***Fashion and its Refugees: production, consumption and subjectivity in the age of neoliberal authoritarianism***

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This paper aims to explore the relationship between migration and refugee movements and the production and consumption of fashion, with the emphasis on the plight of Syrian refugee workers in Turkish garment factories. A recent report published by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre indicates that ‘exploitation of refugees in the supply chains that produce clothes for Europe’s high streets appears endemic’ and ‘the plight of Syrian refugees in Turkey has unfortunately exposed the most damaging market forces at work in the global garment industry: vulnerable refugees fall victim to the drive for lower prices and increased margins’. A theoretical background to the fieldwork I will conduct in Istanbul, this paper will discuss a) how neoliberal discourses of charity, compassion and employability simultaneously obscure and reinforce the increasing degradation of work as well as the physical and discursive violence endured by refugee workers, and b) how the forced migration/displacement and the rapid and enforced acquisition of skills necessary to produce apparel transform the worker’s personal experience, perception and memory of the fashion commodity as well as its production and consumption. Drawing on theories of work, poverty, leisure, memory and affect, I also aim to understand the survival and resistance strategies and tactics used by refugee workers inside and outside the work place. In this way, this paper is intended to contribute to a framework for addressing fashion production/consumption, migration/refugee movements and the subjectivity of the worker as interconnected phenomena.

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Dr Serkan Delice is Lecturer and Research Coordinator in the Cultural and Historical department at London College of Fashion, UAL, where he completed his PhD in 2015. Delice’s research is concerned with the connections between fashion and politics. He explores these connections through three concurrent research projects: First, he analyses fashion media discourses on the subject of cultural appropriation in their relationship to new forms of racial and emotional capitalism, white supremacy and cultural imperialism. Second, he investigates the centrality of fashion production/consumption to political dissidence, immigration and refugee movements in contemporary Turkey. This involves an ethnographic study of garment ateliers in Istanbul. Third, he examines the relationships between masculinity, male homosexuality and social and sartorial transgression in early modern Ottoman and contemporary Turkish society. The first output was an extensive collection of essays on queer culture and dissidence in Turkey (in Turkish, co-edited with Dr Cuneyt Cakirlar from Nottingham Trent University). The second output was his PhD thesis ‘The Janissaries and Their Bedfellows: Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Early Modern Ottoman Istanbul, 1500-1826’, which he will publish as a monograph.