Introduction

Early June 2016. I was invited to attend a symposium on Turkish-American Studies in Istanbul.[1] Reluctantly, I agreed to join. My reluctance was not because of disinterest or bad time management, on the contrary. I longed to return to Istanbul, where I had spent four of the most challenging but rewarding years of my life. I also wished to reconnect to some of my friends and colleagues from that period. My reluctance, instead, was due to the political situation in Turkey. I had heard rumors—soon substantiated—about Turkish colleagues being discharged, some of them having to clear their desks overnight. I know of at least two of my former colleagues—one from Bulgaria, the other from the United States—having had to leave the country, or even having been threatened with imprisonment. It was unclear to me what the reasons for such sudden and drastic measures were, but I was aware of a sense of imminent threat that many of my colleagues in Turkey felt, unrelated to any specific action that would bring them under political suspicion. I asked myself whether I had done anything that would bring me in danger if I were to reenter the country. Might scholarly writing about Turkey have turned into a risky business?

At the last minute, I did attend the conference. Without regrets. It was a happy reunion with old friends, and an opportunity to make new ones. Istanbul to me seemed not very changed. I registered a heightened military presence, but I had seen that before. I could move freely. Istikal Avenue was thriving with tourists and shoppers, and the nightlife was booming in Cihangir. All

1 The symposium took place at the Istanbul Office of the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) in June 3-4, 2016. It was organized by Belma Baskett, Anthony Greenwood, Louis Mazzari, and Gönül Pultar on behalf of ARIT and the Cultural Studies Association of Turkey. The proceedings were published as *The Turkish-American Conundrum: Immigrants and Expatriates between Politics and Culture* (2019), which includes my own contribution on James Baldwin's theatrical endeavors in Istanbul, reprinted here.

seemed the same from what I had seen a decade before. And yet, the people I met at the conference confirmed that colleagues of theirs had been dismissed without notice and that they worked under the constant strain of surveillance and suspicion. Former colleagues from the university I had taught at were in fear of losing their jobs and were already looking for new ones. Soon after, on 23 June 2016, the university—one of 15 universities across the country to be impacted by the "biggest purge in Turkey's modern history" (Lowen)—would be closed down altogether due to alleged entanglements with the Fethullah Gülen Movement, which had been declared a terrorist organization by the government and therefore a threat to national security.[2] The closure led to issuing detention warrants for more than 170 university employees and the displacement of all of its students ("Fatih University Report;" "More than 50").[3]

July 2016. During the night of July 15th, only a month after I hesitantly attended the symposium, another coup d'état would be added to the long list of military coups in the Turkish republic's history. The military instigated an unfortunate and futile revolt on the Bosphorus Bridge, and five days after the failed coup President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared the state of emergency, which would enable him to eliminate internal enemies. In this speech, he moreover announced: "We will also build the historical replica of those barracks in Taksim, whether they want it or not" ("Erdoğan Topçu Kışlasında Israrcı," qtd. in Çıdam 370), implicitly acknowledging that after three years and even after the coup attempt, "he still considered the democratic protest that took place in Taksim's Gezi Park as the most significant challenge to his popularly supported authoritarian rule" (Çıdam 370). The state of emergency officially ended in 2018, but the legacy of that 'emergency'—the toxic climate of fear and retribution with its reinforced political measures and continuing

2 Gülen, the supposed mastermind behind the 2016 coup, has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999. As Lowen explains, the Gülen Movement "was once close to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan—Islamists reshaping a constitutionally secular country. But from 2013 they fell out badly. Gulen followers within the police and intelligence services were blamed for orchestrating phone leaks that appeared to implicate Mr. Erdogan and his inner circle in corruption." Fatih University was closed and the institution's assets seized based on a decree "ordering the closure of 15 Turkish universities, in connection with a state of emergency declared by the government following the failed coup attempt on July 15" ("15 Universities Shut Down").

3 At least one former professor of Fatih University and journalist of the *Zamam* daily newspaper, Ahmet Metin Sekizkardeş, was sentenced to nine years and is still in prison ("Former Professor;" "In a Secret Document;" "Ahmet Metin Sekizkardeş").

arrests and purges—still now holds the country in a tight grip. As I am writing this introduction, press releases continue to inform about discriminatory measures by the Turkish government against women, artists, regime critics, and queers.[4]

Based on my 4-year-stay in Istanbul (2004-2008), working at a very conservative private university, and witnessing the climax of queer visibility before Erdoğan's repressive politics took hold, this book reflects on various manifestations of queer culture and their interaction with transnational, especially European and American cultural contexts. Turkey, seemingly forever on the verge of joining the European Union and yet as far away from succeeding as ever, has become a symbol of how the West perceives the Muslim Orient. And while there are several books treating German-Turkish cultural relations (especially with a focus on Turkish-German immigration), there are

4 The stage actor and theater director Genco Erkal (winner of the Silver Bear—Special Jury Prize at the 33rd Berlin International Film Festival 1983), for example, is one of 174.000 persons and one of the latest victims being accused of insulting the Turkish president ("Acclaimed Turkish Actor;" Höhler). Cenk Özbay mentions as example of the "state homophobia" in Turkey the shutdown of the LGBTI Student Club at Boğaziçi University early 2021 as policing measure against protests that called on the rector Melih Bulu—newly appointed by President Erdoğan—to resign. Press announcements by the Istanbul Governorship linked the protests to terrorism and detained students from the protests. Özbay, however, also asserts "participatory and resilient queer politics" emerging in Turkey that give reasons "to be cautiously optimistic" ("Boğaziçi University Protests"), amongst them are queer representatives in the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and People's Democratic Party (HDP), numerous municipalities celebrating Pride Week in their official social media platforms, popular activism through hashtag "#LGBTIhaklariinsanhaklaridir" (#LGBTIrightsarehumanrights), and the increasing number of sociological and historical publications on queer lives in Turkey. (On the history of the queer movement and its representation in political parties in Turkey, see Çetin 25.) Also, in view of rising homophobia and gender-based violence in Turkey, the country's decision early 2021 to leave the Istanbul Convention against women and domestic violence gave cause for concern and was seen as pointing to a terrifying trend across Europe: "10 years ago, Turkey was the first country to sign the convention. But the continuing ban on Pride Month since 2015 and subsequent public threats have caused growing violence against the LGBTQ+ community. […] Unfortunately, the argument that LGBTQ+ people are [a] threat to traditional values, has been rehashed and emulated by politicians in the EU such as in Hungary and Poland where symbols of LGBTQ+ pride are increasingly subject to political weaponisation" ("Turkey Leaves the Istanbul Convention"); see also "Council of Europe Leaders;" "Turkey to Pull Out."

very few dealing with Turkey in a broader Euro-American cultural perspective, and even less with a focus on queerness. Therefore, this book wants to contribute to a still new, but expanding field of interrogation.

While my own view as German-American scholar—although in itself bicultural—necessarily remains Western and thus presumably unwillingly culturally biased, my approaches take on various standpoints, sometimes closer to a Turkish perspective, at other times closer to a Euro-American perspective, sometimes more based on personal experience, at other times with a more distanced scholarly stance. In each of the chapters, however, the intercultural relations—both in terms of standpoint and subject matter—will be stressed. Questions that I will concern myself with include: How are Turkish artists representing themselves within their own culture as well as within a foreign setting? How do Westerners depict their encounters with Turkish culture, and how do Turks perceive those very same encounters in their homeland and abroad? What stereotypes are at work in both instances? What efforts in intercultural negotiation and transnational understanding are being made to understand and overcome such stereotypes?

With my scholarly background in literary criticism, cultural studies, and genderqueer theory, this book reflects both my established academic interests, and my scholarly and sociocultural experience in Istanbul. So there are chapters where my my specific circumstances as a gay man living in a country where homosexuality is not officially illegal but only precariously subsists, come into play.[5] The film and literature analyses, in contrast, are based on and interact with both Eastern and Western gender and cultural theories, and are deliberately written from more distanced, theoretically induced perspectives. This mixed approach hopefully appeals to a diverse audience cutting across the borders of academe alone. My specific aim therefore is to come to an understanding of how to negotiate obvious differences and hidden similarities between East and West in the realms of culture and ethics, gender and sexualities.

5 In a study on the views of young adult learners of English regarding homosexuality, Ordem and Ulum reveal that although there seems to be an increasing openness towards homosexuality and willingness to discuss queer issues on the side of students, the "Council of Higher Education (CHE) in Turkey banned discussing gender diversity at universities in 2019 by stating that negotiating gender diversity might be a threat to Turkish culture and family culture […]. Therefore, Islamic values are often reinforced in education systems of Turkey" (35).

Like other transnationally oriented works on Turkey, *Queer Turkey* does not take 'Turkish' "to represent a timeless, static, or essential ethnic category," as Verena Laschinger writes in her introduction to a special journal issue on Turkish-American literature. Instead, it understands Turkish, Turkish-American, or German-Turkish "as social constructs, which are carved out of political, social, and ideological conflicts […], (re-)imagined, negotiated, embraced, or dismissed, which hence leaves them continually developing and changing" (Laschinger 117). Furthermore, *Queer Turkey* does not claim any such thing as Turkey being queer, becoming queer, or coming out as queer. 'Queer,' instead, points to "lapses and excesses of meaning" within an "open net of possibilities," as queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (8) famously articulated. Challenging notions of the 'normal' and thus sexual and gendered labelling and taxonomies, *Queer Turkey* partakes in queer theorists' effort to view the sex/gender system as contextual and changeable. In this book, I aim to take objectives of queer theory to consider moments and effects of Turkish queerness. Such objectives, as Michelle Marzullo explains, include "to examine and critique the social processes that shape and normalize sexual and gendered identities, social relations, and expectations around culturally salient power axes such as gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity, and nationality" (696). 'Queer,' as Judith Butler reminds us, relies on its instability, on being called into being ("outness") and at the same time questioning that being by asking questions such as: "For whom is outness a historically available and affordable option? […] Who is represented by which use of the term, and who is excluded? […] What kinds of policies are enabled by what kinds of usages, and which are backgrounded or erased from view?" (227).

In my queer agenda, I might be subject to a discourse of the "Gay International" that, according to Joseph Andoni Massad, in its missionary and liberatory agenda aims to "liberate Arab and Muslim 'gays and lesbians' from the oppression under which they allegedly live by transforming them from practitioners of same-sex contact into subjects who identify as homosexual and gay" (362). For Massad, organizations such as the ILGA (International Lesbian and Gay Association) and the IGLHRC (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, since 2015 called OutRight Action International) partake in this Orientalist impulse and crusading efforts that "continue[] to guide all branches of the human rights community" (362) to provide "proof of cross-cultural, cross-class gay identity, but in reality there is no evidence of gay movements anywhere in the Arab world or even of gay group identity outside of the small groups of men in metropolitan areas such as Cairo and

Beirut" (373). H. Burcu Baba, however, takes note of Massad's admonition as a dangerous discourse when she writes that "under the guise of 'Gay Global'" (59) dissident sexualities around the world are depicted as emanating from the West. She cites Massad as an example of those "who [criticize] the LGBT organizations in the Arab World and without distinguishing among organizations, their demands and efforts [...] have a destructive effect on LGBT people in those countries" (63, Fn 22).[6]

I am aware that many consider "LGBT" an outdated acronym that no longer represents the range of individuals that the rainbow coalition is supposed to serve. As legal scholar Marie-Amélie George comments, for "queer, intersex, asexual, and other identity groups, the LGBT initials that once signaled solidarity and intersectionality have come to seem limiting because they only identify certain subgroups" (245-246). In this book, I will use LGBT mostly when referring to activism, social movements, and human rights issues. Moreover, since I consider myself a researcher who from its onset in the 1990s has embraced queer theory, I like to stick to the term 'queer' in its expansive meaning, applicable to anyone—like myself—who is non-normative, not heterosexual or cisgender, including lesbians, gay men, asexual, transgender, and intersex people. I have always felt comfortable with reclaiming the slur "queer" as a liberating term for someone—myself—who does not conform to traditional gender roles. I do realize, however, especially when being occasionally addressed by students, that people still continue to be negatively affected by the term 'queer' as a derogatory expression meant to hurt. It is clearly not my intention to cause discomfort to anybody identifying with the LGBTQIA2S+ community. On the contrary, as an avowedly queer researcher, my scholarly agenda includes raising and addressing issues that have caused harm to queer people in different times and places as well as highlighting advocates, artists, writers, individuals, who in their own ways—and there are many!—have fought sexual and other forms of discrimination, have chosen non-normative life-styles, have made queerness essential to their art. Accordingly, the chapters of this book deal with various, highly selective—and thus not encompassing—facets of Turkish queerness, and especially with the ways that artists from different realms of cultural production reclaim and shape such queerness within and through their works.

6 For a comparative analysis of (distorted, scandalizing, and uninformed) representations of queerness in Turkish and German journalism, see Bayramoğlu.

Some of the artists that are discussed in *Queer Turkey* join those artists who even reclaim "queer" as a necessity not only to deal with LGBT themes in their work, but to make art that is quintessentially queer. As Megan Carney, About Face Theatre's artistic director in Chicago, states: "I think of queerness as a way to disrupt, reimagine, and liberate our bodies and minds—we need to tell more stories that reveal the nuances of our identities and desires." She continues: "We must remember that not all queer people benefited from the recently won policy battles, especially trans-folks and queer people of color. That said, I think everyone in our extended communities feels vulnerable and galvanized to act right now" (qtd. in Small 69). Similarly, Manhattan-based writer-performer Diana Oh sees a queer aesthetic as fighting against silencing and belittling, as countering queerphobic language and rhetoric: "We are innovators, trailblazers, and out-of-the-box thinkers. We know what it's like to live in a society that chokes us, and our art is pushing back by screaming for liberation. The queer aesthetic is not quiet" (qtd. in Small 70). Self-described "queer fate babe and *bruja*" theater artist Cristina Pitter even pushes queer aesthetics into the realm of the utopic, when in her personal manifesto she puts the call for a queer ideology in extravagantly florid words: "Queer aesthetic—what a whirlwind of color, vibrations, exhilaration, raw energy, and magic. The power of a fist held high, wrapped in fishnet glory and boots strapped up, or the fierce walk of a sleek black suit, heels, and mischievous eye. The soft femme fur of legs unshaved or the perfect polish on his fingernails. Queerness is more than sexuality and gender. I believe it's a political statement, a way of living and loving relentlessly, of knowing pain and violence and our history of existence—but still fighting for a better world" ("cristinapitter"). While all these statements come from North American artists, they reflect concerns that I see mirrored in the Turkish artists I discuss in this book. In his Hop-Çiki-Yaya series, for example, about a fabulous, unnamed transvestite detective, Mehmet Murat Somer, whom I briefly mention in chapter 1 and who would deserve much more consideration, has created a character that is truly queer. Somer reclaims "Hop-Çiki-Yaya," a Turkish derogatory term for queer people derived from a cheerleading chant popular in Turkish colleges in the 1960s. In this sense, Somer employs "Hop-Çiki-Yaya" in a way similar to LGBT activists, who have reverted the word 'queer' from an insult used to oppress and terrorize into a term of empowerment and subversion. I also invoke the highly disputed film *Hamam* by Turkish-Italian director Ferzan Özpetek as an example of the productive ambiguities that queer approaches can offer when discussing contexts that transcend an East-West chasm. I agree with Bill Mar-

shall's assessment that such a film reminds us "that all identities are lived and indeed created in a tension between forces, and that political or other assertions or strategies are always dialogic" (7). As contradictory as "queer" may be, employing queerness as a critical lens need not lead to a regressive 'cultural imperialist' stance that takes West and East as oppositional, non-contradictory cultural, social, and political entities. Rather, queering the contexts of such a film through spatiotemporal considerations reminds us of the "different embeddings of modernity and tradition [and] the ways in which symbolic formations such as nations, ethnicities and diasporas are marked by hierarchical (hetero)sexual binaries whose normativities can be disrupted and undone, and realities reformulated and rewritten" (Marshall 7).

Queer Turkey assembles impressions, notes, and essays of the last fifteen years. The first part "Queer Istanbul" contains two interlinked chapters on aspects of queer lives in Istanbul. These chapters are the most personal, since partly based on my own experience, and as in the case of the chapter on the hamam grown over the years from various earlier versions. The first chapter starts with experiencing the Eurovision Song Contest in a gay bar in Istanbul and continues with thoughts about the history of Turkey's queer community. Ever since Turkey's inception as a modernized, secular nation, political efforts to forge a national identity were at odds with social practices that successfully subverted such efforts. Istanbul's LGBT community managed the paradoxical feat of embracing transnational notions of queerness while staking out sites of resistance, exemplified in this chapter in the vagaries of Istanbulite night life. This blending and interlacing of subversion alongside tradition instead of against it has led to a precariously flourishing, but greatly contradictory queer capital—Istanbul—where the modern and tradition, the rural and the urban, the margin and the center, and above all gay and straight merges into a hotbed of contemporary queerness at the crossroads of East and West. The following chapter enquires into what (really) goes on in a Turkish bathhouse. Taking the film *Hamam* by Turkish-Italian director Ferzan Özpetek as starting point, this chapter aims at examining the emergence and status quo of queer Istanbul. When the film *Hamam* was screened in Turkey, there was a great outcry claiming that this was a totally distorting, Orientalizing, and wholly untrue account of what goes on in a traditional Turkish bath, namely illicit sexuality between men. The movie's true scandal, however, was not the depiction of male nudity and intimacy as such, but the public disclosing of a strictly tabooed homosocial and indeed longstanding homosexual practice. While homosexuality is not forbidden by law in Turkey, it nevertheless still

does not exist in an acknowledged social space, unless perhaps in the very marginalized and stigmatized practice of cross-dressing and transsexuality. Recent developments like the emergence of a queer club scene in cities like Istanbul, Izmir, and Bodrum notwithstanding, the fact remains that coming out of the closet proves to be an extremely painful, if not impossible act for many Turks. The chapter traces the history and discourse of same-sex male sexuality in Turkey by also considering historical and contemporary examples of depictions of same-sex female intimacy such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's eighteenth-century *Turkish Embassy Letters* and Özpetek's historical film *Harem suare*.

The section "Istanbul and the Queer Stage" looks at two examples of staging Istanbulite queerness, both viewed from a transnational perspective. The first of the two chapters follows James Baldwin's years in Istanbul that have left tangible traces in both his works written during that period and his interactions with local culture and people. Especially his engagement with theater while in Turkey led to the creation of Leo Proudhammer, the actor-protagonist of his novel *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, the conception of his last play *The Welcome Table*, and the staging of John Herbert's *Fortune and Man's Eyes* in Istanbul. All three instances are imbued with Baldwin's notion of sexuality being intricately linked to race and nation. Contrary to many criticisms concerning his assumed political ineptness resulting from his geographical distance from American affairs, it is precisely through his self-chosen removed perspective that Baldwin could stay in touch with his Americanness. Only by a self-declared "seeing from a distance" could he emerge as key player in commenting on the American racial condition, and during much of the 1960s it was Istanbul that served for him as a transatlantic queer space where he could successfully juggle the intricacies of identity politics. The second chapter of this section centers around the Pera Palace Hotel in Istanbul that has long been a site of transnational interest. Already its original intent when built in 1892 was to host passengers of the Orient Express and its nickname as the "oldest European hotel of Turkey" aptly reflects this heritage. It has been the setting of Anglophone world literature such as Ernest Hemingway's "The Snow of Kilimanjaro," Graham Greene's *Travels with My Aunt*, and perhaps most famously Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. But the hotel also reflects Turkey's own turbulent history from Istanbul's luxurious Belle Époque to the oftentimes nostalgic luxury of a postmodern metropolis with Room 101 being converted into a memorial for Atakürk, the founder of modern Turkey, thus designating the space as museum-hotel. *Pera Palas* (1998), the play by Turkish-

American playwright Sinan Ünel that is the centerpiece of this chapter, is a complex spatiotemporal interlacing of the hotel's/nation's history with that of a Turkish family and their Anglo-American friends and lovers encompassing the 1920s via the 1950s to present time. Intermingling East and West, past and present, Islam and Christianity, traditionalists and feminists, hetero- and homosexuality, this play is at once a multifarious love story and a polylogic diasporic tale.

The third section "Transnational Queer Politics" features two writers' transnational queer poetics regarding their portrayal of Turkey: Bayard Taylor and Elif Shafak. A traveller from America to Arabian countries could very well pass through Germany. It is this track that nineteenth-century travel writer and poet Bayard Taylor took. Not only did he physically pass through Germany on his way east; in his ethically and aesthetically envisioning the Orient, he also fundamentally relied on Germany's Oriental reception. His Oriental travel accounts and above all his own Oriental poetry thus reflect Taylor's actual encounter *with* the East as well as his engagement with German literature *on* the East. Addressing his home audience from abroad (and later at home with lecture tours), Taylor through his writing held a prominent position in mid-nineteenth century as mediator in the triangular constellation America, Germany, and the Orient. At the same time, through his employing the cultural standards of Genteel America, Taylor managed to sidestep the condescending colonial and imperialist attitude that characterized much of European Orientalist literature of the nineteenth century. With her fifth novel of 2004, *The Saint of Insipient Insanities*, Turkish writer Elif Shafak entered the plane of transnational literature, since this novel is not only originally written in English, it also is set mainly in east-coast metropolitan North America. She has continued writing in English and her highly disputed sixth novel of 2007, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, with its predominantly urban setting of Istanbul but also of Tucson, Arizona, and San Francisco could be said to be a counter piece to *The Saint* in its Turkish-American connection. In both of these English-language novels, Shafak deals with the questioning of ethnicity and nationality from postcolonial and global perspectives, and thus on the one hand departing from her narrower focus on Turkish cultural history of her earlier novels, but on the other hand suggesting to read post-Ottoman Turkey's national setting against the backdrop of postcolonial national histories across the world.

The final section "Performing Queer Turkish Cultures" returns to some of the issues raised in the first section and continues concerns of raising issues

of desire and ethics within trans-Turkish settings. The first of the two chapters looks at the development of the New Turkish Cinema. The enormous media attention attributed to the prize-winning film *Gegen die Wand* (*Head-On*) by German-Turkish director Fatih Akin has drawn critical attention to the diversity of cultural perceptions both from a European and a Turkish perspective. Whereas former and solely German productions like Hark Bohm's *Yasemin* still rely on stereotypical representations of clannish Turkish families and the influential films of Turkish director Yücel Çakmaklı aim at emphasizing a national Anatolian-Muslim morality, recent co-produced films like the ones by Italian-Turkish director Ferzan Özpetek and Fatih Akin deliberately question fixed notions of Turkish identity in an increasingly mobile, migrant and 'Europeanized' Turkey. Through their films, these directors take part in the popular culture movement of the so-called New Turkish Cinema that with its Arabesk, urban visual style distances itself from earlier dominant, rural and traditionalist Turkish film productions. Central to an understanding of the agenda of this cinema in particular and of the general changes in Turkish society, it implies the changing representation of male honor from a long-established protective nationalist principle toward a more flexible, tolerant attitude. This change in turn stands for a gradual dissolving of deep-rooted generational as well as class and gender-based family ethics, thus speaking for a broader cultural hybridization of Turkish traditions. The final chapter continues the discussion of Arabesk in its transnational appeal. Turkish pop music has entered the international charts, having progressed from Oriental sounds to dance-pop. Tarkan, whose music style and performance mixes belly-dance, rap, break-dance, Turkish classical music and Western pop, is but one example of a booming pop-culture in Turkey, centered in Istanbul's clubbing scene and present in every household throughout the country. And yet, as unlikely as it may seem when viewed solely from a Western perspective, where Tarkan figures as thoroughly Westernized and highly sexualized Orient-export, his music is actually rooted in the Turkish tradition of Arabesk culture. This culture has emerged on the fringes of Istanbul, where the traditional culture of immigrants blends with urban culture. The epithet Arabesk at first described a hybrid musical genre in the early 1970s and acquired immense popularity among low-income populations in Istanbul. Arabesk then was used as derogatory label; the music was banned from state radio and television for defying the established—and pure—canons of both folk and classical Turkish music by intermixing rhythms and instruments from poplar Western and Arabic, especially Egyptian music. With Arabesk singers like Orhan

Gencebay, Ferdi Tayfur, Müslüm Gürses, and Mahsun Kırmızıgül soon acquiring cult status, the label has come to denote not only a musical genre, but a film genre as well as the cultural habitus and lifestyle of its fans. Thus, today Arabesk means impurity, hybridity and bricolage, and it even designates a special kind of kitsch. In anthropologist Mary Douglas's terms, this is a polluted and polluting style, and in literary critic Susan Sontag's terminology, its banal, trashy and kitsch style would qualify as camp. Arabesk, therefore, has become a postmodernist phenomenon *par excellence* with its mixture of high and low styles, its mass-consumption, its transgression of class and race distinctions, and its overriding the division between rural and urban culture. Bemoaned by many as expressing the significant identity problem of contemporary Turkish society, it is hailed by others as symbolizing the Turkish success story of merging East and West. This final chapter brings me back to the first in reflecting the tremendous changes within the notions of culture, gender, sexuality, and ethics in modern Turkey. Ever since Turkey has become a Republic in the early twentieth century, the country has struggled to balance the traditional codes of Muslim morality with the claim of becoming a modern, Westernized nation. Focussing especially on the changing gender and sexual relations in Turkey as well as on steadfast Western stereotypical notions of what 'goes on' between and amongst the sexes in that country, it is my book's claim to pay tribute to the currency of queer Turkish culture as transnational poetics of desire.

Being queer in Turkey and trying to convey the meaning of what that means is still not easy. As Cenk Özbay, one of the leading queer Turkish scholars asserts, Turkey remains a "sex-negative culture: it is considered immoral, forbidden, despicable and sinful to talk about sexuality or the sexual/reproductive/genital parts of the body in public" (*Queering Sexualities* 4). Thus unsurprisingly, given such a sex-negative culture, Özbay finds that "homosexuality is one of the most poisonous social taboos in the twenty-first century, even among the most modern, secular and well-educated classes of Turkish society" (5). Queer people in twenty-first century Turkey, i.e. a country in which homosexuality is legal and yet subject to police harassment, experience a "double life," because on the one hand, the Turkish state and arguably large parts of the society are becoming more conservative, religious, and oppressive. "On the other hand, same-sex sexualities are performed as they are tolerated within the zones of exception, especially in certain neighbourhoods of the major metropolitan areas," which in turn leads to a "double configuration of same-sex sexual cultures, tolerance and intolerance, respect and interven-

tion, freedom and restriction, grassroots diversity and super-imposed uniformity" (Özbay, *Queering Sexuality* 16). But Turkey's state-controlled homophobia is also part of a worldwide rise of neoliberal and conservative politics that has reached many countries such as the United States, Russia, Poland, and Hungary. Women's and LGBT organizations in these countries as well as in Turkey continue to fight against increasing governmental authoritarianism and society polarization.[7] *Queer Turkey* is meant as a contribution to that fight.

My thanks and gratitude go to my former colleagues in Turkey, many of which—like me—came when Fatih University opened its gates to include an international staff: Verena Laschinger (thanks for not only sharing an apartment with me in Istanbul but for continuous reassurance; special thanks for allowing me to use one of her marvelous Istanbul photos for the cover of this book), Martin Cyr Hicks (thanks for sharing countless nightly conversations and Efes' with me), Kevin McGinley, Terence Powers, Clyde Forsberg, Louis Mazzari, Sheenagh Pietrobruno, John Toohey, Vassil Anastassov, Jeffrey Orr, James Lambo, Jane McGettigan, Huma Ibrahim, Elizabeth Pallitto, and Joshua Parker, now my dear colleague in Salzburg, whom I still have the pleasure of sharing a professional and personal friendship with.

I was lucky and honored to have met very special people in Istanbul: Gökhan Pehlivan, Hüseyin Karagöz, David Rolland, Özgür Güler, Tayfur Düzağaç, Seval Arslan, Dilek Uner (whose yoga space was a safe haven for me). I remain grateful to Beril Erkut for introducing me to Reiki.

Without the love and deep friendship of those who supported me from afar, I could not have lasted: my parents Doris and Leo Poole, Annette Keck, Johannes Stricker, Peter Velte, Frank Völker, Sylvia Miescowski, and many more.

Special thanks to Karin Wohlgemuth, who is always there to organize and gently push me; Ioana-Mihaela Cozac and Michael Taylor, who helped me with the final stages of the manuscript.

My heart reaches out to Wolfgang Schulz, who stood by me in these Istanbul years, and still stands close.

7 See, for example, the queer-feminist perspectives on Turkey "Yeter! Es reicht!," a series of German and Turkish texts by Sibel Schick and Tebessüm Yılmaz instigated by the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (<www.rosalux.de>).

Works Cited

"15 Universities Shut Down in Connection with State of Emergency." Scholars at Risk Network. 26 July 2016. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/2016/07/15-universities-shut-connection-state-emergency/>

"Acclaimed Turkish Actor Sued for 'Insulting President' with Twitter Posts." *Arab News*. 17 April 2021. Web. 30 Aug 2021. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1844451/amp>

"Ahmet Metin Sekizkardeş, Türkei, in Haft seit 2016." *Wahrheitskämpfer: Portraits ermordeter und verfolgter Journalisten*. n.d. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <http://wahrheitskaempfer.de/portfolio/ahmet-metin-sekizkardes-tuerkei-in-haft-seit-2016>

"Council of Europe Leaders React to Turkey's Announced Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention." Web. 6 Nov 2021. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/newsroom>

"cristinapitter." Web. 11 Aug 2021. <https://www.cristinapitter.com/press>

"Erdoğan Topçu Kışlasında Israrcı." *Deutsche Welle Türkçe*. 19 July 2016. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <http://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-top%C3%A7u-k%C4%B1%C5%9Flas%C4%B1nda-%C4%B1srarc%C4%B1/a-19409185>

"Fatih University Report." Academic Solidarity Initiative (ASI). Web. 10 Aug 2021. <www.academicsolidarity.com/en/fatih-university-report-2-eng/>

"Former Professor of Fatih University Sentenced to 9 Years in Prison—Still in Jail." Committee of Concerned Scientists. 1 Jan 2020. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <https://concernedscientists.org/2020/01/former-professor-of-fatih-university-sentenced-to-9-years-in-prison-still-in-jail/>

"In a Secret Document, Turkey Admitted Jailing Dozens of Journalists While Sticking to Policy of Denial in Public." Stockholm Center for Freedom. 12 May 2021. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <https://stockholmcf.org/in-a-secret-document-turkey-admitted-jailing-dozens-of-journalists-while-sticking-to-policy-of-denial-in-public/>

"More than 50 Fatih University Staff, Including Academics, Detained in Istanbul." *Hürriyet Daily News*. 27 Dec 2017. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/more-than-50-fatih-university-staff-including-academics-detained-in-istanbul-124816>

"Turkey Leaves the Istanbul Convention Despite Calls to 'Stop the Withdrawal!' by Civil Society." Web. 6 Nov 2021. <https://europeangreens.eu/news/turkey-leaves-istanbul-convention>

"Turkey to Pull Out of Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women." Web. 6 Nov 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-to-pull-out-of-istanbul-convention-on-violence-against-women/a-58114681>

Amnesty International. "Gezi Park Protests: Brutal Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Turkey." 2 Oct 2013. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/12000/eur440222013en.pdf>

Atalay, Ozlem, and Petra L. Doan. "Reading the LGBT Movement through its Spatiality in Istanbul, Turkey." *Geography Research Forum* 39 (2019): 106-126.

Baba, H. Burcu. "The Construction of Heteropatriachal Family and Dissident Sexualities in Turkey." *Fe Dergi* 3.1 (2011): 56-64.

Bayramoğlu, Yener. *Queere (Un-)Sichtbarkeiten: Die Geschichte der queeren Repräsentationen in der türkischen und deutschen Boulevardpresse*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2018.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* London: Routledge, 1993.

Çetin, Zülfukar. "The Dynamics of the Queer Movement in Turkey." 28 Sep 2015. Heinrich Böll Stiftung: The Green Political Foundation. Web. 27 June 2021. <https://www.boell.de/en/2015/09/28/die-dynamik-der-queer-bewegung-der-turkei>

Çıdam, Çiğdem. "Unruly Practices: Gezi Protests and the Politics of Friendship." *New Political Science* 39.3 (2017): 369-392.

Erol, A. E. "Queer Contestation of Neoliberal and Heteronormative Moral Geographies During #ocupygezi." *Sexualities* 21.3 (2018): 428-445.

George, Marie-Amélie. "Expanding LGBT." *Florida Law Review* 73 (2021): 243-319.

Höhler, Gerd. "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Der beleidigte Präsident". *Salzburger Nachrichten*. 26 Aug. 2021. Web. 30 Aug 2021. <https://www.sn.at/politik/weltpolitik/recep-tayyip-erdogan-der-beleidigte-praesident-108512890>

Laschinger, Verena. "An Introduction to Turkish-American Literature." *Amerikastudien / American Studies*. "Turkish-American Literature." Ed. Verena Laschinger, 61.2 (2016). 113-119.

Lowen, Mark. "Turkey Post-Coup Purges Convulse Society." *BBC News*. 3 Oct 2016. Web. 10 Aug 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37517735>

Marzullo, Michelle A. "LGBT/Queer Sexuality, History of, North America." *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality*. Ed. Patricia Whelehan et al. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. 693-698.

Marshall, Bill. "Contextualisation, Part 1: Queer Cinema and the Global." *Image & Text* 32 (2018): 1-8. Web. 26 Oct 2021. <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/it/n32/02.pdf>

Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14.2 (2002): 361-385.

Ordem, Eser, and Ömer Gökhan Ulum. "Gender Issues in English Language Teaching: Views from Turkey." *Acta Educationis Generalis* 10.2 (2020): 25- 39.

Özbay, Cenk. "Boğaziçi University Protests and State Homophobia in Turkey." 15 Feb 2021. Web. 26 Oct 2021. <https://cenkozbay.com/2021/02/23/bogazici-university-protests-and-state-homophobia-in-turkey/>

———. *Queering Sexualites in Turkey: Gay Men, Male Prostitutes and the City*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017.

Pultar, Gönül, Louis Mazzari, and Belma Ötüşet Baskett, eds. *The Turkish-American Conundrum: Immigrants and Expatriates between Politics and Culture*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Queer and Now." *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. 1-20.

Small, Zachary. "LGBTQ, Emphasis on the Q: A New Generation of Theatremakers is Ready to Blow Up the Gay Canon and Reclaim a Defiantly Queer Aesthetic." *American Theatre* 35.1 (208): 66-70.

Acknowledgments

These chapters have been published in earlier versions: "'the wonder of thy beauty:' Bayard Taylor's *Poems of the Orient* as an Intermediary Between German Poetics and American Ethics." *America and the Orient*. Ed. Heike Schäfer. Heidelberg: Winter, 2006. 73-102; "Arabesk: Nomadic Tales, Oriental Beats, and Hybrid Looks." *Dichotonies: Gender and Music*. Ed. Beate Neumeier. Heidelberg: Winter, 2009. 245-265; "Bastardized History: Elif Shafak's Transnational Poetics." *Transcultural Spaces: Challenges of Urbanity, Ecology, and the Environment in the New Millennium*. Eds. Stefan L. Brandt, Winfried Fluck and Frank Mehring. *Real: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* Vol. 26. Tübingen: Narr, 2010. 213-230; "Istanbul: Queer Desires Between Muslim Tradition and Global Pop." *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe Since 1945*. Eds. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans. London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2014. 171-190; "Precarious Masculinities in the New Turkish Cinema." *Transnational Mediations: Negotiating Popular Culture between Europe and the United States*. Eds. Christof Decker

and Astrid Böger. Heidelberg: Winter, 2015. 169-190; "'Built for Europeans who came on the Orient Express:' Queer Desires of Extravagant Strangers in Sinan Ünel's *Pera Palas*." *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 61.2 (2016): 159-180; "'One sees it better from a distance:' James Baldwin's Staging America in Turkey." *The Turkish-American Conundrum: Immigrants and Expatriates between Politics and Culture.* Eds. Gönül Pultar, Louis Mazzari and Belma Ötüşet Baskett. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. 153-168.