



Hacettepe University Graduate School Of Social Sciences

Department of Communication Sciences

Cultural Studies and Media Program

**DISCUSSING HOMONORMATIVE POWER RELATIONS: DRAG
QUEENS IN TURKEY**

Abdul Kadir KARAKAŞ

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2023

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ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

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Abdul Kadir KARAKAŞ

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ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Doç. Dr. Burcu ŞİMŞEK** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

Abdul Kadir KARAKAŞ

ABSTRACT

KARAKAŞ, Abdul Kadir. *Discussing Homonormative Power Relations: Drag Queens in Turkey*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2023.

The aim of this study is to fill the gap of normativity discussions which is specifically based upon homonormativity, and its power relations in the context of Turkey. The study brings an understanding to culturally created norms – they are named homonormativity and a broader sense hegemonic heteronormativity in the frame of the study – with centre & periphery terms. The study adopts a qualitative research method. Homonormativity is concerned by three different approaches according to the flow of the study: i. Semi structured in-depth interviews are conducted with 5 drag queens in order to examine homonormativity from drag queens' point of view. The interviews are voice recorded by the consent of the interviewees. The data from the interviews are analysed by using queer linguistics (QL) approach. ii. Drag queen performances are observed by the researcher with participant observation technique thus the unmarked homonormativity can be discussed by the researcher in its ordinary and common form. This part of analysis consists of observation notes and descriptions of the researcher. iii. Last, the analysis of the study also includes YouTube videos of participants – if there is a channel of the interviewee – so that the scope of the study broadens to online settings. First two methods are the representations of the physical world around drag queens and homonormative settings. On the other hand, the third step focuses on the invisible power of YouTube as a new media tool, and representation of homonormative power relations in media. This research converges to different approaches to discuss homonormative power relations which aims at making a multi-component explanation. To conclude, this thesis has partly reached its aim to understand how homonormativity mirrored itself to the drag scene of Turkey.

Keywords

Homonormativity, Power, Drag Queen, Performance, Queer

ÖZET

KARAKAŞ, Abdul Kadir. *Homonormatif İktidar İlişkilerini Tartışmak: Türkiye’de Drag Queenler*, Yüksek Lisans, Ankara, 2023.

Bu tez çalışması, Türkiye bağlamında homonormativite (Hellinger & Motschenbacher, 2015; Motschenbacher, 2014a; Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013) ve onun iktidar ilişkilerini drag queenler üzerinden tartışarak alandaki ilgili boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, merkez ve periferi kavramlarıyla ve onların akışkan dinamikleriyle kültürel olarak inşa edilen normlara – bu çalışma çerçevesinde homonormativite ya da daha geniş bir bağlamda heteronormativite olarak adlandırılan – yeni bir anlayış sunmaktadır. Çalışmanın akışına göre üç farklı yaklaşım sorunsallaştırılmakta ve nitel araştırma yöntemleri benimsenmektedir. Öncelikle Drag queenlerin bakış açısından homonormativiteyi incelemek için beş drag queenle yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler görüşmecilerin izni ile ses kaydına alınmaktadır ve kuir dilbilim (queer linguistics) yöntemlerini merkeze alarak bir yakın okuma yapılarak irdelenmiştir: katılımcı gözlem tekniği kullanılarak drag queen performansları izlenmiş ve böylece belirtisiz homonormativitenin en sıradan ve yaygın hali tartışılabilmektedir. Son olarak, YouTube kanalları olan katılımcıların paylaştıkları videolar çözümlenerek araştırmanın alanı çevrimiçi ortama genişletilmiştir. İlk iki yöntem homonormatif ortamın ve drag queenler etrafındaki fiziki dünyanın temsilleri ile ilgilenmektedir. Diğer yandan üçüncü aşama, medyadaki homonormatif iktidar ilişkilerinin temsillerine ve bir yeni medya aracı olarak YouTube drag queenlerin kullanımına odaklanmaktadır. Özetle, bu araştırma homonormatif iktidar ilişkilerini tartışmak için farklı veri setlerini yakın okuma ile irdelemektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma homonormativitenin Türkiye drag çerçevesindeki yansımalarını kısmi olarak ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Homonormativite, İktidar, Drag Queen, Performans, Kuir

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on homonormative power construction and its relations among LGBTIQ+² individuals with queer linguistics' (QL) perspective through the case of drag queens in Turkey. This study argues normativity as a matter of centre and periphery relation. According to centre and periphery relation, speaking of Turkey, heteronormativity is hegemonic and dominant. Dominancy and hegemonic position of heteronormativity, in other words heterosexual culture, reaches to the centre of public's culture. On the contrary, LGBTIQ+ culture becomes peripheral in this relation of power as a broader approach. Being peripheral does not retain LGBTIQ+ culture from normative power construction on its own. Being peripheral as sexual orientation or identity gathers those individuals together in the name of LGBTIQ+ and makes it possible for them to create a cultural difference both historically and politically. Like the hegemonic cultures, minority cultures have their own way of ordering power and its relations. Here homonormativity as the problematised subject of the thesis have commonalities and parallelism with hegemonic heteronormativity. In addition to the binary appearance of the centre and periphery relation, this relation is not rock solid. Including the central or peripheral positions, every dynamic in the relation of centre and periphery are fluid. As long as the queer one can be seen at the central point of the hegemonic culture, they exist within the heteronormative boundaries.

LGBTIQ+ movements in world history go back to 1869, Germany. In opposition to arguments to banning homosexual relationships in Germany, Karolyn Maria Benkert wrote an open letter to Minister of Justice. This was the first homophile movement in the LGBTIQ+ history (Jagose, 2017, p. 36). Then, in Britain, two sexologists Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis founded the British *Society for the Study of Sex Psychology* in 1914. They also connected to some homophile groups in Germany and they also mentioned third sex as a concept. However, they clearly stated that 'It is not the time for demanding this kind of third sex in Britain' in their declaration (Jagose, 2017, p. 37). On the other hand, the first recorded homophile foundation of America which was founded

²LGBTIQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersexual, Queer and people who feels comfort in this togetherness but not define themselves as those restricted identity labels.

in 1924 called *Chicago Society for Human Rights*, which was a conservative one (Jagose, 2017, p. 37). *Mattachine Society* and the *Daughters of Bilitis* were established in 1951 and 1954 as homophile societies following the *Chicago Society for Human Rights* (Jagose, 2017, p. 38). Those societies and some groups in the societies sometimes interacted with some feminist organisations and activist groups but they mostly failed to be accepted by those feminist organisations. Transsexuals had the most problem with being articulated under the umbrella of those organisations. On the other hand, lesbians were sometimes targeted by white middle class cissexist women just because they were lesbian. These groups have always been under attack such as in the case of on the the police attacked a gay and drag bar, which was called Stonewall Inn., in New York on June 27th, 1969. That attack lit a world wide fire. Protests began not just in New York or in the USA but all around the world. Gays and Lesbians were united and they fought for their lives and rights and hat day became a milestone of the queer history (Jagose, 2017, p. 45 - 56). They showed up queer power to the world. Later, the last week of June was celebrated as 'Pride' for the freedom of queers and still is. At first sight, the movements' agents and beneficiaries were gays and lesbians. Drag queens, transsexuals, and trannies were excluded at first because they were seen as more marginals than homosexuals. However, later on the discussions and activism, homosexuals contacted political relations with them (Jagose, 2017, p. 56). Their movement led a broader union and activism field on human rights for sexual minorities.

It can be said that LGBTIQ+ or queer terms do not have a long historical and geographical background in terms of nomination in Turkey. 1993 was the year when LGBTIQ+ individuals began to get organised around '*Lambdaİstanbul*' internationally in Turkey. ame year, there was an attempt to organise an international event for the first time in Turkey. Nevertheless, the governorship put a ban one day before the starting date of the event. In 1993, *Lambdaİstanbul* became a member of *International Lesbian and Gay Association* (ILGA). It cooperated with the *AIDS Prevention Association* (ASD) to raise awareness among homosexual individuals about AIDS and sexual health. Moreover it was funded by the World Health Organisation (WHO) with the help of ASD.³ Besides, KAOSGL, which had meetings to share ideas in the 90s, started its publishing life around

³ <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/s/hakkinda/ozetle-lambdaistanbul-ne-yapti/> access date 01.05.2020

a magazine in 1994. Likewise Lambdaİstanbul, KAOSGL aimed at fighting against heterosexist, patriarchal, discriminatory social structure, when it started its publishing life. In 2005, KAOSGL was established as the very first association on the field of sexual orientation and sexual identity in Turkey.⁴

Another discussion is about transsexuality and its organisational schemas which differs from feminism and queer activism in Turkey. Transnians and trans-women are extra excluded from societies because their sexual identities are more observable in the public eye. The reason for differing is the relation between trans-women and sex work in the macro-structure (van Dijk, 2015) of society. Society pushes them to the periphery so that their identities are guilted and marginalised. Both worldwide and locally trans+⁵ individuals had difficulties finding the right place for activism. In early stages like the first half of the twentieth century, trans+ individuals (mostly trans women) gathered around mainstream feminist groups. Later on, they were marginalised by traditional and mainstream feminism so trans+ individuals grouped together and this wasn't seen up until that time (Koyama, 2016, p. 363). Trans+ individuals began to speak up for themselves. They were blamed for dividing the movement but soon their efforts produced results. Then time had passed and their organisations gained acceleration. In 2003, The Transfeminist Manifesto was declared (Koyama, 2016, p.363). The manifesto was clear and all inclusive not just for trans women but for all trans identity individuals. The manifesto is against institutional health which push trans+ individuals to choose the 'right' way of being, dogmatic religious sex structures which targets trans+ identified individuals and compulsory binarist social oppression. All of the mentioned above and more restricts being trans+ identity and diversity. In Turkey's history, *Pembe Hayat* which was founded in 2006 is the most known trans+ activism association. Trans issues are also class related issues in Turkey, like elsewhere. On the one hand, one of the best known singers of Turkey since the 1970s is Bülent Ersoy, a transwoman⁶. On the contrary,

⁴ <http://www.kaosgldernegi.org/belge.php?id=tarihce> access date 01.05.2020

⁵ The term will be used to refer to all trans identities as an umbrella term in the study.

⁶ She is one of the most precious guests of the President of Turkey. She is invited especially to dinners and gatherings on important days such as pride week.

<https://www.haberler.com/magazin/erdogan-bulent-ersoy-u-iftara-davet-ederek-8549208-haberi/>

<https://www.netgazete.com/yasam/cumhurbaskanligi-kulliyesinde-ilk-resepsiyona-bulent-ersoy-dakatilidi--710920>

Access date 21.11.2022

there has been committed at least 61 recorded hate crimes and discriminatory behaviours against LGBTIQ+ individuals in 2019 in Turkey⁷.

Drag queens are the selected group of queers⁸ not because they have a central role in universal queer culture but because they have fluid identities between centre and periphery positions in homonormativity and they are invisible historical agents of homosexual cultures all around the world. Drag queens should be evaluated from different perspectives from art, sexual identity, persona to activism and business. Drag queens belong to the stage as the most visible performative field. Drag queens deconstruct 'femininity' image of society with exaggerated dresses and makeup (Berkowitz & Belgrave, 2010; Strings & Bui, 2013; Taylor & Rupp, 2004). On the other side, they do 'lip-sync' and dance to the accompaniment of their favourite singers' songs. Synchronisation of lip-sync and the song is also important for their performance. They are mostly seen at night entertainments. Contextually, drag queens who demonstrate extreme variables of gender performances are generally cis-gay men. However, nowadays trans+ identified and queer identified individuals are on the scene. In these drag performances, just like drag queens, audiences have tasks to do. Formally or informally, drag queen audiences should obey the culture which includes giving tips to the favourite drag queen during and after the performance.

Just like nearly every unique queer culture, Turkey's historical culture has its own drag queen like entertainers such as '*köçek*', '*çengi*', and '*zenne*'. Köçeks can be seen as proto forms of drag queens in Muslim Anatolia which are described as 'beautiful boys who dances and dress like women' (And, 2014, p. 29-30). In other words, drag queens are contemporary flag carriers of köçeks and other forms of local queer entertainers in Turkey. Köçek history goes back to the 17th century. They were identified as homosexual 'perverts' according to Metin And who is a theatre historian in Turkey (2014, p. 30). And describes that köçeks wear women's clothes with long hair. Rich men spent all their money and gold for the sake of a smile of köçek. It is also stated in the same paper of And that *çengis* who are women make love with women and *köçeks* who are men make love

⁷<http://www.pembehayat.org/yayinlar/detay/1640/2019-yilinda-translara-yonelik-gerceklesen-hak-ihlalleri-raporu> access date 25.03.2021

⁸ In this study, sometimes queer will stand for defining LGBTIQ+

with men. In addition to this, in the Ottoman Empire, köçeks were not just dancers but also sex workers in taverns. Taverns, coffeehouses, and Turkish baths were homosocial places in the late Ottoman period (late 18th century). Köçeks can be seen in many Classical Ottoman poems and historical records. Those homosocial spaces which were mentioned above were a threat for Western Ottoman perspective. Ottoman met a new kind of puritan view in the late 19th and early 20th century. This acquaintance oppressed Ottomans homosexuality and led them to hide and forbid it in the long run (Sarıtaş, 2020).

As it is mentioned earlier, drag queens have a special role in queer culture with their fluidity. Being in the centre as a drag queen means whenever they are on stage and perform, they become the idols of queer identified individuals. They reconstruct the sexual identities via imitation and exaggeration. This kind of reconstruction enables them to erase gender dependent roles and norms with a big confusion. Drag scratches the bases of femininity and masculinity to make them uneasy to be determined by the audience. Such an act not only harms the understanding of the existence of an essence in masculinity and femininity but also muddies femininity and masculinity as concepts. On the other hand, drag queens have a peripheral position because of their fluidity. Drag queens belong to the stage. Out of it, drag queens are just someone who does not belong to a certain part in the queer community. Drag queens can't be fit to a specific sexuality or sexual identity. Their uncertainty and fluidity, however, are still unknown and distressing for the majority. This is the reason why they are on the periphery and just like their persona and activism, their normative location is not stable.

Almost no scholar neither specifically focused on homonormative power nor drag queens involvement in normative relations in Turkey. For example, Çalışkan (2004) studied queer kinship terms in the sense of transsexual sex workers. Çalışkan interviewed transsexual sex workers and found strong relations which are related to transnormativity. In addition to this, the researcher revealed that some trans sex workers prefer not to identify themselves as trans women because of the binarist and normative social oppression which they try to exclude themselves from. Those who do not identify themselves as trans women also make it obvious that they are exposed to the stress as well. On the other hand, there are theses (Çoban, 2017; Kovaci, 2016; Livberber, 2014; Yayla, 2019; Yenmez, 2014) about queer individual visibility in the traditional and new

media. In these theses (Çoban, 2017; Kovaci, 2016; Livberber, 2014; Yayla, 2019; Yenmez, 2014), the main concern is the representation of queer individuals. Queer representation in media has been examined around queer activism and queer beneficiary representations. On the other hand, some of them examine queer representations in cinema. There are also some theses (Cabadağ, 2015; Yılmaz, 2019) about queer spaces related issues. These researchers focused on the topic of where queers live in the sense of neighbourhood and in what ways they interact with the city or the neighbourhood. These studies mostly have addressed the social and civil structure of the city: How do queers live in the city? Does the city give queers the opportunity of free and liberal places? Are queers safe in their neighbourhood? All of the questions and more were problematised by the researchers in the sense of queer space. Moreover, there are some queer studies (Çoban, 2017; Arabacı Koç, 2019; Alsamua, 2019) in relation to cinema and performing arts. Çoban focused on the film *'Zenne'* and the audience comments. This thesis presents a cultural perspective on the representation of LGBTI identities in cinema. Moreover, Çoban searched for the comments of audiences so that the study turned into some kind of audience study. Arabacı Koç was interested in the representation of the side characters as LGBTIQ+ individuals in Turkish cinema. Alsamua discussed queer cinema and its atmosphere. Alsamua mentioned the reading of a cult queer movie (*Far From Heaven* - 1950s) and its design which allows multiple identities with respect to queer theory and queer cinema aesthetics. As it was mentioned above, queer issues were studied mostly in the sense of representation. Representation brings the issue from the perspective of others. Here in this thesis, drag queens as agents have a chance to bring an inside view to queer discussions which has not been common in the scholarship in Turkey. Though there are also thesis from other fields such as health, arts, education, and law which are out of the frame of this thesis.

Drag queens, on the other hand, were studied in diversity in Turkey and around the world. Brown (2001) studied drag queens in the means of gay masculinities and drag femininities in *'Doing Drag'*. Sarid (2004) mentioned drag queens' group norms. Sarid, who examined drag performances with respect to social interactions, focused on the term *'intellectual property'* which refers to drag queens' performative spaces and their identity properties. Hopkins (2004) examined a drag queen performance from the beginning to the end. This examination enabled Hopkins to reveal the systematicity of the normative drag

performances, and the way drag queens make meaning on their performances. On the other hand, Hopkins followed the traces of time and space relations of drag queen performances, and the structure of space and so on. There are also more examples (Fox, 2008; Egner ve Maloney, 2015; Farrel, 2016; Haslop, 2019) on the topic of drag queens which will be mentioned later in the thesis.

Similar to drag queens, drag kings have gotten the attention of researchers lately. Generally, drag kings do almost the opposite of what drag queens do. Both drag queens and drag kings share the same aim which is deconstructing the heteronormative and patriarchal discursive structure via performance. Drag kings, who behave, and dress, and make up like normative social masculine images hyperbolically, perform parodically on stages and special events just as drag queens do. Hegemonic⁹ elements of the dominant culture in Turkey, which is heterosexual, and cis, and men, and white (or Turk in the context of Turkey), etc.; becomes the thing that can be exaggeratedly become a parody item for drag kings so for criticism and deconstruction. Baker and Kelly (2016) focused on drag king culture and the representation of masculinity. Moreover, their study was almost a proof of the reason why masculinity -specifically white supreme masculinity - which is seen as non-performative, should be studied deeply. On the other side, Drysdale (2018) investigated drag king culture by using self experiences, observations, and ethnography which took five years in Sydney. Drysdale's study, which deals with the role of drag king shows and events in nightlife, the evaluation of lesbians and the masculine performances of lesbians, explained the state of the drag king culture in Sydney through both the observations of the researcher and the experiences of the audience and group interviews. The space which drag kings created for themselves and their performances was added to the study. Kumbier's study (2002) is probably the most interesting one among others. Kumbier mentioned that different personas, sexual identities can be fitted in a single body which enables the existence of a drag queen and drag king in the same body. The study, which Kumbier created with an 'I' language, touched on how a single body, either a drag body or non-drag body, can be different from another with the help of developed technology and how the body is modified according to the identities or personas. One can easily assume that sexuality cannot be stabilised yet

⁹ Hegemony as a concept will be discussed shortly in the coming sections.

it can be changed and misled. Drag performances are a distinct way of doing it. Similarly to drag queen studies, a lot of drag king studies demonstrated that drag king performances bring social masculinity to the stage via parody and exaggeration so that they can deconstruct and break its borders. According to Rosenfeld (2003) doing masculine performance by a drag king both interferes with the power of mainstream masculine culture and takes its power on queer women. To gather all these works (Coles, 2007), it can be said that drag is a powerful step to subvert compulsory heterosexuality depending on Butler's drag strategy. Drag was a concept for Butler to explain how sexed bodies occurred instead of natural beings. Further drag was also a sign of politics of body, which fakes and reproduces whatever is intended. Then sexed bodies become a slippery slope. Some feminist circles may argue drag strategy by saying that it degrades femininity, and demonstrates limited femininity yet drag deconstructs sexual regimes and roles, which are in the society's heart, in the basis.

Özkazanç (2018) mentioned drag queens to *ViraVerita* in an interview which was about Butler's concept of performance. There are a few studies that have a drag focused view or paradigm in Turkey. Özkazanç emphasised drag strategy in Butler's *Gender Trouble* book. Baştürk (2016) frequently highlighted drag queens in the context of transsexuality and *RuPaul's DragRace* in the thesis. The study concluded that media representations of drag queens and transsexual individuals in the mean of visibility had risen lastly. Those examples have demonstrated that the academy in Turkey did not focus on drag queens in particular.

This study aims to find out how normative systems work in a queer normative setting. Queer culture's normative bases are under examination. A further question is the fluidity of drag queens as the power holders. This study is designed as a qualitative research in which data is collected through semi-structured in-depth interview, participant observation, content analysis of Youtube content in the light of Queer Linguistics with a close textual analysis. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with drag queens to examine how they relate to homonormativity reflected by their point of view. Normativity production is a process which depends on the power of the related individuals or groups. This is the reason why drag queens have a unique role in it. They create and deconstruct the norms by performing. On the other hand, their agency is contextual, so

out of the stage, they are patients¹⁰ of those norms. Two-sided living in queer culture enables them to see every different aspect of queer culture. Participant observation technique in this research, in both online and offline settings, helped me to observe the ordinary drag performances. Their performances on both online and offline settings may differ by some aspects. The differences between settings are also discussed in this thesis. YouTube is the platform for online settings as it is access and open to public. Some drag queens have their own YouTube channels in which they share their performances or different content. A combination of these different approaches constitutes this multifaceted thesis.

¹⁰ Being a patient in any act leads the concerned parties to be the receivers. In this scenario, the term patient is used as in 'who receives and is under influence of the marked norms'.

CHAPTER 1: BODY AS POLITICS IN QUEER THEORY

1.1. THE UNDERSTANDING ABOUT GENDER

PERFORMANCE: QUEER THEORY

‘‘How did a term that pre-existed in the grammar – to indicate gender inflections in words – gain such strength within feminism?’’

(Cortez et al. 2019, p.3)

‘Queer’ was a derogatory word towards LGBTIQ+ individuals before entering the academic literature. It has got an inappreciable history in the sense of its use. The word was used to refer gay people to stigmatise them till the 90s, however queer is in use for both stigmatisation and theoretical social meaning; and to refer to a whole spectrum for not specifying the non-normative sexualities, and sexual identities. So, the word ‘queer’ is also used to refer to a whole spectrum of non-normative sexualities and sexual identities in the thesis. Non-normative sexualities are historical acts and performances unlike academic interest to them. Homosexuality is one of the non-normative sexuality types of today. It was not always seen as a non-normative sexuality, it mostly depended on the very culture before modernity. Most discussions were structured on and around - mostly male - homosexuality in the past not because it is the only non-normative sexuality but because it is one of the sexuality which has been named and pathologic early. Additionally, homosexual resistance to the normative ‘scientific sexuality’ was more visible than others. Despite the fact that intersexuality spectrum as hermaphroditism or androgyne were also non-normative sexuality issues, and their definition goes back to the Greek myths, besides liberation movements, and activism for intersexuals were later than homosexuals’. The reason for the difference of activism between homosexual movements and intersexualism is patriarchy. Patriarchy allowed different sexualities to exist at different times, and this led to instability. In addition to patriarchy, traditional biology and modern medical health authorities met at the conservative perspective on the body.

Homosexuality¹¹ was mostly seen and recognized as the third sex issue in the late 19th century (Jagose, 2017, p. 36-37). The first homophile act in history was the open letter which was written by Karolyn M. Benkert to the German Minister of Justice. This open letter was the first attempt for the homophile movement for not criminalising homosexual existence. Moreover, Benkert was a farsighted person who referred to the future of homophile movements and highlighted that “this attempt would be remembered”. Clearly Benkert was correct, the letter lit a fire. From 1869 when Benkert wrote the letter, to 1969 when the Stonewall riots began, in a hundred years homophile and homosexual liberation movements gained accuracy. Further, feminist movements had an impact on homosexual liberation movements. The 20th century was an important century which led feminist, homosexual, and trans movements to gather in their own spaces. They stood up for the idea of liberation and rights. Queer people fought against hate crimes, discrimination, criminalization, visibility, and heterosexist social system, and heteronormativity. Those were not the only problems they have faced during their activism. They also faced a lot more of them which all were interrelated, they had political reasons. Still in the core of queer activism lies a passion for living in an equal World regardless of sexuality, and sexual identity. Trans+ individuals, and homosexuals are organised underground. They had faced criminalization progressively. The more the society tries to exclude ‘queer individuals’ the tighter they become to their activism. The 20th and 21st Centuries are so complicated due to their richness of theory and liberation movements. Contemporary studies recall the 20th century from almost every aspect. To bring an understanding to queer and body issues, every knot must be untied. First the women liberation movements are explained in relation to queer liberation. Queer liberation is splitted to two, which would be bounded together later, one is gay and lesbian liberation movements and the other one is trans+ movements. Following the liberation movements, the academic interests of women and queer subjects will be held in this section. Last, gender performance, which originates from feminism, will be located in the heart of queer theory.

¹¹The concepts of homosexuality and homosexual are used in this thesis not to refer a medical discrimination but to refer to explain the former situation and label for gays, lesbians, and bi+. It is of course problematic to use such concepts in this thesis, yet the concepts were used consciously.

Feminism, which is the very first sexuality based grand movement, has three main phases which are called waves¹². Nevertheless, its history is similar to the homosexual liberation movement's history, homosexual liberation movement was less visible on the contrary to feminism.

First wave of feminism was constructed around fundamental rights. It consisted of the right to vote and stand for election, equal pay for equal work, equal access to education, and more basically equality for public visibility. From the 19th century, women were seen out in public. Women from different cultures and countries started to participate in the labour force because of wars around the globe and their intensity. Developing industry - especially in the West - brought more war and exploitation which led to WWI at some point. The main reason for women to be introduced to the working space from the domestic space is closely related to the lack of labour power of the industry.

Similarly, the first wave feminist movement and women liberation movement in the Ottoman Empire could have been positioned to the 'New Ottomans' in 1867. The very first organisation or step was not a fully fledged 'Westernish' feminism. Later, in 1869, with the public-education law¹³ women had the opportunity to access education, still the Ottomans lacked education system that would serve the general public.. Although, İstanbul, which was the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, was different from the rest of the country, the rest had little chance to access education. Opening female teacher schools took one year from the foundation of the new education system. Literate women started to write in the newspapers and journals. Women liberation became efficient in the last year of the 19th century. Women liberation movement was closely and strongly bonded to Turkism. Despite the ideological transition from the Islamic conservatism to Turkism, Turkism's understanding of women was still modest. Later with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Kemalism, which was named after the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, adopted the main ideology. In 1927, with the adoption of the civil law, women obtained equal rights except for the right to vote and

¹² There are actually four stages of feminism, the last one called postfeminism to indicate fourth wave, still it is debatable and problematic for contemporary feminist scholars.

¹³ The education model was more like a prototype of French legislation.

stand for an election¹⁴ (Safarian, 2007). Moreover, between 1924 and 1934, the Turkish Women's Federation, which was established by the women who worked hard to gain the right to vote and stand for an election, was a political party. Despite the pressures of the one party government, in the 1927's election, the federation had a candidate for the municipality. One of the promises of the Turkish Women's Federation was the free distribution of milk for those nursing mothers of the municipalities. The attempts of the federation got positive results. In 1935, with the election of the president of the Federation, Latife Bekir who was the leader of the federation, proscribed the party for the reasons of achieving the ultimate aims of the party. From 1935, the women's movement of Turkey was completely governed by the mainstream, patriarchal, nationalist government (Sirman, 1989, p. 12-14).

The second wave feminism focused on the matter of 'identity'. Women stood against 'sex' based discrimination. The matter of identity and civil rights were the main sources of the movement. In the 1960's it was not a secret that women got paid less than men. Nevertheless their efforts were equal, their payments were not equal as it should be. According to Van Der Gaag (2014, p.101-103), women were laboured only a little by more than half of labour power by the year 2011. The second wave was more academic than the first. The first wave of feminism could have been counted successful, so feminism attracted the interest of academia. Women libertarians had the opportunity for discussing patriarchy, women representation, economical position and women labour, women language, and more importantly sex¹⁵ differences. The moment when the term 'gender' was first used by Money since the early 1950s (Cortez et al., 2019, p.3), Money referred to people's diverse sexual conditions; thus the concept of gender led to the main idea of the second wave. Later, Robert Stoller was inspired by Money, and coined the term by writing a book 'Sex and Gender' and used the term 'gender identity'. Feminists and sexuality theorists were fond of the acquisition of the term 'gender identity', as the term might have empowered women liberation and feminist theory by highlighting the social roles of sexed bodies. Either this or that way the concept of gender existed before

¹⁴ In 1930, women received election rights for the municipality elections for the first time, and got all election rights including parliamentary elections in 1935.

¹⁵ Referring to the biological distinguished receptors which separate the human beings by observing the genitals.

language. Feminists were aware of the distinction between the daily experiences of male identified and women identified people yet the nominalisation with the concept of gender was the missing piece in feminism. Different daily life experiences caused an interrogation on the sex differences. Different sexes experience different realities in different ways. There were unwritten rules to be obeyed for both sexes, still one sex oppressed the other one obviously through sex roles. Division of labour does not seem to be equal enough as it should be. This is the point where the second wave feminism focused on identity. Additionally, black women were still stigmatised because of their race so a broader understanding of equality was needed. Feminist theorists quickly adopted the concept of gender and bended it to gender roles, and gender identity.

From the late 1960s, the concept of gender was used to point to the social realisations of sexed bodies and their social roles within society. The frustration for the new fields and discussions of the first half of the twentieth century enriched the academic literature for social sciences. On the other hand, Foucault was questioning the history of sexuality (2007). Foucault discussed 'sexuality' as a discursive act which is oppressed by the power itself including modern medical institutions etc. Furthermore, Foucault, referring to the 17th century's Western world, unveiled the systemic oppression on sexuality which was pushed away from society, and even language (Foucault, 2007, p.20-22). The vanishing operation of sexuality was much more beyond than expected. Sexuality has been an issue of taboo, and language is the way to convey it, so that the most effort was made upon language itself. The more the use of language is oppressed because of sexuality, the more new phrases and expressions have been made up. Sexuality discourse had grown both in the sense of public/common use and private, thereby as an act sexuality started to turn into a discursive production. Additionally, sex was not aimed at being forbidden, it was forced to be regulated (p.25). The understanding of regulation drew the normalising borders. Religious and medical authorities walked arm in arms so the stigmatisation was inevitable. Up until the 1990s, the concept of gender, which was tied to sexed bodies, was able to explain white, western, middle class, heterosexual, -preferably- working, cis-women feminists' problems. Indeed, the concept of gender was overloaded with the assertion of authority to solve women's problems of every kind. Gender experiences and representations from the point of feminism were problematized, still their solution of the gender concept was sufficient and almighty according to the feminists. Although women

have been oppressed almost all over the world, western feminists claimed one way of womanhood which leads to a de facto. Ignoring the varieties of determinants for identity such as race, ethnicity, class, culture, labour, society and social structure, sexuality, age, and body, traditional feminism failed to be all inclusive. Nonetheless, varieties of associations were established for the articulated issues such as black feminists (Taylor, 1998) or lesbian feminists (Taylor & Rupp, 1993) etc.. Moreover, the concept of gender became a subalternate of biological understanding to sex. Both the deep connection and the precedence relationship between sex and gender would have been problematised, due to the resistance to 'others'.

Queers activism to raise voices became visible seriously on the 27th of June, 1969 in New York City as mentioned in the introduction section. Drag queens and trannies were at the forefront of the Stonewall riots. The Stonewall riots spread quickly to the world. Their slogans were heard all over the world, their hunger for liberty was felt in the squares of world's capital cities. Queer individuals marched for liberty, for equality, for rights, and to be recognised. However, the riots did not take long, yet it was powerful. Homosexual and trans voices were heard once, and it was not the last. The concept of umbrella 'queer' occurred long after the two sexuality movements. On the one side there were gays and lesbians which were generally cis-sexed individuals, were fighting for their equal rights, fight for the discriminative politics, and stood against hate crimes. They were not human enough to live in a 'normal' society. Gays and lesbians have structured their organizations differently such as lesbians put themselves under the 'Daughters of Bilitis (1955)', gays were around Mattachine (1950). Lesbian feminists were excluded from feminism not just because of their sexuality but also because of their social class. They were feminist, and they were aware how men are privileged, so that they needed to stay together. Gay men were seen as lucky but the situation for them was still a conflict. The diversity in the queer society was not limited to gays and lesbians, there were also trans+ individuals. Most trans women were called trannies or t-girls¹⁶. Obviously trannies were not accepted in the feminist groups, they were not counted as women, yet they were not men anymore. The situation for trans women was a total purgatory. Transgendered people faced another discrimination by the organisations, and public. Their not being a 'real/biological'

¹⁶ They were called 'travesti, dönme, top, tekerlek etc.' in Turkish.

women and not being a proper man were problematised. They were excluded from feminism, they generally were not accepted by the gay societies as they were sex workers. White middle class cis-gays and cis-lesbians were able to hide their sexuality in some ways¹⁷, and they were able to access education unlike trans individuals (Spade, 2015, p.19, 34). Their humanity was questioned by the public, and also lesbian communities. The matter was not just sexuality, it was the matter of identity¹⁸, and its relation to the basic problem of Agamben's concept of homo sacer. The distinction between sexual identity and sexual orientation was problematic. Those, non-normative sexual orientations and sexual identities, were all marginalised by the society, also they were marginalising each other. In this respect, Stonewall was a unique example of unification. Diverse LGBT individuals and communities stood up together. Their march gave birth to queers regardless of their diverse identities. After Stonewall, it was a milestone for queers, first LGBT were abbreviated to have an umbrella. Then, other letters which stand for explaining their sexual identities and their sexual orientations added to the abbreviation up until the umbrella term queer. Queer is still a problematic word, and the debates about queer to use go on. goes back to five years later from the Stonewall riots, in 1974, American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the list of diseases. This was an important step for the homosexual liberation movement, thus they would not be labelled as diseased. Nevertheless, homosexuals and trans were held responsible for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic in the 1980s. HIV transmission occurs via blood, and sexual intercourse. Media and medicine authorities blamed gays and trans for the epidemic. Then, it was understood that the epidemic has no relation with gays or trans, yet it was an issue of public health and protection. The lower condom use and vacant sexual behaviours brought the higher risk of transmission. Moreover, HIV was not the only virus that contaminated the population, still most of the contagious viruses such as Hepatitis are contaminated more than the similar ways which means more contagious than HIV. Still, institutions of religion and media blamed homosexuals for causing an epidemic just because of having same-sex intercourses.

¹⁷ Because sexual identity and sexual orientation are not the same things. However their references to sexuality might seem to close spaces. An orientation refers to the sexually and/or romantically attracted object or human; sexual identity goes to one's own sexual claim about oneself not the attracted party.

¹⁸ I intentionally did not use the concept of 'sexual identity'. Sexual identity is more than sexuality and its relations, so I prefer to use that as the matter of identity.

Additionally, this stigmatisation obliged queer individuals for another stream of activism. A public health issue switched over to queers¹⁹. Queers started to fight for those living with HIV, and the HIV/AIDS activism coined to LGBTIQ+ activism in a way (Bayramoğlu, 2011).

In the meantime in Turkey, queer liberation movements were limited. Despite, its clarity for Ottomans' homosexual relations -especially male to male- were non objectionable up until the 19th century, Western relations of Ottomans forced Sultans to create a puritan society, and art (Saritaş, 2020, p.53). In fact, gay sexuality was obvious, and common. Divan literature²⁰ is full of homoerotic scenes, poems and gay poets. After the declaration of independence and the establishment nation state of Republic of Turkey, gays were silenced. The heritage of Ottoman gay poets were almost erased. Only a few traditions were left visible such as 'köçek' which is suggested as local ancestors of drag queens in relation to the thesis.

Queer activism in Turkey was not common. Not only the concept of queer but also the relation between ghetto and LGBTT has appeared in academic studies later in the 1990s (Birkalan-Gedik,2011, p. 345-348). LGBTIQ+ associations were found at that late time, due the LGBT subculture were still local and traditional. In 1996 and 1997 the very first organisation Lambdaİstanbul and the first journal KaosGL were established. Queer visibility was restricted to nightlife domains. Bülent Ersoy²¹, Zeki Müren²²Ahu (Siyah Pembe Üçgen, 2012, p.38) were queer artists who took the stage in music halls in Ankara, İzmir, İstanbul and Bursa before the 80s. The 80s are important for the history of Turkey not only because of the military coup but also the social change that made the queer existence worse. Every queer - mostly trans+ - events and their right for work in the music halls were restricted and banned in 1981 (Siyah Pembe Üçgen, 2012, p.39-42). In the memories of Belgin²³, reporting that Belgin was invited to the state's brothel of İzmir via a friend of Belgin. According to Belgin's report, in the 80s, trannies were allowed to work

¹⁹ Gays and trannies were specifically blamed for the spread of HIV.

²⁰ The art for Ottomans generally consisted of miniatures and poetry. Poetry was divided into 'folk poetry' and 'Divan/Ottoman poetry'.

²¹ Bülent Ersoy, who was named 'diva', was one of the expurgatory trans artists.

²² Zeki Müren, who was called 'Pasha' or 'the sun of art', was one of the most famous singers of the time between 1950 and 1996.

²³ Belgin was working as a singer and sex worker.

in state's brothels. A few years later, trannies were not allowed anymore to the brothels to work, due cis-women could not work as hard as trannies and not do anal just like trannies. Trans sex workers worked cheaper than cis-women also, that was another reason for cis-women not wanting them to work in the same working space. These prohibitions lasted seven years. In the 90s, Turkey was a different country politically and socially.

As it was mentioned earlier in this section, the 90s were the decade of the organisation of LGBTI+ individuals. Lambdaİstanbul was the first organisation which was established in İstanbul after the very first attempt of Pride in Turkey in 1993. KaosGL was a journal which was founded in Ankara and its aim was to fight and publish against homophobia and transphobia. Gacı Journal²⁴ was a milestone of trans activism. Daughters of Sappho in Ankara, Sisters of Venus in İstanbul, university associations of METU, Boğaziçi, and Hacettepe and also more of them in the metropolises of Turkey were the signs of LGBT power (Siyah Pembe Üçgen, 2013). The organisations and journals gave room to LGBTI+ individuals to organise and to gather. Nevertheless, the organisations established unrelatedly, they started to act with solidarity from the late 90s up until today. LGBTIQ+ activism might seem to be late in Turkey compared to the USA and Europe. Lambdaİstanbul celebrated PRIDE for the very first time in Turkey on its 10th anniversary in June, 2003. There were only 50 for the PRIDE march, yet it was a milestone for the LGBTIQ+ history of Turkey²⁵. LGBTIQ+ individuals celebrated PRIDE under police escort for 13 years in Turkey²⁶. In 2016, İstanbul governorate banned any LGBTIQ+ events and meetings for the reason of security²⁷. In 2017 Ankara governorate banned LGBTIQ+ events and meetings by grounding the authority of emergency state²⁸.

²⁴ <https://kaosgl.org/haber/gaci-yaziyor-trans-okuyor> access date: 23.02.2023 - time 12.05

²⁵ <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/s/hakkinda/ozetle-lambdaistanbul-ne-yapti/> access date: 03.07.2021 - time: 16.45

²⁶ Mainly Taksim/İstanbul was the point where the people marched for PRIDE, still LGBTIQ+ individuals marched in the main cities of Turkey.

²⁷ https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/06/160619_istanbul_lgbti_mudahale access date: 03.07.2021 - time: 17.00

²⁸ <https://www.gazeteruzgarli.com/ankaradaki-onur-yuruyusu-yasagi-iptal-edildi/> access date: 03.07.2021 - time: 17.00

Queer activism expanded itself from the ghettos and streets to academic discussions. Majorly gay and lesbian studies²⁹ started to become 'queer studies'. In 1969, Stonewall Riots gave power to gays and lesbians, thereby an academic interest occurred upon them. In 1980 and 1981, the HIV/AIDS crisis became a global pandemic. Gays were held responsible for contamination of the virus. Media and religious authorities were blaming gays and transsexuals for the pandemic. This pandemic led a wholly different perspective to LGBT studies. The concept of queer was recalled to indicate a broader set of meanings. In the late 1980s and 1990s, gender was a debatable concept.

Judith Butler, who is self labelled as feminist, was able to bring a critique to feminism via writing the book '*Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*' in 1990. Furthermore, the book became one of the milestones of feminist literature, and later it was quickly adopted as one of the founding works of Queer Theory. Butler discussed the relation of gender and sex. Body is a bag made of skin that includes bones, blood, and flesh; nevertheless, the body is not that simple to retain that basic explanation. The reason why the body is also the basic political sign equal to language. Additionally, it refers to a physical, and a medical being, yet a body is more than a concrete animate organism which is constructed discursively. Butler (1993) cited Foucault to bring an understanding in the sense of sex, and gender of a body. Accepting 'sex' as a category, Butler supposed that it is a norm from the beginning. Normative category of sex had been fed by the discourse which proposes that sex is a natural existence, so that sex also became a regulatory, disciplinary practice. Additionally, the concept of a body is shaped by discourse which comes from the culture, and the society. Body is governed by the regulatory sex discourse that restricts body in two separate categories which are femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, feminism came up with the idea of gender, which refers to the social roles around femininity and masculinity, as a social construction. At first sight, the term gender worked very well to distinguish the social construction of sex and its roles in society and having sexed in accordance with an individual's genitalia. The distinction, later, caused naturalisation of sex. Sex became prior to gender that blurs sex as an act which is

²⁹ Soon later, gay and lesbian studies turned out to be LGB and LGBT studies. In addition to the mentioned study fields, in Turkey, Queer Studies are still under the label of 'Gender Studies' and/or 'Womens's and Gender Studies'. And also, the concept of 'queer' is not still fully accepted in academia so some universities and academic institutions still use the name 'LGBT Studies'.

performed by individuals -mostly- unconsciously. In this sense, Butler (1993, p. 4-5) argues the logic of the difference between gender and sex in reference to language constructivism. If gender was put forward to demonstrate social realisations of sex and sexed bodies, why on earth do scholars and theorists need such a concept? With respect to Butler, gender was a troublesome word. Feminism needed a strong criticism for its grounded grand narrative. According to Butler (2019, p.55), the concept of 'gender' cannot be universal nor comes before the culture. As a discursive production. 'Gender' - as a concept - does not force the discursive limits of discourse analysis, as Foucault suggested. It is the utterance that is reshaped and reproduced within the culture. Besides, its reproduction depends on the hegemonic normative values of the related culture. Butler points out that gender is highly culture specific, thus Butler also opposes the universal rational language of binary gender understanding. The distinction between sex and gender was argued by biological reference of sex which directly puts itself as fate by the observable genitalia. Indeed, how hard biological understanding of sex stands still like it cannot be changed, yet the concept of gender leads to a culturally constructed side of sex. Sex and gender are separated by changing the focus of the concept of gender from the genitalia to a more social one. So, gender highlights the cultural and social side of realisations and/or roles based on traditional understanding of sex. Though gender is deeply connected to the idea of sex, the concept of gender insists on being totally social. Nevertheless, at the furthest point of gender, there is a deciduousness between the culturally created gender roles and sexed bodies (Butler, 2019, p.50). Hence, the concept of gender, and sex become greatly unable to explain non-normative sexualities, and non-normative gender identities such as trans+, and non-binarism. The Western feminist theorists who suppose that gender is a universal reality, made a mistake to put sex in an antecedent position, and their apprehension on gender becomes problematic. Notwithstanding, gender emphasises the constructive side, it brings a language problem which leads to a conflict about priority of sex. This is also a language constructivism issue so the proposal for gender crashes (Butler, 1993, p.5). As long as including sex into the concept of gender, gender is no longer a different phenomena than sex itself.

The Western sight to the gender ignored 'other' varieties of genders and hegemonic representations. The monolithic presumption of Western gender, oppresses non-Western gender issues and cultures. The invisible borders of the intervention becomes the

hegemonic policy of the theory. Lesbian feminism, which had an intersecting cluster, had a perspective which Grosz criticised. According to Grosz, lesbian feminism brought a new level of idea that assumes itself as the 'true sexuality' which was positioned just opposite to the male heterosexuality. Moreover, Grosz understood this idea was an exterior, alienated object which did not propose to be the essence of sexuality. Neither from the heterosexual male perspective nor from the 'womanhood' this idea could not have provided the representation issue of women existence (Grosz, 2011, p.29-30). Still, no matter what Grosz said, lesbian feminism was a unique example of the merge of feminism and lesbianism.

The gender performance is to do that gender whether it is given or assumed to one or the individual consents to any. On the one hand, the society forces the individual to fit in a role and do the gender in a terminal way so that the society would work perfectly. The society and the medical institutions behave like the infant will be a cis-gender individual. Butler mentioned gender as something performative and discursive. Sexed bodies are generally marked with birth. Medical institutions and governments want to know an infant with its identified, observable (genital organs), chromosomal sex. Sex here is used to refer to some biological and observable 'evidence' of a typical being. Mostly, authorities recognize two sexes which lead binary oppositional sexes in short binarism. Binarism restricts gender performances, acceptances, and diversity. As it is accepted that gender is a performative utterance; non-binary, genderless, fluid genders, trans+ identities, intersexuals and other identities and personas of gender spectrum may be failed to be understood by binarism of society. Butler had proposed that sex and sexuality are performative acts that regulate daily life and social interactions. Furthermore, it is a fiction, it is a fantasy which insists on being static. However, just like sex, gender is also a performance and a naming process. With reference to Austin's speech act theory (1975), Butler adapts the concept of gender performance. Both gender performance and speech acts share a row in a matter of fiction and doing something with words and discourse. Naming as a performative act is the most common way of speech acts, so is gender performance. For example, 'I now pronounce you husband and wife', 'It's a boy/girl' etc. Naming is also a pronoun issue so is interrelated to body, gender, and sexuality. Pronouncing a couple as 'husband and wife' is the naming of two individuals' honorifics after the marriage. Their names are deleted, and they bound each other in the sight of the

public and laws. They became a 'family' with just the words of pronouncing them. That is also the transition from 'Ms.' to 'Mrs.', yet the same transition does not work for 'Mr.' everytime. It is also the fact that the honorifics are not free from their genders, though the feminine one is strictly bound to marriage unlike the masculine³⁰. A similar process runs for 'it's a boy/girl'. 'It's a boy/girl' means that the infant once had the pronoun 'it' which means that it had no determined sex under the norms of medicine nor the society. Later, with the visualisation techniques such as ultrasound, - generally - a gynaecologist or a radiologist observes the baby, which is in the womb of the carrier, and assumes its gender as a boy or a girl according to the unborn's genitalia development. In a more traditional way, the infant gets its gender at birth. From that time on, the infant which had a pronoun 'it' became a boy or a girl so that it is called 'he' or 'she'. Turning from it to a 'he' or a 'she' is 'naming' as a speech act which is enabled by the power of the authorities. The infant's assigned sex roles determine what to wear, and what to play, how to speak, and which job it will be appropriate to choose later in its future. Though, it is the basic explanation of sex roles, it is not easy to fit the infant in such a pre-given mould.

Gender performance can be subverted with Butler's point to the drag (2019, p.174-175). "The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (Butler, 2019, p.176). In addition to the gendered body, the body itself is also a contradiction to define such a way to be. Drag, here, helps to upside down the discursive truth and falsity relations. Butler cites Esther Newton's writings about drag, which include the contradiction between inner body essence and visible outfit, and the gender of the body's being masculine, yet the essence's being feminine. This two wayed contradiction delimits the discursive borders. Falsity and truth conditions of these contradictions are true so is the impossibility of gender itself.

Grosz (2011, p.17-18) brings another point to the 'gender' issue. As opposed to Butler, Grosz is not eager to read gender performance as the performance of the reproduction of the social normative understanding of sexes. Besides, Grosz does not argue gender as a subordinate appearance of the 'sex'. Citing Foucault, accepting the genders as the consistent identities, problematizes the sources of the identities that leads to the

³⁰English has a single male honorific (Master), yet it is not in use anymore.

impossibility of the steady identities. Grosz criticises the compulsory heterosexual matrix of the genders; due to the gender based identities, according to the classical gender understanding, ends up a performance of a pre-given ideal. Additionally, Grosz does not take gender with reference to the bodies, pleasures, hopes, practices, behaviours etc., as Grosz combines those complicated terms to the sexuality term. According to Grosz, gender or sex has nothing to do with the morphologies of the body, pleasures, any sexual activity or apprehensions. Grosz does not intend to distinguish and precede the sex compared to sexuality. Sex is neither independent from sexuality nor is it more accurate than sexuality. Nevertheless, Grosz points out clearly that ‘I agree with Foucault that ‘sex’ is a production of the ‘sexuality’ regimes’ (Grosz, 2011, p.18).

The body is also an issue of sexuality not because it is the determiner of sex and inherent to it but because it is the thing beyond the physical being which is also political. In addition to all these gender and body matters, Grosz defines the word ‘*queer*’ as the instability which is wholly beyond any normativity (2011, p. 23-25). Queer does not refer to any steady non-normative sexuality, besides it is unstable to be distinguished from the normative heterosexual, and/or gay, and lesbian matrix. Queer changes in time and space, as power tends to include periphery to itself, so that today’s queer may be tomorrow’s norm which means tomorrow’s queer is unpredictable. It’s just an unpredictable set of sexualities which are also free from gay and lesbian authority. Lastly, Grosz (p.35-36) mentions the lesbian and gay power in relation to heteronormativity. Criticising Butler, Grosz puts forward the body as a matter which enables sexuality (sexuality mentioned by Grosz) so that the body can’t produce a new way of sexuality, though it only reproduces the existing sexualities as long as the body itself is able to do so. Again, supposing that bodies became mere cores of a meaningless effort. They dissolve and never go further to be a production of the new.

1.2. QUEER LINGUISTICS FOR QUESTIONING HEGEMONY

Language studies for gender were mostly restricted to woman speech (Hall, 1999). Male speech was seen as the natural one so that woman speech and woman language needed to be inspected further. A woman language was ‘made up’ and identified in the sense of its

contexts such as domestic area, public area, and working area; also word selection, word/structure repetition etc. were counted as the variables. There was also an understanding of the idea that the women's language was 'powerless'; on the contrary, the male language was perceived as the 'powerful' one (Lakoff, 1973). No sooner than finding out the differences of woman language from the natural languages, language scholars pointed to a new target which have their authentic way of speaking which was named gay slangs³¹. Queer slangs are totally a subject for another thesis, however, realisation of the different variations of queer slangs made scholars curious (Baker, 2002; Boelstorff, 2004; Kontovas, 2012; Motschenbacher, 2020). Moreover, some queer slangs have genetic boundaries like language families (Kontovas, 2012, p.56). Nevertheless, the hegemonic languages of the queer slangs are mostly disengaged. Owning a language or having a different stylistics (or something like a language) distinguishes the specific community from the dominant culture. Once the dominant culture and minority culture diverge in the name, those - at least two groups of individuals - never get one and similar. Their main distinction is their label difference. They might have countless sharings and behaviours, yet they are different, it does not matter what the difference is. In this thesis, the differences between cultures is examined from a queer perspective. In addition to the queer perspective, this thesis aims at revealing the system of homonormativity. Queer linguistics provides the grounds for data analysis due its capacity to cover normativity studies on language on the basis of sexuality.

Queer linguistics (QL) calls and applies queer theory to linguistics and it mostly adopts a social constructivist perspective. QL is a relatively new approach in comparison to gender, and sexuality studies in linguistics. Motschenbacher (2011, p.149-152) defines QL as a critical 'heteronormativity' studies in language, yet it is obvious that the definition lacks of interest on non-heteronormativities which will be a discussion for being ambiguity later on this chapter. No matter how seriously Motschenbacher states that QL mainly concerns heteronormativity, the target as heteronormativity restricts the power inequalities in other variations of normativity. Still, this definition does not mean that QL has no interest in them. As long as taking QL is the study of language from a

³¹ The gay slangs will be used as queer slang in the capacity of this thesis. Queer as mentioned before serves as an umbrella..

queer point of view. Denying that ‘other’ normativities cannot be counted as problematic normativities just because they are not ‘hetero’ stabilises the heteronormativity in non-heteronormative settings. Moreover such an approach might be concluded as normally the only normativity can be heteronormativity and it is the only one type that oppresses. However, stabilised heteronormativity should be varied to countless varieties. Normativities regulate themselves constantly in order to be legitimised. In addition to this, the old fashioned approach, which was mentioned earlier, classifies sexualities and sexual acts to binary position which are heterosexual counted as the ‘only’ normative sexuality, and non-heterosexual which is commonly named as ‘gay’³². Also, accepting heterosexuality as the only normative sexuality in advance encourages pseudo validity for the idea that normal sexualities and sexes exist so that non-heterosexual sexualities or gender identities are problematic. By virtue of the fact that sexualities and sexual acts vary from culture to culture just like sex roles and meaning making process’ of sexuality related issues, pointing to a certain normativity by ignoring the others is problematic. Thus, the definition of Motschenbacher of QL may be edited to ‘non-normative sexuality studies of language which are against normative ones’. As an unstable concept, queer is not only slides to the opposite point of heterosexual sexuality but also it avoids socially accepted stereotypical homosexuality which is apolitical, nationalist, and dominant such as monogamous, hetero-like³³, male to male homosexual relationships in short homonormativity³⁴.

Another issue on heteronormativity, according to Motschenbacher (2011, p.152), is the readings of the concept ‘non-heteronormativity’. On the one hand, non-*heteronormativity* refers to the sexualities which are not heterosexual. The term ‘hetero’ is being targeted by the presence of the discussion as if the concept of hetero is a de facto which is free

³² The binary situation of straight/gay is the most mainstream one, though the sexual orientation is a spectrum so that means there is no line for the sexualities only the points of the spectrum.

³³ Here the phrase hetero-like is used to refer the normative, binarist such as one is active roled penetrator and the other one is passive penetrated, oppositional such as masculine one and feminine one in the relation of contrastivity, necessarily hierarchical such as age, income, social class or stratum etcetera relationships. And of course, all of the above is described as fictional and self identified versions of normativity.

³⁴ Reminder: This definition is not to blame folks who have the fitting lives. The definition is to point to the normative and hegemonic queerness.

from social construction. On the other hand, stressing ‘non-heteronormative’ ends up with the heterosexualities which are counted as non-normative. Motschenbacher’s emphasis on the concept of ambiguous non-heteronormative is open to discussion for the sake of language and logic. The emphasis changing to the words causes a conflict on the social, and cultural basis of sexualities. When the emphasis is on normative and it ends up with the idea that there are certain heterosexualities which are totally non-normative, yet heterosexuality was accepted as a normative position for the sake of being heterosexual. If the very concept of some certain heterosexualities are not normative, how come could one point those certain heterosexualities as heterosexual? Unless it is heterosexual, wouldn't it be positioned somewhere in the queer spectrum which also means that not-heterosexual/normative? Otherwise, the dominant heterosexuality would not have ended up with the name of heteronormativity. When changing the stress to the concept of hetero, hetero becomes the one type of sexuality that is excluded by the prefix of non- so that it leads to ‘other’ sexualities having normativities. Logically, the ambiguity of the concept of non-heteronormativity only causes a discursive game which problematizes the stress leading to a different point of view of focus. Still, the game must have been created to be solved, as the ambiguity is contradictory. No matter where to put emphasis in the concept of non-heteronormativity, with a deductive reading, Motschenbacher claims that both there exist other kind of sexual normativities which are constructed by the ‘minor groups’ in themselves and some heterosexualities are not normative so heterosexuality, in general, is not problematic as a whole. There is only a specific type of heterosexuality -in the very related culture.

The earliest QL studies -whether we call them Queer Linguistic studies- were held on and around ‘gay and lesbian’ languages. Specifically in sociolinguistics, scholars mentioned and researched sexuality, and gender in the language studies; still they can be counted as the founder works. However, their interests on those topics were limited to mapping or restricted for categorising the ‘gay speech and/or slangs’. This mapping purpose has been mostly achieved in the Western societies. QL aims at making a critical point of view via compounding gender regimes, identities, and desires. Coming from its base, QL defends that gender identities and sexualities are socially constructed and also performative just like what Butler proposes. In addition to this, various approaches of QL are critically

opposed to the social constructivism of sexuality. Yet, they acquired a psychoanalytical point of view which led them to mostly debatable discussions. However, Motschenbacher (2011, p.150) clearly states that Motschenbacher's approach to QL is moderate, thus Motschenbacher evaluates that gender and sexuality are interrelated concepts unlike some 'radical' QL researchers states. As opposed to the idea of performing gender, Motschenbacher criticises Butler for the lack of interest. Gender as a performance and as a social construction might seem so similar though there are slight differences between those two proposals, on the one hand the concept of gender performance is an act which is related to doing gender. It goes to acting, and behaving on a slippery slope. Fully culturally dependable gender performance rejects unified, and monolithic gender experiences so that every culture and subculture make meaning on gender differently. For this reason, gender became performative. On the other hand, social construction of genders and/or sexualities is the process of meaning making and norm producing. Discursive construction of genders refers to the fictionality of genders and norms. From one culture to another, the gender norms and performances vary. The possibility of the variety exists only if the discursive limits of the language and culture. Moreover, social constructionism and gender performance are such interrelated concepts that they are bound to each other. Gender performance could not have been an option if social life was not theorised as a construction with the limits of discourse.

QL also helps to deconstruct stable heterosexuality and its insistence for being natural. It scratches for non-normative heterosexualities so heteronormativity could be destroyed. QL also behaves expansionist thus it covers all around the sexuality and queer issues. Sexuality and gender are all around the social life, even some languages have gendered structures, therefore QL is available to understand and examine human interaction and social construction.

In contrast to the traditional approaches, QL does not propose language, and identity as stable phenomena. The following discussion provides methodological considerations on how to proceed from a Queer Linguistic point of view in sociolinguistics. Three key areas are distinguished: Ethnographically based studies of local interaction, critical approaches to Discourse Analysis and Contrastive Sociolinguistics. These areas are not clearly

separable and overlap to a significant extent. They provide tools that may be used by Queer Linguists to expose the relativity, contextual fluidity and incoherence of binary gender and sexuality discourses. (Motschenbacher, 2011)

QL problematizes normative social structures and social constructions. From the opening lines of this section, QL is a critical study which criticises normative sexualities in the sense of discursive constructions. So QL is an ongoing study area. As long as something becomes queer in the sense of sexuality which includes non-normative sexual behaviours and acts, QL will make critiques on the dominant normative discursively constructed sexualities and their constructions via language. Besides, Leap (2013) constitutes QL as sexuality research and its relations with the social construction of normativity by the hegemonic power. Leap emphasises normative 'power' more than Motschenbacher. According to Leap, power is responsible for constructing the normativity. Here power is not the almighty. Every normativity brings its own normative power with itself. As it seems there is not one normativity, power is also variable and highly dependent on its norms. One can conclude that normative power constructs not only its society but also itself. Leap also mentioned homo-sociality as did Kiesling (2005, p. 695-699). Kiesling (2005, p. 695-699) focused on homosociality which defines homosexual's sociality in their own groups which can be concluded to a normative society. Homosociality shows up in different ways depending on the culture, the hegemonic society and homosocial spaces which let individuals socialise in single-sex spaces. Sarıtaş (2020, p. 93-117) mentioned Ottoman homosocial spaces which are Turkish baths, coffee houses and taverns. Ottoman homosocial spaces are also the places of homosexual sex trades in Ottoman. This thesis considers Ottoman homosociality and homosexual normativity further later on. Leap moves further Kiesling's homosociality term for the sake of normativity. Leap suggested 'homosocial bonds' for further readings of QL. According to this idea, homosocial bonds create a hegemonic relationship within homosociality. Leap suggests that the homosocial one is not free from hegemonic one. Homosocial bonds are tightly tied to hegemonic heteronormativity and patriarchy that can regulate homosociality according to class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Homosocial bonds still privilege some homosexuals more than others. Leap also mentioned that metaphors are other ways of demonstrating cognitive meaning making process through the relationship

between the concepts and their correspondences. Concluding from Leap, power is not independent from its historical bounds and social settings though it is within the hegemonic one thus it is not almighty and stable. In addition, language is a reasonable way of power and normativity studies, so that QL helps to reveal its codes.

Hegemony is another concern of the thesis. It cannot be separated from power, society, and language. Language is the way which hegemony can show up so that QL focuses on the hegemonic power and normativity construction via discourse. Hegemony comes with power which can briefly be described as power inequality. In a broader sense, centre and periphery relationship occurs within hegemonic relations. Hegemony, in fact, is a complex concept to explain. Gramscian perspective of definition of hegemony helps to understand the relation of centre and periphery in the borders of this thesis. Hegemony had transitioned by Gramsci from a point, which was from a Marxist superstructure to proletariat, to more of a dynamic relation between the mass of society and upper layers. With this sense, hegemony basically reproduces itself with the help of the society itself. Hegemony has as an expandable feature (Chantal Mouffe, 1979, p. 180) with respect to its relation to economy, and politics. With this expansion, it allows itself to leak to the society by giving the society an agency to be hegemonic. The key approach to hegemony would be that it can recreate itself, and its dynamics are not concrete so that it changes with its rules and the mediums of showing off itself. To conclude hegemony, hegemony is not necessarily a top-to-bottom way of working, in contrast it works as bottom-to-top (Mouffe, 1979, p.193-196). Hegemony is in heteronormative culture, which insists on being natural, and moral, and healthy. This is how the hegemonic social construction is located to the centre in the normative and power circles. On the other hand, queer culture which indicates homonormativity is peripheral still it is not free from heteronormativity and some of its cultural veins. As in every normative social structure, homonormativity has its own hegemonic representations and norms. Queer culture also constructs a normative society in which power inequality occurs. Hegemonic relationships in queer culture occur with cis-male white, just like in the example of Turkey, for Turkish gay individuals secularism is still a strong value among queer individuals.

1.3. DISCUSSING NORMATIVITY IN QUEER THEORY

Normativity is a matter of socialisation. It stands in the heart of social units. Normativity can be described as a combination of essentialist values of a society. Normative values vary from society to society so that every society has its own unique normativities. QL calls normativity in a positive meaning unlike its common association is negative. Normativity helps individuals to make sense of the complex constructed issues in reality in the level of cognition (Motschenbacher, 2013). Since normativity is not almighty, it widens the normative boundary so that it would be almighty. In a binary oppositional system, where zero stands for the absence and one stands for existence, normativity, which aims at reaching to one, is always zero. Additionally, there are not just two numbers in this binary oppositional fiction. There are infinite possible numbers which can't be decided whether they are totally zero, in other words absent or are they totally one. Between those two possibilities, normativity acquired a one way directed path. However, the impossibility of reaching such an idea is a total singularity.

Homosexual acts were common in Anatolia as it was mentioned before. Sarıtaş (2020) focused on marginalisation of Ottoman homoeroticism. '*Mahbub*' was the name of the person whom Ottoman men fell in love with. Sarıtaş also made use of Ze'evi's works which helped to develop Sarıtaş's work. Ottoman homoeroticism is seen in many areas from the literature and poems (p. 118) to the homosocial spaces (p. 88) like coffee houses, taverns, and Turkish baths; to the Islamic mysticism (p. 57). Ottoman homoerotic love also was in sight with different names and figures. Mahbub can sometimes be a Zenne who is in women attires and dances in - mostly - men entertaining settings. Also, homosocial settings are so common around Ottoman so that homoerotic relationships too. Taverns and coffee houses employed beautiful young men as cupbearers to attract other men to their places. Those spaces also hosted literature, lyrics, music, and poems. Patriarchy in Ottoman also led art to a male centred attitude. Thus, homoeroticism endured in Ottoman literature. In addition to this, Abdülbaki Gökpınarlı (1954, p.30 cited by Sarıtaş, 2020, p.45) described homosexuality as 'unnatural love'. Gökpınarlı also said that the source of this kind of love is unknown whether from Iran and India to the Greeks or from the Greeks to the World but Gökpınarlı was sure that it was not seen in one or five poets of Ottoman, yet it is seen in every Ottoman poets. Mentioning a girl was a shame for them. Homoeroticism had been seen in Islamic mysticism too. The love

between a young follower and sheikh was holy in the public's eyes. Thereby, cults and madrasah could be counted as homosocial places with a difference. Not all cults and madrasas accepted homoerotic love in the sense of godly holy way of reaching to the god. Homoeroticism was seen hierarchical most of the time. The homoerotic relationships were ordered in binarism in which between older and younger, master and apprentice, follower and sheikh etc. Still, there can be peer homoerotic relationships. Most of the peer relationships were in madrasah. Even if Ottoman had a patriarchal heteronormative society, love between the sheikh and anyone (could be a follower or another sheikh) was accepted and blessed for the sake of god's name.

Gender is a modern way of naming and separating different beings. On the other hand, sexed bodies are still new compared to ancient Greeks who had Hermaphroditus that (they) are two sexed children of Aphrodite. Hermaphroditus is also the ancient intersexual representation. They existed heavenly so that the ancient society did not try to castrate or kill Hermaphroditus.

Feminists had an earlier opportunity to organise and gather. On the other hand, Queer groups as LGBT groups did not have a chance to organise internationally. (those are said for Turkey of course.) On the other hand, queer individuals met locally and territorially. Their local organisations, associations led them do their activism from the bottom of the society unlike untied and unbound feminist discourses. Hegemonic feminist discourses in Turkey are so irrelevant. There are two of them. One discusses global femininity in the sense of western discourses. Another one indicates more local women's problems and cultural projections. Their different behaviours are not tied in a point also their masses are different. For the LGBTIQ+ movement, one cannot say the same history in Turkey. Their activism was limited. Minding the LGBTIQ+ individuals in the world, many western countries did not stand against to LGBTIQ+ individuals. They were successful to force the governors so that western countries had to - not enough but least – cover LGBTIQ+ rights (Delice, 2012, p.133). Specifically after 9/11, a new perspective has emerged. LGBTIQ+ individuals of West assumed LGBTIQ+ individuals of middle eastern / muslim countries as mass of victims who have to be saved from oppression. This perspective led western LGBTIQ+ communities to face another level of fascism toward 'others'. Their approach became monolithic. As a consequence, in the USA, England and

Germany, queers of colours criticised monolithic victims of LGBTIQ+ people whose background is Muslim or middle eastern countries or non-white (Delice, 2012, p.140-141).

The concept of queer-sociality, based on the concept of homo-sociality from Kiesling (2005), will be appropriate for this thesis. As Kiesling uses, homo-sociality is an essentialist and marginalising socialisation practice created by men in various contexts. This practice takes place among men and carries its own norms outside of their sexual orientation and surpasses the heterosexual one. While Kiesling (2005; as cited in Leap, 2015) talks about the hegemonic dimension of homo-sociality while creating his own structure, he also says how homo-social ties are carefully formed by heterosexual ties, but how privileges are formed by considering concepts such as gender, race and class. The features of the concept of homo-social can be expanded and the concept of queer-social can be created. This socialisation to be created bears the characteristics of homo-sociality in terms of variables, but includes queer individuals as a coverage area. It can be said that similar variables are also effective in queer-socialisation and this creates a power.

Normativity studies have an important place in queer linguistics. Despite its sometimes negative connotations, normativity has a positive effect on individuals at the cognitive level in making sense of the complex structures of reality (Motschenbacher, 2013). In queer linguistics, normativity manifests itself through language. Also, according to queer linguistics, normative power and hierarchy are not static. While normativity with a constantly changing power structure does not have predetermined features, it is also deeply related to the historical and social context.(Leap, 2012; 2015; Motschenbacher, 2010; 2012; 2013).

1.3.1 Heteronormativity and Homonormativity

Lisa Duggan, a social and cultural analyst, initially articulated the contemporary idea of homonormativity. Duggan argued that homonormativity is a politic of queer assimilation. Homonormativity is anti-queer in the ways that it reifies heteronormativity, and it is further understood as providing cultural norms for

the right way to be gay and lesbian. In this capacity, homonormativity perpetuates gender, sexuality, and racial stereotypes for gays and lesbians. Homonormativity is best understood in relation to heteronormativity, where queer politics and activism arise. [...] Queer activists emphasise the LGBTQ people whose best interests are not served by activism founded in homonormativity such as transgender discrimination; homelessness among LGBTQ youth; job and housing discrimination based on sexuality and gender; bisexual erasure; and inequalities at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomics, and nationalism. Centralising activism efforts on homonormative political pursuits constructs normative stereotypes of who LGBTQ people are, what they want, and how they behave. These stereotypes are often examined in the context of media representations. Pervasive homonormativity in popular media proliferates stereotypes of what it means to be gay, how to be gay correctly, and that—in the end—it is quite normal. This disadvantages LGBTQ people who do not—because they are unable or do not want to—conform to homonormative stereotypes.’’
(Bolen, 2016, p.542-543)

According to Foucault (2007, p.72-73), power is everywhere. Power is not a stable utterance of the society and sociality, yet it is the result of the effort of stabilising the social hierarchy. Every human interaction consists of a kind of power relation. Unlike other political scientists, Foucault did not assign a negative meaning to power. In addition, Foucauldian power does not have to be from top to bottom, yet it is bottom to top which comes up with the idea of power leaked in every human interaction. It has a dialectic relationship with society via discourse.

Power also includes a consent relationship among the individuals, collective mind, and the norm producers which indicates to the individuals who are responsible for reproducing the norms. Power consolidates itself by every human interaction. It gets greater and narrower, still there is a power relationship which results with the hegemony. Power has no stable place all over everything, nor can it be the future eventually. It is so simultaneous and reproduced, though, there is always a chance to make everything upside-down. Power constructs itself with the discourse. Discourses are all around which

leads us to Wodak and van Dijk further so that we can conclude power as a discursive construction which enables individuals to be in it and gets consent all over.

The power of patriarchy and the dominance of maleness in accordance with age hierarchy was accounted in the sense of homosexual bonds. The bottom positioned homosexuals were perverted unlike the top participants of the intercourses were still accepted men. The tolerance inequality between bottoms and tops caused a power demonstration area which had a hierarchy. This had led to homosexuality as a kind of power demonstration. The hierarchy among men were decided by homosexual acts, yet the perverted one is the - figure of speech - weak. Patriarchy is not just the oppression of women by men. It is also the system that regulates the relationship among men. It is a broader system which leaks in every human interaction and insists on its naturalness (Delice, 2018, p.152). By this way, patriarchy becomes the normative social reality. It not only dominates individuals other than cis-heterosexual-men but also reconstructs social life with its hegemonic power.

As a matter of construction, power constitutes itself from the norms. Norm based power consolidates itself via discursive features (Koyuncu, 2018, p.29). Selek, who is a scholar from Turkey who works on gender and sexuality, (2014, p.54) referring to Foucault, defines bourgeoisie as a power over sexuality and gender. Selek (2014) mentioned Raymond Williams proposed that every organisation, society has their own way of meaning making and value systems. From this base, the dominant cultural system is not a static structure, yet it is slippery. Dominant culture tries inclusion, which is not within it, though this inclusion process requires exclusion as well.. Medical institutions has a normative position as well which stands on the normative values. From its basis, medicine as an institution started to reproduce norms in terms of 'standards'. Their norm producer attitude has become dominant (Koyuncu, 2018, p.24). So that homosexuality was labelled as a non-normative type of sexuality in the earliest times of the foundation of medical and clinical institutions. Normative medicine had put forward male and female categories as necessarily interrelated to each other. Notwithstanding, not only the body perception but also the culturally constructed bodies and sexes varied alongside genitalia, sexual orientations, and gender dysphoria. Terms like transsexuality are medicalized as 'gender dysphoria' by psychiatry authorities. In pre-modern history, the relationship between

femininity and masculinity was a vertical one which proposed that masculinity is superior in contrast to femininity. Early in modernity, sex acts were still a taboo which was claimed as a shameful thing to talk and think about, still the science of sex which was called sexology was established. After the power of sexology as an authority, masculinity and femininity were understood as mutual sides of one being which is humanness. Tiefer (1996, p. 252) focused on the medicalization process of sex by sexologists. Western world of science took over the source of knowledge so that it became one to rule all over the world with their ideas and systems. Just like the early anthropological studies, Western understanding of sex, and sexuality spreaded. Heterosexualism has become a norm. Unlike antique understanding of beings - for example, the existence of Hermaphroditus - sex became binary.

The Eastern world was no different than Western world at first, still Eurocentrism penetrated into the Eastern traditions. Turning back to sexology, it was always and almost still under the reign of patriarchy, cis-sexism, binarism, heteronormativism, eurocentrism - and more of them. Positivist masculine science has ignored, pathologized, and sinned, and perverted queer individuals. Only an expression, science of sex discourse had the power on society to regulate sexuality for the sake of norms and science. This scientific behaviour led queer individuals to move off the central position of the society. They were labelled as sick and so on. Their excluded position in the society brought them together. they created their own culture just because their 'national' culture excludes them and labelled them perverts. Medical institutions tried to 'cure' them with torture and un-humanistic ways and sometimes without their permission. Queer individuals were strong enough to stand up and fight for their rights. They stood up for not being sick due the medicals and science had nothing concrete to use against the queers. In addition to this point, homosexuality in a male-to-male setting was in sight where no women homosexuality was not even a concern. Normative social structure of early modern societies was patriarchy. Patriarchal normativity of the society was the hegemonic one even so male homosexuality - specifically in Anatolia - could have been accepted on the condition of secrecy. On the issue of the body, that body hasn't always been assumed as a pre-given gendered piece of flesh, bones and blood.

Power also constitutes a system which can be purely explained with the following quotation from Seleki;

“According to Raymond Williams, there is a system of central practices, meanings, and values that are organised, dominating and influential in every particular period, which are appropriate to define. This dominant cultural system does not constitute a static structure but a continuous process of incorporation. Only some of the meanings and values that are inherent in the living conditions of different classes through certain institutions, especially educational institutions, are “selected for emphasis”. Meanings and values outside this central core are constantly reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms that support, or at least not contradict, elements within the dominant culture. The dominant system thus has to constantly “produce” itself in order to contain practices, meanings and values against itself. Therefore, it is out of question to draw a clear cultural and moral distinction between the included and the excluded. We cannot say that every excluded group is necessarily outside the dominant culture and dominant ideology. Whether this is so or not, every exclusion relation is also a domination relation. The one in power has either forced, excluded, or destroyed the other to abide by its own rules.” (2014, p. 36).

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

This thesis, which is created as a qualitative study, is basically divided into different sections in order to discuss various aspects of homonormativity through the examination of the drag queen identity, the power relations of queer culture, and the role of stage, and lastly the role of new media mediums.

This qualitative research³⁵ was planned to stand against the normativities³⁶ that surround social life. Human beings are such complicated animal species that always put difficulties in their own path. One of the examples of the problem that they made by themselves is normativity. There might have been practical reasons for creating the norms; although we, humans, are not as primal as our former forms like Neanderthals or Homo-Erectuses. For this thesis, the main problem is the normative oppressions on gender and sexuality related concepts. As it was mentioned before in the thesis, gender, sex, and sexuality are complex concepts. They vary from culture to culture including the sub-cultures, pop-cultures etc. Therefore, normativities are applied to the centre and periphery relations in terms of this thesis. Closer to the centre means socially moderate and normative. The queer society has its own norms too with this perspective. Further, I propose that identity is one of the concepts of normativity caused along with every other component³⁷ of identity. The greatest scaled society of humans, and human caused knowledge is constructed from the binary aspect. Sex was defined as the two sides of the same coin. The coin is the human itself; on the one side there is male and on the other side there is female. Gender, and sexuality, which are the main concerns of the thesis, are also understood as binary. Binarism is not free from heterosexism and therefore heteronormativity. And then there is another part of the binarism which are queer and straight³⁸.

The igniter of the thesis goes back to 2019, when I was led to a topic for the final paper related to Queer Linguistics for the ‘Gender and Language’ MA course by my supervisor

³⁵ I use ‘I’ language more than the rest of the thesis.

³⁶ There are several normativities that surround it so I preferred to use the plural form of the concept.

³⁷ Such as sexuality, ethnicity, race etc.

³⁸ I personally don’t make a difference between those two concepts because I do not claim any gender or strict sexuality. From my point of view, there is no specific gender to be classified. Genders and sexualities are just the performances to be performed and there is no limit to define them properly.

Burcu Şimşek, who came across an interview of ‘Madır Öktiş’ in Vogue Turkey³⁹. Şimşek thought that the matter of drag queens might be interesting for not just the final paper, but also for my MA thesis, encouraging me to seek further. The story of the thesis began at that point and I found myself adding my personal curiosity about normativity, and queer linguistics. Drag queens are selected for the examination of heteronormativity and homonormativity discussion, because they have a fluid role (demonstrated in image 1.) when creating norms in queer scenes as I mentioned in the Introduction section. Their fluidity between the homo-centre and homo-periphery is a unique example. Queer clubs are one of the main homonormative scenes not only because of its role of entertainment but also because it has a meeting and dating function. Drag queens are sometimes the power holders when they’re in the centre which also means that they are in charge on the stages of queer clubs⁴⁰. Drag queens are on the peripheral when the sun shines or there are no spot lights. The normativity circles shown below to visualise how to locate norms in restricted terms of the coverage of this thesis; however the normativities and examples may be broadened with respectivity.

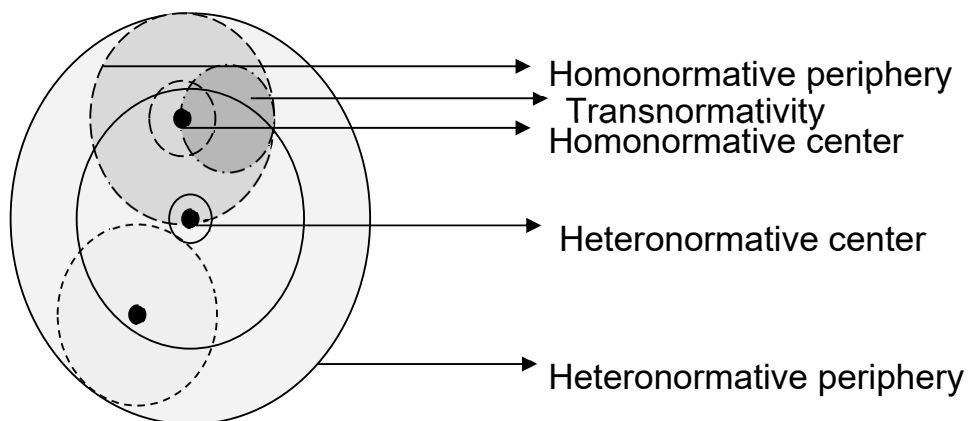


Diagram 1: Normativity Circles.

2.1. DATA COLLECTION

In this thesis, I used participant/observation (PO) technique as a side data collection method. PO allowed me to observe the drag events that were held in Ankara many times, and once in İstanbul. Defining drag queens in their own scene is a must. As a researcher

³⁹ Vogue, November 2019. Page numbers are 96-97.

⁴⁰ Still the stages are not necessarily located in the queer clubs but also queer friendly contexts.

I cannot mention drag queens out of their own contexts. The most popular drag scenes are gay bars, gay friendly pubs and clubs, and ‘gay’ centred night clubs. As one of my participants stated, *‘drag queens are nightlife workers’*. To understand a culture and transfer it to some other contexts such as academia, I had to be there with drag queens. I was there to be entertained and to spend nice time with friends and my folk. I went there again to observe as a researcher because I experienced one side of everything and the illusion. According to my earlier observations, in comparison to the dominant heteronormative culture, the queer culture seemed like there were no proper concepts or rules to be obeyed. The very first impression of a stranger would be that the queer society has no limits or restrictions or any kind of norm in themselves. The truth is that the queer society is once for all a society. Queer normativity, in other words homonormativity, has its own unlettered norm system just like heteronormativity. The homonormative set is more or less like a heteronormative system but in queer settings/contexts. That is the reason why I did this research against normativity. I was questioning normativity, hegemony and their queer concepts for a long time. Additionally, I was interested in drag queens who not just stand for amusement but also they stand for activism. They are the ‘other’ face of the queer coin. Moreover, I examined - not detailed - the social media accounts of my interviewees mainly Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Their social media data are not used in this thesis though, providing me an insight about my close reading of the interviews. The ethical clearance of this research was taken from Hacettepe University Ethical Clearance Commission (Appendix1)

The main method of data collection of this thesis is semi-structured in-depth interviews. I used this method to collect my main data because the best way to understand what drag queens think and what they do is to ask directly to the drag queens. I would never know what drag queens do exactly to be a drag queen. In addition to their drag personas, I needed to examine the traces of homonormativity on drag queens and from drag queens. I interviewed five drag queens at different times and through different channels. The drag queens that I interviewed were: ‘Midnight X’, ‘Florence Delight’, ‘Pepi’, ‘Lou Lou’, ‘Matmazel Coco’. Four of the five interviews were held on Zoom and the last one was held on WhatsApp video call. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic conditions, even though I was in the same city with my interviewees; my interviewees demanded to hold the whole interview on online platforms. My shortest interview took 50 minutes, and the longest

one took 3.5 hours in two separate days with one break in each time. The length of interviews varied due to the interviewees intention and willingness to tell their stories. All of my interviewees gave consent for tape recording the interviews. I requested written consents from my interviewees but the social environment did not allow us to meet in person. That is the reason why I also requested verbal consent when I started to record. All the interviewees were informed both verbally, and handed direct consent and ethic forms through the Internet . Our interviews were semi-structured (Appendix 2). However, I asked some additional questions to both clear and highlight some points.

I mainly used queer linguistic perspective to analyse the data, through close reading data. QL allowed me to inspect the traces of homonormativity in all those queer scenes but specifically in the scene of drag queens. Nevertheless, this thesis is written in the field of cultural studies not in linguistics, I analysed my data on a linguistic ground. As I was collecting verbal linguistic data, non-linguistic data was a few steps behind⁴¹.

I transcribed tape records with the help of MS Office 365 Word's transcription feature. Once I uploaded the tape document, the feature transcribed it demonstrating the speakers, and the time. Then, I corrected the wrong transcriptions which were caused by the fast and/or hard speech; also the English words. Moreover, as my interviewees were native Turkish speakers like I am, we held the interviews in Turkish. Thereby, the data of this thesis is in Turkish language. In this study, while demonstrating the examples from data, original Turkish text is written italic first for those interested with the original texts. The English translation, which is translated by myself as the researcher, is written in the square brackets under the original text.

I personally prefer not to use gendered pronouns other than the pronouns that were given to me by the interviewees. The reason behind why I avoid using pronouns is that I don't see the world as a gendered place. Even though I can't escape from the reality of the social

⁴¹ Because of the global conditions since March 2020, I was not able to attend any drag events; also all the bars, clubs etc. were closed most of the time because of the restrictions. The main reason for not collecting proper non-linguistic data is the conditions.

side of the genders and its reflections on the social system and hierarchy; I intentionally destabilise its existence.

2.2 ANALYSIS TOOLS

“Since group prototypes specify how people feel, perceive, think, and behave, social categorization generates stereotypical expectations and encourages stereotype-consistent interpretation of ambiguous behaviours”.(Hogg and Reid, 2006, p. 10-11) Discussing normativity in a queer scene might be challenging due to its being peripheral in relation to the centre and periphery model. As I mentioned before, queer normativity style is located to the periphery for the reason of its being a less common way of living. According to Hogg and Reid (2006, p. 8), ‘norms are shared patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour’. Their main focus is group norms which are defined as regularities in the differentiating social groups (p. 6). Hogg and Reid, are also aware of the fact that those norms are characteristic. They adopt the social identity perspective to express social cognitive and social interactive processes that are associated with the group norms. Hogg and Reid are aware of the prevalence of individualism and individualistic lifestyles, especially in Western countries. However, when it comes to group identity, all these individuals can represent the same identity picture. Hogg and Reid were curious about the normative codes of this reality. Hogg’s social psychology background and Reid’s communication science background fed their curiosity. The progress of the normativity studies in the field of social psychology has influenced other disciplines such as linguistics, communication sciences, and naturally cultural studies (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 52). The discussion of group norms and group identity entailed them to create their analysis tools for normativity. Their analysis tools are basically grounded on social identity perspective, which is deeply related to self-concept and self-categorization. Self-concept and self-categorization bring group prototypes at first, then they lead to social categorization. Group prototypes are the main and/or basic elements of a group that is realised at first; but sometimes they are the specific pre-thoughts about the group. Hogg and Reid (p. 10-11) report that once an individual is categorised according to the group prototypes; the individual is viewed according to the group prototype. The group identities depersonalise the perception of others toward the person who belongs to the

group, due the social categorisation of the viewer allows the viewers to see them through a lens. Depersonalization reduces the subject (the viewed individual) to the embodiment of the group prototypes in their social categorisation. That is the reason why the individual loses their unique existence. In addition, social categorisation also indicates that having a group identity is not only a matter of others who view the people outside the group but also a matter of self identification of the people in the group. This self-categorisation also depersonalises the individual self in terms of feelings, thinking, and behaving. ‘

‘‘From a social identity perspective, group prototypes describe individual cognitive representations of group norms’’ (Hogg and Reid, 2006, p.11). Moreover, the process of depersonalisation based on the in-group prototypes causes in-group normative behaviour. Every concept that is mentioned above has a relation of causality to each other. To produce a group norm by the social categorisation, the categorisation has to be salient so that people can identify themselves as a part of the group when they are in-group in the same context. The categorisation also must be negotiated by the members of the group by any aspect including nationality, gender, religion, profession etc. Unless the individual finds a fitting category, they need to find another one. This is basically related to the accessibility and negotiation of the social categorisations. Then, there are descriptive and prescriptive group norms that are valid by everyone. Descriptive and prescriptive group norms hold the group together by certainty. Descriptive group norms and prescriptive group norms can be exemplified as two steps. A descriptive group norm can easily turn into a prescriptive one which consists of a lot of pressure. Prescriptive norms are musts in the groups. Prescriptive force prototypes are stronger than descriptive ones. They are strongly related to who we are, how we identify ourselves. Prescriptive prototypes also desire to be accepted as much as possible. Later, they mention the perception of the group norms, and the differentials influencing the group as well.

From the point of Hogg and Reid to the study of Motschenbacher by using their analysis tools, I offer a formulation to analyse my data with the light of Hogg and Reid (2006). In my formulation, I only focus on the representations and reproductions of the norms. Thereby, I propose a Three Dimensional Tool. In this formulation, all three dimensions don't have to be fulfilled by the pieces of TDT/3DT elements. TDT is created by me with the inspirations of my previous readings, but mostly the inspiration by Hogg and Reid, and Motschenbacher. I propose such an analysis tool because Motschenbacher (2014) did

the same in a different way. Motschenbacher (2014, p.55) also focused on direct and indirect communication to bring an understanding of the normativity of objectophilia. Additionally, Motschenbacher showed how people with objectophilia define their desire for objects just like heterosexuals do⁴². TDT has three dimensions as it can be understood by its name. All those three dimensions have two possibilities to be fulfilled. The first dimension is related to its communicative channel whether the norm is reported directly or indirectly. The difference between direct/overt and indirect/covert communicative channels is based on lexical preferences. Direct/overt communicative channel has the lexical evidence to perform or to report of the very concerned norm. Lexical evidence is always sought for directness. As it was mentioned above, direct communicative channels occur when people directly articulate the norm. Indirect/covert communicative channel indicates that the norms are put forward not with the lexical proof. Instead of lexical proof, indirect communication channels use grammatical traces such as suffixes for requirement or necessities⁴³. Additional to two fillings of this dimension, direct communicative channel always contains indirectness. For the second dimension, the matter of filling is the content of utterance. The content of utterance means the descriptiveness level of the norm. Description and prescription are some kind of tolerance levels. A norm always exists in between zero and one. However, there cannot be a measurement to scale it. The norm can be anything between as certainty yet it is so easy to be a prescriptive one instead of the other. Prescriptive norms should be seen as a must, and they are always descriptive as well. To define whether the statement is descriptive or prescriptive, I don't need any lexical proof. Last dimension of this tool focuses on the source of the norms. The source of the norm can be either internal self approach or external other approach. When the interviewer uses 'I' language to denote 'self', it becomes an internal self. On the other hand, if the interviewer mentions some other external factors such as people or the stage itself, it becomes other external. Internal self denotes the influence on the referrer internally. External other denotes the influence on the referrer externally. Their lexical

⁴² According to the findings of Motschenbacher's study, people with objectophilia describe their relations with their objects in a heterosexual way.

⁴³ For the reason that the Turkish language has no modals as lexical categories, I used the concept of suffixes. It is all about the language structure of Turkish. For further about the structure of Turkish, see also Johanson (2021).

and morphological indicators are obvious. When they refer to the source of the norm by just using 'I' language or indicating to others, it becomes obvious to choose.

CHAPTER 3: FINDING AND ANALYSIS

Analysis part is divided into basically two different sections based on the design of the main question groups of the interview questionnaire. Both sections have answers for the power relations, homonormativity, and drag queen perspective of being in the queer culture. The first section is the 'Identity/Persona' section. In the first section, interviewees were answered the questions related to the drag queen identity/persona; and drag queens' relations in the sense of larger community as queer community, and the hegemonic heteronormative culture. Considering the possibility of differentiation in terms of associating with the community, six subtitles aroused. Also these subtitles are named after the core questions that are asked to the queens during the interviews. These questions are: 'What is a drag queen? And, How can one be a drag queen?', 'How long have you been doing drag?', 'What is the position of drag queens in LGBTIQ+? And, How much are you associated with the community?', 'What is activism?', 'Do drag queens organise? If yes..? If not...?', 'Do you think that you're an idol to queer people? And, is there any fame for drag queens?'. The first section is related to the queer community and its dynamics from different angles. The second section is 'Performance and Stage'. This section is more related to the drag performances and queens' relation to the stage, and show. Performance and Stage also secretly answers the question of the hierarchy of queer entertainment, therefore the power relations. Stage itself also directly creates a power inequality as a concept. It is also doubtless that this section is a key for the understanding of gender performance of Butler. However mostly related to the performance of stage, the performance is not limited to the dance and lip-sync but includes all the gender affiliated signs⁴⁴ in a deconstructive way. Also what drag's do is not limited to the deconstruction but also it's mocking the socially created sexual identity concept in the very base (Butler, 2008, p. 225). The second section has its own subtitles in terms of the questions that are asked to the interviewees. The questions are: 'What is a drag performance?', 'What is a drag queen's authenticity?', 'What is the stage for a drag queen?', 'How can you define the stages that you take?', 'What are the differences of the drag performance fields over one and a half years?', 'How did the new media influence drag queens?', 'What is a drag queen off the stage?'.

⁴⁴ Sign is used in a context of semiotics but not the side of Baudrillard's sign for media, and simulation theory.

The normativity analysis was also applied to which the participants indicated any normative sign. However, the main concern of the thesis is homonormativity; the traces of homonormativity can also be seen in any part of queer life including drag stages, drag events, experiences of drag queens, and so on. That is the reason why I hunted ‘other’ elements that are related to homonormativity and power relations. The ‘other’ elements are basically listed above as subtitles, so I examined them accordingly.

3.1 IDENTITY/PERSONA

The Drag Identity section focuses on the elements of drag identity and/or persona. Nevertheless, both identity and *persona* concepts refer to different points. I sometimes use these concepts as mutual. The basic reason for using those concepts mutually is that my interviewees used both of the terms to define their drag. There are two basic reasons for them to use those concepts mutually. On the one hand, some define drag as just an occupation which leads me nowhere but a close point to persona. On the other hand, some define drag as a persona or an identity mutually and they admit the existence of a drag person who has a selfness. Unless my interviewees clearly point out that their drag is a persona or identity, I get it as identity which was also attached to them. The situation is complicated enough, due there are examples of a queen’s definition of drag can be both identity and persona and also an occupation at the same time. Thereby, I used the concepts not to define and categorise directly every queen, but to highlight some certain parts of their experiences for a clarification.

3.1.1. Defining A Drag Queen

Asking the question of ‘What is a drag queen?’ is not only to understand the ‘nature’⁴⁵ of drag itself but also to highlight the definitions by the agents themselves. The question also makes visible the borders of drag. It pushes the persons to identify so that the normative definitions would be observable. Midnight X said:

...toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı ve kalıp yargılarını hicivle, hiciv yoluyla eleştirmek. Belli, işte iktidar biçimlerini eleştirmek için kullanılan bir sanat formu.’

⁴⁵ Even though, saying nature indicates some kind of abstract essence, this study does not claim any essence to drag. By saying nature here indicates a sequence of time to observe and understand the very moment of the subject time.

[It is making a critique to sex role stereotypes with satire, and irony. It's a form of art, which is used for criticising the forms of specific power types.]

Kuirlikle alakası olması gereken bir performans sanatı bu.

[It (drag) is a performance art which has to be related to being queer.]

(Midnight X)

Those above are the clear cut way of summarising drag. Drag is not a one way piece of art according to them. Midnight (according to their experiences) preferred to define drag as more than a form of art also. For the first quotation, drag is defined normally critical to certain types of power. Anyone can easily point to heteronormativity and patriarchy when it comes to the power in the very first moment. In addition, drag uses irony and satire to criticise. The irony is neither hidden in the performances, nor the atmosphere. The irony is drag by itself. Drag is mocking the sexual role stereotypes by its existence. Secondly, the art which also has that invisible normativity within itself. Drag also has to be related to queer. The necessity of the relation between a and b, which are drag and being queer, is one way flowing but not necessarily. From the point of a to the point of b it's a journey to be flowed; however, the journey does not have to be ended in the point of b. Also it does not happen the other way round. The validity of drag is bound to be it's queerness. The queerness is not working as a scale so that the drag is also not being measured. Despite the fact that, it is only a litmus to be considered under the performance arts umbrella.

Atanmış bir bedenin üzerine seçilmiş bir görüntü yerleştirmek çok pahalı bir iş.

[Putting a preferred apparition to the assumed body is an expensive work to do.]

(Midnight X)

Drag is an expensive work to do. The labour is invisible most of the time. The show takes only a few minutes, which equals to the duration at most two songs long. However, the backstage of drag needs so many things such as make-up, costume, wigs, rehearsal, music selection, choreography, time, space, and mentally readiness, and also capital. This backstage work is where the artist puts effort heavily. Goffman's 'the presentation of self in everyday life' (translated by Cezar, 2021) could bring a better understanding to the topic. In the theory of Presentation of Self, Goffman (2021, p. 33-40) offered the concept of the front stage as a performance field. Whatever happens in the front stage also needs backstage preparation for a presentation in this condition. Midnight clearly pointed out

that drag is the front stage of a very expensive work. But the highlight here is the putting the preferred apparition to the assumed body. The assumed body is the predictable appearance of a person. That body is not the margin of society that anyone can see in the streets. Changing the body to something else that is not relevant for norms, is the main battle of drag. Drag is the agency of the person on their body. Drag is the right to reform and reshape the mould that was given by birth or surgeries. Thereby, the expense is not just the capital that costs for the material, but it also costs the society to toss.

Bir şey öğreneceksen alaylı öğrenmen gerek
 [If you want to learn something, you have to do it self-taught]
 (Pepi)

The other normative point of drag is self-taughtness. There is no school to teach people how to drag. There is no institution to protect and guide them. The only thing that a queen has is mother and/or sister, which is also mentioned below, and the internet.

Hani kreatif anlamında zaten hali hazırda bir şeylerin bir doyuma ulaşmış olduğu. Bi tık, yani, ok kendimi ifade etmek istiyorum ve bunun için şöyle kanallar açacağım, şöyle akıtacağım, içimdeki şu şeyi hissinin geldiği, bir an artık onun nasıl bir ansa epifani. O kişi için o epifani kendini bir şekilde akıtıyor yani ve nasıl olunuyor işte birinden öğrenerek sorarak ederek ablan varsa ablana danışarak annen varsa anne danışarak.

[I mean something must be accomplished. For example, one should say that I want to say something and to make it I'll make these channels open. I'll say it this way. I feel this way. I don't know how to tell but the epiphany. For that person, epiphany flows. They tell something. Then They learn how to be one, they learn from each other, they ask their elder sisters and they ask their mothers if they have any.]

(Midnight Xpress)

A mother is important for a queen, because the mother teaches to the daughter by using experiences. An experienced mother can help the daughter in different ways; and teach different things such as how to do make up, and how to deal with the clubs etcetera. Mother and daughter relations are common among trans women, especially they are sex workers (Çalışkan, 2014). A similar relation occurs in the drag side.

Florence Delight's opinions are below:

Baktığımız yer buna (masa üzerinden rastgele bir obje gösteriyor) drag diyebilir miyiz mesela? Hayır diyemeyiz. Çünkü bu böyle yapıldı ve böyle duruyor, yapıldığı haliyle duruyor. Bu çok tartışıldı drag camiasında. Ben onu her zaman gördüğüm şeklin dışında görürsem ve beni etkilerse estetik olarak zevk verici ise ya da işte tam tersi estetik olarak

beni rahatsız etmesi gerekiyor diye düşünüyorum. Yani bende bir his uyandırması gerekiyor.

[Can we call this (Pointing a random object on the table) as a drag? No we can't do that. It was made like this, and it stands as in the form that is made at first. It was discussed a lot in the drag community. If I see it in a different form than I used to see it, and it impresses me, pleases me in an aesthetic way; or vice versa it annoys me. It should arouse a feeling of something.]

(Florence Delight)

The transitioning from a body to another by influencing the audiences' feelings is the drag. Going beyond the daily look is what drag can make happen. Extending the limits to reach a more complex look. It should also be complex with respect to Florence. Drag has more dimensions than an object. It has a purpose to arouse a feeling of something. Additionally, to answer the question how one can be a drag queen, Florence says that "when you want to, you become one". One should dive into drag. There's no need to learn the techniques, costumes, and so on; everything comes in time when it is needed. The main path to take to become a drag is the passion to express oneself. If a performance arouses a feeling of anything to the audience, that would be drag. Florence also defines drag as drawing onto the body to express their feelings. They say that drawing the body is an easier way of communication for them.

Pepi brings another dimension to the discussion by saying:

Şeyin, RuPaul'un 1 sözü var, doğuyoruz ve daha sonra yaptığımız her şey aslında 1 çeşit drag. Kendimizi ifade ettiğimiz her şey aslında drag, işte doktorun stetoskop takması falan filan diye böyle klişe örnekler vardır. Onlarda drag aslında. Yani dışarıdan baktığında kişiyi anlamayı ya da kişinin self expression anlamayı sağlayan her şey 1 çeşit drag. Aslında benim yaptığım şeyde biraz alıp bunu onla çarpıp dışarıya o şekilde yansıtmak.

[There's this quotation of RuPaul, 'We were born, then everything that we've done is a kind of drag'⁴⁶. Everything that we express ourselves is a drag, such as the cliché of wearing a stethoscope of a physician. Those are also drag. When you look at a person and see the things that you interpret about them, and their self expression; these are also drag. The thing I do is to take it, multiply it with ten, and project/represent/present it.]

(Pepi)

⁴⁶ The original quotation is 'You're born naked and the rest is drag'.

More than audience or art oriented, Pepi wanted to point out the self expression side of the drag. Having been a closet drag for years, being understood is more remarkable for Pepi. Also, according to Pepi, drag was not defined under art, nor was it described by the feeling of the audience.

Aynen, üniforma gibi hem biraz daha böyle işte kask miğfer dir falan filan tarzı gibi böyle savaşa hazırlanıyor gibi sonuçta yani.’’

[Exactly, It’s like a uniform. Also, it’s like a casquette, a helmet, you know? It’s in a word preparing for a war.]

(Pepi)

Putting drag on counts as a battle; because the arena is the stage and the war is against the society itself, most likely not the audience. Then we don’t know whether drag queens are the commanders of the war or the soldiers⁴⁷. No matter what role they have, bringing the war metaphor after highlighting the self expressive side of drag; I interpret that the war is between one’s free will of self expression and the norms of society that are trying to oppress so that the normative circle would be tighter. Later than this, Pepi draws the line between crossdresser and drag queen. According to Pepi, the main difference between them is sex work, and identifying themselves by the items that they use. Crossdressing is more like a sex work⁴⁸, and the main item that they have is their underwear. When it comes to the drag queens, they’re not sex workers so that labour is different. Lastly, Pepi also said that drag means anarchy. Pepi used to be a closeted drag, so Pepi stated that doing drag would be the thing that Pepi’s family would have never approved of.

Matmazel Coco focused more on the occupation side.

Önceki halinde bir iş olarak bir sektör olarak görülüyordu. Her şey planlı programlı işte kostümünden şovuna, şarkısına makyajına kadar böyle gider. Şey, şu an iki koldan ilerleyen bir iş yani. Bir yandan işte cinsiyet rollerini alaşağı eden bir hali de var tabi ki ama bir yandan da baktığımızda çok fazla eğlence için kullanılan işte erkeklerin tırnak içinde söylüyorum bunu abartılı kadın kılığına girerek birazcık olayı komedileştirdiği bir durum söz konusu. E tabi geldiğimiz noktada artık trans kadınların da yaptığı bir iş oldu. O yüzden dünyada bu bir tartışma konusu aslında trans kadınlar drag queen midir değil

⁴⁷ I specifically asked and left the question not answered, due the answer is not important at all.

⁴⁸ According to Pepi’s narrative, the majority of the crossdressers that Pepi met until our interview were sex workers, so that everything written there were also the expressions of Pepi’s experiences.

midir çünkü. Erkek bedeninin kadın bedenine dönmesi drag olarak görülüyor. Kadın bedeni erkek bedenine dönmesi drag king olarak görülüyor.

[The former version (of drag) was seen as an occupation, a sector. Everything was planned from costume to show to song to makeup etcetera. Well, now it has two branch occupations. On the one hand, it has a side that upside down the sex roles stereotypes. On the other hand, the situation is, quote, where men wear exaggerated women's clothing to make it comedy. Surely, the point where we are now; it became an occupation which trans women also can do. For this reason, there was a big discussion around the globe whether trans women are drag queens or not. The transition of male body to female body was seen as drag. When the female body transitions to male, it is called drag king.]

(Matmazel Coco)

Coco's highlight is more like an occupation side as I mentioned above. Additionally, Coco draws a branch from a main branch of drag's development in Turkey. The former and the common drag was a mainstream entertainment tool which is also visible on TVs, night life, refreshment bars, and so on. It was a whole sector and a 'serious' job considering the late 90s⁴⁹ and the beginning of the 2000s. Drag business was taken seriously so that the organisations had more budget comparison to today. Conservatism and political-Islam had not had its popularity in those times, so that, even though it was still a taboo, it was the fact that drag was profitable for the organiser, and the club owners. Later, the queer activism in Turkey has evolved in a new era. With this evolution, drag was introduced into the queer scene as a youth entertainment. The new version of drag was more political, and more critical. It allowed queer people to be more anonymous, so that queens would be more progressive in terms of activism. The mainstream drag has lost its fancy reputation. Coco and some others survived from the rise of the conservative political-Islam. Although they're not as mainstream as the former queens, they're the ones who keep drag as a broader and more expensive sector. In addition to this, Coco mentioned the difference between the tranny shows and drag queen shows in people's minds. The main difference is the budget. People assume that some shows are not drag queen shows if the budget is way too low and the work is not as pricey/fancy as others. In fact, Coco did not draw any difference between them. Lastly, the transformation discussions were important because as a trans woman Coco clearly pointed out that the

⁴⁹ Actually the drag history goes further back from the 90s, but I consider Coco's age so that I find it more appropriate to mention the time accordingly.

sector was gay dominated so that trans women were not as accepted as today. No matter how hard it was, she went all the way up.

Lou Lou is also on the professional side of drag. Lou Lou brought a generation difference between younger and elders. Besides, Lou Lou puts the quality for defining drag as an occupation.

Tabi içinden geldiği sürece yani yeteneği varsa tabi ayakkabının üstünde yürüyeceksin, makyaj yapacaksın vs. Gerçi onu yapmayanlar bile var şuan yani makyaj yapmadan sırf sadece sakallı drag queenler bile var. Artık queer denen bir şey var.’’

[Sure, as long as you feel it, and you have the ability - you should walk in the shoes, do makeup etc. Yet, there are some who do not apply makeup - there are drag queens who have just a beard. There’s a thing called queer.]

(Lou Lou)

Yani bunu herkes tamam yapıyor olabilir ama herkes gerçekten iyi olamaz. Mesela yapmak için yapmak var ve profesyonelce yapmak var. Şimdi 16 yaşımdan beri yaptığım için artık çok profesyonel görüyorum kendimi. Çok arkadaşım var öyle profesyonel, ama yenilerinin içinde baktığım zaman mesela hep kadın kılığına girmeyi drag queenlik zannediyor. Aslında çok yanlış bir şey bu drag queen dediğin zaman her şey olabilir.’’

[Yes, OK, anyone can do it now but they all can’t be good at it exactly. For example, there’s doing drag for the sake of itself, and there’s doing it professionally. Since I’ve been doing drag since I was 16, I assume that I’m professional. I have lots of friends who are professionals, however when I see younger people, they think that wearing women’s clothing is being a drag queen. In fact, this is not correct. When you say drag queen, it could be anything.]

(Lou Lou)

As it is clearly seen above, drag needs more talent and hard work in order to be a qualified occupation. From doing makeup to walking in the heels, drag is mainly about what the queen represents. Moreover, according to Lou Lou, there’s the concept of queer so that some queens don’t do makeup. Lou Lou said it like there was no concept of queer before so that queer brought the freedom to the drag scene; however, Lou Lou is not at the side of being free from the normative approaches to drag quite the reverse Lou Lou highlights quality for drag. Doing drag from a very young age, now that Lou Lou can say that Lou Lou is professional. As a professional Lou Lou criticises the contemporary queens, due to assuming they’re just wearing women’s clothing. However, the younger generation of

queens are more political. Having some contradictory statements, Lou Lou still insists to be in the safe occupational approach to drag.

Drag queens' location within LGBTIQ+ community was another question of this research. I proposed a dynamic and fluid position for drag queens in the community. Midnight X told me that; they did not reveal their drag persona to any partners of them except for two of them. They also added that even though they knew they were safe, they thought that revealing their drag identity to their partners would hurt their relationship. They were keeping as a secret their drag persona just to prevent themselves. Even though they were a well known drag queen in the community, their drag persona and non-drag persona are separated. The experience that Midnight X had tells a lot about how drag is integrated in the community. Drag is mostly appreciated by the members of the community; however, an individual who has a drag persona keeps their persona as a secret as a prevention. Moreover, Midnight added that they are activist who are organised around different organisations. Midnight X also uses their drag as a provocation tool for the community.

Florence Delight's answer was so direct:

*(Drag queenlerin LGBTIQ+ içindeki rolleri) ... toplumsal harekette bence. Özellikle kuir gibi kırılğan ve hassas grupları cesaretlendirmek bir araya getirmek ve onları eğlendirmek noktasından hareket ediyor. **Biz temsil edilemeyi bir özne olarak temsil ediyoruz***

[(Drag queens' role in LGBTIQ+) is the social movement, I think. Especially groups, which are fragile and sensitive like queer, are encouraged, and brought together, and entertained by drag queens. We're representing the unrepresented ones as agents/subjects.]

(Florence Delight)

'The social movement' is a strong statement. Florence obviously recalled Stonewall at first. They were right to recall it due drag queens were the ones who threw stones. They were the ones who lit the fire of riots. Drag queens are boosters for the community, because they have the power of gathering people. Individuals are not strong enough when they're alone. The social movement can only occur when people get together. The ones who need encouragement are encouraged, the ones who need to be represented are represented. Florence Delight summarised well the position of drag queens when they're the centre. Furthermore, Florence made a critique on activists' attitude towards the drag

of Turkey. LGBTIQ+ activists in Turkey have little interest in the drag art scene of Turkey. Unlike the other art fields such as photography and painting, drag did not attract LGBTIQ+ activists as a performance art. This lack of interest by activists made Florence upset to their own community. No matter how significantly Florence stated that they're representing the unrepresented ones, drag queens want to be recognized, and be more visible.

Pepi was certain about the answer, and also Pepi put a bit more personal experiences to the topic:

Ortasında! ...

[It's in the middle! ...]

Drag is in the middle of LGBTIQ+. Drag is in every letter of the abbreviation. Drag is a composition of every letter. However, Pepi did not define himself in the community. Pepi felt excluded by the society, and then Pepi did not want to participate. Pepi's behaviour was a bit two branched in terms of drag and Pepi's self. Pepi's most significant critique on LGBTIQ+ community is the irresponsible behaviours of the activist power holders. Pepi believed that activism should be done for the sake of community's benefits not for the sake of the power holders individualistic benefits. On the other hand, the drag community that Pepi tried to get in contact with first was a disappointment. Pepi found an echo chamber in the drag community. Pepi wanted to interpret most of the problems that the community faces as class issue; however, the community was busy with the American imported discourses. Pepi was right with the critique, but it might cause another question of creating local discourse. I'm not going to focus on this here more. The last thing that Pepi added to this topic was how the drag scene might be unequal, and fascist. From Pepi's experiences, the power inequalities are also visible in this very little community.

Matmazel Coco represented the traditional point of drag. I personally find her point a little bit unfair. *Yani eskiden olsaydı aynı kişiler kadın kılığına girip caddeye çıkacaklardı. Seks işçiliği yapacaklardı. Çünkü o zaman tek yolumuz olduğunu, başka bir yolumuz olmadığını düşünüyorduk. Şimdi onu yapmıyorlar da işte okuyorlar falan ya da ailesiyle düzenini bozmak istemiyor da drag yapıyor."*

[If it was the old times; they would have worn women's clothing, and show up in the streets. They would have done sex work. Because, we thought that this is our only option;

there's no other option. Now, they don't do the sex work but they study; or they don't want to mess up with their family so that they do drag.]

(Madame Coco)

Matmazel Coco thought that doing drag was the current way of crossing the bridge which was a lot different from today. Coco is apparently false with her approach to drag. Even though she was thinking that drag is an occupation just like sex work, both the motivation and the practices are not correlated. The queens are not drag queens because they just want to dress like a 'woman'. They are drag queens because they want to protest. Because they want to entertain queer people. They are drag queens because their motivation is not wearing women's clothes with the side effect of having sex with others. They wear their costumes, and dance, and do makeup, and do lip-sync, and want to be visible. The list goes on. Furthermore, doing drag is not to be in a safe space. Drag is not bonded with queens' sexual identities such as being trans, agender, or cis etc. Moreover, drag existed also in Turkey in the old times, so does sex work. Another unfair critique of Coco is that of mitigating other queens' activism. She is doing her activism with drag by taking the stage with her open trans identity, and entertaining the mainstream people as a trans woman. What she's doing is great work; however, activism is unique and everyone has their own way of activism.

Lou Lou came to the topic with a lot more daily life practises. Lou Lou stated that also Lou Lou is in the middle of LGBTIQ+. According to Lou Lou, everyone knows Lou Lou in the community and vice versa. Lou Lou is helping trans people who are in need.

3.1.2 The Relationship Of Drag Queens To Queer Activism

One can easily define activism with a dictionary, but there is no need for a dictionary. Real life experiences of queens enable them to define activism from their perspective so that the definitions are unique. Midnight X defines activism as an essence of themselves.

Aktivizm Midnight'in çok özünde, yani midnight'in biraz da olma sebebi de bence bu. Çünkü biraz şey düşünmeye başlamıştım, hani ben Midnight'ı niye doğurdum? Yani böyle kızım olsun istemiyordum. Kendi kendi kendimin kızım ve kendi kendimin anasıym falan gibi 1 şeyim var çünkü hissi.

[Activism is in the very essence of Midnight; I mean, this is also one of the reasons why Midnight exists. I started to think that, to tell the truth, why did I bear Midnight? I mean, I did not want a daughter. I am both the daughter of myself and the mother of myself, like I have a feeling like that.]

Midnight's definition of activism is self labelled. They put activism to the essence of their existence. Drag is not only to entertain oneself and others but also it is activism by existence. The urge of being an activist made Midnight to bear a daughter who is themselves. One's bearing themselves is a strong stance. Midnight's stance shows that their power lies under their activism. Birth metaphor is not common in the community unlike kinship metaphors which are only used as mother-daughter. Midnight created the kinship by themselves in both ways so that their metaphor/narrative gets stronger in terms of activism.

Mekanda kuir komünite tarafından alkışlanıyorum ve bu alkışlanmayı görmek, okey, bu aslında kötü bir şey değilmiş ve bu demek ki, bunu kabul eden ve bunu alkışlayan bunu baş tacı eden bir topluluk var umudu... Bir ütopya yaratıyoruz aslında belki de performans esnasında, kuirtopya! Ve bu kuirtopyada insanlar birbirin bu özelliklerini alkışlıyor/uz. Toplumda alkışlanmıyor ama biz kendi aramızda alkışlıyoruz. Ve birbirimize iyi geliyoruz.

[I am applauded by the community, and having this; OK, what I am doing is not a bad thing, and it's a hope that seeing a community that applauds, accepts and rolls out the red carpet to this(drag)... We're actually creating a utopia during the performance, Queertopia! And in this Queertopia, we people are applauding each others' characteristics. It is not applauded in the society, but we applaud among ourselves. And we are good for ourselves.]

(Florence)

Activism is Florence's field of interest. Nevertheless, they know that they can't get lawful rights; Florence works for their community in terms of creating a more free and equal environment. They find solidarity within the community and during their performances by applauds. A Queertopia is created by them. Queertopia is not a dream for Florence, it is an aim also. They work hard to convert their environment to a queertopia which is free from the class struggle, racism, misogyny, and so on. A queertopia, where anyone can stand alone and represent themselves freely without any judgements, is possible. Florence also added that they can't go out to the streets to fight for their rights. Their main reason for not doing it "they come with RoboCops". The oppressive ideological devices of the state are more powerful and developed than ever. They worry about their life so that they're right for changing the environments that they share instead of getting their life threatened. Florence did not refrain from saying that they don't identify anything that

does not touch directly to the society. They also made a critique on the behaviours of activists in Turkey, due they might reproduce the social imposition of aesthetics, and keep alive the class discrimination. At the end of this, I want to focus on Queertopia more, because it is the attempt to convert/change the daily life which everyone has to live with countless invisible issues. The violation of rights that queer people face everyday is not mentioned by the rest of the society (including some parts of the queer community). I find the idea of Queertopia the most valuable. It might be a utopia, but it only brings equation to everyone's life.

Pepi does not find drag as a way of activism.

Yani maddi kaygı gütmmeden yapılması gerektiğini düşünüyorum aktivizmin. O yüzden zaten benim yaptığım yerde draglerin yaptığı şeyleri tam olarak aktivizm olarak görmüyorum maalesef. Toplumun çekirdeğini değiştirmeye çalışarak yapılabileceğini düşünüyorum aktivizmin. Toplumun her çeşidine, her kesimine, her sınıfına anlatılabilecek kadar sorunların basitleştirilip anlatılması gerektiğini düşünüyorum.

[I think activism should not be done for the sake of any financial worry. This is why, unfortunately, I think that neither the thing I do nor the other queens' is activism. I think activism can only be done by trying to change the core of the society. It should be as simple as to be told to people from every social stratum, social class, etc.]

Pepi's point is basically about the financial benefits of drag performances. Even though the benefit is low, Pepi thinks that it cannot be counted. In addition to the finance side, Pepi thinks that anything that does not touch the core of society, and is not as simple as to be understood by a layperson; can't be activism. I don't totally agree with the idea that drag is not activism. It directly touches the core of the society, because every individual creates a society, no matter how central they are; so drag performances are acts, queens are activists. Further, Pepi's answer included severe criticism towards the civil society organisations. Pepi thinks that the leaders of social society organisations and the queer celebrities are not at the grassroots level. Pepi insisted on the existence of echo chambers, and I mostly agree with this criticism.

Bir transın otobüste binmesi bence yeterince aktivizm. Bir transın ailesiyle görüşüyor olması, bir seks işi dışında bir işte çalışıyor olması. Yani kişilerin kendisi olarak kendilerini bir yerlerde var edebiliyor olması.”

[A trans' getting on a bus is enough activism. A trans' seeing their family, working in a field other than sex work. I mean, the challenge of representing themselves in various places.]

(Matmazel Coco)

Bizim aktivistler bi basın bülteni yayınlıyor ben bile anlamıyorum, eğer insanlar anlamayacaksa bu neden yapılıyor? Zaten bunu anlayabilecek insanlar bunları biliyorlar. Bilen insana daha ne anlatsın ki, önemli olan bilmeyen insana anlatmak... Aktivizmin dışarıya yapılması gerekiyor. Bakkalın, sokaktaki teyzenin anlaması gerekiyor.

[Our activists publish a press release, even though I don't understand it. If people won't comprehend it, why would they publish such a bulletin? People, who can comprehend it, have already known these. What would you tell the ones who already know? The important thing is to tell the ones who don't know yet... Activism should be done outwards. Grocer, the old lady in the streets should comprehend it.]

The first quotation of Matmazel Coco explains a lot about daily life activism. It is also the starting point of the slogan ‘*Her Yürüyüşümüz Onur Yürüyüşüdür*’ [Every March of us is Pride March]. Queer people who conduct their lives in this heteronormative, homophobic, transphobic, biphobic world, do activism by just going out. In addition to these, Coco also mentioned the stereotypes at one point. If a queer person does not fit the stereotype that has been given to them by the society, it also triggers the society so that it is activism. Later, Coco made a critique on the community's activists. Not only the language but also the high complexity of the bulletins are problematic, and hard to understand for lay people. Her definition of activism is based on her criticisms of activists. She also identified herself as an activist, but she did not identify drag activism in advance. She did not deny the activist roles of drag performances, and she added that some queens are fully activist with their performances and their aims but she did not generalise it to every queen.

Lou Lou had an unnecessary negotiative behaviour on activism.

Vallahi yerine göre yapılmalı diyorum. Bazen çok tehlikeli olabiliyor, bazen de eğer çok siyasi olursa, ipin ucu kaçabiliyor.

[In truth, I would say it should be done when it is only needed. Sometimes it can be dangerous, some other times; if it's too political, it can go a bit far.]

Lou Lou's reference is to the Boğaziçi Student Movements. After saying the quotation above, Lou Lou mentioned the movements and stated that Lou Lou is so sad about what happened there and to the students. Even though Lou Lou is sad for the students of Boğaziçi; Lou Lou did not approve of the activism when it's too political. Moreover, Lou Lou focused on the results of the activism and pitied them. But there's no way of doing activism with negotiation, if the power holders are ignorant, and oppressive.

I wondered if drag queens organise in terms of an association or a kind of solidarity network, the answer was "no, but when it's needed". Most of the queens have already known each other so that they can help each other in many different ways such as creating channels to the other clubs, helping to find a new tailor etc. Other than these instant movements and organising, there is none to gather them. For this, Lou Lou stated that when Lou Lou is retired, Lou Lou will attempt to create an organisation for queens such as a syndicate or an association.

3.1.3. Defining One's Self As A Drag Queen

Fame brings power. Power brings to being central for the focus of this thesis. Midnight X had the feeling of being famous with the organic bonds with their audiences. When they lost their real life stage connection, and things became more online than ever; they also had some other audiences but not quite the same.

O appreciation ı o alkışı okey, bugün birilerine bir şeyler hissettirdim birileri evine eğlenerek dönüyor. Birileri evine işte bir şeyler düşünerek dönüyor hissini veren tam oydu zaten. O yüzyüzelik o organik sahne bağıydı. O sahne bağı koptuğunda biraz da o şey de koptu tabiki.

[That appreciation and applause OK; I got someone feel something, someone's going to their house with joy. The thing that gives me the feeling that someone's going back to their house with some thoughts. That being face-to-face that organic stage connection was it. When the stage connection is disconnected, the thing is also disconnected]

Midnight X does not relate any fame to themselves; however, they relate a natural bond with the audience and followers. They had a local crowd before, but now they have a bit

larger crowd both from Ankara and İstanbul. Midnight's fame brought them the power which they'll mention later in the following chapter.

Florence pointed to the fake and real divas of the community:

Ünlülük elbette var, özellikle komünite içerisinde. Divalar var, çok büyük karakterler var. Bunlardan bazıları öyleymiş gibi davranıyor ama alakası yok, bazıları komüniteden o dönütü kendiliğinden alıyor.

[Of course there's fame, specifically in the community. There are divas, there are VIPs. Some pretend that they're; however, they're not even close. Some get feedback from the community per se.]

The fake divas pretend that they're divas. Florence also explained the diva according to them. But the divas do not fit the qualities of being a diva according to Florence. Florence's approach to fame is obviously within the community so that it's having the power of the community not the power of the outsiders. Still having the fame whether by the community itself or fake, is the representation of the power which is given organically (!) or the passion to have it. This validates the idea behind the thesis that the power inequalities and the passion to have it.

Pepi, made an occupational comment to this question by saying;

Bizim ünlümüz olabiliyor sadece, dışarıdaki rastgele bir insan yine tanımıyor onları, yine bilmiyor. Yine totale giden bir hat olmuyor çünkü en nihayetinde bir ticaret var, arz talep ilişkisi var, totalden böyle bir talep gelmediği için arzı da olmuyor haliyle.

[The celebrities are ours only, the common people don't know them. There's no line to total, because there's a trade with relation to supply and demand. When there's no demand by the total audience, there's no supply to them.]

And added:

Umarım hani beni idol alan yoktur yani... Bilmiyorum, bi drag queen'i idol almamalıyız bence çünkü. Drag queen olmak çok zor ve drag queenlik bir illüzyon işi. Kimse gördüğü illüzyona kapılıp drag queen olmamalı, öyle olduğu zaman hiç görmedikleri şeyleri görebiliyorlar. Hiç istemediğim şeyleri yaptım. Çok eski drag queenlerle de konuşuyorum haliyle kimisi ırkçı, kimi 50 yıl önceyi yad ediyor hala falan vs... işte şöyle giymesi lazım, drag böyle olmasın. Geçelim, niye bunu bu kadar ciddiye alıyorsun ki? Yaptığım şey yani kadın kılığına giriyorum sonuçta.... İkimiz ikimiz de peruk takıyoruz. Kendini ciddiye al, ama yaptığın şeyi bu kadar ciddiye alma ya.

[I hope there's none to take me as a model... I don't know, we should not take drag queens as idols. Being a drag queen is thorny and drag is an illusion. None should be a drag queen by following the illusion that they see. When it happens, they can face the thing that they have never seen before. I did so many things that I did not want to do at all. I'm talking to old queens, naturally some are racists, some still mention 50 years before etc... one should wear like this, drag should not be like this. Let it rest, why do you take this so

seriously? The thing that I do is wearing women's clothing in the end. We both wear wigs. Take yourself seriously, but not the thing that you do, please.]

Taking the first approach to account, this is similar to Florence's comments; however the main difference is the business metaphors such as 'supply and demand'. Here, Pepi represents the bridge between the youth and the elderly in some aspects, even though Pepi is in early twenties. Later, Pepi answered the question of 'Do you think that you're an idol to someone?', both realistically and pejoratively. The realistic part is the point where Pepi mentioned how hard it is doing drag without the illusion that they make. One way or another, drag performance is a stage show that has several tricks from makeup and costume to light and music. Everything in the club and/or the hall and/or the stage is designed to highlight the performer and create the best possible atmosphere. On the other hand, mitigating drag to wearing women's clothing is not the fairest approach to have. While Pepi was criticising the 'elders' in general by talking about the racism etc., drag itself is affected by the criticisms. From being an idol and the fame in the drag community, the topic came to an end like mitigation.

Matmazel Coco obviously stood on the occupational, and mainstream side.

Benim hedef kitlem 300 400 lira 500 lira para verip fix menü gelecek kişi olması gerekiyor. Onlar beni tanıyorsa benim bilinirliğim oluyor ya da bir mekanda bir yere çalışmaya gidiyorsun. Buradan kalkıp Malatyaya gittiğimde oraya Matmazel Coco diye bir afiş koyduklarında insanlara 'evet Matmazel Coco var mı? Aa geliyoruz!', 'işte bizim masaya gelsin doğum günümüz var' diyorsa o zaman o bana şeymiş gibi geliyor.

[My target audience should be the ones who can pay for 300, 400, or 500 Liras for a fixed menu. If they recognise me, I can say that I'm well known; or you go to a place to work. When I go to Malatya, and they put banners for Matmazel Coco for people; and when the people say 'yes, is there Matmazel Coco? OK, we're coming!', 'ask her to visit our table. We have a birthday celebration'; I find this meaningful.]

Measuring the fame of a drag queen is based on one's popularity in the level of mainstream. Accepting what is famous and what is not created by a scale of how much known by the mainstream audience. In addition to the mainstream's approval, the audience should be able to afford at least a certain amount of capital to entertain the show. This approach concludes me to a very specific point to define the famous by the words of Coco. The point is that a famous person should have a mainstream audience who is also

above a certain stratification of society so that they can afford to have this very specific fun. Fame is not only created based on a mainstream audience but also it is created on a class matter. On the other hand, Matmazel Coco defines herself as a famous person because mainstream audiences know who she is. She also put a line between having her fame and activism that she does. According to Coco, her activism on this side where she's entertaining the mainstream with her open trans woman identity is an effective activism. I personally have no doubt that the activism that she's doing might be highly effective for the benefits of queer community; however, by doing this and limiting the activism to such a limited way is unfair, and restrictive. Turning back to fame and being an idol to queers, she said that she is not just an idol to the queer people but also she can be an idol to the parents who have queer children. According to the feedback that she is given, her presence with an open sexual identity encourages people who don't know about queer but specifically trans identity.

Last part of this section, Lou Lou stated an unspoken reality within queer community.

Şimdikiler bizden kendinden daha büyük olanlara saygı gösteriyorlar. Bizde de öyle ezikleyelim saçma sapan şeyler de yok. Artık aklımız başımızda ya 40 yaşına gelmişim... Gece hayatında ünlü olanlar çok da hiç yaşamadım (eziklenmek). Ünlü olanlar çok var. Çünkü neden? Ben mesela çalıştığım Çırağan Sarayı'nda çalıştım.

[Current ones respect their elders. And we don't drag them ridiculously. We're now levelheaded, I have become 40... There are several people who are famous in the night life, but I've never experienced such a thing (being dragged). There're plenty of famous ones. Because why? For example, the place I work at, I worked at Çırağan Sarayı(Palace).]

The first thing that emerged from Lou Lou's answer was 'dragging someone' and/or 'being dragged by someone' in relation to age hierarchy; and further the respect that is a must to be shown by youngsters in the age hierarchy. Dragging someone within the community is an unspoken fact that Lou Lou was the only one who mentioned such a thing. Bringing his own age into account clearly shows that the 'wise comes with age' metaphor is in charge in the borders of this answer.

3.2 PERFORMANCE AND STAGE

Performance and stage section of this thesis mostly includes the queens' stage performances, and its preparations, and afters. As their performances can't be excluded

from their drag persona, it tells more than the story of their moves and makeup. Every tiny detail tells the story of hidden normativity and its results by power inequalities. Still, this section should be read with the question of how normativity relates to the daily and unquestioned practices.

3.2.1 Defining Drag Performance

According to Midnight, drag performance is a protest, and/or a way to express oneself. The process was the most important point for Midnight so that they preferred to mention a whole process of their performance. This is the reason I'll mention Midnight more in the following title than here.

For Florence, drag performance is to make the audience feel something, catching the gaze, and have a complex outlook.

Drag performans benim için iyi görünmek, kompleks görünmek, ilgi çekici olmak, bakışları yakalamak ve bunun üzerinden görülmeyen veya çok görülen bi şeyle bazen dalga geçmek, bazen hatırlatmak unutulmuş bir şeyi. Bunu yaparken eğlendirmek bence keyif vermek aslında ya da rahatsız etmek. Bi şey hissettirmek yani sahnede.

[According to me, drag performance is to look good, to look complex, being interesting, catching the gaze; and upon these mocking something that is not seen or the thing that is commonly visible; and sometimes to remind a forgotten thing. In the process of making these, in fact pleasing the audience; or discomforting them. I mean, making them feel something when I'm on the stage.]

As Florence pointed out in the previous section, making the audience feel something which is no matter in which way or what to is the key approach. Florence had an 'in your face' attribution as well, so that explains a lot. Florence has an aim every moment when taking the stage and it is not only to make an illusion to the audience but also it is to demonstrate maybe the reality. And in that way Florence hopes to make their audience feel the unfelt in a way. It is not just waking them up, it is also making them alive in different ways. It is fighting against the coping mechanism to ignore everyday issues to stand against.

Pepi thinks that drag performance is what makes a person do whatever they want possible. The possibility was oppressed by society, and the environment. It is a compensation of

what if I had the opportunity. Pepi also did not forget the ones whose ideal is to be political in a psychological or sociological way, or performing drag just because they like the song that way.

Ben kendi kendime eyleyerek büyüme zorunda kaldım. Çünkü benim etrafımda beni eyleyecek kimse yoktu. Ben kendimi odalara kilitleyip işte böyle elime fırçayı alıp şarkı söyleyip söylüyormuş gibi yaparak büyüdüm. Daha dragin ne olduğunu bilmeden ... Bir yeri yerde kendini var edebilmeye çalışmak gibi aslında, yani işte Beyoncé'nin şarkılarını alıp yapmak. Ya da Madonna'nın şarkılarına lip sync yapmak. Bu toplum benim bir Madonna olmama izin vermedi. Ben olamadım Madonna ama olabilirdim. Bakın böyle diyebilmek gibi. Hatta onlardan daha iyisini yapabiliyordum diyebilmek aslında.

[I had to grow up to comfort myself. There was none to comfort me around. I grew up locking myself in rooms, grabbing a hair brush, and singing, and pretending to sing with that. I did not know what drag is ... In fact it is like trying to try making dreams come true, I mean taking Beyoncé's song to sing. Or lip syncing to Madonna's songs. This society did not let me be a Madonna. I could not be a Madonna, but I could be. Look! Like this. Insofar that I could be better than them.]

Growing up with the realities of society as a queer kid brings many different oppressions, unless one is lucky enough to have a caring and comforting environment. This is what many queer children had to face and dealt with. Bringing drag performance as a compensation to the past is a way to fight against society. It is the way of saying 'Society was responsible for me not being a Madonna by its oppressions, and gossips, and everything; now that society I'm here lip syncing Madonna'. It is a way of self-actualization for Pepi. It was the urge of being on the stage to sing to the crowd in a way that Pepi wants to. Pepi's story is similar to many queer kids' stories as well.

Coco interprets drag performances as business. According to her, drag is a branch of acting.

Yani şudur diyeceğim bir şey değil. Ben oyuncuyum. Her zaman kendimi böyle adlandırırdım ve oyunculuğun bir dalıymış gibi geliyor bana. Çünkü ben teatral bir iş yapıyorum ... Benim için bir oyunculuk performansı. Ben yani mesela hiç ruhumu tatmin etmek için yapmadım. Daha öncesinde de öyleydi. Hani içeyim içeyim kulübe gidip eğlendiğim olmadı. Orada çalışıyormuş gibi hep öyle benim için.

[It is not a thing for me to say 'this'. I'm an actress. I always named myself this way, and it feels like it's a branch of acting; because I'm doing a business in a theatrical way ... It's an acting performance to me. For example, I've never done it before to satisfy my soul. It was always like this. I mean, I did not feel like 'drink, drink and go to a club to have fun'. It's like I'm working there, it's always that way to me.]

Coco as an actress interprets drag performances in another branch of acting business. Taking her job seriously, Coco is not doing drag to entertain herself, but the business requires to entertain others. She added that she chose to have a drag queen character in her repertoire, because she's queer; however, she says she could have had another character which is not a queen as well. In addition, she's playing a non-queer character in one of her plays.

Lou Lou stated that it is not all about wearing women's clothing. Lou Lou is dealing with everything related to drag from costume design to music and choreography.

Dans ediyorum, koreografi yapıyorum. Kostümle uğraşıyorum, mizansen şovlar çıkarabiliyorum. Mesela benim en son şovum yirmi dakikaydı. Havada bu sürprizleri ile bizi uçurdu falan bilmem ne yani bırakmadım sadece kadın kılığına girmek değildir. Aklın her şeyi yapabileceğim bir sanat dalı aslında her kılığa giriyor. Palyaço olabilirsiniz.

[I dance, I do choreography. I'm dealing with the costume, I can make mise-en-scene. For example, my last show was twenty minutes long. In the air, she flew us, something. I did not let it go, I mean it does not mean to wear women's clothing. In fact, it is an art branch doing anything that is in the capability of mind. You can be a clown as well.]

Lou Lou is in every detail of what Lou Lou is doing for drag performance. According to Lou Lou there's no limit of being as soon as the mind is capable of doing. This limitless art branch needs first person attention.

3.2.2 The Relationship Of Drag Queens And Creating Authenticity

The main point of having authenticity both individually and as a concept of drag defines the differences and non-normativities among the other concepts that were highlighted by the interviewees. Norms are sometimes the availability of a concept as a consequence some other times they are the restrictions of their validation. Either defining authenticity individually or bringing it to a broader sense for drag concept, it has a key role for the construction of this very thesis. In addition, authenticity here is not used to refer to a point which is an essential to drag then more of a uniqueness of every queen. Indexing an authentic part of a queen in the context of this thesis brings the chance of them to create their own concept. Asking them about their authenticity, I aimed at making queens to construct, not to focus on essentialism.

According to Midnight X, the signature is their face. The authenticity is constructed upon their appearance.

Örneğin bir tane ıslak mendille şöyle tutup çektiğinde iz ne kalıyorsa. Bu yüzden kim olduğu anlaşılmalı biraz da.

[For example, the traces that are passed to the napkin when you wipe it from your face. One should know who you are by the trace of your face.]

The traces left on a napkin makes you who you are. The appearance makes a queen who queen is. Absolutely, drag is not all about the makeup that one wears; yet it is not totally unbound from it. Midnight's makeup has its sign such as their eyebrows. Some significant details of Midnight make them who they are.

Florence's authenticity is fed by the social, and individual experiences. In addition to this, Florence stated that drag is a performance performed on a body. As every individual's body is unique, drag is performatively authentic.

Farklı şekilde yorumlayıp gözlemlediğimiz için böyle bi özgünlük ortaya çıkıyor aslında. Çünkü bir olayın herkeste uyandırdığı hissiyat farklı oluyor. Yorumda farklı olabiliyor. Gücü de farklı olabilir olayın etkisinin. Bu yüzden bence özgün olabiliyor. Birde zaten beden üzerine yapıldığı için beden formamız farklı oradan benziyor.

[The authenticity occurs when we interpret and observe life differently. Because, something happens that makes everyone feel differently. The interpretation could be different. Its power could also be different. I think, by this way it can be authentic. In addition it is a performance performed on a body. Our body forms are different, so are our experiences.]

Different bodies enable the performances to be unique, and authentic in their own ways. People don't have the same structured and shaped bodies in the outer world, nor do queens. The uniqueness of their body, their queerness, and perceptions of the world; creates the authentic performances of queens.

Unlike other participants, Pepi thought drag queens are not much more authentic than manufactured.

Bana türkiye dragleri hep tekdüzeymiş gibi geliyor. Hepsi çok güzel ama fabrikasyon gibi ayınlar ya da sıradanlar gibi geliyor. Cinsellik yine aynı şekilde TR draginde çok fazla.

[I feel like all drags of Turkey are the same. Every one of them are fascinating; however they're similar, like they're manufactured, or common. Sexuality is too much in TR's drag as well.]

Being the only queen who denies the authenticity of other queens, Pepi thinks that authenticity is lost among all the beauty of other queens. Still, Pepi does not hesitate to say that their beauty seems like mass manufactured so that they all look the same. In addition to this Pepi criticises the heavily sexual contexts of drag performances. Pepi finds sexuality a bit exaggerated in TR's drag scene. On the other hand, Pepi has some authentic sides which are being approachable, and theatrical shows, due Pepi can't dance. The main cast of Pepi's performances is Pepi's face. As long as Pepi does not dance on the stage, The performance style of Pepi differs from other queens in a way. Lastly, Pepi likes to rouge.

Matmazel Coco's statements were mostly based on individual authenticity.

Benim için bir oyunculuk performansı ben yani mesela hiç ruhu tatmin etmek için yapmam. Daha öncesinde de öyleydi. Hani içeyim içeyim kulübe gidip eğlendim değil. Bu benim işim.

[It is an acting performance, I, for example, don't perform drag to nourish my soul. This was never a case. I mean, I didn't go to clubs to drink and have fun. It is my job.]

Coco mentioned drag as a business as usual and added some important features that she has. Coco's authenticity is her job. Coco is just a character performed by Seyhan Arman. Additionally, Seyhan Arman is in Seyhan Arman's consciousness during performance, even though she does not reply to the name Seyhan when she's ready to perform. This readiness is completed by green lipstick, prosthesis, and fake Coco Chanell perfume. As long as the original scent does not smell as nice as the fake one on her, she prefers to use the fake one. According to Coco, anyone that knows Matmazel Coco can recognize her with her scent, or green lipstick.

Lou Lou sacrifices the whole day to drag. And Lou Lou's authenticity comes from the performances.

Başlıkların benim özel...Lady Gaga dediğin zaman ilk başta akla gelen...Tina Turner çünkü türkiyede yapan hiç kimse yok. Bir tane iki tane vardır belki, onlara da bilmiyorum. Ama Tina Turner yapan hiç kimse yok... Mesela Gagayı bir tek ben yapıyorum Türkiye'de.

[My headpieces are special...When it comes to Lady Gaga...Tina Turner, because there's none in Turkey who performs them. Maybe there are one or two, but I know neither. But none performs Tina Turner...For example, I am the only one who performs Gaga in Turkey.]

Apparently Lou Lou's performances are based on the most famous singers. Besides, Lou Lou's headpieces, Lou Lou's costumes, choreographies etc. are finely selected.

3.2.3 Stage For A Drag Queen

A stage is the surface where the performance is performed. Thus, the features and the accessibility of the stage gains importance. Defining a stage whether is an actual one or an ideal one, reveals the approach of the queens to the power inequalities. Stage itself highly highlights the inequalities between the performer and audience, so that its definition shouldn't be missed.

Midnight X defined an ideal stage by taking into consideration its accessibility.

Baya şuan teknik şeylerden bahsediyor olacağım. Bu arada birincisi sahnenin önünde boş düz bir koridor olmalı. Çünkü benim şovlarımda özellikle seyirci ile olan etkileşim de korunmaya çalıştığı için. Seyirciyle aramda bir yükselti farkı varken eşitler arası bir ilişki kuramam. O eşitler arası ilişki kurmak istediğimde kurma yarayacak olan şeyde sahnenin önünde onlarla aynı zeminde olabileceğim boş bir alandır. O yüzden ben buna ihtiyaç duyarım.

[I'll be mentioning technical things. By the way, first of all, there should be a straight corridor in front of the stage, because my show specifically tries to keep the interaction with the audience. I can't create a relationship between equals when there's a height. When I need a space to interact between equals, I'll need that space, and that space is the corridor. That's the reason why I need it.]

The interaction between the equals is important for Midnight, even though they like to keep the authority in their hands during the performance. Still, designing such a stage which allows somehow an equal relation is a step. Further, Midnight mentioned other technical details such as light, audio, screen etc. One of the things that Midnight mentioned was the inaccessibility of night life for handicapped people. Giving examples of their former clubs, Midnight envisioned a better, and more inclusive nightlife life space for all.

Florence's ideal stage is like an ancient Roman Arena; however, as a performance art, drag can be performed anywhere.

Onu o yapan şey taşınmazlığı ve satılamazlığıdır. Bundan uzaklaşmadan ya da bu temeline bu onu o yapan şeyine kaybetmeden nasıl aktarabilirim kaygısıyla düşünüp her noktayı sahneye çevirebiliyor muyuz? Sahne sadece bir araç aslında anlatacağım bi şeylerin.

[The thing that makes drag what it is, due it is unsaleable, and unportable. Not getting away from this idea, on this base, without losing its essence; can we turn any space into a stage? Stage is only a tool for me to tell something.]

From Florence's perspective, an ideal stage is where all of the audience can see the performance. Besides, a stage is not necessarily a usual stage in terms of clubs or theatres. A stage can be anywhere, if there's an audience or there is something to be told by the performer. This approach broadens the spectrum of stage definition from streets to building stairs.

Pepi's stage explanation is mostly about its business side, but additionally a stage is a representation area.

Toplumda var olmamış bir insan olarak en fazla kendimi gösterebileceğim bir alan çünkü orada sadece orası aydınlatılıyor ve bir şekilde insanlar sana bakmak zorunda. O yüzden çok güzel bir duygu yani orada var olabilmek, orada kendimi gösterebilmek.

[As a person who did not have a space in society, the stage is where I can show myself; because only the stage is spotlighted, and in a way people have to look at you. That's why it is a good feeling, I mean being able to be there, showing myself there.]

Stage is an imitation of life but in an opposite way of the social reality. During the drag events, queens who are not the highlighted persons of society, are highlighted. Maybe not only there, but most commonly, they have the opportunity to be represented either by themselves or they're representing silent ones. The effort for existence is extra that the other participants of the society mostly don't have to do. Furthermore, it needs seriousness, and professionalism. And, then Pepi mentioned lot's of sectoral points.

Matmazel Coco did not think that there would be an ideal stage in terms of technical details.

Hala bir şey yok idi abi sen diye bir şey yok. Şartlara uygun yapmak durumundasınız. Şeyleri benim için ideal bu sahne dediğinde ideal sahneye ulaşamıyorsun.”

[There's no such thing as an ideal stage. You should perform in accordance with the consequences. Once you say these are the ideals of my stage performance, you never reach those standards of the stage.]

There are few musts of Coco such as wireless microphone, light, etc. But other than this, Coco generally appears on the stages of Dolmabahçe Sarayı, or high production events. By taking into consideration these, Coco does business and needs are shaped accordingly.

Lastly Lou Lou mentioned the mass production with a big crew behind.

Büyük sahnelerde çıkıyorum, genelde ekibimle birlikte oluyorum arkamda dansçılar vs. Vinç kafes vs gibi şeyler olursa daha hoşuma gidiyor. Sınırları zorlamayı seviyorum.

[I appear on the big stages. My crew accompanies me on my behind such as dancers etc. I like such things when they have a crane, or cage. I like to push the limits.]

The mass production enables many options to use in a show apparently. Additionally, Lou Lou seemed like Lou Lou had already met needs for a stage.

3.2.4. Drag Performances Across The Pandemia

The World's conditions for the last few years have changed dramatically, so do the events of drag and drag culture during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Midnight X separated the process into three phases: Confusion, poverty, and funds of massive companies.

Tüm sahneler vs. Kapatıldıktan sonra önce biraz beklendi. Bu ne kadar sürecektir acaba?...Çünkü online etkinliklerin en büyük sorunu olan beldesizlikle ⁵⁰ mücadele edilmek zorunda kalındı... Bunun dışında bazı şeyler işte projeler vs. Eğer fonluyorsa online etkinlikler düzenlemeye ve o etkinliklere katılan performansçılara vs o fondan beldelerini vermeye başladı.

[When everything etc. were closed, there was a duration. How long will it take?...Because the most important problem was the lack of gelt⁵¹, and we had a struggle against it...Other than this, some projects etc. If it was funded, they set up online events; and the performers who attend the events etc. get their gelts by the funds.]

⁵⁰ 'Belde' is a Lubunca word which means 'money'.

⁵¹ 'Gelt' is a Polari word which means 'money'. In the original text, Midnight used Lubunca which equals Polari of Britain.

The three phases made a huge impact on local drags. Especially the last era was nothing but a capitalist trap to the drag culture. There was an undeniable benefit for the queens to get rid of the poverty phase. But, Midnight's one statement for the current situation for the drag events was pretty a sum to all. Midnight said '*drag has become an indoor wageless labour*'. Especially for the poverty phase, drag had been changed a lot in terms of from physical setting to an online setting. This transition suddenly made the effort that had been put invisible.

Florence mentioned the online settings of drag events, and the class discrimination of the events in physical settings.

Rezerve etmişler falan ne alaka? Bu sınıfsal ayrımların olduğu mekanlarda çok rahatsız ediyor...Onlara farklı muamele mi yapmam gerekiyor?...Onların hepsi benim seyircim ve onların ayrımı olmasını istemem yani. Benim yaptığım işe karşı benim ideolojime ters bir şey bu.

[They have reserved or so, what? I feel uncomfortable in such places when the class discrimination is obvious...Should I treat them differently?...They all are my audience, and I don't want any discrimination among them. This is wholly opposite what I do, and my ideology.]

According to Florence, the online settings have them make some money, but drag was not only limited to the online events. Florence took stage in some terrace bars in İstanbul, but Florence was not happy to be there all the time. The class discrimination of the structures of the places made Florence uncomfortable. Comparing the structure of the places to their own ideology, Florence finds the situation opposite.

Pepi interacted with GZONE at a random point and then had a few works by connections such as photo shoots for calendar, and some works from Warner Music.

Ek gelir kapısı oldu diye düşün yani darg olarak.

[Think like it was a side income as a drag.]

The connections of Pepi helped financially. Especially some works that have an online setting let Pepi be visible in a way.

Matmazel Coco was provident when everything has changed. She found work to do almost anytime when it's needed. She was not affected much by it.

Online işler yaptım. Şirketlere falan ona yüzde yaptığım şeyleri büyük şirketlere online olarak kendi evimden Zoom üzerinden yaptım işte oyunlar oynattım. Çekilişti, şuydu buydu, yılbaşı vs. 3 4 ay tekrar kapandı ve o açılınca tekrar çalışmaya başladım. Şimdi kulüpler açıldı.

[I made online works. I moderated some games on Zoom at my house for companies, big companies. Raffles, this and that etc. There was a home closing for 3-4 months and then I started to work again when everything was open.. Now the clubs are open.]

The poverty phase description of Midnight did not happen to Coco. Coco had to do some work, even though Coco does not like it normally. Still, Coco existed during almost the whole closing process.

Lastly Lou Lou, had to take out a loan twice. Lou Lou was about to finish all the capital, the clubs were opened again.

Şöyle etkiledi, çalışmadım çünkü kulüpler kapanınca yani o da ister istemez bizim işlerimizi direkt durdu.

[It was like this, I could not work; because when the clubs were closed, our business had stopped immediately.]

Lou Lou had hard times the last few years financially. Lou Lou's works were always big productions in physical settings so that Lou Lou did not get into the online settings. Even though Lou Lou had difficulties for one and a half years; Lou Lou finally could get back to the stage.

3.2.5. Drag Queens And Their New Media Use

Specifically the last few years, new media mediums have changed daily life more than ever before. This change has occurred also in the drag scene, so that this title emerged. Midnight X mentioned a variety of events that were held on Instagram, YouTube, and Tiktok.



Image 1: An image of Midnight X from the youtube channel.⁵²

Daha sonra işte yine Warner Music Tiktok'ta işte şeylerden, queenlerden vesairelerden performans şeyleri istedi, Tiktokları falan filan istedi işte bunlar üzerinden queenler'e böyle bir para verilebilir hale geldi. Yani kısacası eski organizatörler, eski partiler vesaireler kızlara beldelerine verebilecek şekilde devam edemedi.

[Later on, Warner Music requested from erm, from queens etc. performances. They requested tiktoks and the queens got some money from it. I mean the old organisers, old parties etc. were unable to give the girls their gelt, so they did not last long.]

According to Midnight, the old version of events were unable to continue, besides the massive companies such as Warner Music could benefit from the situation by also helping queens to survive. It was a win-win relationship for both parties.

Florence is another queen who benefited from Warner Music's campaign. In addition to this benefit, Florence had conflict with some other queens because of this co-working.

⁵²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFIWf00xy-E> access date: 02.01.2023



Image 2: An image of Florence Delight from the youtube channel.⁵³

Çok daha şey oldu çünkü müzik şirketleri dışarı yönelik aslında sosyal hayatı, akan hayata bunu göndermediği için müzikleri bir şekilde sonuçta aktaramadıkları için bunu yeni medya kanalları ile yapmayı tercih ettiler. Daha ağırlıklı olarak yapıyorlardı. Zaten daha ağırlıkta ve gerçek bir performansçılar yani bu işi yapan insanlar aracılık etmeyi seçtiler.

[It became more like erm, because the music companies could not transfer the new music to the social life, they somehow could not manage to do it; and they preferred to do it with the new media mediums. They were doing it, but they preferred to work with real performers, I mean they selected the people who are doing it.]

The new media mediums were another setting for drag performances. The global producers were aware of the importance of the new media settings; so they decided to put drag queens forward. The win-win policy also worked for the queens.

When it comes to Pepi, Pepi's approach is a bit off the stage.

⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLvr3arPucE> access date: 02.01.2023



Image 3: An image of Pepi from the youtube channel.⁵⁴

O şekilde yani çok sosyal medya queen diye geçen tarzda bir drag queen olmadım maalesef.

[The way that is called social media queen, I was not kind unfortunately.]

Pepi observed a different angle of the drag during the lockdown. Most of the queens had changed their setting from the physical world to an online setting with the medium of social media. Pepi was not one of them apparently. The lockdown times were the times for Pepi to stay away from drag and a kind of detox. The changings of both the settings and the way of consuming drag as an audience has changed to another place. And, the phrase ‘social media queen’ is self explanatory.

When it comes to Matmazel Coco, she was one of the queens who had a benefit from the new system even though her way is not like the other queens’.

⁵⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJ4jCye4DOM&t=13s> access date: 02.01.2023



Image 4: An image of Matmazel Coco from the youtube channel.⁵⁵

Birazcık popülerlik sağladığı kendince, çünkü insanlar seni devam ediyorlar takip etmeye. Sonra diyorsun ki ben şurada çıkıyorum, kalkıp oraya geliyorlar.
 [It brought a kind of popularity, because people remained to follow you. Then, you say 'I'm going there', and people come there to where you say.]

The popularity is actually being accessible. Especially Instagram allowed Coco to be reached by more and more people by just posting her works. She was already a minor celebrity anyway, still she could work rotely during the lockdown.

Lou Lou kept using social media for personal purposes instead of reaching to their audience or fame.

⁵⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7TWTu8MSiI> access date: 02.01.2023



Image 5: An image of Lou Lou from the youtube channel.⁵⁶

Sosyal medya yeni medyayı sadece bireysel kullanımında tuttum, genelde siyasi şeyler.
 [I kept using social media for private purposes, political in general.]

Lou Lou's social media behaviour is only restricted for personal and political reasons. This also led Lou Lou to be banned for a short time, that is the reason why Lou Lou's social media accounts are private.

⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJ4jCye4DOM&t=13s> access date: 02.01.2023

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, drag queens were asked questions according to three different sets of points to bring an understanding of their point and/or role of homonormativity. The points were decided according to observed homonormativity in the context of Turkey. The first point was about their background. They all had different backgrounds in terms of where they're coming from, where they're working, their experiences for a whole life span, education, age, family, and class, and gender. Most of the differences that were listed above were not asked to the interviewees, because I did not want to direct the interview from the beginning. After collecting their demography briefly, I quickly turned to the second focus of the thesis. Identity and Persona are the concepts which every interviewee had the chance to create their own definition according to their way of interpretation. Their definitions for their drag identity varied from defining drag as just a job which is almost no different than acting to a way of being who can live their own self under the spots. The second definition also comes to a conclusion for doing what is undone, and not seen. This opens up space for every different being a person might want, so that this performance reflects real life in a way. A person cannot do anything which is not a part of themselves, so that both their understanding and interpreting drag lit a light to the homonormative structures. As it was mentioned before in the thesis, defining a concept or a being brings a norm. This norm either includes or differentiates the other concepts to create itself. This was the main reason why they were asked to create their own definitions for drag. They brought the normativity by their own experiences and interpretations. According to their answers to the questions for identity and persona part, drag can be mostly a medium for representation. And when it comes to the relation of power, drag draws a pattern which is not the most common. As it was shown in the Normativity Chart before, norms have chambers from the very centre to periphery. In this kind of relation everyone stands somewhere in the designated areas according to their ways of identifying themselves. Drags in this context have both the periphery and least power holder positioned and the only power holder positioned only in very restricted settings such as stage. To consider this very specific point in relation with power, observing how might the behaviours and norms change accordingly is surprising. The powershift norms change from one another. On the one hand there are drag queens who have more political stance than others that

create a more sincere environment. On the other hand the ones who are more likely to think that drag is a business, they took their distance from the audience visibly.

As a conclusion, homonormativity in the scene of drag queens of Turkey can be observed according to their positions. The homonormativity of their setting is not always being a part of a common power holder but the way that drag queens have their normativity is more likely to be fluid in between the centre and periphery. In addition to this, what they have reported to me until now to the end of this thesis, all supported the existence of homonormativity in queer scenes even though it might be described as a more light normativity in comparison to heteronormativity. And drag queens are in the positions of the ones who are more likely to be influenced and oppressed by the norms. Further examination can also prove and highlight their position for norm producing.. Because no matter how less discussed in this thesis that their roles of producing the norms for the queer culture, their move kind of might start new movements and behaviours/rituals in the community. Furthermore this way of producing and consuming makes both the agents and the objects of the same norm in the long run.

Florence Delight, a drag queen interviewed in this thesis, said ‘We’re representing the unrepresented ones as agents/subjects.’ This quotation sums up drag queens’ roles in queer community in terms of being representatives of the unheard, and the unseen. As a queer person, it is also a duty of mine to my people to be their voice. This whole thesis was a challenge from the beginning. The sensitivity of the topic was the very first challenge. Mentioning negative connotative concepts as normativity in an unheard way brought a big responsibility to learn the furthest. The second challenge was Covid-19 pandemic. With the pandemic and the urgent precautions accessing social life was highly restricted. Pandemic brought an economic crisis over the already started bad economy. The economic factors forced drag queens to either ‘poverty’ or other solutions to earn money. The pandemic also changed the understanding of stage and accessibility of drag shows to another level. Last but not least thing about pandemic, is the loss of physically shared places. The less space you share physically, the less one can reach out to a person to start a communication. Reaching out to Queens via social media and/or using snowball technique, enabled the target to be smaller. Also none of the interviews were held in a

physically shared space so technical issues such as poor internet connection and interruptions of living areas occurred. The other challenge was writing the thesis in another language. As being the Lingua Franca, English is a gendered language. Unlike the Germanic roots of modern English has lost almost every gendered feature but the gendered pronouns. I would love to avoid gender assumptions in the thesis, but for the sake of being cohesive I had to use a few gendered pronouns.

The reason why I chose Motschenbacher and the QL is focusing on a queer normative topic with a linguistic background. As long as language is the perfect way to demonstrate who we are; I thought so queer spectrum identities are best analysed from a queer perspective. Drag queens' way of creating their identities and norms were through language. In addition to the queer perspective, Motschenbacher is one of the pioneers of the field. For further studies, QL will help to widen the field of interest of queer studies. Drag queens' performances, song selections, and back stage conversations also would be read with QL and Motschenbacher's approach. Also Goffman's (2021, p. 33-37) representation of self helped me to understand how to position one's own representation of themselves can be produced, regulated, understood, and reproduced in a way of circles of normativity. Normativity does not only regulate people's lives with prohibition but also enables them to act in a certain way which was consensually approved by every actor ⁵⁷ of the concerned community. The fact that normativity, especially homonormativity, cannot be observed by itself without the dependency of individual and social occurrence.

And lastly but not least, TDT worked fifty percent in this thesis because the three dimensions of the analysis were used to bring a further and technical understanding from a queerlinguistic perspective. QL played a perfect role in the thesis to bring an understanding how the normativity was constructed contextually.

⁵⁷ It has to be every actor of the concerned community, otherwise that person, who is totally different and has no shared values at all, can't be considered in the community.

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APPENDIX 1. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM



T.C.
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19.04.2021

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 25.03.2021 tarihli ve E-12908312-300-00001514118 sayılı yazımız.

Enstitünüz İletişim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencilerinden **Abdul Kadir KARAKAŞ**'ın **Doç. Dr. Burcu ŞİMŞEK** danışmanlığında hazırladığı "**Homonormatif İktidar İlişkilerini Tartışmak: Türkiye'de Drag Queenler**" başlıklı tez çalışması Üniversitemiz Senatosu Etik Komisyonunun **13 Nisan 2021** tarihinde yapmış olduğu toplantıda incelenmiş olup, etik açıdan uygun bulunmuştur.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini saygılarımla rica ederim.

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Vural GÖKMEN
Rektör Yardımcısı

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APPENDIX 2. ORIGINALITY REPORT