

Melancholia, Love and Sex in the Early Modern Ottoman Elite Circles

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Abstract

In the early 17th century, melancholia and one of its subcategories, love, were regarded as diseases within the traditional medical literature. Furthermore, in this framework, sex was designated as a stark contrast to the Ottoman concept of love. The echoes of society's response to this classification can be discerned within the pages of etiquette manuals and literary works from that era. With this perspective in mind, this course will delve into three primary themes: i) An exploration of how the Ottoman elite of the early 17th century—comprising scholars, bureaucrats, and other influential figures—defined and personally experienced melancholy, love, and sex; ii) An examination of the various forms and societal norms surrounding intimacy and sociability during this period; iii) An analysis of the boundaries imposed by social class and gender within the contexts of melancholia, love, and sex.

Bio

Ercan Akyol is a senior lecturer and last stage PhD student of Turkish Studies at the University of Vienna. His main research interests lie in the area of literary and cultural studies. In his PhD thesis, he focuses on Ottoman literary culture in the early 17th century. In scope of his thesis, he is particularly interested in the modern historiography, Ottoman paleography, manuscript culture, and contextualization of the early modern Ottoman literature. He has published various articles and encyclopedic entries on modern Turkish and early modern Ottoman literature both in Turkish and English.