


is very interesting, but seems somewhat out of place as it does not quite connect to the central questions of the chapter.

Another weakness in the book concerns the limited focus on the experiences and viewpoints of Islamic and conservative consumers of beauty services. This problem is particularly visible in Chapter 7. While exploring pious self-fashioning, the author does not resort to narratives from Islamic and conservative clients of beauty services, but instead puts a large focus on the narratives of a male religious scholar, Nureddin Yıldız, and a family counselor, Sibel Üresin, notorious for the anti-feminist statements she makes in popular television shows and her support for legalizing polygamy. We learn at length about Üresin and Yıldız's ideas and concerns about what the limits of self-fashioning "should be" for Muslim women. The author also discusses the beauty practices and preferences of conservative women through a young woman who works at a beauty salon owned by her mother in Fatih. However, we do not hear the voices of clients themselves, and keep wondering how they experience and narrate their own self-fashioning practices.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, *Istanbul Appearances* is a valuable and timely contribution to the literature on the global beauty industry. The book is also essential reading for those working on cultural politics of gender in Turkey. In addition, students and scholars interested in the ethnographic method will find in Liebelt's book a captivating, excellent example of fieldwork, diligently conducted and compellingly described.

Feyda Sayan-Cengiz 

Department of Political Science and International Relations,
Manisa Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Turkey
Email: feydasakan@gmail.com

Sertaç Sehliskoğlu, *Working Out Desire: Women, Sport, and Self-Making in Istanbul*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2021, xvii + 295 pages.
doi:[10.1017/npt.2024.1](https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2024.1)

Sehliskoğlu's book is an ethnographic study that deals with women and women's subjectivities as they go after their "passion for sport" (*spor merakı*) in İstanbul, Turkey. Sehliskoğlu's subjects are regular women: middle-aged, older, or young, housewives and working women, some religious, some not, traversing a whole range of circumstances and experiences in İstanbul. What brings them together is their dedicated and passionate engagement in sporting activities in various spaces. Using women's experiences to explore a challenging concept – desire, but also using desire as a lens to understand women's experiences and subjectivities, Sehliskoğlu focuses primarily on spaces that lie beyond the confines of both family and work, such as women-only gyms and outdoor gyms in parks. Women, as desiring, imagining agents, come together to exercise and socialize in these spaces, simultaneously defining and re-creating their subjectivities, while negotiating, maneuvering, and dealing with existing discourses, norms, and practices of gender. It is their desire that, according to

Sehlikoğlu, urges these women to negotiate with and challenge the gendered boundaries in which they exist. Throughout the book, Sehlikoğlu analyzes how this desire is shaped, articulated, and worked out in these various spaces, how it interacts with social boundaries, underlining its importance in self-making. As such, the book has an optimistic tone; through its focus on an understudied arena, the leisure activities of women in a Middle Eastern context, it emphasizes the creative potential of desire, and how it contains a possibility for change, for empowerment.

The book starts out with Sehlikoğlu introducing *spor merakı* as an object of desire. Using a three-angled approach Sehlikoğlu divides the book into three parts on self, space, and time. The first three chapters deal with the making of the self. Chapter 1 is an historical analysis of sport as a tool for transformation in Republican Turkey. Chapter 2 lays out the conceptual foundations of the book, discussing Muslim women as desiring subjects. Chapter 3 concerns television mediascapes, involving television personalities, pilates gurus, and other mediating figures, and how women engage with their discourses. The next three chapters deal with spaces where women negotiate their *spor merakı*. Chapter 4 is on how *spor merakı* as a spatial object of desire interacts with and is carved out of the space of İstanbul. Chapter 5 turns to public spaces like parks and how privacy (*mahremiyet*) is created/negotiated in these public spaces, emphasizing everyday forms of contestation as women negotiate the boundaries of privacy. Chapter 6 takes up homosocial spaces, women-only gyms, and underlines the role of female gaze as women establish their own norms. Finally, the last three chapters are on temporality, specifically, on attempts at gaining control over the temporal patterns in one's life. Chapter 7 deals with how *spor merakı* creates a crack within the structure of daily life to establish a rhythm and space for oneself. Chapter 8 turns to women's experiences and narratives of the temporality of the body, specifically focusing on pregnancy. Finally, Chapter 9 takes up the notion of the body as *emanet*, something entrusted by God, underlining how women redefine this concept, challenging the Islamic critique of exercising women as caught up in a commercial, market-oriented, aesthetics-obsessed fad. The book concludes with a coda where Sehlikoğlu reflects on conducting an ethnography of desire and her transformation through the fieldwork.

All these chapters establish women as desiring agents, willing to create a new self separate from conventional feminine duties, which they negotiate in a dynamic relationship with the various social forces shaping their daily lives. These agentive capacities, and the negotiations and contestations with which they engage, however, are understated, concealed, and generally unthreatening, and hence beyond the ethnographic gaze, argues Sehlikoğlu (p. 8). This willingness and ability to tune into what is generally neglected is, in fact, what the book really shines in, its strength lying in what anthropology does so well: looking into daily experiences and meaning-making of regular people, so commonly overlooked in other academic disciplines and beyond. In this case, this neglect is even more pronounced, as the subject of the book is women engaging in a "leisure" activity outside the bounds of the family and work which habitually tends to be seen as the domain of men and is only taken seriously when men practice it, be it arts or sports. In fact, the word "aunties," used to refer to some of these women, while sounding affectionate, is derisive in Turkish parlance as Sehlikoğlu also underlines, mocking and belittling what these women are doing. Of course, there is a class dimension here which I will turn to below, as not all women,

but only some are mocked, though all women negotiate and maneuver the patriarchal demands of being/acting in public as women, as the book demonstrates.

Not only does Sehliskoğlu hone into what goes on in these ordinary spaces among ordinary women, she also does a great job of underlining the complexity as well as the fluidity of the interactions and negotiations that go on. I especially found Chapters 5, 6, and 7 very engaging, as they deal with very quotidian, yet challenging to communicate notions, such as feeling joy, feeling comfortable in the public as a woman, or negotiating being in public yet averting a man's harassing gaze. The book is filled with interesting ethnographic vignettes and vivid insights drawn from them; it is obvious that Sehliskoğlu immersed herself into the fieldwork, bonding and experiencing daily life with women she writes about (as she herself states on p. 23), which allows her to reflect on and communicate this complexity. She presents a nuanced understanding of everyday experiences, underlining the conflictual, multilayered, and constantly shifting meanings in these practices and the way they are negotiated.

While insightful and rich, I thought the book has certain drawbacks, most of which might relate to editorial choices. First and foremost, I found it lacking some coherence, organizationally but also theoretically. The book deals with a form of desire in its various facets, where different chapters correspond to different facets/spaces of experiencing/working out/negotiating this desire. Yet, one feels like one is reading separate articles rather than a book where different chapters work together to carry or deepen an argument. This might be a deliberate editorial choice; however, it makes the book a challenging read, where it is not always clear why some concepts are used in some chapters and not others. Overall, I found myself wishing for more crisscrossing, more referencing between different chapters, more organization, as well as more theoretical engagement within them. For example, neoliberalism is regularly used in the book (see, for example, Chapter 4 on İstanbul which talks about the neoliberal management of the city as interacting with women's desire), yet there is not a sustained discussion of what makes what Sehliskoğlu is talking about neoliberal, and how that matters when it comes to women's experiences. What to me sounded like the most important theoretical considerations/discussions were regularly in the footnotes. Again, this could be a deliberate editorial choice for targeting a specific audience, but, considering that the publisher is a university press, I would have expected these theoretical discussions to be embedded in the main body of the book.

Relatedly, I longed for some contextualization of the research within larger structural changes that Turkey has experienced. Sehliskoğlu explores how women negotiate and maneuver gendered norms and discourses, yet the main discussion of these norms in Chapter 1 revolves around Republican values and the legacy of the early Republic. While the importance of the early Republican period and its values in shaping the Turkish trajectory is evident, I wished for a discussion of how these values have changed or were challenged, especially within the period that Sehliskoğlu is examining. The discussion of "Islamic perceptions of women's sporting bodies" in Chapter 1 is very short and only talks about *fatvas*, which feels inadequate given the book's focus on lived experiences of gender boundaries. Are these the two main determinants of norms regarding female bodies in contemporary Turkey? Specifically, a discussion of neoliberal expectations from female bodies, reflected in institutions as well as popular discourse; Turkey's significant process of autocratization, reflected particularly in the struggles over urban space (especially so in

Istanbul) and gender roles and norms; the increasingly conservative governmental initiatives regarding women's place in society; and last, but not least, how these have been challenged by the feminist movement, one of the most organized social actors in Turkey since the 1990s, would have been useful in the introductory chapters, allowing direct links to various chapters of the book.

Lastly, in exploring ordinary women's experiences in the Middle Eastern context, the book excels in overcoming the religious/secular binary and the overemphasis on religion, which is to be applauded. However, aiming to overcome these binaries, I worried whether it downplays differences in the way women of various class backgrounds experience and negotiate the patriarchal boundaries of the pockets of society in which they exist, maybe drawing on different capitals as well as discourses. It is not as if Sehlüköglü does not see or write about this; she has deliberately conducted research in neighborhoods of varying socio-economic standing and these dynamics are mentioned within chapters. However, this is done in a diffused, scattered manner, and almost never taken up directly. I thought it would have been useful to have a discussion in the introduction or conclusion that ties together this thread which runs through chapters, with maybe some reflection on ordinary women who are not in the book – for example, the non-conservative upper-class women who also are one of the carriers of trends in sport, or middle-/lower middle-class women who might choose mixed-gender gyms. While all women negotiate with patriarchal norms in Turkey, the choosing of the gym is part of that negotiation for women who go after their passion. Also, there are many women who choose to go to mixed-gender gyms, which requires some reflection.

Yet, of course, a book cannot include everything, and these considerations actually underline that this is an interesting and rich book dealing with an overlooked area, which accomplishes what it sets out to do and raises questions in the process. I believe, especially, that certain chapters would generate much interest, curiosity, and discussion if assigned in undergraduate and graduate courses alike, in sociology and anthropology courses dealing with subjectivities, leisure, everyday practices, and women beyond the Global North.

T. Deniz Erkmen 

International Relations Department, Özyeğin University, Çekmeköy, İstanbul,
Turkey

Email: deniz.erkmen@ozyegin.edu.tr

İlkim Büke Okyar, *Arabs in Turkish Political Cartoons, 1876–1950: National Self and Non-National Other*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2023, xiv + 329 pages. doi:[10.1017/npt.2023.31](https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2023.31)

Büke Okyar's book, *Arabs in Turkish Political Cartoons, 1876–1950: National Self and Non-National Other*, is an exceptionally well-crafted work that offers a coherent framework for examining the visual construction of Arabs in cartoons during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods and highlights the role of these images in