

Writing non-Turkish Subjectivities, Writing Contradictions: Twentieth-Century Istanbul in *İstanbul* *Ansiklopedisi*

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Abstract

İstanbul Ansiklopedisi is an absorbing project undertaken by the renowned historian Reşad Ekrem Koçu and published between 1944 and 1973. The encyclopaedia features a diverse range of entries about the history of buildings, fountains, customs, and individuals who either lived in or visited the city. It provides a unique perspective on Istanbul, containing information that was difficult to find elsewhere. The encyclopaedia has often been read and analysed for its entries on Ottoman history.

Instead, this article concerns itself with the more recent history of this text, scrutinising the entries about twentieth-century Istanbul, entries that frequently included contradictions, especially concerning gender and sexuality. I explore the way in which Koçu referred to non-Turkish subjectivities that did not conform to the heteronormative subject formation and went beyond the regulatory state discourses of the Turkish nation-state in the twentieth century.

Introduction

İstanbul Ansiklopedisi (the Encyclopaedia of Istanbul) is an extensive project inquiring into different periods of Istanbul in Ottoman and recent Turkish history. Reşad Ekrem Koçu (1905-1975), a popular historian and author, stated that he wanted to form an enormous registry of Istanbul via this encyclopaedia project. *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* was released intermittently, first as individual fascicles and later in complete volumes between 1944 and 1973. Koçu initially published the first three volumes of the encyclopaedia from 1944 to 1951, but financial difficulties forced him to halt its publication. In 1958, he resumed his work on the encyclopaedia, revising previously published volumes and advancing up to volume eleven until the letter G. Throughout the project, Koçu received support from his friends and colleagues, including Semavi Eyice (1922-2018) and Kevork Pamukciyan (1923-1996).

Despite its engrossing content, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* has been marginalised and ignored in contemporary Turkey, and is currently out of print. Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay indicates that, since the encyclopaedia stages the Ottoman past, it was expected to be reissued, including its unpublished parts, due to the rise of neo-Ottomanism in current Turkish politics (90). However, the content of the encyclopaedia runs counter to neo-Ottomanism, which mainly embodied Islamic morality and the conservative cultural values of the Ottoman Empire since the beginning of the twenty-first century in Turkey (Altınay 90). The marginalisation of Koçu's historiography is not unique to the current political circumstances. *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* also departed from the conventions of Istanbul in the period during which it was written. The encyclopaedia brings together descriptions of historically diverse sexual practices and subjectivities, many of which did not appeal to common decency in Koçu's lifetime. As Orhan Pamuk states, "[t]here weren't many readers who could tolerate, let alone appreciate, his sexual tastes (161)."

The entry about Papazın (of the Priest)¹ Dimo is representative in revealing these non-conforming practices and subjectivities, which emerge repeatedly in the encyclopaedia, and pertain to murder, prostitution, sexual deviance, and young male outcasts. Dimo was a male

¹ All translations in this article are the author's own.

Greek prostitute and murderer living in Istanbul at the end of the nineteenth century. He worked as a barber's apprentice in the Golden Horn until he was pandered into prostitution by a horse rider called Çako. One night in 1898, when Dimo was nineteen, he got drunk and stabbed Çako to death. Dimo was sentenced to hard labour and probably died in a prison in Rhodes (Koçu Vol. 8, 4595). Edhem Eldem mentions Papazın Dimo together with Bıçaklı (Knifeman) Panayot, another Greek boy, to demonstrate that they are representative of Koçu's specific interest in young boys, who often belonged to ethnic minorities and/or were part of the subculture and backstreets of Istanbul in the twentieth century (00:48:30-00:50:54). These examples demonstrate that the encyclopaedia goes beyond describing architectural structures, streets, and neighbourhoods of Istanbul and includes distinct configurations and societal stratifications of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion across history.

Scholarly works on Koçu's massive encyclopaedia project have explored entries similar to, or perhaps even more captivating than, the one about Dimo, including non-conforming, mostly queer practices, desires, and subjectivities within the Ottoman Empire. Koçu's interest in the Ottoman Empire and how he incorporated it into the encyclopaedia have been the focus of these scholarly works. For instance, Joseph Allen Boone reads *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* as an attempt to memorialise Ottoman homoerotic desire that was about to vanish under modernisation attempts and the emergence of new discourses on gender and sexuality at the turn of the century (56-57). Altınay considers Koçu a political dissident whose work was the result of his melancholic attachment to the Ottoman Empire. By making non-conforming practices and subjectivities, regarding sexuality or otherwise, within the Ottoman Empire available to a wider audience, Koçu challenged significant political actions taken against same-sex desire and the Ottoman past during the transformation from an empire to a nation-state in the early twentieth century (Altınay 93).

Departing from the previous works centralising Ottoman content in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, this article focuses on the entries concerning

non-Turkish sexual subjectivities in recent Turkish history, particularly mid-twentieth-century Istanbul, a period during which the newly established nation-state deemed heteronormativity, reproductive sex, and the child-centred family as crucial components of a larger political project. The objective of this article is to demonstrate the way in which the inclusion of non-Turkish subjectivities into the encyclopaedia enabled Koçu to capture what he found interesting without meddling with the state's nationalist agenda and subject formation. To achieve this, the first section of this article explains the ways in which the political agenda of the Turkish nation-state attributed particular gender roles to its citizens and promoted heteronormativity and the nuclear family as foundations of society. Koçu's encyclopaedia is a significant and productive source that reveals discursive ambivalences regarding nationalism, subject formation, gender, and sexuality in twentieth-century Istanbul. The second section offers close readings of particular accounts of non-conforming subjectivities and practices of twentieth-century Istanbul that challenged moral and societal norms surrounding sex, identity, and family, which were enforced by the state. In my analysis, it becomes clear that on the one hand, specific entries in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* aligned with state ideology and what was considered necessary or appropriate at the time; on the other hand, Koçu maintained his deep interest in non-conforming practices, subjectivities, and desires in specific entries, often pivoting around non-Turkish subjectivities. Therefore, this article explores a collection of bodies, practices, and desires that move beyond the state ideology and its project of national subject formation and looks at the city's vibrant socio-cultural scene during the mid-twentieth century via *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*.

Nationalism and the Regulation of Desire

Following its establishment in 1923, the Turkish nation-state focused on solidifying the state ideology in various ways. This included severing ties with the Ottoman Empire, disregarding its diverse, multi-ethnic population, and developing a new historiography that traces its origins to Central Asia (Ersanlı 115-116). Forming a national identity was one

of the most significant steps in the process, often referring to distinct identity categories regarding ethnicity, race, religion, ability, gender, and sexuality. These categories have an effect on defining and shaping the identity of individuals as ‘ideal’ citizens. Even if these categories are not explicitly stated, they still create distinctions that determine who is included in or excluded from ideal citizenship (Sirman 147-148). In the case of the Turkish nation-state, the ideal citizen was considered Turkish, Muslim, able-bodied, and heterosexual, with a set of rights and responsibilities that served “specific operations of power and of a particular moral subjectivity” (Sirman 148).” The ideal citizens were often deployed in so-called “familial citizenship,” which signified a heteronormative marriage between a ruling husband and his reliant wife, who was also a mother. Such citizenship led to the regulation of desires and the reinforcement of heteronormativity and, consequently, to the formation of a new type of morality in the twentieth century (Sirman 148-149). Accordingly, nationalism moved beyond solely being a political ideology and also became a discursive practice permeating new configurations of power structures, institutions, desire, subjectivity, and everyday life (Sirman 152-154). As Nükhet Sirman writes, “[g]ender and the family are thus placed at the center of what Foucault has called governmentality (154).”

Cenk Özbay claims that the state was occupied with promoting heterosexuality, the nuclear family, and assigning the mother role to women, who were held responsible for raising future generations, so much so that same-sex desires and practices were relegated to and became part of the urban underground culture (870). Koçu’s *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* unveils these relegated desires and practices. On that note, the encyclopaedia has been perceived as “queer” for including sexual practices and subjectivities diverging from the heteronormative formations of the Turkish nation-state (Altınay; Boone). In addition, Pamuk considers Koçu to be a homosexual writer who expressed his sexual desire in his popular novels, and even more so in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (158). Koçu undeniably had a particular interest in young boys that reveals itself in different entries throughout the encyclopaedia. Nonetheless, Murat Bardakçı takes against Pamuk’s commentary on

Koçu's sexuality, giving nuances that Koçu was a *cemal aşığı* (lover of facial beauty), a specific category regarding male sexual subjectivity in the Ottoman Empire, signifying those who took pleasure from glancing at beautiful boys.

Moreover, Koçu's divergence from the state ideology extended beyond his own sexual subjectivity, a subjectivity which was not deemed acceptable according to the new type of morality imposed on its citizens by the state. Owing to his academic interests, it also fed into Koçu's identity as a historian. As a historian employed at the university, he worked on Ottoman history, which the state had deliberately ignored when constructing a new national historiography. His work on the Ottoman Empire ultimately resulted in Koçu losing his position at the university. As Altınay indicates, nation-state projects, by definition, often seek legitimacy through subject formation (93). Individuals who fail to become national subjects aligned with these specified subject positions, are "queered" by the state or by those who police the norm imposed by the state. The queerness of these individuals, however, is separate from their sexual subjectivities. Altınay employs the term "queer" to refer to "practices, structures of feeling, and modes of identification" that go against state-sanctioned values, norms, and dominant discourses, including but not limited to gender and sexuality (90). This broader definition of queer allows for exploration of non-conforming experiences beyond gender and sexuality. That is to say, those who are in conflict with the politics of the state might also shape their own queerness by the failure to become desired national subjects, rather than by non-normative sexualities (Altınay 93). In Koçu's case, because he did not meet the requirements to be recognised as a desired national subject, he was "queered." Through the publication of *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, he continued to challenge the dominant national historiographies by bringing attention to overlooked and marginalised subjectivities and historical records, making them accessible to a larger audience. The encyclopaedia was primarily viewed as unconventional in academic circles regarding the way in which it produced knowledge and occupied a queer position amongst Turkish historiographies.

On the one hand, Koçu did not follow the new, nationalist line of historiography imposed by the state, but kept his interest in the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, he was somewhat influenced by the new state ideology that normalised heterosexuality as Turkishness. This occasionally gave itself away in the encyclopaedia. For example, in the entry entitled “Çıplak Resimlerini Çekdiren Uygunsuzlar (1880-1890 arasında)” (The Inappropriates Who Have Their Nude Pictures Taken [between 1880-1890]), Koçu mentioned commercial photographs of certain Ottoman Greeks, such as Çıplak (Naked) Despina, Papazın Dimo, and Bıçaklı Panayot, who posed nude. These photographs were sold in beer houses and *meyhanes* (traditional restaurants). The article contains illustrations of the photographs, hand-copied by Sabiha Rüştü Bozcalı (1904-1998), who drew numerous illustrations for *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*. The photos contain captions such as “*La beauté grecque de Constantinople*” (The Greek beauty of Constantinople) and “*Le beau garçon de Galatha d’origine grec*” (The beautiful boy from Galata of Greek origin) (Koçu Vol. 7, 3930). Whilst including these nude models as an entry, only the censored and altered versions of these photographs were published in the encyclopaedia. The models were made to wear clothing, and fezzes were placed on the boys’ heads in the illustrations. Additionally, while all the models held Greek flags made out of paper, Bozcalı chose only to include the flagsticks when copying the photographs. It is very likely that Koçu recommended this alteration when incorporating the visuals. The Greek flags were removed from the illustrations due to the nationalist rhetoric that was prevalent during that time. This gesture would prevent the encyclopaedia from being subject to state pressure and censorship in its publication. Even though Koçu wanted to keep a certain suggestiveness regarding nakedness, he made sure that the visuals did not overstep the sensitivities of the state regarding nationalism and morality.

Koçu had an ambivalent attitude towards the state ideology and the formation of the national identity. His discursive ambivalences bring to mind José Estaban Muñoz’s “disidentification.” Muñoz conceptualised disidentification as the survival strategies employed by minority subjects to come to terms with a majoritarian public sphere that relegates the

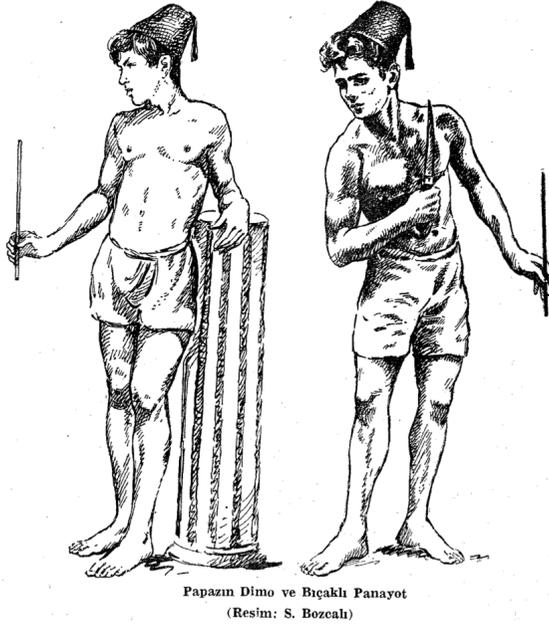


Fig 1: Papazın Dimo and Bıçaklı Panayot (Koçu Vol. 7, 3930).

existence of non-conforming subjects to “the phantasm of normative citizenship” (4). Aside from the subject’s assimilation into (identification with) or rejection of (counter-identification) dominant ideology, Muñoz suggests disidentification as a third mode, which “neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (11). Muñoz argues that a disidentifying subject has an attachment to the dominant ideology and invests it with new life. In this regard, I contend that Koçu worked on and against the official historiography and the state ideology via *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*. Koçu’s disidentifying subject position led to discursive ambivalences throughout the encyclopaedia. As is evident in the example of the nude models, in removing the Greek flags and dressing the models in the illustration, he frequently paid attention to the state’s socio-political and moral priorities and concerns. Nevertheless, whilst speaking of non-conforming practices and

subjectivities, he instrumentalised non-Turkish subjectivities as convenient means to articulate his interest and fascination for beautiful boys without disputing the state ideology and the heteronormative identity formation enforced by the Turkish state.

Non-Conforming Bodies of Mid-Twentieth Century Istanbul

In *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Koçu used non-Turkish subjectivities to sustain his interests and curiosities concerning a diverse range of sexualities. Nevertheless, he often contradicts himself even whilst discussing the same content in different entries within the encyclopaedia. For instance, Altınay points out that the encyclopaedia contains contradictions because Koçu used multiple frames of reference, especially regarding gender and sexuality (98). Although Koçu tried to avoid anachronisms when writing about the Ottoman past, his writing was influenced by the norms and values of his time (Altınay 98). The entry about Çilergül (Kızoğlan [The Girl Boy]) epitomises these contradictions. The entry informs the reader about Erdoğan Özaltaş, an eighteen-year-old boy from Bursa, who, using the stage name Çilergül, gained fame for belly dancing in female clothing at bars and nightclubs in Beyoğlu in 1958. Çilergül received a ban for dancing in bars after being reported to the police. The incident was covered by the newspaper *Hürriyet*. Despite the setback, Çilergül was caught by the police again four months later while still performing. Based on this incident, Koçu



Fig 2: Çilergül Hanım
(Koçu Vol. 7, 3982)

in Beyoğlu in 1958. Çilergül received a ban for dancing in bars after being reported to the police. The incident was covered by the newspaper *Hürriyet*. Despite the setback, Çilergül was caught by the police again four months later while still performing. Based on this incident, Koçu

defended Çilergül's right to wear female clothing in the newspaper *Hergün*, noting that there is no criminal element in their behaviour, and questioning the double standard for the way men and women dress up: "There is no such rule that a man cannot wear female clothing. There is no fault when our girls walk around wearing male clothing, why would a young man be followed because of wearing a dress?" (Koçu Vol. 7, 3982)² He indicated that the honour of manhood is not in clothing; Çilergül only worked to earn a living.

In the entry, Koçu gives examples from the history of performing arts in the Ottoman Empire, and compares Çilergül to *köçeks*, male dancers who performed in female clothing in Istanbul coffee houses and taverns, and were an important part of the Ottoman homoerotic culture (Popescu-Judetz 46, 52). The entry also includes a quote from a poem by the eighteenth-century poet Nedim, describing a young boy dancing in the guise of a girl: "You have the coquetry of a virgin girl and the voice of a tall handsome man; you cause such trouble, oh my infidel beloved; I am not quite sure whether you are a girl or a boy!" (Silay 97)³ I contend that the use of this poetic reference by Koçu betokens Çilergül's ambivalent sexuality. It further exposes the extent to which the terms used to define modern constructions of sexualities, such as heterosexual or homosexual, do not suffice to talk about a range of Ottoman sexualities because they cannot convey their nuances. When discussing Çilergül's performance, Koçu overlooks the changing definitions and meanings attributed to specific sexual practices and the historical contingency of discourses on gender and sexuality. He assumes a continuity between the period in which Çilergül performed and Ottoman performing arts, which either died out or took on new meanings in the twentieth century (Altınay 98). To a certain extent, Koçu likens Çilergül's performance to *köçek* performances. When modern discourses on gender and sexuality permeated Ottoman society, attitudes

² Erkek kadın esvabı giyemez diye bir kanun yok. Kızlarımız oğlan kılığında sürü sürü dolaşıyorlar, kabahat olmuyor da bir delikanlı entari giyince niçin takip ediliyor? Bir erkek sahnede oryantal dans numaraları gösteriyor, ve gazinolarda yüzlerce seyirci onu kız zannediyor, zevk ile seyrediyor, takdir edip alkışlıyor. Bu çocuk, sadece sanatkârdır.

³ "Kızoğlan nâzı nâzın şehlevend âvâzı âvâzın / Belâsın ben de bilmem kız mısın oğlan mısın kâfir." Translated into English by Kemal Silay, 97.

towards homoeroticism changed, and *köçek* performances began to be disapproved of in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴ Koçu was born in the later years of the Empire and witnessed the establishment of the Turkish nation-state, and consequently was subject to socio-cultural, political, and sexual transitions in the early twentieth century. Having lived in this transitional period is also indicative of the discursive ambivalences that occur in the encyclopaedia, referring to historical sexual desires and practices from the vantage point of the present. These discursive ambivalences are generated by anachronisms when speaking of sexual practices and desires and result in contradictory statements even when the same practices and desires are at stake in different entries in the encyclopaedia.

In addition, Koçu not only refers to *köçeks* from the Ottoman Empire but also showcases cross-dressing dance performances in European cities such as Paris, Berlin, and London as evidence. In this way, he tries to justify Çilergül's cross-dressing performance by also referring to Europe, which the Turkish nation-state often used as a point of reference. The entry illustrates the way in which Koçu's different frames of reference—Ottoman and European—co-exist within a single entry in the encyclopaedia, as Altınay suggests.

Nevertheless, Koçu's anachronisms extend beyond having the diverse frames of reference within a single entry; he also shifts his perspective on Çilergül elsewhere. In the entry titled "Gipsy," Koçu refers to a member of a French revue called Gipsy, who was originally from Italy and visited Istanbul in 1965. Koçu defines Gipsy as a



Fig 3: Gipsy (Koçu Vol. 11, 7030)

⁴ On the gender and sexuality in the Ottoman Empire, see Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*; Abdulhamit Arvas, "From the Pervert, Back to the Beloved."

tall, dark young man who performed in female clothing. In the same entry, he also refers back to Çilergül, arguing that “perverts” similar to “Gipsy” began to be seen in Turkey, too, with Erdoğan Özaltaş being the pioneer (Koçu Vol. 11, 7030). The accusation of Çilergül being a “pervert” stemmed from turning the scale to heteronormative standards imposed by the Turkish nation-state and contradicts his previous defence of Çilergül’s cross-dressing performances. I maintain that, although Koçu aimed to subvert normative subjectivities and moral norms via his work, his disidentifying subject position did not always succeed in reworking established frameworks such as heteronormativity. His changing perception of Çilergül as making a living via dance performances to seeing him as a pervert between volume seven and volume eleven exemplifies the discursive ambivalences concerning non-conforming subjectivities, practices and heteronormative formations of the Turkish nation-state. Altınay’s discussion on Koçu’s contradictory statements when writing about sexual practices and subjectivities is somewhat limited to the example of Çilergül and does not offer a broader picture of the recurring and, to some extent, structured contradictions in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*. The remaining examples in this article aim to display Koçu’s contradictory attitude towards non-conforming practices and desires, suggesting that Koçu employed non-Turkish subjectivities as convenient tools to express his fascination for different sexualities, all the while avoiding conflict with the state ideology and the heteronormative identity promoted by the state.

Koçu’s writing on non-conforming subjectivities is not limited to cross-dressers and includes transsexuals and sex change operations. Back in the 1960s, when the trans community started facing state violence, the community was relatively small and mainly concentrated in Istanbul. Due to their marginalisation from society, trans persons often resorted to peculiar jobs or prostitution to make a living (Altınay 213). Nevertheless, Koçu does not pay much attention to those transsexuals recognised by the state as Turkish citizens but spotlights non-Turkish ones. Julia Dollar, who like Gipsy was also from Italy, was a “girl-boy” member of the same French revue. Their birth name was Carlo Mario. Having first arrived in Istanbul in 1963, Dollar was a beardless boy at

eighteen or nineteen (Ölker Vol. 9, 4669). In the article, Koçu further describes Dollar's body in detail, noting that those who performed in the revue consisted of young boys who dressed up as women, grew their hair, and whose breasts and buttocks were feminised through hormone vaccines. Dollar underwent a sex change operation in Switzerland in 1964 and returned to Istanbul in 1966. However, the way Koçu writes about Dollar and the operation includes slurs and highly transphobic language such as "girl distorted from a boy" (Ölker Vol. 9, 4670). Koçu mentions the cross-dressing and gender-bending practices of Dollar and other members of the revue, defining Dollar as an "outlandish creature," and in referencing their sex change operation labels them a "pervert" that has no equivalent in Turkey (Ölker Vol. 9, 4670).

The entry about Alikı Çipicis features another reference to sex change operation.

In this entry, Koçu speaks of sex change operation as a medical practice to help Alikı attain her true sex. Alikı was the son of a fisherman, born in Rhodos in 1908, who went by the name of Aleko during his boyhood. Aleko was called "girl Aleko" by their fellows, as their voice was not exactly in the tone of the male voice (Kınaylı Vol. 7, 4034). They were never interested in girls around them and always consorted with their male friends. In 1928, Aleko became a seaman in the Italian navy and came to Istanbul with a ship named "Amerigo Vespucci." They visited a Turkish bathhouse, *Yamalı Hamam*, in Tophane. Mustafa, one of the bath attendants, told Aleko that they were not a boy but a "girl-boy creature," an androgyne. Koçu wrote that Mustafa was the first person who "diagnosed" Aleko with womanhood. Aleko thought about this "diagnosis" and applied to a hospital



Fig 4: Julia Dollar
(Ölker Vol. 9, 4668)

in Rhodos following their muster out of the navy in 1931-1932 (Kınaylı Vol. 7, 4035). Here, the word choice “diagnosis” hints at the extent to which medical discourses stigmatised certain bodies and sexualities diagnosed as needing treatment to become ‘normal’ bodies.



Fig 5: Aleko the fisherman and Alikı the stripteaser (Kınaylı Vol. 7, 4034)

After a sex change operation at the age of 24, Aleko “became a girl” and took the name Alikı, and later became a famous bar girl who earned high wages in an Italian nightclub in Rhodos in 1933 under the nickname “Boy Alikı.” Koçu noted that Alikı started striptease shows after customers insistently wanted to see Alikı’s “distorted male” body naked. That same year, Alikı married a wealthy man named Vasil Çipicis and moved to the United States. Upon the death of their husband, Alikı continued to perform striptease dancing for seven more years in the

United States. In 1950, Alikı visited Rhodos and then Istanbul to see Mustafa, the bath attendant. Those in the bathhouse were mesmerised by the beauty of Alikı, who clasped Mustafa and kissed him. Alikı wanted to marry him, but Mustafa did not accept the proposal. Despite this rejection, Mustafa spent fifteen days with Alikı, drank lots of whiskey, smoked American cigarettes and made Alikı buy expensive clothing (Kınaylı Vol. 7, 4035). Although Koçu recounts the relationship between Mustafa and Alikı, he remains silent about Mustafa's sexual orientation. I argue that this silence helped Koçu secure himself and his work against possible interventions by the government. Outspoken in some ways and silent in others, Koçu remains ambivalent in his struggle with the state ideology and heteronormativity.

Koçu's *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* persists as a unique, idiosyncratic source for Ottoman and recent Turkish history, providing details that are difficult to find in the official historiography. The encyclopaedia showcases the discursive ambivalences and the conflicting attitudes towards gender and sexuality prevalent during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Whilst describing modern sexual identities in twentieth-century Turkish society in his work, Koçu withheld describing specific sexualities intrinsic to the Ottoman Empire, such as *köçeks*. This resulted in anachronisms, as in the example of Çilergül, juxtaposing historically contingent subjectivities next to each other. His ambivalent stance towards different sexualities can be understood as creating what Muñoz would call a disidentifying subject position. By including non-conforming, non-Turkish subjectivities in his work, Koçu found an implicit way to offer alternatives to state-imposed heteronormative sexualities. However, he does not openly challenge non-conforming sexualities in broad terms, and often remains silent about other Turkish sexualities.

Conclusion

İstanbul Ansiklopedisi is a captivating historical resource that provides insights into a diverse range of desires, sexual practices, and subjectivities that differ from the ideology and subject formation of the Turkish nation-state. Reşad Ekrem Koçu employed specific strategies when

compiling this encyclopaedia to express his interest and fascination for beautiful boys, dancing performances of cross-dressers, and transsexuals. However, the entries, topics, or commentaries included in the encyclopaedia are not always consistent and sometimes contradict each other. This is partly due to the emergence of modern discourses on gender and sexuality at the turn of the century, which were relatively new to society and equivocal at times. Furthermore, Koçu himself was a product of the historical circumstances in which he wrote and was influenced by these new discourses. As discussed above, these newly emerging discourses caused anachronisms, such as using specific terms that belonged to Ottoman sexual practices whilst speaking of mid-twentieth-century sexualities.

Despite Koçu's fascination with non-normative sexual practices, he was cautious not to overstep the boundaries of the state ideology and identity politics through his work. Thus, non-Turkish subjectivities, such as Greeks or Italians, became safe choices for Koçu to convey the city's vibrant nightlife during the mid-twentieth century. It allowed him to depict a diverse and rich cultural landscape without directly challenging the state's cultural, political, and moral norms and values. Regardless of its discursive contradictions or intentionally selecting non-Turkish subjectivities when speaking of non-conforming sexual and gender practices and desires, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* provides a unique window into the city's historical and cultural heritage, shedding light on its complex and multifaceted nature.

* Editor's note: Kadir Has University Information Center - SALT Research, including the unpublished volumes of Reşat Ekrem Koçu's Istanbul Encyclopedia, is being digitized within the scope of the Reşad Ekrem Koçu Archive study, and all copyrights belong to Kadir Has University.

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Biography

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