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SOCIOSEXUAL ROLES IN OTTOMAN PULP FICTION

Abstract

The sociosexual world of the premodern Middle East has been studied through a variety of sources ranging from legal documents to shadow theater. Most such sources are either prescriptive or transgressive: they uphold or subvert a normative framework, telling us more about the framework itself than about how it was inhabited by subjects in everyday life. This study introduces the Tifli stories as a descriptive source that transcends the prescriptive–transgressive dichotomy. An Ottoman-Turkish genre of prose fiction produced at least from the 18th to the 20th century, the Tifli stories were a protorealistic form of “pulp fiction.” Where most sources sought to stabilize specific sociosexual roles, the Tifli stories explored the ambiguities inherent in these roles. This study employs the Tifli stories to interrogate understandings of the Ottoman sociosexual world that rely strongly on normative sources and to stage an approximation of how norms were negotiated in practice.

Keywords: gender; history; literature; Ottoman Empire; sexuality

The sociosexual world of the premodern Middle East has been the subject of much fascination and some misunderstanding. A great deal of recent scholarship has been devoted to demonstrating that this world must be approached on its own terms rather than through modern categories of gender and sexuality. In exploring the particularities of the era in question, spanning roughly from 1500 to 1800,¹ scholars have employed a wide range of primary sources, many of which establish a specific framework of norms, taboos, and sociosexual roles in medical, legal, literary, and other contexts.

The analyzed sources are fruitful in revealing just how different the premodern Middle Eastern sociosexual order was from modern Western standards. However, they offer an overly simplified view of that order, a view that is too closely aligned with ideal norms and roles. This, I argue, is due to the nature of these sources: most of them are either prescriptive or transgressive, explicitly decreeing or deliberately subverting a normative range of rules and behaviors. Prescriptive and transgressive sources are two sides of the same coin: they are more interested in the normative framework itself than in how everyday subjects actually experienced and negotiated that framework.

This article offers the Tifli stories, an Ottoman-Turkish genre of prose fiction produced at least from the 18th to the 20th century, as a source that allows us to address this issue.

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The Tifli stories follow the adventures of everyday characters in Ottoman Istanbul. Their protorealistic style, I argue, positions them as a descriptive—rather than prescriptive or transgressive—genre. In other words, the Tifli stories do not seek to outline, defend, or undermine sociosexual norms as much as portray the conflict that ensues when these norms are compromised in suspenseful yet relatable ways. For a comparison, one may imagine the difference between how a book of etiquette and a penny dreadful would have depicted British society in the Victorian era.

Conceived as popular, lowbrow entertainment, the Tifli stories experienced their greatest flowering as an early form of “pulp fiction” in 19th-century Istanbul, riding the first wave of commercial printing activities in the city. The 19th century was also the period in which the sociosexual order of the premodern Middle East became fatally compromised by the dynamics of Westernization. Nonetheless, the Tifli stories engage with premodern norms and roles—the stories are set during the reign of Murad IV (r. 1623–40), depict the traditional sociosexual world, and arguably even approach it in a more unconstrained way than many sources from previous centuries.

This study draws on previous scholarship to propose a categorization of premodern Middle Eastern sociosexual roles according to the variables of age, physical sexual characteristics, and sexual practice. It then explores how the Tifli stories focus on some of these roles—the boy-beloved, the female adolescent, and the adult male and female pursuers—and expose them as ambivalent and interconnected rather than static and rigidly bounded, as suggested by most other sources. Using the Tifli stories as a starting point, the study offers a detailed analysis of how these roles were inhabited and networked in the sociosexual milieu of premodern Istanbul. While specific assumptions about the roles as made by previous scholarship are questioned or refined in the process, the study’s overall aim is to advance beyond a definition of the roles towards an understanding of how they were negotiated by subjects of history.

As mentioned, this study uses mostly 19th-century sources to shed light on social constellations that were already being heavily challenged at the time. Whenever the Tifli stories seem more reflective of this age than of prior periods, the study makes an effort to point this out. In fact, the Tifli stories undergo considerable change in the course of the 19th century, change that closely reflects the developments of the era. However, due to limitations of space, the topic of 19th-century change in the Ottoman sociosexual world must await another study.

PRESCRIPTIVE AND TRANSGRESSIVE SOURCES

Modern categories of gender fail to explain the sociosexual world of the Middle East prior to Westernization. Dror Ze’evi argues that this world relied on “a one-sex biological paradigm in which women were believed to be imperfect men.”² As the male–female gender binary did not exist in its modern form, neither did the sexual identities based on it, such as hetero- and homosexuality. Consequently, it was not considered abnormal per se for an individual to be sexually active with members of both sexes. For instance, the act of sodomy could be a crime regardless of the involved partners’ sexes, while certain sexual acts between men could carry less punishment than others between men and women.³

Nonetheless, as Afsaneh Najmabadi points out, the period in question was not “some premodern golden age of multiple sexualities.”⁴ Social categories invoking sexual

criteria did exist even in this world, including some, such as the boy-beloved, that have received a great deal of modern scholarly attention.⁵ Below I will offer a systematic outline of such categories, arguing that they are best understood not as fixed gender identities, but as partly negotiable sociosexual roles based on a mixture of physical sexual characteristics, age, and sexual practice.

The norms defining and governing these roles seem to have been quite consistent for a long time across many urban and linguistic centers of the premodern Middle East. In his analysis of Arabic sources on the topic, Khaled El-Rouayheb establishes a time frame from 1500 to 1800, adding, “I would expect that many of the points I make (though probably not all) are valid for Turkey and Persia”⁶ as well. Indeed, a comparative look at Turkish and Persian sources from the same period, such as those studied by Ze’evi and Najmabadi respectively, reveals a degree of overlap that justifies talking about a premodern Middle Eastern sociosexual continuum, at least among the “attitudes and values of the learned male elite,”⁷ authors of most sources at our disposal.

The level of consistency found across sources should be somewhat surprising in light of their apparent variety: they encompass not only three centuries and languages but also various realms of discourse such as painting, poetry, medicine, jurisprudence, travel literature, dream interpretation, and shadow theater. It is this very variety that prompts Ze’evi to claim that “there was never a completely unified view of sexuality, no single coherent internal or external voice to guide people through the socio-sexual maze.”⁸ How, then, to explain that such a colorful range of sources seems to point us to a relatively monolithic worldview?

The answer, I argue, is that in some respects, our sources are not so varied after all. To be sure, their purposes of composition and outward appearances are diverse. However, the lens through which they view their subject matter is largely the same. They are either prescriptive or transgressive, that is, they either outline ideal norms and roles or deliberately transgress these. In so doing, they remain firmly rooted within one and the same normative sociosexual framework. Legal texts are a good example. Whether they accurately reflect the values of a society and its legislators, or, as Ze’evi puts it, display “values that were meant for others [and] ethics that promulgators never believed in,”⁹ their prescriptive intent remains. The same is true for medical texts that seek to be authoritative in their definition of maladies and prescription of cures.

On the other hand, we have transgressive sources, such as sexually explicit literary works. As Irvin Cemil Schick notes, these include some of the most marginalized and understudied genres of Ottoman literature, such as the *bāhnāme* (book of intercourse), *hezeliyyāt* (facetiae), *şehrengiz*, and *hammāmiye* (poems cataloguing the objects of sexual desire in a city or its bathhouses).¹⁰ While such risqué works were by no means always intended as critiques of dominant social norms, they could contain a critical element. Regarding *karagöz*, the bawdy Ottoman shadow theater, Ze’evi opines, “It was here that [society] created its world of laughter, made its critique of state and religion known to the authorities, and presented an alternative.”¹¹ For instance, *karagöz* features female characters in assertive and sexually active roles, which Ze’evi reads as a deliberate transgression of the homosocial norms of Ottoman high literature.¹²

Apart from being based on the same normative framework, prescriptive and transgressive sources also share formal characteristics that limit the scope of their observations on sociosexual roles. One such characteristic is formal rigidity. Prescriptive sources strive

to establish neatly delimited categories of sexual agents and practices, leaving little room for overlap and interaction. Transgressive sources mirror these categories, often exaggerating them even further for effect.¹³ Another limitation concerns point of view. Prescriptive sources are usually written in an official and authoritative voice. Literary sources—even when transgressive—tend to feature an embodied, semiautobiographical narrator. In both cases, the default narrator is a male adult, which means that the perspectives of other sociosexual players—such as women and adolescents—are marginalized or absent.¹⁴ Finally, most of these sources have a narrow focus on the sexual, presenting it in isolation from other aspects of life.

Are there sources that go beyond the prescriptive–transgressive dichotomy—sources that focus less on how the sociosexual world of the premodern Middle East should or should not have been, and more on how it was actually experienced by subjects in everyday life? I am not suggesting a naïve separation between normative discourse and subjective experience. As Saba Mahmood states, “social norms are the necessary ground through which the subject is realized and comes to enact her agency.”¹⁵ There is no pristine, autonomous subject that exists prior to, or in the gaps afforded by, normative influence. Still, in Mahmood’s words, “norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted. . . but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways.”¹⁶ Let me, then, rephrase my question in Mahmood’s terminology: are there sources that sideline the consolidation or subversion of norms, focusing instead on the variety of ways in which these norms were performed, inhabited, and experienced?

I propose the Tifli stories, an Ottoman-Turkish genre of short prose fiction produced in Istanbul from at least the 18th to the 20th century, as such a primary source. I argue that the Tifli stories are a descriptive genre rather than a prescriptive or transgressive one. Unlike, for instance, medical texts, they were written for entertainment rather than didactic value, and unlike *karagöz*, their entertainment value derived mainly from plot suspense rather than from a comical subversion or exaggeration of social norms. Overall, the Tifli stories are a genre more interested in depicting the performance of sociosexual roles in everyday life than in categorizing, endorsing, or subverting these roles.

I do not claim that the Tifli stories give us the sociosexual world of premodern Istanbul “as it really was” or in a way that radically contradicts the picture found in other sources. Rather, I argue that they set this static picture in motion. They dissolve the boundaries between sociosexual roles: characters often inhabit more than one role and come into contact with a broad range of characters inhabiting others. The stories eschew an authoritative narrative voice, featuring a disembodied “third-person” narrator who can switch back and forth between multiple characters—male and female, young and old alike. Finally, they give us not merely the sexual but the sociosexual: the sexual is not abstracted for analysis but presented as just one part of the characters’ existence in society. In short, the Tifli stories offer an opportunity not only to revise and refine our assumptions about sociosexual roles, but also to expand our appreciation of how the roles were put into practice.

THE TIFLİ STORIES AS A DESCRIPTIVE SOURCE

The oldest dated Tifli story known to scholarship is the manuscript “Süleymanşah” which, according to Şükrü Elçin, contains a marginal note indicating that it was read

as early as 1756–57.¹⁷ While this manuscript is no longer extant, two other stories in manuscript form, albeit undated, are preserved in their entirety: “Hikayet” (“Story,” a generic title, also known as “Sansar Mustafa Hikayesi,” or The Story of Weasel Mustafa) and *Meşhur Binbir Direk Fazlı Paşa Batakhane Hadisesi* (The Famous Incident at the 1001-Columned Fazlı Paşa Den of Vice).¹⁸ There are four extant Tifli stories published in the lithography medium, all of them from the second half of the 19th century: *Leta’ifname* (Book of Pleasantries, early 1851),¹⁹ *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi* (The Strange Story of the Lady with the Dagger, 1851–52), “Tifli Efendi Hikayesi” (The Story of Tifli Efendi, 1875), and “Tayyazade Hikayesi” (The Story of Tayyazade, 1875).²⁰ Another four 19th-century Tifli stories were printed using moveable type: *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi* (The Story of Cevri Çelebi, 1872–73), *Hikaye-i Tayyazade* (The Story of Tayyazade, 1872–73), *Meşhur Tifli Efendi ile Kanlı Bektaş’ın Hikayesi* (The Famous Story of Tifli Efendi and Bloody Bektaş, 1882–83), and *İki Biraderler Hikayesi* (The Story of the Two Brothers, 1883–84). The 20th century brought us at least ten more Tifli stories, with the most recent serialized in 1971 (and reprinted in 2002).²¹ This study will exclude the 20th-century material and focus on the ten extant stories produced in or before the 19th century.

Individual stories or subgroups of the genre have received some scholarly attention, especially in works by Mustafa Nihat Özön, Pertev Naili Boratav, Şükrü Elçin, and Hasan Kavruk.²² However, such works have been scattered across diverse academic fields including literary history, folklore studies, art history, and history of theater, with scholars in one field often unaware of work done in others. The stories were first analyzed as a genre in my own 2013 book, *Tifli Hikayeleri* (The Tifli Stories),²³ which covers all extant stories, including some hitherto unstudied texts, and contains modern Turkish transliterations of those stories produced in the Ottoman script.²⁴

All Tifli stories are set in Istanbul during the reign of Murad IV (r. 1623–40) and feature appearances by the sultan himself and/or Tifli Ahmed Çelebi (d. 1660–61), one of the sultan’s court entertainers, mostly in supporting roles.²⁵ The stories revolve around ordinary Istanbul denizens and their adventures in pursuit of social status, financial gain, and sexual gratification. The plot of *Hikaye-i Tayyazade* serves as an example: Hüseyin Efendi, an older, discharged Ottoman court official, takes in Tayyazade, a low-born, talented, and handsome male adolescent, for companionship. One day, Hüseyin is kidnapped by Gevherli Hanım, the aging, female head of a prostitution and extortion ring. Tayyazade infiltrates Gevherli’s headquarters, makes her fall for him, and manages to rescue Hüseyin and Gevherli’s other captives with the aid of Murad IV and his troops. The sultan rewards Tayyazade with riches and admission into his inner circle.

The Tifli stories constitute a unique, indigenous Ottoman literary genre that draws on various strands of oral and written storytelling to create its own generic synthesis. The genre is part of the Ottoman manuscript storytelling tradition, which started producing original works (as opposed to adaptations from Arabic and Persian) in the 17th century.²⁶ Some scholars have used Tifli’s presence as a story character to argue that the historical Tifli Ahmed Çelebi is the stories’ author.²⁷ This thesis is debatable, firstly because Tifli posthumously became a stock character of the Ottoman storytelling tradition,²⁸ and secondly because changes in the stories’ plots and characters mirror changes in Istanbul society across the centuries. The stories are particularly close to the Ottoman

meddah tradition of urban oral storytelling.²⁹ Some Tifli stories also exist as *meddah* narratives, and they all share the *meddah* tradition's "realist" tendencies such as the setting of Istanbul and a focus on the mundane adventures of lowborn protagonists. Other traditional influences include oral folk literature and *karagöz*, while in the 19th century the Tifli stories fed into the early Ottoman theater and novel, providing plot points or entire storylines for these newly emerging, Western-inspired forms.³⁰

In a literary milieu where court poetry was the gold standard, the Tifli stories were conceived as lowbrow entertainment rather than as works of artistic or didactic ambition. Most of them are anonymous, possibly out of authors' fear of derision: one of the few authors known by name was accused in an Ottoman literary anthology of having written his story under the influence of mind-altering drugs.³¹ Nonetheless, the Tifli stories' appeal transcended social strata, with features of the genre found in the works of 17th-century court poets such as Nev'î-zade Atayî and 19th-century coffeehouse entertainers such as Meddah Aşki alike.³² With the rise of print technology in the 19th century, the stories' popularity made them the ideal source material for Ottoman pulp fiction: in Ahmet Ö. Evin's words, "By 1874 . . . a version practically of every story in the *meddah* tradition had been commercially printed."³³

In the process, the Tifli stories were told and retold, written, published, rewritten, and published again. Among the works examined in this study, *Meşhur Binbir Direk Fazlı Paşa Batakhane Hadisesi*, *Hikaye-i Tayyarzade*, and "Tayyarzade Hikayesi" are revised versions of one story; the same holds true for the story pairs *Meşhur Tifli Efendi ile Kanlı Bektaş'ın Hikayesi* and "Tifli Efendi Hikayesi" as well as *Leta'ifname* and *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*. Especially from the 1850s to the 1880s, the stories underwent rapid change in adapting to new social realities and discourses while still retaining key generic features. Examples of such change are the disappearance of traditional professional guilds, only found in the early manuscript "Hikayet," and the spread of the horse carriage as a means of transportation from the highborn upper classes to the newly rich.

The Tifli stories' protorealism—like that of the *meddah* tradition—is less a formal literary stance than an accommodation of a growing urban audience with an appetite for relatable stories about their own lives and milieus.³⁴ Among the realist literary strategies found in these stories are the avoidance of an intrusive narrator; an attention to plausible relations of cause and effect without recourse to coincidence or the supernatural; the setting of the stories in a historical era (1623–40) and an actual city (Istanbul); the maintenance of temporal and spatial continuity; the detailing of the urban space down to the names of streets and venues; the attention paid to minutiae of daily life such as material objects, character names, and behavioral patterns; and, of course, the mundane motives and preoccupations of the characters. While these features are not equally present in all of the stories, they are pronounced enough for the Tifli stories to warrant description as "the only genre displaying a rudimentary form of realism in Ottoman literature" prior to Westernization.³⁵

Through this protorealistic approach, I argue, the Tifli stories transcend the prescriptive–transgressive binary found in most other sources used to study the sociosexual world of the premodern Middle East. To the Tifli stories, the norms and roles of this world are means rather than ends, employed not for their own sake, but rather to generate conflict and suspense. The stories' characters are generic enough to be identifiable as bearers of certain sociosexual roles. But the situations and interactions they face are complex

enough to preclude any simple enactment of those roles. Instead, characters are forced to negotiate multiple roles, subvert certain norms while affirming others, and adapt their stances to changing circumstances. By depicting these lifelike scenarios, the Tifli stories manage to tease out nuances and complexities of the Ottoman sociosexual lifeworld that elude prescriptive and transgressive sources alike.

AN OUTLINE OF SOCIOSEXUAL ROLES

Before analyzing the Tifli stories' interventions in detail, I will attempt a systematic outline of sociosexual roles as identified in other sources. As mentioned above, these roles are located at the varying intersections of three main criteria: physical sexual characteristics, age, and sexual practice. A number of roles were assigned to adolescents. Leslie Peirce informs us that in the eyes of Ottoman law, "Both pubescent boys and pubescent girls—those approaching legal majority—might be 'carnally desirable' (*müşteha*), and thus the potential object of the desire of adult males."³⁶ While adolescent girls' desirability continued into adulthood, boys were expected to transition from objects of desire to desiring subjects once their beards started to grow.³⁷ This meant that beardless adolescent boys—often referred to as *amrad*—constituted a specific, age-delimited sociosexual group (or gender) that was neither male nor female in the modern sense. The most common and well-studied sexual role assigned to *amrads* was that of the boy-beloved. Famously, the overwhelming majority of love poetry in the premodern Middle East was composed by adult male poets and devoted to such boy-beloveds.³⁸

The beloved was not the only role available to male adolescents. Once they reached sexual maturity, they could also be cast as unruly sexual predators. Ottoman law, using the word *levend* to describe such young men, took special precautions to keep them away from sexually vulnerable groups: "*Levends* shall not come to places where women and boys [*avret ve oğlan*] come to fetch water or wash clothes, they must be prevented. . . . And they shall not gather in front of a public bathhouse or along the road to a bathhouse."³⁹

These male adolescents then underwent a complex transition to adulthood. On the one hand, continued exposure to male desire became a threat to their adult masculinity. On the other hand, their own emergent and volatile sexual desires rendered them a threat to the sociosexual order.⁴⁰ Their transition from *amrad*- or *levend*hood to the new role of male adulthood, beginning with the growth of the beard, was fixed and finalized, at least in the eyes of the law, with the assumption of marital—and particularly parental—duties.⁴¹

This was as true for women as it was for men. Peirce maintains that Ottoman law understood female sexuality to be "latent until activated in marriage."⁴² Once married, women became more closely monitored by their social milieu, both to check their unfolding sexual desires and to ensure the purity of their husbands' lineages.⁴³ Motherhood, finally, marked the beginning of a woman's "postsexualization." As I have argued in my study on Ottoman wives-of-women literature (*mekr-i zenān*), women were never simultaneously imagined as mother and sexual being in such stories.⁴⁴ Similarly, in *The Imperial Harem*, Peirce demonstrates the rising influence that female elders in the Ottoman imperial household enjoyed with the establishment of a carnally pure, postsexual image.⁴⁵

This kind of influence, Peirce maintains, was highly prized in the Ottoman Empire, where authority was “a phenomenon of the inner, often literally an interior, even residential, space the boundaries of which are guarded.”⁴⁶ By occupying a central node in the household, the female elder could command extensive networks that would project her power well beyond the boundaries of “private space.” Ze’evi argues that high-born ladies’ influence could exceed that of their husbands, who had often been “recruited as slaves from lowly Christian village families”⁴⁷ before rising through the ranks of the Ottoman administration and being rewarded by the palace with marriage into Ottoman nobility. When such Ottoman bureaucrats fell from grace, their marriages were often annulled and the ladies were remarried to other rising administrators without losing any of their power and standing. Their continued influence, however, hinged on the careful cultivation of a chaste, ideally postsexual, image.

While female adults thus came to occupy central positions in networks of power emanating outwards from private space, male adults dominated public space, where they “competed and cooperated in the pursuit of money, status, and power.”⁴⁸ Maintenance of the established sociosexual order was similarly divided among female and male adults. Peirce informs us that female elders often supervised the sexual order in private space.⁴⁹ Public morality, in contrast, was controlled by male adults. As Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli put it, “Women and boys who entered [public] space did so under the protection of adult males and under the control of adult-male authority.”⁵⁰ Particularly incumbent upon male adults—in their role as fathers—was the protection of their minor offspring from sexual harm. For instance, Ze’evi mentions stipulations within Ottoman canonic law that obliged fathers to pay fines if their adolescent sons entered sexual relationships with older men.⁵¹

This protective duty of fathers points to a split in adult sociosexual roles: adults could be cast as preservers of the sexual order, but equally as illicit desirers transgressing this order. Male adults in particular often pursued barely disguised extramarital sexual lives. With marriage itself connected more closely to social status, life cycle, and procreative duties than to romance or sexuality,⁵² Najmabadi states that as long as “men performed their procreative obligations, the larger community was generally not much concerned with the rest of their sex life.”⁵³ There were even distinct sexual categories for male adults, dividing them into woman-lovers and *amrad*-lovers⁵⁴: a male adult’s sexual preference for women or boy-beloveds could crystallize into a quasi identity.

Both of these options, however, cast the male adult as the active pursuer and penetrator in his sexual interactions. Another split in roles occurred if the male adult desired to be penetrated himself. As El-Rouayheb has observed, “The Arabic medical tradition, following the Greek, tended to regard the male who desires to be anally penetrated as being afflicted with a disease—*ubnah*.”⁵⁵ The *ma’būn*, a man suffering from *ubna*, was a well-established sociosexual stereotype bearing many similarities to the modern stereotype of the “passive homosexual.”⁵⁶ Being labeled a *ma’būn* was a source of shame and social dishonor, putting the inhabitant of this role beyond the pale of Middle Eastern sexual tolerance.

Finally, extramarital sexual desire was by no means seen as limited to male adults. Large parts of the wiles-of-women genre are built on the stereotype of the unfaithful wife whose sexual appetite becomes insatiable once “activated” by marriage.⁵⁷ *Karagöz* features the character of Zenne (woman), a sexually active, unmarried woman whom

Ze'evi describes as “respected, independent, opinionated, and sometimes wealthy” while at the same time promiscuous if not an outright prostitute.⁵⁸ The objects of female adults’ sexual desires could be varied, and while there are too few sources on the subject of female–female desire to form a scholarly opinion on the phenomenon,⁵⁹ boy-beloveds were regarded as attractive to male and female adults alike.⁶⁰

This outline provides us with a spectrum of sociosexual roles, some of them temporary and associated with age or specific sexual acts, others quite crystallized and more closely reminiscent of modern sexual identities. Among adolescents, the spectrum includes the boy-beloved, the *levend*, and the unmarried girl. Adults are split into two groups: defenders of the established order such as fathers, mothers, and postsexual female elders; and transgressors of this order, whether female or male, with male transgressors further subdivided into woman-lovers, *amrad*-lovers, and *ma'būns*.

THE ROLES IN A DYNAMIC NETWORK

While this spectrum gives us a fair overview of the sociosexual roles that Middle Eastern subjects could inhabit, it does not tell us how these roles were networked. The relations between roles as conveyed by the sources are mostly bilateral and exclusive, such as the relations between older male pursuer and boy-beloved, recounted from the pursuer’s perspective and to the exclusion of all other relations in the duo’s lives. Also, the sources mostly ignore the possibility of a subject negotiating a multiplicity of roles.

This is where the Tifli stories come in. Their protagonists and antagonists inhabit some of the most ambivalent and unstable sociosexual roles: they are boy-beloveds, female adolescents, and adult male or female pursuers of questionable desires. The Tifli stories spin a complex web of relationships around these protagonists and antagonists, a web designed to unleash the full potential for conflict inherent in the roles these characters inhabit. In other words, as a genre of adventure and suspense, the Tifli stories create excitement by mixing up and compromising the very roles that most other sources seek to divide and circumscribe.

Let us turn to the boy-beloved first. Most sources offer a reductionist view of this role, treating its inhabitants as passive objects of adult male pursuers’ desires⁶¹—in fact, most sources on the boy-beloved are written from an adult male pursuer’s perspective. Andrews and Kalpakli paint a more nuanced picture of the beloved as an active beneficiary of his position, serving “the more powerful, wealthier, and older [male] in return for valuable gifts, jobs, and introductions to people at higher levels of power.”⁶² Nonetheless, the beloved’s own point of view, or the relations he has beyond that with his pursuer, hardly enter the discussion in sources and scholarship alike.

The boy-beloved features in eight out of ten pre-20th-century Tifli stories, with the narrators devoting extensive space to describing events from his perspective. He is the main protagonist of five stories: Tayyazade in *Meşhur Binbir Direk Fazlı Paşa Batakhané Hadisesi*, *Hikaye-i Tayyazade*, and “Tayyazade Hikayesi”; Yusuf in *Leta’ifname*; and Süleyman in *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*. He plays the main supporting role in two stories: Ahmed in “Hikayet” and Abdi in *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi*. Finally, he appears in two minor roles in “Tifli Efendi Hikayesi.”

Unsurprisingly, the beloved is always an object of desire. Sometimes, the entire city is aware of his beauty.⁶³ For instance, Süleyman in *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi* is so

well-known that “lovers with perturbed hearts would devote their time to finding out which mosque he would visit on Fridays and at which excursion spot he would rest. Then, many a hapless wretch would line up at the street corners and in the bazaars, wailing and bewildered, to at least receive a greeting from his father.”⁶⁴ The beloved is often pursued by male adults, some of whom are quite remarkable: Tayyazade is pursued by Hüseyin, a retired minister of finance; a nameless beloved in “Tifli Efendi Hikayesi” has an affair with Kara Mustafa, a grand vezir; and Ahmed in “Hikayet” is desired by none other than Murad IV himself.

However, the beloved has other pursuers as well. Firstly, there are influential older ladies who seek to engage him in a similar exchange of companionship for patronage: Tayyazade is pursued by Gevherli Hanım, Yusuf by Raiye, and Süleyman by Hançerli Hürmüz, the “lady with the dagger” who gives her story its name.⁶⁵ Secondly, there are the *levends*, the sexually predatory, unmarried male adolescents who inhabit the same age group as the beloved. Two Tifli stories are named after these desiring *levends*: “Hikayet,” which is also known as “The Story of Sansar Mustafa,” and *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi*. Tifli stories often feature a rivalry of pursuers for the graces of the beloved. For instance, a *levend* and an adult male pursuer (Sansar Mustafa and Murad IV) fight over Ahmed in “Hikayet”; and adult male and female pursuers (Hüseyin and Gevherli Hanım) fight over Tayyazade.

While the beloved engages in sexual relationships with all three groups of pursuers, he never does so out of desire: he is either abducted (by a *levend*) or placated with gifts and favors (by a male or female adult). The beloved’s partiality to gifts need not be selfish or frivolous, though: characters such as Tayyazade and Süleyman are poor and must provide for their mothers. Upon securing Hürmüz’s patronage, Süleyman tells his mother, “If, on the one hand, we have been rendered destitute, on the other hand, the works of fortune’s child have shown us their face. Henceforth, I urge you to enjoy your life.”⁶⁶

This role as provider points to the heightened agency the boy-beloved enjoys in the Tifli stories as compared to virtually all other primary sources. This agency also carries over into the realm of the sexual. While the beloved is sexually subservient to his pursuer, this passive role does not define his entire sex life. For his own gratification, he looks to female prostitutes or male and female adolescents his own age. In “Hikayet” and “Tifli Efendi Hikayesi,” the beloved takes the initiative and bargains with his *levend* or older pursuer, requesting the services of a prostitute in return for his own sexual favors to them. As Ahmed tells Sansar in “Hikayet,” “For eight or nine days, you have been getting your pleasure from me. Now, won’t you catch me a woman so that, thanks to you, I might get my pleasure from her tonight?”⁶⁷

While the boy-beloved’s interest in prostitutes is fleeting, his pursuit of male and female adolescents has the potential to upset the balance of power between him and his own patron/pursuer. A substory recounted within *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi* features Na-yab, the boy-beloved of the king Cemşid, who falls in love and elopes with Seyf-i dil, a merchant’s son. The story ends with Cemşid killing Seyf-i dil before committing suicide. Süleyman and Yusuf, the boy-beloved protagonists of *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi* and *Leta’ifname*, fall in love with young female household slaves of the influential ladies who patronize them. And while the ladies try their best to stop these affairs from blossoming, the stories end with the young couples united and the ladies humbled or punished.

These stories show that far from being emasculated by his sexual services to a patron, the beloved could combine this passive role with a sexual agency that endangered his patron's standing and very life.

Overall, the Tifli stories offer us the boy-beloved as the central node in a complex network of desire. In this capacity, he is both subject and object, active and passive, desirer and desired. While scholarship has noted the "untamed" sexuality of the male adolescent,⁶⁸ the Tifli stories offer us a chance to witness how this multivalent sexuality might have manifested itself in a multilateral web of relationships.

Discussion of the boy-beloved naturally leads to the figure who is, in many Tifli stories, his main antagonist: the adult male pursuer. In most sources, this character simply appears as the dominant partner in his relationship with the beloved but is not really examined in terms of the wider, often negative, context and consequences of his pursuit. This might be due to the fact that many sources on the topic, such as court poetry, feature embodied narrators who inhabit the role of the pursuer themselves and are therefore likely to romanticize it. The Tifli stories, not burdened by such a narrator, expand our horizons regarding the adult male pursuer's overarching lifeworld.

The adult male pursuers in the Tifli stories are not the solipsistic heroes of unrequited love found in court poetry. They are embedded in a complicated social context that renders their desires and acts ambiguous and problematic. For one, they must negotiate the fine line between the social and the sexual.⁶⁹ Tayyazade's pursuer Hüseyin seems to be interested in the former: "There is no discerning, refined man for me to converse with, a man who would comprehend my words and be capable of answering. I have not come into possession of such a man."⁷⁰ His wife, however, construes things quite differently: "When he comes to the harem, he doesn't look me in the face. He doesn't come to the harem until six or seven at night. Even though his beard has turned gray, he still hasn't abandoned his habit."⁷¹ The harmful consequences of pursuing beloveds may reach far beyond domestic strife: one day, while searching for Tayyazade in the streets, Hüseyin is abducted by an extortion ring, triggering the second part of the story that culminates in his rescue by Tayyazade and Murad IV. To sum up, the adult male pursuer's position of strength vis-à-vis the beloved could easily translate into a position of weakness vis-à-vis his own network of dependents and society in general.

His pursuit of the beloved could even destabilize his sexual role as penetrator or his social role as family father. While scholarship casts him in the role of the active penetrator, a role he can only desert at the risk of becoming pathologized or ridiculed, "Tifli Efendi Hikayesi" gives us Kara Mustafa both penetrating and being penetrated by his beloved without being categorized or censured as a *ma'būn* by other characters or the author/narrator himself.⁷² And while most primary sources justify pursuit of the beloved only as long as it does not replace or jeopardize the reproductive institution of marriage, "Hikayet" makes light of this rule. In the story, Tifli himself appears as an *amrad*-lover with a categorical aversion to women: "By God, brother, I have never chased after women in my life. I don't even like my own mother."⁷³

The Tifli stories' adult male pursuer is a highly compromised figure. To be fair, though, he inhabits a society in which male authority figures routinely vacate or compromise their roles as upholders of social norms. He is never depicted as a father, but most fathers in the Tifli stories fail their children: the fathers of numerous beloveds such as Tayyazade and Süleyman are dead or die at the outset of the stories, while the fathers

of female adolescents in *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi* and *İki Biraderler Hikayesi* are inept or senile, unable to keep their daughters in line or protect them from sexual predators. This general breakdown of patriarchal authority is particularly troubling in light of the Ottoman father's legal obligation, mentioned above, to safeguard his minor offspring from sexual harm. The Tifli stories' social landscape, littered with dead and ineffectual fathers, provides a stark contrast to other sources such as those penned by the Egyptian scholar Ibn al-Wakil al-Mallawi (d. ca. 1719), in whose love stories El-Rouayheb often finds "the intervention of fathers to prevent the adult lovers from frequenting their sons."⁷⁴

The breakdown of patriarchal authority goes beyond parental duties to affect the integrity of public space itself. The Tifli stories find this space penetrated by *levends*, beloveds, ladies, prostitutes, and other disruptive figures who challenge the sociosexual norms that absent, enfeebled, or compromised male adults are barely able to maintain. It seems plausible to connect this bleak perspective to the moral ambiguities occasioned by 19th-century changes in Istanbul society.⁷⁵ It may seem anachronistic, then, to project the Tifli stories' compromised adult male pursuer backwards onto premodern contexts. I would argue, however, that it was the 19th-century loosening of established normative discourses that enabled the Tifli stories to explore the ambiguities that already existed in the premodern sociosexual order in an unrestrained fashion relative to earlier sources.

As mentioned above, the Tifli stories thrive by shining the spotlight on liminal and ambivalent sociosexual roles. Among female characters, the prostitute and slave girl remain secondary because they lack such ambivalence. The prostitute may possess a high degree of agency in the public sphere but is portrayed as morally reprehensible by default, while the slave girl, even if morally upstanding, is denied agency by definition.⁷⁶ The influential lady, meanwhile, oscillates between roles: moral but sexually impotent (the postsexual female elder) or immoral and sexually active (the adult female pursuer). This oscillation makes her a perfect subject for the Tifli stories to explore.

No other pre-20th-century primary source treats the case of ostensibly postsexual female elders assuming the role of adult female pursuers as extensively as the Tifli stories. In so doing, the stories confirm Peirce's view of Ottoman private space as a locus of female agency. Influential ladies seem secluded in their private worlds, but these same private worlds place them at the center of networks from which they draw "information and sources of power."⁷⁷ However, as opposed to the postsexual female elders of Peirce's imperial household, the ladies of the Tifli stories use their wealth, prestige, and networks to establish contact with boy-beloveds, lavish them with gifts, and punish them if they renege on their duties as quasi gigolos. While Hürmüz and Raiye in *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi* and *Leta'ifname* only act for their personal gratification, Gevherli—Tayyazade's female pursuer—is a thrice-widowed Ottoman lady who has turned her residential palace into the headquarters of a prostitution and extortion racket.

Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi and *Leta'ifname* in particular offer detailed portrayals of a woman who possesses the privilege necessary to explore her sexuality, but who must, paradoxically, renounce her sexuality to preserve that privilege. Her refusal to renounce it does not end well: in both stories, an attraction develops between her boy-beloved and a female household slave, with the lady resorting to brutal retribution

against the young lovers. By mistreating her slave, she undermines the foundations of her domestic authority. By mistreating the beloved, she—though never portrayed as a mother—becomes a threat to the offspring of other mothers, and thus to society at large. She ends up opposed by the beloveds' mothers as well as her own household staff, and is ultimately punished by the sultan with execution or stripping of rank and wealth.

Their endings notwithstanding, the Tifli stories' portrayal of these ladies is far from judgmental. Despite her affair with the boy-beloved Yusuf, Raiye of *Leta'ifname* has a moral code. When she learns of the affair between Yusuf and her household slave Leta'if, she interrogates the latter: "Tell the truth. If you have conducted such an affair, I will manumit you and give you to the gentleman. But if you lie, only I know what I'll do to you." Leta'if is frightened and denies the relationship. Raiye's reaction is fierce: "If you'd told the truth, I would have freed you and given you to Yusuf Şah. But because you lied, I will kill you."⁷⁸ With Hürmüz of *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*, the positive emphasis is on love rather than morality. As her beloved, Süleyman, concedes at the end of the story, "O tyrannous one! You have done me both good and harm, but you have done it all out of the love in your heart."⁷⁹ While Hürmüz hatches plot after plot to thwart Süleyman's relationship with her household slave Kamer, Süleyman intercedes with the sultan on three occasions to ensure she is pardoned each time.

The only other primary source that approaches the Tifli stories in exploring the adult female pursuer is literature on the wiles of women. And even this literature only features two reductionist takes on the type: the adulterous wife whose sole motivation is her insatiable sexual appetite and the scheming woman who uses her sexuality to ensnare men in her guileful plots.⁸⁰ The Tifli stories' adult female pursuer, morally complex and intricately networked in society, offers a matchless glimpse into the sociosexual lifeworld of an influential older lady in the premodern Middle East.

The final sociosexual role I examine in this study, and another one rarely encountered in primary or secondary sources, is the freeborn female adolescent. She enters the Tifli stories relatively late, taking center stage in *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi* (1872–73) and *İki Biraderler Hikayesi* (1883–84), two stories published toward the end of the 19th century. The appearance of this figure was probably facilitated by the increased visibility and freedom of movement enjoyed by Istanbul women during the period in question.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the sociosexual role is not without relevance to premodern times: Peirce's reading of 16th- and 17th-century legal texts yields the insight that "adolescent girls appear to have circulated with greater freedom than their married older sisters."⁸² What rendered them good material for the Tifli stories was the moral ambiguity resulting from the combination of this freedom of movement with the question of sexual probity.

The female protagonist of *İki Biraderler Hikayesi* is an unnamed adolescent girl whose elderly father is unable to prevent an unscrupulous aunt from delivering her into the hands of Kazazzade, a young and wealthy debauchee. Kazazzade is an ambivalent character, combining the age and attitude of a *levend* with the social standing and resources of an adult pursuer. More interesting, though, is the girl herself, who recounts nearly a third of the story in the first person. At Kazazzade's mansion, she is greeted by a party of prostitutes amusing themselves at a banquet. Realizing that she must take her honor into her own hands, she blows out the candles in the hall, grabs a knife, and forces Kazazzade and the prostitutes to retreat before flinging herself into the Bosphorus. She

is saved from drowning by the fortuitous arrival of a ferryman who rows her to safety and, eventually, ends up marrying her. While this girl never transcends her role as object of desire to become a desiring subject in her own right, she does assume stewardship of her own chastity in the absence of adult supervision.

A more complex take on the female adolescent is found in *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi*. Here, the merchant's daughter Rukiye falls in love with the boy-beloved Çavuşzade Abdi, for whose affections she enters into a rivalry with Cevri Çelebi, the story's eponymous *levend*. At one point, Cevri ventures a comparative appraisal of Abdi and Rukiye's beauty: "I've never seen such a beauty among men as Çavuşzade, or as yourself among women. But since I'm in love with Çavuşzade, I wouldn't exchange a hair of his for ten girls as comely as you." Rather than being offended or intimidated, Rukiye praises Cevri for his answer: "Bravo, Cevri Çelebi, if you're in love, this is how it should be."⁸³ Rukiye initiates a sexual relationship with Abdi and eventually elopes with him. Her irate father promises the sultan to punish her: "Had I but known, my lord, I would have flayed her alive. But I will have her found, my lord, and make an example of her!"⁸⁴ Murad IV, however, has other plans: after having the couple located and brought before him, he approves Rukiye's choice of companion with the words, "the box has found its lid,"⁸⁵ and conducts their wedding himself.

With Rukiye, then, the Tifli stories greatly expand the sociosexual role assigned to female adolescents in most primary sources. In contrast to these sources' understanding of female sexuality as "awakened" by the loss of virginity to men, Rukiye is a sexually charged virgin who dictates the terms of her own deflowering. Unlike the sources' depiction of virgins as passive objects of male desire, Rukiye covets, pursues, and obtains her own male object of desire despite male competition. And in contrast to the sources' insistence on the father as protector and arbiter of his minor offspring's sexual trajectory, Rukiye claims sexual agency and overrides her father's wishes, making independent decisions that are ultimately vindicated by the sultan himself. She repositions the female adolescent as a player who, like the influential lady, has a choice of roles: the passive virgin awaiting male activation of her sexuality, or the sexually self-awakened virgin who desires, competes with, and opposes a range of male players in charting her own transition to womanhood.

The ambivalence of characters such as the boy-beloved, the female adolescent, as well as the adult male or female pursuer is exploited by the Tifli stories to build conflict and suspense. As the stories enter their denouements, however, they restabilize sociosexual roles and reaffirm the societal status quo. This is achieved through the plot device of the sultan, the ultimate male patriarch, who often appears as a *deus ex machina* to set things right. He does so by handing out punishment and reward in a way that either removes or resocializes transgressors. Ladies and prostitutes are punished severely,⁸⁶ while older male pursuers maintain their privileged positions, their admonishment taking the form of scorn and ridicule.⁸⁷ Boy-beloveds and female adolescents (as well as most slave girls) are married off to appropriate partners decreed by the sultan, who thus promotes them to adulthood. *Levends*, finally, are married off by the sultan as well, even though they generally express no interest in women.⁸⁸ Marriage ends the sexually ambivalent roles of male and female adolescents, anchoring them in society as heads of their own households—though the new ambivalence of the adult pursuer, to which even the sultan is not immune, surely awaits.

CONCLUSION

Calling the Tifli stories descriptive rather than prescriptive or transgressive is, in a way, a sleight of hand. It might be argued that the stories consist of a transgressive center flanked by a prescriptive beginning and end. An ideal social order is outlined, gives way to conflict and disorder, and is eventually reestablished by the *sultan ex machina*. This plot structure is not the only conventional aspect of the Tifli stories either. Even when the stories seem at their most transgressive, some sociosexual constellations remain unthinkable. We never encounter fathers or mothers who are also pursuers of adolescents their children's age. We never encounter a father who is alive and well but tolerates his children's involvement with older pursuers. We never read of a boy-beloved who returns the feelings of his older pursuer. Male adult pairings are off limits, as are female pairings of any age.

Here, discourse is eclipsed by experience: of course, pursuers were also fathers, but the limits of taste and propriety seem to have prevented fiction from incorporating such facts. Still, these limits point us back to the Tifli stories' protorealism: this is not a genre that derives its thrills from shock value or caricaturized transgression, and neither is it interested in passing moralistic judgment on its characters. The genre lands somewhere in the middle, curious enough about sociosexual roles to explore their possible complications, but sympathetic enough to the inhabitants of these roles to keep them within the boundaries of social empathy as dictated by the age. And this is what makes the Tifli stories so valuable to the study of history—audiences may well have found themselves in these characters, flawed and contradictory but rarely beyond redemption; and they may well have shared these characters' plight in trying to reconcile clear-cut norms with multilayered experiential realities.

NOTES

¹I am following the time frame established by Khaled El-Rouayheb in *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

²Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2006), 167.

³El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 127.

⁴Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005), 243.

⁵See, for instance, Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁶El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 11.

⁷*Ibid.*, 10.

⁸Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 10.

⁹*Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁰Irvin Cemil Schick, "Representation of Gender and Sexuality in Ottoman and Turkish Erotic Literature," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 28 (2004): 81–103. The explicit content of these works did not, however, bar them from polite society: "The presence of eminent mainstream scholars among the authors and translators of these works is noteworthy, as is the fact that many were commissioned by and/or presented to imperial patrons." *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 125.

¹²*Ibid.*, 143.

¹³This exaggeration can be found, for instance, in the "debate between 'women-lovers' and 'boy-lovers'" as described by Selim Kuru in "Sex in the Text: Deli Birader's *Dafi'ü'l-gumun ve Rafi'ü'l-humum* and the Ottoman Literary Canon," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 10 (2007): 157.

¹⁴Here, the *karagöz* genre with its prominent female characters would present an exception.

¹⁵Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 19.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷Şükür Elçin, “Kitabi, Mensur, Realist İstanbul Halk Hikayeleri,” in Elçin, *Halk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Milli Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları, 1977), 130.

¹⁸Titles of works in larger collections are given in quotes, titles of alone-standing works in italics.

¹⁹This is also the name of an Ottoman genre.

²⁰The last two stories are found in the same volume.

²¹Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Aşk Yolunda İstanbul'da Neler Olmuş* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2002).

²²Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçede Roman* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985 [1936]); Pertev Naili Boratav, *Halk Hikayeleri ve Halk Hikayeciliği* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1946); Elçin, *Halk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları*; Hasan Kavruk, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mensur Hikayeler* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1998).

²³David Selim Sayers, *Tıfli Hikayeleri* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013).

²⁴I acknowledge the help of the staffs at Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi (both İstanbul), Milli Kütüphane (Ankara), Erzurum Atatürk Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi (Erzurum), and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vienna).

²⁵On the life of the historical Tıfli Ahmed Çelebi, see Köprülü Zade Mehmed Fuad (Fuad Köprülü), “Tıfli Ahmed Çelebi,” in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Tahsin Yazıcı et al., vol. 12 (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1974), 234.

²⁶Kavruk, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında*, 70.

²⁷See, for instance, Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1997), 85.

²⁸Theodor Menzel, *Meddah, Schattentheater und Orta Ojunu* (Prague: Orientalisches Institut, 1941), 3.

²⁹*Meddahs* were urban storytellers who performed their stories with the aid of mimicry and basic props at coffee houses and similar public gathering spots.

³⁰See Saim Sakaoğlu, “Hançerli Hanım Hikayesi,” in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, ed. İlhan Tekeli, vol. 3 (İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı Ortak Yayını, 1994), 547; and Güzin Dino, *Türk Romanının Doğuşu* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1978).

³¹İbn-ül-Emin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Son Asır Türk Şairleri*, ed. Müjgân Cunbur (Ankara: Atatürk Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 1999), 1:151. The author in question is Ali Âlî, writer of *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*. On the topic of Ottoman prose authors concealing their identities out of fear of ridicule, see Elçin, “Kitabi, Mensur, Realist,” 130; and Kavruk, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında*, 5–6.

³²For Atayi, see Tunca Kortantamer, *Nev'i-zade Atayi ve Hamse'si* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1997), 99, 420. For Aşki, see Nutku, *Meddahlık*, 93.

³³Ahmet Ö. Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983), 38.

³⁴See Tülay Artan, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi,” *Defter* 20 (1993): 91–115.

³⁵Evin, *Origins and Development*, 35.

³⁶Leslie P. Peirce, “Seniority, Sexuality, and Social Order: The Vocabulary of Gender in Early Modern Ottoman Society,” in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Madeline C. Zilfi (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 174.

³⁷El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 26.

³⁸On this topic, see Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*.

³⁹Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 82, 126. This edict from the time of Süleyman I (r. 1520–66) is quoted in Peirce, “Seniority, Sexuality, and Social Order,” 180.

⁴⁰Peirce, “Seniority, Sexuality, and Social Order,” 177.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 183.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 181.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁴David Selim Sayers, “The Wiles of Women in Ottoman and Azeri Texts” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014), 25–26.

⁴⁵Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), ix.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁷Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 68.

⁴⁸El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 25.

⁴⁹Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, ix.

⁵⁰Andrews and Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds*, 51.

⁵¹Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 65.

⁵²On Ottoman arranged marriages, see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1995), 120.

⁵³Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 20.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* See also Kuru, "Sex in the Text," 164–65.

⁵⁵El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 19.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 45–46.

⁵⁷For a detailed treatment of this stereotype, see Sayers, "The Wives of Women."

⁵⁸Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 136.

⁵⁹On the absence of the female–female pairing in the Ottoman legal tradition, see Peirce, "Seniority, Sexuality, and Social Order," 174; Andrews and Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds*, 172; and Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 65.

⁶⁰El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 66.

⁶¹In Deli Birader's work, according to Kuru, "their pleasure is not considered at all. They are either taken by force or sodomised by a trick." Kuru, "Sex in the Text," 163.

⁶²Andrews and Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds*, 143.

⁶³For the status of the beloved as "pin-up," see also El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 82.

⁶⁴"Uşşâk-i dil-fîgâr, mumâileyhîn cumaları kangî cami-i şerîfe azîmet ve kangî mesirede ârâm ve istirahat edeceğini bir haftadan bir haftaya tahkik ve tecessüse hasr-i evkat edip, köşebaşlarında ve çarşı ve pazarda nice efgende-i biçare, zâr ü hayran olarak hiç olmazsa pederi tarafından bir selama muntazır olurlar idi." *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*, 6. Transliterations in the endnotes follow Sayers, *Tıfli Hikayeleri*.

⁶⁵The beloved as gigolo is also a motif found in later *karagöz*. See Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 148.

⁶⁶"Bir taraftan harap olduksa da bir yandan asar-i yavru-i talih, rû-nümâ oldu. Bundan böyle sefa üzere olmanızı memul ederim." *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*, 49.

⁶⁷"Sekiz dokuz gündür sen benim ile zevk edip sefa mı sürdün, ya n'ola şimdi bana bir avrat sayd etsen, ben de bu gece senin sayende avrat ile bir zevk eylesem olmaz mı?" "Hikayet," 27a.

⁶⁸See Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 92.

⁶⁹On how this line could be drawn in a legal context, see Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 31.

⁷⁰"Bir söz anlar zarîf âdem yok ki anımla sohbet ideyim benim söyledığım sohbeti anlasun ve cevâba kudreti olsun böyle bir âdeme mâlik olmadım." "Tayyazade Hikayesi," 4.

⁷¹"Hareme girdiği vakit yüzime bakmaz gice sâ'at altıya yediye varınca kadar hareme gelmez sakal ağardı yine ferâgat imedi." *Ibid.*, 14. On the issues of matrimonial discord and disapproval of visibly aged male pursuers, see also Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 23–24, 29.

⁷²"Tıfli Efendi Hikayesi," 87–88.

⁷³"V'Allahî birâder benim 'ömrimde zen-pârelik etdiğim yokdur anamı bile sevmem." "Hikayet," 26a. Connections between bachelorhood and boy-love are also mentioned in El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, 29.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁵For a similar point in relation to the 19th-century Ottoman novel, see Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1993).

⁷⁶Regarding the legal standing of slaves in the Ottoman Empire, Ze'evi points to a consensus that "Slaves, not having full jurisdiction over their own bodies, should also have diminished legal responsibility, [while] free men and women should be punished more severely." Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 55.

⁷⁷Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 7.

⁷⁸"Doğru söyle. Eğer senden böyle iş zuhur etti ise seni çıtrak edip beye veririm. Eğer yalan söyler isen ben bilirim sana edeceğim işi"; "Eğer doğru söylesen idi seni azat edip Yusuf Şah'a verecek idim, çünkü yalan söyledin, seni katlediyim." *Leta'ifname*, 99.

⁷⁹“Hey zalim, sen bana hem iyilik ve hem kötülük ettin ise ancak sevda-i nefsin üzerine ettin.” *Hançerli Hikaye-i Garibesi*, 108–9.

⁸⁰See Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Gayane K. Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Zulaykha and Yusuf: Whose ‘Best Story’?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997): 485–508; Margaret A. Mills, “Whose Best Tricks? *Makr-i Zan* as a Topos in Persian Oral Literature,” *Iranian Studies* 32 (1999): 261–70; and Sayers, “The Wiles of Women.”

⁸¹Najmabadi notes an eyewitness report from the 1880s in which “A Hajj Muhammad Kabuli, on his way back from Mecca through Istanbul, observed in distress that on the streets of Istanbul some Muslim women walked with their faces and heads uncovered.” Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 135–36.

⁸²Peirce, “Seniority, Sexuality, and Social Order,” 181.

⁸³“Erkekta Çavuşzade ve nisada efendim gibi güzel görmedim, amma bendeniz Çavuşzade’ye aşık olduğum cihetle Çavuşzade’nin bir kılın sencileyin on kıza değışmem”; “Aferin Cevri Çelebi, aşık olunca böyle gerektir.” *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi*, 21.

⁸⁴“Bilmedim efendim, derisini yüzerdim, ancak, efendim, buldurup ibretiâlem eyleyeyim.” *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁵“Kutu kapağın bulmuş.” *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸⁶Prostitutes and ladies are executed in stories such as *Leta’ifname*, 152; “Tayyazade Hikayesi,” 62–63; and *Meşhur Tıfli Efendi ile Kanlı Bektaş’ın Hikayesi*, 31.

⁸⁷For instance, Tıfli falls into the Bosphorus while trying to avoid detection of his involvement with beloveds. “Tıfli Efendi Hikayesi,” 93.

⁸⁸For weddings of both beloveds and *levends*, see “Hikayet,” 46b–47a; and *Hikaye-i Cevri Çelebi*, 32. Sansar Mustafa, the *levend* in “Hikayet,” is married off to the sister of Ahmed, his boy-beloved.