

In Sickness and in Health: Medical Imagination in Turkish Literature

Abstract

Starting from the nineteenth century, health gradually became a focal topic in relation to the future of the empire, and later the Republic. The portrayals of diseases, in return, functioned as signifiers of anxieties over cultural transformation. In this talk, Şima İmşir offers medical and health humanities as significant tools to trace the constructions of health and sickness in Turkish literature. She pays particular attention to diseases such as syphilis, tuberculosis and cancer and their representations in the literary imagination, and identifies the discourse on health as a key component in the making of the Turkish nation-building ideology. Looking at a range of prose fiction by authors such as Suat Derviş, Halide Edib, Peyami Safa and Kerime Nadir, she considers how the larger discourse on corporeal expectations leaks into literary imagination.

Bio

Şima İmşir is an assistant professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at Koç University. She is the author of *Health, Literature and Women in Twentieth-Century Turkey: Bodies of Exception* (Routledge, 2023) and the co-editor of *Muslim Women's Popular Fiction* (Manchester UP, forthcoming). Her articles have appeared and are forthcoming in numerous edited collections and journals such as *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, *A History of Middle Eastern Modernism* (Cambridge University Press), *Turkish Literature as World Literature* (Bloomsbury), *Women of the Middle East* (Routledge) and *Monsters in Society* (Brill). Her teaching and research range from medical and health humanities, illness and literature to comparative modernisms and technology and literature.