortable about talking. I was her first interview/serious conversation and she was incredibly excited to do it. She said that she needed to talk like this, openly and in detail. Months later, she told me that she gave another interview to another student, and that she really likes "talking about this stuff."

At first, she said that she was hesitant about entering the space of LGBTT activism because of wearing a headscarf. "I was anxious about the reactions I would get." She explained that she received no adverse reactions and "they did not even care about my sexual orientation; what was important to them was my presence there." While she is highly closeted elsewhere, she is also very active very present in the activist circle both feminist and LGBTT. While she lives with her friends away from her family, because she is not out to her housemates she still has to manage her life at home. Our experiences somewhat overlap here. I am similarly closeted about my sexuality towards most of my family with whom I live in very close quarters. However I work on a thesis project that leaves me very small chances of denying it, if it ever becomes a conversation piece. We both hide our books and brochures if they seem too revealing. In our homes, our most intimate spaces, become places where we feel uncomfortable the most.

Zenperest looks back on her life a lot; her childhood and her adolescence and remembers certain instances and examples that she thinks are 'telling' of who she is right now. She told me that she was always a little masculine; never played with dolls and played with guns and other 'boyish toys'; never got along with girls and always played with boys. "They would always say 'she must have been bounced off from being born as a boy at the last moment' or called me a

‘tomboy.’ I was the person who was excluded by girls, and accepted by boys.” Then she told about a time when her third grade teacher gave her a book about a girl who becomes a boy after passing under a rainbow. “She told me ‘read this, you’re going to like it.’ After I read it, I was even more confused. I questioned myself: ‘I wonder if I would also become a boy if I pass under a rainbow?’ or ‘am I supposed to be a boy?’” It was not until high school that she came to terms with being a woman, and started defining herself as a lesbian. “I realized that I liked women when I started masturbating. In elementary school, I would fall in love with my female teachers but I couldn’t make sense of it; is it admiration or something else.”

Her experience with LGBTTT activism, she explained, helped her to “improve” herself because she feels like she does not have to hide anything about herself. On the other hand there is still something she partially hides, still fearing judgments: “although I don’t feel like I belong to the religious community, my family is and I don’t tell everyone that.” Moreover, she said that she is looking for a model, a formula for people to feel comfortable even if they are closeted, “a way for them to join without being exposed, like a teletubbies costume or a mask when coming to the pride walk.” This corresponds to the point that Tuna Erdem criticizes in the mainstream LGBTTT movement in Turkey in her article. She wrote:

“Looking closely at the text prepared to call for the 2010 *Eşcinsel* Pride Walk is informative enough to understand the place of secrecy in these politics. In the text, there is a call especially for ‘closeted’ *eşcinseller*, it is endorsed that they can hide their identities by wearing glasses or hats, and going even further ‘assurance’ is given by saying “there is benefit in reminding that although 3000 people joined last year, due to the censorship we did not appear in media.””³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ Erdem, "Hizadan Çıkmaya, Yoldan Sapmaya, ve Çıkıntı Olmaya Dair." p. 16-17.

She criticizes the call that is made for a march to show ‘pride’ in our sexual practices for expecting us to find some kind of use in the “openly homophobic attitude” of the media in Turkey. She added:

“Surely, the pride organization committee is concerned with guaranteeing the increase in attendance and crowd presence with this ‘strategy’. However, while doing this, it should not go unnoticed that they reduce each of those who attend to a ‘number’ and give a promise of becoming invisible. It is not seen contradictory the presence of a crowd that reveals how much they fear, how much they are ‘ashamed’ of being exposed by hiding behind glasses and hats in an event organized for *eşcinseller* to show openly that they feel ‘proud’ of themselves. The promise of the *eşcinsel* struggle to the *eşcinsel* people is this: there is a politics where individual differences are ignored under an *eşcinsel* identity that supports invisibility.”³⁹⁶

A concept that goes beyond the binary of pride vs. shame, that is ‘openness’³⁹⁷ was the main topic of our conversation; and in fact according to her it is the core of the issue. On the first page in her forthcoming article, referenced above, as a footnote Tuna wrote:

“Without Seda Ergül this piece of writing would not have happened. I owe a thank you to the love of my life Seda Ergül who gave me courage and the possibilities to be queer, motivated me to write on the topic of queer and spared hours and days to share with me her thoughts on my every sentence.”

This gesture is how I opened up our conversation. It was bound to reveal what she understands from queer but also it signaled the necessary self-reflexive approach³⁹⁸ to queer politics of sexuality. I asked her what she meant by courage and what was it that Seda did that gave her as “courage and possibilities to be queer.” She replied:

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

³⁹⁷ She used the term *açıklık* which means openness but is also used as ‘being out of the closet’. The openness she talks about needs to be distinguished from the closet. While there are moments when she means coming out of the closet in the sense of aberrant sexualities it is more than that. This openness is much more complicated than the metaphor of the closet. Moreover, it indicates a life-long, ongoing, that expands to all aspects of life not just sexuality and must be practiced by making no concessions.

³⁹⁸ She calls it the “personal plane” and uses an anecdote to enter it, noting that this recollection is not of a happening that is out of the ordinary but a part of her daily life relations.

“For me the road that goes from LBTTT to queer is a road about courage. The only place that they are aligned is this. Everything starts with openness. The necessity of entering into the personal in an academic article is built upon this for me. We’re talking about something that starts with coming out. This coming out is something that is infinite. For example a lot of people are out nowhere else but Lambda. This is a kind of ‘being out.’ To be fair there are a whole world of people who are not even out this much. There is thing about being out to family members that are more or less understanding. Or there is being out to the family but not to place of work. This is a thing that goes to infinity. And it is something that is necessary to do over and over again. For example Seda and I reserve a room in a hotel and then we go. When they see that we came as two women they say ‘oh we reserved a double bed for you, we’ll change that immediately.’ Right away, as soon as you arrive you have to come out. Constantly one must live it with every person she comes in contact with. Therefore being closeted also has different types. Really, I have been out to myself since I have known myself. When I was in middle school I really was walking around saying ‘I am a lesbian’. But they looked at me as a kid. No one took it seriously. I never faced any of the problems you do when you try to come out because ‘she is just being childish.’ Because it is not conceptualized as a category any different than ‘I’m going to be a superman when I grow up’, you never come out. Therefore it means nothing for me to say I have been out since I have known myself. This is the first. The second comes to my personal thing which is not being able to come out because of verbalizing it too much. Like this, to everyone I met, I would say ‘I am Tuna and also I am bisexual.’”

She said that this can become a way of closing up. What she was essentially doing, she explained, was hiding behind her words. “At the end because I was able to say it comfortably to everyone, I assumed I did not have any problem with it.” Her relationship with Seda brought her to realize a sense of ‘closedness’. One that she had not seen an example of anywhere else. Almost a cage without any exit; a cage that blinds a person. “It’s a mechanism that does not allow for me to recognize that I actually had reservations and fears although I came out verbally. Therefore, with Seda’s entrance to my life what broke was something like this.” When she met Seda, she was in a monogamous heterosexual relationship. She said that before she experienced this transgression, when she was with a woman she would “close up the heterosexual part” and when she was with a man, she did the opposite. As she noticed the permanence of the closet

unless one practices 'total openness' she also realized that "it is not something to be restricted into one field." She continued:

"I have to be open about all issues. It's not going to happen by just saying I am a bisexual. Or it's not something that's going to happen by saying I am a lesbian. My private life has to be public. Otherwise you really have to come out one by one regarding every single issue."

This is what she means by courage and by it being the road to queer. In order to eliminate constant obstacles and problems regarding managing oneself, being this 'open' to the 'outside' is the only way. Or at least something we never tried. She told me an anecdote of an interaction she had with a LGBTT activist.

"I was dancing at a bar with a beer bottle in my hand. And I was dancing while I was holding it like a dick. She came up to me and said 'because of people like you, they tell us that we have penis envy'. I told her 'although this is not the place for it, what you just said is phobic. Let's talk one day; I'd really love to.' If you continue be the person who apologizes for something she does, hide it, or see it possible that it is necessary for you to be rased for this or that political, social reasons this issue doesn't end. This way you can never be open. You can never benefit from what being open brings you. It's a package. I have to be open up to the smallest detail of my sexual life... But it's not just that. I have to be open regarding my political views. I should not be filing them down. It's like without having an apologetic tone but of course being open to the condition that I may be wrong and that there may be another way of looking. But to be able to see that, one already has to act honest to the utmost degree. You must be able to say what you're thinking with total openness so that the coming reaction can affect you; can stand at a place where it can hit you. Once you start twisting it around, really you end up protecting yourself. Protecting yourself from the possibility of looking from a different angle. At the end it means to be open to every attack. Because an attack becomes something that you can benefit from. Also it means to be open to transformation. This is the part that interests me a whole lot. Because I also realized this: by being open, I mean in this way being open, what is the hardest is to be open to changes. You may say I like making love this way or that way. Ten years later you may not choose to relate that way. But then everyone that you came out to come down on you."

The openness she focused on, constantly coming back to it in our entire conversation is what prevents the operation of self control mechanisms that necessarily makes one subject to surveillance, control and discipline. She suggest putting down the guards with which we think

we protect ourselves. For they create the illusion that we are protected from the abuse of heterosexual hegemony. What it does is making us more vulnerable to attack; but more importantly easier to control, easier to turn docile.

Coming out of the closet creates a rupture. It is a breaking point; sometimes a creation of a new identity or what allows for new forms of relationality. When one's realness, Truthfulness and therefore happiness is claimed to be dependent upon it, the discourse of the closet constitutes our happiness and at the same time our freedom as if truth is by nature free or produce freedom as an inherent function. Foucault wrote:

traditional themes in philosophy, which a “political history of truth” would have to overturn by showing that truth is not by nature free – nor error servile – but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. The confession is an example of this.”³⁹⁹

It remains a system that reproduces shame as much as it introduces pride. Tuna's focus on practicing total openness does not allow shame. What it does allow are the conditions of possibility for us to expose ourselves to the other in order to share and to communicate. It makes possible the experience of *clinamen*; an inclination towards an ‘other’ that is to say in terms of Jean-Luc Nancy. This inclination according to Maurice Blanchot who wrote in a dialogue with Nancy, is due to a “principle of incompleteness.” A being moves towards the other not to complete itself but to validate its existence, in a contest with the other. It “puts itself in question, which question needs the other or another to be enacted.”⁴⁰⁰ This overlaps with what Tuna said about total openness: “you must be able to say what you're thinking with total openness so that the coming reaction can affect you; can stand at a place where it can hit you.” Total openness is

³⁹⁹ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 60.

⁴⁰⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (NY: Station Hill Press, 1988). p. 5.

the condition of possibility for *clinamen*; for the positioning of beings where they can ‘touch’ each other.

Communication is one of the principles of the community that Jean-Luc Nancy conceptualizes (which I will further develop with Tuna’s experience of a queer community in the last section). While he does not specifically focus on ‘openness’ in this way, the type of communication he describes is related to the “exposition to the outside” which necessarily brings total openness. Communication is “the constitutive fact of an exposition to the outside that defines singularity. In its being, as its very being, singularity is exposed to the outside.”⁴⁰¹ Giorgio Agamben, in his recapitulation on Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*, traces the meaning of ‘outside’ in Latin and Greek only to find that it is not an external space, unreachable and discontinued. On the contrary in both languages (in Latin it is “the door of the house; in Greek it means “at the threshold”) it designates an opening, an access, and not a limit:

The threshold is not in this sense another thing with respect to the limit; it is, so to speak, the experience of the limit itself, the experience of being-*within* an *outside*. This *ek-stasis* is the gift that singularity gathers from the empty hands of humanity.”⁴⁰²

Singularity of a being, and this is where it is severely distinguished from individuality, indicates its plurality. The principle of communication between *singular-plural beings* does not create a bond but a sharing of alterity, with the circulation of meaning of the self. It constitutes a way to speak in terms of a *we*, that which

“makes sense of the world as the spacing and intertwining of so many worlds (earths, skies, histories) that there is a taking place of meaning, or the crossing through of presence. “We” says (and “we say”) the unique event whose uniqueness and unity consist in multiplicity.”⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*. p. 29.

⁴⁰² Agamben, *The Coming Community* . p. 68.

⁴⁰³ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*. p. 5.

That multiplicity is what Tuna Erdem insinuates with the title she gave to her forthcoming article: “Regarding getting out of Line, straying, and becoming Salient: Not Identity, sexuality! Not single type sexuality, sexual multiplicity!”

Primarily, identity is fluid. It fluctuates contiguously. It is also a performance of fabricating a way to represent oneself. However, identity is generally perceived as a stable, consistent, continuous, singular and unifying experience of the self. In fact, it is practiced as if it were such most commonly as a way to validate a socio-political existence of people who are oppressed or otherwise have seen only the sharper side of the knife. As circumstances of a person, or a group change, however, identity is either crushed and destroyed, or recreated and restored. As being travels in time and space so does identity; it develops, shatters, splits, and fragments. It is not an endless experience of a constant unity, but a multiplication of the self; each factor imposing its own model of normalization on the being. Moreover, it is commodified and consumed as such, betraying its claim of authenticating a being. While establishing its difference, originality and uniqueness, identity creates a boundary, a protective bubble, making transgression from either side punishable. Inclusionary properties of identity, directly produce exclusion of those who do not belong to it. Not isolated from cultural, social and political surroundings, identity, what makes a being postulate *I am such and such*, serves for its own manipulation and regulation. Instead of unifying it marginalizes and polarizes beings. Regulative and constraining normalization practices utilize identity, the signification of individuality, resulting in the illusion of a sovereign, autonomous, independent, and free individual.

At the same time, no matter how paradoxical, it provides a realm of existence, a space for self validation for the marginalized. This paradox is not to be taken lightly, as it is the contradiction itself that creates the aforementioned illusion. As a strategic performative

construct, identity finds a stable ground for existence on a 'righteous path to liberation'. Politics of being 'out' as lesbians and the development of strong political unity has served the purpose of empowering women, and produced a space for representation and visibility. It is important to keep in mind, still, "the institutional privileges enjoyed by those who can afford to disavow "identity" and its "limits"" and "those for whom such disavowals reproduce their invisibility"⁴⁰⁴. This particular layer of the paradoxical constitution of identity requires special attention. It is important to watch where we stray but continue to incessantly insist on multiplicity. That multiplicity is what has the potential to eliminate the hold of essentialistic view of sex and loosen the grip of pride and shame on our happiness; freeing our 'bodies and pleasures.'

⁴⁰⁴ Martin, Biddy. "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]", 275.

B. Greatest Evil: Family

If this project takes as its central problematic the ‘forms of normalization’, it will not be complete without talking about family. It can be argued that this in fact should have been the core of this project considering the following points:

- a) ‘Family’ was what pushed me into focusing on normativity in the first place. It was my own relationship with my family that caused me to be this infatuated by ‘queer’ resistance and problematization of family, leading me to turn it into an academic endeavor. With my return to my ‘homeland’ I was placed under strict observation with overwhelming efforts to ‘show me’ (which really means ‘make me’) the modern Turkish way, which included rigid moulds of ‘ideal member’ of ‘this’ family, ‘ideal (republican) young woman’, ‘ideal citizen’...etc. ‘Ideal’ can easily be replaced with ‘proper’ to give a fuller picture. My body and my clothing, the material verification of *myself*, was pulled this way and that way from the moment I set foot in the country. I was to re-learn what I must have obviously forgotten. I was to be indoctrinated as a re-born Turk. And family never stops, never tires of this duty; however much one resists it.
- b) In 2010, the pride week central topic was declared as ‘family’ by the organizers. It should not be mistaken however, not all forums, and not all articles printed in the Pride Week Book and elsewhere regarding the topic was problematizing hetero/homo-normativity as constituted by ‘family’. In fact, this type of critique was limited to a few examples.

- c) Most of the coming out stories start with coming out to ‘family’ in Turkey. Both in the conversations I refer to in this project, and in the coming out meetings I attended, family was the primary source of fear and anxiety in ‘coming out’.
- d) LISTAG (LambdaIstanbul Family Group) receives an exceptionally high regard in LGBTT organizing emphasizing how significant family is for LGBTT politics.

For the reason that I chose to focus on narration anxieties with respect to our sexualities, at this moment it seems more fitting to be discussed, however, as a part of ‘constitution of happiness.’

In “Thinking Sex” Gayle Rubin wrote: “economic sanctions, family pressures, erotic stigma, social discrimination, negative ideology, and the paucity of information about erotic behavior, all serve to make it difficult for people to make unconventional sexual choices.”⁴⁰⁵ Especially the intimate relationship of ‘economic sanctions’ and ‘family pressures’ in Turkey increase coercive power exponentially. Like Tuna said in our conversation this condition is very specific to Turkey. “In Western cultures, due to its definition, family already does not support you after a certain age.” The fear of being cut off financially and the anxieties that surround the process of hiding and managing family, at least to the extent that we observe here, is specific to Turkey.

It was our conversation with Tuna that inspired me to create a separate section on family. She said:

“All evil starts with family. My problem is with the institution of family. In this country there is a law for the protection of family. Therefore, the things you can say about this is also limited. It’s really under protection; we’re talking about an institution that is under protection of the state. We don’t need to talk about *eşcinsellik* and so on, one by one. We don’t need to talk about a heteronormative system as if it exists. That’s family already, nothing else. On the one hand there is the concept of ‘the child’

⁴⁰⁵ Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” p. 31.

and on the other hand there is family; these cannot be separated from each other. The entire constraint is built in relation to this. So family is what imposes this heteronormative system. You are already born into that. At the end it is what teaches you it. For that reason, without attacking the institution of family, demanding any kind of rights from the state has no meaning. You can receive whatever right you want from the state on paper. For as long as family exists, we're not going to go even one step ahead. This is one side. The second is that constraints regarding almost all queer sexualities come up to the protection of children⁴⁰⁶. Therefore the problem is family. For me if there is an area for political struggle, it is with the institution of family. I address nothing else. The entire system is built upon family. The evil is that family. Law is not the problem, state is not the problem. The problem is family."

This section is built upon that problem of family and what kind of anxieties and fears surround that family as well as the spaces of resistance that appear outside of it.

According to Foucault family does not operate to restrain, restrict, and repress sexuality. "On the contrary, its role is to anchor sexuality and provide it with permanent support."⁴⁰⁷ Families produce normalization, docility and conformity. Whatever does not fit the heteronormative, reproductive family model is either thrown out or persuaded with whatever means available or possible to 'fit'; or at least act like it.

"Families play a crucial role in enforcing sexual conformity. Much social pressure is brought to bear to deny erotic dissidents the comforts and resources that families provide. Popular ideology holds that families are not supposed to produce or harbor erotic non-conformity. Many families respond by trying to reform, punish, or exile sexually offending members. Many sexual migrants have been thrown out by their families, and many others are fleeing from the threat of institutionalization. Any random collection of homosexuals, sex workers, or miscellaneous perverts can provide heart-stopping stories of rejection and mistreatment by horrified families."⁴⁰⁸

The initial reaction of D.'s family created an emotional turmoil that lasted about six months. She did not intentionally come out to them; they learned about it after finding pictures of

⁴⁰⁶ Here she is referring to the idea on which Lee Edelman built his book *No Future*. It is that the concept of future, therefore progress, is built upon the figure of the Child. That figure is impossible to go against and therefore coerces people to conformity.

⁴⁰⁷ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 108.

⁴⁰⁸ Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." p. 22.

her and her girlfriend. Until they asked her, she had not even thought about it. She said that she just experienced it, did not name it, did not think about it.

“When my parents asked me about it frankly at first I was afraid. They learned when I wasn’t at home and my mom called me and said to come home right away. I went home and found that they had taken away my computer. My dad is taking my phone away from me. They took everything that a young person can have. It was the semester holiday and the school was going to start that week. My dad told me ‘you’re not going to school for one week.’ I said ‘ok, fine’. I wasn’t in a position to say anything. And I was also thinking ‘my god how did this happen to me, how did they find out about it all of a sudden.’ To tell the truth I wasn’t expecting such a reaction from my family. I was already going to tell them myself after a while.”

It was her first year in college and she was put on curfew where she had to come home right away after the classes ended at three. At first she said she conceded, but two months later she decided to leave home and told her parents that she was going to drop out as well. For a week she stayed with her girlfriend in the dorms of the school she went to in another city. They moved to a different city after her girlfriend’s roommate learned about them. Through the roommate the school learned and then of course the family. D. explained that her girlfriend’s father was a very angry, restricting man. Because her girlfriend did not know what to do, they both decided to go back home. When D. returned home, her family did not say anything or ask anything. “They were miserable,” she said. They still did not know where she had gone to and what she did. Once they learned after finding some of the things that she and her girlfriend wrote to each other, a second dramatic period ensued. Her mom told her to leave the house and accused her of ‘doing this’ to get attention which was going to cause her parents to get a divorce. D. said that she never felt guilty about this because she knew it was not true that it was her fault; they had already been fighting everyday: “I said ‘go ahead, get a divorce. I am leaving too; I have nothing left to do with you.’” So she left. But not even a week later her mother called her to come back, saying that she was not going to say or do anything and that it would be for her own good to continue living

at home so she did not have to work while going to school. D. returned home once again. She explained:

“After that my mother continued to question me. She was constantly asking me ‘are you bisexual or lesbian?’ Sometimes I said ‘I don’t know.’ Sometimes ‘I’m bisexual’ and sometimes ‘I’m lesbian.’ It changed depending on my mood. But I actually knew I was a lesbian. With my dad we never talked about this subject. He absolutely did not talk about it. ‘It’s your life, you’re going to live this life. Live it however you want but don’t put yourself in a position where I can’t protect you,’ he said. ‘I never talked about this topic with you, I never will. Because it is not something I can accept. Just take care of yourself.’ He said things like that from time to time. But he never opened the topic asking whether or not it ended. But my mom always asks.”

One time, when her mother witnessed D. crying hysterically because she and her girlfriend broke up, she came up to her and said “if this is something that upsets you this much I will accept it. I can never understand it, I can’t talk about this subject easily with you but I will accept it.” This marked the moment when she stopped questioning it. It became almost a ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ matter. I asked D. whether or not this changed her thoughts about her family. She responded:

“That’s probably the biggest effect. When my mom and dad gave a reaction like this I was very disappointed. Because I did not think they were people like that. Wanting the best for someone, wanting the best for everyone, staying in jail for ten years because of that and then when it is their own child saying ‘how could this happen’ and reacting extremely like taking her phone away were things I did not expect and so I was very disappointed.”

Similarly my own mother’s negative reaction when I came out to her (though it was not even close to the trauma D. experienced) had disappointed me greatly. It was an unexpectedly negative reaction from someone who has never expressed anti-homosexual views. Quickly after the initial shock she got used to the idea, however the sense of disapproval remained.

E. came when her mother asked her whether or not she liked women (just like D.). She never gathered the family around to do a big performance. Her mother’s reaction was hysterical

to the point of saying “we did not raise you to be like that.” After that however she ignored the situation and they hardly talk about it, unless her mother says something about marriage or kids. What is significant in her relationship with her mother is the bargain she made with her. It is a clear example of that intimate relationship of family and economical ‘freedom.’

E. wanted to study Sociology in college. When her scores from the college exams came in, her mother told her that she cannot study Sociology with she has such high scores and that she must go into law to become a lawyer. Social sciences and humanities are neither regarded with high prestige nor involve high income in Turkey. She was forced to study law even though she had enough scores to go to the school she wanted for Sociology When E. accepted her demand, she said she decided to bargain with her. “I also presented her some conditions. I hoped for a prearrangement however of course those conditions are not realized. They were financial conditions. I remained a law student.” She added:

“Beginning with my sophomore year, I told her, ‘I want to live away from you.’ Two years before that my mom already knew about my sexual identity and we were always in a battle. We still are. But this didn’t happen and now, going even more backwards, she is telling me that I can only leave this house once I build my own firm and sternly closed the doors.”

This is an example of a direct bargain; one that is shaped by the middle-class expectations of this society, and the ways in which the ‘kids’ look for a way to manage them.

“I would like everyone to accept it,” said A. referring to her family. “There are moments that make me sad but I don’t mind it that much. ‘This is me,’ I say. I am the way I am, it’s not going to change.” We talked about the differences in our behavior with our families and the differences between family types. In what can be categorized as western, middle class, liberal and secular small family, I hide almost all of what does not fit to the unity of my family. There is

a practice of standardization in the types of families such as mine. But her family, which can be categorized as more conservative, there is a different attitude towards differences.

“My family is a very large family with cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. My father has 19 kids. He had wives. I never saw my other mothers, they passed away before I was born. Right now only one of my step mothers is alive. But they all had kids. We are very close with my siblings but there is an age difference. For example my older brother has a daughter who is my age. I am an aunt to my niece who is my age. So I don’t know how it will affect her to know that her aunt is *eşcinsel* but I am out to all of the family members I am related to in the first degree, except for the older ones. I don’t hide it. But I also don’t sit and talk about it. I introduced my girlfriend to all of my cousins, nieces/nephews... everyone. They all know her. Some are against it. Some don’t support it but I am out to all.”

Although some are against it, there never occurs any conflicts. She explained this as follows:

“In the family, I am someone who is liked. Someone to whom a lot of people come for advice. Not just my peers but also those who are older than me comes for advice. They come and ask things. Sometimes about financial stuff. Or confer with me when investing. I really like that. I think because I live a lot of things in life very properly me being an *eşcinsel* does not stand out so much. If I had lived very carelessly, if I had not held onto anything in life, financially, as a status or prestige... there isn’t anything like lower or upper but if I were someone who lived improperly they may have seen my *eşcinsellik* differently.”

She added: “as Kurds we have always faced discrimination. Kurds were alienated, they couldn’t be equal, they were always mistreated. You can’t talk in your language, use your name. Maybe because of that, because *eşcinseller* are also second class citizens, because they are also not equal...” She regards her family’s somewhat positive outlook to the possible alliance between those who are live precarious lives.

Zenperest is not out to her family. She thinks that she would be restricted in a lot of ways if she tells her family that she is a lesbian. “Although they are liberal, because relationships can change I do not think about coming out to my family,” she said. She talks to her mother about her views on gender, sexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality...etc. however she does not mention

herself. They know about her best friend who is gay, however she still fears that they may have a different reaction if they knew about her.

Regarding families' reactions and possible acceptance, Tuna said:

“As long as you articulate being a lesbian in terms of heterosexual norms, you do have the opportunity to be accepted. Once you go outside of their world completely, that's when you have no chance of being accepted. But I don't worry about being accepted. At the end I don't accept them, why should they accept me. Once they start accepting I will suspect myself to tell the truth. I must have sculpted a part of me for them to accept me. These two things can't go together: On the one hand we say there exist a heteronormative system; on the other hand we want to be accepted to that world. Either that system is not as ambiguous as we say, or at the end we are looking for ways to tailor ourselves to that system. We worry about being a part of that system. Getting my family's approval was never an issue for me. I came out and my relationship with my family ended. I don't feel any sorrow because of it. Of course when it comes to coming out to family, there is something that everybody knows. It is not something that happens one time. You say it, they act like nothing happened. They insist on understanding the parts that suit them. You say it over and over again. It can take years. Being open for real means opening up the type of life you live. Then it stops being something that they can deny, or ignore.”

For Tuna any agreement means a compromise. The level of openness she is talking about requires a different kind of attitude. “You have to dare losing. For as long as you don't dare to lose, you will live in fear and anxiety all the time.” This is why, as she explained before, the road to queer goes through ‘courage.’

For the reason that it is in family that our identity and character is shaped, this is not an easy process, said Tuna. “It is not one moment; it is a long process;” one that is not only about sexuality but everything. It rules with fear; fear for the ‘Child’. That ‘Child’ is the figure of future, the figure of reproduction, the figure of normalization, the figure that you cannot go against. Along with the production of a figure that becomes an indicator of one's humanity (good or evil) or success (or failure) of becoming a woman (good vs. bad mother), family produces a

‘land of ruins.’ “There is something like you will be destroyed once you go outside of it. You can’t survive that way” said Tuna. You cannot survive, neither can you be happy.

I have been saying ‘I’m not going to get married; I’m not going to have kids’ since I were a kid. The responses I received from all around moved from ‘You say that now, but when you grow up you’ll change your mind’ to ‘You won’t be happy.’ “The fear is entirely built on discourse,” Tuna said. I had mentioned to her the feeling of loss and emptiness that may come ‘after family’, and that this is where a great deal of anxiety and sorrow emerges. She said that before coming to the topic of sexuality, she had already lost her trust in family; she knew already that for her it was not possible to act along with them.

“Therefore I had found my own way. It is not an emptiness for me; what you call emptiness was nothing other than freedom. There is a relationship between emptiness and freedom, no doubt. Regarding the condition of not being bound somewhere... regarding the existence of a space for movement. For me emptiness is not a negative concept.”

But in that she also does not deny how hard it can be to split from something so forceful, so powerful which is when she returns back to Seda and how her relationship with her was a transformative force. She became a strong support for her but it was not all her. “If it was going to end with Seda, our relationship would have ended. If I were to expect everything from her... because it would stop being a real relationship.” Instead of the “survival instinct” that operates with family, the group of people “we cannot choose,” they formed a relationship that was ‘different’.

“This is where I have to mention ‘community’”, Tuna said. She articulated what ‘community’ is to her:

“Once you get rid of the people that you can only be together by being someone other than yourself, it becomes easier to find the group of people you can be with, as yourself. For me, the moment when there was no fear in the world was the moment I found this community. I use the

word community in this way: we are no longer talking about persons with names. They'll come and go; and then others will come. But at the end there is that community there. There is a big group of people who more or less have the same concerns in life, and want to live in a similar way. Once you meet that gang, be in it or not it doesn't matter. The sense of loneliness, emptiness disappears. Their numbers may be low. But it is always more than family. However large a family is, community is something much larger. At the end you are not alone. This is the whole thing. Therefore, once you discover that you don't have that kind of worry. Provided that you do not create mechanisms to discipline yourself just to stay in a community. The entire thing about community is that it is built upon the mentality that you will never be judged. For whatever reason it starts the mechanism of inclusion/exclusion it becomes family. Therefore, I'll have nothing to do with a community that uses family metaphors. In our friend community it is forbidden to use family metaphors."

She mentioned that they place a control mechanism for the language of kinship used amongst themselves. Because family is so rooted in us and in our culture, she said that it is "something that needs to be combated constantly." What makes that combat easier is to agree on what the real problem is. "Once you decide on what the actual evil is it becomes easier to take your guard against it." Looking away from kinship models of relationality and instead towards an existence of multiplicity allows these beings to actuate 'another world.' Tuna said that this experience thought her that once one opens up oneself fully, there comes the realization that what one is looking for is right there. The community that she connects with is in the same neighborhood that she has been living for a while. "It's like not having any idea about it even when living right next to it... There is that slogan 'another world is possible.' It's something that is always attributed to the future. But it's not there. It's right in front of your eyes, if you can see it."

Regarding developments of these types of new relationalities in subcultures, Judith Halberstam wrote that "subcultures, however, suggest transient, extrafamilial and oppositional modes of affiliation."⁴⁰⁹ They "make visible the forms of unbelonging and disconnection that

⁴⁰⁹ Halberstam, "What's that Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives." p. 315.

are necessary to the creation of community.”⁴¹⁰ Halberstam’s purpose in her study is to identify subcultural space and time practices that are alternative to the life narrative. She emphasizes that she does not intend to say that in these practices, experiences reproduction is impossible, unheard of...etc. However these lives do represent differences and discontinuities. Her argument is that participants of these subcultures are enabled and in fact empowered “to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of the conventional forward moving narratives of birth, marriage, reproduction and death,”⁴¹¹ in return producing “alternative temporalities.”⁴¹² She reads this involvement as a stylistic investment. Referring to Judith Butler and her analysis of ritual as a concept “that can either reinforce or disrupt cultural norms.”⁴¹³ These participants in queer subcultures do practice certain rituals that nurture a subversive style of existence. She who is “excluded, rejected, abjected”⁴¹⁴ creates spaces and specific ways of communication, and styles of relation to each other.

These ‘new’ ways of relationality was at first “shocking for us”, said Tuna.

“For example, we meet up for breakfast. At the end we are people who are used to the heterosexual culture; when we meet up for breakfast it has an end. There’s nothing like that. Life continues together. This was something that we noticed and that weird us out at first. Because you realize this: it’s not like putting new friends in place of the old ones. It’s something that requires you to change your life style. And we did resist to some of them until we got used to it. Because it was new to us. Another thing is about someone from the community coming to visit you at home. It doesn’t fit the heterosexual nice and sweet moulds. Right when he comes to your home he goes into your bedroom, opens the drawers. Goes through your everything. A person who was raised with heterosexual family values may end up experiencing this almost like a rape. But it was something completely different for me. I saw the materialization of openness. I have nothing to hide. I am whatever I am. There is not an effort to present myself as something else. It’s not like cleaning up before a guest comes to your home. Nothing like that. He comes to me. He comes to whatever I am. And whatever he sees he

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p.314.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 314.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

accepts. Therefore I don't need to clean it up and package it. In front of you there is someone who is sure he is different than you. And in that he looks with curiosity. You see people that look with curiosity like 'let's see other ways of living.' It does not contain any judgment. 'I'm sure she doesn't live like I do. Wonder how she lives.' He comes to learn just another way of living. There is that kind of an openness. You observe people who come and go through all of your stuff ,say 'oh maybe it's better to do it this way' and pick up whatever fits them and do it the same in their lives."

Tuna felt as though this community is a life saver. For her there were two very important points about this community that indicates total openness and made her feel comfortable instantly. The first one is talking about sex. "While our most favorite thing in this life is to talk about sex, there is a limit and a manner to it. If you talk about it frequently, you become the person who can't think about anything else." However, in this community it is much different than the heteronormative social networks. There is not a thing called 'too much detail' or any kind of boundary when it comes to sex. For Tuna finding people who talked about the things she likes to talk about in the openness she enjoys was refreshing. Related to this is the practice of open and direct communication. There is no concern for hiding anything in the name of being graceful. "In the norms taught in families, there is this thing about not saying what people think about each other, or saying it by moderating it. The thought of not saying something negative is related to the concept of openness." She said that her openness had caused her a lot of problems throughout her life. In this community, they practice the opposite. Amongst these people she can be as blunt and as open as she is. "In fact it's a character trait that people value here." She stressed that she was not fond of this community or felt like she fit in because of her sexual choices. "I can say this with content that even if I were a heterosexual, I would have chosen to live in this community. It's not about my sexual choices. There is something else there. I would have been a fag hag then but would have still lived here."

Another thing about family is the state of adolescence that it induces. Adulthood is marked by compliance to the life track that step by step leads you from school, to career, to marriage, and then to motherhood. Along that track, there are timelines and age limits to which one must obey. Family makes sure that happens mostly with a reward system that operates in direct relation with compliance. With increased compliance to adulthood, one receives respect and trust with which comes increased 'freedom.' This systematic operation is not limited to the space of family that is generally defined. This is why Tuna was cautious in her description of 'community' and acknowledged the need for constant recalibration as the 'family' may show its head unexpectedly. She noticed that around the time her relationship began with Seda. They met in a friend group that was composed of heterosexuals. When they met they each had boyfriends, and were both in monogamous relationships. While Tuna was out as bisexual, Seda was not. They spent two to three years together in this group. She continued with their story that links itself to her central concern which constantly reappears in every angle: openness and its relationship to family vs. community.

"In that period there was a long flirting phase, though there was always doubts on whether or not it was real. The only person that uttered anything was my ex-lover who is a woman. She asked us whether or not we slept together in front of everyone. After that, without discussing whether or not there was something before or anything like that, we made love. We had already done everything else. As you can imagine all hell broke loose in the group. We both broke up with our lovers at the time. All heterosexuals took the sides of the men who were 'betrayed and abused.' We were completely excluded. I can't lie about it, it was painful. People that you've been so close with to up and go like that all of a sudden is a painful thing but we were able to go through it in love. At the time I lived with my boyfriend and she lived with hers and we did not have any place to make love. I say this because this is something that you would experience with family when you are an adolescent. We experienced the exact same problem. You can experience this in anywhere that the concept of family enters. Apparently we were a family that was responsible for protecting the heteronormative norms. Because people that we were so close told us that we cannot enter their house, that we cannot make love there."

The extension of adolescence is not limited to a place to have sex but all practices. Once one leaves that mould of heteronormative family, wherever it is, one becomes a permanent adolescent. However instead of a condition of constraint and regulation, it becomes a space for resistance. It is the embodiment of “the refusal to grow up and enter the heteronormative adulthood.”⁴¹⁵ It is that space of failure to ‘become’; to ripen; to wise up which emerges as a refusal to normalize. Halberstam points out that this is apparent in the longer lasting participation of queers in subcultural activity which is usually during pre-adulthood for heterosexuals. Continuous adolescence is the political space for unbecoming and un-belonging and the emergence of new forms of relationality.

After the experience with their friend group, Tuna and Seda “locked themselves into a two person world,” Tuna explained. By the end of two years of this life for two, they began experiencing problems. “We had no one else in our lives and we did everything together. And this is something that pushes the relationship too much. Seda said this, and that’s why I say that I owe it to her all of this: We need *eşcinsel* friends.” This started their meeting of people that they felt comfortable with; a period of forming new relationships in which they could experience a commonality that they had not before. “At first it intoxicated me,” she said. Although she does not deny that this new group of people, new form of sociality contained issues as well, but at the end it was the beginning of experiencing a space that makes possible the multiplicity she favors; a space that allows a her to go outside of her own limits and explore a ‘commonality’ with others.

This potential for the already existing peculiarities of *Beings* to actuate the emergence of a way to relate to each other without the overbearing presence of systems of domination, and in a community that embodies but not repudiates or regulates those foundational peculiarities brings

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p.330.

about the discussion of *Being Singular Plural* and *Community* in the way Jean-Luc Nancy articulated. His conceptualization of community examines an environment where the conditions enable a *Being* to think in terms of a *We* without having to abandon its differences; to embody being *singular-plural*. In relation to community, being and gay happiness which intersects with the tension between the pride of perseverance and shame hidden in failure and belatedness of the ‘victim’, Heather Love wrote: “When the future that is being marketed to us is so intensely bright. The good life may be out there somewhere... then again, it may not. In any case we have tended to find our pleasures elsewhere.”⁴¹⁶ That ‘elsewhere’ for Tuna is a queer community which emerges in the conditions of possibility as articulated by Nancy. According to him, “A community is not a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project – nor is it a *project* at all”; neither it is “a communion that fuses the *egos* into an *Ego* or a higher *We*.”⁴¹⁷ This community necessarily includes principles of communication, sharing, finitude, resemblance and love, and *happens* in the *presence of singular-plural beings*.

Singularity of a being is inseparable from its plurality⁴¹⁸. In the first section of *Being Singular Plural*, “We Are Meaning,” Nancy explains this plurality via the concept of meaning. “Meaning is its own communication or its circulation. The “meaning of Being” is not some property that will come to qualify, fill in, or finalize the brute givenness of “Being” pure and simple,”⁴¹⁹ he wrote. Meaning, then, necessitates the presence of *clinamen*. Because ‘we are meaning’ and it indicates circulation and communication, a being becomes singular plural. “*Meaning is itself the sharing of Being*.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁶ Love, “Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence.” p. 12.

⁴¹⁷ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*. p. 15.

⁴¹⁸ “Singularity of each is indissociable from its being-with-many and because, in general, a singularity is indissociable from a plurality.” ———, *Being Singular Plural*. p. 32.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

This conceptualization of ‘meaning’ is positioned against, as problematized by Foucault, the becoming of sex our meaning through the logic of sex as it operates in a deterministic fashion with the emergence of modernity. In that the space for resistance and being singular plural overlap, designating community of singular plural beings as a place for political action, and politics as a place for new communities to emerge. In that separation, the presence of outside is certain. Because “the law of touching is separation.”⁴²¹ You cannot touch what is not separated. There appears alterity, the outside and necessarily the plurality. They are the conditions of our being and meaning. “Everything, then, passes between us;”⁴²² between our meaning(s).

So far as the being is singular plural, it is unidentifiable; its representation is impossible. “the singular-plural constitutes the essence of Being a constitution that undoes or dislocates every single, substantial essence of being itself,”⁴²³ wrote Nancy. For queer is also unidentifiable to the same degree; ambiguous, and incoherent, it arrives as the embodiment of being singular plural. Agamben wrote that what is imperative in this conceptualization “is the idea of an *inessential* commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence. *Taking-place, the communication of singularities in the attribute of extension, does not unite them in essence, but scatters them in existence.*”⁴²⁴ As the subject exposes itself, tears the limits of his own identity, while meeting the other’s limits. Tuna brings up the idea of community against family with this in mind. Family establishes and regulates a coherence in the way it relates. It provides protection to the essence of sex and identifies limits accordingly in which transgressions become violations. In this understanding of community, however, and this is where Tuna finds solace, transgressions are essential to being and fundamental to the constitution of community.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p.5.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴²⁴ Agamben, *The Coming Community* . p. 18.

VI. CONCLUSION

Subjectivity is enticing for it allows the scholar to mark a field in order to map out how metanarratives emerge as a continuously functioning mechanism to frame its subjects. In this project, I tried to use that space to reflect on the narrations of anxieties, and the examples of resistance therein, of women loving women in Istanbul. The unique experience of modernity in a cosmopolitan city like Istanbul, keeping in mind the place it occupies geopolitically, formed a web of complexities and contradictions. Provided the space limitations, I had to focus this thesis to a number of points:

- 1) The experiences I focused on were of women who performed politics. The field indicated by ‘politics’ is not limited to the mainstream LGBTTT activism. It is a field that extends to any type of engagement in the field from volunteering at an organization, to owning a women only night club; from writing on the subject to participation/performing in sub-cultural activities. It was important to me to stay away from trying to ‘know’ them and instead I looked for the ‘how’ in their narrated stories.
- 2) Marking the 1980 military coup as a fracture in the history of Turkey, following on Nurdan Gürbilek’s cultural criticism, I focused on in intersection of the contradictions emerged thereafter and the anxieties surrounding practices of sexuality specifically in Istanbul.
- 3) The matters of realness, authenticity, passing and truth operate intricately with a) (in)visibility and representation of women loving women and b) the anxieties that surround narration of practices and experiences of sexuality. ‘Games of truth’ and

‘technologies of the self’ as articulated by Michel Foucault allowed an analytical space for this discussion.

- 4) At last I focused on sexuality as an affective practice in which our happiness is constituted by the metanarratives in question. The anxieties and fears as ‘affects’ of pride and shame which necessitate each other’s emergence, and their manifestation in relation to the institution of family form an intimate map of practices and experiences of sexuality. A brief discussion of community as the space of resistance (political and affective) provided an opening for queer to *happen*.

Regarding ‘getting in line’ Tuna Erdem wrote:

“Everyone who grew up in this geography, during mandatory elementary education have repeatedly experienced getting in line, aligning oneself in accordance with the shoulders of the one in the front. Heteronormative system forms exactly this way, by aligning, adjusting one’s own position with respect to the one ahead, without being salient, without moving, freezing in a straight and thin line.”⁴²⁵

She connects this getting in line practice performed usually for state ceremonies to practices of sexuality. In that, sex becomes a problem not because of being aberrant in its nature but when it is practiced outside of the norms of heteronormative family which emerged as a stable pillar with modernity.

As Foucault wrote “The society that emerged in the nineteenth century” along with creating a discursive field of sexuality where everyone talked sex, it “set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex.”⁴²⁶ It became

“the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within

⁴²⁵ Erdem, "Hizadan Çıkmaya, Yoldan Sapmaya, ve Çıkıntı Olmaya Dair." p.7.

⁴²⁶ Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, 1. p. 69.

us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends.”⁴²⁷

This fear and anxieties that come along is foundational to the study of subjectivity focusing on ‘aberrant’ sexualities. Both the space explored and the scholar who engages with that space receive a share of the ‘burden’ or failure. In Turkey, with respect to the unique experience of the project of modernity, it emerges as double failure. The condition of never having the capacity to become ‘west’ or always being late/belated, always being a copy appears in the lives of women in a critical way for they become state’s apparatus to alleviate this failure. There in arise the particularity of women loving women in Istanbul. Mode of becoming woman has no end goal, much like the mode of becoming western. Women loving women as they do not fit the greater project of modernity and its family norm become a mirror to the metanarratives that surround sex, gender and sexuality in Turkey.

Furthermore...

The toughest engagement was finding where and what to focus on during this journey. The intersectionality of sexuality troubles and complicates the work of the scholar greatly. This project could have traveled in many other directions not mentioned in the body of work.

Gürbilek’s metaphor of the ‘shop window’ can be further developed in relation to political economy of sexuality. How women loving women become a part of emerging markets, and receive recognition as such is an aspect ignored in this study. Queer theory and methodology has the potential to be one of the strongest critique of capitalism. The exploration of the experiences and practices of women loving women with that concern in mind could expand this project’s horizons.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

The use of bodies and pleasure in this study exists on the sidelines as I take my focus to be narration anxieties. There are, at this time, no academic studies of how we, as women loving women use our bodies to have pleasure in this cultural context. Development of a project that takes bodies and pleasures as a central concern remains a necessity.

In this project it may seem that I am offering queer as the savior or the solution to all of our problems as women loving women with the way I've structured this project. That is not my intention. This structuring, the way queer or my reading of it as the embodiment of being singular plural placed towards the end is only a reflection of how queer theory and politics came to my life. If we can view this conclusion as end of a certain journey then it is only natural for queer to complete it as it filled the empty spots in my conceptualization of not only sexuality but also other fields. I say this with complete awareness that this is neither an end to this project, it is impossible for it is a living, breathing area of culture, nor my journey in this field. In fact it is only beginning and therefore this should be read as an un-conclusion. This time, though, it is beginning with queer or *kuir* or *terso* or *ibne*... whatever the word we choose to signify stubborn resistance to constraints imposed on, around and from our bodies, our being. Queer "scramble our understandings of place, time, development, action and transformation,"⁴²⁸ wrote Halberstam. If this thesis somewhat leads the reader to that confusion, then it performs the task intended.

⁴²⁸ Halberstam, "What's that Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives." p. 331.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community* [in English]. Translated by Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: Theory Out of Bounds, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Ahmed, Sara. "The Happiness Turn." [In English]. *New Formations* 63 (2007): 8.
- Amar, Paul. "Security and Neoliberalism." Paper presented at the Doing Queer Studies Now University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010.
- Balka, Mirosław. "How It Is." London: Tate Modern 2009.
- . "How It Is." Tate Modern, <http://channel.tate.org.uk/media/47872674001>.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. "Happiness in a Society of Individuals." *Soundings* (2008).
- Benjamin, Walter. "Thesis on the Philosophy of History " Translated by Harry Zohn. In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 2007.
- Biddy, Martin. "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[S]." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelove, David M. Halperin. New York Routledge, 1993.
- Bildirici, Faruk. "Eşcinsellik Hastalık, Tedavi Edilmeli." *Hürriyet Pazar*, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/pazar/14031207.asp?gid=59>.
- "Birlikte Pışmeye Kuşkusuz İhtiyacımız Var." KaosGL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/elbette_birlikte_pismeye_ihtiyacimiz_var.
- Blanchot, Maurice. *The Unavowable Community* [in English]. Translated by Pierre Joris. NY: Station Hill Press, 1988.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble* [in English]. 2 ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. 2.
- Çakır, Bawer. "Bdp Ve Chp: "Kavaf İstifa Etsin!"." Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/bdp_ve_chp_kavaf_istifa_etsin.
- . "Lambdaistanbul Da Kavafı Mahkemeye Verdi." Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/lambdaistanbul_da_kavafi_mahkemeye_verdi.
- Cenk Özbay, Serdar Soydan. *Eşcinsel Kadınlar: Yirmi Dört Tanıklık* [in Turkish]. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003.
- Chetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* [in English]. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

- "Dev-Sol Davasında 29 Yıl Sonra Karar." CnnTürk.
- "Dikkat Aile Var! 18. İstanbul Lgbtt Onur Haftası Kitabı." İstanbul: Lambdaistanbul, 2010.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge, 1984.
- Erdem, Tuna. "Hizadan Çıkmaya, Yoldan Sapmaya, Ve Çıkıntı Olmaya Dair: Kimlik Değil, Cinsellik! Tektip Cinsellik Değil, Cinsel Çeşitlilik! ." In *Türkiye Tarihi ve Toplum Üzerine Queer Okumalar* edited by Cüneyt Çakırlar Serkan Delice. İstanbul: Metis Yayınevi, 2012.
- Ertürk, Ali Ekber. "Akp'den Memecan, Kavaf'a Tepki Gösterdi: "Talihsiz Sözler"." Akşam http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/akpden_memecan_kavafa_tepki_gosterdi_talihsiz_sozler.
- "Eşcinsellik Hastalıktır' Sözü Düşünce Özgürlüğümü! ." ANF News Agency; Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/escinsellik_hastaliktir_sozu_dusunce_ozgurluguymus.
- Fissel, Mary. "Gender and Generation: Representing Reproduction in Early Modern England." In *Sexualities in History*, edited by Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay. New York: Routledge 2002.
- Florence, Maurice. "Foucault." In *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984*, edited by James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [in English]. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. Tavistock Publications, 1972.
- . "Impossible Prison." In *Sylvère Lotringer*, edited by 1961-1984 Foucault Live: Collected Interviews. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996.
- . "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." Translated by Random House. In *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- . "Subjectivity and Truth." Translated by Robert Hurley and Others. In *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984*, edited by Paul Rabinow. London: Penguin Books 2000.
- . "Technologies of the Self." Translated by Robert Hurley and Others. In *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984*, edited by Paul Rabinow. London Penguin, 2000.
- . "Truth and Power." Translated by Leo Marshall Colin Gordon, John Mepham, Kate Soper. In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

- . *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality: 1* [in English] [La Volonté de Savoir]. Translated by Robert Hurley. History of Sexuality. 3 vols. Vol. 1, London: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Gürbilek, Nurdan. *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark* [in English]. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004.
- . *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window* [in English]. London: Zed Books Ltd, 2011.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity* [in English]. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.
- . "What's That Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (2003): 313-33.
- Halley, J., and A. Parker. "Introduction." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2007): 421-32.
- Halperin, David. "The Normalization of Queer Theory." [In English]. *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2 (2003): 5.
- . *What Do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk, and Subjectivity* [in English]. MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2007.
- Jagose, Annamarie. *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and Logic of Sexual Sequence* [in English]. NY: Cornell University, 2002.
- "Kamuoyuna Açıklama." Irkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe DurDe Girişimi ve Sosyal Değişim Derneği, <http://www.durde.org/2011/04/kamuoyuna-aciklama/#more-3278>.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz A. "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case." [In English]. *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 22.
- Kaplan, Hilâl. "İslâm Ve Eşcinsellik Meselesi." Taraf <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/islam-ve-escinsellik-meselesi.htm>.
- "Kavaf'a Destek: Eşcinsellik Bir Hastalıktır! ." Dünya Bülteni Haber Merkezi, <http://www.dunyabulteni.net/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=108742>.
- "Kavaf'a Tepki Yağdı. Utanç Verici, İstifa Etmeli." Kaos GL, http://www.kaosgl.org/icerik/kavafa_tepki_yagdi_utanc_verici_istifa_etmeli.
- Koyama, Emi. "The Transfeminist Manifesto." <http://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf>.

- Lauretis, Teresa de. "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by David M. Halperin M.A.B. Henry Abelove. NY: Routledge, 1993.
- Love, Heather. "Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence." [In English]. *New Formations*, no. 63 (2007): 14.
- . *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* [in English]. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Marcus, James Clifford and George E., ed. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Martha, Vicinus. "They Wonder Which Sex I Belong To: The Historical Roots to Modern Lesbian Identity." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* edited by Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelove, David M. Halperin. NY: Routledge, 1993.
- McDowell, Linda. "In and out of Place: Bodies and Embodiment." In *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Moffat, Zemirah. "Queer Giving: An Audio-Visually Guided Shared Ethnography of Wotever Vision (2003-)." University of Westminster, 2009.
- Muñoz, David L. Eng and Judith Halberstam and José Esteban. "Introduction." [In English]. *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005): 18.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural* [in English]. Translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O' Byrne. CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- . *The Inoperative Community* [in English]. Translated by Lisa Garbus Peter Connor, Michael Holland, Simona Sawhey. edited by Peter Connor Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2004.
- Newton, Esther. "Just One of the Boys: Lesbians in Cherry Grove, 1960-1988." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelove, David M. Halperin. New York Routledge, 1993.
- Puar, Jasbir. "Ecologies of Sex, Sensation, and Slow Death." *Social Text Journal*, <http://www.socialtextjournal.org/periscope/2010/11/ecologies-of-sex-sensation-and-slow-death.php>.

- RFSL, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Rights. "Kadınlar Arasında." In *LambdaIstanbul*, edited by The Swedish Federation for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Rights. Istanbul, 2010.
- Rubin, Gayle. "Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on "Thinking Sex"." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 1 (2010): 15-48.
- . "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Michèle Aina Barale Henry Abelove, David M. Halperin. NY: Routledge 1993.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet* [in English]. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990.
- . *Tendencies* [in English]. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Stoller, Paul. *Sensuous Scholarship* [in English]. Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Tuksal, Hidayet Şefkatli. "Birlikte Pişmeye İhtiyacımız Var!" *Star Gazete*, <http://www.stargazete.com/yazar/hidayet-sefkatli-tuksal/birlikte-pismeye-htiyacimiz-var-haber-247547.htm>.
- "The Unilever Series: Mirosław Balka." <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/unilevermiroslawbalka/default.shtm>.
- Vance, Carole S., ed. *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*: Pandora, 1992.
- "Welcoming and Opening Plenary Session ". Paper presented at the Doing Queer Studies Now Conference University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people who came into my life created the conditions that made this project possible. Without them this project and my journey in academia would have lacked creativity. Without them I would have been filled with regret instead of gratitude and joy.

First and foremost, I thank each of the nine participants in my interviews for this project. They spared hours for me and graciously shared intimate stories from their lives without reservations, allowing me to transform myself and my project. I value each interaction greatly and am tremendously thankful that our roads crossed.

In this process that renders a person fragile; that pushed me into an unfamiliar solitude I received the mentorship of a few very valuable scholars. It is an honor to have been mentored by them while developing my ideas. They each, in their own way, enriched my journey. I will be forever grateful for their warm presence and careful direction. I could not have written this thesis without them. More importantly, without them I would not have felt intellectually fulfilled and hungry for more at the same time.

Cüneyt Çakırlar is the crystal ball of my masters education at Istanbul Bilgi University. He has been instrumental in my quest of finding what is primarily significant to me as an intellectual. It was the space he created that sparked up my ideas. He remained calm and critical while leading me down the path of ‘queer theory’; building a strong and balanced pillar for me to lean on. He is my mentor, my ‘academic mother’, my friend, and hopefully in the near future my colleague.

Ferda Keskin strengthened and deepened my knowledge of political philosophy and encouraged me to present my ideas with precision and clarity. He introduced me to Jean Luc-Nancy, opening up his conceptualization of ‘Community’ and ‘Being’ which led me down a path that I longed for but did not notice previously. I am gratefully indebted to his teaching. His pedagogical style remains inspirational.

The wonderfully pleasant Selen Ansen has been a source of continuous motivation and addictive encouragement since the first day I met her. Her beautiful smile along with prompt, detailed and inspiring comments on everything I have written in the past two years has kept me grounded and on track. Her delicate and delightful manner will stay with me as a safe house and her friendship a valuable piece in my treasure box.

The Cultural Studies and Philosophy and Social Thought master programs in Istanbul Bilgi University made it possible for me to meet exceptional people; my mentors, my teachers and my friends. I took something from everyone I came in contact with in the past two years. These two programs attract unique people I came to admire. No expression of gratitude would be enough to describe the impact of my experiences here to my life.

At the foundation of the conditions that made these experiences possible is my family. I feel lucky to receive such strong and unparalleled support from them. The following three people, specifically, have always been with me; never against me.

Duygu Aksoy motivated me to take a chance and to go outside of my comfort zone which initiated this journey. Without her encouragement I would have been spinning my wheels, still trying to figure out a beginning.

My mother, Buket Durgun, not only financed my graduate education but also raised me in love and care with only one condition: to nurture that love and care to share it with others. In light of all that she could and could not do for me I grew up to be the woman I am today. I look forward to the new chapter of our relationship we began to write in these two years apart from each other.

My father, Aykut Durgun, remains to be a source of energy. From him I learned my failures are only experiences, necessary for all that I can make possible for myself. I owe it to him my realization of the joy in engaging with this field. He never tired from expressing how proud he is of me. It is impossible to express my gratitude and love with words for both my mother and my father. All that I can write here feels dull and insufficient.

I cannot ignore the help and support I received from my friends while writing this thesis. They brought me tea and coffee, cooked for me, provided me a peaceful and quiet place to study and sometimes even a bed to sleep on. They listened to me when I needed to talk; they talked to me when I had nothing left to say. More importantly we laughed together. I would like to specifically thank Elif Keskinçilic for allowing me to use her art as a cover to this writing and for teaching me about courage. She is forever inspiring with her creativity and audacity.

I always trust the kindness of strangers. Some of them became friends; others remained strangers forever. My journey has been shaped by their trespassing of my life. One of those strangers who created a space for himself in my life, marking this body and this city forever is Ömer Albayrak; my compass.