

Winner

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Title

“Loving Sovereignty: Political Mysticism, Şeyh Galib and Giorgio Agamben.”

Citation

This paper considers Ottoman imperial sovereignty in tandem with the discourse of mysticism that underpinned it, using the poetry of Şeyh Galib (1757-1799) as a study-example. In Galib’s poetry, the metaphor of the beloved sovereign neutralizes his sovereignty when affect turns political submission into an act of freely given love. The author deploys Giorgio Agamben’s notion of “potentiality” in order to elucidate this obscured relation of power. This line of argument suggests that the metaphor of the beloved sovereign in Galib’s poetry cautions against the sovereign’s own “potential” to claim vulnerability and to exploit love to consolidate his power. The essay is exemplary of true comparison, in that the juxtaposition of an early modern poet with a philosopher of the 21st century brings the two into dialogue and causes us to think in new ways about both of them.