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Night Shifts: Moral, Economic, and Cultural Politics of Turkish Belly Dance Across the
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ABSTRACT

Night Shifts: Moral, Economic, and Cultural Politics of Turkish Belly Dance Across the

Fins-de-Siècle

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This dissertation examines the ways in which performance forms articulate with urban identities in the context of transnational economic and cultural exchange. In this multisited historical ethnography, I explore the links between late 19th-century Ottoman and contemporary Turkish public spheres fractured by morality battles and political transformation. Both periods are characterized by a shared commitment to free market modernity, social reform, and Islamic revivalism. To generate income and credibility in the world market, heritage tourism initiatives, Ottoman and Turkish alike, have deployed auto-Orientalist strategies among which belly dance figures prominently. Focusing on the contradictory configurations of belly dance as familial, aesthetic, tourist, and erotic product, I argue that the enduring dichotomy of honor and profit reveals particular anxieties over Turkey's Ottoman past, European future, and the ingrained dialectic of Islamic and secular revivalism across the Middle East.

I deploy belly dance praxis as a critical optic to examine the interplay among market-based modernity, urban spatial entitlement, and cultural purity across centuries and across the Atlantic. I thus connect the Orientalist Turkish Village performances at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition with the tourism-driven revitalization of belly dance in rapidly globalizing post-1980s Istanbul. My historical analysis exposes how belly dancers, as dishonorable yet redeemable exotics, both financed and compromised the West-compatible, modern Muslim image of the late Ottoman Empire. Similarly, current controversies over

lucrative Orientalist commodification illustrate the ambivalence of modernity projects in Turkey: the moderately Islamic, European Union aspiring, zealously secular “noble savage” of the Middle East.

To document the embodied operations and ideological underpinnings of Ottoman heritage tourism, I conducted archival research on both sides of the Atlantic. During four years of ethnographic fieldwork, I worked with and/or interviewed 58 musicians, agents, club owners, and belly dancers and their families across tourist restaurants, disreputable nightclubs, elite entertainment venues, dance classes, and homes. As a professional belly dancer, I choreographed for and performed at tourist restaurants and hotels in Istanbul. Combined with critical anthropological, gender, and performance theory, these findings posit Turkish entertainment, and belly dance, in particular, as contested expressions of economic rejuvenation, cultural authenticity, and sexual propriety.

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PREFACE

I was 8 years old when our lives were interrupted by the 1980 coup, the third military intervention in three decades. It aimed to stem the violent conflicts among ultranationalist, Islamist, and leftist student groups in order to uphold a safe, secular future for Turkey. Translated to life, this meant curfews, the incarceration of thousands, and the untimely disappearance of friends and family.¹ The coup brought panic-tinged fear and destruction to my extended family: a diverse group comprised of devout Muslim elders, young zealous leftists, and steadfast secularists.

Despite persistent loss, we continued to have our festive Saturday gatherings punctuated with the sweet smell of caramelized eggplants, orange peel, and minted garlic yogurt. Gathered around the long white table at my elder aunt's (Melahat Teyze) small apartment, we kept rhythm with our chests, hands, and hips to music louder than our laughter. Around midnight, my mother's cousin, Vildan Abla, the prime belly dancer (*baş dansöz*) of the family, ran to her room to change into an "impromptu" costume: silky, layered skirts topped with a beaded scarf. My younger cousin Gülşah and I helped our elders clear off the table and watched anticipation bubble as Şefik Ağabey turned off the fluorescent lights and the music.

Confident and playful, Vildan Abla tread the table, or the "stage," in light steps until she heard the music – a surprise song on the radio—interrupted by our initial applause. Sliding her

¹ In "Turkey: Reading the Small Print," John Mepham writes that between 1980 and 1984 "there were roughly 180,000 arrests; 65,000 were detained; 42,000 sentenced; 326 were sentenced to death, of whom 27 were hung" [*MERIP: Middle Eastern Report* 14: 19-25].

hips like butter (*tereyağı gibi*) and pounding her torso like a drum, she worked up a climax with or against the music. The climax was the invitation through which everyone, including the aging, veiled grandmothers and respectable, stern grandfathers, shimmied like nobody's business. Breathless, we watched and elated, we participated. I came to belly dance in a safe, intimate setting that rendered technical training and familial expression as continuous, multi-sensory acts.² Perfecting bodily isolations involved never-ending mimicry aimed at gaining musicality, improvisational skills, participatory applause, and ultimately some tips: those precious coins stuck to my forehead by appreciative elders.

I owe my interest in embodied ethnography, in part, to this personal history. Remembering oppression, destruction (the coup) and resourcefulness (belly dancing) all under one roof, I inquire into how political regimes and/or discourses touch social bodies in palpable yet contradictory ways. I repeatedly ask: how do power relations shift in and through cultural production as they criss-cross intimate global networks?

This dissertation examines the ways in which performance forms articulate with urban identities in the context of transnational economic and cultural exchange. In this multisited historical ethnography, I explore the links between late 19th-century Ottoman and contemporary Turkish public spheres fractured by morality battles and political transformation. Both periods are characterized by a shared commitment to free market modernity, social reform, and Islamic revivalism. To generate income and credibility in the world market, heritage tourism initiatives, Ottoman and Turkish alike, have deployed auto-Orientalist strategies among which belly dance

² Belly dance is an ancient solo improvisatory movement form with a vast geographical reach from North Africa to the Central Asia, from the Middle East to Europe. For a critical history of this dance form, see Shay and Sellers-Young's "Belly Dance: Orientalism-Exoticism-Self Exoticism," *Dance Research Journal*, 35:1 (2003) , 20-24 and 31.

figures prominently. Focusing on the contradictory configurations of belly dance as familial, aesthetic, tourist, and erotic product, I argue that the enduring dichotomy of honor and profit reveals particular anxieties over Turkey's Ottoman past, European future, and the ingrained dialectic of Islamic and secular revivalism across the Middle East.

I deploy belly dance praxis as a critical optic to examine the interplay among market-based modernity, urban spatial entitlement, and cultural purity across centuries and across the Atlantic. I thus connect the Orientalist Turkish Village performances at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition with the tourism-driven revitalization of belly dance in rapidly globalizing post-1980s Istanbul. My historical analysis exposes how belly dancers, as dishonorable yet redeemable exotics, both financed and compromised the West-compatible, modern Muslim image of the late Ottoman Empire. Similarly, current controversies over lucrative Orientalist commodification illustrate the ambivalence of modernity projects in Turkey: the moderately Islamic, European Union aspiring, zealously secular "noble savage" of the Middle East. These turn-of-the century cases also intersect along artistic lines with rampant cross-fertilization between Western and non-Western musical, dance, and literary genres. The differences lie with individual artistic choices, variability of production genres, tools, and lexicons in addition to the diffuse impact of macro-level State and urban projects on quotidian lives.

To document the embodied operations and ideological underpinnings of Ottoman heritage tourism, I conducted archival research on both sides of the Atlantic, juxtaposing official state documents (Turkish Prime Ministry Archives) with popular literature, ranging from contemporaneous diaries, fiction, and visual media to the salacious American newspaper/journal coverage of the 1893 WCE. During four years of ethnographic fieldwork, I

worked with and/or interviewed 58 musicians, agents, club owners, and belly dancers and their families across tourist restaurants, disreputable nightclubs, elite entertainment venues, dance classes, and homes. As a professional belly dancer, I choreographed for and performed at tourist restaurants and hotels in Istanbul. This embodied methodology helped me decipher aesthetic codes, nightlife contracts, and often, if not always, facilitated my entry into various circles of entertainers. Combined with critical anthropological, gender, and performance theory, these findings posit Turkish entertainment, and belly dance, in particular, as contested expressions of economic rejuvenation, cultural authenticity, and sexual propriety: public expressions with significant human costs.

Each chapter is thus a critical investigation of the interplay between aesthetic and material choices with which governments, public moralists, and performers, Ottoman and Turkish alike, have constructed and navigated proper, lucrative public spheres and/or intimate circles. Chapter One defines the Ottoman participation in the 1893 WCE as a fractured moral experiment with liberalism (world market integration) and situates it in the volatile context of financial, political, and ethnic strife and reform. In addition to official male performances of imperial pride, I focus on the displayed female works by Muslim reformer Fatma Aliye and Christian activist Hanna Korany and their definitions of Ottoman moral capitalism centered on sexual and economic moderation. Together, they articulated a gendered regime of privilege (bourgeois domesticity) fueled by liberal ideology (feminization of labor and gender-progressive education) and torn by religious imperial difference (modern Islam vs. missionary Christianity). The impoverished female textile workers (Balkan refugees) and their in-situ handicrafts production both helped authenticate and sell industrious and/or exotic Ottomanness. This chapter provides a gender-nuanced analysis of late Ottoman reform with an eye to its

classed, ethnic, and religious faultlines at home and abroad. It also sets the stage for the ideological paradox of auto-Orientalist stage and everyday performances at the Turkish Village in the Midway Plaisance.

In Chapter Two, I position these embodied exhibits as contested foils to Ottoman gender and political-economic reform. In so doing, I expose the tacit collaboration between the Ottoman government and the Turkish Village concessionaire Roberto Levy for the lucrative commodification of domestic exotics: belly dancers and Bedouin warriors. As anti-family nocturnal workers and backward ethnic curios, these domestic colonies simultaneously financed and ruptured the image of the Ottoman Empire as a honorable, Muslim contender on the world stage. Here I challenge top-down accounts of late Ottoman reform/representation and suggest a shift toward performance- and gender-centered archival research. As well, I document the belly dancers' hybridization of dance and musical genres, presentation styles, and performance conventions within and beyond the Empire. Documenting the extent and range of cultural trafficking in the late Ottoman cities, I challenge the reification of world's fairs as exemplary models for global artistic and cultural exchange. Taken together, Chapters One and Two highlight the impossibility of understanding post-1980s Turkey and its Orientalist cultural production in isolation.

Charting these parallel histories, my goal is to reconfigure contemporary Istanbul as Turkish Village writ-large: an Orientalist theme park rejuvenated by artistic trafficking and divided by secular and Islamic models of urban restructuring. More specifically, I draw connections between the current Islamist government (AKP) and Pan-Islamist Hamidian regime and between the redemption of belly dance by Ottoman elite reformers and the contemporary secular Turkish bourgeoisie. I document the cross-fertilization of folk and

cabaret movement styles in reference to the belly dancers' nocturnal migration between nightclubs and social festivities within and across national borders.

Chapter Three situates the recycling of Ottoman sites and performances, or neo-Ottomania, in the post-1980s neoliberalization of Istanbul driven by the tourism boom, structural adjustment policies (the IMF and the World Bank), and import substitution strategies. I focus on shifting belly dance practices at nightclubs, dance classes, and tourist restaurants to redefine urban change as a joint moral and economic project with aesthetic consequences. Gentrification, as analytical lens, helps explain not only the contradictory glorification and denigration of professional dancers, but also the lived heterogeneity of Islam and capitalism in contemporary Istanbul. I treat new Islamic veiling (*tesettür*) and belly dance as similar neoliberal practices forged around upgrading the Ottoman past, but separated by the alternate moral agendas of Islamist and secular governments. Taken together, these embodied gentrification practices delineate the contours of morally and materially acceptable female presence in the public sphere. I also contend that these projects inform performance codes, conventions, and genres as practitioners continually refashion them through formal and everyday performances. This leads me to theorize how the codification of movement, choice of venue, and structuring of performance space help elevate or gentrify a marginalized dance form.

As a rejoinder to the last chapter, Chapter Four details the on- and off-stage negotiations between musicians and belly dancers. Here I explore the ways in which ethnic, and particularly Rom affiliations, intersect with artistic, monetary, sexual leverage in Istanbul's entertainment industry. Zooming in on one tourist restaurant performance, I analyze how on-stage musical and kinetic cues involve daily conflicts over tips, female honor, and ethnic difference.

Specifically, I focus on the belly dancer Birgül's interactive sexual parody to question the limits of performative transgression. I also suggest that the syncretism of Turkish belly dance technique is shaped by the dancers' navigation across tourist restaurants, seedy nightclubs (*pavyon*), and social festivities.

In Chapter Five, I detail further the sexual, economic, and ethnic anxieties of belly dance production to illuminate the joint politico-moral contours of Orientalist heritage tourism and erotic nightlife. Juxtaposing the agents', choreographers', dancers', and club owners' narratives with performance analysis, I probe the complex interrelationship among dance hierarchies (folk dance vs. belly dance), ethnic and sexual difference, and kinship exchange. While the continued privileging of folk over belly dance underwrites secular models of Progress, the naturalization and/or omission of dance technique affects the dancers' ethnic and sexual entitlement on the ground. As redeemed tokens of political tolerance and artistic effervescence, Rom dancers and musicians advance urban gentrification, Turkey's EU bid, and world dance/world music profits. And these working dancers are locked in a daily dialectic of patronage and sexual/economic exploitation as they infuse commodification with kin obligations. This contradictory portrait leads me to redefine intimacy as a sexually-laden, performative folk system: a system transformed as much by global capitalism as shifting aesthetic hierarchies. As in all other chapters, I posit embodiment as both the shaper and indicator of socio-political shifts in Turkey, and by extension, the Middle East.

This research enables me to investigate issues with broader implications for Anthropology, Gender Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Performance Studies, and World Dance Studies, such as: the mutual constitution of urban and cultural gentrification; the material underpinnings of moral and sexual economies; the role of performance in the

cultivation and fragmentation of Islamic and secular power structures; and in a meta-critical reflection, the impact of the academy on the selective theorizing of Middle Eastern dance forms and their practitioners. As my analytical lens and methodology, performance helps suture the gap between Humanities and Social Science inquiries.

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Chapter I

Moral and Efficient Imperialism: The Ottoman Laboratory for Modernization Abroad

Introduction

When President Cleveland pressed the button, the dynamo triggered all the interconnected machines in the Machinery Building. The flags above the buildings unfurled. The fountains gushed with water. The sound of cannon balls, fired from the war ships in the Michigan Lake, filled the sky. . . . The band began to play the American national anthem. When that electricity button was touched, all the interconnected limbs of the world took on a new face. One could mistake it all for a hurricane. But this was a whirlwind of bliss.

Ubeydullah Efendi, *The Chicago Fair Illustrated*, 1893, 1, 11, cols. 2-3.³

Thus Ubeydullah Efendi, a prominent member of the Ottoman *ulema* (doctors of Islamic knowledge) in exile, vividly describes the grand opening of the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition that captivated more than 27 million visitors between May and October (Bertuca, Hartman, and Neumeister 1996, 368).⁴ In *The Chicago Fair Illustrated*, the official

³ The six monthly issues of this newspaper (1893) were sold for 25 cents at the Fair. Both propagandist and educational, CFI targeted both the Ottoman citizens at home and on the Exposition grounds. Sponsored by the Ottoman State and Syrian merchant Suleiman K. Bustani, this newspaper provided celebratory and critical reviews of the Fair with a special focus on its expenditures. Ubeydullah Efendi, the cosmopolitan member of the *ulema*, wrote all the articles. These newspapers are not in the Turkish Prime Ministry archives, and only the first three issues (June-August) are in the Smithsonian archives. However, in his memoirs Ubeydullah Efendi mentions he wrote for all six issues during his Chicago stay until November [See Note 2]. I have been unable to track the remaining three issues (September-November).

⁴ In his memoirs, Ubeydullah Efendi characterizes his American journey as an attempt to escape Sultan Abdülhamid II's "authoritarian claw (*pençe-i tasallut*)" [*Sıradışı Bir Jön Türk: Ubeydullah*

monthly Turkish newspaper at the Exposition, Ubeydullah Efendi depicts the “foreign wonders” (*ecanib-i garâib*) to vicariously indulge the Ottoman readers abroad with this theatre of Progress (1893, 1, 2, col.1).⁵ Like many of his contemporaries, he celebrates both the performative and physical manifestations of the rational mind in this spectacle of Western industrial prowess, advanced technology, and military might.⁶

In collaboration with Frederick Putnam’s Ethnology Department, the business-minded exposition committee aptly translated the main tenets of Progress--scientific advance and civilization--onto a 680-acre urban artifice buzzing with conferences, congresses, performances, and 100,000 ethnological and technological exhibits (“Seeing the Fair,” 7 May 1893, 28, col. 5). Ultimately, the WCE had a hierarchical structure: the incandescent White

Efendi'nin Amerika Hatıraları (A Unique Young Turk: The American Memories of Ubeydullah Efendi), ed. Ahmet Turan Alkan (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997 [1926]), 185]. Under Hamidian autocracy, he claims to have “suffered one and a half years of imprisonment, five and a half years in exile, and ten years of fugitive status” (ibid., 110). He was persecuted and sent to exile because of his involvement in the Young Turk oppositional movement (1893-1899) [Hanioglu 1995, 49-58]. The Ottoman concessionaire İbrahim Hakkı Bey, an old school friend, overlooked Ubeydullah Efendi’s unfavorable political status, knowing that the expected governmental rejection would be too tardy to be effective [1997 (1926), 175]. In this chapter, I refer to the US as America, following the terminology of archival sources.

⁵ Published in Ottoman Turkish, the CFI targeted Ottoman readers.

⁶ As with all world’s fairs, the fetishization of the machine, in particular, and industrial markers, in general, were both scenographically and ideologically central to the 1893 Chicago Exposition [Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 13]. This machine trope helped transform Chicago from a provincial to a cosmopolitan landscape. It also anchored American financial and ambassadorial prospects in the grand stage of post-Industrial Revolution. For a critical analysis of America’s politically and financially distraught landscape in the 1880s and 1890s, see Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 39, 52-54. See also Micaela di Leonardo’s parallel characterization of the American *fin de siècle* in *Exotics at Home*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 4.

City glistened with official “civilized” exhibits *and* the dark Midway Plaisance featured picturesque “barbarians” rendered as evolutionary mishaps.⁷

In this chapter, I chronicle both the causes and consequences of late-19th-century Ottoman reform to analyze the Empire’s subsequent ambivalent participation in the 1893 Chicago WCE. On the one hand, the wide range of manufactured goods, fine arts, and low-scale machinery in the White City concretized Ottoman material progress. On the other hand, women’s intellectual and manual work, across the White City and the Midway, simultaneously bolstered and contradicted imperial moral distinctions. In what follows, I explore the continuities and rifts among competing discourses of Western and Ottoman Orientalisms, Occidentalism, and economic liberalism with a particular focus on the woman-centered domestic reform staged abroad. My goal is to elucidate both the everyday and ideological links between shifting moral economies and free-market priorities against the background of the financially-strapped and ethnically-torn late Ottoman Empire.

An examination of the intertwined economic and cultural motives helps clarify the conflicted Ottoman representation in Chicago. The massive scholarship on the WCE has focused either on its racial and political-economic hierarchies (Rydell 1984 and 1993, Harris 1993, Corbey 1993, Greenhalgh 1998) or on its representational strategies (Mitchell 1989, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Çelik and Kinney 1990). Although most scholars have addressed Orientalism’s role in shaping the Midway’s racial and gendered inequalities, none has

⁷ WCE historian Robert Rydell contends that “the Midway provided visitors with ethnological and scientific sanction for the American view of the nonwhite world as barbaric and childlike and gave a scientific basis to the racial blueprint for building a utopia” [1984, 40]. Legitimized by an evolutionary paradigm, or the unilinear, hierarchical ranking of races, the Fair’s ideological project both cultivated and maintained a symbiosis between the White City and the Midway. On the link between social evolutionism and “the new creed of American progress,” see also Rydell 1984, 41.

adequately explored the uniqueness of the Ottoman participation in it, the dual categorization of the Empire as simultaneously a developed nation (positioned on the White City) and a “semi-barbaric” nation (positioned on the Midway Plaisance). The Ottomans and the Iranians were the only non-colonized Muslims on the Midway.

The term, “Ottoman Orientalism,” coined by Ussama Makdisi, helps us understand the Empire’s self-definition as “at once part of the East but above the rest of the Eastern peoples” vis-à-vis its benevolent, West-facing Muslim imperialism (2002, 787). It is through an understanding of such indigenous imperialism in the context of heightened capitalism and volatile political reform that we can capture why and how Ottoman representation was so fractured.

Turkish research, focusing more extensively--albeit insufficiently--on the Ottomans’ particularity, has reduced this venture either to a remedy for the Empire’s international legitimacy crisis (Deringil 1998) or to a non-commercial cultural intervention (Çelik 1992). Centering on male elite policy-makers (Deringil 1998) or on the Muslim architecture and performances at the world’s fairs (Çelik 1992), these studies overlook how female subjects of all classes simultaneously mobilized and challenged official ideologies. As such, these limited analyses downplay the gendered, ethnic, and economic variability of Ottoman participants and their contested engagement with domestic reform.

Over the last two decades, the vast Middle East gender literature has emphasized the crucial linkage between female-centered domestic imperial reform and Islam (Keddie and Baron 1991, Kandiyoti 1991, Abu-Lughod 1998) and among political-economic shifts, cultural production, and moral prescriptions (Frierson 1995, Ringer 2004, Mahmood 2001, Kandiyoti 2000, Quataert 1997, Şeni 1995). Engaging with this literature, I pursue three analytical tasks.

First, incorporating both official and popular Ottoman voices, I highlight the economic, ethnic, and moral tensions that underwrote the Empire's modernization spectacle. While I combine official state documents with Ottoman and American popular literature, ranging from newspaper stories to fiction, I take a cue from historian Afsaneh Najmabadi in "treating sources about men as sources about women" (2005, 1).

Second, deploying gender as analytical lens (Keddie and Baron 1991, Ahmed 1992, Najmabadi 2005, di Leonardo 1998, Lancaster and di Leonardo 1997), I juxtapose the works of Ottoman Muslim writer Fatma Aliye and Christian activist Hanna Korany with the Muslim Balkan female refugees' craftsmanship at the Woman's Building. These female displays animate Ottoman discourses of domesticity, the changing public sphere, and the increasing feminization of labor. They also constitute cultural authenticity as key to religious and economic rejuvenation.

Third, exposing the ethnic and classed cleavages between reformist women (Aliye and Korany) and female laborers (Balkan refugees and nameless craftswomen), I detail the lived Ottoman heterogeneity on the Exposition grounds and beyond. My gender-sensitive social history, attending to political-economic and ideological shifts, enables a nuanced portrait of the Ottomans' Chicago adventure. Let me turn to the dazzling array of discourses, practices, and actors involved in the generation and implementation of early imperial reform.

Contextualizing Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1861)

Subsequent to centuries of reign over the Balkans, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious 19th-century-Ottoman Empire underwent volatile transformation ensuing in a series of reforms. The goal was to preserve the empire's territorial,

cultural, and moral integrity in the face of escalating political and financial strains. Wars on multiple fronts created a cycle of international debt, while territorial loss exacerbated the revenue deficit. Increasing Western economic penetration, the lack of local capital, and the rise of minority, particularly Balkan, nationalisms put the Empire further at risk. In an effort to circumvent imminent political turmoil, the Sultans thus collaborated with the elite bureaucracy in constructing a series of Westernizing structural and cultural adjustments, the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1861).

The conglomeration of bureaucratic, judicial, administrative reforms, centering on the security of private property and life and opening the Empire to European trade, was indeed an ambitious experiment with economic liberalization and liberal political ideology. First, the wider implementation of free trade with the 1838 Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention (Owen 1981, 91; see also Quataert in İnalcık and Quataert 1994, Vol. 2, 826-27), accompanied by increasing economic concessions to Europe and local non-Muslim investors, helped further previous laissez-faire reforms under Sultan Mahmud II's (1808-1839) reign⁸ Historian Donald Quataert (1997, 419) notes how the Sultan implemented a "uniform, state-centered dress code (the *fez*)" to craft a liberal, secular, and modern state. The *fez* was aimed to override the engrained economic and religious differences most visible in everyday gear. As Quataert notes

⁸ Although the Ottoman Empire was increasingly integrated to the capitalist world economy from the 16th century onwards, this process did not generate whole-scale reform until the 19th century. For a detailed analysis of the 16th- and 17th-century economic history, in general, and the Ottoman capitulation regime vis-à-vis foreign trade, in particular, see Halil İnalcık, ed., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1600*, Vol.1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48-54, 188-91, 192-195, 348, 355, 365-375. Also see Suraiya Faroqhi in Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1914*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 481-82, 522-23, 570. See Huri İslamoğlu-İnan and Çağlar Keyder in Huri İslamoğlu İnan, eds., *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 42-62.

(414), Sultan Mahmud promoted a religiously undifferentiated bureaucracy in loyal service of the monarchic state, while it simultaneously dismantled state protectionism in favor of the free market. The Ottoman workers' resistance to the attempted erosion of religious differences, however, hindered the making of state-centered citizenry. Such ethnic, religious, and economic fractures not only continued into but also intensified in the subsequent Tanzimat period.

The main contradiction of Tanzimat, as identified by Ussama Makdisi, was “between a notion of equality before the law regardless of rank and station that was guaranteed by the state and a rigid adherence to a hierarchical and inviolable social order, without which there could be no state” (2002, 12). Hence the reform work relied on traditional stratification, while it simultaneously challenged the foundational basis of tradition. Constituting a modern state entailed not only shifting, but also disrupting local power hierarchies premised on a Muslim imperial structure.⁹ This risky venture alienated government elites, the *ulema*, and the military corps. For the representative secular state to succeed, however, the Ottoman subjects could be mobilized, paradoxically, with the promise of a consistent, (ideally) mutually-beneficial, and just imperial paternalism, a morally- and socially-sanctioned judicial order. On the other hand, Ottomanism, or the rising secular Ottoman citizenry, accrued legitimacy from the letter of law, not from the Sultan's office or his Muslim persona. Although contradictory in essence, the contentious coexistence of the old and new judicial as well as social forms guaranteed survival in times of tribulation.

⁹ The Sultan's authoritarian paternalism drew on building a just Muslim Empire. In this paradigm, multi-ethnic and multi-religious subjects were expected to reciprocate with undivided loyalty to the Sultan and his court in order to protect their rank or simply to survive. See also Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) for a thorough analysis of these tensions.

Second, the search for a liberal definition of Ottoman sovereignty challenged the “patrimonial household model,” or what Carter Findley describes as “the official view of the state as an enormously extended household” (1980, 20). This model both drew from and bolstered the Sultan’s patriarchal sovereignty. Particularly, the rising elite--civil servants, scribes and bureaucrats with secular Western education--undertook multiple institutional reforms to implement central taxation and administration, while seizing power away from the Sultan to the Sublime Porte or the Ottoman government (1980, 13). These men of Tanzimat, thus, aimed for an efficient modern--read Western--bureaucratic machine, punctuated with differentiation of function and post, advancement through meritocracy, and precise documentation.

Tanzimat reforms, however, intensified generational and class conflicts and heightened the search for cultural authenticity. The Young Ottomans (1860-1870), the second generation of equally well-educated male intellectuals, sought both to institute parliamentary sovereignty and to infuse it with Islamic law. These reformist men in exile sought to indigenize Enlightenment socio-political ideals in their effort to preserve Ottoman distinction in the face of hyper-Westernization.¹⁰ Although the rising bourgeoisie was unified in salvaging the Empire, it was segmented along bureaucratic and commercial lines (Göçek 1996, 3). By accumulating social and cultural capital through transnational networks and newly-available educational venues, the Muslim bureaucratic bourgeoisie--the men of *Tanzimat* and the Young Ottomans--vied for scarce resources with the emergent non-Muslim commercial bourgeoisie,

¹⁰ For a detailed account of the origins, ideological underpinnings, and effects of this movement, see Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Ottoman Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). On the Young Ottomans’ fusion of liberal politics with Islamic jurisprudence, see Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 202-209 and 213.

Greek, Armenian, and Jewish merchants. Imperial decrees--1839 *Gülhane* and 1856 Reform--protected the non-Muslim merchants and their foreign partners.¹¹ As Müge Göçek (1996, 138-141) suggests, such bifurcation not only furthered intra-generational religious and economic conflict, but also compromised the reform's reach and effect.

Accompanying such polarization was a burgeoning civil society, colored by a plurality of Ottoman newspapers, journals, and voluntary organizations (Göçek 1996, 128-9). In this emergent forum, public moralists fervently debated the indicators, deeper causes, and effects of Western ideologies and cultural forms. Like their administrator counterparts, they were preoccupied with maintaining local cultural integrity and material equilibrium against rapid and costly change, urban renewal projects (Istanbul and Beirut), luxurious lifestyles, and glittery tastes.¹² Unlike the bureaucratic and commercial bourgeoisie, these intellectuals engaged with reform through a particularly gendered lens.

From the Tanzimat onwards, male and female protagonists embodied the dangers of excessive Westernization. The "archetypal Westernized fop," selfishly obsessed with his dandy looks, fancy carriages, and flamboyant manners, epitomized a "superficial aping" (Mardin 1974, 408). Numerous similar figures personified reform without substance, providing a caution against cultural anomie. Depicting fatherless households with orphaned and effeminate

¹¹ For the impact of these edicts on the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the global capitalist market, see Rıfat Önsoy, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Katıldığı İlk Uluslararası Sergiler ve Sergi-i Umumi-i Osmanî, 1863 İstanbul Sergisi (The First World's Fairs in Which the Ottoman Empire Participated and the 1863 Istanbul Exposition)," *Belleten* 47, no. 185 (1983), 206-7.

¹² Using a performance lens, I discuss the details of cultural Westernization in the subsequent chapter.

sons, the novelists obliquely criticized the Empire for lacking its proper patriarch (Parla 1990, 185; see also Kandiyoti 2000, 95).¹³

The familiar tropes of lustful female concubine and passive slave indexed, contradictorily, women's untamable sexuality as well as the oppressive traditional institutions, depriving women of their basic educational and public rights. As the over-sexualized slave of Western lifestyle and fashions, the *alafranga* (Westernized) Ottoman Woman signaled the darkest side of moral abyss, loss of virtue (Kandiyoti 2000, 103). Like their male counterpart, this female archetype also exemplified perilous class fragmentation indulging in elite conspicuous consumption and lavish individual gain at the expense of social redistribution. Through such fictive figures, most critics of super-Westernization thus prescribed joint moral and political-economic reform. In other words, material disenfranchisement and sexual excess were unequivocally caused by swift and facile economic liberalization, ossified traditionalism, and ineffective sovereignty at large.

Sultan Abdülhamid's Rule (1876-1909) and the Chicago Fair

Sultan Abdülhamid (1876-1909) inherited an urgent repair project, one that involved patching the social fabric torn between local and international political-economic conflict. In particular, the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78), the Macedonian conflict--the apex of Balkan minority nationalisms--the Greek war (1897), Armenian uprisings (1890-93), and European

¹³ See Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 92 for a parallel discussion of how numerous novelists of the subsequent Hamidian era deployed love as a central theme in their social and political commentary. In particular, the authors (ibid.) argue "In the years of Hamidian censorship it [love] was also a euphemism, perhaps one might say a displacement of liberty."

occupation of a several provinces (1881 and 1882), all led to significant resource depletion.¹⁴

Simultaneously, escalating enmities between non-Muslims and Muslims and persistent Young Turk opposition to his regime undermined socio-political stability.¹⁵

As a result of interminable wars, usurious loans, and poor economic management, the Empire's increasing external indebtedness culminated in the 1875 bankruptcy. The Ottoman government then cooperated with foreign powers to establish the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (1881), an historic model that bears an uncanny resemblance to the contemporary IMF. Besides mobilizing local resources for principal and interest on foreign loans, the PDA paved the way for profitable foreign investments in local industry and public works. In effect, it promoted direct "European economic penetration" as well as indirect exploitation through non-Muslim Ottoman enterprises under European patronage (Owen 1981, 100 and 191-200).¹⁶ While the PDA's restructuring policies focused on aiding and diversifying Ottoman economic liberalization, its emphasis on foreign and private investment further compromised this empire-at-risk.

Throughout this volatile period, Ottoman interest in the 1893 WCE presented numerous problems and possibilities. This project articulated with transnational commercialism, industrialization, and cultural diffusion propelled by the world's fairs. How,

¹⁴ Here I refer to the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. See Chapter Three in Shaw and Shaw *Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 172- 272 for a comprehensive account of the domestic and foreign political-economic pressures during Abdülhamid's reign.

¹⁵ For alternate accounts on the implementation, efficacy, and consequences of the Young Turk movement, see Sükrü Hanioğlu 1995 and 2001 and Aykut Kansu 1997.

¹⁶ Owen [1981, 193] notes that the average net revenue, ceded to the PDA, increased from £1,952,000 in 1882-83 to £2,538,000 in 1912-13.

then, did the Ottoman interest originate? What were the motives behind Ottoman participation, and how did it come into being? In contrast to Selim Deringil's (1998) and Zeynep Çelik's (1992) analyses, I contend that the late-Ottoman Empire's costly Chicago affair served multiple intertwined functions, ambassadorial, geopolitical, commercial, and cultural.¹⁷ Further, these interconnected motives were triply shaped by ongoing state reform, burgeoning private enterprise, and previous Exposition experiences.

Prior to the WCE, temporary exhibits had been a key feature of late-Ottoman life as barometers of industrial and moral progress and as incentives for future market measures. The Ottomans had experimented intermittently, though persistently, with the Exposition format across international and domestic contexts. The participation in the London (1851 and 1862) and Paris Expositions (1853 and 1855), all centered on, first, identifying the range of local manufactures--textiles, carpets, weaponry--and raw material--agricultural and mining goods (Önsoy 1983, 195-206). Second, the government took on immense financial burdens (Önsoy, *ibid.*, 203) with each international display to stimulate domestic production, enhance transnational export, and lure future foreign investment (Önsoy, *ibid.*, 206). Building on these goals, the Sublime Porte cooperated with the elite bureaucrats and diplomats in implementing the 1863 Istanbul Exposition (*Sergi-i Umumî-i Osmanî*).

This domestic Exposition featured thirteen large pavilions replete with the latest European agricultural and industrial machinery (Önsoy 1983, 231-2). It juxtaposed local Ottoman produce from almost every province of the Empire, ranging from rice, tobacco, and cotton to dyed silks and atlas embroideries and from mining riches such as iron, silver, and

¹⁷ Here I follow Paul Greenhalgh's delineation of world's fairs functions, "The imperial, the educational, the commercial, and the ambassadorial" [1988, 82-83].

marble to musical instruments and husbandry products. Impressive in scale and in ambition, the 1863 Istanbul affair thus mobilized the Exposition format as a prominent instrument of domestic economic reform and industrial revitalization. Continuous with Tanzimat, the economic reform demanded both state intervention--tax regulations, imperial monopoly, and educational investment--and intermittent deregulation to advance private entrepreneurship.

Equally salient was the state's pervasive moral authority in proscribing gender-segregated spaces of leisure on the Hippodrome grounds. Listening to the imperial military orchestra (*Asâkir-i Nizammiye-i Şahâne Muzıkası*), Ottoman male and female subjects came together to represent modern public citizenry (Önsoy 1983, 233-234). As with the future Expositions, the 1863 Istanbul Exposition was thus predicated on mutually-constitutive moral and political-economic restructuring.

Over the subsequent decades, a paired emphasis on education and fine arts helped further the world's fairs' commercial focus (Greenhalgh 1988, 13-14, 19-22). From the 1867 Paris Exposition onwards, the Ottomans adapted to this new format with a wider range of displays, architectural projects, photography, oil paintings, and sculpture (Germaner 1991, 292).¹⁸ In addition to modish artistic styles and technological advances, such exhibits also

¹⁸ For a detailed list of the Ottoman exhibits at the 1867 Paris Exposition, see Semra Germaner, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Uluslararası Sergilere Katılımı ve Kültürel Sonuçları* (The Ottoman Empire's Participation in the International Expositions and Its Cultural Consequences), *Tarih ve Toplum*, 16:95 (1991), 292-293.. They displayed paintings by famous local artists such as Hamdi Bey and Ahmed Ali Efendi and by foreign artists such as M. Labbe and Pierre Montani. Germaner mentions Istanbul residing, French painter Montani's contemporary album in which he used latest wavelength-technologies to translate color variations in Delacroix and Veronese paintings to sound bites (ibid., 293).

accommodated women's art work. The Ottomans crafted an artistically-competent, gender-progressive image to demonstrate cultural compatibility with the West.¹⁹

Like most other Ottoman participation in the World's expositions, the WCE affair in 1893 reflected interdependent political-economic and cultural ambitions. But in an era of heightened political-economic turmoil, the stakes were significantly higher and so were the efforts. An editorial at *Chicago Fair Illustrated*, the official Ottoman newspaper at the WCE, viewed the world's fairs as invaluable lessons (*ibret*) in cultural and economic liberalism (1893, 2, 18). Also noted was the competitive opportunity for Ottoman self-diagnosis and socio-economic improvement (1893, 2, 18). The variety and quality of imperial produce on display revealed the Empire's worth and credibility. Competing as a world power, the Ottoman Empire could simultaneously enhance civilizational and material progress.

Prior to the WCE, the Hamidian government's meticulous two-year planning underwrote distinct practical and representational priorities. A detailed imperial decree instructed participating Ottoman merchants and craftsmen on the desired sizes, packaging, and labeling of goods and customs duties (BBA Y.A. Res 58/33, 11 ZA 1309, lef 6-7).²⁰ Meanwhile, most Ottoman presses published exaggerated and favorable accounts of the Fair (mostly translations from French newspapers) to entice Muslim and non-Muslim merchants and to enhance the Sultan's imperial legitimacy at home and abroad, Abdülhamid's far-seeing

¹⁹ For a historical analysis of the changing motives behind female displays at world's fairs, see Greenhalgh 1988, Chapter Seven, entitled "Women, Exhibiting and Exhibited."

²⁰ BBA is an abbreviation for the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* (Prime Ministry Archives) in Istanbul. Y.A. refers to the *Yıldız Collection* that houses official documents, newspaper clips, and correspondence from the Hamidian period.

investment in the worldly Chicago Fair justified his rule (*Chicago Fair Illustrated*, 1, 2, col.3).²¹ Such investments of prestige proved worthwhile.

At the WCE, the twelve sections of the chocolate-colored Moresque style Ottoman Pavilion overflowed with “nearly every industry of the country” (Truman 1893, 537). Situated between the Fine Arts and Fisheries Buildings in the White City, this official monument housed “textile fabrics, gold, silver, and other minerals, munitions of war, electrical appliances, antiquities, all natural agricultural products, silks, and dye-stuffs” (Truman 1893, 537). Other official exhibits across the Department of Manufactures, Transportation Building, and Women’s Building animated similarly marketable and prestigious goods.²² While Ottoman items in the White City were simply on display, detailing the Ottomans’ industrial progress,

²¹ The weekly Westernist Ottoman newspaper *Servet-i Funûn* (Wealth of Knowledge) began featuring stories on the commercial and cultural aspects of the Exposition and of Chicago and America as early as 1308/1892. These publications include, “Kristof Kolomb’tan Evvel Amerika” (America Prior to Khristof Colomb), 10 September 1308, 30; “Şikago Sergisi’nin Haritasi” (Map of the Chicago Exposition), 8 Teşrin-i Evvel 1308, 88-89; “Amerika’da Medeniyet” (Civilization in America), 3 Kanun-i Evvel 1308, 215-18; “Şikago Mesher-i Umumisi” (Chicago World’s Exposition), 22 April 1309, 110-18. Further, in almost each issue there was a section entitled “Conferences and Exhibits” that informed the readers about the latest and /or upcoming industrial and cultural expositions worldwide, from 1900 Paris Exposition (19 Teşrin-i Sani 1308, 190) to a US convention on bees (21 February 1308, 409). Over the course of the Exposition, the newspaper published, translated, and illustrated letters from Chicago, detailing transportation routes to the Exposition and the content of each display (“Amerika İhtisasatı,” 29 April 1309, 130-131; “Amerika İhtisasatı,” 27 May 1309, 194-95; “Amerika İhtisasatı,” 3 June 1309, 210-13; “Amerika İhtisasatı,” 8 July 1309, 290-92. Other stories included general information about the Exposition (“Şikago,” 16 September 1309, 44) and illustrated biographies of Imperial Commissioners (“İbrahim Hakkı Bey ve Fahri Bey” (İbrahim Hakkı Bey and Fahri Bey), 2 September 1309, 1, 9-10) as well as pieces from the *Chicago Fair Illustrated* (“Yangın” (Fire), 9 September 1309, 26-27). Although there was a photograph of the Turkish Corner was on one cover, the following brief article discussed only the commercial goods with no mention of the dance and theater performances (“Türk Pazarı” [Turkish Bazaar], 7 Teşrin-i Evvel 1309, 91).

²² Historian of the Fair, Ben Truman [1893, 537], writes favorably of these Ottoman exhibits, “Exhibits are also made in the department of manufactures, consisting principally of Oriental rugs and filigree jewelry; in the department of transportation exhibits, in which caiques [sic], sedan chairs, bullock carts, etc. are shown, and in the Woman’s department, where embroideries made by the women of Turkey are an interesting feature.”

similar “priceless” products--rich Oriental silks, quaint embroideries and carpets, coffee urns--were on sale in the Turkish bazaar at the Midway (Truman 1893, 558).²³ At the end of the Fair, the imperial commissioner Ahmed Fahri Bey was satisfied with the wide foreign interest and the awards that the Ottoman manufacture exhibits had garnered (“Made Friends Everywhere,” 1 November 1893, 27, col. 6). He predicted proudly that “there will be an increased demand from America for our rugs and inlaid work” (ibid, “Made Friends Everywhere,” 27, col. 6). While this statement underlined the state’s ardent interest in foreign trade, the list of textile and manufactures companies receiving awards illustrated the growing Western and non-Muslim investment in post-Tanzimat Ottoman industries.

Commercial motives alone do not adequately explain, however, why the Ottoman government allocated its scanty resources and devoted extraordinary time and energy to such a distant exposition across the Atlantic. The escalating European and Russian encroachment in Ottoman lands had rendered Britain, France, and Russia as necessary yet unreliable political and commercial partners. Over the course of the Tanzimat, the Ottoman Empire and America had sustained a mutually-beneficial relationship. The Ottomans received considerable technical, military (war ship and navy construction), and industrial (building of cotton plants) advice and assistance (Kurat 1959, 25-6). In return, barely-industrializing America profited from very favorable terms of the trade and judicial procedures secured by the 1830 Treaty of Commerce and Friendship (*Ticaret ve Dostluk Antlaşması*, 1830) (Kurat 16).

²³ For a detailed description, see also “Turkey at the Exposition” in *Campbell’s Illustrated History of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, James B. Campbell, ed., Vol.2 (Chicago: J.B. Campbell, 1894), 417.

Subsequently, although American missionary activities, particularly their educational ventures, threatened the nationalist and pan-Islamist Hamidian regime, cultural exchange with America in the form of gifts, photograph albums, books, and statistics fuelled new Ottoman projects. The first modern census (1885), for instance, was based on the American model (Behar 2003, 22). Sultan Abdülhamid also sent 375 printed books to the American National Library in 1884 in order to rectify the Ottomans' unfavorable international image. This image was central to his candid conversations with the fearlessly critical New York Congressman Abram S. Hewitt a year earlier (Gavin 1988, 6).²⁴ In sum, engagement with America, or Europe-writ-large, in Ubeydullah Efendi's words, promised Western civilization without the usual threats, America had no immediate territorial aspirations over Ottoman lands. The New World thus counterbalanced the existing European balance of power. Far away yet so close, America was the new frontier of modernity, as well as a favorable ally whose cultural imperialism (i.e., missionary schools) could be kept in check.

The official Ottoman exhibits animated not only geopolitical perspicacity, but also a pragmatic partnership between Ottoman bureaucrats and merchants. In other words, the

²⁴ See Cemal Kutay, ed., *Avrupa'da Sultan Aziz (Sultan Aziz in Europe)*, Istanbul: Şile Matbaası 1970 [1867]. Sultan Abdülhamid's direct experience of the 1867 Paris exposition also largely influenced his ambitious plans for the 1893 world's fair. As a member of his uncle Sultan Abdülaziz's entourage, young Abdülhamid surveyed the latest advances in science (hospitals, laboratories, glass-blowing stands), industry (steamships, trains, gas lighting and heating), and urban planning (Hausmann's well-lit and clean Paris). Along with others, he enthusiastically participated in all the balls and lavish banquets to meet and greet the French notables and attended high-art occasions such as operas, displays of Greek antiquities, and fashion shows. There, watching mixed-gender crowds flood the Indian, Persian, and Turkish pavilions, he saw the dangerous currency of Orientalism, marketing/reifying harems as authentic exotica was pivotal to luring visitors (Kutay, *ibid.* 65-6). In addition, Prince Abdülhamid shared his uncle's annoyance not only with the "dismal" condition of European colonies (particularly, the former Ottoman province of Algeria), but also with the scarcity of Ottoman products--coffee and tobacco--at the Beaux-Art style Ottoman Pavilion. The prince then disappointedly and naively inquired, "Is this all of our nation's produce? Is there no more?" [Kutay, *ibid.*, 154-55].

decades-long rivalry between the two bourgeoisie classes (Göçek 1996, 138-141) was temporarily resolved in favor of an urgent common goal, minimizing financial loss and maximizing Ottoman popularity at the 1893 Fair. Thus as members of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, imperial commissioners İbrahim Hakkı Bey and Fahri Bey forged an alliance with the commercial bourgeoisie, Turkish village concessionaire Roberto Levy and Armenian merchant H.H. Topakyan. In preparation for the fair, merchant Roberto Levy, the Sadullah Suhami company representative, accompanied İbrahim Hakkı Bey on a business trip to the textile factories in Hereke (BBA, Y. PRK. 27/43).²⁵ Surveying fabric samples, they consulted one another and the factory manager Akif Bey to select the “most appealing products for the American market” (*Amerika’da revac bulacak surette kumaşlar*) (BBA, Y. PRK. 27/43).

Similarly, H.H. Topakyan, a Constantinople native living in New York, came to the Exposition with business and trade acumen based on years of marketing Turkish and Persian treasures. Besides providing rare handmade silk rugs (one of them with a value of \$15,000) for the Persian Village, Topakyan also supplied goods for the Persian exhibit at the Turkish Village, the Shah’s 160 year-old, richly-embroidered war tent that received very high bids from England and France (“Persia’s Exhibit,” 27 August 1893, 24, col. 2). In a propaganda-ridden newspaper article, Topakyan characterized his entrepreneurship as loyal service to the “wise, enlightened, and far-seeing” Hamidian regime and praised the imperial commissioners’ urban cosmopolitanism (“A Great Oriental Power,” 7 September 1893, 3, col. 6).

Despite united efforts and the self-ascription of businessmen as reliable citizens, class-bound moral tensions continued to surface in official counter-narratives. For instance, although

²⁵ Mr. Levy was referred to as both Robert and Roberto in the documents I perused.

the Ottoman newspaper at WCE was empathetic to Ottoman merchants' plight, it nevertheless portrayed them as greedy creatures, these men sacrificed progress, civilization, and humanity for profitable business, excessive spending (*israf*), and debauchery (*kurre-i sefâhat*) (*Sergi Nasıl Gidiyor?* [How is the Fair Going?], 1 July 1893, 2, 18).²⁶ Like critics of super-Westernization at home, the commentator underscored the limits of capitalist transformation by questioning the emergent bourgeoisie's moral standing and motives.

This article evoked the conundrum of the Tanzimat's free-market reforms continuing into the Hamidian era: necessary material benefits such as investment and profit were weighed against hyper-individualism. Self-interest, once unbridled, was seen as causing moral laxity. The new entrepreneurs, though vital to economic growth, were publicly shameless spendthrifts (*Sergi Nasıl Gidiyor?* *ibid.*). Continuous with domestic Ottoman debates, the commentary abroad inextricably linked profit and propriety to formulate capitalist transformation as an ethical socio-cultural problem. In contrast to Tanzimat-era representations, Abdülhamid II and his government configured Islam as a cure for not only excessive self-interest, but also against heightened foreign intrusion.

Performing Imperial Pride: Ottoman Commissioners in Public

The imperial commissioners, İbrahim Hakkı Bey and Ahmed Fahri Bey, promoted a modern Ottoman image to fuse profit and propriety seamlessly with cultural and ambassadorial credibility. Embodying post-Tanzimat meritocracy, both men were seasoned and skillful

²⁶ In an article, entitled "*Serginin Kusurları*" [The Fair's Flaws], Ubeydullah Efendi blames inefficient administration and costly customs tariffs for the Ottoman merchants' predicament (*CFI*, 1 August 1893, 3, 26).

diplomats with considerable cultural capital: multilingual university educations and distinguished domestic and foreign government service (*Campbell's Illustrated History of the WCE*, 1894, 2, 416).²⁷ Their WCE duties included not only supervision of exhibits, but also hosting sumptuous receptions in addition to wining and dining eminent foreign bureaucrats and powerful Exposition officials.²⁸

Their European clothing--“Prince Albert coats, black trousers, and neat fitting terra-cotta gloves”--helped craft a fashionable Western image accented with a safe Oriental flavor, “a red, black-tasseled fez” (“Turkish Pavilion Dedicated,” 27 June 1893, 7, col.2). Such an image was corroborated, on various other occasions, by delicately choreographed acts of decorum, linguistic competence, and cultural adaptability (“Ibrahim Hakki [sic] Bey’s Dinner,” 18 July 1893, 1, col. 2).²⁹ In a sumptuous Turkish feast at Kinsley’s, for instance, both imperial commissioners graciously entertained 150 distinguished guests with “strange music of the Orient” in a lavish authentic setting-- “table arrangement in the form of a star and crescent”--

²⁷ The biographies in the *Campbell's Illustrated History*, detail the accomplishments of both men (Campbell 1894, *ibid.*, 416). Particular emphasis is placed on İbrahim Hakkı Bey’s diplomatic school education in Constantinople; fluency in English, French, and German; frequent and successful European missions; and, last, his titles and decorations, ranging from Grand Insignia of Armenia, Mejidie, and İmtiyazi gold and silver medals (*ibid.*, 416). Ahmed Fahri Bey’s biography mentions his Dar-ul-Shafaka--government school--education and electrical engineering training in Paris; his high position in Istanbul telegraphic service; delegation at the Universal Postal Congress (1891), and multiple titles and awards (416). See also the “İbrahim Hakkı Bey” entry in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1999.

²⁸ Here is an abridged list of numerous lavish receptions attended by the imperial commissioners, Reception for Spanish Princess Eulalia at the Palmer House (“Eulalia in Society, Reception by Potter Palmer,” *The Chicago Herald*, 10 June 1893, 3, cols. 1-4); Banquet in Honor of the Russian Czar (“In Honor of the Czar,” *The Chicago Sunday Post*, 28 May 1893, 3, col. 2); Chicago Woman’s Club Reception (“Affairs in the Polite World,” *The Chicago Evening Post*, 31 May 1893, 4, col.4); and Russian Visit to the Ottoman Pavilion in Honor of the Ottoman Empire Day (“Vive Abdul Hamid, Russia Gives Friendly Greeting,” *The Chicago Herald*, 1 September 1893, 5, col. 7).

²⁹ See also “Star and Crescent,” *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, 18 July 1893, 1, col. 3.

punctuated with Eastern tapestries, rugs, and crystal lanterns (“Star and Crescent,” 18 July 1893, 1, col. 3).³⁰ Coloring true Ottoman hospitality with Western business zeal, İbrahim Hakkı Bey spoke, “in very English,” [their own phrasing] about the mutually-beneficial--“profitable”-partnership between the Americans and Ottomans (“Star and Crescent,” *ibid.*).³¹

Propelled equally by economic needs and cultural motives, the imperial commissioners, and the Ottoman Empire by extension, drew prestige as much from elite markers of cosmopolitanism as from extravagant Islamic performances.³² For the opening of the Ottoman Pavilion, for instance, they sacrificed 5000 lambs to assert the Ottomans’ Islamic prowess. As noted by the *New York Times*, “Abdülhamid II formally announced himself a patron of the World’s Fair” through this first-time “Mussulman [*sic*] sacrifice in Western lands and under Christian skies” (“Turkish Pavilion Dedicated,” 24 November 1892, 3). This lavish Muslim performance abroad was intended not only to impress foreign powers with the Ottomans’ civilized religio-political might, but to evoke the increasing Islamicization of public ceremonies back at home (Deringil 1998, 16-43).

³⁰ For a brief list of guests, also see “İbrahim Hakkı Bey’s Banquet,” *The Chicago Times*, 18 July 1893, 2, col. 6.

³¹ On other diplomatic occasions, the Turkish Village concessionaire shared promotional duties with the imperial commissioners. For instance, Robert Levy accompanied Charles Henrotin (consul general of Turkey), İbrahim Hakkı Bey, Ahmed Fahri Bey, Sursock Efendi (Turkish council), and Tevfik Bey to commemorate Sultan Abdülhamid’s ascension to the throne on the Ottoman Day at the WCE (“Turks’ Day at the Fair,” *The Chicago Times*, September 1893, 5, col. 3). The article also mentions Levy “closing the banquet with a happy speech” cheering “the Sultan of Turkey, the president of United States, royal commissioners and Consul Henrotin” (*ibid.*).

³² İbrahim Hakkı Bey also used the media as a public forum to mobilize these motives. He penned a letter, on behalf of Sultan Abdülhamid, to *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, where he lauded “the preeminence of Chicago over all other cities in the world, the greatness of the Fair, and the undisputed leadership of the Tribune in the work of recording the history of the Exposition” (“From the Sultan of Turkey’s Commissioner,” 26 June 1893, 1, cols. 5-6).

Inside the Pavilion, the janissary display, animating twelve traditionally-dressed soldier mannequins, symbolized Ottoman military might in particular, and the Empire's historic rule over Muslim lands in general. The now-abolished janissary institution, a constant reminder of the Ottomans' past Muslim sovereignty, also celebrated the modern Tanzimat state with its reformed army.³³ As art historian Wendy Shaw argues, the museum format, a post-Tanzimat Western institution, was adopted domestically to promote Ottomanism, or modern state apparatus and citizenry (2003, 19). This format helped selectively adapt Western Enlightenment ideals--classification, visual order, and progress--to Ottoman imperial nationalism and Islamism.³⁴ As such, the janissary mannequins in Chicago acted, in both form and content, as "bifurcated signs for a glorious past as well as a modernizing present" (Shaw, *ibid.*, 58). While the public Islamic performance at the Ottoman Pavilion gates promoted Hamidian Pan-Islamism, the exhibit inside propagated "a controlled narrative of Ottoman legacy" (Shaw 2003, 53). It endorsed Ottoman military power, both historic and reformed, without which neither Pan-Islamism nor Ottomanism could be sustained. Linking past glory to present transformation, these displays also indexed future invincibility enabled by ideological and military reforms.

³³ There were heated debates among the Ottoman government officials on whether or not to display the janissary models in the 1893 Chicago Exposition (BBA Y. MTV 76/36, 7 N 1310). As Shaw notes, the officials were concerned about "reminding the Christians of earlier conflicts between East and West" and about the image of a traditionally dressed army--abolished in 1826--that could wreck the Ottomans' civilized, European equivalent image (Shaw 2003, 57-8). For the intricacies of this image, see also Deringil 1998, 154-164.

³⁴ In *Possessors and Possessed*, a historical study of the Ottoman museums in the second half of the 19th century, Wendy M. K. Shaw emphasizes the nationalist aspirations behind the Ottoman juxtaposition of "a European framework (museum model) with Ottoman/Islamic content" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 24, 224. She contends that the Ottomans invested in museums, because they envisioned them as modern institutions.

These deliberate displays of imperial pride reveal, first, the imbrication of Ottoman legitimacy with worldly commercialism. Claiming equal footing with the Great Powers of the world as the only modern--meaning reformed--Muslim power (Deringil 1998, 154), the Ottoman state reinstated itself as a reliable trade and commercial partner for America and others.³⁵ Second, the commissioners, as authoritarian spokespeople of the Hamidian regime, did not solely deliver their messages, but constantly *performed* Muslim Oriental authenticity, West-facing cultural respectability, and business zeal. To do so, they cued their appearance, decorum, and actions in carefully crafted settings. These everyday diplomatic performances infused Tanzimat reforms with Hamidian Pan-Islamist rhetoric as they combined profit-seeking business with claims to global Ottoman superiority. Claiming supremacy with geopolitical acumen, military might, and cultural progress, the Ottoman performances abroad deployed Abdülhamid's modern Islamism for material and cultural gain.

Enacting Ottoman difference, however, also relied heavily on female intellectual and physical labor. In particular, women's works were to profess Ottoman Muslim morality against taxing international demands. In reality, ethnically-, religiously- and economically-diverse Ottoman women in Chicago simultaneously bolstered and challenged the Empire's modern Islamic profile with conflicting narratives of Occidentalism, Orientalism, and philanthropy.

Fatma Aliye on Display: Making Muslim Ottoman Women Proud

The "woman question" was a site of heated debate and intense, religiously-charged controversy. It was impossible to reconsider gender, cultural authenticity, or religious traditions separately; the "woman question,"

³⁵ Although Deringil details the Ottoman state's image management abroad, he downplays the commercial and economic motives behind Ottoman participation in the world's fairs.

authenticity question, and “Islamic tradition” question were indissolubly connected.

Monica M. Ringer, “Rethinking Religion,” 2004, 48³⁶

Following the invitation from the Woman’s Building committee, Muslim Ottoman writer Fatma Aliye’s three books were dispatched to the Chicago Fair.³⁷ This Aliye display sparks several lines of inquiry that link gender identity and religious modernism with late Ottoman reform. First, how did Aliye’s public intellectual persona--an educated Muslim woman--align with contemporaneous Ottoman imperatives and policies? This quest helps elucidate the political and cultural stakes involved in the Ottoman representation at the Exposition. Second, what did her works reveal about the moral underpinnings of the Hamidian reform as well as the vibrant public forum forged around Ottoman women’s shifting domestic roles, education, and mobility? In other words, Aliye’s writing, in particular, and the broader controversy about “the woman question,” in general, treated female bodies as public stages for dramatizing the conflict between the indigenous and the foreign, and between economic liberalism and Muslim authenticity.

The secondary literature on Aliye has, however, focused exclusively on the moral and political (Kızıltan 1990, Galin 1998, Kurnaz 1997, Findley 1995) or the literary (Esen 1990) dimension at the expense of the economic and, thus, has underestimated their complex

³⁶ Although historian Ringer addresses the “woman question” in the early-20th-century Iran, her analytical categories are applicable to the late Ottoman conjecture.

³⁷ See Fatma Aliye File, Atatürk Library, 18/1 for a letter (10 August 1893) from the Women’s Library cataloguer Edith E. Clark, requesting Aliye’s works and a detailed biography. In a subsequent letter (28 August 1893), secretary Suzan Yale Cook celebrates the attention for Aliye’s books and embraces this event, a Turkish woman’s works on display, as “a rarity” (Fatma Aliye File, Atatürk Library, 18/2). See also Edith E. Clark, ed. *List of Books Sent by Home and Foreign Committees to the Library of the Woman’s Building*, (Chicago, IL: World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893), 92. This record indicates that there were three books by Fathma Alie [sic] on display and that all were in Turkish (Clark, *ibid.*, 92).

interplay. In contrast, by revisiting Aliye's displayed books in detail, I highlight how her indigenous model of Muslim modernity creatively articulated with contemporaneous political-economic pressures, such as market transformation and foreign cultural contagion. Particularly intriguing is how Aliye deployed Occidentalism as both a critique of Western morality and an affirmation of local Islamic values in order to advocate bourgeois family formation and, particularly, companionate marriage.

The Ottoman government's tacit support of the Aliye exhibit was no coincidence as she (1862-1936) was always on favorable terms with the imperial power. Her father Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, an erudite conservative governor, lawyer, and historian, as well as her husband Mehmet Faik Bey (first aide-de-camp) were both loyal servants of the Hamidian regime.³⁸ As exemplary and dutiful wife and daughter with considerable literary achievements across fiction and non-fiction genres, Aliye bore the print of progressive education without sacrificing her Islamic roots.³⁹ Her home education centered on Ottoman Muslim values, Quranic interpretation, and Persian and Arabic classics along with the Western European literary canon in the original

³⁸ For details on Ahmed Cevdet's religious upbringing and education, his pivotal role in the Tanzimat reforms, as well as his prolific public persona as a bureaucrat, educator, jurist, and administrator, see his biography (1995 [1913-1914]) entitled *Ahmed Cevdet Paşa ve Zamanı* (Ahmed Cevdet Pasha and His Time), written by his own daughter Fatma Aliye, (Istanbul: Bedir Yayinevi). Also see Richard L. Chambers, "The Education of a Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Alim, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4:4 (1973), 440-464) for a comprehensive account of Ahmed Cevdet's traditional Muslim background and the extent of his influence "first in language and educational reform, then in historiography, and eventually in the codification of law" (464).

³⁹ For an in-depth account on Aliye's early (*tufuliyet*) home education, marriage, relations with her father and husband, see her mentor Ahmet Midhat's biography (, 1998 [1893-94]), *Fatma Aliye Hanım yahut Bir Muharrir-i Osmanîyenin Neşet-i* (Fatma Aliye Hanım or the Birth of an Ottoman Female Writer). Secondary sources on Fatma Aliye include, Kızıltan (1990), Findley (1995), Tülay Gençtürk Demircioğlu's introduction in her translation of Aliye's *Levayih-i Hayat* (Scenes from Life) (2002, xi-xv).

languages (Ahmet Midhat 1998 [1893-94]), 39-60).⁴⁰ Her versatile home-schooling thus mimicked the hybridity of Hamidian formal education, which historian Benjamin Fortna describes as “an overtly Western system to impart a message that included both the Western and the ‘Islamic’” (Fortna 2000, 388).⁴¹ Aliye’s background epitomized the state’s overt religious rhetoric with its exclusive focus on Islam’s individually and socially transformative elements.

Despite her elite home-schooling, Aliye and her accomplishments as a learned Muslim woman verified the effectiveness of Hamidian public educational reform for all classes. Building secondary-level schools (*rüşdiye*) across the empire, the Hamidian government, to repeat Selçuk Somel’s argument (2001), had aimed first to undermine Christian missionary schools and their cultural imperialism. In addition to taking aim at foreign proselytizers, Benjamin Fortna has also illustrated other targets of Hamidian education reforms, “the highly motivated nationalist educators of neighboring states and the schools of indigenous minorities” (2002, 8-9).

Second, the education reform, as Fortna suggests (2000, 369, 376-78), sought to inculcate modern Muslim citizenship through new-style schools. These schools exclusively

⁴⁰ Müge Galin, editor of *Fatma Aliye yahut Bir Muharrir-i Osmanîyenin Neşeti* (1998, 14), mentions Aliye’s interest in French literature and her particular fascination with Victor Hugo, George Ohnet, Eugene Sue, Emile Zola, Francois Mauriac, and Andre Maurois.

⁴¹ In *Imperial Classroom, Islam, the State, and Education in the late Ottoman Empire*, Benjamin Fortna broadens this argument, underscoring how the Hamidian modern education “was informed by a very enlightenment notion of progress that relied heavily on Western European models but cut them short with a strong dose of Ottoman and Islamic elements that were deemed capable of meliorating [*sic*] the deleterious sideeffects of Western influence” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

focused on discipline and uniformity across curricula, architecture, and school gear.⁴²

Seemingly secular, they relied heavily on an “indigenous religio-cultural spirit” that shaped “the schools’ course content, calendar, and social intercourse” (2002, 5, 13; 2000, 370).⁴³ The persistent Islamicization and Ottomanization of education, centering on moral instruction, not only animated a self-strengthening effort against foreign and internal intruders, but also diverged from the Tanzimat’s ready adoption of Western institutions (Fortna 2002, 9). In contrast to the Tanzimat, the Hamidian period’s overt Islamism demanded Ottoman agency or the selective adaptation of foreign institutions (2002, 9). This adaptive agency also saturated Fatma Aliye’s moral argument for bettering Muslim women’s domestic and public rights.

This educational program was highly gendered as it sought, first, to raise devout yet liberal-minded Muslim mothers, and, second, to aid massive recruitment of working women from the growing number of girl’s arts and crafts schools.⁴⁴ A contiguous gender agenda,

⁴² See Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonising [sic] Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 63-79, and 101-102 for a parallel history in 19th-century Egypt and, particularly, for the centrality of order and discipline in building and maintaining modern institutions, such as schools and museums. Although Fortna’s account of Ottoman educational project underscores a similar modernizing imperative, it emphasizes equally the moral component. Moreover, Fortna (2002, 22) challenges Mitchell’s application of Foucauldian omnipotent state model by highlighting how individual students subverted daily the authority of state schools.

⁴³ Fortna pursues this line of argument to challenge the modernizing historiographic dichotomization of the secular and the religious. To refute such binarisms, he contends, “the religious/secular divide is particularly unsuited to the Ottoman educational system, with its string doses of Islamic content, its mix of religious and civil employees, the Islamic dimension to its yearly calendar and daily routine, and perhaps most important of all, . . . the religio-cultural justification for its construction in the first place” [2002, 17].

⁴⁴ Donald Quataert (1991, 162) argues that after the 1880s, there was growing employment of women in manufacturing, in general, and in home or factory-based textile industry, in particular. To explain the significance of informal female labor, he writes, “they made yarn and cloth at home for immediate use by household members, they produced at home for the market, and they labored in workshops, away from the home setting” (ibid., 165). The first girl’s arts and crafts school had opened in 1877, and by 1901 there were 11 girls’ middle schools (*kız rüşdiye*) with 1640 students and 40 teachers (Davis 1986, 50-51). For detailed education statistics of the Hamidian era, covering the

premised on regulating women's upbringing and productivity, also informed the first precise empire-wide census (Behar 2003, 20-21; see also Duben and Behar 1991). The 1885 census aimed to extend and fortify Abdülhamid's centralized power into the domestic circle. Providing extensive demographic and social details on women for the first time, this new census thus regulated not only the moral standing, but also the pocketbooks of women.

Beyond official circles, the popular debates in print sought to reconstruct discourses on domesticity. Deniz Kandiyoti has identified fractures and continuities among various interest groups:

Throughout the reform period, debates on women and the family became self-consciously integrated into different ideological recipes for salvaging the threatened empire. For Islamists who advocated a return to the unadulterated application of the Shari'a to Westernists who favored a radical break with Islam, all used the condition of women as an indicator of the moral health of society (1997, 124).

As with the census, the moral and economic dimensions of this public forum, though contested, were nevertheless inextricably bound. During the Hamidian period, cultivating and guarding female morality, according to indigenous values, provided a way to protect cultural (read, Muslim Ottoman) authenticity. Further, defining moral Ottoman womanhood involved accommodating or resisting broader market transformation. All these quests found ample expression in the public forum on reform, in general, and the burgeoning women's movement, particularly.

Advocating betterment of female rights, public education, and equal mobility, the rising Ottoman women's movement, as elsewhere, was largely predicated on consolidating bourgeois

remarkable increase in women's enrollment across *rüşdiye* (middle school), *idadî* (high school), and *kız sanayi mektepleri* (arts and crafts schools), see also Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını, 1839-1923* (The Turkish Woman Before the Republic, 1839-1923) (1997, 27-50).

domesticity.⁴⁵ Household rationalization via scientific child rearing and companionate marriages helped cultivate bourgeois ideals (Kandiyoti 1997, 115).⁴⁶ Proliferating newspapers and periodicals by and for women all prescribed efficient, frugal, and moral household management. They provided tips on childcare, hygiene, fashion, marriage etiquette, polygamy, family entertainment, and *tesettür* (Islamic covering).⁴⁷ Running biographies of accomplished Western and Muslim women and their literary works aimed to inspire elite readers towards participation in public and political life. Despite ideological variations, most periodicals causally linked public conduct and citizen rights to the domestic sphere, burdening women not

⁴⁵ The recent literature on this movement is steadily expanding, Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Ottoman Women's Movement) (1994); Aynur Demirdirek, *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayatı Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi* (The Story of Ottoman Women's Search for the Right to Live) (1993); Ayşe Durakbaşı, *Halide Edib, Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm* (Halide Edib, Turkish Modernization and Feminism, 2000, 102-108); Özen, Hatice, *Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türk Kadın Gazete ve Dergileri, 1869-1900*, (Turkish Woman's Newspapers and Journals in Historical Process, 1869-1900 (1990); Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını* (The Turkish Women Before the Republic) (1997).

⁴⁶ See Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households, Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940* (1991) for the reformist writers' distortion of demographic facts, conjuring up extended households, prearranged marriage, and enslaved concubines, in order to idealize bourgeois norms such as conjugal love or companionate arrangements in nuclear Ottoman families. For parallel histories of bourgeois domestic ideals in Egypt and elsewhere, see Juan Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in the Turn-of-the-Century-Egypt" (1981, 387-407); Beth Baron, *Women's Awakening in Egypt, Culture, Society, and the Press* (1994); Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905* (1984).

⁴⁷ Prominent weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly women's periodicals and newspapers and others with exclusive coverage of women's topics include, *Ayine* (Mirror) 1874-76; *Vakit* (Time) 1875; *Aile* (Family) 1880; *İnsaniyet* (Humanity) 1882; *Hanımlar* (Ladies) 1882-1883; *Mürüvvet* (Humaneness) 1885-86; *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (Ladies' Own Gazette) 1895-1907; *Hanımlara Mahsus Malumat* (Information Exclusively for Women) 1894-96-; *Takvim-i Nisa* (Women's Calendar) 1899-1900. See also Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesi Türk Kadını* (1997, 65-71). In terms of prevalent topics, early issues of weekly *Aile* provide a good example. "*Ev İdaresi* (Home Management)" (1:17 [1880], 7), compares household management to state governance only to conclude that the former is more difficult. Other topics include bedtime stories for kids and health tips. In the second issue, articles on wives' duties and house cleanliness and order appear. In "*Kadının Vezâifi* (Women's Obligations)," women are identified as "the manager, owner, representative, protector, and regulator of the family" (*Aile*, 1:2 [1880], 19).

only with their immediate families, but also with the Empire's future moral and material welfare.

Fatma Aliye wrote extensively on similar topics for influential newspapers and journals and, thus, became one of the prominent shapers of the indigenous women's movement.⁴⁸ Penning accessible didactic works in history, philosophy, and literature, she formulated effectively the terms of women's duty in relation to both the "true" transcendental and the "corruptible" lived Islam.⁴⁹ As a reformist writer, Aliye's overarching goal was to impart a correct model of piety for both elite and ordinary Muslim women. She often detailed the lives of educated, pious Muslim women in order to justify her prescriptive writing morally and historically.⁵⁰

Chronicling Muslim women's past socio-political accomplishments, Aliye thus sought to motivate her Muslim sisters for conjugal equality and education rights. She also aimed to rectify foreign Orientalist myths animating Eastern gender oppression. Neither Aliye's prolific

⁴⁸ Aliye was one of the chief writers for the longest running woman's magazine, *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (Ladies' Own Gazette) (1895-1907), which I will refer to as *HMG* hereafter. To name a few of her running series on Islam and women within an East-West comparative framework, "Bablulardan İbret Alalım" (Let us learn from the Bablus), *HMG* 15 September August 1895, 2-3; "Madam Montagu" (Lady Montagu), *HMG* 20 September 1895, 2-4.

⁴⁹ Aliye's works on history and philosophy include *Nisvan-ı İslam* (Muslim Women) 1892; *Levayih-i Hayat* (Postmarks of Life) 1897-98; *Taaddud-ı Zevcat* (Polygamy) 1898-99; *Teracim-i Ahval-ı Felasife* (Philosopher Biographies) 1899-1900; *İstila-ı İslam* (The Islamic Conquest) 1900-1901; *Ahmed Cevdet Paşa ve Zamanı* (Ahmed Pasha and His Time) 1912-13; *Kosova Zaferi ve Ankara Hezimet* (Kosova Victory and Ankara Defeat) 1912-13. For a detailed list of all her works, see Mübeccel Kızıltan and Tülay Gençtürk (eds), *Atatürk Kitaplığı Fatma Aliye Evrakı Katalogu--1* (Atatürk Library Fatma Aliye File Catalog -1), (İstanbul: Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 1993), 6-9.

⁵⁰ For Aliye's validation of modernizing Muslim women in history, see "Meşahir-i Nisvan-ı İslamiyeden Biri, Fatma bint-i Abbas" (One Prominent Muslim Woman, Fatma bint-i Abbas), *HMG* 27 September 1895, 3-4; and "Meşahir-i Nisvan-ı İslamiyeden Biri, Fatma bint-i Abbas" (One Prominent Muslim Woman, Fatma bint-i Abbas), *HMG* 1 October 1895, 2-3, and "Eslaf-ı Nisvan, Arap Kadınları" (Our Female Ancestors, Arab Women), *HMG* 8 October 1895, 1-3.

career nor her activism illuminates, however, the dialogue between her three proudly shelved books at the Woman's Building Library and the fervent "woman question" back at home. Also left unexplored is the impact of these books on the fairgoers. Let me explain.

Fatma Aliye co-authored *Hayâl ve Hakikat* (Dream and Reality), a novel, in 1891-92 with her mentor Ahmet Midhat Efendi. Ahmet Midhat was a prominent writer and publisher who shared Aliye's interests in women's education, religious identity, and marital duties. Written in prose and letter format in two sections from a female and male perspective, this book narrates the dramatic tragedy of unrequited love. The broader battle between the feminine realm--dreams and intuition--against the masculine way of life, or rational positivist thinking, is gripping. Aliye's fictional character, Vedad, is a well-read, young, elite Ottoman woman who prefers books to lavish spending. She dutifully rejects the frivolous trappings of fashion or beauty obsession. Unlike her *alafranga* (Europeanized) sisters and brothers, rebuked in almost every novel of the period, Vedad thus personifies an industrious, progressive, and honorable Muslim woman, a woman unadulterated by excessive, or extravagant, Westernization (Mardin 1974). But her feminine emotional nature is the inevitable source of corruptibility.

Orphaned and sensitive, Vedad falls desperately in love with Vefa, a young man with lofty (read, positivistic) ambitions. During their engagement, Vefa's indifference injures Vedad so deeply that she bleeds to death from untreated tuberculosis ("*çekiği sedîd ve medîd ıztırlara ölümden başka deva bulamamıştır*") (Midhat and Aliye 2002 [1891-92], 41). In the second section, written by Ahmed Midhat, the male protagonist Vefa's trials and tribulations take center stage. Forced into marriage, he delays his medical career. In return, Vefa takes an aloof, indeed heartless, stance towards Vedad's suffering, which he later labels as "an

interesting case of hysteria” (Midhat and Aliye 2002 [1891-92], 49, 51-53). Although male reason seemingly reigns over female intuition, both authors champion gender complementarity--a material and emotional division of labor at home--for a healthy family union. They thus contend, “Vedad (a woman) without Vefa (a man) is ruled by a disadvantageous intuition; and Vefa (a man) without Vedad (a woman) is ruled by a cold, emotionless heart” (Midhat and Aliye 2002 [1891-92], 32).⁵¹

Rendering moderation as the golden rule for individual and familial health, this novel inextricably links the private bourgeois sphere to liberal ideals of meritocracy. While excessive emotional capital results in hysteria, excessive competition or positivism produces a defective husband or future father. As with earlier Tanzimat novels, precautionary notes on hyper-individualism or market overindulgence signify a critique of laissez-faire ethics. The authors identify moral malaise and social polarization as the perils of free-market transformation. The late Ottoman family, once again, becomes both the engine for, as well as the safety-valve, against liberal ideology. The domestic sphere secures life, property, and honor, as it provides checks and balances against the social evils of the market economy that compromise female virtue and communal welfare.

Echoing the early 20th-century Iranian debates on progressive Islam, such unbridled individualism, in Aliye and Midhat’s view, poses a double threat, it disrupts communal harmony and signifies excessive libido or the seeds of immorality (Ringer 2004, 48). Moreover, diagnosing self-interest as both the cause and symptom of superficial Westernization, they

⁵¹ This quote is a direct translation of “Vefasız Vedad istifadesiz bir zeka, Vedadsız Vefa hissiz bir kalb hükmüne girmişti.”

suggest Islamization as a moral remedy. This moral agenda effectively mirrors the Hamidian Pan-Islamist ideology.

On the one hand, Aliye and Midhat recognize the potential in liberal transformation by celebrating both the Tanzimat and Hamidian gains in civil rights and gender-progressive education. On the other hand, they seek ways to curb capitalism's excess. To do so, they propose to reconcile liberal politico-moral system with indigenous Muslim values, sexual modesty and material moderation. They recuperate the Tanzimat transformation, or liberalism at large, by coloring it with indigenous moral depth and propriety. At the same time, they render Islam as a modern belief system adaptive to contemporary change.

In her second book on display, *Nisvan-ı İslam* (Muslim Women, 1891-2), Aliye, the self-ascribed cultural ambassador, continues to address various debates on Muslim women's domestic duties, veiling, arranged marriages, polygamy, and concubinage. Intending to rebut pervasive Orientalist misconceptions, Aliye defends Shari'a (Muslim law) against corruptible cultural institutions and customs. She intends, first, to prove the compatibility of Islamic tenets with reason and science.⁵² Her second goal is to underscore the material versatility (adaptability) of Islamic moral values and, particularly, how these agree with both redistributive and liberal economic logic.

To rectify European associations of Islam with backwardness and gender oppression (1993, 66), Aliye highlights, first, the charitable aspects of concubinage (*cariyelik*) (69-74). She demonstrates how this pervasive institution saves women from selling their honor in dire economic conditions and grants them equal rights in their "adopted" family (*"bunlar familya*

⁵² Aliye bemoans the European misconceptions about Muslim women in the "Mukaddime" (Preface) of *Nisvan-ı İslam* (Istanbul: Mutlu Yayıncılık, 1993), edited by Mübeccel Kızıltan, 66.

âzasından mâdud gibidir”) (1993, 71). In addition to receiving gifts, money, and trousseau for their labor (“*her cariyenin emeğine mukâbil hediye, para ve cihaz verilir*”) (1993, 69), the concubines, as family members, receive life-long protection from their owners even after their religiously-subscribed emancipation in their ninth year of servitude (1993, 70-71). In Aliye’s formulation, concubinage, or rather slavery, as a social institution, signals simultaneous adherence to Islamic mandates and to laissez-faire logic. It protects concubines as household members and provides monetary remuneration for their labor.

Addressing gender equality during and after divorce and Muslim women’s right to private property, she positions the Muslim household as the regulator of both indigenous morality and the emergent market economy. Aliye characterizes polygamy--the Muslim right to multiple wives--as a socially-corruptible (*sûistimal*) exception (*nâdir*) rather than the norm in the late Ottoman Empire (1993, 88).⁵³ Then follows the provocative comparison of Ottoman polygamy (*taaddüd-ı zevcat*) with prevalent Western extra-marital relationships. Aliye argues, if and when the polygamy is abused in the Ottoman geography, then the wives have the right to divorce (*talak*) and thus can enter another profitable partnership legalized by the marriage contract (90).

In contrast, “mistresship” (*metreslik*), the Western alternative to polygamy, is hazardous (*ziyânli şeyler*) for women and children (90). First, these hidden affairs produce illegitimate children (*evlâd-ı tabîye*) with unchaste mothers (90). Moral debauchery ensues in a world of “bastards” and fallen women. Second, this pervasive European custom, because of its

⁵³ Aliye notes that polygamy is not mandated in Islam (*Allah’ın emri*) and that Shari’a permits multiple wives only in cases of infertility (*akim olmak*) or spousal illness (*hastalıklı zevce*) (1993, 88-89).

illegitimacy, deprives women and children of their legal rights to property and honor. In effect, it undermines their chances at legal and socio-economic equality (“*her türlü hukûk-u insanîyeden mahrûm bırakılmıştır*”) (90).

Aliye thus reverses Orientalist assertions of immoral Muslim hyper-sensuality to foreground instead the corruptibility of Western women and, by extension, the Western family structure. Projecting gendered vices onto European women, the author advocates Occidentalism as a way to assert Ottoman identity and alterity. This critique of Western moral deprivation echoes the early-20th-century Iranian reforms (Ringer 2004, 49). As in Iran, Ottoman indigenous modernity is defined against facile and rampant Westernization. And it is Islam that helps safeguard this modernity by “combining morality with cultural authenticity” (Ringer 2004, 49).

Aliye’s Occidentalism thus mirrors the Hamidian shift away from Tanzimat’s relentless Westernization. It gestures towards resourceful adaptation, the selective fusion of foreign cultural institutions (Fortna 2002, 9-10, 23) with Ottoman Islamic elements. In her search for modern Islam in both *Muhadarat* and *Nisvan-ı İslam*, Aliye, however, resists essentializing Islam. In so doing, she distinguishes timeless Tradition from lived social reality or the Qur’anic mandates from corrupt polygamous affairs. Like Muslim reformists elsewhere, Aliye constructs indigenous cultural authenticity around a changing yet pivotal Islamic core that creatively adjusts to the demands of the time (Ringer 2004, 49). Emulating her mentor Ahmet Midhat Efendi’s stance vis-à-vis the 1889 Paris World’s Exposition, Aliye also deploys Occidentalism as an engine of social reform (Findley 1998, 17). As Carter Findley (1998, 48) aptly argues, Occidental reform, proposed by Midhat and Aliye, differentiates “the material Other from the

spiritual Self.” This distinction accommodates Western technological and industrial progress without compromising Muslim values.

Redefining modern Ottomanness vis-à-vis Western cultural influence, Islamic gendered dictates and economic reform finds full expression in Aliye’s discussion of *tesettür* (Islamic veiling). She considers *tesettür* an expression of Muslim tradition and social class as well as a catalyst for efficient household and imperial economy.⁵⁴ In *Nisvan- ı Islam*, Aliye characterizes Islamic veiling as a nonnegotiable, but liberating order of Allah. She contends that the veil enables, rather than restricts, women’s public mobility (95). In so doing, she embraces full hair coverage as a Qur’anic mandate, or “true” Muslim covering, as opposed to the fashionable full-body coverage that disguises the face, hands, and feet (95). She then applies this distinction between Allah’s law and lived Muslim tradition to the prevalent *alaturka* (Eastern) and *alafranga* (Europeanized) styles. Seemingly contradicting her statements on the Shari’a’s nonnegotiability, Aliye promotes female fashion as individual choice driven by daily needs and occasions. While *alafranga* clothing denotes sophisticated taste, *alaturka* style signals adherence to traditions (113). More pressing for Aliye are, however, the crucial links among personal fashion, women’s familial duties, and the broader Ottoman textile industry. Thus follows Aliye’s prescription, whether a Muslim woman chooses to dress in *alaturka* or *alafranga* style, she shall consume responsibly, buy local Ottoman textiles on a frugal budget (115).

⁵⁴ There is a growing literature on this topic. Recent studies on late-Ottoman clothing (Quataert 1997, Şeni 1995, Faroqhi 2000) have explored the relationship between Ottoman dress laws and citizen-making (Quataert 1997, 420); between fashion styles and socio-economic distinctions (Quataert 1997, 405; Şeni 1995, 25); between household textile consumption and imperial economic revitalization (Quataert 1997, 409). Last, scholars have linked choice and degree of coverage to Muslim women’s public mobility and moral conduct (Quataert 1997, 409; Şeni 1995, 27).

In other words, the consumption of homemade textiles enables both an efficient bourgeois household and helps revitalize a vulnerable Ottoman industry (115).⁵⁵ Responsible fashion, ruled by moderation, helps Ottoman women express themselves as dutiful Muslim wives, mothers, and citizens (116). In contrast to extravagant slaves of fashion, these mindful women reconcile market-ruled private consumption with their public responsibility to a Muslim imperial order. Linking domesticity with imperial economy through fashion and taste, Aliye thus aligns effectively Islamic communal duty with laissez-faire principles.

Pluralistic fashion is most evident in Aliye's discussion of the corset, a fashionable Western novelty of the Hamidian era. In defense of this design, Aliye argues it enhances the allure of loose Turkish *entari* (nightgown-like dress) giving it more definition (*muntazam şekil*) (124). Implicit is the corset's visual significance as it forces upon Ottoman women a fitted waist, an arched back, and, most importantly, an erect posture. Hence it challenges pervasive Orientalist tropes of Eastern indolence, referencing odalisques and concubines idly lying on their harem sofas (Şeni 1995, 29). In Aliye's vision, the corset is, then, a necessary Western import as it symbolizes bourgeois Muslim women's honorable industriousness.

Finally, the third book, *Muhadarat* (Conversations) (1892-1893), considers questions of Muslim female modesty and economic survival through the protagonist Fazıla's dismal journey from elite marriage to divorced slavery.⁵⁶ In the end, Fazıla is socially demoted, but never a fallen woman. And women's paid work is not the ideal, but the last resort for sustenance. According to historian Carter Findley (1995, 790), Fazıla's "irreproachable integrity" helps

⁵⁵ Here Aliye refers to increased foreign market threats to the local textile industry.

⁵⁶ For this novel's intricate plot and ideological links to larger debates on Ottoman family, see Findley (1995, 783-794).

consolidate the ideal of “an Ottoman Islamic superwoman” (784). She is capable of protecting her family’s honor and empowering herself in dire circumstances (791). Although Fazıla faces the worst form of unrequited love in her infertile super-Westernized husband, she victoriously tackles the double burden of honor and sustenance. Then she realizes her sole dream--motherhood--in her second marriage.

In all her works, Fatma Aliye frames “the woman question” as one of modern Islam. Her bourgeois Muslim feminism, however, disguises the socio-economic, ethnic, and religious conflicts within and beyond the Ottoman women’s movement. Before looking at the daily conflicts at the Chicago Fair, let us ponder about the accessibility of Fatma Aliye’s works for the fairgoers. These books, for which we have no record of English translation at the time of the Exposition, were neatly displayed in the Woman’s Building behind glass windows.⁵⁷ Hence they inevitably fell short of conveying progressive Muslim womanhood to a foreign audience. Perhaps it is safe to view the Fatma Aliye exhibit as a case of failed Occidentalism. Even if her works had been widely available at the Chicago Fair, would these concepts in print have overridden the highly-popular and highly-Orientalized other bodies and voices?

⁵⁷ There was only an Arabic translation of *Nisvan-ı İslam* at the time of the Exposition, *Tarib-ı Nisa el-Müslîmin*, 1309/1891-92 (Kızıltan 1993, 9). For the inaccessibility of books at the Woman’s Building, see Teresa Dean’s column “Teresa Dean Sees Queer Things at the Fair,” *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, 15 August 1893, 7, col. 3. Dean writes “... there is a good deal of bitter complaining up in the library of the Woman’s Building because the books are not allowed out of their cases. You can only read the titles on the covers, but you must not read and you must not touch. Many books that have been sent here have been for the purpose of being read but that makes no difference. They are under lock and key. They are being preserved carefully for the permanent building for women” (Dean, *ibid.*).

Hanna Korany's Orientalist Christian Vision

Motherhood is the chief office for which woman was created. . . . The women of the orient feel honored by motherhood. . . . At the same time, they do not always know how to train and bring up children. What they need is a liberal education. American missionaries have already done much towards elevating the women of Syria to a higher plane of intelligence and I believe America will have to be the source of beneficence and deliverance to other darkened countries.

Hanna Korany, (1893)⁵⁸

We feel, therefore obliged to state in our opinion every woman who is presiding over a happy home is fulfilling her highest and truest function, and could not be lured from it by temptations offered by factories and studios. Would that the eyes of these idealists could be thoroughly opened that they might see, not the few of a fortunate class, with whom they possibly are in daily contact, but the general status of the labor market throughout the world and the relation to it of women . . . Women everywhere in large numbers are actively engaged in the lowest and most degrading industrial occupations, laboring mainly as underpaid drudges, to the great profit of manufacturers and producers.

Bertha Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers (1893)⁵⁹

Hanna Korany, an upper-class Christian Ottoman journalist from Syria, vociferously engaged with the Chicago Fair. She partook in congresses, receptions, and openings across the White City and the Midway, traversing both the Woman's Building and the Turkish Village.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ From Hanna Korany's paper on "Progress Among Oriental Women" delivered at the Congress of the Public Press: "Views of a Syrian Woman," *The Chicago Herald*, 26 May 1893, 2, col. 7. For longer versions of the same presentation, see "Progress Among Oriental Women," *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, 26 May 1893, 2, col. 2-3 and "Ethics of the Press, Leading Topic of the Women Journalists," *The Chicago Evening Post*, 25 May 1893, 2, cols. 2-3.

⁵⁹ From *Addresses Delivered at the Opening of the Woman's Building, May 1, 1893*, edited by Bertha Honore Palmer, Chicago, IL: World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, 8.

⁶⁰ "Hanai is their Ideal, Lady Managers have taken up a Syrian Woman as a Model of Virtue," *The Chicago Times*, 2 August 1893, 5, col.1; "Politics and Dress, Important Subjects before the Women's Congress Today," *The Chicago Evening Post*, 16 May 1893, 2, col. 3); "Ethics of the Press, Leading Topic of the Women Journalists," *The Chicago Evening Post*, 25 May 1893, 1, col. 7 and 2, cols. 2-3). For a mention of Korany's address at the opening of Turkish village, see also "Notes of the Exposition," *The Chicago Evening Post*, 8 July 1893, 3, col. 2.

Whether at the Congress of the Public Press or at the World's Congress of Representative Women, she adamantly addressed the question of Oriental women's progress in relation to dress reform, economic uplift, and religious difference.⁶¹ To save Eastern women through Christian mission, Korany articulated an Orientalist reform that was starkly different from Fatma Aliye's prescriptive oeuvre. A paired look at Korany's ideological framework and activities illuminates the performative challenges to the imperial Muslim modernity, a modernity propagated by the Hamidian government and state-aligned female reformists like Fatma Aliye. Focusing on the words and actions of a "marginal" Ottoman subject--an Arab non-Muslim woman--, I thus highlight the social ambiguity of late-Ottoman reform with a particular focus on its ethnic and religious fractures on the Columbian Exposition grounds.

From the Ottoman state's perspective, Korany personified palpable cultural and political dangers. First, educated at Beyrout's American missionary seminary, Korany registered the formidable threat of Christian proselytizing, one that had, in part, galvanized the Hamidian educational reforms (Fortna 2002, 203).⁶² In addition to increased centralization and supervision of Ottoman hinterlands, the Sultan had also invested in the provincial *Aşiret* Schools (Imperial School for Tribes). His goal was to integrate the alienated and wayward

⁶¹ On Korany's involvement in the Journalism Congress, see "Politics and Dress" (ibid., 2, cols. 2-3); "But Will They Agree? Editors of the World Hold a Week of Discussion," *The Chicago Times*, 22 May 1893, 5, cols. 3-4; "Programme of To-Day's [sic] Sessions," *The Chicago Herald*, 25 May 1893, 2, col. 7. For details of her participation in the Woman's Congress and of her position on dress reform, see "Verses of Fashion," *The Chicago Herald*, 24 May 1893, 9, cols. 3-4; "Dress Reform Oddly Illustrated," *The Chicago Herald*, 17 May 1893, 2; cols. 4-7; "Dress Her Theme," *The Chicago Times*, 17 May 1893, 1, cols. 1-4).

⁶² For details of Korany's missionary education, see "Progress Among Oriental Women," *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, 26 May 1893, 2, col. 2. Benjamin Fortna [2002, 203], construes the competitive Hamidian centralization as a reaction to "the deleterious effects of foreign educational encroachment on the empire's youth." According to Fortna [203], such moralizing was a way to "withstand the challenges inherent in that threat."

Arabs, Druzes, Kurds, and Zaydis into the “political life of the state” (Rogan 1996, 83).

Indoctrinating political allegiance, this tribal school experiment (1892-1907), as historian Rogan argues (*ibid.*, 83-107), built on state-sanctioned identities--Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism-- to stem effectively foreign imperialism and separatist nationalism.

Second, as a native of Ottoman Arab lands, Korany evoked stagnation, deceit, and ignorance, cultural traits that were associated with the Empire’s Eastern provinces. Coining this pervasive post-Tanzimat discourse “Ottoman Orientalism,” historian Ussama Makdisi (2002, 768) discusses how prolific indigenous Orientalisms have unsettled the simple dichotomy of “Western imperialism/non-Western resistance.” As a dual strategy of political resistance and empowerment, Ottoman Orientalism sought, first, to combat growing Western imperialism by cautious emulation. Second, civilizing its “ignorant” domestic exotics, the Empire aimed to overcome internal--provincial--stagnation (794-5). Reproducing Western Orientalist formulations of the indolent East, Ottoman Orientalism thus “distinguished between a degraded Oriental self--embodied in the unreformed pre-modern subjects and landscape of the empire-- and the Muslim modernized self represented largely (but not exclusively) by an Ottoman Turkish elite who ruled the Ottoman Empire” (Makdisi 2002, 770).⁶³

Makdisi contrasts this auto-exoticizing modernity with earlier exclusionary discourses of coeval religious subordination. He demonstrates how “spatial integration of Arabian provinces was justified by and consolidated temporal segregation” (780). During Abdülhamid’s reign, Islam helped cultivate not only cultural distinction from the West, but also became a

⁶³ Describing the Ottoman internalization of Western Orientalist paradigms, Makdisi [2002, 769] emphasizes “a complex of Ottoman attitudes produced by a nineteenth-century age of Ottoman reform that implicitly and explicitly acknowledged the West to be the home of progress and the East, writ large, to be a present theatre of backwardness.”

civilizing disciplinary tool. The goal was to overcome temporal segregation by integrating backward and degenerate domestic Arabs to the Empire's present and future.

Hanna Korany, however, agreed with neither the discursive strategies nor the political impact of Ottoman Orientalism. In her widely-read, and well-received paper, "Modern Progress Among Oriental Women," delivered at the Fair's auxiliary Journalism Congress (May 1893), Korany lauded, instead, the emancipatory impact of missionary education in multi-religious Syria ("Ethics of the Press," 25 May 1893, 2, cols. 2-3). To prove her point, she proudly referenced her own education and accomplishments as a Protestant Oriental woman ("Ethics of the Press," *ibid.*, "Progress Among Oriental Women," 2, col. 2.). Then she framed her gratitude to America with the hope that "the mother of liberty would ever be the source of enlightenment and beneficence to other darkened countries" ("Progress Among Oriental Women, 2, col. 2).

It was the restrictive Mohammedan religion that left women in darkness. Oppressive social measures such as gender-segregation or veiling, Korany argued, confined women to their apartments. Trapped by Islam, these women had little knowledge of the outer world (*ibid.*). Characterizing Muslim women as the unfortunate sisters of the Christian Orientals, she contended, "Christian woman is nearly equal to the European and the American in refinement and intelligence" (*ibid.*, col.3). Korany burdened the Christian Ottoman Woman with "uplifting her sister from the bondage of ignorance to the freedom of enlightenment" (*ibid.*, col.3). Korany concluded with hope about the universal female potential, "Woman is the mirror in which you see the reflections of mankind. If corrupted, she is a devil, but if well-trained she is an angel" (*ibid.*).

Following this delivery and others, Korany charmed the Board of Lady Managers, the white elite puritanical founders of the Woman's Building, with her lady-like manners,

“language of oriental luxuriance” and her model of Christian salvation (“Hanai as Their Ideal,” 5, col. 1).⁶⁴ In contrast to Ottoman associations of degradation and treachery, the Lady Managers saw in Korany a progressive Oriental, a woman whose Protestant upbringing enabled her career and voice and tamed her spirit. As the opening statement by Board President Palmer suggests, the Lady Managers, like Korany, imagined efficient, well-educated mothers as universal bearers of rational households. Along with other female activists, the Lady Managers were equally concerned with the women’s public rights and work conditions. They sought to rectify globally the unequal treatment of female wage-earners (Palmer 1893, 8, 11-13). Like Korany, Palmer considered ignorance, or lack of education, in and beyond the household, “an intolerable waste” as it “threatened the reserve power of any individual” (ibid., 14).

At the World Congress of Representative Women, visions of female laborers’ and mothers’ “reserve power” was tightly bound with the ongoing controversy on female clothing (“Dress Her Theme,” 17 May 1893, 1, cols. 1-4). Suffragettes like Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Julia Ward Howe, the leading figures of the National Council for Women, cooperated with the Lady Managers and other activists to find a healthy and efficient--read, workplace suitable--alternative to the restrictive, hence, “unhygienic” and impractical corset (“Dress Her Theme,” ibid.; “Dress Reforms Oddly Illustrated,” (17 May 1893, 2, cols. 4-7; see also Greenhalgh 1988, 181-182).⁶⁵ This combined effort not only built on earlier struggles of

⁶⁴ See Robert W. Rydell [1984, 52, 59-60] for a critique of the Lady Managers’ racial prejudices, in general, and their refusal to appoint a black woman to the committee, in particular. Paul Greenhalgh [1988, 178-183] provides a detailed account of the Board’s activities and political goals with an eye on the political ambiguities involved.

⁶⁵ For a brief list of “old war horses” of the woman’s suffrage, see “Women’s Rights, Then and Now,” *The Chicago Evening Post*, 21 May 1893, 4, col. 5. In their critique of the corset, both Henrietta Russell and Bertha Morris Smith emphasized its health hazards and proposed instead “a hygienic dress”

Dress Reform, active since the 1870s, but also initiated multiple new designs with loose, sanitary fabrics and flexible hem and waist lines (“Educate the Race,” 17 May 1893, 2, col.1; “Dress Her Theme,” *ibid.*; “Verses of Fashion,” *ibid.*).

At the Congress, Korany’s “modified Syrian plan” gained the most attention and traction. It even surpassed Delsartian Henrietta Russell’s picturesque and flowy Grecian dress and Lucy Stone’s reintroduction of the light Bloomer design (“Dress Her Theme,” *ibid.*). With a silk blouse and wool jacket over a loose split skirt bagged up at the bottom, Korany’s native design, also featuring low-heeled shoes, fulfilled the basic Dress Reform goals, freedom of limbs and feet ensured the wearers’ ease and comfort (“Dress Reforms Oddly Illustrated,” *ibid.*; “Dress Her Theme,” *ibid.*). All these features thus made Korany’s proposal fit for the workplace. Given the massive mobilization of women across the booming Syrian textile industry (Quataert 1991, 162) and the American workforce, the Dress Reformers, like Korany and her American sisters, promoted the femininization of labor on both sides of the Atlantic. As such, they effectively aligned cultural interests and tastes with the market-driven economies of their homelands.

Along with her costume project, Korany raised two critiques, First, she rebuked her Oriental Syrian sisters for abandoning their native heritage in pursuit of *a la mode* Western fashions (“Dress Her Theme,” *ibid.*; “Reforming Women’s Dress” (15 July 1893, 4, col. 4). She targeted the despotic rule of Parisian fashion that eradicated cultural difference (“Reforming Women’s Dress,” *ibid.*). Korany’s critique was not, however, solely driven by cultural

that “should leave room to breathe and for the organs of the body to perform their natural functions” (“Verses of Fashion,” *The Chicago Herald*, *ibid.*, col. 4).

concerns, as she cashed in on “authenticity” by selling embroidered Syrian textiles at an exotica booth in the Woman’s Building (Dean, “White City Ships,” 24 June 1893, 5, col.3). Marketing “all the pretty things her countrywomen made,” Korany cleverly fused the role of a representative reformer with that of a savvy businesswoman (ibid).

Second, Korany censured her American sisters’ extravagant spending on clothes, making them “slaves to fashion” (“Dress Reform Oddly Illustrated,” ibid.). Despite differing religious positions, Korany, the Lady Managers, and Fatma Aliye all viewed thrift as key to civic-minded and moral individualism. Thrifty, industrious women toiled for their families and, by extension, the nation’s advantage. In lands of liberalism, whether the Ottoman Empire or America, this shared discourse cast financial moderation as honorable a virtue as female modesty.

Although joined around capitalist ideals, Korany and Aliye still advocated varied religious paths to Ottoman progress and moral uprightness. While Korany undermined Ottoman Orientalism through pro-Christian Western Orientalism, Aliye aimed to reverse all Orientalisms with Occidentalist narratives of Islamic cultural distinction and superiority. Although both Korany and Aliye viewed the domestic sphere as the engine of cultural advancement, they differed on the rights and obligations of professional women operating in a liberal economy.

Like the Lady Managers, Korany embraced the equitable integration of women to the global workforce. Aliye, on the other hand, privileged the household, or the locus of educated womanhood, over professional life even as she, along with other Muslim feminists, fought for elite women’s public mobility. As upper-class intellectual reformists, both approached laissez-

faire transformation as a moral problem with differing degrees of caution and investment.

The question remains, how did their Ottoman sisters engage with capitalism on the Chicago Fair grounds? And what did the low-scale female Ottoman enterprises reveal about the lived ruptures of class differentiation? How effective were these moralistic and philanthropic discourses in obscuring gender and class inequality on the ground?

The Ottoman Female Workers at the White City and Beyond

The desire of the Board of Lady Managers is to present a complete picture of the condition of women in every country of the world at this moment, and more particularly of those women who are breadwinners. We wish to know whether they continue to do the hard, wearing work of the world at prices which will not maintain life, and under unhealthy conditions; whether they have access to common schools and to the colleges; . . . whether the women, in countries where educational facilities are afforded them, take a higher stand in all active industries of life as well as intellectual pursuits.

Bertha H. Palmer (ibid.)⁶⁶

As proponents of “elevated womanhood,” The Board of Lady Managers strove not only to promote female labor globally, but also to spread civilization to the undeveloped corners of the Orient, populated by “their helpless and wretched sisters” (Palmer in Maud H. Elliott 1893, 21-22).⁶⁷ In so doing, they collaborated with foreign governments, philanthropic organizations, and entrepreneurs in funding the on-site foreign handicraft ventures. Charity, moral duty, and

⁶⁶ This quote is from the Board President Palmer’s introduction in *Arts and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, edited by Maud Howe Elliott, (Paris and New York: Goupil & Co. 1893), 13.

⁶⁷ Bertha Palmer also regrets the paucity of Oriental women and their exhibits, “It is unfortunate that we cannot hope to have women from the Orient present in large numbers at the Exposition, so that they might profit by its civilizing influences” (1893, 19).

cultural salvage justified these enterprises. A closer look at the Turkish handicrafts exhibit in the Woman's Building and at the Turkish Village in the Midway can expose the contested intentions and investments of those involved.

Brought by the Turkish Compassionate Fund (TCF), South Balkan female émigrés worked exhausting schedules at the Exposition to recreate exquisite lace and embroidery designs and luxury items already popular in elite European homes. This war-relief organization was established after the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War by the British Ambassador Sir Henri Layard, British public and private investors, and in part by the Ottoman government (Burdett-Coutts 1883, ix-xi, 182). Propelled by “perfect Christian pity,” TCF provided shelter, health services, food, and clothing for the non-combatant refugees, mainly afflicted Muslim women and children. Hundreds of thousands had fled Russian assaults, famine, and disease in the Balkans (Bulgaria and Rumelia) before settling in Constantinople, Adrianople, and Phillippopolis (Burdett-Coutts 1883, 24).⁶⁸

Mrs. Arthur Hanson of Constantinople mobilized TCF resources to transform houses into textile workshops where a skilled female refugee produced up to 200 pieces a day (Burdett-Coutts 1883, 188) initially for personal and communal daily sustenance (174).⁶⁹ Then the entrepreneur-cum-philanthropists discovered exquisite antique designs in these once-wealthy women's family heirlooms. Mrs. Hanson and Lady Layard thus founded in 1879 the

⁶⁸ In the *Daily Telegraph*, Baroness Burdett-Coutts called the British public to religious relief action, asking them “to unite in common action for the succour [*sic*] of the innocent, defenceless [*A Great Oriental Power 1893*] sufferers, into whose wounds Christendom, if it is to merit its name, is bound to pour its oil and its balm” [The Turkish Compassionate Fund: An Account of Its Origin, Working, and Results, (London: Remington and Co., 1883), 21]. Also the refugee population included some Jewish and Christian Ottoman subjects (1883, 23, 200).

⁶⁹ For the kinds, rate, and distribution of TCF output, see the numerical charts in *The Turkish Compassionate Fund*, W. Burdett-Coutts, ed. 1883, Appendices II, xciv-xcvi).

Women's Work Establishment (WWE) that produced 6,000 to 7,000 yards of material (Burdett-Couts 1883, 228-29). European sales soared to £8,000 over four years (Burdett-Coutts 1883, 228-29).

The TCF employees were transported to the Exposition to engage in a strenuous yet "meaningful" on-site production at the Woman's Building.⁷⁰ They partook in a seemingly benign cultural enterprise, "rescuing a rare industry from absolute extinction" (ibid., 229). Mrs. Hanson, however, was discontented with the Ottoman workers' pace and productivity in Chicago. In a purely business-like tone, she exclaimed,

[t]he Ottoman race itself has little or no inventive powers. They can do nothing but copy . . . while orders to make even the slightest alteration . . . bewildered them. . . . Another difficulty is having once learned a new stitch the women seem to lose all power of remembering an old one. "It is gone, gone," they repeat hopelessly. Thus it is a serious undertaking to lead a skilled worker away from the design which her *lithe brown fingers* have made popular at every Court of Europe (Weimann 1981, 411) (emphasis added).

Imbrications of racial, classed, and gendered difference shot through another embodied Turkish display. At the Midway Plaisance, young Ottoman girls and women deftly wove, spun, embroidered and swiftly moved from pattern to pattern, while transforming eleven two-story cottages into cultural and historic sweatshops ("Turkish Village at the Midway Plaisance," 1893-94, 3, 318, col.1). On the one hand, their quaint piecework operated as a vibrant putting-out system. Pivotal, yet unrecognized, putting-out production contributed to Ottoman silk, lace, and carpet industries, industries that had long been catering to domestic and European consumers (Quataert 1991, 161, 172). On the other hand, this in-situ production conferred false

⁷⁰ Mme. C. Zacaroff also delivered a paper on the Turkish Compassionate Fund at the Woman's Building ("World's Fair Events," *The Chicago Record*, 22 September 1893, 1, col. 6). For commentary on the quality of TCF designs, see "Done by the Unspeakable Turk," *The Sunday Herald*, 13 August 1893, 31, col.2.

authenticity to the Turkish artifacts at the Grand Bazaar, investing them with the illusion of immediate production. Just a few feet away in the busy Street of Constantinople, fairgoers thus purchased not only Eastern merchandise, but also the performativity of workmanship.

Performing their precious nativity and industriousness in recreated environments, these women, along with their products, became what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, 19) labels “cultural metonyms.” In effect, they aptly colored the drama of the quotidian with the absent, but omnipresent, Ottoman cultural-scape.

Embodied Ottoman exhibits across the White City and the Midway were ideologically continuous as both were predicated on salvaging and promoting historic industries for symbolic (art) and material (merchandise) gain within and beyond the imperial borders. These racialized and classed on-site productions helped reify women as the timeless bearers and agents of the archaic Ottoman culture as well as the living ethnographic specimens of a lower race. As such, these exploitative quotidian performances significantly challenged not only the Lady Managers’ and Hanna Korany’s philanthropic capitalism, but also Fatma Aliye’s, and by extension, the Hamidian state’s persistent refutation of European Orientalism. Perhaps the Ottoman government used indigenous Orientalism to cast Muslim refugees and other Turkish Village workers as uncivilized domestic colonies. As discursive and pragmatic strategy, Ottoman auto-exoticism maintained a hierarchy whereby the female workers’ labor and sweat mattered less than the works of exemplary Muslim women such as Fatma Aliye.

Conclusion

The Ottomans’ Chicago adventure was not solely an intriguing, though inequitable, case of transnational cultural and monetary flow characteristic of the world’s fairs. It was also the

culmination of Tanzimat and Hamidian modernization staged for an international public. As such, this cultural and diplomatic endeavor tells the complex story of late-Ottoman reform, illuminating the shifting regimes of indigenous and global imperialism, capitalism, and honor. It is thus a story of the Empire's further integration into the world-market accompanied by urgent ideological and geopolitical concerns. Viewing the Chicago Fair from the Ottoman perspective underscores the continuities and rifts between the official and popular cultural production operating in a transnational market economy.

The array of female Turkish displays, first, highlights the heightened role of women as active shapers and interpreters of Ottoman modernity. Capturing the labor of both intellectual and professional women, I challenge the male-centered, top-down formulations of Ottoman reform with a nuanced gender analysis, an analysis attentive to lived class and ethnic fractures. These female exhibits articulated simultaneously with the Western and late-Ottoman political-economic and moral educational reforms. And such moral progress helped reshape women's domestic and public roles across the newly-rationalized, bourgeois households and the feminized workforce.

Second, the Ottoman women's intellectual and physical labor constituted female virtue not only as sexual modesty, but also as frugal and industrious management of the household and/or the national economy. Female reformists like Hanna Korany and Fatma Aliye, for instance, have explored the inextricable connection between liberal economic and moral restructuring, even as they professed conflicting routes to modernity. United around ideals of bourgeois domesticity, their differing paths of Christian salvation and modern Islam led them to opposite formulations of Ottoman distinction. For Aliye, Islam, as transformative and transforming moral and discursive regime, safeguarded Ottoman cultural and economic

autonomy against foreign contagion. On the other hand, Hanna Korany configured Protestant Western imperialism as the only remedy for despotic Ottoman Muslim imperialism.

Rendering female fashion as class-based cultural taste, Korany and Aliye alternately envisioned the corset as a global impediment to female paid labor or a symbolic challenge to Orientalism. Although advocating different pious regimes, both women nevertheless aligned moral propriety with individual as well as imperial economic needs and desires. Their goal was to define female public presence as a contested matter of profit and honor in the increasingly capitalist Ottoman-scape. This Ottoman focus on women's rights, shared by the Board of Lady Managers abroad, highlights the extent of cultural and political exchange in the Empire prior to or along with the world's fairs. Hence a keen historical eye on indigenous imperial formation helps dispel the reification of the world's fairs as privileged arenas for cultural exchange.

Third, while Korany's and Aliye's narratives animate regimes of privilege, the newly-demoted Balkan refugees toiled manually to link cultural authenticity to economic profit on the Exposition grounds. This particular disjuncture between official, benevolent Muslim modernity and the lived immiseration of Ottoman laborers abroad has revealed how intersecting class and ethnic inequalities had fractured the imperial reform and representation. Further, creatively engaging with capitalism, the Ottoman state and male and female reformists, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, were all confronted with another difficult choice on the ground, whether to purchase cultural credibility and honor or to simply survive the economic demands. Alternately, how did the Islam- or Christianity-centered Ottoman modernity translate to real-life cases and whose morality and economic welfare were compromised in that translation?

To pursue an answer, let us zoom in on the inner workings of the Turkish Village at the Midway with an exclusive focus on the lucrative, yet risky, Orientalist everyday and concert

performances. This quotidian emphasis, introduced in the refugee sweatshops, has a dual analytical contribution. First, it illustrates how an ethnographic lens captures fully the limits and possibilities of the Ottoman enterprises in and beyond its borders. Second, Turkish Village performance strategies help expose both the autonomy and dependence of ethnic, sexual, and poor outcasts. These domestic exotics were put on display for profit and, sometimes ironically, for credibility.

Chapter II

Ethnic, Sexual, and, Economic Dilemmas of Auto-Orientalism At the Turkish Village

Introduction

No man ever saw a sight like the Midway ball last night. It was a bird's eye view of the human race, a cross-section of humanity with one end in the center of Europe and the other in African wilderness; a wild fantasia of queer folk, radiant in all the trappings from the gay vermillion of the farthest Orient to the sleek seal sacque [*sic*] of the Bering Indian, and strange in a bewildering confusion of languages. . . . Colors ran rampant and all the rules of tailoring were tried . . . a Dahoman maiden, in the arms of her furbelowed chief, waltzed against the turbaned Turk with his Parisian partner.

“Ball of All Nations,” *The Chicago Herald*, 17 August 1893, 1, col. 7⁷¹

. . . one cannot help comparing . . . [German march music] with the squeaking music just opposite [in the Turkish Village]: weak, noisy chaotic. Yet the Turk is always on the street making a prodigious roar in person, which no German does; the latter stays inside his high walls (the Turk has no walls) and listen to his own music and to his own soul in response. . . . Marked is the contrast between the most external and internal peoples of Europe, the Turk and the German, here set opposite to each other, and each revealing himself in architecture, custom, art, in the very noises which each is making.

Denton J. Snider, 1895, 358-59.

Situated between the Persian concession and the Panorama of the Bernese Alps, the

Turkish Village at the WCE hosted a plethora of live commercial and historic displays. These

⁷¹ For a similar emphasis on “fantastically picturesque mosaic of odd bits of tribes and nationalities,” see “Midway as a Babel,” *The Sunday Herald*, 28 May 1893, 25, cols. 3-4. Also see Frank Millet et al., *Some Artists at the Fair*, (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1893).

exhibits were steeped in luscious color, sound, kineticism, and aroma.⁷² Merging profitable Oriental entertainment with education, this contingent and its participants also partook in the Midway's main ideological enterprise: that of translating evolutionist hierarchies into animated foreign villages and ethnological performances.⁷³

From the Ottoman perspective, Turkish Village presented a lesson in capitalism as it helped commodify real and imagined Ottoman heritage with contested cultural and ideological claims. Managed by Roberto Levy, a Jewish entrepreneur from Constantinople, this multi-ethnic and multi-religious contingent consisted of a mosque, the Odeon Theater featuring regional folk dances, a *café chantant* with sensual belly dancing, and a bazaar overflowing with Ottoman goods, including delicate embroideries, jewelry, coffee, water pipes, and rare rugs and carpets ranging in value from \$16 to \$600 ("Turkish Village," 6 August 1893, 10). The Bedouin Encampment, an ethnic quotidian show, animated Ottoman warriors, agile horsemen, and idyllic female nomads ("Bedouin Life in the Desert," 23 May 1893, 3, col. 6).

While some exhibits celebrated the ongoing Ottoman industrial revitalization, the everyday and concert performances by ethnic and gendered liminal subjects--belly dancers and Bedouins--partly challenged the Empire's self-image as a civilizing Islamic and Westernized

⁷² The Turkish Village was located diagonally across from the Cairo Street and straight across from the German Village. See the map (inside cover) in Handy P. Moses, *The Official Directory of World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893).

⁷³ According to literary critic Denton J. Snider, a tour along the Midway or this "suggestive highway of human progress" provided "a voyage around the World and down Time" [Chicago: Sigma Publishing Co., 1895], 238. Like other Midway sites, Turkish Village and its inhabitants enlivened the familiar story of cultural and technological underdevelopment. Spatially incorporated yet temporally distant, this site articulated with what Johannes Fabian has labeled "the denial of coevalness" (1983, 31). Marking the Ottoman Empire as an uncivilized nation of the past, Turkish Village undermined the state's costly self-promotion as a progressive, West-facing, and civilizing Muslim power. However, it also consolidated imperial rule by displaying exotic--racial and sexual--domestic colonies.

power. Why and how did this representational breach escape the eyes and regulations of the highly-interventionist Hamidian regime? If such risky representations were indeed intentional, what gains and losses ensued from them? An appreciation of the contradictory motives and mechanisms of this Village abroad helps elucidate the complexity of late Ottoman modernity on the ground. First, as a cultural history of reform, it brings to life the contestations over “the modern.” Second, the debates around Orientalist tourism, cultural authenticity, and profit continue to define and rupture contemporary neo-Ottomanist ventures and performances.

In this chapter, I use a performance lens to examine the interconnected cultural, ideological, and economic significance of multiple Ottoman exhibits, ranging from musical and dance performances to everyday activities. Auto-Orientalist commodification of embodiment, by the state and private entrepreneurs, both shaped and fractured Ottoman representation. With an ethnographic eye on the interlocking domains of artistic, economic, and moral exchange, I explore the interplay between monetary gain and honor deficit negotiated at the level of bygone lives.

Sources, Methodology, and Theory

Here I raise several methodological and theoretical questions. The first one concerns the nature and interpretation of contradictory archival sources on the Turkish Village. In contrast to copious American coverage, there is a paucity of Ottoman official and non-official records on belly dance performances and Bedouin desert scenes at the Chicago Fair.⁷⁴ Some imperial

⁷⁴ I combed through a wide range of sources, ranging from Yıldız Palace Collection at the Prime Ministry Archives to Exposition journalist Ubeydullah Efendi’s memoir (1997 [1926]) and from the daily *Servet-i Funûn* (Wealth of Sciences), the newspaper that published the first three issues of *The Chicago Fair Illustrated* (the official Ottoman newspaper at the Chicago Exposition).

(state) archive documents, however, prove that Turkish Village manager Roberto Levy, representative of Sadullah Suhami Company, had extensively cooperated with the Sublime Porte, or the Ottoman government, in organizing and supervising the Ottoman displays (B.B.A Y.A Res 59/3, 11 ZA 1309, BBA Y.A. Res 58/33, 11 ZA 1309). Moreover, Levy's presence at the Ottoman Empire Day (31 August), augmenting Sultan Abdülhamid's imperial power, indicates that this commercial pact continued on the Exposition grounds ("Honor the Sultan," 1 Sept 1893, 7, cols. 1-2). Relying on a limited range of sources, most historians have dismissed the tacit cooperation between the Ottoman state and private investors. This erasure elides the economic and moral significance of joint auto-Orientalist ventures, ranging from belly dance shows to ethnic performances.

Pivotal to such neglect is a historiographic bias. In his study on the Hamidian legitimization policies, historian Selim Deringil has overlooked the state's undercover, yet extensive and self-conscious, involvement in the Orientalist performances across major world's fairs (1998). To "de-exoticize" the late Ottoman epoch and to rectify the Euro-centric biases in historical research on this period, Deringil foregrounds instead the motivations of elite male Ottoman policy-makers (1998, 6, 8). Yet, relying solely on the Prime Ministry archives with limited consultation of popular or nonlocal sources (11), Deringil reiterates the authoritative official narrative on the Ottoman participation in world's fairs. He thus unquestioningly accepts the state's aversion to "plays injurious to the honour and modesty of Muslim women or damaging to national honor and prestige" (1998, 155). This leads the historian to conclude:

The evident desire to compete successfully as a modern civilized member of the club of Great Powers also expressed itself in the effort to prevent objectionable things "oriental." *The Ottomans particularly objected to the display of "dancing girls and dervishes"* (Deringil 1998, 160), (emphasis mine).

Deringil's analysis illustrates, first, the methodological limits of utilizing only indigenous and official sources for studying Ottoman transnational and popular cultural performance. Drawing only on state documents and rhetoric, this method feeds into the dominant top-down bias in late Ottoman historical enterprise, a bias denying the palpable quotidian life that exceeds the archive. In so doing, Deringil renders peripheral subjects--women, non-Muslim and ethnic groups—as passive recipients of social change. Relatedly, he overlooks how self-exoticism was a contested yet pivotal imperial strategy for improving Ottoman social, cultural, and economic capital on the global stage.

Second, Deringil's image of a progressive late-Ottoman Empire, stripped of “all things Oriental,” is wedded to the prevalent analytical aversion to performance.⁷⁵ Numerous performance scholars (Jackson 2000, 2004; Conquergood 1991, 1998, and 2002; Roach 1996; Drewal 1992) have coined such aversion as “logocentrism” or the epistemic primacy of print text over live performance (Taylor 2003, 8). Critical of the ephemerality or artifice of embodied acts, logocentric historical scholarship overlooks the analytical potential of everyday or artistic performance as “a system of knowing, storing and transmitting knowledge” (Taylor 2003, 4; see also Conquergood 1991, 180).

Marginalizing embodied acts often involves high political stakes. As Diana Taylor (2003, 5) aptly inquires, “whose memories, traditions and claims to history disappear if performance practices lack the staying power to transmit vital knowledge?” This is not to say performance shapes solely counter-hegemonic discourses. Rather, as the Ottoman imperial commissioners' White City presence suggests, the privileged elite, too, have fused a variety of

⁷⁵ Some scholars have coined this aversion to performance as “anti-theatrical bias” in academia [Johnson 2003; Jackson 2004; and Postlewait and Davis 2003].

performance styles and genres, including exotic Oriental displays and Western music, to enhance cultural superiority and economic gain.⁷⁶

How and why should the analytical power of performance be redeemed for historical enterprise? Performance not only illuminates but helps reenact the past and shape the future. Even when its tangibility is unacknowledged by the state, performance as both art and life alters its participants and audiences. The lack of official documentation on belly dancers does not negate the ambiguous motives, lives, and impact of live Orientalist representation at the Turkish Village. Instead, I argue that this intentional erasure of exoticized bodies and representations reveals much about the moral contours of late Ottoman reform. Denying the state's contradictory involvement in these exotic shows thus generates not only analytical loss, but also a puritanical history oblivious to sweat, sensuality, and inequality.

Embodied acts travel through movement, oral histories, life stories, and everyday expressive rites (Conquergood 1998). It is through linking memory, history, and culture that both performers and audiences create transformative and contested social expression (Taylor 2003, 2-3; see also Roach 1996 and Jackson 2000). The challenge that Turkish Village poses to Ottomanist historians, as Shannon Jackson notes, urges us “not only to write a history of performance, but also how to enter the performance of history” (Jackson 2000, 32). Entering the Turkish Village stage requires both a methodological and theoretical shift in order to connect causally auto-exoticizing embodiment to the shifting material and moral order of the late Ottoman Empire. Challenging Deringil's call to “de-exoticize,” I deploy performance as an interpretive frame and source to focus on the political-economic and artistic stakes and the

⁷⁶ See “Performing Imperial Pride” in Chapter One for a detailed discussion of İbrahim Hakkı Bey's and Fahri Bey's everyday performances.

human cost involved in the marketing of Oriental Ottoman heritage. To do so, I foreground how impossible it is to dissociate performers' physical labor from their aesthetic choices and from the social and ideological exchange coded by their particular performances.

Multiple lines of inquiry flow from such a perspective: What performance strategies were involved in crafting self-Orientalizing scenarios, settings, genres, and kinetic vocabularies at the Turkish Village? How did this traffic of the exotic recycle and/ or contradict moral discourses on the Ottoman family, new woman, and shifting class structures? Following Kate Fleming's study of the eccentric Ali Pasha, I also inquire whether the entrepreneurial manipulation of Western Orientalist vision entailed ideological empowerment along with threats to imperial pride. What lines of gendered, ethnic, and economic difference existed among Bedouin Ottoman subjects, the belly dancers, and other performers? Using Ussama Makdisi's "Ottoman Orientalism" frame, I ask: how did their articulations of Ottoman imperialism and capitalist ethos differ?

Roberto Levy and Representational Dilemmas of the Turkish Village

In the first place permit me to state that the Ottoman Government is in no wise [*sic*] financially interested in the "Midway Plaisance Turkish Bazaar," which is entirely a private enterprise, at the head of which is Robert Levy, a most estimable merchant of Constantinople, who enjoys the good will of his government, but who occupies *no official position* [emphasis mine] with the imperial Turkish exhibit to the Columbian Exposition. . . . These facts can be fully corroborated by the Imperial Ottoman Commissioner to the World's Columbian Exposition, Ahmed Fahri Bey, now in Chicago, or by his Excellency Hakky [*sic*] Bey, the Ottoman Commissioner-General, who will shortly arrive here.

"A Turkish Subject Explains," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 April 1893, 3.

The celebration (Ottoman Day at the world's fair) opened in the Turkish Village in the Midway plaisance by religious services more impressive than usual, to which only believers in the prophet were admitted. . . . Charles [*sic*] Levy, manager of the village

presided, and near him at the head of the table sat Charles Henrotin, consul general of Turkey, in a brilliant red fez, Hakki [*sic*] Bey, Fahri Bey, royal commissioners, both in gorgeous uniform, resplendent with gold; Sursock Effendi [*sic*], Turkish consul, Tufik [*sic*] Bey, aid de camp to his majesty of Constantinople, and other officials and dignitaries. . . . Mr. Levy closed the proceedings at the banquet table with a very happy speech proposing at its close three cheers for the sultan of Turkey, three for the president of United States, and others for the royal commissioners and Consul Henrotin. He then got three himself and went off to prepare for the parade to the Turkish pavilion inside the grounds.

“Turks’ Day at the Fair,” *The Chicago Times*, 1 September 1893, 5, col.3.⁷⁷

Although the first quotation defensively denies the commercial and representational salience of the Turkish Village to the Ottoman Empire, this site accomplished more than simply provoking controversy. Projecting a contradictory sexual and ethnic image with belly dancers and Bedouin warriors, this Midway village was, nevertheless, ideologically and economically contiguous with the official Ottoman exhibits in the White City. Revisiting the able manager Roberto Levy’s persona and acts as well as the exhibits under his supervision enables a sophisticated understanding of this continuity. A closer look at the exhibits’ dramatic strategies also elucidates the frictive constitution of the Ottoman Empire as an Orientalized exotica, a Muslim superpower, and a Westernized contender on the world stage all at once.

Pan-Islamism and Cultural Brokerage

Fluent in eleven languages and versed in exotic consumptive economies, Roberto Levy was a cosmopolitan, globe-trotting Ottoman merchant with lofty dreams: staying in Chicago to build a moving agency and opening a Turkish restaurant to “tickle the American palate”

⁷⁷ For specific details on the parade route from the Turkish Village to the Ottoman Pavilion, see also newspaper announcements: “World’s Fair To-Day,” *The Chicago Herald*, 31 August 1893, 1, col.1 and “World’s Fair Events,” *The Chicago Record*, 30 August 1893, 1, col. 6).

(“Orient At The Fair: Subject of the Sultan Tells of the Turkish Exhibit,” 8 April 1893, 9).⁷⁸

In managing the Turkish Village, he thus put to use both an entrepreneurial spirit and his prior experiences with cultural brokerage (“Exhibits Being Packed,” 2 November 1893, 7, col. 2).⁷⁹

Like the imperial commissioners Ahmed Fahri Bey and Hakkı Bey, Levy was adept at not only understanding, but also manipulating the Exposition’s capitalist ethos: he knew how to “sell” national (Ottoman) heritage. Moreover, as the second epigraph to this section suggests, Levy both grasped and capitalized on Western diplomacy and Ottoman statecraft, deciphering their hegemonic symbolism and modern protocol. To commemorate the 17th anniversary of Sultan Abdülhamid’s reign at the Ottoman Day Celebration, Levy tactfully and enthusiastically marked, in his banquet toast, the United States President, the Sultan and his bureaucratic elite (imperial commissioners and Consul Charles Henrotin) as business partners and as political superiors (“Turks’ Day at the Fair,” 5, col.3).

It was Levy’s fluency in indigenous and foreign registers, from capitalism to Ottoman patrimonial hierarchies and to Islamic reformist ideology that earned him a central position at official Ottoman ceremonies. The Sultan’s Day, a special day to flaunt Ottoman supremacy, for instance, took off from the dubious Turkish Village where the state elite and the new entrepreneur, both “decked in red fezes and flashy uniforms,” strategically collaborated for profit and prestige under the “star and crescent” with their “1000-peopled Turkish colony” (“Honor the Sultan,” 1 September 1893, 7, cols. 1-2). The Village inhabitants, donkey boys, dragomen, dancing girls, houris, both Turkish and Bedouin alike, all paraded on camels and

⁷⁸ An article on “Languages on the Plaisance” notes that Levy “could carry on flirtation in eleven languages, not to speak of a few odd dialects.” The languages cited are: English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Russian, Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Arabic, and old Hebrew (*The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 June 1893, 3).

donkeys as they celebrated *en route* to the Ottoman Pavilion: the Sultan's prestigious seat abroad ("Honor the Sultan," *ibid.*, col. 1).

Levy's ability to converse in multiple registers was most apparent at the consecration ceremonies staged at and around the Turkish Village mosque. Leading a procession of American Shriners--"the nobles of the Medinah Temple"--along with Muslim Ottoman subjects, Levy orchestrated this dedication ceremony "in true Moslem style" with the Caliph Sultan's permission ("Dedicated to Allah," 28 April 1893, 1, col. 5). The event was suffused with cues of Ottoman Islam, such as the Sultan's scarlet moon-and-crescent banners, soldiers, and imperial marches ("Mosque is Dedicated," 29 April 1893, 1, col. 6). Muezzin Selim Ağalı performed a memorable call to prayer attended by 1,500 devout native and foreign Mohemmedans ("Mosque is Dedicated," *ibid.*). Following the communal prayers and before taking the Mystic Shriners to the bazaar, Levy presented them a "Turkish sword incased in a carved sheath," the worldly reminder of Muslim military might, ("Dedicated to Allah," 28 April 1893, col. 6).

As well, the towering mosque, a replica of Süleymaniye in Istanbul was intended as a salient visual reminder of Ottoman Muslim supremacy, articulating the state's desire to accommodate every Muslim subject regardless of ethnic and sectarian divisions ("Kısm-ı Osmanî'nin Resmî Küşadı" [Official Opening of the Ottoman Section], *CFI*, 1 June 1893, 1, 15). The Ottoman newspaper in Chicago (*CFI*) summarized the mosque's Pan-Islamic message with proud reference to its "prestigious location" (*en şerefli mevki*) ("Kısm-ı Osmanî," *ibid.*, 15). Sanctioned by Caliph Abdülhamid, this mosque provided a safe sacred space for the global Muslim community (*akvam-ı İslamîye*) (*ibid.*).

Both the mosque's setting and ceremonies within, however, registered multiple ironies. First, the mosque's location at the Midway, or the site of evolutionary mishaps and sensuous pleasure, inevitably marked Muslim believers as members of an underdeveloped and morally-decaying nation. Second, this sacred procession was led by a non-Muslim layman: Jewish merchant Roberto Levy. Third, from its multisensory exotic presentation to its intentional initial secrecy and final destination--the bazaar--this holy event performatively centered on selling Oriental mystique. Driving Roberto Levy as the Master of Ceremonies was the lucrative project of theatricalizing Eastern sacred bodies and acts.

One reporter regarded the "gala day for Islam" as evidence of Roberto Levy's "unparalleled showmanship." He contended this was a rare "exhibit of prayer" where participants emblazoned with Muslim insignia "prostrated before Allah" for onlookers ("Mosque Is Dedicated," 29 April 1893, 1, col. 6). In other words, what distinguished Levy from ordinary exhibitors of curios was his urge to sell the sacred rather than only market commonplace displays, such as "men and women fighting, eating, marrying, and selling" ("Mosque Is Dedicated," *ibid.*).

Elaborating on the spectacle's business aspect, the author also noted:

There will be no admission fee, but a collection will be taken up to defray expenses. Hymn books will be provided, and visitors to the mosque will be permitted subsequently to make any purchases in the adjoining bazaar that their fancy and the condition of their pocketbook may dictate. ("Mosque is Dedicated," *ibid.*)

Levy's entrepreneurial wisdom in marketing sacred acts was not, however, as striking as the ways in which he manipulated the Ottoman elite hegemonic discourses to further his capitalist projects and ended up, ironically, as the "official" voice of Ottoman Islam. Further, Levy deployed his business skills to sell almost every aspect of Ottoman culture.

Quotidian Performances and Cosmopolitan Cultural Brokerage

In contrast to the official Ottoman focus on inanimate objects in the White City, Levy's exotica venture was premised on marketing both religious and profane embodiment: scenic ethnic shows (Bedouin Encampment), dance and theater concerts (*café chantant* and Turkish Odeon), everyday life scenes (Constantinople Street Scene), and street pageantry. Folklorist Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett emphasizes strategic and ideological distinctions between the display of inanimate objects and live bodies positioned as ethnographic specimens or curios (1998, 19). She posits two categories for presenting people in living style: "staged recreations of cultural performances (wedding, funeral, hunt, martial arts display, shamanistic ritual) and the drama of the quotidian (nursing a baby, cooking, smoking, spitting, tending a fire, washing, carving, and weaving) (1998, 45)."

To summarize quintessential Ottomanness, Turkish Village inhabitants engaged in mimetic and metonymic displays with contradictory implications. Presented as "unstaged" native acts, the Turkish quotidian dramas included, first, in-situ crafts production at the back of the Grand Bazaar where female laborers exemplified both honorable and modest Ottoman industriousness and the larger processes of Hamidian industrial revitalization ("Turkish Village on Midway Plaisance," *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, 3, 1, 318).⁸⁰ Second, female dancers' everyday acts, such as smoking, dressing up, or putting on toiletries, evoked erotic Eastern femininity. They authenticated and were authenticated by Ottoman traditional music

⁸⁰ See "The Ottoman Female Workers at the White City and Beyond" in Chapter One on the ideological implications of this in-situ production.

and performance, architecture, and cuisine (“Olive-Eyed Houris,” 22 April 1893, 7, cols. 1-2; “Arrival of the Dancers,” May 27, 1893, 3, col.3; Çelik 1992, 54). By the same token, the Bedouins in Garfield Park encapsulated “simple manners and customs” of Arabian desert life by their “untrained” yet agile mere presence, a presence that evoked primitive, war-thirsty masculinity and idyllic femininity (“Bedouins Desert Life Exemplified,” 25 May 1893, 5, col.2).

The sedan chair bearers, characterized as “swarthy” and “stout-legged,” served simultaneously as ethnic specimens and human curios, lending racial and cultural color to the “Constantinople Street Scene” (“Seen in Jackson Park,” 12 May 1893, 9, col. 5).⁸¹ Loud and assertive, these “perspiring fellows” transported not only Midway visitors, but also road maneuvers--worth a dollar a ride--from Istanbul’s narrow, noisy, and crowded streets. As one reporter noted, the sedan bearers often acted “like they must be given the right of way at all times and under all circumstances” (“Sedan Chair Men Stop for None,” 21 May 1893, 4, cols. 1-2).⁸² In effect, their traffic manner instantiated Ottoman despotism.

As loud as the sedan-bearers, sixty-two “baggy-trouserred” and “sturdy” Turkish firemen gave daily “exhibits of how they run to fires” under Roberto Levy’s and Chief Ketaligi’s proud supervision (“Special Midway Shows Today,” 30 May 1893, 4, col.7).⁸³ One reporter noted the exceptional stamina and speed of these Ottoman men with reference to how they could “run 25 miles without stopping” with the ability “to tire any horse alive on a

⁸¹ See also “Entertainments,” *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, 10 May 1893, 3, col.1.

⁸² On the mechanics of daily transportation in Istanbul, see also Roberto Levy’s interview: “Orient at the Fair: Subject of the Sultan Tells of the Turkish Exhibit,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 April 1893, 1, col. 3.

⁸³ Also see “Orient at the Fair”, 1, col.3 for Levy’s description of Turkish firemen and their engines.

straight-away jog” (“Special Midway Shows,” *ibid.*). Yet, these everyday dramas of Eastern virility also mobilized conflicting representational schemes devised by the Ottoman state, the Fire Chief, Roberto Levy, and their foreign onlookers. From the Hamidian perspective, the hand-held brass machine, exhibited in the Transportation Building, was to exemplify the Ottomans’ technological progress (“Day of Many Fetes,” 9 September 1893, 1, cols. 1-2). It is also safe to speculate that the firemen’s physical agility and technical competence were intended to corroborate imperial political stamina. For Levy and imperial commissioners, the stylized firemen show was a promotional device to boost Turkish Village admissions.

In reality, the simple Turkish machine, a heavy hand engine carried on shoulders, paled in comparison to technically sophisticated locomotives, cars, and polished brass American fire apparatus and, hence, indexed inferior Ottoman industrial prowess (“Day of Many Fetes,” *ibid.*; “Turkish Firemen,” 21 June 1893, 4, col.1).⁸⁴ The firemen were tragically ineffective in dealing with real life fires. As many newspapers reported, these “over-excited” men, “howling with all their might and main,” often knocked down and injured people along the way before arriving on the scene late with “a suction pipe too small to fit a neighboring plug” or with a “broken hose” (“Turks Put Out a Fire,” 21 June 1893, 2, col.3; “Turkish Firemen Run Over a Man,” 25 June 1893, 4, col.4; “Turks Fight a Fire,” 28 June 1893, 4, col.7).

In effect, the firemen’s performances recycled tropes of Eastern irrationality (lacking a solid plan); depravity (noise and recklessness); despotism (seizing the right of way); and inconsequentiality (late and ineffective apparatus and performance). Portraying the animalistic

⁸⁴ One *Chicago Evening Post* reporter described the Turkish fire engine “as a portable syringe of somewhat less power and usefulness than the pumps which were cast away in this country several generations since; rather inferior as a piece of fire apparatus to the leather-bucket brigade which Ben Franklin operated in Philadelphia 150 years ago” (“Turkish Firemen,” *ibid.*).

and primitivized East, these men inadvertently became, in the eyes of the onlookers, pathetic and feminized Oriental curios rather than accomplished technicians. In spite of the firemen's effective exotic appeal, this unintended Orientalist discourse marked Ottoman bodies and, by extension, Ottoman culture as backward, peculiar, and whimsical.

Oriental Dance at the Café Chantant

In contrast to the quotidian dramas' equivocal Orientalism, Turkish dance and theater productions deliberately mobilized self-exoticizing rhetoric, imagery, and movement. At the Turkish *café chantant* and the Odeon Theater, the Jewish, Bedouin, Coptic, Rom, and Armenian dancers--from Constantinople and Damascus--continually whirled, undulated, and contorted their abdominal muscles for many spectators at 25-and 50-cent-worth shows a day ("Olive Eyed Houris," 22 April 1893, 7, cols. 1-2; "Entertainments," 10 May 1893, 3, col.1)⁸⁵ The *café chantant* performances comprised solely of the *danse du ventre*, the infamous Eastern dance with indigenous and global immoral associations (Çelik 2000; Shay and Sellers-Young 2005; and Jarmakani 2005).⁸⁶ Yet the folkloric Turkish Odeon staged "above-reproach"

⁸⁵ See also the Turkish Odeon Theater's newspaper advertisement: "Costumes, Manners of Bedouins, Druzes, Syrians, Kurds, Turks. Their amusements, weddings, dances, etc. See the Beautiful girls of Damascus and Constantinople. Performances hourly, beginning at 1 p.m. Admission 50 cents" in *Chicago Evening Post*, 23 May 1893, 3, col.6. It is significant that a couple of months later, another ad mentions only "the beautiful dancers of Damascus and Constantinople" [*The Sunday Herald*, 2 July 1893, 27, col.4].

⁸⁶ On *danse du ventre*'s erotically-charged moral threat, see the caption for "A Performance in the Egyptian Theatre" in *The Magic City: A Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair and Its Treasures*, Vol. 1, No. 16 [April 30] (Philadelphia: H.S. Smith and C.R. Graham for Historical Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated. The caption reads as: "The *danse du ventre*, as the movement is known, and which was executed by girls not only in Egyptian Theater, but also in the Persian, Turkish, and with some modification in the Moorish Theatres, on the Plasiance, is a suggestively lascivious contorting of the abdominal muscles, which is extremely ungraceful and almost shockingly disgusting."

dramatic plots and regional dances to secure cultural authority and to counter claims of immodesty and frivolity (“Musical and Dramatic Notes,” 3 July 1893, 3, col. 4).

Belly dancers performed in private spaces, evoking distant Eastern seraglios where dolled-up odalisques laid luxuriously on low divans surrounded by Oriental rugs and the sweet aroma of mocha and tobacco (the *chibouk*) (“From the Turkish Café,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated; “Rougina, the Syrian Dancer,” 3 July 1893, 1, col.7; see also “Salina (Algerian),” *Oriental and Occidental Types*, 1894, unpaginated). Describing Syrian dancer Jamelee’s Turkish café performance, one viewer noted:

It was customary in these dances for only one performer to appear one at a time, while the rest, grouping about her upon divans and cushions, encouraged her by witty comment or shrill feminine cries, all the time keeping up a curious musical accompaniment on tambourines and stringed instruments. (“Jamelee [Syrian Dancer],” *Oriental and Occidental Types*, 1894, unpaginated)

Referencing solo Ottoman belly dance conventions with a group of accomplished female musician/dancers and their sonic insertions, this image also conjured up homoerotic indolence: recumbent harem women entertaining each other in seclusion.

Shared by Turkish, Egyptian, Persian, and Algerian Villages alike, the movement vocabulary connoted both sexual frenzy and moral disorder. In response to “increasing sharp drum beats” and string instruments, the dancers’ convulsive body isolations--hip and shoulder accents and shimmies--and swift turns signaled unrestrained libido.⁸⁷ In one viewer’s words:

Stamping her foot forward, the dancer will move her shoulders up and down, increasing contortions of her body, striking the castanets she carries, whirling sometimes, but more often stamping forward, each time to a posture nearer the floor, until as she seems to

⁸⁷ See the caption of “A Dance in the Street of Cairo Theater” in *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, Educational Arts Series, Vol. 1, No. 11 [18 January] (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

expire in the excitement of rapid music and cries of the musicians. . . . (“A Dance in the Street of Cairo Theatre,” *The Dream City*, unpaginated)

Another commentator likened these climactic shimmies and whirls to “epileptic” suggestive acts (Smith 1893, 67). In this performance, a frenzied belly dancer used her “languorous looks, open lips, waving hands, protruding, suggestive stomach and wriggling body” to express “the hot, voluptuous passion of the East” (Smith *ibid.*, 66-67).

Separating the audience from performers, the proscenium stage simultaneously served as a voyeuristic device and cultural barrier, temporarily dissociating male and female onlookers from the belly dancers’ much-publicized “scandalous” sexual excess.⁸⁸ Further, this “sanitizing” arrangement visualized the temporal distancing of uncivilized, stagnant bodies (“Turkish Stagecraft” 9 July 1893, 24, cols. 1-2). Marking the Eastern Others “in terms of distance,” the proscenium spatialized temporal differences between the audience and performers to exemplify performatively what Johannes Fabian has called the “denial of coeavealness” (1983, xi, 31).

Beyond the performance space, spatial separation, as a publicity device, evoked the dancers’ sexual availability. At the cafe entrance, hawkers loudly advertised, “pretty Turkish girls upstairs,” inviting visitors to peep in on Turkish exotic dances for only twenty-five cents. (“From the Turkish Café,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). Here the secluded performance space invoked harem secrecy. Such privacy was pivotal to the erotic economy of Eastern mystery and romance perpetuated in and through belly dance. In other instances, the non-

⁸⁸ On the widespread objection to and banning of belly dance shows, see “Want Midway Dances Stopped,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 August 1893, 1 cols. 3-4; “Persian Theater Closed,” *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, 5 August 1893, 1, col. 2; “Ousted from the Midway,” *The Chicago Herald*, 5 August 1893, 1, col. 7. See also “Amina (Egyptian),” *Oriental and Occidental Types*, 1894, unpaginated for a “storm of protest” championed by the Board of Lady Managers.

Muslim dancers posing as Muslim were often promoted as “fresh from the seraglio, the Sultan’s favorites.”⁸⁹ This marketing strategy aimed to entice fairgoers with a rare, but “purchasable scopic privilege,” a privilege, as Amira Jarmakani argues, that surpassed Islamic rules of sexual propriety, in general, and gender-segregation, in particular (2005, 4).

Folkloric Performances at the Odeon

While tradition signified timeless eroticism at the *café chantant*, it registered equally timeless but respectable ethnic diversity at the Odeon Theater. Staging ceremonial festivities, ranging from Christian rituals to tribal Kurdish scenes and to Palestinian weddings and funerals, the Odeon exhibit was, in the manager’s words, an honorable cultural tableaux, “free of Nautch girls or anything indecorous in the performance of any of our people” (“Not an Immoral Show,” 23 July 1893, 32, col. 1). Issues of morality were intimately linked with the Odeon’s ideology of national pride. Here the stylized and desexualized performances showcased ancient and contemporary folklore as dual expression of glorious national heritage and as proof of Ottoman civilization. Managed by Naanum Moghabghab, a Prebysterian minister from Beyrout, this show also promoted the Ottoman Empire as “the land of the Bible” (Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme, 1893).⁹⁰ In other words, although the Odeon corroborated Ottoman supremacy in and through folklore, it did so with Christian overtones, breaching the state’s emphasis on proud Muslim heritage.

⁸⁹ See the caption of “An Odalisque from the Seraglio” in *The Magic City*, Vol. 1, No. 16 [April 30] (Philadelphia: H.S. Smith and C.R. Graham for Historical Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

⁹⁰ On the Christian subtext of the Odeon, see also “A Godly Manager,” *The Chicago Times*, 17 July 1903, 4, col. 3.

At the Odeon's entrance, a *commedia dell'arte*-influenced clown, adorned with "warlike instruments," tirelessly promoted the show with "witty sayings, funny songs, and grotesque dances" ("A Turkish Clown," *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). Accompanying this amusing strategy was a detailed and didactic play synopsis ("Odd Shows at the Fair," 25 June 1893, 17, col. 5). Inside, the interpreter, acting as both "ethnographic specimen and museum docent," translated to English every dramatic line ("Odd Shows," *ibid.*). The eclectic program consisted of a dramatic story--act one--followed by regional dances such as Aegean Zeybek male-female duets, Albanian dances with rhythmical finger snapping, and dervish-style whirling in front of a Golden Horn image ("Selim is Frequently Married," 5 May 1893, 5, col.2; "Olive Eyed Houris," 22 April 1893, 7, cols. 1-2).

Although the dramatic text was intended to signal civilized sophistication, the whimsical intrigue of protagonists and plots helped reinforce Eastern irrationality and inconsequentiality. Set in and around the palace, *True Manhood* dramatized the turbulent relationship between a brave subject and a capricious Arab king who alternately murdered his visitors on a day of bad fortune and entertained them with joyful receptions on a day of good fortune ("Turkish Stagecraft," 9 July 1893, 24, cols. 1-2; also see Programme No. 3 of "True Manhood," *Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme*, 1893, unpaginated). Other plots centered on looting Arabs and their tribal violence ("Odd Shows at the Fair," 25 June 1893, 17, col. 5), love ailments cured by sorcery and witchcraft ("Turkish Stagecraft," 9 July 1893, 24, cols. 1-2), and mystical harem decadence amplified in gender-segregated wedding ceremonies ("Oriental Wedding in Damascus," *Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme*, 1893, unpaginated).

In spite of the Odeon's "purist" rhetoric, the artistic and ideological distinctions between belly dance and folklore were often blurred in practice and in the visitors' eyes.⁹¹ The Odeon dancers often incorporated a *danse du ventre* vocabulary and music, while they executed rapid twirls and subdued body isolations to accent with hand cymbals, *davul* (colossal kettle drums) and *ney* (Turkish flute or *manjereh*) ("Olive-Eyed Houris," 22 April 1893, 7, col. 2; "Rosa, the Famous Dancer," *Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme*, 1893, unpaginated). Performing at multiple sites at once or changing employment for better pay, the dancers also made it impossible to distinguish Odeon and *café chantant* performances ("Waiting For Music," *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated).

Turks at the International Midway Balls

The conflation of the folkloric and the sensual and of social and formal dancing occurred mostly at street pageants or traveling ethnographic spectacles: state days such as Illinois Day; national days such as the 4th of July; and international balls on 16 June, 17 August, and 11 October. The foreign concessionaires cooperated with the Exposition Company in organizing and promoting these memorable international parades as grand carnivalesque marches to display the Midway's "queer" racial and cultural difference.⁹² Designed as moving

⁹¹ See "Odd Shows at the Fair," on how the "folkloric" dancing in the Kurdish Drama is read as *danse du ventre* and rendered as "the only objectionable feature" [*New York Daily Tribune*, 25 June 1893, 17, col. 5].

⁹² For elaborations on cultural and racial difference, see, for instance, descriptions of "greasy bodies of Dahomey Amazons forming a background" ["The International Ball at the Fair," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 August 1893, 1, cols. 2-5]; "bird's eye view of the human race, a cross-section of humanity with one end in the center of Europe and the other in African wilderness; a wild fantasia of queer folk, radiant in all the trappings from the gay vermillion of the farthest Orient to the sleek seal sacque [*sic*] of the Bering Indian" ("Ball of All Nations," 1, col. 7) and "gazing upon the freaks" ["Midway Bars its Doors," *The Chicago Times*, 18 June 1893, 1, cols. 3-4].

publicity campaigns, these orderly processions on and beyond the Midway thus intended to boost admissions with foreign villages' hyper-visibility and their kinetic and aural omnipresence ("For All the Nations," 8 June 1893, 10, col.7).⁹³ For instance, the most-attended and well-planned International Ball (17 August) at the Natatorium Hall captured the multisensory intercultural dialogue characteristic of all parades: "curios of every hue" from forty nations dressed in colorful traditional garb, from Egyptian turbans and Ottoman veils to Pueblo Indian blankets and feathers; they carried their national flags and performed Japanese fan dances, Mexican fandangos, and Sioux Indians' scalp dances as they mingled with the Romanian quartet, wildly-thumping Dahomeyan drums and metal pans, and plaintive Paraguay serenades ("For All Nations There," *ibid.*; "The International Ball at the Fair," 17 August 1893, 1, cols. 2-5).

Under Levy's shrewd management, Ottoman subjects attended every ball in large numbers. "A crimson-fezzed army" of four hundred to five hundred-seventy paraded on horseback, camelback and on foot (*ibid.*; "Midway Bars Its Doors," 18 June 1893, 1, cols. 3-4). Although imperial insignia such as star-and-crescent flags anchored the Ottomans' visual distinction, moving bodies, as in other ethnic acts, were the primary locus of cultural difference. As such, they fulfilled, what Jane Desmond has coined "physical foundationalism,"

⁹³ In explaining the purposes of a Midway parade, President Burnham noted that: "It would let the public know that there was something on the Midway and would draw thousands to the venue. At the same time, the day and hour of the parade having been well advertised, it would draw a great crowd to the world's fair grounds and become one of the popular features of the fair" ["Light in the Midway," *The Chicago Evening Post*, 13 June 1893, 1, col. 4]. To proceed with the first international ball on 16 June, the executive committee was willing to meet the demands of the foreign concessionaires, because this was a lucrative investment. As the article suggests, "every dollar taken in on the Plaisance means cash in the world's fair treasury and that is the point upon which the concessionaires have no trouble in getting the ear of officials" ("Light in the Midway," *ibid.*).

an epistemological framework that renders performing bodies as the ahistorical guarantors of cultural authenticity (1999, xiv, 12). Such naturalization and commodification of bodily truths through live performance translated racial and sexual hierarchies of social evolutionism into ubiquitous native song-and-dance routines at these international parades (Desmond 1999, xiii).

It was Rougina, for instance, “the dancing girl, in a sparkling robe” who fluttered, or moved in rapid circles, to lead the Turks at the grandest International Ball (“All Nations There,” 17 August 1893, 1, col.5). With “a fez on one side of her tossing head and pantalets clasped to her ankle by jewels,” Rougina performed the prototypical harem girl. As the leading icon of Ottoman exotica, she thus blurred the distinctions between the “honorable” Odeon-type folklore and “dishonorable” *danse du ventre*.

Given belly dance’s wide appeal and marketability, and Levy’s business skills, it is safe to speculate that such Turkish publicity moves were intentional economic investments. Like many other concessionaires, Levy vigorously protested against the Exposition Company’s ineffective and unfair management, particularly, the lack of lighting and unsanitary work conditions on Midway grounds, Sunday closings, and exorbitant percentages--25 %--extracted from each ticket and item sale (“Fair Directors Sued,” 16 May 1893, 4, cols. 1-2; “No Joy for Javanese,” 29 May 1893, 2, cols. 1-2). The international parades provided Levy and his crew with an urgent opportunity to recoup their financial losses.

To boost profits, Levy also deployed his personal charisma: gallantly riding his horse and enthusiastically socializing with all other participants (“Midway Bars Its Doors,” 18 June 1893, 1, cols. 3-4; “All Nations There,” 17 August 1893, 1, cols. 2-5). His active engagement with each international assembly paid off as he ended up managing and superintending the

decorations of the Grand Farewell Ball (11 October) at the Vienna Bakery (“All Nations Will Dance,” 4 October, 1893, 7, col.1). At other times, he built a Turkish Parlor, a lavish showroom, selling “rich Oriental stuffs”--rugs, tapestries, and embroideries--at the Turkish Bazaar (“The International Ball at the Fair,” 17 August 1893, 1, cols. 2-5). Far-Away Moses, a Turkish Village celebrity, helped Levy’s vision by “drinking coffee as an exhibit” at the All Nations’ Parade (17 June) (“Midway Bars Its Doors,” 18 June 1893, 1, cols. 3-4). From formal and quotidian performances to marketable goods, such deliberate commercialism thus suffused every Turkish representation at Midway parades.

Deliberate Orientalism and Entrepreneurial Citizenship

Economic motivations alone do not, however, fully explain the symbolic import of Ottoman performances. In particular, one central question concerns whether Turkish adoption of Western Orientalist tropes signaled unidirectional Western hegemony or whether its intentionality connoted agency? Over the last two decades, world’s fair research has favored arguments of Western discursive control through hierarchical spatial, architectural, and visual arrangements on Exposition grounds (Çelik 1992, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Mitchell 1991, and Rydell 1984). In particular, Timothy Mitchell (1991, 2, 5-7) posits the “world-as-exhibit” framework as a 19th-century colonial visual regime that not only arranged chaotic foreign villages into orderly representations, but, by doing so, also separated the privileged gazer/viewer ontologically from the unprivileged natives on display.⁹⁴ Similarly, Barbara

⁹⁴ To suggest “world-as-exhibit” as a representational technique, Timothy Mitchell [1991, xiv] writes, “Everything seemed to be set up before the observer or exhibition of something, representing some reality beyond . . . the world itself ordered up as though it were an endless exhibition.”

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests that the ethnographic gaze, premised on panopticonesque surveillance, persistently objectified and dehumanized native performers at the world's fairs (1998, 54-55).

Challenging dichotomous formulations of active Western viewers versus passive non-Western performers, historian Kate Fleming construes cultural representation as a multidirectional and multivalent process in which “power of different sorts is embedded at all levels” (1999, 184). In her study of Ali Pasha, Ottoman governor of late-18th-century Ioannina, Fleming chronicles his self-conscious manipulation of Western Orientalist fantasies by exposing the artifice of his eccentric behavior and irrational acts. Dressed as an Oriental native, Ali Pasha often “bragged about his conquests, cruelties and rapaciousness” and spoke in unintelligible language to his European visitors (175-6), while he entertained them with Eastern decadence: young and fawning dancers (163).⁹⁵ Performing the cruel, irrational, and decadent Ottoman despot, Ali Pasha thus intentionally cued his everyday performances to meet European Orientalist expectations (176).⁹⁶ Using Orientalism to his own favor and benefit, the Pasha, as Fleming argues, cleverly became an active, formidable subject in this representational process (1999, 17).

Like Ali Pasha, Roberto Levy deliberately consolidated Orientalist visions of himself and the Ottoman Empire through multiple performative strategies. First, he effectively used décor--showrooms for Ottoman goods--performance genres--belly dance, quotidian drama, and

⁹⁵ On the specific uses of Orientalism as representational power, Kate Fleming [1999, 156] writes, “Ali reveled in playing the part of the idiosyncratic, cruel, and illogical despot, and staged carefully planned Orientalist vignettes to thrill his visitors and validate their established view of himself.”

⁹⁶ His immediate circle was populated with French employees and in Ioannina's cosmopolitan merchant community [Fleming 1999, 178].

theater--and native costumes to manipulate familiar Orientalist tropes of sensual eccentricity and irrational authoritarianism. Second, Levy alternately adorned himself with Muslim insignia, such as *turban* (Islamic headdress), robe, and *tespih* (rosary), and with daggers and rifles to project a versatile ethnic (Zeybek, Aegean, Jewish) identity (“A Typical Turk,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated)⁹⁷ Posing in luxurious Oriental interiors, Levy portrayed himself, for Exposition albums, as the representative of Mohammedan Turks and ethnic difference as he extended his “acts” for the Gala Day for Islam and international balls (“Mosque is Dedicated,” 29 April 1893, 1, col. 6) .⁹⁸

Oscillating between folkloric and Orientalist depictions, sacred and nonsacred alike, Levy’s malleable self-portrayal also echoed Ali Pasha’s incorporation of a European political vocabulary and cultural trappings (Fleming 1999, 156). Ali Pasha, as Fleming (1999, 164) suggests, borrowed French symbols and tastes to “obtain what France stood for: independence, modernity, power, and supremacy.” Like Ali, Levy deployed both cultural and political Westernisms. He dressed in European suits for official Ottoman ceremonies across the White City and the Midway. As well, he both promoted and defended his enterprises in Western terms

⁹⁷ See also the caption of “R. J. Levi, Constantinople” in *Oriental and Occidental Northern and Southern Portrait Types of the Midway Plaisance*, (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

⁹⁸ See the caption for “A Typical Turk” in *Midway Types*, a photographic album of the Exposition, for an elaboration on tropes of Oriental intrigue and sensual luxury: “It has not been necessary to bowstring a rival, sack and dump into Bosphorus beauty of the seraglio to produce the air of satisfaction which surrounds this gentleman from the Far East” [Chicago: American Engraving Company 1894, unpaginated]. R. J. Levi’s caption in *Oriental and Occidental Types* (1894, unpaginated) considers Levi’s entrepreneurial success as “another illustration of the wonderful fertility of the Jewish mind and power to adapt himself to any environment, and to utilize every opportunity for pecuniary gain and personal advancement.” This description layers the visual image of the ethnic (Aegean, Zeybek) Turk with Jewish difference.

with reference to proper documentation and legal entitlement (“Fair Directors Sued,” 25 May 1893, 9, col. 1; “To Protest in Chorus,” 16 May 1893, 4, cols. 1-2).

In one of his numerous vociferous protests against the Midway management, Levy threatened to “bring an action against damages for breach of contract in failing to furnish the village with light and lavatories” (“Fair Directors Sued,” 25 May 1893, 9, cols. 1.).⁹⁹ Levy used the discourse of rights, or the lack thereof, to articulate his grievances about power shortage:

We have suffered many things of many men (Exposition officials). This is but another. I am the slave of the Exposition. I know it and I wish I didn't. We have to take what is thrown to us, not what is *our rights* [emphasis mine]. If they take these lights from us we have nothing left. Well, they can shut up my show, but cannot shut my mouth. (“Threaten to Close,” 13 June 1893, 1, col. 5)

Dismayed by continued blows to business, ranging from Sunday closings to high tariffs on Ottoman goods, the Turkish manager retaliated by breaking contracts (“No Joy for the Javanese,” 29 May 1893, 2, cols. 1-2). He justified it with “the loss of patronage he suffered through the failure to provide him with electric lights [that] more than equals the amount demanded of him as percentage on sales” (“Uproar in the Indian Village,” 13 June 1893, 1, col.5).

Levy's multiple strategies positioned him not only as a free-floating capitalist citizen, pursuing larger profits, but also as a product of late-Ottoman political ideology. His demands for fair treatment on Exposition Grounds reflected the liberal premise of Tanzimat reforms (1839-1861). Securing private property and life through judicial, administrative, and bureaucratic arrangements, Tanzimat reforms had enabled Levy and others to speak the Western language of rights, business contracts, and legal entitlement. Further, such structural

⁹⁹ See also “Egypt in the Dark,” *The Chicago Herald*, 11 May 1893, 9, cols. 1-2.

alignments helped define imperial citizenship as consumerism and entrepreneurship: a citizenship bound by the right to sell and purchase freely.

As entrepreneur-cum-trickster, Levy manipulated both Ottoman and Western discourses to craft himself as an informal sovereign on the Exposition grounds. Punctuated with losses and gains, his story continues to highlight the limits, stakes, and portable strategies of late-Ottoman capitalist transformation, in general, and the moral and economic quandaries associated with embodied cultural production, in particular. It remains to us to explore the resonance of traveling artistic and political vocabularies back in the Ottoman Empire.

Traveling Aesthetics and Ideologies

Urban Restructuring, Entertainment, and Propriety

The Ottoman performers and their changing fortunes were firmly embedded in the restructured *fin-de-siècle* cityscapes. As many scholars have noted, the late Ottoman government invested extensively in the commercial and cultural remaking of the imperial capital (Istanbul) and provincial centers, ranging from Damascus to Aleppo and from Beirut to Mosul (Hanssen, Philipp, and Weber 2002; Hanssen 2005, 8; Çelik 1986). These cities thus became the ultimate stage for centralizing state power, luring foreign and local investment, rejuvenating trade, and for inculcating civility during the Tanzimat and Hamidian periods (Hanssen 2005, 11, 19). As historian Jens Hanssen argues, the physical transformation of each city was driven equally by public morality and bourgeois distinction (Hanssen 2005, 194-95).

During the Tanzimat era, the imperial capital, Istanbul, for instance, underwent a construction boom funded by the Palace and European and indigenous private investors. While the municipal administration (1855) changed hands, investing councils instead of *kadis* (Islamic judges) with state power, the European-style symmetry in urban planning and new architecture all mirrored the process of centralization-at-large (Çelik 1986, 44). The affluent European quarters of Galata and Pera, populated by the commercial non-Muslim bourgeoisie, were the chosen sites for municipal urban renewal projects (1855). These projects ranged from construction and repair of sanitation facilities to building of fire-proof brick houses, street lights, close supervision of markets and guilds to beautification of harbors and docks and to the proliferation of cultural centers (Çelik 1986, 44-47). With the exception of palace or other elite inhabitants, the city's remaining population--the Muslim masses--suffered daily from poor infrastructure in their neighborhoods: haphazard roads, unsanitary establishments, and imminent fire threats to their wooden residences. Hence, the eclectic and Westernized Tanzimat urban reforms reflected bourgeois privileges, in particular, and broader processes of class fragmentation, in general.

Although administrative centralization continued during the Hamidian period, the urban restructuring was cast in terms of Islamic paternalism and welfare to mitigate inequitable class differentiation. As the civil imperial edicts demonstrate, Sultan Abdülhamid took measures to regulate bread, meat and fuel prices and to provide shelter and food for the urban poor (Engin 2001, 33-43, 80-84). Meanwhile, large-scale tourism investments such as landscape beautification led to the displacement of the disadvantaged, "stubborn" (*fakir ve inatçı*) Muslim and non-Muslim populations living in lower-class quarters (Engin 2001, 85-87). In contrast to such contradictory economic regulations, imperial concerns over public order

were driven only by the maintenance of a safe, moral public space free of vice and debauchery. Myriad decrees were thus issued to scrutinize Muslim women's dress code and public mobility, alcohol consumption, gambling, prostitution, and nightlife decorum (Engin *ibid.*, 53-58; 62-66).

As in Istanbul, the reconstruction of *fin-de-siècle* Beirut was at once a moral and economic project undertaken jointly by Ottoman and European authorities and the local literary and commercial middle class (Hanssen 2005, 265-266). The burgeoning of private villas and public architecture reinscribed both the indigenous elite's and the Ottoman state's claims to power (Hanssen, *ibid.*, 196). On the other hand, as historian Jens Hanssen demonstrates, the proliferation of leisure spaces, such as theatres, coffeehouses, cabarets, early cinemas, and public squares, generated discourses of respectability and placed "fear and demonization" at the heart of Beirut's bourgeois project of modernity (*ibid.*, 212).¹⁰⁰ Increased police control and the introduction of gas lighting after 1887 were implemented to monitor unruly bodies of nightlife: lower-class workers, European visitors, and disreputable women (*ibid.*, 199, 209-211). As a result, policing nocturnal entertainment, ranging from alcohol consumption and gambling to lewd shadow plays, became pivotal to, what Jenssen labels, "elite notions of civility" (*ibid.*, 193).

Cultural Hybridization in the Empire and Beyond

¹⁰⁰ In Hanssen's words: "The elite's urbanity coincided with the development of public spaces for leisure--shops, cafes, squares, and night-time places of entertainment--in the wake of rising levels of material consumption" [2005, 198].

Cosmopolitanism as bourgeois praxis was both the recurrent theme and primary goal of Ottoman urban restructuring. The late-19th-century Beirut was marked by ethnic and religious heterogeneity accompanied by unprecedented cultural plurality (ibid., 2005, 13). In Istanbul, Western material and performance culture permeated the well-lit and clean streets of Pera and Galata and upper-class Muslim lifestyles in myriad ways. In particular, Armenian-owned theatres featured European, mostly French and Italian, troupes performing Western classics (Akın 2002 [1998], 258) and well-known operas such as *La Traviata* (263). The local French newspapers featured illustrated announcements of and detailed stories on the burgeoning *café chantants* and variety theaters, grand balls with waltzing, classical music concerts, ballet, piano and horse-riding classes, as well as luxury items, ranging from Havana cigars to porcelain dinnerware and to the latest Parisian female fashion in elegant hats and hairstyles.¹⁰¹

Similarly, the imperial palaces were saturated with cultural Westernization. While European architecture infused the interior décor of the palaces--i.e., baroque Dolmabahçe Palace--conspicuous consumption (Akyıldız 1998, 59) became a common practice. Sultan Abdülmecid's daughter Refia, for instance, accumulated extraordinary debts to import all her carriages, clothes and furniture from Paris (ibid., 49, 51). Further, Istanbul's "chic" reputation and wars led to an increased flow of bodies and tastes across borders as Egyptian upper-class women relocated to Istanbul, from 1820s onwards, for luxury tourism and as British and French

¹⁰¹ See Nur Akın's 19. *Yüzyılın ikinci Yarısında Galata ve Pera* [Galata and Pera in the Second Half of the 19th-Century] (Istanbul: Literatür, 2002), 40-51, 257-264 for a meticulous survey of the range of cultural Westernization in French daily newspapers (1848-1900), including *Journal de Constantinople*, *La Turquie* and *Le Moniteur Oriental*. Their readers were the non-Muslim and European inhabitants of Pera and Galata.

soldiers altered the capital's entertainment-scape in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1856) (Sakaoğlu and Akbayan 1999, 158).

In her memoirs, poet and composer Leyla Saz Hanım has detailed the hybrid ceremonial culture of the Abdülmecid era (1839-1861), particularly how the palace residents were preoccupied with music stands, pianos, and Western notation (1994 [1920-21], 46, 139, 152, 201).¹⁰² An imperial orchestra, trained in both European and Turkish genres, played popular tunes from *William Tell* and *La Traviata* (ibid., 44) and performed for ballet performances and concerts at the Palace (ibid., 46-7).¹⁰³ Also striking was the coexistence of multiple European dances--Scottish, Spanish, Western ballets and pantomimes (ibid., 152)--and ethnic performances--Greek Horas, Albanian and Bosnian folk forms--in addition to the traditional styles, executed by "male belly dancers (*köçek*), young Armenian girls, and Jewesses" (50-51, also see Ali Rıza Bey 2001 [1920-25], 327).

Traditional belly dance performances, executed by non-Muslim and Rom performers, continued to animate local upper-class harem festivities (Garnett 1909, 229, 235, 244; Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 29-31), outdoor middle and lower-class family excursions (Ali Rıza Bey, ibid., 115), and the underground working-class taverns (Koçu 2002). The Ottoman performances at the

¹⁰² On the popularity of Italian music during Abdülmecid's rule, also see Abdülhamid's daughter Ayşe Osmanoglu's memoirs (1960, 17). She also mentions Western music became part of routine performances at the Palace after Sultan Abdülmecid commissioned Italian composer Donizetti's brother for a personal imperial march (1960, 26). This musician then trained both the imperial orchestra (*Muzika-ı Hümayun*) and an all-female band in Western classical music (26).

¹⁰³ As the daughter of Ismail Pasha, the chief imperial physician, Leyla Saz (1850-1936) had frequent and easy access to the Çırağan Palace during the latter years of Sultan Abdülmecid's rule (1839-1861) and the whole of Sultan Abdülaziz's reign (1861-1876). Enriched with an insider's perspective, her memoirs, *Imperial Harem of the Sultans*, Landon Thomas, trans., (Beyoğlu, Istanbul: Peva Publications, 1994 [1920-21]) provide myriad details of the imperial quotidian with a particular focus on harem life, ceremonies, and musical and dance styles.

Columbian Fair drew extensively from such decades-long cultural plurality by sampling imperial marches with Western instrumentation for parades and grand openings and by playing belly dance tunes in Turkish Village theaters (Truman 1893, 537, 558; “Midway Fourth Parade,” 30 June 1893, 1, col.7; “Entertainments: Constantinople Street Scene,” 10 May 1893, 3, col. 1).¹⁰⁴

During Abdülhamid’s reign, the Yıldız Palace in Istanbul was the main site for the unprecedented artistic cross-fertilization. In her memoirs, Sultan Abdülhamid’s daughter Ayşe Osmanoğlu frequently documents Western-style dramas, Italian operas and operettes such as *La Traviata*, *Barbier de Seville*, and *La Belle Helene*, performed by traveling European companies in addition to special appearances by eminent theatre artists such as Sarah Bernard and Coquelin Cadet (1960, 67-68). The imperial theater company featured European and local farces and satiric plays every Friday, while *ortaoyunu* (Turkish light comedy) masters occasionally performed comedic acts spiced with *alaturka* music (Osmanoğlu, *ibid.*, 66, 68). On other occasions, American artists, who had recently joined the imperial troupe, played accordion and mandolin and sampled step dances. According to Osmanoğlu, the 60-person imperial orchestra (*Muzika-ı Humayun*) was comprised not only of Ottoman flute and violin virtuosos such as Saffet Bey, Zati Bey, Vondra Bey, and Cemal Bey, but its members were also trained by numerous resident and traveling European masters such as Guatelli Pasha, the Italian Campi family, Spanish Aranda Efendi, and French Lombardi Pasha (*ibid.*, 67).

The music loving Sultan and his daughters and sons all revered and practiced Western classical music and funded numerous chamber orchestras (*ibid.*, 20, 25, 69). With a vast

¹⁰⁴ On performances of traditional Turkish band at international parades particularly on June 16th and August 17th, see “Ferris Wheel Moves” in *The Chicago Times*, 16 June 1893, 2, col. 4 and “Ball of All Nations,” 1, col. 7.

instrument and notation collection, Abdülhamid explained his preference for *alafranga* music in terms of its “joyful and volatile” (*değişiktir ve neşe verir*) nature (ibid., 25). This heightened interest in Western genres also evoked the interplay among continued cultural Westernization, bourgeois tastes, and Ottoman claims to worldly sophistication. Although the Sultan did not patronize *alaturka* music as strongly, an all-female classical art ensemble flourished and tambour masters such as Cemil Bey frequented the Palace during his rule (ibid., 66, 69). The slave forewomen of the harem also continued to perform various traditional belly dance styles, ranging from *köçek* to *tavşan* (rabbit dance), for exclusively female audiences (ibid., 66).

In Chicago, syncretic Ottoman performances, drawing on both Eastern and Western musical styles, were frequently featured across the White City and the Midway. For instance, the full-uniformed imperial orchestra demonstrated its across-genre proficiency by “interspersing classical numbers with popular music” for the Ottoman Pavilion’s opening reception, the grandest of all official Ottoman ceremonies (Truman 1893, 537). The same band joined other foreign orchestras in playing the American anthem for the Fourth of July demonstration along the Midway (“Midway Fourth Parade,” 30 June 1893, 1, col.7).¹⁰⁵ For the mosque dedication ceremonies in the Turkish Village, the brass band played the Sultan’s grand

¹⁰⁵ Another reporter characterized this Turkish accompaniment as “the crooning wail and monotonous humming” that led to “a heavily handicapped attempt to render a national air or two for the gratification of native born Americans” [“All Honor the Nation,” *The Chicago Times*, 5 July 1893, 2, col. 3]. The mention of “disorganized tam tam and a bit of bamboo” suggests that the Turkish Village music utilized not only Western-style instrumentation, but also included Eastern drums, *ney* and vocal instrumentation (“All Honor the Nation,” ibid.). To salute President Cleveland ceremoniously on his first Midway stroll, twelve Turkish Village musicians with drums and flutes executed “Hail to the Chief” with what the reporter labeled as “weird” Turkish variations [“Midway in Gay Attire,” *The Chicago Herald*, 2 May 1893, 4, col. 5; “Parade to the Park,” *The Chicago Evening Post*, 1 May 1893, 7, col. 4].

march counterpointing “ineffable wails” and Eastern zither (*kanun*) tunes with autoharp and violin accompaniment (“Dedicated to Allah,” 28 April 1893, 1, cols. 5-6; “Mosque is Dedicated,” 29 April 1893, 1, col. 6). Singing, dancing, drama, and instrumental accompaniment were inseparable genres at the daily Odeon Theater performances in which regional Albanian, Damascene, Turkish, Bedouin, and Palestinian folk styles mingled with “heavy tragedy in a fez and low comedy in a turban” (Truman 1893, 558). The Odeon’s musical accompaniment was highly diverse, combining harp, timbral, and string instruments with Eastern *davul* (colossal kettle drum) and *kaval* (manjereh or long drawn-out flageolet) and with historic cymbals and lyre (*Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme*, 1893, unpaginated; “Olive-Eyed Houris,” 22 April 1893, 7, cols. 1-2).¹⁰⁶ In Kalamonitic drama, two girls played the tambourine to accompany dominant mandolin and overgrown zither before the curtain came down with the choral version of “America” (“Selim is Frequently Married,” 5 May 1893, 5, col.2). World’s fair encyclopedist Ben C. Truman (1893, 558) emphasized the dominant *davul* and *kaval* in Turkish orchestration, which to his ears, sounded “mournful, weird, and plaintive.” During international parades, dancing girls often “swayed their bodies in rhythm” to Turkish music, complementing traditional tunes with belly dance movements (“Oddest of Parades,” 18 June 1893, 2, col. 4).

¹⁰⁶ The reporter describes the Lebanese manjereh master Sol’s performance as: “He caught the slender reed half way down, laid a finger to the solitary air hole, applied the mouthpiece to the extreme corner of his mouth, and started a quick dance tune in time of a breakdown. There was a pleasant clearness of tone in the monotonous strain. Suddenly he curled his lips, turned the instrument endways on, and evolved a sound that an audience, not knowing its source, would have sworn was that of a string instrument. The manjereh is a thing of versatility” [“Olive-Eyed Houris,” 7, col. 2].

Belly Dance as Syncretic Practice

Although popular at palaces and royal festivities, 19th-century Ottoman belly dance praxis also extended beyond imperial circles, animating a plethora of public and private spaces that ranged from prominent mansions to coffeehouses to disreputable taverns (*meyhane*) (And 1976, 135, 145; see also Öztürkmen 2003, 40). Professional female dancers (*çengi*), organized as 12-person guild ensembles (*kol*), frequented private elite harems (*konak haremleri*) (Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 331, 388-394). Supervised, promoted, and trained at *meşkhane*s (informal conservatories) by their *kolbaşı* (MC, dance teacher, and agent), these non-Muslim and Rom dancers enchanted female audiences with their musical adaptability and kinesthetic agility (Ali Rıza Bey 2001 [1920-1925], 29).¹⁰⁷ The performers improvised complex routines, comprised of abdominal and torso isolations, with *çalpara* (wooden clappers) and *zil* (metal cymbals) to match the wind and percussion accompaniment (*sıracı*) before they broke into singing *ruhanî gazel* (spiritual songs) (Ali Rıza Bey, *ibid.*, 187-188; Pakalın 1946, 349-350; see also And 1976, 139).¹⁰⁸ Like their male counterparts (*köçek*), most itinerate female Rom dancers also traversed coffeehouses and popular excursion sites in Istanbul such as Kağıthane and Haliç. At these venues, they both danced and played tambour, *nakkare* (a small kettledrum), and *zurna* (Anatolian woodwind instrument), vying for the tips of their lower- and middle-class clients (Ali Rıza Bey, *ibid.*, 115).

Moreover, most belly dancers had traditionally performed *curcuna* (comical dancing), accompanied by clowns and jesters, in *Ortaoyunu*, the Turkish *commedia dell'arte* performed

¹⁰⁷ See Seeman 2002 on how most Rom dancers, raised in entertainer families, had life-long dance and musical training.

in public squares (Ali Rıza Bey, *ibid.*, 154-155; And 1976, 146-148).¹⁰⁹ In Galata and Beyoğlu, the backstreet taverns (*meyhane*) featured mostly effeminate male dancers-in drag (*köçek*) and some non-Muslim female dancers (*çengi*) who sexualized their routines with nudity and lascivious backbends for exclusively-male audiences (Abdülaziz Bey 2002, 309; Sevengil 1985, 76). Some *köçeks* performed for their frequent male admirers at “seedy” (*her türlü zevklere uygun*) nightclubs--historic gentlemen’s clubs--in Lonca, a red-light district near the Golden Horn, where female waitresses (*kadın sakiye*) served alcohol to private customers (*özel müşteriler*) (Abdülaziz Bey 2002, 309). Mediating between elite and nonelite venues, most cosmopolitan professional dancers were exposed to and hence fluent in diverse vernacular and traditional performance genres that matched the artistic plurality of late Ottoman entertainment. Embedded in an eclectic performance oeuvre, these performers deployed unique employment strategies and across-genre training to creatively fuse dramatic, erotic, and social dance vocabularies and musical styles.

As in Istanbul, the Ottoman dancers abroad displayed similar artistic versatility as they simultaneously navigated theatrical and cabaret-style venues: the Odeon and *café chantant* in the Turkish Village. Like Farida, the Egyptian Village star who transferred herself to “the more remunerative” Turkish Café, other dancers also moved effortlessly between various Midway sideshows and dance vocabularies during the Exposition (“Waiting for Music,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). Prior to her Chicago appearance, Rosa, the premier dancer at Odeon, had toured the Ottoman Empire where she had “all the Sultan’s dominions at her feet” (“Rosa’s Wonderful Feat,” 25 July 1893, 8, col. 3). As a result of such mobility, this fast-whirling Jewish

¹⁰⁹ After *köçeks* were outlawed in 1856, *zennes* (male Ortaoyunu characters dressed as women) took over their function (Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 155).

dancer from Thessalonica had mastered a variety of styles, including the *danse du ventre*, Constantinople and Thesalonian vernacular dances, and the sacred Arabian-Muslim forms such as *delkey*, all of which she enacted for the prototypical Turkish weddings at Odeon (Programme No.5, *Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme*, 1893, unpaginated; “Rosa, the Famous Dancer,” *Souvenir Programme*, *ibid.*). Like Rosa, the Damascus-native Rougina developed an eclectic style, a sophisticated mixture of “Turkish and gypsy,” during her travels across Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg (“Rougina, the Syrian Dancer,” 3 July 1893, 1, col. 7). Performing at the Turkish *café chantant* with her own company of four girls and several musicians, Rougina deliberately used some traditional visual cues such as the gypsy head dress and avoided others--hand staining or face-painting--to promote herself as an authentic yet worldly dancer (“Rougina,” *ibid.*).

In addition to tours within and beyond the Empire, the world’s fairs provided another opportunity for the hybridizing performance. For instance, as Zeynep Çelik and Leila Kinney (1990, 51-2) have documented some belly dancers traveling from one Parisian exposition to another between 1889 to 1900, incorporated into their routines elaborate accessories and “dance of the chair” alongside numerous Oriental props: *nargile* (water pipe), swords, and mirrors.¹¹⁰ And these performers were embedded in broader, reciprocal circuits of artistic exchange. In other words, just as belly dance, as exotic erotica, gained popularity in the wake of the 1889 and 1900 Paris Expositions, generating Oriental-Western hybrids of *danse du*

¹¹⁰ The authors characterize “the dance of the chair” as a test of agility centering around balancing the chair in the mouth. This routine echoed, as the authors note, the infamous quadrille of the Louis XII chair, “which in 1886 had become the ‘signature dance’ of Aristide Bruante’s *Le Mirliton*” [1990, 54].

ventre with cancan, Parisian entertainment also infiltrated Ottoman everyday life with the proliferation of *café chantants* and French imagery (Çelik and Kinney 1990, 52).¹¹¹

In the Midway, Persian Palace proprietors proudly advertised similar Parisian influence, promoting their chief dancer Belle Baya as “the greatest Oriental star, the prize beauty of the Paris Exposition of 1889.”¹¹² Educated in “the cafe chantants of that pleasure-seeking city,” Baya and other dancers “toyed with their cigarette, and by their smile gave a Persian-Parisian charm to the anomalous entertainment” (“Persian Palace,” *ibid.*, “A Dancer of the Persian Palace,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). As Belle Baya’s and Rougina’s trajectories suggest, the dancers’ global mobility, particularly in Europe, enhanced not only their symbolic capital, but also the erotic allure of their respective Villages.

How did these traveling aesthetics manifest in individual Midway performances? Or how can we, as performance historians, frame the continuities between late Ottoman and Chicago belly dance performances, paying particular attention to dance vocabulary, technique, training, etiquette, and musical formation? In Jamelee’s routine at the Turkish Café, for instance, each ensemble member took turns at performing and the non-dancing rest encouraged solo dancers with “witty comments and shrill feminine cries,” while they played tambourines and stringed instruments (“Jamelee, Syrian Dancer,” *Oriental and Occidental Types*, 1894, unpaginated). Jamelee’s number incorporated Ottoman *çengi* conventions: participatory and

¹¹¹ I do not, however, agree with Çelik and Kinney’s unsubstantiated disavowal of belly dance’s persistence in the late Ottoman Empire [1990, 54]. Instead, I document how Western influences coexisted and altered preexistent forms rather than replacing them.

¹¹² See the caption of “Persian Palace” in *The Dream City*, World’s Arts Series 9, Education Arts Series, Vol. 1, No. 9 [4 January] (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1893-1894), unpaginated.

multifocal improvisation driven by the dancers' across-genre proficiency.¹¹³ Like their counterparts in Istanbul, these dancers effortlessly combined various genres such as singing, dancing, and instrumental accompaniment (Sevengil 1985 [1927], 76). When they were part of the chief soloist's entourage, as in Rougina's case, they echoed the social organization of *çengi* guilds at home (Abdülaziz Bey 2002, 388-389).

In other instances, musicians and dancers interacted in diverse ways, either setting cues interchangeably, competing with, or simply dominating each other. Over at the Egyptian Corner, the prominent dancer Farida had to wait for her "queer musicians" who "began strumming when the spirit moved them, stopped when they got ready and were through with the conversation with which they enlivened their work" ("Waiting for Music," *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). In contrast, an Algerian dancer executed more control over the musicians. She dramatically swayed her body and waved her hands to accompany the mandolin, tambourine, flageolet, and drums before breaking into a crescendo of "undulating hips, protruding, suggestive stomach, and wriggling," to match the shrill, "noisy" instrumental climax (Smith 1893, 67). In the end, by abruptly stamping her foot, she cued the musicians to stop, what the viewer interpreted as, "an epileptic, perfect paroxysm of undulations" (Smith, *ibid.*). Another dancer of the same Village enhance her shuffles, whirls, snake-like undulations and foot stamps with the aid of stimulating cries and escalating, rapid rhythms (Smith 1893, 66).¹¹⁴

¹¹³ For a description of Ottoman *çengi* conventions, see Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 29, 115 and Abdülaziz Bey 2002, 309.

¹¹⁴ See also "A Performer of *Danse du Ventre*" in Street Cairo Theater for how a female dancer "moved her shoulders and body rhythmically to the sharp beats of the tambour." This quote is from *The Dream City*, World's Arts Series 11, Educational Arts Series, Vol. 1, No. 11 [18 January] (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

In each instance, the complex improvisatory negotiations between the musicians and dancers suggest heightened musical adaptability. Through such adaptability and dialogue, dancers in Chicago achieved kinetic crescendos based on the traditional technique of rapid and sharp torso and hip accents, stomach and upper-body undulations.¹¹⁵ The movements, described as “protruding,” “revolving” and “wriggling,” signaled the vertical and lateral hip, stomach, and neck slides as well as circular shimmies (Smith, *ibid.*, 66-67). This dance vocabulary corresponded to the Ottoman repertoire, comprised of neck and hip glides (*kafa tutmalar ve bel kırmalar*) and fast shoulder shimmies (*omuzdan titremeler*) (Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 29).

The elaborate whirls, interpreted often as wild abandon and rarely as technical competence, served as traveling steps or preparation for the joint kinetic-musical climax (“Rosa’s Wonderful Feat,” 25 July 1893, 8, col. 3). The Ottoman corollary of these whirls included brief introductory promenades and swift gliding steps (*turnak üstünde uçar gibi koşmalar*) (Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 29; Sevengil 1985, 76). Snake-like undulations or chest-to hip and hip-to chest waves registered suppleness of the torso and spine.

As in the Algerian case, some Chicago dancers enlivened their performances with associative gestures, illustrating, for instance, the toilet of an Oriental lady with mirror and hand washing (Smith 1893, 66). Alternately, others displayed Western influences through ballet-inspired toe elevation or via their professional, “animated hauteur,” often interpreted as “French” (*ibid.*, 67). One “Parisian of Teheran” interspersed her whirling dance with a split, a move that evoked “all the terpsichorean devices and suggestiveness of all the lands she had

¹¹⁵ See the caption of “Dancing Girl in the Street of Cairo Theater” in *The Dream City*, World’s Art Series 11, Educational Arts Series, Vol. 1, No. 11 [18 January] (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

passed on her pilgrimage from Persia to the Plaisance” (Smith, *ibid.* , 69). Most Rom dancers, born into and raised by entertainer families, capitalized on their life-long training (Seeman 2002, 144). Muhammed, the Syrian Gypsy *köçek* at the Turkish Village, had exceptional agility coupled with a “spring of the body and play of muscles” perfected through years of informal training (“Muhammed, the Gypsy Dancer of Syria” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). He, like other Rom Ottoman dancers, had begun his training “as soon as he could walk” (“Muhammed,” *ibid.*).¹¹⁶

The dancers in Chicago and Ottoman lands also displayed similar performance attitudes and shared performance conventions. The fourteen year-old Jewish dancer from Beirut, Marietta, for instance, titillated Turkish café audiences, men and women alike, with her “proficiency in the art of flirting with her eyes” (“A Nautch Dancer,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated).¹¹⁷ According to Smith, some belly dancers flaunted their sexuality in semi-

¹¹⁶ See also the caption of “The Gypsy Dancer of Syria” in the *Turkish Village Souvenir Programme*, on how gypsy performer parents “begin teaching their little ones from childhood up, especially the muscle dance” [1893, unpaginated].

¹¹⁷ The same dancer is named Rosa in a different pose in *Campbell’s Illustrated History of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, vol. 2, 1894, 623. I am borrowing from Margaret Drewal’s comments to offer an explanation. One of these citations is wrong. According to the *Turkish Theater Souvenir Programme*, Rosa is a Jewish dancer from Thessalonica [1893, unpaginated]. Marietta, on the other hand, is supposedly also Jewish, but from Beirut, Lebanon. Marietta was the name given Faridjee from Madame Rosa’s Café Chantant, who performed with the Turkish Café Concert Troupe in the Turkish Theatre. She is said to be 14 year old Jewish girl from Beyrouth. In *A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, John Mc. Govern, ed., Vol. 1, No. 8 [5 March] (Chicago: The Jewell N. Halligan Company, 1894), her name and affiliation is given as Maryeta of Cairo Theatre. In *The Magic City*, Vol. 1, No.16 [30 April] (Philadelphia: H.S. Smith and C.R Graham for Historical Publishing Co., 1894), she is identified as Marietta who danced in Algerian Theatre. Either Marietta was circulating among different villages and theatres, **or** the authors writing this information are wrong or sloppy in their information gathering, **or** there was more than one Marietta performing. Çelik and Kinney illustrate a Faridjee who performed in the 1889 expo, but if she is the same Faridjee, who was renamed Marietta in Paris, then she couldn’t have been only 14 years old four years later in Chicago. Perhaps an oral tradition was created intended to authenticate the dancers, but has no basis in reality. Thus, like Little Egypt, Mariettas or Rosas could be infinitely substituted for each other. The information on Rosa seems more consistent, however, than that on Marietta. This discussion challenges

recumbent poses or with over-dramatic routines, featuring suggestive glances, “languorous looks and open lips” (“At Ease,” *Midway Types* 1894, unpaginated; see also Smith 1893, 67). And others simply toyed with their cigarettes behind sexy smiles (“A Dancer at the Persian Palace,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). Further, the dancers’ gauzy veils and short sleeves, through which “coppery arms and torsos gleamed,” and their ankles “peeping out of swishing draperies” enhanced such sexual gestures (Smith 1893, 66). It was not only the unfamiliar movement, but also revealing costumes that simultaneously shocked and repelled the corset-wearing Victorian audiences, club ladies, and puritan reviewers, leading them to protest vigorously the belly dancers’ racial and sexual difference (“Want Midway Dances Stopped,” 4 August 1893, 1, cols. 3-4).

Across the ocean, many folklorists have claimed that Ottoman *çengis* enticed numerous elite female audiences with their revealing and glistening (*göz alıcı*) costumes, luscious and shiny hair (*parıl parıl uzun saçları*) in addition to their suggestive choreographies replete with back bends and intimate breast shimmies (Pakalın 1946, 349; see also Koçu 2002). Folklorist Ali Rıza Bey purportedly witnessed, for instance, the itinerate Rom *çengis* of Sulukule flirting extensively with mixed gender audiences in public sites (2001, 115).

Metin And writes that beardless *köçeks* (dancing boys) with long hair locks crafted a transgendered persona with elaborate female costumes and manners (1976, 139). Also seductive were their leisurely and skillful movements interspersed with somersaulting, wrestling, ground-rolls, mincing steps, syncopated finger or clapper-snapping (*çalpara*) and witty parodies (ibid., 139-141). According to these authors, both Ottoman dancing boys and

the veracity of information on the belly dancers of the Midway. Nevertheless, these archival sources offer a useful description of dances even if the names and sources occasionally do not match.

girls, as experienced masters of flirtation, successfully built frequent clientele and had dedicated, passionate admirers from all walks of life.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the dancers elicited frenzied and improper audience response, signaling social transgression. Most Chicago spectators, men and women alike, for instance, became “quite fervent” in their admiration of Marietta as they engaged in “heroine worship” (“A Nautch Dancer,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated). To display their appreciation for other Turkish Café dancers, some audiences yelled and clapped enthusiastically (“From the Turkish Café,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated; see also “Jamelee, Syrian Dancer,” *Oriental and Occidental Types*, 1894, unpaginated). At the Persian Palace of Eros, excited boys loudly waved their hats and “rained cigarettes at the dancer’s feet” to demand a repetition of her “physically snaky” routines (Smith 1893, 69). Algerian Theater roared with the “obscene cries” of “drunken and depraved” men and women (“Ousted from Midway,” 5 August 1893, 1, col.7).

Numerous historians and commentators have claimed a similar Ottoman tradition: loud, energetic and sexually-engaged though segregated audience response colored with intimate tipping (Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 185; Sevengil 1985, 72-73, 76; Pakalın 1946, 349-350). From the 16th century onwards, chroniclers like Evliya Çelebi and Enderunlu Fazıl Bey had detailed such risky, erotic interactions, driving obsessive male *köçek* admirers to emotional and financial devastation such as bankruptcy and crazed adultery (Sevengil 1985, 72-73; Koçu 2002 [1947], 61-64). According to Ali Rıza Bey (2001, 186), 19th-century *çengis* engaged in secretive and

poetic (*gizli ve hurdeli*) love affairs with their female clients as they practiced much-marginalized “same sex love” (see also Sevengil 1985, 76).¹¹⁸

Transgressing boundaries of moral propriety through costume, choreography, and performance decorum, the dancers and their passionate spectators thus continually provoked popular controversies and strict official regulations on both sides of the Atlantic. While the Ottoman state temporarily banned *köçek* dancing in 1856 to stem infectious moral laxity, Director General Davis joined forces with the Board of Lady Managers to close “every disreputable or immoral place” with belly dancing on the Midway (Pakalın 1946, 350; “Ousted from the Midway,” 5 August 1893, 1, col. 7; “Want Midway Dances Stopped,” 4 August 1893, 1, cols. 3-4). The Persian Theater was targeted first as it featured “private lewd performances” in addition to common belly dance indecencies such as “grotesque abdominal motion” in “an entirely nude condition” (“Persian Theater Closed,” 5 August 1893, 1, col. 2).

In Chicago and Istanbul, popular literature on belly dance was replete with derogatory references to the dancers’ excessive sexuality, as indicative of either their ethnic primitivism or urban moral depravity. To sensationalize foreign dance performances, some Chicago commentators spoke of “dusky, Algerian savagery” and described Egyptian dancers as “destitute of animation, formless as badly-stuffed animals, as homely as owls, and graceful as stall-fed bovines” whose “abdominal muscles were the only portions of anatomy or mind which

¹¹⁸ Given the Ottoman moral order, it is likely that these authors were biased against belly dancers and were prone to label them marginal on all accounts: sexual, ethnic, and classed. I trouble their interpretations below.

showed any cultivation” (“At Ease,” *Midway Types*, 1894, unpaginated).¹¹⁹ Like their primitive sisters, the sophisticated, world-trotting performers, such as the Parisian-Persian or Turkish dancers, too, engaged in the *danse du ventre*. One reporter reduced all these performances to “the suggestively lascivious contorting of abdominal muscles which was extremely ungraceful and almost shockingly disgusting.”¹²⁰

Across the ocean, Turkish commentators interpreted “loose” (*serbest*, *laubali-meşreb*), “licentious” (*hevesperâne*) and “slutty” (*yosma*) *çengi* behavior as the natural outcome of their freakish, unnatural homosexuality or endemic ethnic, particularly Rom, deficiency (Ali Rıza Bey 2001, 29, 115, 186; Abdülaziz Bey 2002, 309; Pakalın 1946, 350).¹²¹ This preoccupation with the dancers’ dubious sexuality has contemporary implications, infiltrating not only present-day Turkish public opinion, but also many popular and academic accounts. To explain the non-Muslim *köçek* recruitment from among the Armenian, Jewish, and Greek populations, the prominent folklorist Metin And writes: “Turks would never enter such a degrading profession” (1976, 140).

In interpreting these historic controversies, several caveats are in order. First, the American and Ottoman marginalization of the belly dancers’ ethnicity and sexuality

¹¹⁹ See also the caption of “Three Dancing Girls” from Egypt in *The Magic City: A Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair*, Vol. 1, No. 14 [April 16] (Philadelphia: H.S. Smith and C.R. Graham for Historical Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

¹²⁰ See the caption of “A Performance in the Egyptian Theatre” in *The Magic City: A Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair and Its Treasures Including a Graphic Representation of the Famous Midway Plaisance*, Vol. 1, No. 16 [April 30] (Philadelphia: H.S. Smith and C.R. Graham for Historical Publishing Co., 1894), unpaginated.

¹²¹ See also Sevengil’s [1985, 76] reference to homosexual *çengi* affairs as “ruhsal sakatlık” (spiritual handicap).

underscores a contemporaneous preoccupation with public morality. And confronted with such persistent stereotyping, performance historians face two dilemmas: how to separate the chroniclers' moral prescriptions from the actual performances and how to honor the artistic virtuosity of this dance form without denying its erotic component. After all, as most sources suggest, flirtatious gestures and glances were central to the dance technique.

Second, relying mostly on foreign travelers' accounts, dance historians have mistakenly emphasized Western colonization as the main cause of belly dance's increasing eroticization during the 19th-century (Tucker 1986, Nieuwkerk 1995, Franken 2003). To explain the Egyptian ban on female entertainers in 1834, dance scholar Karin Nieuwkerk foregrounds, for instance, the sexual demands of the European travelers, consuls, governors and the growing foreign military presence in the wake of the French Napoleonic Expedition (1794) and British occupation (1882) (Nieuwkerk 1995, 30-37). According to Nieuwkerk, heavy state taxation and limited work opportunities also led struggling public dancers to further eroticize their performances for foreign audiences with relatively nude and suggestive choreographies (Nieuwkerk, *ibid.*, 34-35). In effect, the Westernizing ruler Muhammad Ali joined forces with the conservative *ulama* (religious authorities) to protect the image of modernizing Egypt as a morally superior Muslim nation (*ibid.*, 32). Historian Marjerie Franken (2003, 95-96) attributes the birth of the belly dancer to growing Western artistic presence--first opera houses, music halls, and nightclubs--in the post-1860s combined with the loosening of state restrictions on dancers. These accounts overlook, however, the significance of local Eastern traditions and cross-cultural borrowings prior to and simultaneous with European colonization. Related is their ignorance of native erotic subculture or the prevalence of indigenous taverns (*meyhane*) in the late-Ottoman Empire, a topic I have documented extensively in this chapter.

Dismissing the versatility and range of Ottoman performance traditions has important theoretical and historiographic implications. First, it privileges Western influence over local artistic projects, rendering Ottoman Egyptian and Turkish entertainers as passive recipients of foreign forms. As such, it reproduces the Orientalist binary of active West and passive East. Second, emphasizing West-to-East trajectories, this approach denies reciprocal cultural borrowings embedded in multiple artistic circuits.

Further, most Anglophone scholars with limited linguistic means have exacerbated such biases by overrelying on travelogues and foreign accounts. My goal here is not to simply dismiss these foreign-language documents as voyeuristic and distorted anecdotes. Following historian Kate Fleming (1999, 16), I suggest rather recuperating the “proto-ethnographic” aspects of travel literature with the aid of other, primarily Ottoman, sources.¹²² Juxtaposing sensational American journalistic accounts with Ottoman sources helps highlight the particular ideological and artistic routes among the European centers, worlds’ fairs, and the Ottoman Empire. Conscious of the racial and sexual prejudices in the sources, I suggest reading between the lines to detail dance and music vocabularies and performance decorum, in particular, and foreign and local public spheres, in general. Documenting the extent and nature of cultural trafficking in the late-19th-century Ottoman Empire, I challenge the historically-misguided glorification of worlds’ fairs as ideal models for global artistic and cultural exchange.

¹²² Admitting the limitations of travelogues, Fleming notes, “these materials not only provide a repository of quaint, amusing, and colorful Orientalism, but also constitute an entirely viable and extremely rich source for the writing of history--not just of Greece, but of the countries from whence its authors hail” [1999, 16].

Belly Dancers, Honor, and Shame

The official Ottoman newspaper, *The Chicago Fair Illustrated* (1893) (*CFI*), at the Exposition reiterated American public outrage at the Midway Plaisance sideshows with an emphasis on their “shameless” (*hali-ül-izar*) and “dishonorable” (*erazliyi bile utandırarak*) content (1893, 2, 18). Oblivious to highly-popular Turkish belly dance shows, author Ubeydullah Efendi also proudly, but mistakenly, asserted that Ottoman Theater at the Turkish village was the only respectable Midway site: it contained nothing “injurious to public propriety” (*mugayir-ı adab-ı umumîye*) that could “tickle the audience’s fancy” (*erbab-ı temasanin hissiyatini gıcıklayacak*) (*CFI*, 1893, 2, 18).

Despite such rhetorical aversions, belly dancers transported to the Exposition not only exhibited Ottoman aesthetic vocabularies and strategies, but also indigenous moral conundrums. The question then becomes: How did these performers animate the class, ethnic, and sexual fractures that undergirded late Ottoman urbanization, changing entertainment landscape, and the broader frame of woman-centered reforms? What challenges did they pose for other Ottoman exhibits of female labor across the Midway and the White City?

The figure of the liminal belly dancer loomed large in the late Ottoman imaginary. The state’s banning of belly dancers in Istanbul and Egypt (Pakalın 1946, 350; Nieuwkerk 1995, 30-37) were suggestive of their perceived threats to moral order, in general, and to imperial and urban bourgeois reforms, in particular. As scantily-clad and economically disenfranchised public bodies, these dancers were charged with lack of propriety and privilege. In other words, female performers, without cultural and economic means, did not qualify for the Hamidian gender reforms that encouraged women’s education, employment, and greater public visibility.

In Istanbul and Beirut, belly dancers and other nocturnal workers became the object of myriad decrees regulating women's dress and public movement, prostitution, and nightlife decorum (Hansenn 2005, 53-58; 62-66). The imperial goal was to cultivate a bourgeois Muslim public space by policing those on the fringes.

In contrast to such indigenous measures, the belly dancers in Chicago deliberately exuded erotic mystique with advertisements such as "fresh from the Seraglio, the Sultan's favorite." The non-Muslim Turkish dancers, posing as Muslim for profit, thus violated Islamic rules of public female conduct and gender segregation. The belly dancers also tainted the Empire's honor by putting themselves or the Sultan's private property on display. The Orientalist conceptions of oversexed Eastern bodies, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, further undermined Ottoman claims to moral and civilizational superiority. The lack of official documentation about these dancers abroad suggests the intensity of such national shame.

In imperial literary accounts, the figure of the belly dancer condensed anxieties over cultural authenticity and deficient civilization vis-à-vis the West. Ottoman novelists and nonfiction writers positioned loose women, in general, and dancers, in particular, as pivotal to their moral and social prescriptions (Kandiyoti 2000, Mardin 1974). Eminent public moralist Ahmed Midhat, for instance, viewed the belly dancers at the 1889 Paris Exposition as discursively and literally inauthentic (Findley 1998). He argued that this dance was a misguided product of Western Orientalism (*ibid.*, 46). Practiced by non-Muslims, not by devout, God-fearing Muslims, belly dance, Midhat contended, was also a shameful anomaly: "not the kind of thing we approve of . . . their dance could be seen, even in Egypt or Tunisia, only in out-of-the-way places of dissipation" (in Findley, *ibid.*, 39-40).

For Midhat, belly dancers, as sexual commodities and/or household slaves (*cariye*), embodied both the dangers of rampant market economy and oppressive traditions (Mardin 1974, 404). Stripped of free will, these unfortunate outcasts contradicted the new ideal Muslim woman who was educated and devout enough to lead a humble and accomplished life. While Midhat advocated redemption for all fallen women--prostitutes, dancers, slaves--through gender reform, Yakup Kadri Osmanoglu and other elitists characterized belly dance as an unsalvageable “Little Tradition” or as worthless and crude popular culture (ibid., 414, 436).

Fatma Aliye’s *Udi* (The Ud Player)

Some of these themes above find ample expression in *Udi* (The Ud Player), Muslim reformist Fatma Aliye’s (2002 [1899]) didactic novel on public entertainment, sexual honor, and hazardous passion. Driving the plot are the tensions between honorable and adulterous love and between sustenance and women’s respectability. Born in Damascus, Bedia, *Udi*’s protagonist, is happily raised in a musical family, engaging in daily jam sessions with her civil servant/musician father, Nazmi Bey. As a precocious singer (*hanende*) and instrumentalist (*sazende*), Bedia favors her oud over all other instruments and treats it as her confidante (*sırdaş*). Over the years, she discovers another grand, yet malignant, passion: her handsome, frivolous, and snobbish husband Mail Bey.

During her marriage, Bedia grieves over unrequited love and deceit. Testing Bedia’s endurance and love, Mail engages in affairs with fallen women, particularly with a Jewish belly dancer, Helula. Bedia discovers her husband’s betrayal when she accidentally sees Helula perform with Mail’s indecent gift: her own bracelets (2002 [1899], 10). Publicly shamed, Bedia

initiates a divorce because, as inscribed on her oud, “Love accommodates all but betrayal.”

Following Bedia’s desertion, Mail drowns himself in an abyss of drinking. Helula, the ultimate seductress, takes Bedia’s harsh judgment to heart and quits nightlife, seeking redemption through marriage. In the end, the lonely and broken Bedia descends into dignified poverty and gives music lessons to provide for her orphaned niece and nephew (ibid., 111). Against all odds, the oud proves to be her only true, loyal love (“*benim yarım sensing*”). It is an indomitable source of pleasure (“ *zevk ve sefa kaynağım*”), income (“*geçim kaynağım*,” “*ekmek teknemsin*”), and trust (“*bana hiyanet etmedin*”) (ibid., 116). In a world of fallible or absentee men and fallen women, the oud, or in Bedia’s own words, “her only worthy male companion” promises immortal love. Bedia tragically dies of pneumonia.

In this novel, the belly dancer (*rakkase*, *çengi*) is the outcast *par excellence*: a vulgar (*adî*) non-Muslim creature (*mahluk*) of the night (ibid., 10, 86-87). Helula is, nevertheless, depicted as both the predator and the victim. As a callous (*kattı, merhametsiz*) predator, she not only dupes and seduces her male admirers, but also robs them of their wealth and honor leading them to irrecoverable ruin (ibid., 57-58). Like her mother, she has wrecked many marriages and destroyed many families, including Bedia’s (ibid., 8, 54). Born into a disreputable entertainer family, Helula is trapped in this “vulgar” trade because of family obligations: she is burdened with the care of her mother, an aging singer, and her two orphaned siblings (ibid., 59).

Faced with limited choices, Helula also blames the larger socio-economic system for her immoral conduct. In a volatile encounter with Bedia, Helula defends herself against Bedia’s self-righteous accusations of dishonor. She boldly asks:

When a woman is forced to earn a living, what capital (*meta*, *sermaye*) other than her suggestive glances (*gamze*) and smiles (*hande*) can she sell? (ibid., 59).¹²³

Helula's stance, first, speaks to limited choices for women without male patronage. Raised fatherless and abandoned by all male kin, Helula initially tries "begging in bitter cold" ("soğuktan donmuş olan avcum açık") on the streets. Unable to make a living, she then resorts to dance, or what she describes as, a compulsory, draining routine composed of hops, smiles, coquetry (*işve*), and capricious acts (*cilve*) (ibid., 58-9).

Second, Helula's conundrum helps configure belly dance, in particular, and nightlife, in general, as an unjust market economy wherein lucrative sexual innuendo and respectability are unevenly entangled. As pawns and agents of this unjust and immoral industry, belly dancers or "merchants of lust" also wreck families by seducing men--"old children"--to adultery, greed, and theft.

The belly dancer mirrors Mail Bey, the over-Westernized adulterous husband: the insatiable consumer of nightlife. As accomplices in debauchery, Mail Bey and his mistress sin twice. Mindlessly mimicking Western immorality through their affair, they facilitate foreign cultural contagion. As such, they compromise indigenous authenticity. Further, this deviant couple jeopardizes familial and communal welfare for individual sexual or monetary satisfaction. Driven by profit and excessive libido, the figure of the belly dancer champions unbridled individualism and embodies the moral malaise associated with extreme economic liberalism.

¹²³ This quote is a direct translation of: "Kadın kazanmaya mecbur olduğunda ise handelerinden, gamzelerinden başka satacak ne sermaye ve meta bulabilir?" (59).

Bedia, as Fatma Aliye's moralist voice, describes the belly dancer's lack of honor as a joint moral and economic problem. On the one hand, the dancer (Helula), as the synecdoche of the "ill-bred world of prostitution" ("*çirkef fuhuş alemi*"), vicariously contaminates, through the husband's kisses (*buseler*), the honorable Muslim housewife's (Bedia's) "clean" (*pak*) body (ibid., 84). On the other hand, Aliye configures public begging as dishonorable as adultery since it exemplifies indolence. Rebuking laziness (*miskinlik*), the author suggests instead honorable sustenance through textile peddling (*bohçacılık*), tailoring (*dikiş*), laundry (*çamaşır*), or private tutoring (*evde ders*).

Even though Ottoman Muslim women's employment is acceptable, it ranks, in Aliye's formulation, as morally and economically inferior to domestic duties. In other words, Bedia's character and her tastes--nonprofessional music making--locate the principles and desires of bourgeois Muslim womanhood in home-making and companionate marriage. Her humble employment as a private tutor helps prescribe moral public behavior for once-privileged women: how they should, upon demotion, struggle for honorable sustenance.

As the mindful Muslim woman and the lascivious belly dancer, Bedia and Helula offer an ideologically compelling contrast. Together, they represent the dynamic tension between the economy of flesh and wealth of high morals. Through over-exposure and under-privilege, the dancer (Helula) captures the proper limits of capitalist transformation. In contrast, the new bourgeois Muslim woman (Bedia) proposes moral capitalism as the fusion of moderate gain, communal welfare, and Islamic modesty.

Like their fictional counterpart Helula, the real-life belly dancers in Chicago challenged Ottoman Muslim modernity, in general, and female reformist Fatma Aliye's books at the Woman's Building, specifically. On the one hand, their lucrative sexual laxity signaled market

overindulgence: indicative of unfettered Western intrusion and Ottoman moral deprivation. On the other hand, dramatizing polygamous harem fantasies, these recumbent dancers reiterated erotic myths of Eastern indolence. Oscillating between excess and deficiency, the belly dancers contradicted the new definition of female virtue, proposed by Aliye and others, as both material and moral restraint and toil. In particular, live belly dance performances, depicting Ottoman women without honor and property, undermined the corrective Occidentalism in Aliye's *Nisvan-ı İslam* (Muslim Women) and exemplary tales of bourgeois domesticity and industrious moral womanhood in *Hayal ve Hakikat* (Dream and Reality) and *Muhadarat* (Conversations).¹²⁴

Although the dancers physically validated the Orientalist vision of Hanna Korany—the Ottoman Syrian reformer at the Fair--their alleged sexual impurity and financial excess challenged her design of Christian capitalist salvation.¹²⁵ Like the female workers in low-scale, in-situ Ottoman enterprises, the dancers staged their Eastern nativity in recreated environments to ensure their status as cultural metonyms. As informal economy laborers, the textile workers and dancers both faced exploitation across historic sweatshops and sweaty entertainment venues. Some workers, like the Muslim Balkan refugees, however, were salvageable in the eyes of philanthropic capitalists, such as the Board of Lady Managers and Hanna Korany. Like belly dancers, others stayed marginal to elite Ottoman gender reform. Although united by sweat, class, and public visibility, the manual laborers and dancers were nevertheless divided along moral lines. In contrast to belly dance, handicrafts and textile production promised

¹²⁴ See Section Four of the previous chapter for a detailed analysis of Aliye's works on display.

¹²⁵ For a comparative discussion of Korany's paradigm, see Chapter One.

dignified poverty, not honor deficit. Belly dancers thus ranked the lowest among all Ottoman female exhibits in Chicago.

Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality

The Turkish Village performers' ethnic difference, particularly their Bedouin or Rom background, exacerbated their moral and material marginalization at home and abroad. These intersecting ethnic and sexual ascriptions operated along the dialectic of rural/urban and premodern/modern. The 400-person Bedouin Encampment, the scenic ethnic show of the Turkish Village, demonstrates well the ideological tenets and lived dilemmas of this dialectic across the Atlantic.

To reenact the "barbaric splendor" of Ottoman desert life, Bedouin men displayed agile, "wild" horsemanship and aggressive athletic skills as they engaged in "fierce combats with lances and naked scimeters" ("Amusements: Bedouin Life in the Desert" 23 May 1893, 3, col.6).¹²⁶ Promoted as "vicious" curios "lithe of limb and muscular as bullocks," these "swarthy" Syrian, Bedouin, and Arab inhabitants represented hazardous Eastern provincialism: a provincialism suffused with animalistic sexuality ("Bedouin Life at Garfield Park, 26 May 1893; 5, col. 2). The mock battle scene was structured around violent tribal enmity triggered by bride theft (ibid.). Justifying vigorous combat to defend female and tribal honor, these daily performances evoked Eastern irrationality, fanatic traditionalism and stagnation expressed through aggressive Bedouin masculinity. At other times, to authenticate their nomadic,

¹²⁶ The female and male inhabitants of Bedouin encampment, like the Turkish Village firemen, sedan-bearers, textile workers, dancers, and other residents and like all other Midway inhabitants were constantly on display authenticating quotidian dramas.

peripatetic existence, the tribes performed song and dance routines on foot and on horse in the Midway parades. While all Bedouin displays invoked rural and morally deficient civilization, the erotic subtext of male warfare--“the deluge of Mohammeden gore”--was more threatening than the female belly dancers’ tales of seduction (ibid.).

The trope of a pre-modern Ottoman hinterland populated by ignorant, vulgar Arabs was also prevalent in contemporaneous popular and official accounts back at home. In her memoir, Selma Ekrem, Jerusalem mutasarrif Ali Ekrem Bey’s “liberated” Muslim daughter, has depicted Ottoman Palestine as a land of lack and ignorance filled with “gloom, religion, and filth” (Ekrem 1930, 58). During her journey across Arabian deserts and cities, she encountered Arabs “living like animals, in holes, burrowed underground” and dwelling in tents where “naked babies crawled in the dust” (ibid. 101).

As shocking as Arab men’s “ravenous” eating habits was their “mad bonfire dance” (ibid., 101). Like their Bedouin brothers in Chicago, these male villagers were “like demented beings” who “jumped and waved their long guns and swords that caught a thousand glimmers from the bonfire” (ibid., 102). In the rest of the dance,

In and out of the shadows, they gyrated, the white robes swelled over their heads. . . .
With loud whoops and piercing war cries the white forms jumped on their horses. . . .
They raced round and round the fire, let out blood-curdling yells, firing their guns in the air, and raising the night from its slumber (ibid., 102).

Providing gaudy images of Arabian nomadic impoverishment and masculinized raiding, Selma Ekrem (ibid., 105) justified her father’s and, by extension, the state’s ambitions for disciplining this backward Ottoman East.¹²⁷ To save Berussebi inhabitants from their disorderly and

¹²⁷ See Ussama Makdisi’s analysis of how Hamidian policies used Arabic savagery as a means to pacifying the region (2002, 789-90).

hazardous nomadism, Ali Ekrem Bey collaborated with the Islamic Hamidian government to implement urban renewal projects (*ibid.*). Their joint goal was to “help the Arabs towards civilization” through settlement with infrastructural and social provision, ranging from roads, fountains, pharmacies to built homes, subsidies, and tax exemption (*ibid.*).

Reforming rural hinterlands, as historian Ussama Makdisi argues, was pivotal to late-Ottoman modernization (2002, 769). As a form of local Orientalism, this strategic ethnic othering internalized Western notions of Progress, but countered foreign imperialism with indigenous Muslim advancement (*ibid.*, 779). Creating its own backward Orient in the Arab periphery, the Ottoman state thus established itself as a reformist, imperial power with superior, meaning Islamic, civilizing mission.

This framework helps configure the Bedouin Encampment in Chicago as the target and outcome not only of Western, but also of Ottoman Orientalism. Marketing rural Arab savagery in a premodern ethnological village helped justify colonial Ottoman rule over its provinces and constituted this Empire, with its own colonized subjects, on a par with European colonial powers at the WCE. It transported Ottoman modernity’s main paradox to the Exposition: to craft a Western-compatible, reformist image, or “at once part of the East but above the rest of the rest of Eastern peoples,” the Ottoman government needed to showcase its own domestic exotics. In the Chicago context, “de-Orientalizing the Ottoman Empire by Orientalizing it” (*ibid.*, 773) was, however, driven as much by economic profit as political supremacy. In other words, the Ottoman participation in the 1893 Exposition was at once an ambassadorial and economic project driven by cultural superiority and much-needed profit (Chapter One). The revenues from domestic exotic displays, ranging from belly dance and Odeon Theater to the Bedouin Encampment, were necessary to the Ottoman presentation.

Drawing on elitist and incomplete archival research on the Ottomans at WCE, Makdisi (*ibid.*, 789-790) mistakenly denies the central role Bedouin Encampment and belly dancers played in transporting Ottoman Orientalism abroad. This not only elides the interplay between political-economic and cultural stakes of the Ottomans' Chicago endeavor, but also renders invisible the free-market of late-Ottoman modernity at home. Related is the gender- and sexuality-blind approach to Ottoman human villages in the global market and at home. Dismissing the crucial ideological and profitable link between ethnicity and sexuality, Makdisi sanitizes Ottoman imperialist acts as solely cultural endeavors devoid of commodification and sexual subtext.

Instead, drawing on postcolonial literature on empires (Stoler 1995 and 2001, McClintock 1995, Manderson and Jolly 1997), I redefine Ottoman Orientalism as a mobile imperialist project whereby ethnic, gender, and sexual othering were inextricably entangled. Embodying both libidinal excess and ethnic degeneracy, Turkish Village performers helped transform commodity spectacle into a contested laboratory for Ottoman Orientalism. This laboratory articulated with ambivalent state intimacies. As moral and ethnic anomalies, primitive Bedouin raiders along with lustful belly dancers breached the Ottomans' Islamic supremacy. On the other hand, as redeemable and profitable colonial possessions, they helped finance, albeit partially, Ottoman exhibits and consolidated imperial rule in the eyes of Western powers.

Ideologically ambivalent, this self-Orientalism also had an inequitable impact on the performers' lives. Struck by constant debt and slow business, the Turkish Village performers

suffered from the Exposition committee's unfair regulations.¹²⁸ Demanding inflated custom duties, exorbitant percentages from sales and shows, and Sunday closings, the financially-distraught Exposition management also deprived the Turkish Village of proper shelter, lights, and lavatories. Dancing girls fell ill with colds and rheumatism, while cholera became a daily threat ("Midway in Gay Attire," 2 May 1893, 4, col. 5).

Although the chief supervisor Roberto Levy fought for equal rights and compensation, some Bedouin Encampment managers either discharged their employees or pocketed their pay ("Five Arabs Out of Employment," 5 August 1893, 1, col. 3). Deprived of three weeks' salary, three desperate Bedouin performers retaliated with assault and torture ("Wild Fight in Camp," 21 August 1893, 1, col.1). They disfigured manager Hastab Abaled by dragging him "at a gallop" on the ground ("Ominous to Theatrical Managers," 1 September 1893, 4, col. 5). Others threatened to appeal to the Sultan upon losing their esteemed horses and rugs in compensation for their \$4000 debt to deputy sheriffs ("Look to the Sultan," 10 June 1893, 7, col. 1). Cheated by their managers, they invoked imperial paternalism or the Sultan's benevolent redistribution as a solution even as they operated fully in an uneven free-market. The performers' unrealistic, but timely, call for redistribution exposed the limits of liberalism staged as exotic commodification. While they belabored to enhance the Ottoman credibility and revenues in a global market, they were left without protection and welfare. Their destitution laid bare the human cost of Ottoman participation in the Chicago Exposition, in particular, and in the world market, generally.

¹²⁸ See "Rob the Exposition," *The Sunday Inter-Ocean*, 6 August 1893, 1, col.5.

Conclusion, or the 4Rs

Turkish Midway Productions animated a physical encyclopedia of domestic backwardness replete with moral, ethnic, and class anxieties of late Ottoman modernization. Let me discuss these intertwined tensions as 4Rs: Repulsion, Redemption, Rescue, and Repeat. In so doing, I explore the links between late Ottoman and contemporary Turkish public spheres fractured by morality battles and political-economic reform.

Repulsion and Redemption

The Ottomans' 1893 Chicago venture was an experiment in economic liberalism and cultural credibility. To partake in global capitalism with cultural distinction, the Empire needed to both commodify its sexual, ethnic, and classed others and to preserve its Muslim moral superiority. At first glance, selling "authentic" belly dance and ethnic quotidian shows for profit seemingly compromised the image of a (sexually) modest and civilized, or rather, modern Muslim Empire. Ottoman heritage tourism abroad was thus fraught with the tension between profit and propriety: between monetary gain and civilization/honor deficit.

Upon closer inspection, however, this domestic exotics display was pivotal to consolidating Ottoman imperial power for the Western onlookers. Like all other Western superpowers, the Ottoman government flaunted its unruly, yet redeemable, colonies at the Midway: the site for lucrative evolutionary and cultural mishaps. Auto-exoticism, as a dual economic and ideological project, was thus necessary for de-exoticizing the Empire or for proving its commercial and political compatibility with the West.

Auto-exoticism was a cross-class exercise as elite Ottoman bureaucrats--İbrahim Hakkı and Fahri Bey--and entrepreneurs--Roberto Levy and Far Away Moses-- deliberately cued Oriental appearances and *mise-en-scène* to anchor or market authenticity. But the real burden of the paradox fell on shimmying, raiding, and sewing peripheral bodies: belly dancers, provincial “savage” Arabs, and female handicraft workers. While most simultaneously proved and undermined Ottoman modernity, their “benevolent” Sultan and business-minded managers abandoned them to destitution and sickness. Both repulsive and redeemable, Turkish performers evoked the lived ambivalence of Ottoman modernity as they revealed the promises and shortcomings of Islamic world-market integration.

As in the late-Ottoman Empire, auto-exoticism drives heritage tourism in contemporary Turkey. Neo-Ottomania, the post-1980s’ recycling of Ottoman cultural practices and sites, has helped propel neoliberal urban restructuring and entertainment projects (Chapter Three). Hosting “authentic” profane and religious performances, contemporary Istanbul has become Turkish Village writ-large. In particular, professional belly dance continues to provoke numerous moral and political controversies. For instance, although belly dance shows help finance urban and national projects of the current Islamist government (AKP), they do not qualify as Ottoman heritage on the government webpage.¹²⁹ Evoking the late-Ottoman erasure of belly dance tourism from official archives, this gesture underscores how belly dance is still rendered dishonorable.

Similar to the Pan-Islamist Hamidian regime, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) preaches moral capitalism in an effort to merge EU candidacy, its pro-American politics, and

¹²⁹ Visit Turkish Ministry and Culture’s webpage: <<http://goturkey.kulturturizm.gov.tr/>>.

“just” Islamic morality (Tuğal 2007, White 2002). Locked in a cycle of foreign debt, the AKP pursues structural adjustment with the IMF just as the Hamidian government collaborated with Public Debt Administration and foreign investors. In these financially-strapped contexts, belly dance tourism, as “necessary evil,” exposes the dilemma of challenging Western Orientalism while exploiting it.

Ottoman Orientalism, too, has transmuted into nationalist, secular, and regional Orientalism in present-day Turkey. To justify banning belly dance at holiday resorts in 2002, the Center-Left party has referenced its Arabic origins.¹³⁰ Recycling tropes of oversexed and uncivilized Bedouins/Arabs, this government strove to bolster its Western compatibility by proving its superiority over “lesser” Middle Easterners. Despite the differences between Hamidian imperialism and contemporary Turkish nationalism, such measures demonstrate the continued force and extent of indigenous Orientalism as well as its exclusionary politics in the larger Middle East.

Rescue

Belly dancers simultaneously defined and endangered official and popular late-Ottoman gender reform. As anti-family workers of the night, they elicited constant government regulation. The Hamidian state’s exclusionary policies, particularly the exile of *köçeks*, sought to clear bourgeois public spaces of the dancers’ nocturnal debauchery.

¹³⁰ See Türker Alkan (2002) “Göbek Atma Hakkı” at <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=36238&tarih=30/04/2002>.

These transgressors posed similar threats to the indigenous women's movement. As objects of Orientalist commodification, they registered both Western intrusion and unbridled self-interest. Both were inimical to Ottoman distinction, newly-rationalized and bourgeois households, and moral capitalism (Chapter One). The dancers' lounging harem sensuality not only troubled Muslim or Christian sexual purists, but also challenged "the new woman": a figure that constituted industrious, educated modesty and tempered gain as the measure of Ottoman progress.

At the Exposition, the dancers contested Ottoman women's works on display and, particularly, writer Fatme Aliye's prescriptive literature on modern Muslim salvation and journalist/entrepreneur Hanna Korany's pro-Protestant, philanthropic reform. These performers, as literary or flesh-and-blood figures, were, nevertheless, the foil against which elite female reformists defined processes of moral and economic restructuring as mutually constitutive. Although the dancers were the least salvageable women, marriage or moderate capitalism promised some salvation. Some dancers, like Rosa and Rougina, gained distinction through their participation in the world's fairs. Domestic and international tours not only marked some dancers as cosmopolitan, but also enhanced their active hybridization of dance and musical genres, presentation styles, and performance conventions.

These themes and tensions prevail in present-day Istanbul. Urban gentrification of Ottoman sites is both shaped by and shapes the upgrading of belly dance as elite praxis. As they consume and practice this newly-chic dance form, the secular bourgeoisie, like Ottoman public moralists, subsume class anxieties under morality battles (Chapter Three). As such, the displacement of corrupt, disadvantaged bodies not only exposes the lived asymmetries of gentrification, but also shows how choreography, studio context, and non-participatory

performance further groom belly dance for elite consumption. In effect, this process rescues the dance from its professional practitioners.

In the field, most professional dancers have viewed marriage as a self-rescue tool as it helps absolve them of private sin and public shame and provides financial security. For a few others, it marks the end of artistic creativity (Chapter Five). Gaining leverage or public and professional respect requires artistic competence: musical adaptability and technical expertise. Birgül's story (Chapter Four) suggests how the imbrication of ethnic and sexual hierarchies complicates this pursuit of recognition across Rom and non-Rom communities.

Like the globe-trotting Ottoman performers, some dancers engage with international and domestic tours. Unlike their historic counterparts, they also use media, from television shows to dance videos, to connect with global world dance vocabularies, ranging from flamenco to Indian classical dance. Incorporation of ballet, as in the Hamidian era, mostly guarantees social prestige associated with Westernization and choreographic intervention. Just as WCE dancers, like Farida, performed at multiple Mid-East Villages, contemporary Istanbul belly dancers, in pursuit of economic or cultural advantage, traverse various sites at night: strip clubs, social festivities, corporate events, and tourist restaurants. Adjusting their movement, costume, and presentation for various audiences, most field friends also create eclectic movement styles. Participating simultaneously in weddings and the nightclub scene, they fuse technical subtleties of cabaret style--tight staccato hip isolations--with Rom social dance: vertical belly thrusts and vigorous hops and gestures (Chapter Four).

It is this mobile complexity of dance technique that necessitates multi-sited research. Following fellow dancers, I detail not only how movement travels, but how it transforms across contexts. And I embed this map of artistic circulation in an urban social network with shifting

boundaries. Here I demonstrate the processes whereby entrepreneur-cum-agents, like Ottoman commissioner Roberto Levy, mobilize and support the dancers as they police their morality, art, and pockets (Chapter Five); how families simultaneously profit from and shun their children's sexual capital (Chapter Three); and how Rom musicians vie with dancers for tips, honor, and reputable ethnicity (Chapter Four). In effect, by following the money and honor, I extend anthropologist George Marcus' definition of multi-sited research to causally connect the kinetic and social complications of a thriving urban entertainment industry.

Repeat

This analysis highlights the impossibility of understanding post-1980s' Turkey in isolation from its late-Ottoman past. My comparative focus is multi-layered as I draw connections between urban and national free-market restructuring across these volatile periods. It is through comparison that I posit such past and present turning points as entries into repeatedly fractured and malleable modernity projects.

As well, embodiment anchors the interplay among moral discourses, heritage tourism, artistic traffic, and gender formations. Multiple research sites, from archives to urban venues, mark the auto-Orientalist commodification of corporeality as at once a moral and economic project: a contradictory project that simultaneously hinges on inclusion and exclusion. My goal is neither to reify market economy nor to define belly dancers as victim-pawns in a cycle of Orientalism. Relatedly I am reluctant to present a corrective or compensatory subaltern history, recuperating the unofficial voices of performers and others. Rather, I detail various routes to empowerment and disadvantage to render this living social history as one of negotiations. In essence, these chapters demonstrate the efficacy of ethnography in elucidating the past. Setting

the stage for case studies, they make visible the embodied substance of Ottoman imperialism and Turkish free market transformation.

Chapter III

Beyond the Glitter: Belly Dance and Neoliberal Gentrification in Istanbul

Introduction

Contemporary Turkish belly dance underscores real and imagined connections to an Ottoman past within overlapping Islamist and secular neoliberal projects and identities forged around female modesty, heritage tourism, and urban restructuring in post-1980s Istanbul.¹³¹ In this chapter, I use belly dance praxis as a critical lens to explore the complex ways in which gendered cultural worlds and urban economies actively intersect across multiple contemporary Istanbul venues.¹³² In a series of urban settings, I illustrate a rich array of distinctions along shifting lines of class and practices of female modesty to emphasize the wide range of Islamic and secular subject positions in the market-driven gentrification of Istanbul. While these ethnographic scenes reveal moral and economic possibilities as well as limitations for varied

¹³¹ In the last two decades scholars have increasingly focused on situating belly dance's cultural production and transmission vis-à-vis local and global histories. See belly dance ethnographies of Nieuwkerk 1995 on Egypt, Shay 1999 on Iran, Kapchan 1994 on Morocco. Despite its escalating popularity and salacious media coverage, contemporary Turkish belly dance remains underresearched. Historical scholarship (Çağatay 1971, Davis 1986, And 1949 and 1976) has, however, focused on the Ottoman past in which belly dance performances prevailed publicly as part of the imperial festivities or as private praxis in the imperial harems. See Chapter Two for an overview of the late Ottoman styles and their social significance.

¹³² The revitalization of belly dance in Istanbul presents ethnographic and conceptual challenges raised by the form's changing and often contradictory manifestations at various scales: familial practice, trendy pastime, tourist attraction, erotic product, and art form. Shay and Sellers-Young contend that belly dance students in the West invest "millions of dollars and enormous time," contributing to the dance's growing worldwide popularity [2003, 13].

social actors, they also underline attendant tensions around urban public face and performance, profit and propriety, economy and etiquette.

Bach á L' Orientale

In a two-piece fitted dark suit, I am dressed to match a rare formal occasion in Istanbul: a classical music concert featuring belly dance. The renowned Lutfi Kırdar Convention Center's spacious and austere foyer is far from welcoming.¹³³ Bodies, clothed in cashmere and fur, but nevertheless giving no impression of warmth, unhurriedly glide on impeccable marble floors, greet amidst Grecian columns, and depart as if in step with a Bach *cantata*.

I choose one of the twelve doors to enter the techno-smart concert hall on the ground floor. Surrounded by the maple proscenium and oak walls, the maroon velvet raked theater seats shine under bright spotlights like rare ruby gems. In this vast and pretentious space, Asena, a hyper-visible Turkish belly dancer of the new millennium, takes the stage to perform two of her own choreographies for *Bach á L'Orientale*'s premiere.¹³⁴ She rapidly alternates between ballet lexicon--*pirouettes*, *attitudes*, *arabesques*--and belly dance vocabulary to match the fecund musicality of energetic percussion and soaring wind instruments. The dancer skillfully layers chest and hip isolations, torso and arm undulations in a polycentric and

¹³³ Lutfi Kırdar Convention Center, located in Harbiye--Istanbul's main commercial and cultural district--was established to host the Habitat II Conference in 1996. Besides transforming Istanbul into an international congress and conference destination, this place implicitly mirrors Istanbul's unsubstantiated claims to being a Global City. See Keyder's macroanalysis [1999, 20-23] of Istanbul's infrastructural shortcomings that render it as more of "an international mart" than a "global city," in Sassen's terms [1991, 3-4].

¹³⁴ As the creative force behind *Bach á L'Orientale*, classical pianist Anjelika Akbar identifies the project as a popular merging of the East and West [2002, CD liner notes]. Thus she has collaborated with Asena in order to realize fully her vision of homemade participatory Orientalism.

polyrhythmic style that characterizes belly dance.¹³⁵ Asena's sweat-ridden staccato movements counterpoint Anjelika Akbar's serene and virtuosic piano playing, indexing a disharmonious meeting between two performance styles.

After the final piece, the female spectators, adorned in sequined jeans and vintage jewelry, accompanied by men in tuxedos and casual chic outfits, all rise to their feet in appreciation of the meeting of two worlds: the elite and the popular, the West and the East, the refined and the unrefined. Standing next to her mentor Akbar, Asena smiles both demurely and proudly as she bows and poses for the television cameras. Her anxiety is palpable as she tightly presses the fresh white lily bouquet to her sparse, glittery silver designer costume. Equally palpable is the tacit question: "Has she finally made it?" The elite applause provides acceptance and temporary relief from the salacious press coverage of her illicit affair with an *arabesk* music mogul: "She might have finally made it."

This scene, unimaginable a decade ago, illuminates some of the key linkages in the revitalization of belly dance in Istanbul. These linkages can be found not only between the increasing standardization of dance movement and a changing urban geography, but also in the sanitizing elevation of a form of popular entertainment to an art form embedded in worldwide cultural and economic circuits that articulate with the shifting local moral economy in allegations against Asena's sexual honor.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Most belly dancers with whom I worked respond to wind instruments with arm, torso, hip undulations, such as snake arm, camel walk, and figure eights. They match accelerated drum beats with hip accents--i.e., hip drops or vertical--up and down--hip or shoulder shimmies. Polyrhythmic layering, such as combining torso circles in half time with double-time hip shimmies, indicates the dancers' technical and musical proficiency.

¹³⁶ Turkish belly dancers' continued stigmatization stems from a local moral economy informed by cultural Islam and gendered hierarchies that marginalize dancers on the basis of scarcity of costume,

Emergent dance scholarship has helped construe dance, inherited and acquired corporeal knowledge, as overt *habitus*, keeping pace with or cueing almost every power-saturated urban and cultural beat.¹³⁷ This opening vignette elucidates the connected choreographies of recent urban and cultural gentrification in Istanbul, both equally attuned to (and, indeed refashioned by) post-1980s Turkish free market modernity. On the ground, we encounter the paradox of a newly-chic yet often disparaged dance form and simultaneously redeemed and denigrated belly dancers performing in an increasingly restructured and polarized Istanbul, cultural capital of European Union aspirant Turkey. In what follows, I use a unique optic, that of the changing fortunes of a particular dance form and its practitioners, to explore the specificities of the neoliberal shift and gentrification in and beyond Istanbul, with particular focus on gender relations and specifically on Turkish form of modern Islamism.

It is through the heightened recycling of Ottoman goods, buildings, discourses, and performance practices for tourist and local consumption that belly dance, historically a morally and economically suspect profession, has entered local elite social space. This recycling project is neo-Ottomanism, a classed and gendered self-Orientalism particular to post-1980s Turkish free

assumption of loose morals connected with nightlife, and character of the venues--nightclubs. For the intersection among the dishonor of the trade, Islam, and prevailing gender ideology in Egypt, see Karin van Nieuwkerk 1995 and 2003. For a detailed discussion on how money increasingly negotiates dancers' honor in neoliberalizing Istanbul, see the section entitled Gendered and Class Conflicts Run Amok at a Local Club.

¹³⁷ See Susan A. Reed 1998 for a comprehensive literature review that situates shifting bodily repertoires as productive and reproductive forces in the constitution of socio-cultural and political identities. For a parallel history of endorsement from abroad propelling domestic appreciation and sanitization, see Savigliano on Argentinian tango (1995, 138). Notwithstanding historical differences between colonized India and never-formally-colonized Turkey, see Meduri 2001 for similar middle-class generated processes of sanitization/upgrading of a once-disreputable Indian classical dance, Bharatha Natyam. None of these works, however, causally connect urban political economy with bodily acts.

market modernity.¹³⁸ As such, it signals a shared symbolic economy that inextricably connects bodily endeavors, gentrification, and tourism. Although scholars have addressed its ubiquity, none has yet adequately theorized neo-Ottomania's particularity, its discursive and material cross-fertilization across Islamist and secular circles as they draw from the same discursive pool to concretize their alternate moral agendas on Istanbul's landscape.¹³⁹ Alternatively, my comparative ethnography of belly dance and new Islamist veiling practices indexes how the domains of symbolic (neo-Ottomania) and political economy (neoliberalism) overlap in multiple and contradictory ways in the unique context of contemporary Turkey where Islam and modernity are conjoined rather than opposed. To reengage fully the materiality of neo-Ottomania in Istanbul, I causally link the recent upgrading of an historic performance praxis--belly dance--to the larger urban projects of preservation and gentrification. Bridging cultural and political-economic analyses through an embodied lens, this study has larger methodological and theoretical implications for urban anthropological research.

My analysis pursues a number of convergent lines of argument. I extend the concept of gentrification to cultural practices, specifically performance, by articulating the connections between the upgrading of Istanbul and the upgrading of the new markers of taste via Bourdieu's theory of distinction (1984, 172). I draw on Bourdieu's configuration of classed and

¹³⁸ Critically merging Edward Said's "discursive Orientalism" [1978, 3] with Marta Savigliano's concept of "self-exoticism" based on her ethnography of Argentinian tango [1995, 138], I define "self-Orientalism" as the local deployment of globally available Orientalist tropes that reify Eastern sensual or religious exotica for material or symbolic gain. See also Shay and Sellers-Young (2003, 14, 27).

¹³⁹ See Göle 1997, 93 for the brief mention of "a nostalgia for things Ottoman." Çelik 1994 and Bartu 2001 focus on the translation of neo-Ottomania onto urban space without any consideration of gender. Although Jenny B. White [2002, 30] mentions "neo-Ottoman nostalgia infecting Islamists and secularists alike," her analysis does not adequately cover secular practices.

sedimented corporeal knowledge to emphasize the central role that embodied practice plays in generating and maintaining sociospatial distinctions. As well, Ara Wilson's concept of "intimate economies" provides a framework inclusive not only of class, but of all other identity configurations--gender, sexuality, and religion--that both underwrite and are shaped by the changing local market and nonmarket transactions in globalizing contexts (2004, 9, 11). How does the inextricability of cultural (embodied) and economic capital, as variedly formulated by Bourdieu and Wilson, articulate with Istanbul's "strategic political geography," or the production of spatial entitlement across various scales (Smith 1992, 58)?¹⁴⁰ To what extent do such processes of spatial entitlement intersect with or override the prevailing local schemes of cultural purity and gendered supremacy? Specifically, how do the current Islamist and secularist renditions of female modesty weigh against material gain to delineate the contours of acceptable gendered and material public presence in Istanbul's ever-changing landscape?

I thus call for a performance-centered and gendered theoretical intervention in analyses of gentrification in particular and urban ethnography in general. Recent political-economic analyses of gentrification--mostly in Western cities--focus on the local circuits of capital accumulation (Harvey 1985) or the interplay between global and local economic forces (Sassen 1991 and 1998, Smith 2002) with some attention to the formation and exchange of cultural or symbolic capital (Logan and Molotch 1987, Zukin 1995). The very few studies on Istanbul's gentrification articulate a strict dichotomy between a cultural analysis (Bartu 2001) and a

¹⁴⁰ See Neil Smith's "schematic theory of the production of geographical scales" [1992, 54, 66]. Smith reconfigures geographical scale-making as an exclusionary socio-political praxis that operates at the level of the body, home, community, urban space, region, nation, and globe. Similarly, in her critique on the ideological valorization of "the global," Anna Tsing prioritizes the "culture and politics of scale-making" to address the distinctive processes, whereby material and institutional components facilitate and interrupt global interconnections [2000, 330, 347].

purely economic approach (Keyder 1999). This binary, in effect, demands either macro-level analysis at the expense of the quotidian or political-economic analysis at the expense of a gendered one. Instead, by treating both gendered data in particular and everyday performance praxis in general as indispensable ethnographic data, we can fully capture how urban and cultural gentrification mutually constitute one another.¹⁴¹

Here I draw from four years of participant observation, formal and informal interviews, and shared movement across disparate field sites in Istanbul: a concert hall, a tourist restaurant, a native nightclub, a dance class, and a retail store.¹⁴² Located in the gentrified and historic districts of rapidly swelling and commercializing Istanbul, these sites address the multiple identities of belly dance in its commodified and noncommodified manifestations. They differ from one another in the practitioners' socio-economic variability, exposing the lived asymmetries of gentrification.¹⁴³ My multi-sited research enables a partial yet nuanced account of Istanbul's diffuse modernity as it finds *tangible* expression through professional and

¹⁴¹ Anne Allison's (1994) ethnography of Tokyo nightlife, Martin Stokes' (1992) research on the production and consumption of *arabesk* music in Istanbul and Marta Savigliano's (1995) work on the global exoticization of tango, all utilize participatory embodied data for their urban ethnographies. These analyses, however, do not *equally* emphasize political economy, gender, urban topography, and performance praxis.

¹⁴² Initially, I had envisioned fieldwork in tourist restaurants and underground (exclusively male) nightclubs. The dancers' migration among multiple venues a night and the perplexing phenomenon of elite belly dance, however, helped launch my query on gentrification. I thus expanded my initial scheme to address the intersecting domains of elite entertainment and dance classes. Subsequent to two years of preliminary research (1998-2000), I conducted field research at three tourist locales, two elite clubs, two dance courses, two underground nightclubs, accessing more than 58 dancers and their social networks over the course of two years (2002-2004). I also worked as a dancer at a small-scale tourist venue in Harbiye, a rapidly gentrifying district.

¹⁴³ In addition to the pragmatic issues such as access and frequency of visits (except for the section entitled The Windfall of a Serendipitous Encounter), my selection of vignettes is based on the depth and richness of material gathered around my central query on gentrification.

quotidian performances at these field sites. These vignettes position the standardization/sanitization of movement and space as essential to local gentrifying efforts.

In addition to being an interdisciplinary tool and a material way of knowing, performance, as analytical lens, reconfigures bodily acts as both markers and makers of socio-spatial distinction: a distinction forged by the macro and micro variability of intention and reception at the performance moment and beyond.¹⁴⁴ Hence, drawing on Sharon Zukin's reformulation (1995) of Erving Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor (1959), I use the front-backstage distinction to historicize the motivations not only of dancers, but also of the municipal and national governments, promoters, managers, and families. This backstage also involves using performance as methodology. My engagement in a chic dance class, for instance, has helped chart the kinetic preparation for the elite entertainment (see section entitled *Gendered and Class Conflicts Run Amok at a Local Club*).¹⁴⁵ As a whole, these vignettes elucidate, at once, "the shape of space and time" at differing scales and the distinctive consequences of gentrification across class and status (Tsing 2000, 341). As such, my ethnographic narratives unfold as substantive manifestations of the heterogeneity of capitalism and of lived Islam in changing Istanbul.¹⁴⁶ Intimacy lies in the embodied details.

¹⁴⁴ For detailed discussions on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the performance paradigm, see also Conquergood 1991.

¹⁴⁵ Shared movement conferred access to more venues and their backstage, while my belly dance literacy allowed for a kinetic engagement with performances and audiences. My class and professional aspirations, however, undoubtedly undermined my triple nativity as an Istanbul-raised female belly dancer.

¹⁴⁶ For a comparative case, see Wilson's ethnography of Bangkok (2004) in which she reveals the diffuse intimacy within global capitalist venues. See also Tsing (2000, 349) for a critical analysis of the globalist research that overlooks "the creative distinctive cultural forms of capitalism."

Istanbul in Vogue as a Tourist Destination

While the post-1980s tourism boom facilitated the return of belly dance in Istanbul, it also reflected the drastic political-economic shifts in Turkey as a whole. Following the 1970s political turmoil, the military, always a strong force in Turkish politics, took over the regime in September 1980 for the third time, ironically, to “restore peace” nationwide (Ahmad 1994, 184; see also Zürcher 1993, 293).¹⁴⁷ The climate changed drastically with the center-Right’s rise to power in 1983. Turgut Özal, a self-made man, embodied the triumph of merit over connections, a much-romanticized neoliberal characteristic, and his economic policies helped engender new commercial sectors and novel definitions of upward mobility (Zürcher 1993, 297).¹⁴⁸ As export-oriented market economy replaced import-substitution strategies, the IMF and the World Bank allocated new sources of international funding for Turkey (Zürcher 1993, 316). The early-1980s home improvement fad included intermittent privatization, gradually lessened state responsibility, and the commodification of culture. The goal was to increase Turkey’s odds of gaining European Union membership.¹⁴⁹ These economic shifts also led to Turkey’s current

¹⁴⁷ On the extent and impact of ideological battles between the Turkish Left and Right during the course of the 1970s, see Ahmad (1994, 171-73) and White (2002, 38-40).

¹⁴⁸ On the valorization of the Özal government, also see Kozanoğlu (1995, 14-16, 18).

¹⁴⁹ The reform program aimed at the bettering Turkey’s human rights record by improving the State’s treatment of its Kurdish population and the gender-equality and domestic violence related articles of the Civil Code (Kinzer 2004, Sciolino 2004). For a detailed account of the latest harmonization laws, see Amnesty International’s 2004 Annual Report on Turkey.

mounting indebtedness to and reliance on foreign loans and investment as well as the severe economic crises of 1994 and 2001.¹⁵⁰

In Istanbul and in Turkey as a whole, the post-1980s growth of service and finance sectors provided new possibilities for social mobility. In particular, tourism became a prominent tool for economic development as profits escalated from US\$770 million in 1985 to US\$3.6 billion by 1992.¹⁵¹ Both local government and entrepreneurs capitalized on Turkey's Ottoman and Byzantine heritage and on its well-preserved Mediterranean and Aegean coastline to lure tourists to the country. The current Islamist government's website proudly lists culinary culture, theater, natural wonders, archeological sites and Ottoman relics as unique pillars of Turkish tourism.¹⁵²

Turkey's main attraction for Western tourists, however, was and still is its unique position in the Middle East, grounded in its long-standing modernization/Westernization project. In the past quarter century, Turkey has gradually developed a democratic and modern Islam and pro-American politics (it was formerly the sole Middle Eastern NATO member).¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Recent scholarship has focused on either the positive or negative impact of neoliberal restructuring: on liberalization of public political expression (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997, White 2002, Göle 1997) or on the socio-economic turmoil triggered by heightened class polarization (Kozanoğlu 1995, Keyder 1999). Most scholars agree, however, that Turkey's uneven economic development was globally characteristic of the 1980s.

¹⁵¹ For these numbers, search "Turkey and tourism" on the Library of Congress webpage: Country Studies Series by Federal Research Division.

¹⁵² Visit Turkish Ministry and Culture's webpage: <http://goturkey.kulturturizm.gov.tr/>.

¹⁵³ Over the last two decades, Islamic revivalism in Turkey has markedly attracted scholarly attention. Although the identity-politics-centered approach of the first decade polarized secularists and Islamists (Göle 1997, İlyasoğlu 2000, Gülalp 1997), the most recent scholarship underscores the cross-fertilization of ideologies and lifestyles (White 2002, Saktanber 2002, Yavuz 2003) by examining the multifaceted connections among global Islamic movements, local party politics, Islamic sectoral divisions, and the quotidian.

Reinvigorated Turkish Islam and the Kemalist project interrelated, as Hakan Yavuz notes, in contingent and transformative ways (2003, ix). The unthreatening cross-fertilization of Islamic and secular modernity projects thus distinguished Turkey as the “good/safe Muslim” from her “bad Muslim” Arab sisters.¹⁵⁴ Endowed with the correct race and ethnicity as a predominantly white nation, Turkey ultimately benefited from its status as the Middle East’s noble savage.¹⁵⁵

Istanbul took center stage in the national tourist makeover. Once a grand imperial city, it had lost status after Ankara’s rise to political and cultural power in the Republican era (1923-50). By the 1950s, though, Istanbul began to regain popularity as a prominent consumption site. After the 1950s, marked by increasing rural-to-urban migration, insufficient infrastructure undercut Istanbul’s growth despite its haphazard industrial and residential expansion. Despite this growth slowdown, the Özal government singled out this historically, geographically, and commercially equipped city as a laboratory for its urban reforms.

The Center-Right urban redevelopment projects of the early 1980s were multiply linked with the national tourism project. Specifically, the interim government hurriedly passed the pre-Constitution *Turizm Teşvik Yasası* (Tourism Enticement Act) in order to transform “more than forty historical urban lands and gardens” into investment sites (Ekinci 1994, 34,173). Both local

¹⁵⁴ See Mahmood Mamdani (2004) for the global political implications of the Good Muslim vs. Bad Muslim construct in the post 9/11 era.

¹⁵⁵ I borrow from di Leonardo (1998, 36) the notion that “correct race and ethnicity” proves indispensable to the constitution of the noble savage. Here I distinguish between the political and the tourist portrayal of Turkey. Although EU might doubt Turkey’s noble savage status as a political and business partner, Turkey’s tourist appeal, as opposed to other Middle Eastern cultures, mainly stems from its soft and safe Orientalism implicated in its noble savagery.

government funding and international financial capital assisted Mayor Dalan in transforming Ottoman imperial sites into hotels: Swiss Hotel (Dolmabahçe Palace gardens), Conrad Hotel (Yıldız Palace gardens), Four Seasons Hotel (Sultanahmet imperial prison) (Ekinçi 1994, 75-6). Arguing that skyscrapers would sharpen Istanbul's tourist appeal, Dalan, with considerable assistance, implemented his global vision, concretizing it in high-rise finance and service centers and shopping malls (Bali 2002, 126).¹⁵⁶

Over the course of the 1980s, with the entrance of such young urban professionals, Istanbul has attained, in Martin Stokes' words, a "glittering theatrical" form, colored by a burgeoning market for lifestyle and ideology and an unprecedented consumer boom (2002, 328).¹⁵⁷ Surrounded by skyscrapers, big business centers and shopping malls, the forerunners of Turkish yuppie-hood began consuming ethnic cuisines, cigars, wine, renowned foreign and local designer clothes, International Arts and Music Festivals as effortlessly as they spoke on their cell phones (Bali 2002, 145-175; Keyder 1999, 15). With its extensive and costly urban restructuring, Istanbul by the 1990s emerged as Turkey's preeminent metropolis and tourist treasure.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the world-class convention hall in the opening vignette provides a palpable example of Istanbul's future aspirations.

Following its 1994 victory in municipal elections, the Islamist Welfare Party continued the reification of Istanbul's Ottoman heritage, specifically to valorize and boost Istanbul's

¹⁵⁶ See Mayor Dalan's interview for a Turkish newspaper, as cited by Bali (2002, 216).

¹⁵⁷ See also Zürcher (1993, 317) and Bali (2002, 95-106, 146-175).

¹⁵⁸ Many local and global developments slowed down the tourist boom, however. To name a few: the Kurdish problem of the 1990s, 1999 Earthquake, recurrent financial crises of 1994 and 2001, the aftermath of 9/11 in which the whole Middle East was implicated, the Iraqi War, the November 2003 bombings in Istanbul.

religious legacy as a once Islamic capital (Bartu 2001, 141). By foregrounding inclusion of the urban poor in the cityscape, the Islamists also invoked the Ottoman model of tolerance and pluralism in their attempt to implement a softer urban neoliberalism.¹⁵⁹ This Just/Fair City model, however, implemented restrictions on the use of Beyoğlu's public space: on many streets, outdoor cafés and restaurants serving alcohol were ordered to move inside.

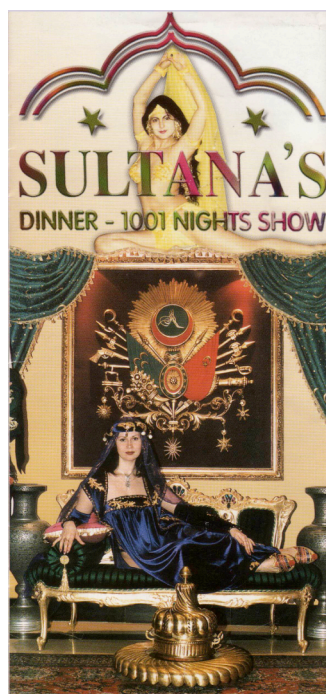
Historian of architecture Zeynep Çelik identifies shared paradoxical trends in the larger urban projects: both the Islamist and secular municipalities undertake concurrent projects of demolition, displacement, and historic preservation (1994, 85). Specifically, Beyoğlu municipality legitimized the displacement of the non-Muslim, impoverished, and mostly informal and entertainment workers in Tarlabası through a "cleaning up" agenda (Çelik 1994:84). Conversely, Çelik Gülersoy's semi-private revitalization project on Soğukçeşme Street helped the local government in preserving and refashioning the "dilapidated and modest Ottoman houses" located around the imperial Topkapı Palace (1994, 89). This neo-Ottomanist project literally concretized familiar 19th-century Orientalist fantasies: the uniform architectural style faithfully reflected turn-of-the-century European-travelogues and the opulent interior décor evoked a timeless Ottoman elite glamour.

In the course of the last two decades, neo-Ottomania found expression not only in the local and global circulation of material objects (i.e., prominent industrialist Sabancı's world-acclaimed Calligraphy Collection), urban spaces (historical preservation and gentrification), discourses (the Islamist Justice and Development Party's pluralist and tolerant urban

¹⁵⁹ See Jenny B. White's discussion on how this promise was undermined by class distinctions. In her assessment of the Islamist Welfare Party's fault lines, White (2002, 166) writes "[t]he inequity was perceived to be a moral problem, thus one with a moral solution."

capitalism), but also in urban entertainment. In particular, harem-touched glitzy belly dance shows were indispensable to the promotion of an Ottoman Palace lifestyle for enthusiastic tourist audiences.

Restaurants and nightclubs, featuring Sultan's Night shows, proliferated in downtown Taksim and the Old City, where the remnants of the Byzantine Empire coexisted with real or imagined Ottoman imperialistic treasures.¹⁶⁰ Many travel agencies catered Ottoman theme parties reeking of a familiar Orientalist fantasy, authenticated by "tantalizing and sensual" allegorical dances.¹⁶¹ Eager tourists could now don bejeweled traditional costumes and gleefully roam, or perhaps even shimmy, in period décor.



¹⁶⁰ Orient House, Kervansaray, and Gar Restaurant are the trendiest tourist restaurants in Istanbul with belly dance shows. See their official websites and reviews: <http://www.orienthouseistanbul.com/index2.htm>, <http://www.shira.net/kervansaray%20.htm>.

¹⁶¹ See Worldwide Travel Agencies webpage for a thick description of an Ottoman theme party: http://www.wwsturkey.com/it_istanbul_tp.html#1.

Figure1: Promotional Flyer for Sultanas

The promotional flyer for Sultanas, a small-scale tourist venue, conjures up Ottoman sensuality and opulence.

Sanitized Exoticism at a Tourist Restaurant

I enjoy small talk with the burly middle-aged doorman of the Gar Restaurant located adjacent to the Old City and underneath a busy overpass. The lights of the belly dancers' publicity posters at the otherwise unassuming entrance illuminate the doorman's dark-colored uniform and his tired expression. After passing through the sparsely decorated square foyer, I enter the charmless main dining hall. The earth-toned walls are decorated with small barred windows from which fake maroon flowers droop lifelessly, buried under the faint, generic scent of grilled meat.

Gar Restaurant is a vast, symmetrical and orderly space. And now, catering to an international clientele, it reflects the repercussions of the Iraqi War: it hosts a crowd of fifty in a room designed for three hundred. The few French and German patrons consume the folkloric dances as easily as they fork through the appetizers at their long white tables, constantly but kindly monitored by their Turkish tour guide. The program, which includes three folk dances interspersed with three belly dances, condenses and fictionalizes Turkish vernacular entertainment, while spicing it up with belly dancers' sanitized eroticism. It is "sanitized" because the stage is an elevated proscenium: there is no opportunity for intimate audience tipping during the performance.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Tipping at family gatherings indexes appreciation as the elders reward young children by sticking bank notes on their forehead. In tourist clubs, where the audience is separated from the dancer, tips can be passed on via a waiter or manager. But tourist patrons often tip the dancers during the brief

Each tourist restaurant is a big entertainment factory in which bodily differences are continually and uniformly manufactured as exotic Oriental extravaganza. This is an entertainment land that testifies to what Jane Desmond (1999, xiv, xiii) labels “physical functionalism,” an epistemological framework that privileges the live display of human bodies in securing the authenticity of a tourist encounter. Dance, in other words, is indispensable for a tourist experience to be complete and real. Here at Gar, a taste of Turkish nightlife, in close contact with the belly dancers and folk dancers, complements--verifies--all the sight-seeing and souvenir-shopping. The last dancer, Nergis, acts as the repository of truth, summarizing Orientalized, yet safe, Turkishness via sanitized eroticism. Like Asena, she prefers choreography to improvisation. Her dance technique is enriched by hip drops layered with snaky undulations and an extraordinary variety of lateral and vertical shimmies.¹⁶³

Along with the fidgety few, most audience members watch Nergis’ detached--no eye contact--and confident performance silently and attentively before offering loud applause. The dancer accepts this appreciation with an aloof bow, a visible trace of a female entertainment worker’s decade-long social and economic marginalization. Nergis’ pay is both low and insecure, endangered by even one night’s absence. For financial security, she relies on *extras*--performances at elite weddings or corporate parties--in addition to gigs at exclusively male nightclubs. She makes thirty million Turkish lira a night (\$17) at Gar Restaurant, while each customer pays \$50 to enter. This restaurant also has a nine hundred-person auditorium that used

post-performance photo shoots. The dancers receive tips stuffed into their costumes only in the underground clubs or upper-class taverns. For the conflicts over sharing tips with musicians, see Chapter Four.

¹⁶³ The lateral hip shimmies concentrate on fast side-to-side movements. Shoulder shimmies require rapid front-back accents.

to be full in Istanbul's tourist season, between May and November, before the War on Iraq scared off the foreign visitors.



Figure 2 Nergis in costume (Photo by author.)

Nergis' story evokes the overlapping development in Istanbul's tourism and entertainment industry linked through the materiality of neo-Ottomanist belly dance performances. The Turkish commodification of belly dance--whether for local or global consumption--could be viewed as a gesture to catch up with the *au courant*. Subsequent to belly dance's endorsement by the West, these "harem-styling" performances could be furthering EU aspirant Turkey's fervent claims to cultural progress. Then again, not so smoothly.

In April 2002, the Center-Left Turkish government banned belly dance at Turkish Nights for the non-Turkish clientele at Southern holiday resorts. The officials claimed that, as a dance of Arabic origin, belly dance misrepresented Turkish identity to Western tourists.¹⁶⁴ The ban's secular-nationalist tone, as in multiple other controversies over the dance form, evokes the constant struggle between the past and present Orientalist and nationalist discourses: the deep contradiction between the "dirty," yet essential, revenue from embodied-Orientalism in belly dance shows *and* a Westernized self-image distinct from--superior to--other, especially Arab, Orientals.¹⁶⁵

Islamists have forged an equally precarious dialogue with such Orientalist performativity. Eschewing dancers' suggestive clothing and public mobility, the current Islamist government has conveniently excluded belly dance practice from Turkey's marketable

¹⁶⁴ In *Radikal*, a daily Turkish newspaper, journalist Türker Alkan (2002) writes on the belly dance ban.

¹⁶⁵ A "dangerous" Oriental culture here implies Muslim fundamentalist or terrorist after 9/11.

Ottoman and Anatolian heritage.¹⁶⁶ Instead, their tourism webpage categorizes folk dance, *Hacivat* and *Karagöz* puppetry, one-person *Meddah* shows, minstrel and dervish narratives as prototypical (read: honorable) Turkish cultural performance. Hence, Orientalism, embodied in belly dance performances, continues to be an open sore in ongoing morally and nationalistically-driven Turkish modernization projects.

Nevertheless, the State, city governments, foreign and local private economic capital still participate fervently in neo-Ottomanist urban projects not only to preserve, but also to restructure Istanbul. The inhabitants and makers of this not-yet-global city have efficiently deployed a global urban strategy: gentrification..¹⁶⁷ Following late-1970s' suburbanization, spurred by population density, environmental problems, and the construction of the Bosphorus Bridge, many affluent urbanites, inspired by old Istanbul nostalgia, moved back downtown.¹⁶⁸ To take refuge from what they envisioned as lower-class migrants' invasion (Bali 2002, 134-140), the nouveau riche settled in Pera, the former Ottoman capital of foreign affluence and Western civilization.¹⁶⁹ The secular elite's recycling of the imperial past of Istanbul echoes William Bissell's study of colonial nostalgia (2005) as constitutive of urban redevelopment in

¹⁶⁶ Visit the current Islamist government's tourism website: <http://www.kulturturizm.gov.tr/portal/kultur_en.asp?belgeno=5675>. Although belly dance is not an item on Islamist government's website, it is still a primary tourist attraction for Istanbul and Turkey.

¹⁶⁷ Neil Smith (2002, 99) defines gentrification as "a global urban strategy . . . a consummate expression of neoliberal urbanism."

¹⁶⁸ See Keyder (1999, 145-7) for an economic analysis of the post-1950s excessive rural-to-urban migration. The 1973 construction of the Bosphorus Bridge, linking the Asian and European continents, proved to be a faster and more efficient transportation route than travel by boats.

¹⁶⁹ For the cultural and economic marginalization of the Istanbul's urban poor, also see Öncü (1999) and Keyder (1999). Martin Stokes' *arabesk* music analysis (1992) speaks to how entitlement to certain performance practices plays into the controversies over urban space ownership.

contemporary Zanzibar. Despite the historical differences between never-formally-colonized Turkey and formal British rule in Zanzibar, the privileged Istanbulites, along with the local neoliberal state, here as in Zanzibar, have engaged in idealizing Ottoman cultural cosmopolitanism, which has contributed to the urban displacement of the dispossessed (Bissell 2005, 220–221, 228).

Having isolated themselves from lower-class “contamination,” young urban professionals then helped gentrify two historic neighborhoods: Cihangir and Kuzguncuk, both dating to 15th century Ottoman Empire (Ergun 2004, 394-396; Uzun 2001, 102, 116). Cihangir’s proximity to Taksim and Beyoğlu--redeveloping commercial and entertainment centers--and its unsurpassed view of the city--history at one’s fingertips--attracted many artists and intellectuals, who began renovating dilapidated historical buildings (Uzun 2001, 108). With real-estate developers and young professionals’ arrival and thus rising property values, Cihangir’s mixed-income and ethnic population was gradually displaced. Many residents who worked in Beyoğlu’s entertainment sector (nightclub and tavern workers) were the first to leave. But transvestites and transsexuals, also mostly sex industry workers, proved more resilient. Ethnographer Deniz Kandiyoti (2002) describes their forced departure in the summer of 1996:

When the UN Habitat II conference was hosted in Istanbul in the luxury hotels surrounding Taksim Square, stray dogs and transsexuals bore the brunt of major “clean up” operation that preceded the event. Recalling the event, Tülay describes a military-style operation, the police using fire ladders to break into flats through the windows, with triggers cocked (2002, 287).

Despite growing public visibility and prestige for a few, most contemporary belly dancers continue to be marked as fallen women. Like the transsexuals and urban poor, they frequently

undergo urban criminalization. Gentrification in Istanbul maps a gendered process, one that strategically displaces not only economically marginal, but also morally dubious bodies: bodies that, as Kandiyoti argues, challenge hegemonic definitions of Turkish masculinity (2002, 277, 290). And police violence acts as a last resort for “reinforcing social differences as spatial ones” (Smith 1992, 68).

Some gentrifiers were purchasing distinction as well as a new home in order to effectively merge lifestyle with class. The refinement of taste worked in tandem with the redeveloping Istanbul nightlife scene. Although this very world is thoroughly complicated, since every class has a distinct entertainment style, young professional entrepreneurs strove to emulate New York upper-class sophistication either by opening or frequenting new trendy bars, nightclubs, and restaurants.¹⁷⁰

In particular, Beyoğlu and Cihangir, with their abundance of upper-class taverns, were the initial loci of homemade classy entertainment. Next, Etiler, a northern suburb close to the developing technology axis in Maslak, developed clubs and restaurants offering impeccable service, casual/trendy dress code, club music hybridized with jazz and, most importantly, a “safe” suburban space.¹⁷¹ Belly dancers entered Istanbul’s upper-class entertainment scene as stars in the early 1990s, a time when the dance’s global fashionability converged with local neo-Ottomanist desires. As the demand for belly dancers increased over the 1990s, many trendy local venues featured Turkish pop or *arabesk* music and employed dancers dressed in

¹⁷⁰ See Bali (2002, 256-57 and 268-278) for Istanbul yuppie culture’s fascination with New York’s urban and entertainment style.

¹⁷¹ This “safe space” marginalizes the inhabitants of Other Istanbul--the poor, the uneducated, and the marginalized ethnic groups such as the Kurds--who could not afford the lifestyle.

two-piece “traditional”--neo-Orientalist--costumes. The number of belly dancers thus rocketed upwards while the variety of performance venues multiplied. Prior to the neoliberalization of Istanbul, belly dancers had limited resources in terms of job opportunities, public visibility, and access to international movement styles. In post-1980s, the continued stigmatization of dancers coexisted with their desired respectability: less skimpy costumes and less suggestive dancing.

Gendered and Class Conflicts Run Amok at a Local Club

As I enter an Istanbul oasis for upper-class entertainment, I am inundated by loud taped *alaturka* music and thick cigarette smoke counterpointed with sexy spicy perfumes sold under the Exotic section at the Duty Free. Women flaunt their fit bodies in Versace or Armani mini-skirts and scanty tops. With undulant bodies in space and some shrill laughter in ears, one could easily mistake the atmosphere as purely convivial, were it not for the frowns of fatigue on the waiters’ faces and their sweat-stained white shirts. The rhythm of the waiters’ agitated diligence collides with the rhythm of the crowd’s light-hearted amusement.

The female executives of a cosmetics company seem to shimmy harder than the belly dancer who initially takes over the claustrophobic rectangular stage for a five-minute routine. After this brief introduction, the dancer, Serap, in a purple costume, thick and heavy with beads and precious-looking-yet-inexpensive stones, steps down to mingle with her classy audience. She is paid only in tips and, thus, must visit tables during the rest of her twenty-minute routine, leaving the performance space open. The executive women immediately seize this opportunity to distinguish themselves with gyrations, hip bumps, and camel walks. Their bodies sweat with

the fever of competition. The female spectators achieve a *soft coup* as they disarm the dancer by taking over her home, the stage, while deploying oversexualized femininity and class as their armor. They vie for the limelight with a performance practice that resembles an old Ottoman neighborhood, veiling a dangerous past and an ambiguous future. This cultural upgrading of belly dance by the upper-class clientele invokes the larger process of urban gentrification in Istanbul in which gentrifiers socially and spatially deride, exclude, and displace less-privileged homeowners or tenants.

Serap later frames her displaced plight in terms of sexual honor: “Some of these women are far more scantily dressed than myself. Yet, I am the ultimate loose woman. Why?” Seemingly naïve, Serap’s question echoes Lila Abu-Lughod’s commentary on the popular stigmatization of Egyptian movie stars as “fallen” or dishonorable women (1997, 502, 511). Despite the seeming class divides between wealthy film stars and struggling belly dancers, between poor Bedouins and wealthy Turks, the Turkish nouveau riche here, as in Egypt, engages in class conflicts via the discourse of morality by stigmatizing the female performer. Conversely, the same clientele fervently deploy their newly acquired taste in belly dance (performative neo-Ottomania) to negotiate and re-mark their upper-class status. As entertainment, belly dance praxis has promised cultural and economic proximity to the Center in numerous ways: to the redeveloped, gentrified, and thus socially and economically more segregated aspiring global city and to an Americanized lifestyle infected with Orientalist nostalgia.

During the 2001 financial crisis, many executive women--bankers, media workers, mid-level managers, public relations agents--were taking high-tuition public and private belly dance classes. I attended evening classes for a year at a trendy community college, Bilgi University,

as one of my field sites.¹⁷² Referencing their Ottoman heritage, most of my Bilgi classmates claimed that “every Turkish woman knows how to belly dance.” Despite its historical stigmatization, both Ottoman and Turkish men and women have mastered this dance technique through participatory mimicry at familial gatherings. Why, then, were upper-class women taking lessons if they had already learned to belly dance at home or by cultural osmosis? First, before its gentrification, the public performance of belly dance denoted lower-class status. Second, belly dance itself has transformed from a participatory social form into a presentational codified dance technique. In the dance studio, highly respected retired belly dancer Nesrin Topkapı aptly bridges the social and artistic environments by using standard vocabulary--hip drop, camel walk, figure eight, snake arm--while also referencing dance’s communal heritage through associative domestic gestures: wringing the laundry, holding the baby, or stirring the pot.¹⁷³ From the student’s uniform--leotard and tights--to the use of a full wall mirror, the dance studio setting itself indexes standardization. As such, this space maps the kinetic backstage of Serap’s performance venue, exposing the reconfiguration of elite bodily archives in post-1980s Istanbul.

Our recital at *Hamam*, a pricy outdoor nightclub, epitomizes belly dance’s transformation into an elite concert form, evolving from a participatory and improvisational social practice to an art form: a choreographed ensemble piece.¹⁷⁴ Belly dance’s contemporary

¹⁷² In interviews, some of my classmates also mentioned weight control, physical fitness, and sex appeal as their reasons for taking the class.

¹⁷³ Topkapı’s aversion to skimpy costumes, demure manners, and choice of performance venues--elite and not-exclusively-male--granted her a reputable status: “Turkey’s first family belly dancer.”

¹⁷⁴ Both the name of the club, *Hamam* (a Turkish bath), and its proximity to the imperial Topkapı Palace signal a neo-Ottomanist subtext.

gentrification thus reflects the effective symbiosis between spatial and artistic upgrading: the standardization of its movement vocabulary and context are key to its novel cachet in gentrified Istanbul.

As elsewhere, the urban and cultural gentrifiers' effective capitalization on gendered and classed exoticism both reflected and furthered the uneven social stratification in Istanbul. The young urban professionals' Center overlooked the dark hinterlands, inhabited by the urban poor. Also hidden in the dark were the burgeoning urban feminist movements, fighting for more elbow room for secular urban female professionals.¹⁷⁵ Despite some immediate yet exclusive triumphs, gender inequality centering on female modesty nevertheless persisted in the larger judicial, political, and quotidian realms. Such inequality, dangerously articulated in honor killings, state-run virginity tests, and domestic violence permeated Istanbul in particular and in Turkey in general. Although frequently disregarded as extreme cases, these regular incidents, as Parla astutely notes, mirror the persistent and often State-sanctioned secular or Islamist concern with female sexual purity (2001, 65-66).

Some belly dancers have recounted how police in the early-1980s openly raided the disreputable--exclusively-male--nightclubs and even their own homes. Following most raids, police took the financially insecure and socially disenfranchised dancers to public hospitals for STD exams. As one dancer irritably noted: "For the police, we (the dancers) were nothing but sex workers."¹⁷⁶ But a dancer could avoid such violent intrusions once she procured a

¹⁷⁵ For a comparative case, see Partha Chatterjee (1993) on how women have come to stand for tradition and Indianness in a postcolonial context.

¹⁷⁶ Here "financially insecure few" implies those who could not afford to pay bribes. By "socially disenfranchised," I refer to dancers who were not protected by powerful bosses or boyfriends.

performer's identification card that documented her regular STD check-ups. This identification card, in return, enabled the State both to audit any informal economic activity and regulate the dancers' modesty. Killing two birds with one stone, the State thus monitored both the dancers' bodies and pockets. Although officially banned in 1996, police raids continue, undocumented.

Regulation of female bodies is not, however, novel to Turkish history. Since the late Ottoman reforms, modernizers from all walks of life have rendered women the incubators of modernity while their sexual purity guaranteed the sanctity of the family, the nation, or the religious community (Cakir 1996, Kandiyoti 1991, Tekeli 1990, Abu-Lughod 1998).¹⁷⁷ In particular, the immodestly dressed and "dangerously" public (read: without immediate male patronage) belly dancers have posed a consistent challenge to such efforts. In particular, the dancers' contemporary marginalization in Istanbul indexes a State or public preoccupation with female public presence defined as much by modesty as wealth.

Could the new female elite, then, fully escape this multifaceted surveillance of their modesty while they practiced a morally suspect dance form? I do not argue that the neoliberalization of Turkey has helped permanently weaken the prevalent charges against general or belly-dance-related acts of female immodesty. Rather, the upper-class belly dance practitioners now have some leverage as they opt for a Westernized, secular, and elite cosmopolitanism, while framing moral questions of sexual honor primarily with reference to class. But do the professional dancers have the same option? In Asena's case, the patronage of an elite art form and an established musician--classical music and Akbar--as well as her own

¹⁷⁷ See Tekeli (1990) for a detailed analysis of these secular feminist movements in post-1980s Turkey.

wealth and fame all suspend the charges against her alleged immodesty. But Serap, a struggling dancer, is doubly taxed with neither the economic nor the symbolic capital to escape charges of sexual dishonor. My close analysis of Serap's world thus invokes myriad familial and economic negotiations in and beyond the performance space.

Who Is in the Backstage? A Micro-analysis

Drawing on Sharon Zukin's ethnography of small service industry's role in the sustenance of urban symbolic economy (1995, 157-8), I suggest that a fluid front/backstage divide implicates *not* a power-neutral architectural, spatial, or performative separation (Goffman 1959) but, rather, a division of labor and an ongoing power negotiation inflected by class, gender, and religion. My backstage analysis thus encompasses pre- and post-performance acts and the fluid, yet conflicted, presence of other social agents: the male clientele, the boss, the agent, the costume-makers, the musicians, and the dancers' families. This backstage is "intimate" in Ara Wilson's sense, as it unveils how various social actors, in Serap's world, actively draw on the capitalist and folk kin or community-related moral principles that not only overlap, but also shift with the transnational and local material forces and demands (2004, 11,14).

The backstage of the local upper-class club is framed by the anxiety of men whose wives and girlfriends are up on stage performing for others. They are uneasy with a public performance by their women, as it signals their insufficient surveillance and hence--possibly--weakened masculinity. Also part of the backstage is the restaurant boss who explains dancers' low salaries in reference to the recent financial crisis and the Iraqi War. Unapologetically

business-like, he tells me: “If this one leaves, another will come. There are so many unemployed dancers who would accept my offer without any complaints.” His attitude reflects the unemployment crisis severely affecting those in the informal economy, given the post-9/11 collapse of the tourist industry. Because of slow demand and their large number, as many as one thousand belly dancers in Istanbul in recent years have become interchangeable.

Also crowding the backstage is the entertainment agent, Erotik Erol, who felt no need to see Serap’s dance before employing her, because “her measurements said it all.” He receives forty percent of her tips for each performance plus a new suit every few months. His interest in pure economic gain echoes the boss’ tone, but in this case it is Serap who might seize the opportunity to move to a less costly agent in the unstable job market.

Who else occupies this backstage? The mother, a native Istanbulite, who is glad Serap is finally moving back from Ankara and is fully confident that her daughter will earn enough to finance a brother’s wedding. Although she worries about Serap’s future, since she is unmarried due to her “stained” belly dancer’s status, she suspends larger questions of sexual purity for now: Serap is the main breadwinner in this family.¹⁷⁸ The mother’s flexible position on modesty suggests how the post-1980s market logic increasingly refashions intimate domains. And filial duty is essential for the once-starving folk dancer Serap. Her decision to switch careers evokes Ara Wilson’s portrait of the go-go bar laborers in Bangkok: “it is the desire to be appropriate women that makes them inappropriate women” (2004, 93).

¹⁷⁸ As Ayşe Parla (2001, 77) notes, “the importance of a woman’s purity as an icon of family order is reflected in the linguistic repertoire, most notably in the injunctions against staining the family honor.”

Serap refers to the costume makers, an Ankara couple, as “my family away from home.” Serap’s use of fictive kinship operates parallel to Jenny White’s discussion of Turkish mutual indebtedness (1994, 14-15). The costume makers tolerate late payments to sustain a web of reciprocal delayed obligations, but also because of Serap’s efficiency in landing them new customers.¹⁷⁹ The costume makers’ profit orientation, sugarcoated with the idiom of fictive kinship, provides flexibility and security for Serap, allowing her to survive the fluctuations of an unstable market, the entertainment industry in Istanbul. This relationship highlights the blurring between commercial and noncommercial exchanges in an increasingly capitalist urban space (Wilson 2004, 84). Specifically, both sides activate their own social capital--web of relations--to engage in a shifting, diffuse, and flexible socio-economic contract.

Serap is also adept at cutting corners. Like many other dancers, she evades taxation by working off the books. Serap purchases second-hand costumes when unable, even with a delayed payment or a bargain, to afford her main provider’s price. As well, she borrows pirated CDs to avoid pricy professional CD reproduction (\$300-\$500) or paying live musicians. When Serap has to perform with live music, she pushes some of her tips in the deep corners of her costume in order to avoid sharing them with the musicians.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Jenny White’s prominent ethnography of female piecework in late-1980s Istanbul exposes “how socially valorized indebtedness underlies economic practice in Turkey, and creates, maintains and naturalizes relations of domination and exploitation” (1994, 86). This costume making couple’s “morally capitalist” enterprise employs “invisible” pieceworkers who are as immersed as Serap in the simultaneously “exploitative and solidary” web of mutual indebtedness (4).

¹⁸⁰ In the field, I witnessed intense and occasionally violent conflicts over money between the dancers and musicians. See Chapter Four for a detailed analysis of monetary and aesthetic exchange between musicians and belly dancers in Istanbul.

The backstage also contains the dancer's years of formal and informal training, in other words, her fine-tuning of what Margaret Thompson Drewal labels "acquired-in-body techniques," especially in and through performances with live music (1992, 10). Serap replenishes her bodily archive with moves collected from watching Turkish belly dance masters live or recorded, the technique videos of German Oriental dancers, and MTV music videos.¹⁸¹ She samples Jennifer Lopez's or Shakira's signature moves such as clock-wise pivoting with salsa hip circles and sequential torso undulations.¹⁸² Facilitated by the post-1980s' privatization and proliferation of Turkish television channels, Serap's increased access to international movement lexicons differs starkly from her predecessors' limitations.¹⁸³ And her movement repository reverberates with neo-Ottomania's loud pulse. But what are the gendered and classed limits of Islamic neo-Ottomania? Will the Islamist reification of the past accommodate belly dance praxis, which invokes not only luxurious palace lifestyle, but also sexual suggestiveness?

Twinning of Belly Dance and New Islamism

Over the last two decades, Islamic revivalism in and beyond the Middle East has spurred reformulations of modernity to keep pace with the tools and consequences of globalization. As elsewhere, Muslim ideologues, reformers, and subjects in Turkey have faced

¹⁸¹ Specifically, Serap adds the Turkish drop--the accelerated back bend to the floor--and leg and full-body shimmies to her vocabulary.

¹⁸² Shakira is a half-Lebanese, half-Colombian pop star who samples salsa, tango, and belly dance in her music videos.

¹⁸³ Prior to the 1980s neoliberalization, Turkey had only one television channel that was run by the national government.

the challenge of being incorporated into a world market while also upholding a distinct Muslim identity. Islamist politics in Turkey have transformed from an oppositional (Kemalist secularism) to a mainstream (conservative center-right) stance. And this progression, though interrupted by the 1997 soft coup with the incarceration of an Islamist leader, resulted in the Islamist Justice Development Party's (AKP) victory in 2002 general elections. By prioritizing familial or community-based welfare, the current Islamist government, headed by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, aptly valorizes Muslim idioms of egalitarian morality to ameliorate the escalating uneven distribution of wealth and resources. Despite the Islamists' consistent invocation of moral discourses to undercut the effects of the capitalist market, the dismal reality of class and gender inequality frequently surfaces: burgeoning unemployment and Erdoğan's attempt at criminalizing adultery, both undermining the ideal of democratic public and urban space.

Besides undertaking morally capitalist urban redevelopment or historical preservation projects, Islamists and Muslim elites have also extensively commodified potent Ottoman symbols. Yael Navaro-Yashin's ethnography of an Islamic fashion show demonstrates not only how Islamic textile companies participate in the local and global fashion markets for Ottomania, but also how they render *tesettür* (new Islamist veiling) central to their economic enterprises (2002a, 238-9).

Tesettür's complete coverage of the head and forehead differs from earlier relaxed forms of provincial and lower-class traditional headgear in the degree of coverage and in its unlimited range of fashionable city styles, varying in color and length. *Tesettür*, as Jenny B.

White argues, also articulates a desire for urban upward mobility (2002, 213). Fraught with a paradoxical symbolism, as White notes,

[i]t (*tesettür*) incorporates ideas about an “Islamic modernity” in which women are educated and professionally and politically active. On the other hand, it refers to values like patriarchal hierarchy, gender segregation, and women’s primary role as mothers and their place in the home (2002, 226).

Tesettür purports to ground female modesty ultimately in fashionable covering, while operating as a “mobile honor zone,” effective even in the absence of *himaye* (immediate male patronage) (White 2002, 220-223). The uneasy surveillance articulated in *tesettür* both frees covered women to engage in public life and implicates them as potentially dangerous public bodies, capable of risking their own as well as their family’s honor.

As a gentrifying practice, *tesettür* indexes, as White contends, a moral distinction over uncovered secular female bodies and a social distinction over other economically or culturally unequipped Muslim women (2002, 223). Over the last two decades, numerous scholars have focused on the regional variability of *tesettür* to foreground both its emancipatory and restrictive sociopolitical aspects vis-à-vis shifting discourses of Muslim piety, propriety, and individual liberation (Abu-Lughod 2002, MacLeod 1991, Mahmood 2001). However, with the exception of White’s ethnography, most studies of Turkish *tesettür*, conducted among middle-class university students (Göle 1997a) or Islamist elites (Saktanber 2002), have explored neither the full range of embodied Islamic propriety nor the multilayered plight of disenfranchised Muslim women. Rather than reduce *tesettür* to “the quintessential sign of women’s unfreedom” (Abu-Lughod 2002, 786), I emphasize particularly the triple burden of lower-class Turkish veiled women vis-à-vis the Muslim and secular elites, the secularist state, and the nonnegotiable dictums of Islamist morality.

Essentially elitist at its inception (i.e., the fashions are inspired by the Ottoman Palace styles), *tesettür* literally veils class differences by focusing on moral motivations. Like belly dance praxis, *tesettür* draws from neo-Ottomania with an alternate emphasis on moral and religious discourses. But whereas secular elites can and do negotiate morality with economic and cultural capital, for Islamic elites or masses, no wealth or education can cleanse a once-stained female honor. Despite these lived differences, as illustrated in the following vignette, female modesty is not negotiable in the Islamic idiom.¹⁸⁴

If the Muslim female elite in particular, or the Islamist group in general, do experiment with Ottomania through lifestyle preferences, then why do they not condone belly dance, a practice once so indispensable to the Ottoman palaces?¹⁸⁵ Because belly dance, as public unveiled female performance at venues that serve alcohol, embodies all the vices that the ideal Muslim woman should avoid. Islamist neo-Ottomania selects only certain elite elements of the Empire's past.

Thus *tesettür* and belly dance are the fraternal twins--the noble and nasty savage--of modern Turkey, delineating the contours of morally and materially acceptable female presence in public space. Fathered by neoliberalism, *tesettür* and belly dance oscillate between abjection and sophistication. Zeynep's story charts the unpredictable road between the discursive and

¹⁸⁴ The latest controversy on criminalizing adultery in early fall 2004 is a case in point. Suggested by the Prime Minister Erdoğan as "a measure to protect families," the proposal indexed the unresolved tension between Islam-based family values, gendered inequalities, and civil rights (Sachs 2004).

¹⁸⁵ On the history of belly dance as a prominent Ottoman public and private social practice, see Chapter Two.

quotidian: social actors do not always obey the rules. They take shortcuts and, more often than not, enter dead ends.

The Windfall of a Serendipitous Encounter

During an outing with two friends on a hot, humid late spring day, I climb the steep hill behind the Egyptian Bazaar to the dilapidated historic neighborhood of Tahtakale to purchase a few personal gifts. Out of breath, we enter an unassuming peach-colored kiosk tucked away from the bustle of the street. Its two large rooms hold a kaleidoscope of shiny wooden and metal goods from India, Africa, China, and Mexico. During our conversation about her prospects, university entrance exams and English classes, I cannot help but notice the female shop assistant's bright jovial eyes, hopeful spirit, and her long-sleeved brown shirt and very long skirt. Under the long black wrap covering most of her forehead, Zeynep does not seem to sweat through *tesettir* at all.

Although I feel off duty--I am there to shop, not for fieldwork--Zeynep's question intrigues me: "Do you want to see our Shakira scarves?" (I do, I do!) Then off we head to a boisterous discussion of various dance styles. With the intent of expanding her dance vocabulary, while also sharing more of her Shakira-inspired innovative moves, Zeynep takes me to the secluded and mirrored second room across from the main shop. "We can be comfortable here," she whispers and mimics me in pulling her t-shirt up to expose her highly-competent belly isolations, movements picked up from neighborhood weddings and MTV.

Zeynep tells me that she can only perform at female-exclusive weddings or familial gatherings and sadly adds that "none of my close relatives like to dance as much as me." Her

Islamic headscarf does not contradict her undulant belly, as long as she dances in the safe space of the same-gender.¹⁸⁶ I leave with this great puzzle of the headscarf and the exposed belly. Zeynep's story is striking, because it epitomizes the heterogeneity of lived Islam in contemporary Istanbul. Zeynep's clothing, prospects, and performance all animate a much-desired upward mobility, informed equally by neoliberal ideals of meritocracy--college education--and commodified Islamic fashion--*tesettür*--and constrained by paradoxical Islamist gender politics. Zeynep's prospects also suggest how Islam and the free market, the gentry and the poor, belly dance and *tesettür* discourses, and people continuously overlap in Istanbul in order to widen that same old, uneven gap. Given the Islamist prioritization of home over work for women and the laicist ban of Islamic headscarves in Turkish universities, Zeynep's future will perhaps hold negotiations more puzzling and, indeed, more taxing than the headscarf-and-undulant belly combination.

Conclusion: Remapping Contemporary Istanbul

As metaphor and analytical category, gentrification sheds light not only on the material effects of urban redevelopment, simultaneous demolition and upgrading, but also on the interwoven processes of displacement in the dance studios, the nightclubs, and the multiple

¹⁸⁶ Undoubtedly, there is lived variability among veiled women's public performance of belly dance. Differences lie with context, the participants' class location, and individual taste. For instance, I worked with a devout former professional dancer who, after teaching belly dance in nonsegregated locales, donned her veil to travel across the city. Zehra utilized all her income to finance an apartment in a segregated Islamist community, Basakşehir, where she had to hide her profession. In İbrahim Tatlıses's show, a popular family-centered television program, young women, who are covered, belly dance with each other and thereby create their own segregated space in front of the cameras. These cases of strategic manipulation, however, do not indicate ultimate leverage in managing the demands of Islamist female modesty.

neighborhoods of contemporary Istanbul. This analysis of gentrification in Istanbul elucidates the paths and locations available to moving bodies equipped with different social, cultural, and economic capital. An analysis of competition for space in the everyday urban landscape or professional performance enables us to see not only *why*, but also *how* social bodies contend with their respective discursive and material reality. Each field site provides a different angle of the same story: how Istanbul's recent globalization fad touches lives through a moral and gendered economy. These intersecting material and gendered economies find immediate and tangible expression in and through performance: How effective would urban reform be without inhabitants or dance technique without performance?

Belly dance's incorporation into secular spaces, particularly in a high-tech convention center and an upper-class club, demonstrates the extensive upgrading of this form to art and elite entertainment as praxis of privilege. Asena's and Serap's narratives both index how class can, and does, undermine charges of female immodesty in an increasingly neoliberal cityscape and secular discursive realm. The ongoing clash between honor and money in Istanbul translates as escalating social constraint in an Islamist discourse, best expressed in Zeynep's conflicted story of under-privilege despite contrary hopes and dreams. The case studies suggest that both contemporary Islamist and secular urban restructuring in Istanbul perpetuate a multi-layered, overlapping, uneven development: Glitz and glitter, paved roads, high-tech infrastructure for some *and* sweat, bare bellies and bare homes, stained honor for others. At times negotiable and at other times not.

Situating dance vis-à-vis a larger sociopolitical context does not erase its rich kinesthesia, for a physical archive is inseparable from the artistic and everyday urban culture

making. In other words, the dialogue between hips and lips, the tacit and the vocal, or the discursive and the quotidian, is simultaneously ethnographic and choreographic. I thus chart a complex urban ethno-choreography: how Istanbul inhabitants, from all walks of life, negotiate space, female honor, class, and religion on a daily basis as the city itself becomes increasingly incorporated into the world-market. And following their footsteps and dreams, my analysis moves beyond the glitter towards a gender- and performance-sensitive political economy of gentrification in Istanbul and around the globe.

Chapter IV

Sweat, Power, and Art: Situating Belly Dancers and Musicians in Contemporary Istanbul

Introduction

The recent global interest in belly dance has undoubtedly spurred not only popular enthrallment, but also global academic inquiry with exclusive focus on dance vocabulary, shifting social relations, and vectors of exoticism (Shay and Sellers-Young 2003 and 2005, Nieuwkerk 1995, Arvizu 2004, Shay 1999, Loruis 1996). Although still underresearched, Turkish belly dance's emergent popularity generates fresh avenues of inquiry. In particular, the glitzy comeback of belly dance in Istanbul is tied to simultaneous processes of Orientalist heritage tourism and urban restructuring. In the post-1980s era of neoliberalization, secular and Islamist governments, in conjunction with foreign and local private investment, have cultivated a West-facing Orientalized city (Keyder 1999, Robins and Aksoy 1995) with marketable Ottoman neighborhoods (Çelik 1994, Ergun 2004) and performance practices. Belly dancers have become the dubious bearers and agents of Orientalist fantasy and spectacle, in particular, and of national economic and moral ambitions, in general. In globalizing Istanbul, belly dancers and musicians--Rom and non-Rom alike--are mired between Islamist and secular moral

designs as well as continued ethnic marginalization and glorification: They are simultaneously lauded and degraded.¹⁸⁷

In this chapter, I cast an ethnographic eye on the inner workings of Istanbul entertainment in order to reveal tensions rooted in gender, ethnicity, and class distinctions among dancers and musicians. Taking my cue from the combined emphasis on gender, class, and ethnicity in recent ethnomusicology (Magrini 2003, Sugarman 2003, Silverman 2003) and belly dance research (Nieuwkerk 1995, Lorus 1996), I underscore the fluidity between performance and everyday strategies; between aesthetic choices and economic priorities; and between moral distinctions and ethnic affiliations.¹⁸⁸ Treating sweat, power, and art as interlocking spheres of Turkish belly dance production, I expose how multiple vectors of vulnerability intersect in belly dancers' and musicians' lives as they interact with each other, agents, bosses, and tourist audiences in and beyond the performance space. As well, this strategy enables me to configure kinetic and aural cues as integral to shifting intertwined processes of social, ethnic, and sexual differentiation in contemporary Istanbul's entertainment-scape and elsewhere.

Stepping Inside Orient House: 22 February, 2003

... for exotic is the place where nothing is utterly ordinary.

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter Three on the tensions between Islamist and secular moral designs involved in Istanbul's neo-Orientalist urban refashioning, and particularly, in belly dance marketing.

¹⁸⁸ Although Nieuwkerk's analysis of Egyptian belly dance is class- and gender-sensitive, she discloses having "neither the vocabulary nor the knowledge about intricacies of the trade" (1995, 16). Confessing to lack of dance fluency, Nieuwkerk does not effectively link on-stage musical and kinetic production with her ethnographic analysis. She thus overlooks the mutual constitution of aesthetic preference and social difference in and through belly dance praxis.

After a long ride through a rare snowstorm in Istanbul, I enter Orient House, a prestigious tourist restaurant in the Old City, expecting yet another sensory riot. In the round foyer of this renovated, chic historic cellar, the young female receptionist in folkloric costume greets me in a familiar, yet professionally distant, smile. I quickly glance at the neat, clean, museum-like display of delicate latticework, earth-toned carpets, brass tables, and reverential tulip imagery. In contrast, the dining and performance space feels boisterous and alive with the European, Middle-Eastern, and Asian patrons' chatter and their rhythmic silverware rattle. Surveying this busy crowd of circa 100, I wonder why Orient House, unlike many other tourist venues, has remained unscathed by the decline in tourism brought about by the war in Iraq. The chatter quiets once the live dinner music--Turkish art music (*fasıl*)--begins.

Following this brief musical introduction, the gray-haired Master of Ceremonies struts across the raised round stage to overstate his multi-lingual welcome: from English and French to Japanese and Arabic. In a loud bass voice matching his imperial costume, he introduces the show as "a unique, nostalgic, and authentic journey to an Ottoman past and folk traditions." The raucous program is composed of brief vignettes common to almost all Istanbul tourist locales: regional folk dances, ranging from the Aegean *zeybek*, a male, high-stepping warrior dance, to Black Sea *horon*, also a predominantly male, faster-paced dance in which the males hold hands, interwoven with three fifteen-minute belly dance shows to mostly recorded music, with occasional singing and commentary by the Master of Ceremonies. Continuous animation, live music for most genres, and an onstage parade of Turkish costume and food, however, are

unique to this establishment.¹⁸⁹ The audience's engagement and applause as well as the MC's commentary and the venue's advertisements say it loud and clear: belly dance is the main attraction at this locale.¹⁹⁰ As elsewhere, the sensual and ethnic belly dance performances at the Orient House help commercialize embodied native culture as they authenticate and concretize an imaginary Oriental space.¹⁹¹

Of all the stars, the last dancer, Birgül, is not only the most coveted, but also the most controversial. Birgül, unlike other dancers at and beyond Orient House, prefers live music performance, and she exerts significant control over her musicians. Directing her witty and raunchy physical humor at eager tourists and musicians, this dancer also playfully embraces and challenges gender stereotypes about belly dancers' alleged immodesty.

Here I revisit Birgül's uniquely assertive performance to highlight the artistic--kinetic and auditory--as well as socio-economic negotiations among the dancers, musicians, and audience. In so doing, I take up three lines of inquiry: First, what does Birgül's performance reveal about the aesthetic tools that musicians and experienced belly dancers deploy in structured improvisation? Detailing the sonic and kinetic dialogue in one particular performance, I reconfigure the dancer's body as a powerful musical instrument both as the

¹⁸⁹ At almost all other tourist restaurants, live music--often played on a keyboard--is reserved for the MC's final song session. Except for Orient House and Kervansaray, a downtown restaurant, no other club employs musicians to accompany belly dance or folk dance. Such decisions reside with the owners' goal of minimizing expenses or the dancers' aversion to lower compensation: more musicians mean less pay for the dancer.

¹⁹⁰ Visit the main webpage of Orient House for the visual rhetoric on belly dancers:
<http://www.orienthouseistanbul.com/main.htm>

¹⁹¹ For parallel histories where dance plays a central role in tourism industry's commodification of the exotic and erotic, see Marta Savigliano (1995) on tango and Jane Desmond (1998) on hula dancing.

shaper and conduit of artistic fluency as well as the market and nonmarket exchanges in the broader entertainment sector. Second, incorporating the views of musicians, spectators, agents, and other dancers, I analyze what extent Birgül's sexual and artistic agency diverges from the norm. Third, treating Birgül's performance as socially atypical, I explore power-saturated conflicts between dancers and musicians both within and beyond live performance. My goal is to analyze how Rom identity, gender distinctions, and socio-economic capital intersect to heighten and/or remedy inequality among performers.

Detailing Birgül's performance

Birgül appears on a dim-lit stage where her two-piece fluorescent pink costume dazzles fiercely. In front of five handpicked musicians, Birgül improvises to the clarinet *taksim* (solo nonmetric improvisation) with a confident forward walk and a couple of fast turns with her veil. The first piece is Turkish megastar Asena's instrumental rendition of famous Algerian singer Warda's piece, a piece that bears her name. Immediately after Asena's belly dance CD was released in 2001, "Warda" became a big hit and a familiar tune inside and outside the tourist circuit in Istanbul.

There is a difference between Asena's and Birgül's versions of "Warda." In Asena's piece, the double-size ensemble, consisting of ten musicians, undertakes a richer--more luscious--instrumentation following a much longer *taksim*. As the music picks up, percussion goes in and out of an even level with melodic instrumentation. In contrast, Birgül has instructed

her musicians to shorten the introductory *taksim* and to instead heighten the percussive elements. Translated to dance, this signals less veil work and more hip combinations.¹⁹²

Following the brief veil combination, the lights and music shift to a brighter and faster tempo, matching Birgül's ferocious smile and her aggressive walk with a hair flick. The musicians enter a loud energizing percussive phrase. This phrase showcases Birgül's vibrant style punctuated with fast hip thrusts and vigorous abdominal twists. Her witty interactive presence, riveting both the audience and her musicians, frames the dance technique. Birgül then moves between vertical hip accents and subtle hip and shoulder shimmies, alternately responding to rapid *darbuka* (goblet drum) and melodious *kanun* (zither).

Throughout the routine, she uses both lateral and vertical hip bumps to dialogue with two drums--*darbuka* and small *davul*--and the clarinet in the background. Birgül first undulates deeply as she showcases her fluid torso with waves across her ribs. This undulation prepares her for figure eights or the inward hip swirls. She then travels across the floor and pivots, addressing each audience in this $\frac{3}{4}$ stage and accompanying the dominant clarinet. After another set of pivoting staccato hips, Birgül victoriously ends the routine with the Turkish drop: a risky and swift back fall to the floor.

Then Çarli, the animated musician who moonlights as an agent, switches from the hand *davul* to the big *davul* (a double-headed folk bass drum) to initiate a *Roman oyun havası* (9/8

¹⁹² As part of the cabaret belly dance style, veil work illustrates graceful torso and arm fluidity, agility with props, and sensual undressing (taking off the veil at the end of the routine). For a historical analysis of the veil work's spiritual and sexual meanings, see Andrea Deagon's article on Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils (in Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, 243-275).

meter Rom dance tune).¹⁹³ Cued by Çarli's pounding down beats, the clarinet and *darbuka* join in, drowning out the *ud* and *kanun*.

Offstage, Birgül is keen to identify herself more as a cosmopolitan showgirl/dancer than a Rom dancer in response to the rooted association of the Rom performers with the low-class, the crass, and the uneducated (Seeman 2002).¹⁹⁴ In this routine, however, Birgül nonchalantly flaunts associated Rom gestures, such as hands pounding on the hips and alternate arm brushings. Here she accents the downbeat while gesturing. Then follows heel striking, brisk undulations, or shoulder shimmies enunciating the fourth and fifth beats.

This differs from more traditional Rom steps I have watched and performed at weddings and family gatherings. Despite individual variations, I have mostly observed vertical belly thrusts in contrast to more varied hip and belly moves of a cabaret belly dance style. The feet often emphasize the downbeat, while participants sway to shift weight, linger and hop on

¹⁹³ In an earlier interview, Çarli gives me his business card that reads: "Your Ramadan drummer and agent Çarli provides performers for various special occasions such as birthday, engagement, and wedding parties." Given the economic strains of musicianship, some musicians work as agents in addition to doing multiple gigs a night. Rom *darbuka* player Erkan Tokmak is a well-known musician-agent.

¹⁹⁴ Here I use Roma as an ethnic collectivity and Rom as an adjective designating ethnic performances and processes. In the field, Istanbul performers often chose to self-identify as *Roman* rather than *çingene* as the latter is associated with demeaning official, media, and social stereotypes. However, I have also witnessed some Rom performers humorously banter each other as *çingene*, diffusing the term's power, while others used *çingene* to refer to the "lesser" Roma. Self-ascription as *Roman* signaled either a gender or class privilege as well as a steady or booming career with the incentive to market ethnic flavors to the new urban elite or world music/dance consumers. Other Rom performers, particularly struggling females deliberately concealed their Rom identity in order to escape stigmatization. Hence, individual strategies vary depending on the context and the target audience. For instance, Sema Yıldız, a non-Rom former belly dancer, agent, and teacher who grew up with a Rom community in Karagömrük, deliberately escapes Rom association in the local nightclub circuit but capitalizes on it to lure foreign dance students. See Chapter Five for a detailed discussion of the complex ethnic politics of Istanbul's nightlife.

the fourth and fifth beats. Dancers swiftly draw semi-circles in the air with their feet to accentuate such suspensions. Simultaneously, women make gendered gestures, grounded in mundane tasks such as doing the laundry, wiping sweat off of the forehead, or spanking the baby. The dance often takes place in gender-segregated contexts. In a mixed gender context, women face each other rather than the crowd.

Birgül's hips-and-abdomen-centered staccato style and the absence of classical arm work (no balletic hands or serpentine arms) suggest Rom dance training. Here, her cobra gestures and aggressive floor bouncing both evoke agile virility a gender-transgressive familiarity with Rom movement. By interlacing Rom movement with classical belly dance vocabulary--shoulder shimmies, hip accents--Birgül's routine illustrates the cross-fertilization between professional and social dance genres.

The difference between Rom and Turkish classical belly dance routines can be loosely defined as a matter of musical and kinetic choices. While Rom dance is a social form danced to fast or slow tempo 9/8 tunes, the Turkish belly dance is a professional form that incorporates other styles as varied as 8/4 *çiftetelli* slow, fluid undulations of the torso and arms, sometimes using the veil; Arabic *baladi*, and urban pop music. Rom dance vocabulary emphasizes bouncy and vigorous belly thrusts embellished with intricate foot patterns and associated gestures, including finger snapping.¹⁹⁵ In contrast, concert belly dance emphasizes refined and accented hip, torso, and arm isolations combined in polyrhythmic and polycentric ways. Another difference is spatial arrangement: social Rom dancers use limited space with inward earthy movement with weight on one foot, while most belly dancers strive to expand into space with

¹⁹⁵ *Baladi* is originally a rural form danced to *maqsoum* rhythm and cabaret dancers also incorporate it as folkloric color.

wide arm movements and centered turns. It is hard to speak of absolutes as Rom dancers migrate between their social communities and the belly dance circuit, generating cross-fertilization of both styles across various performance domains.

This is not to underestimate Birgül's artistry with regards to layering codified movements. For instance, mid-routine, she slows down and then faces her musicians to cue the intricate combination below. Here *maya* (an outward lateral hip circle or reverse figure eight) is skillfully layered with stomach rolls as she articulates with the clarinet and *kanun* simultaneously.

Layering, or concurrent isolated articulations with different instruments, is not, however, unique to Birgül. During my fieldwork, most other dancers have identified instrumentation, whether live or recorded, as the engine for their movement: wind instruments signal arm, torso, hip undulations, such as snake arm, camel walk, and figure eights, whereas accelerated drum beats call for hip accents--i.e., hip drops, or vertical, up and down--hip or shoulder shimmies. Accomplished dancers combine their isolated responses to instruments in various tempos resulting in, for instance, the polyrhythmic layering of torso circles in half-time with double-time hip shimmies.

By contrast, Birgül often dictates the music on stage. Even when the musicians cue her, it is to a slightly altered arrangement that she has initially favored. Not only does Birgül choose, orchestrate, and cue the structured improvisation on stage, she also constantly banters with her musicians. This musician-dancer interaction thus implicates a comic subtext in addition to sonic exchange. Carli gets dismissed by Birgül's infamous butt-kick. To assess Birgül's performative strategies fully, let me decode the dialogue between the dancer and the

audience. In addition to highlighting Birgül's erotically-charged exotic animation, I explore the limits of her humorous transgression.

Birgül Teases the Audience But . . .

Birgül, Orient House's lead belly dancer, is rarely short of wit, play, and most importantly, dialogue. Deploying a direct, expansive gaze and irreverent, participatory bodily humor, Birgül seizes almost every opportunity to sequentially invite, banter with, and satirize her audience. Acutely aware of the restrictions of a thrust stage, she also pivots during her combinations to ensure each patron's view in this semi-circle seating area. Alternately, she uses the intimate seating arrangement to mingle with her viewers. To assert her primacy on stage, Birgül weaves sexually-charged challenges with physically complicated moves, testing both her participants' agility and wit. Towards the end of her Rom routine, Birgül switches between showcasing her technique and animating the audience.

Here, she steps off the stage to bump a young male patron with double hip accents, to which the older Jordanian men at the table enthusiastically respond.¹⁹⁶ Encouraged by the belly dancer's private performance as well as his family, a young lad then stands up to dance with Birgül. The dancer intently watches his poor attempt at a shoulder shimmy before commanding him into mimicking her fast shimmies. The young boy's awkwardness underlines the technical complexity of belly dance isolations while emphasizing Birgül's virtuosity. Disappointed but amused, Birgül then forces him back to his chair, offering half-hearted applause.

¹⁹⁶ Most dancers characterized Arab audiences as "tough to please." As opposed to Westerners, Arab tourists are already familiar with belly dance, so they demand better technique and animation. A few dancers noted, however, that an enthusiastic and well-tipping Arab tourist is a source of pride, validating the dancer's technical and performance competency.

To refocus the larger audience on herself, she nonchalantly takes center-stage with vigorously rotating hip drops. Ignoring the prominent clarinet, Birgül continues to accentuate with the pounding *darbuka* and *davul* until she instructs the musicians into a sprightly *kanto*-like tune.¹⁹⁷

Energetically moving on, Birgül invites another male customer to center stage to indulge him with her perky challenges. Such challenges range from role inversion to unabashedly flaunting her sexuality and from testing the participant's physical flexibility to engaging in intimate contact. Here, the patron's creative avoidance and embarrassment culminate in a transgressive climax. By playing on the belly dancer's assumed sexual assertiveness, Birgül transforms self-eroticism into a victorious mode of authority. Initially, she lightly embraces her partner for a quick souvenir photograph, participating gleefully in this exoticizing/eroticizing tourist performance. Deploying parodic humor, she both reinstates and challenges prevalent tourist and local stereotypes of belly dancers as exotic fallen women. All performance components, from gesturing to musical accents, further these humorous call-and-response moments in which the whole audience participates through belly laughs and cheering applause.

Birgül's innovative stage tactics resemble Egyptian megastar Fifi Abdou's style as both dancers strive to playfully challenge both local and global sexualized preconceptions about belly dancers. While Birgül performs to instrumental music for a mainly tourist audience, Abdou gesturally dances to urban *baladi* songs at an elite Cairo wedding (Lorius 1996). Birgül

¹⁹⁷ In the 19th century, *kantos* were early music hall songs (solos or duets) performed sensually with western instruments such as the trumpet, trombone, violins, traps, and cymbals. In the Republican period, its instrumentation changed with the addition of *çümbüş* (fretless banjo), *ud* (fretless lute), and *çalpara* (castanets).

focuses more on the interlacing of exoticism and eroticism in and through the tourist gaze.

In contrast, Abdou challenges, as Cassandra Lorus argues, the local class-bound gendered stereotypes, particularly the Egyptian elite's dual stigmatization of *baladi* (upwardly mobile rural migrants) women as the lower-class and the "sexually uninhibited" (1996, 289). Despite their distinctive dance styles and differing degrees of fame, both performers have some artistic license, grounded in their control over music and choreography.

In her analysis, Cassandra Lorus characterizes Fifi Abdou's performance as transgressive, emphasizing her agency in "subverting the power relations between elite and popular, men and women." As the article's title suggests, for Lorus, Abdou has the power to "outwit patriarchy" (1996, 285). Although Lorus acknowledges the temporary nature of Abdou's disruption (295), she neither specifies nor historicizes the causes and limits of the dancer's transgression. Overlooking the role of musicians in live performance and of other social actors beyond performance, Lorus reduces live stage performance to a performer-audience exchange infused with gender and class hierarchies. She obscures the materiality of belly dance praxis by ignoring the distinct ways in which material priorities and artistic preferences constitute one another.

In Birgül's case, overlapping market and nonmarket exchanges, in and beyond Orient House, provide her with relative artistic and social latitude as she continuously, and sometimes adversarially, negotiates art, money, and honor with her family, bosses, and agents. For instance, Birgül's main agent Göksenin İnal regards her as a gifted performer, "a number one showgirl," who cleverly but inevitably operates in a "meat market."¹⁹⁸ In this regard, her

¹⁹⁸ Recorded interview, 22 October 2002.

chances of “outwitting patriarchy” seem slim. Behind the scenes, Birgül, as many others, also has to work with business-minded agents who are willing to negotiate respectability with higher commissions.

Lastly, macro-political forces have also partly shaped Birgül’s choice of instrumental music. The recent emphasis on instrumental dance music at tourist venues stems, in part, from the Turkish state’s attempt (2002) to ban Arab-originated belly dance at holiday resorts.¹⁹⁹ The rationale behind the secular Center-Left government’s unrealized ban was to protect Turkish entertainment, and by extension Turkish culture, from polluting foreign influences, in particular, decadent Muslim Orientalism. In addition to a persistent Kemalist nationalist ideology (Stokes 1999, Keyder 1987, Yavuz 2003), this proposition also reflects Turkey’s current European Union aspirations in its promotion of a Westernized self-image distinct from and superior to other, especially Muslim Arab, influences. The owners and employees of tourist venues adapted to such regulations by gradually replacing Oriental albums featuring Arabic vocals with instrumental live music or CDs.

Situating Conflicts between Belly Dancers and Musicians

With regards to live music, the on- and off-stage negotiations between Istanbul musicians and dancers are fraught with economic, artistic, ethnic, and moral tensions. The majority of musicians at belly dance shows are Rom men. In the Ottoman and modern Turkish era, most--if not all--urban female belly dancers have come from Rom backgrounds (Abdülaziz

¹⁹⁹ For details of this ban, see a report by İbrahim Okumamış in *Radikal*, a daily Turkish newspaper: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=36125&tarih=28/04/2002> .

Bey 2002, 389; see also Koçu 2002 [1947] and Ali Rıza Bey 2001).²⁰⁰ Over the last two decades, more disenfranchised non-Rom women from and outside of Istanbul have entered the belly dance circuit.

Driving young and old newcomers, as I have often encountered, is the elusive promise of market-bound personal and material advancement, a defining promise of the liberalizing post-1980s Turkey (Kandiyoti 2002, Kozanoğlu 1995). From the early 1990s on, dancers have increasingly found the entertainment sector to be full of opportunities forged by the state- and elite-driven commodification of Orientalist cultural forms. The number of belly dancers rocketed upwards, while the variety of performance venues multiplied. Subsequently, adverse local and global developments slowed down the tourist boom and the burgeoning upper-class entertainment.²⁰¹ Like musicians, most female belly dancers strategize daily in order to navigate the fluctuations of such an unstable job market. Further, as bearers of a profitable, yet eroticized, female performance genre, dancers have remained vulnerable vis-à-vis Islamist and secular cultural politics and gendered social marginalization.²⁰²

My goal here, however, is not to detail the material and social plight of Istanbul performers. Rather, I focus on the musicians' and dancers' different views on performance

²⁰⁰ See Chapter Two on the frequency and role of Rom dancers in the late Ottoman Empire. For a comparative case, see Jane Sugarman (2003, 98-103) on the historical prevalence of Rom entertainers in the Balkans.

²⁰¹ Such developments ranged from severe economic crises – 1994 and 2001— and escalating unemployment to 1999 Earthquake, from the Kurdish problem of the 1990s to the worldwide implications of 9/11 and to the Iraqi War. The November 2003 bombings in Istanbul also affected the nightlife scene.

²⁰² This is not to say that Rom musicians have not been socially marginalized. Rather, I emphasize how gender ideologies can and do exacerbate ethnic stigmatization with regards to female performers.

competence, economic strategizing, and female modesty in order to illustrate the complex social embeddedness of live belly dance praxis. I thus analyze how the dancers' and musicians' various aesthetic expectations, class aspirations, and ethnic positioning converge and diverge to impact their sonic, kinetic, and social choices at the moment of performance and beyond. Let me begin with aesthetic collisions among Istanbul performers.

Aesthetics

Both Rom and non-Rom dancers complain that musicians remain unresponsive to their cues at *extras*, or lucrative one-time gigs, as they purposefully rush and play up the rhythms to exhaust the dancers.²⁰³ The majority of musicians openly regret the recent belly dancer boom: approximately 1000 dancers work the circuit every year.²⁰⁴ They claim that the increasing numbers lower artistic quality as untrained dancers, with the exception of a few accomplished, rarely know how to follow, let alone set cues. Engaged in a local commercial live and mediated music industry, most Rom musicians are fluent in multiple musical genres and expect the same adaptability from dancers. By adaptability (*uyum*), they often refer not only to genre familiarity, but a willingness to let the musicians lead.

The accomplished Rom clarinetist Selim Sesler claims music should mostly dictate the belly dancer's routine except when a seasoned dancer decides to break into an improvisation.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ These gigs include weddings, birthday parties, and yearly corporate gatherings.

²⁰⁴ Due to the unrecorded nature of this work, there are no statistics at hand. This estimate of belly dancers, frequenting Istanbul entertainment venues, is based on myriad interviews with dancers, agents, musicians, dance teachers, as well as restaurant, *gazino*, and tourist club owners.

²⁰⁵ Recorded interview, 8 October 2003.

Indeed, belly dance gigs are marginal to Sesler's primary goal of recording and experimenting with celebratory Rom wedding dance tunes from his hometown of Kesan in Thrace.²⁰⁶ Having engaged in prestigious world music and Rom fusion recording projects, for example, *Roads to Keşan* (Kalan Müzik 1999), Sesler considers playing live to belly dancers a lesser activity, a form devoid of artistic ingenuity. In our brief interview, Sesler characterizes belly dance escort as "charlatanism." For him, it pales in comparison to soloist or vocalist accompaniment (*refakat etmek*) and concert music, the most artistically gratifying of all forms.²⁰⁷ Sesler confidently states that engaging in jams or rehearsed stage concerts constitutes "educated playing" (*terbiyeli çalmak*). While other musicians share Sesler's view with regards to the contemporary scene, some older musicians fondly reminiscence about the musicality of belly dancers performing in the 1950s and 1960s *gazino* culture.²⁰⁸ Erkan Tokmak, a 64 year-old *darbuka* player, recalls a moment when "the dancers and musicians would rehearse together to perfect a routine as they do in Egypt."²⁰⁹ Tokmak regretfully adds, "whereas today there is no art. All a dancer needs is good looks and good hips."

²⁰⁶ *Roads to Keşan* is originally co-produced by Istanbul-based Kalan Müzik with Selim Sesler and Sonia Seeman. Sesler's band, *Trakya'nın Sesi*, strives to preserve hometown melodies and to package them for world music markets.

²⁰⁷ Sesler's exact words were: "Konser vermek, terbiyeli çalmak. Soliste çalmak, refakat etmek. Dansöze çalmak, şarlatanlık. . . . Üçü de ayırdır."

²⁰⁸ See Beken (2003) for the origins and aesthetic underpinnings of *gazino* (Turkish nightclub) culture in general and belly dance as a *gazino* genre in particular:
http://www.muspe.unibo.it/period/MA/index/number8/gazino/bek_00.htm .

²⁰⁹ Recorded interview, 2 October 2003. Tokmak also tells me he played for countless renowned art music vocalists (Sevim Çağlayan, Zeki Müren) and belly dancers (Nana, Ayşel Tanju, Özcan Tekgöl, İnci Birol) in *gazin*os and private parties during his half-century-long career. Frequently touring to Cairo in the 1960s, he closely watched famous Egyptian percussionists and belly dancers as well as their stage interaction.

Economics

Other contemporary musicians with less promising careers are less concerned with creative license than with tip sharing.²¹⁰ Preceding corporate parties, elite gatherings, and weddings, musicians and dancers often settle a salary with the event organizers either on their own or through their agent (who receives 10% to 20% of this amount). And the gap between musicians' and dancers' salaries is remarkable, ranging from doubled to quadrupled pay for dancers, depending on their reputation.

Despite such inconsistencies in pay, most dancers characterize musicians' stake in their tips as "greed," since they view female dance performance as physically and socially more taxing. Serap, formerly a folk dancer and a regular at elite clubs, pointedly remarks: "Have you ever seen any musician sweat as much as we do? Does he ever have to expose his flesh for tips? Have you ever heard of an unmarried musician?" (*Koca olmaz bu müzisyenden?*).²¹¹ Conversely, most musicians consider their labor more worthy as they engage the audience with multiple genres for hours as opposed to belly dancers' fifteen-minute routines. Further, when musicians receive half of the tips, the *sef* (lead musician) splits it among an ensemble of

²¹⁰ As central attraction, the belly dancer receives most of the tips at such events. In general, Turkish tipping practice varies contextually. Tipping in family gatherings indexes appreciation as the elders reward young children by sticking bank notes on their foreheads. In tourist clubs, where the audience is separated from the belly dancer, tips can be passed on via a waiter and manager. But tourist patrons often tip the dancers during the brief post-performance photo shoots. The clientele at *extras*, underground or upper-class taverns stuff the tips into the dancer's costumes. The latter practice is obviously erotically charged.

²¹¹ Conversation, 1 March 2003.

minimally four players. Internal band hierarchies around age, status, and experience determine the why and how of this redistribution.

In the field, I witnessed intense dancer-musician conflicts over money and contradictory performance goals.²¹² The degree of loyalty and competition for more income varied according to performance frequency (a one-time event or long-term collaboration), level of artistry, shared history, and the reach of gender, generational, and class hierarchies. Numerous dancers shared with me the “tricks of the trade,” demonstrating how a dancer can push cash in the deep corners of her costume in order not to share it with her “rivals.” Such reluctance to distribute rewards, however, often results in poor performance quality. The already underpaid musicians purposefully drown the dancer in fast tempos (*kosturmak*) or kill the beat (*baydırmak*, *baymak*). Once a dancer builds a reputation as a “hit and runner” (*kaptıkaçtı*), or a tip-hider, she risks scrutiny, scorn, and/or ostracization by musicians and, ultimately, a difficult performance.

How, then, to make sense of Birgül’s rare in-performance authority over musicians and audiences, an authority that most other dancers lack in the larger industry? With more than a decade-long career, Birgül is a popular and sought-after dancer in the tourist and native upper-class circuit. She not only knows the workings of the unstable informal economy--Istanbul’s entertainment sector--but is adept at maximizing her income through covering all her bases, specifically, by working with several agents at once. In addition to her secure, yet low-paying

²¹² By intense conflicts, I refer to physically or verbally abusive interactions. My dancer and musician friends have repeatedly requested me to play the arbiter, intensifying the awkwardness of the situation.

(\$25), Orient House gig, she often performs at five-star hotel tourist shows, 1001 Night shows, and *extras* such as yearly corporate events (*bayi toplantıları*) and elite weddings.²¹³

Unlike most other belly dancers, Birgül, with considerable though not national fame, has the economic means to sustain herself and to contribute to her musicians' livelihood. The musicians still have to undertake other performances or jobs to make a living, but Birgül provides them with new gigs, security, and occasional gifts, while she generously shares her tips from *extra* performances. Thus, besides market transactions, Birgül and her musicians are also embroiled in a web of noncommercial exchanges inflected with local folk understandings of kinship and reciprocity. The musicians regard and respect Birgül as their *abla* (older sister) or *bacı* (younger or same-aged sister). Immersed in what anthropologist Jenny White (2004, 84) calls a web of "mutual indebtedness," they frequently engage in reciprocal, yet exploitative, social contracts. Further, Birgül has significant cultural capital as a worldly performer with life-long dance training and musical skills; she understands music well enough both to arrange and orchestrate beforehand and to direct the musicians on stage. Also salient are her mastery over a variety of genres and her ability to work the audience "like nobody's business." It is this rare combination of economic, symbolic, and cultural capital that underlies her artistic and social power in this performance space.

²¹³ Undertaken by chic hotels and promoted by tourism entrepreneurs, 1001 Night shows are mid-scale exotic productions that reify Ottoman performing arts and opulence with period décor and set design. As other post-1980s tourist shows, they center on belly dance and its Orientalist sensual associations to entertain and engage tourists. The per-person entrance fee for Orient House was \$60 at the time of my research.

Honor

As elsewhere (Silverman 2003, 133; Sugarman 2003, 111), assessment of female virtue is another point of contention between Istanbul musicians and dancers with off-stage repercussions. The views of four members from Ahırkapı Büyük Roman Orkestrası (*Ahırkapı Grand Roma Orchestra*) are indicative of broader gender sensibilities among most Rom musicians at the higher-end belly dance circuit.



Figure 3 ABRO musicians and the author

Some ABRO members and I meet in the plush lobby of five-star Armada Hotel, a gentrified oasis in the midst of a relatively poor historic Roma neighborhood. *Kanun*-player

Osman Durmuş, percussionist Pire Mehmet, violinist Yaşar, and vocalist Yalçın Görgülü charmingly lead the interview to a promotion of their first SONY (2002) release, *ABRO*. Fusing familiar 9/8 Rom tunes with hybrid renditions of *Pulp Fiction*, this CD underlines both sonic modernity (a SONY contract!) and naturalized Rom heritage. “We (the Roma) are born to entertain,” says Osman, proud in his brand-new suit and with this much-desired recent fame. Underlying all such comments is an insider’s knowledge of the *piyasa* as each musician has engaged with restaurants, nightclubs, tourist, and the commercial recording industry across multiple genres, such as *fasıl*, *arabesk*, and Turkish art music.²¹⁴ Grounded in the labor of a 26-person extended musical family, their cosmopolitanism indexes both the folk values of reciprocal loyalty and a capitalist sensibility. The latter speaks to the escalating marketability of Turkish Rom musicians and sound as local urban and global exotica (Seeman 2002, 352).

The easy and humorous tone of our conversation shifts significantly when I bring up my research topic about belly dance and its practitioners. Yaşar abruptly interjects: “Our ladies don’t work.” The 68 year-old lead musician Pire Mehmet refers first to the demanding schedules of musicians, requiring women’s domestic labor at all times (*müzisyen hizmet ister evde*). Equally salient is their joint emphasis on the unpleasant workings of the entertainment world. Pire Mehmet vehemently states: “Belly dancers don’t fly with us because we know this world inside out. We don’t let our daughters and wives work as belly dancers or singers (*okuyucu*).”

²¹⁴ Seeman (2002, 355) argues that Rom musicians’ musical adaptability, or their ability to play multiple genres, is shaped by their historic role as “cultural brokers and musical mediators for diverse ethnic and linguistic communities.”

Restrictions on public female performance in general, and belly dance in particular, are informed by pervasive Islamic cultural notions of modesty and persistent male patronage, cast in nationalist or familial terms and gendered notions of social reproduction (Kandiyoti 1991, Abu-Lughod 1998, Tekeli 1990, Parla 2001).²¹⁵ More significantly, ABRO's comments illustrate, in part, the musicians' firsthand familiarity with multifaceted sacrifices expected of the not-yet-famous female dancers. Such sacrifices range from flesh exposure--the skimpy costumes--to profitable seductiveness and to on- and off-stage emotional, physical, and economic harassment as well as stigmatization. As elsewhere, the profitability of sexually-charged professional performances is thus weighed against the intactness of female virtue and, by extension, the family's and *mahalle's* (neighborhood) honor. The double burden of Istanbul female Rom belly dancers, torn between economic necessity and sexual-ethnic marginalization, echo Carol Silverman's (2003) commentary on Muslim Rom performers in Macedonia and Bulgaria. Silverman cogently describes their conundrum as follows:

To non-Roma, female Rom professionals are coded as doubly dangerous: first as Roma, second as women. For Roma, on the other hand, female Rom professionals are dangerous for different reasons: first, because they embody sexuality, they can disrupt the social system from their position as insiders; second, the selling of their performances in the marketplace foregrounds the paradox of economic necessity versus ideal modesty (2003, 133).

Views on female modesty vary significantly from one urban Roma community to another, however. For instance, in-home (*devriye evleri*) belly dance performances at Sulukule, an infamous Rom entertainment ghetto in Istanbul, prevailed until their violent dismantling in the early 1990s. The disenfranchised Sulukule dancers were cast as unredeemable bearers of moral

²¹⁵ For the intersection among the dishonor of belly dance, Islam, and prevailing gender ideology in Egypt, see Karin van Nieuwkerk (1995). See also Nieuwkerk (2003, 268).

degeneration in the urban public imaginary. During my fieldwork, numerous Rom and non-Rom performers, men and women alike, repeatedly characterized Sulukule as the uncivilized center of sexual debauchery or the darkest corner of nightlife (*alemin en karanlık kösesi*).²¹⁶

In their search for integration into the sonic industry and beyond, ABRO as well as other upwardly-mobile Rom musicians strive to define themselves against such “lesser”--poorer and dishonorable--kinfolk: the Sulukule entertainers. ABRO’s restrictions on female mobility amplify, at once, locally pervasive honor/shame values and the need to rectify enduring Turkish renditions of Rom women as urban degenerate and eroticized ethnics (Seeman 2002, 200-201).²¹⁷ As the locus of ethnic and sexual marginalization, women also become the barometers of Rom cosmopolitan integration. Unless endowed with wealth or fame, belly dancers risk reinforcing sexualized Rom stereotypes and thereby hinder Rom men’s claims to competitive modernity.

Despite such ethnically-inflected gender rivalries, female Rom dancers and male musicians also engage in surprisingly conflict-free negotiations both during and after performance. The interactional tone shifts with the female Rom performer’s level of

²¹⁶ There are exceptions to my statement. Engaging in world music projects, some Rom musicians and global labels have recently recast Sulukule in a positive light as the center of authentic Roma performance praxis. See *Sulukule: Rom Music of Istanbul* (Traditional Crossroads) featuring violinist Kemanî Cemal : <http://www.traditionalcrossroads.com/cd/4289.htm> . Also see world-touring *Sulukule Ensemble* founded by clarinetist Hüsnü Şenlendirici: <http://www.cafeturc.com/index.php?dil=tr&sanatci=99>. See Chapter Five for an analysis of the civil heritage movement, *40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule*.

²¹⁷ Seeman’s account historicizes how the Byzantine, Ottoman, and contemporary Turkish political ideology and administration worked in tandem with social marginalization of Rom entertainers (2002, 94-163). She identifies two pervasive tropes of sexual and ethnic exoticization, characterizing the Roma as uncultivated nomads or morally degraded--licentious and decadent--urban residents (200-201).

experience, artistry, reputation, dependability, and economic means. For instance, Kibariye, an accomplished Rom singer, is highly revered as her story evokes Roma redemption and resourcefulness. Her history of struggle demonstrates how the Roma can rise above poverty and shame and become players--albeit unequal players--in a cutthroat entertainment market.

As a whole, nightlife contracts demand singular or long-term collaboration between non-Rom and Rom performers. At times gender sensibilities, ethnic conflicts, and monetary competition generate dissonant local and tourist performances in Istanbul. At other times, as I have also observed, perfect pitch, smooth hips, and animated audiences help override such social rifts.

Situating Other Dancers at Orient House and Beyond

How do the other dancers at Orient House compare to Birgül in terms of aesthetic and socio-economic agency? The other two dancers at Orient House are not as fortunate as Birgül. As relatively less privileged dancers susceptible to prevalent musician-dancer rivalries in live performance, both performers prefer dancing to recorded music (CDs) than to a live band. How, then, do the dancers' economic, moral, and artistic priorities interconnect and factor into their musical preferences? Olga, the first dancer performing as Oya, is a classically trained Russian dancer who fled her home following the severe economic crisis of the 1990s.²¹⁸ Lacking popularity and technical intricacies of belly dance, Olga frequently moves between

²¹⁸ Olga is one among many Russian and East European dancers who have migrated out of necessity since the dissolution of communism in the 1990s. Unlike Olga, most foreign dancers work the *pavyon* circuit facing state-sanctioned and social everyday harassment, economic desperation, and in-club adversity from Turkish and Rom dancers. See Gülçür and İlkaracan (2002, 412, 419) for the underpinnings of migration and the precarious position of undocumented Russian and East European women in the informal sector, particularly in sex trade or small-scale export and import business.

tourist performances, occasional weddings, and exclusively male chic nightclubs (*pahali pavyon*). So does Gülnihal, the second dancer, from humble origins in Izmir.

Trained by reputable Nesrin Topkapı, or the Turkish Fifi Abdou, Gülnihal deploys skilful technique that fuses ballet, flamenco, and both Egyptian cabaret and *baladi* style.²¹⁹ Despite her technical sophistication, Gülnihal is reluctant to view her trade as “art.”²²⁰ Having had to work at disreputable venues after a short-lived period of television fame, she seems fairly disillusioned with the workings of her trade.²²¹ In particular, she refers to economic hardships: negligible pay, having to work multiple shows a night during prosperous seasons, and the lack of jobs during economic crises (1994 and 2001). In a casual conversation, I learn that her economic hardship is doubled by familial obligations: she provides for her sister and mother.

As with many others, Gülnihal mentions belly dancers’ social marginalization as the immodest or “unmarriageable women.” Echoing the voices of many other performers who have not made it, Gülnihal bitterly emphasizes the sexual and emotional harassment that disenfranchised dancers--the economically unprivileged or those lacking in fame or reputation--regularly face vis-à-vis their bosses, agents, and audiences across reputable and disreputable

²¹⁹ Gülnihal learned the Egyptian *baladi* technique from her mentor Nesrin Topkapı. Topkapı reenacts combinations from her large collection of 1940s-1950s’ Egyptian films that feature belly dance. Topkapı also tells me that her mother, a traveling performer, introduced her to Arabic music and dance after touring in Beirut (Interview, 15 October 2002). Some other dancers of the tourist circuit pick up Egyptian or Arabic cabaret and *baladi* style on their travels to Beirut and/or Cairo. Prenses Banu, a contemporary of Topkapı and a famous dancer of the 1980s, still performs regularly in Cairo where she closely observes Dina’s latest moves. The lead dancer at tourist Kervansaray, Emmune has watched Arab music videos on satellite TV with me on multiple occasions. She enjoys mimicking Egyptian singer Ruby’s phrases and incorporates them into her routines.

²²⁰ Recorded interview, 22 February 2003.

²²¹ Ibid.

venues. Given Gülnihal's resentful tone, I leave out my set questions about the dancers' artistic license vis-à-vis live or recorded music as they appear redundant and naive.

Conversely, Olga is eager to discuss her stylistic preferences with me. Confident in her classical technique, she views belly dance as "art, sensual as it may be."²²² According to Olga, this dance requires discipline and consistency, "qualities which live music cannot guarantee every night." She matter-of-factly adds: "You know what to expect with a CD. You have choreography and you perform it. No musician can mess it up." Olga's distaste for live instrumentation stems, in part, from a classical training that favors a set choreography over the unpredictability of improvisation.²²³ Although both Olga and Gülnihal decline to discuss the costs of an individual dance CD production, it is significantly high as professional studio prices range from \$300 to \$500.²²⁴ The majority of dancers, who work across tourist and native, elite as well as disreputable exclusively male nightclubs (*pahali ve ucuz pavyon*), thus turn to pirated CDs, homemade instrumental compilations burned by their agents or musicians, or simply borrow from friends.

The narratives of Olga, Gülnihal, and Birgül illustrate the extensive variability, even in one venue, of individual aspirations, social mobility, and of dance repertoires and styles

²²² Recorded interview, 18 January 2003.

²²³ In contrast, some well-respected retired dancers such as Nesrin Topkapı and Tülay Karaca regard their past collaborations with musicians at *gazinos* as exciting opportunities for spontaneous artistic exploration. Topkapı fondly recounted long rehearsals with *Maksim* musicians from which both parties benefited artistically. Tülay Karaca, a legendary *zil* player, confidently referred to musicians (at Klüp 12) as her students. She proudly contended she taught famous Balık Ayhan to play the *darbuka*: she often provided a rhythm with her *zils* and asked the musicians to emulate.

²²⁴ Recorded interview with Murat Akkaya, 29 January 2003. Akkaya is a self-employed producer and agent who owns the Studio Quadro in Beyoğlu. He has worked with almost every belly dancer in the tourist circuit in the last two decades.

effective in forging dancers' musical aspirations. Beyond Orient House or other tourist venues, event organizers and restaurant/club owners can freely dictate the dancers' costuming and musical choices, particularly if the dancer lacks symbolic and economic capital. The less privileged the dancer, the less she can exercise artistic and social control.

The question then becomes: how have lives of belly dancers changed, both artistically and socially, over the last two decades? Prior to the escalating liberalization of Istanbul, belly dancers had limited resources in terms of job opportunities and public visibility. They entered Istanbul's upper-class entertainment scene in the early 1990s, a time when the dance's global fashionability converged with native neo-Ottomanist economic and cultural projects. Previously, *gazino* (middle class nightclubs) establishments accommodated belly dancers as *uvertür*, ranking below Turkish art music singers. With the recent heightened interest in Orientalist cultural praxis, an increasing number of tourist restaurants as well as yuppie *meyhanes*, taverns and clubs have rendered belly dance as the main act.

Facilitated by the early 1980s' privatization and proliferation of Turkish television channels, dancers have also gained increased access to international movement lexicons. At the time of my fieldwork, tourist and elite venue dancers used MTV music videos as virtual dance classes, sampling Jennifer Lopez's pivoting salsa hip circles and Shakira's sequential torso undulations. Additional sources of movement hybridization include watching other dancers at the workplace or belly dance stars on local television channels (Kral TV or Kanal D morning programs) and learning the Egyptian and Lebanese dancers' signature moves while on tour.

Another overarching trend is the growing distinction between socially-trained and studio-trained dancers, a distinction that marks belly dance more as a codified art form than a familial praxis. Although there is an increased interest in formal dance classes among the

privileged few, imitation and informal emulation continue to be the main form of transmission among the rest. In reality, there is great circulation of movement as dancers work at multiple venues at night and some, like the Rom performers, transport classical as well as Rom dance vocabularies and styles to and from professional and communal environments.

Conclusion

With the heightened market economy in Turkey, the terms of belly dancers' stigmatization have transformed as well. While the privileged dancers can negotiate their modesty and/or ethnicity with wealth as well as reputation in secular elite circles, the majority of performers without means face multi-tiered marginalization as ethnic, sexualized, and lower-class bodies. At the macro level, both Islamist and secular governments partake in neoliberal policies that heavily rely on and profit from post-1980s Orientalist tourism, in general, and belly dance, in particular. Although belly dancers are the engines of a lucrative urban and national industry, secular nationalists shun them as bearers of ethnic and cultural impurity, while the Islamists morally condemn their suggestive public mobility and, hence, unredeemable immodesty. As in the past, professional belly dancers in Istanbul continue to remain vulnerable to shifting state regulations and social sanctions at large. And levels of artistic fluency as well as intra-industry ethnic, sexual, and class distinctions help define contemporary Turkish dancers' standing vis-à-vis their audiences and fellow artists.

Chapter V

Redefining Heritage, Intimacy, and Profit Inside Turkish Tourism

Introduction

I see the physicality of the body as the viscerally syntactical extension of the unpredictable movements of institutions through time and space (including transnational space), the body in motion (dancing on stage, dancing through space) as analogous to institutions in motion, and the movement of the body as reflecting social movements.

--Deborah A. Thomas, "Democratizing Dance," 2002, 512.

At once an exotic/erotic commodity, familial expression, and ethnic art, contemporary Turkish belly dance underwrites contradictory political discourses and everyday acts. Collaborating with agents, club owners, academics, and government officials, professional belly dancers generate controversy across interconnected spheres of urban heritage tourism, local nightlife, and public memory.²²⁵ In this chapter, I detail the projects and lives of two agent/dancer/choreographers, Göksenin İnal and Sema Yıldız, to analyze the intimate ambivalence of Turkish neo-Ottomanist ventures that transformed Istanbul into an Orientalist

²²⁵ The limited studies on Turkish cultural tourism focus on its historic, natural riches and political conundrums (human and women's rights, the Kurdish issue) in the context of EU integration (Öztürkmen 2005, 605; Rhodri 1996). Neither of these works, however, analyze the discursive and material stakes of embodied cultural tourism or its Ottomanist focus, in general, and belly dance, in particular. Further, Öztürkmen's elitist research design, privileging tourism managers, ignores the diversity of other tourism workers, performers, and their spectators. Özyürek's edited volume, *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, and Bartu's article (2001) restrict discussions of Ottomania only to urban sites and present a secular vs. Islamist binary. They also neglect the central role of concert and everyday performance in public memory construction.

theme park.²²⁶ As strategic entrepreneurs and artists, both Inal and Yıldız market ethnic and sexual difference to world dance enthusiasts, advocates of political pluralism, and local as well as foreign tourists. Juxtaposing their narratives with other dancers' and club owners' testimonies, I pursue multiple inquiries.

Engaging with the growing dance studies (Savigliano 1995, Desmond 1999, and Ness 1997, 2003) and social science literature (MacCannell 1973, Picard 1990, Stein 1998, Schein 2000, Hazbun 2004) on embodied cultural production and tourism, I first ask: How are dance hierarchies constructed in Turkish public entertainment?²²⁷ What does the continued privileging of folk dance over belly dance reveal about various models of Turkish modernity and progress (Shay 2002, Çefkin 1993, Öztürkmen in Kandiyoti and Saktanber 2002)? How do these hierarchies affect the aesthetic, moral, and economic choices or limitations of working dancers in Istanbul's nightlife? What role do movement vocabularies and/or performative conventions play in the urban inclusion and exclusion of nighttime workers? In other words, how does the naturalization or omission of belly dance technique foster ethnic and sexual entitlement in the tourist industry and beyond? Despite persistent marginalization, how do these performers

²²⁶ See Şebnem Denктаş' commentary in *Yeni Yüzyıl* (a daily Turkish newspaper) on the unprecedented rise of Ottoman cuisine, entertainment, and decorations during the 1990s ("İkinci Osmanlı Saltanatı (The Second Ottoman Reign)," 19 January 1995, 10). For a more recent rendition of the Ottoman craze in popular culture and arts, see Merve Erol's "'Osmania' Devri Çocuklarıyız Biz! (We're Children of the Ottomania Age)" at http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=cts&haberno=6225; Internet.

²²⁷ See Stokes, "Voices and Places," 1997 for a similar argument on the generative role of music in social and spatial imaginaries. Although the belly dance scholars, working mostly on Egypt, consider the intersections of heritage tourism and embodiment, they compromise political-economic to foreground instead the gendered, sexual (honor-related), and discursive dilemmas of Orientalist cultural production (Sellers-Young 1992, Nieuwkerk 1995 and 2003, Lorus 1996; Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, Karayanni 2004 on Cyprus, Jarmakani 2005, and Dox 2006). With folklorist Metin And's pejorative, hyper-nationalist account, Turkish belly dance research remains critically underdeveloped and stigmatized (1976).

become tokens of redemption, political tolerance, and artistic innovation, while they advance urban gentrification, Turkey's EU bid, and world dance/world music profits?

In effect, the simultaneous erasure and exaltation of Orientalist physical/artistic labor illuminates past and present cultural conundrums. Like the late Ottomans' WCE adventure (Chapter Two), contemporary belly dance fad creates domestic exotic colonies. And these urban colonies simultaneously finance and fracture the current image of Turkey as an honorable, neoliberal Muslim contender on the world stage. Drawing from ethnographic research on moral economies, I underscore how performers and their bosses mobilize kinship idioms to define and control the intimate labor of belly dancers across the tourist and disreputable (*pavyon*) clubs (Wilson 2004, MacLeod 1996, Giddens 1992, Scott 1976 and 1990, Berlant 2000, and Meneley 1996). In so doing, I expand on anthropologist Ara Wilson's (2004) model of moral economy to analyze how capitalist commodity logic interacts with artistic-social folk forms in swiftly globalizing Istanbul (Keyder 1999, Ergun 2004, Islam 2005). Challenging Wilson and others with performance theory (Thomas 2002, Conquergood 1991, 1998 and 2002, Taylor 2003, Jackson 2000, Madison and Hamera 2006), I define intimacy as sexually-laden, performative folk system, a system transformed as much by global capitalism as shifting aesthetic hierarchies.

This reconfiguration requires understanding the belly dancers' bruised subjectivities in relation to twin structures of patronage and exploitation: structures forged in the name of intimate social ties. As performance scholar Deborah Thomas (2002) notes in the opening epigraph, dance as intimate embodied practice helps link familial, institutional, visceral, and discursive change in and beyond Turkish public entertainment. Following Thomas and other

performance scholars, I thus posit this fieldwork as a critical intervention in the anthropological study of tourism, moral publics, and world dance. Let me begin with faces and performances.

The Reincarnation of the Turkish Village

“This Roberto Levy guy sounds just like me!”²²⁸

-- Göksenin İnal

Göksenin İnal, a bulky man in his early fifties, sits proudly in front of his platinum tourism awards and behind a brand new laptop at his office in Cibali, Istanbul. Inal watches his young female assistants, Özge and Bilge, scurry around to fulfill their fictive *ağabey*'s (older brother's) wishes: hot tea, photocopies, answering cell phone calls and my incessant questions. Through the wide, lattice bay windows, he gazes beyond me at the historic Golden Horn and the hills dotted with lean minarets, Ottoman towers, and metallic high-rises. Sitting at the edge of a chaise lounge, I glance at his worldly possessions: tall posters of his performance company, *Anadolu Folk Topluluğu* (Anatolian Folk Troupe), shadow puppets (Hacivat and Karagöz), calligraphy, *kilim*-designed soft cushions, a round copper tray table, and animal heads mounted next to a smiling Atatürk portrait.²²⁹

²²⁸ İnal makes this comment after I detail the Ottomans' participation in the 1893 Chicago Exposition (2002). Intrigued by the Turkish Village concessionaire Roberto Levy's story and the shows under his supervision, İnal sees himself as the modern-day Levy. He appreciates their shared entrepreneurial zeal, particularly with regards to Orientalist cultural commodification and their savvy manipulation of the informal economy.

²²⁹ Here the Atatürk portrait is emblematic of what anthropologist Esra Özyürek observes, in *Nostalgia for the Modern*, as the hyper-proliferation of secular images and objects in late 1990s' Turkey (2006). Özyürek contends that such ubiquitous Kemalist expression condenses the privatization of secular state ideology in response to “increased public Islamist visibility, rise of Kurdish separatism, and demands of EU and IMF” (2006, 2-5) For a brief version of her argument on secular nostalgic

As we both marvel at his patrimonial sovereignty and possessions, İnal tells me of his difficult rise to fame and success from his humble origins in the small and conservative city of Bursa. Since discovering folk dance as a young boy, he has specialized in a regional, hyper-masculine war dance, widely known as Bursa *kılıç kalkan* (sword and shield dance). After making headlines as the “Flying Turk” in London and elsewhere, İnal established his own folk dance ensemble in the early-1970s to “preserve, promote, and spread” Turkish culture domestically and worldwide.²³⁰ Since then, he has choreographed and/or supervised more than 10,000 folk dance shows. According to him, these shows helped “civilize” (*çağdaş seviyeye getirmek*) folk forms and their uneducated (*cahil*) and poor practitioners with clean attire, performance etiquette, and choreographed movement.²³¹ Beyond the stage, he writes columns for local newspapers, moralizing about latest folk art trends, shows, and his vision of Turkey’s heritage, in general.

İnal is not only a self-ascribed educator, cultural ambassador, and entertainer, but also a fiercely competitive entrepreneur with a neo-Ottomanist vision.²³² Over the last two decades, he has cleverly focused on collecting and marketing Ottoman heritage items and performances to

modernity and neoliberal intimacy, see also Özyürek, “Miniaturizing Atatürk,” *American Ethnologist*, 2004.

²³⁰ İnal (2002). For further details, see also İnal’s website: http://www.anadolufolk.com/webpage.cfm?Sub_ID=4; Internet.

²³¹ İnal (2002a and b). Other comments are cited from these two 5-hour interviews and casual conversations with İnal and his team either in his office or at performance venues.

²³² On the making of neo-Ottomania in the post-1980s’ Turkey, see White 2002 and Göle 1997. In this dissertation, I complicate previous definitions of neo-Ottomania with a particular focus on its secular and Islamist embodied manifestations (Chapter Three).

profit from the post-1980s' tourism-driven neoliberalization.²³³ First, 1001 Nights and 1900s' Istanbul shows follow a familiar recipe at renovated Ottoman palaces and five-star Istanbul hotels. Set in bazaars around elevated *otağs* (imperial tents), they feature 500 “natives” in generic period costume, ranging from street sellers and flashy belly dancers to shoe shiners and demure folk dancers. The loud imperial marching band (*mehter*) evokes Ottoman military might, while folk rhythms and belly dance percussion underscore primitive and sensual authenticity. Everyday and stage performers invite eager tourists, dressed in embroidered fezzes and vests, to fulfill their Orientalist fantasy (become a Sultan or Sultana for a night) and purchase visual privilege (watch harem dancers posing as Turkish delight). These performative exchanges entice foreign visitors to consume period handicrafts and a cornucopia of exotic food.²³⁴

İnal also exhibits male oil wrestling on designer carpets or sets up a one-km-long banquet table at Old City's Grand Bazaar, where animators ride horses in gold Sultan costumes. In another project, ten rowers (*kiirekçi*) take foreign VIPs on a boat tour across the Golden Horn and back in time to experience late Ottoman recreations on water. The company's international tours use similar performance strategies to encapsulate imaginary and real Ottoman/Anatolian traditions for foreign executives, bourgeois pleasure-seekers, and Turkish

²³³ On the centrality of tourism in the post-1980s Turkish economic development, see Law for the Encouragement of Tourism (1982) on the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's webpage: <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN/BelgeGoster.aspx?17A16AE30572D3130239EEA0FCDF038B3C1A5398CDEBDCC8>; Internet. For official business plans with an emphasis on Turkey's “natural, cultural, historical, and geographical assets” and selective amnesia on belly dance, see *Tourism Strategy of Turkey -2023*, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara 2007, 1). See also the *All about Turkey* website for the rising tourist entries and the mention of Istanbul as “Europe's nightlife capital,” <http://all-about-turkey.com/tourism.html>; Internet.

²³⁴ Ottoman cuisine samples include kebabs, *köfte* (meatballs), halva, *mantı* (local ravioli), *boza* (fermented millet drink), sherbet, and *sakız muhallebisi* (pudding with a gum).

businessmen across a wide geography: from Karachi to Milan and from Moscow to New York.²³⁵

At home, İnal has collaborated with the Islamist Eminönü Municipality for the display of ostentatious palace fashions in front of Hagia Sophia for the yearly commemoration of Istanbul's Ottoman conquest (1453). Eyüp Municipality and Bel-Tur, a private tour company, have jointly invested in recreating Ramadan festivities with old-time street-sellers, public *iftar* prayers, whirling dervishes, *Ortaoyunu* improvisers, folk dancers, fire-eaters, tightrope walkers, acrobats, and illusionists.²³⁶ Here at Feshane, a renovated Ottoman textile factory in the Islamist Eyüp district, İnal's company sells performative Islamic nostalgia and validation to modern families with veiled women. As a supple and innovative entrepreneur, İnal adapts to the demands of private and state investors as well as the foreign tourists, secular and Islamic alike.

In his perpetual search for the "authentic," İnal travels to distant Anatolian villages to learn regional dance steps and acquire traditional costumes. His remarkable private collection, "Anatolian and Late Ottoman Costumes and Jewelry," serves multiple purposes. On the one hand, emblemizing İnal's sophisticated taste, in Bourdieuean fashion, this informal museum bolsters his status as a cosmopolitan cultural broker with distinction: the lofty goal of preservation.²³⁷ On the other hand, ranging from imperial ceremonial robes (*kaftan*), janissary shoes (*yemeni*), and embroidered pouches (*işli para çantası*) to rosaries (*tespih*), coined short

²³⁵ İnal mentions having toured 160 countries. In addition, he gives me copies of news coverage on these events. For the Milan tour, catering to textile company executives, see Tayfun Topal, "Vur Patlasın, Çal Oynasın," *Magazin*, 28 June 1993. On the Karachi, Pakistan performances, see Midas, "If Turkish Music be the Food of Love," *Dawn*, 27 May 1994.

²³⁶ *İftar* is the fast-breaking meal in Ramadan. *Ortaoyunu* is Turkish commedia dell'arte.

²³⁷ Here I refer to Bourdieu's connection between consumption and class distinction: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (1984, 6).

jackets (*tepelik*), and bridal dresses (*Bindalli*), these period pieces lend credibility to his neo-Ottomanist and folkloric ventures as they authenticate performers as well as their formal and informal choreographies in recreated historic settings. Gathering to himself all cultural forms, Inal colors his entrepreneurial zeal with virile masculinity as he anchors both in animal trophies, literally “hunted” artifacts and dance repertoires.

As a key player in contemporary Turkish tourism, Inal seems like a 21st-century-version of Roberto Levy, the globe-trotting manager of the Turkish Village at the 1893 WCE.²³⁸ Although a century apart, these men derive entrepreneurial success from their fluency in and manipulation of multiple socio-economic registers that range from transnational capitalism to Islamic reformist ideology. While the Jewish merchant Roberto Levy led the Ottomans’ Islamic Gala Day at the WCE, the devoutly secular Inal has orchestrated urban Muslim festivities-- Ramadan at Feshane and The Commemoration of Istanbul’s Conquest--on behalf of Islamist authorities.²³⁹ Partnering with both religious and secular private or state investors, both businessmen market not only sacred, but also profane, Eastern acts, including ethnic vistas and controversial belly dance shows. To effectively commodify Oriental mystique, they adopt a similar dramatic strategy: multi-sensory blurring of artistic genres and quotidian acts. Fusing Ottoman “traditional” music (*fasıl* and imperial marching bands), performance (folk dance, drama, and belly dance), architecture (recreated bazaars, pavilions, *otags*, harems on elevated proscenium), and cuisine (aromatic Ottoman delicacies), these holistic displays also function as

²³⁸ For a detailed analysis of Levy’s persona and exhibits under his supervision, see Chapter Two.

²³⁹ I characterize Inal as devoutly secular in reference to his proud collection of Atatürk pins and pictures and his continued command of Atatürk’s legacy in daily life. On one occasion, he forced Atatürk pins on me and my husband to adorn us with proper “ammunition” against Islamist revivalism.

ethnographic spectacles potent with mimetic and metonymic symbolism (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Greenhalgh 1988).

Street pageants, lavish showrooms, and tribal *tableaux vivants* of the 1893 Turkish Village all come alive in Inal's folk dance routines, the Grand Bazaar feast, and Turkish Nights for tourists at home and abroad. Contemporary Sultan impersonators and their harem girls, imperial boat rowers, oil wrestlers, and street sellers evoke the 19th-century textile workers, sedan bearers, firemen, houris, dancing musicians or music-making dancers at the WCE. Across the *fins-de-siècle*, these deliberate Orientalist fantasies ground ethnic and cultural distinction in virile masculinity and idyllic or licentious femininity. As impresario-cum-animators, Levy and Inal have also both deployed personal charisma to craft themselves as the Masters of Ceremonies. In effect, these projects and their managers help transform contemporary Istanbul into a swelling Turkish Village: an Ottoman Wonderland filled with the rewards and dilemmas of auto-exoticism.

In Istanbul, self-Orientalist imagery and production parallel the shifts in urban and state politics. Promoting the city as the center of three empires--Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman--a local NGO, in alliance with municipal authorities and the AKP, initiated "Istanbul as The 2010 Cultural Capital of Europe Project" to further boost historic preservation, gentrification, and tourism.²⁴⁰ The four elements publicity campaign has capitalized on traditional architecture (earth), urban spiritual capital--across synagogues, churches, and mosques (air), the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn (water), as well as the growing arts and culture scene (fire).

²⁴⁰ For promotional and implementation details of this project, see <http://www.istanbul2010.org/?p=&lang=eng>; Internet.

As in other historic preservation and urban renewal projects in Turkey, this venture thus characterizes Istanbul not only as a historic treasure in perpetual renovation, but also, more recently, as the “tolerant” capital of religious diversity and artistic effervescence. As such, it reinforces the Islamist AKP’s main ideological mission: modeling modern Turkey on Ottoman cosmopolitan multiculturalism (Onar 2007, Malik 2003, Günes-Ayata 2003, Behnabib and Işıksel 2006, White 2002). The AKP’s neo-Ottomanist agenda centers on marketing Istanbul as a safe and moral Oriental haven (without extremist Muslim terrorism or morally-degenerate belly dance) and as a Westernizing, neoliberal Muslim contender (with formal EU candidacy and 160 million Euros EU aid) (Casanova 2006, Benhabib and Işıksel 2006).²⁴¹ Using glitzy images of Ottoman palaces, mosques, international art festivals, skyscrapers, and alcohol-free nightlife, the remakers of Istanbul define heritage tourism as moral capitalism: a capitalism evocative of late Ottoman modernity.

Like the 19th-century Ottoman government, the modern tourism investors deny both belly dance’s status as a highly-lucrative popular Ottoman tradition and the larger transformation of Istanbul into a WCE-style Turkish Village. Instead, Rom pagan spring rituals (*Hıdırellez Kutlamaları*) with the newly-fashionable Rom social dances and music (40 Days, 40 Nights Sulukule Celebrations) represent living performance traditions.²⁴² Urban minorities, such as the Rom inhabitants, poor local artists, administrators, real estate agents, and academics

²⁴¹ Zaman journalist Abdullah Kılıç notes that the Istanbul 2010 project will receive not only this bulky aid from the EU, but “is also expected to attract seven to ten million tourists in 2010” (<http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=31955>; Internet).

²⁴² For the detailed schedule and political agenda of Sulukule Celebrations, see project manager Aslı Kıyak İnçin’s blog at <http://40gun40gece-sulukule.blogspot.com/>; Internet.

jointly generate participatory and “grassroots” festivities to justify gentrification as an ethnically- and economically-fair democratization project.

But how does İnal, the award-winning cultural ambassador, fit into this official scheme? Although he sells moral Islamic entertainment for domestic consumers, he constructs luscious harem scenes for foreign visitors. Despite official denial, belly dancers remain the main attraction in tourist shows in Istanbul and elsewhere. Further, as a seasoned trickster, İnal knows how to work the system. He recounts the intermittent official bans on belly dance shows at Ottoman Palaces. With these bans, the nationalist secular government sought to protect Turkish culture from Arab influence, while the Islamist officials sought to avoid presumed moral contamination and the larger defamation of Ottoman legacy. To avoid censorship, İnal has promoted his performers as “folk dancers who just executed regional social dances.” He mischievously adds, “when the (secularist) bureaucrats outlawed the *fez*, a presumed Arab import, on stage, we performed with a turban (*sarık*). Then they said ‘you now look like *imams*’ (Muslim prayer leaders), ‘go back to the *fez*.’”²⁴³

İnal’s narrative illuminates the lived ambivalence of current neo-Ottomania, in particular, and global urban heritage tourism, in general. In Istanbul, the recently-designated 2010 Cultural Capital of Europe, multiple ideologies not only clash, but also fail to dictate tourism production. Let us turn to dance hierarchies within this industry to explore how belly dance compares with folk dance in terms of ideological significance, technique, production, and promotion. And what difference do gender and sexuality make in the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of moving bodies?

²⁴³ İnal (2002a).

Ideological Hierarchies: Folk Dance vs. Belly Dance

In modern Turkey, professional folk dance and belly dance have both consolidated and unsettled multiple binaries: rural/urban, modest/immodest, secular/religious, and homogenous/heterogeneous. Following the Ottoman Empire's disintegration, the makers of the Turkish Republic (1923-) deployed various vernacular forms such as folk music, dance, and costumes simultaneously to craft and discipline nationalist subjects (Öztürkmen in Kandiyoti and Saktanber 2002, 128-147 and 1992; Shay 2002, Stokes 1992, Keyder 1997, Çefkin 1993). Initiated by Turkey's founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Kemalist modernization project sought to implement ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, cautious Westernization, and secularization with privatized religious expression (Özyürek 2006, Yavuz 2003).²⁴⁴

Either dismissing or sanitizing ethnic--Kurdish, Armenian, and other-- antagonisms as regional cultural diversity, state-sponsored folk dance companies bolstered the official narrative of Turkish homogeneity (Shay 2002, 209). In an effort to repudiate Islamic gender segregation, most folk dance choreographies devised a co-gendered performance space where unrelated men and women perform together in public (Shay 2002, 209). Continuous with the Kemalists' abolition of the Caliphate, mandatory unveiling, and other clothing reforms, this secularization of embodied practices further distinguished the new Republic from its Ottoman past. Similarly, folk dance initiatives glorified rural peasants as the bearers of a modest, industrious, and "authentic" Anatolian heritage, a heritage uncontaminated by urban Ottoman degeneracy (Shay

²⁴⁴ For a critical reading of Turkish modernization and particularly of how concepts of modernity have changed since the early Republic, see Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey* (2005, 3-9).

2002, 209).²⁴⁵ In contrast, belly dance emblemized past excess and deficiency.²⁴⁶ Its gender segregation, revealing costumes, and Orientalist harem imagery alternately conjured up Ottoman indolence and libidinal corruption or archaic Islamic restrictions. Contradicting the secular, moral, Westernized yet peasant-centered image of the early Republic, belly dance and its practitioners were thus excluded from official modernization narratives.

Folklorist Anthony Shay explores the contemporary repercussions of these evolving binaries, detailing how the Turkish State Folk Ensemble (TSFE) has “embodied and participated in the national discourse” (Shay 2002, 222). Since its inception in 1975, this company and its members have conducted field research in Turkish villages to collect, classify, and execute regional dance steps (216). As such, they continue to render local folk expression as an ethnically-neutral peasant practice. Sponsored by the state, TSFE has celebrated Kemalist ideology and Turkishness across domestic and international festivals and competitions (Shay 2002, 217; Çefkin 1993). In addition to extended world tours and research, the ensemble also conducts professional hiring (auditions instead of word-of-mouth) and training (long structured rehearsals rather than participatory learning) and emphasizes choreography or structured movement over improvisation. These strategies articulate well with the contemporary Kemalist ideology: a West-facing but domestic civilizing project that relies on meritocratic professionalism to restructure folk movement as cosmopolitan, worldly traditionalism.

²⁴⁵ See Stokes 1992 for a parallel construction of Turkish folk music during this era.

²⁴⁶ *Arabesk* music shares similar charges of cultural impurity associated with an Ottoman past and Arabic present. For social marginalization and ideological significance of *arabesk*, see Stokes 1992, Özbek 1991, Özgür 2006.

In TSFE performances, as Shay notes, young dancers fuse abridged repetitive phrases and intricate foot- and torso-work across geometric floor patterns from almost every region. Choreographies cover Black Sea *Horon* (an athletic male line dance), Aegean *Zeybek*, Central Anatolian or Konya *kaşık* (wooden spoon dance), and *karşılama* (couple line dance) from Western Anatolia (212).²⁴⁷ Innovative company director Mustafa Turan also incorporates *çiftetelli*, the social belly dance popular in the Ottoman Empire, as a way to “recuperate lost traditions” (220). *Çiftetelli* choreographies sanitize cabaret style belly dance through ample coverage as well as softer hip and torso isolations (209). Despite the company’s overt Kemalist ideology, this upgrading of Ottoman *çiftetelli* demonstrates the malleability of folk heritage on the ground.

Shay’s extensive analysis of choreographic politics, however, overlooks two major shifts in recent Turkish history. First, subsequent to the Islamic revivalism that led to the AKP’s electoral victory in 2002 and 2007, official heritage has been increasingly cast in religious, Ottomanist terms (Çınar 2005, Yavuz 2003, White 2002). With minimal reference to Anatolian folk praxis, or the Kemalist cultural fortress, the Ministry of Culture’s website demonstrates official Islamic resistance to secular definitions of heritage.²⁴⁸ Second, focusing only on one state and a few amateur ensembles, Shay elides the increasing commodification and hybridization of Turkish folk dance in the wake of post-1980s’ neoliberalization (Öztürkmen 2002). In this tourism-driven economy, embodied folk forms no longer operate solely as official mouthpieces, but also as lucrative tourist products.

²⁴⁷ For detailed description of these dances, see Metin And 1964 and 1976.

²⁴⁸ See <http://www.discoverturkey.com/english/kultursanat/halkkultur.html>; Internet.

Göksenin İnal's ensemble, *Anadolu Folk Topluluğu*, exemplifies this duality. As a folk arts researcher, collector and choreographer, İnal construes folk dance as the privileged expression of Turkishness and, by extension, of the secular Republican legacy. He casts folk representation as a "national responsibility" (*millî sorumluluk*).²⁴⁹ Not only does he research the referential meaning of each regional dance, but also shares this research with young university students who audition to join his ensemble. Under his supervision, Bilge, a masters student in folk dance, trains and disciplines the dancers in and through long, structured rehearsals.

Both preservationist and innovative, this technique involves complex footwork, associated gestures, agility with props (handkerchiefs, wooden spoons, swords and shields), theatrical expression, and ballet vocabulary. *Demi-pointe* and *plié*, for instance, prepare dancers for the aerial plunges in the fiercely-athletic Bursa *kılıç kalkan* (sword and shield dance). Or in *Kafkas* (Caucasian) line dances, *port-de-bras* ensure graceful carriage of the arms: "peasant" women demurely flirt with local hand gestures and balletic, upright torsos. Far from challenging "authenticity," this Western vocabulary, as İnal insinuates, improves local movement styles and, in essence, reflects the broader Kemalist project: claiming Western cosmopolitanism without compromising Turkey's Anatolian heritage.

For İnal, folk dance training is a domestic and international civilizing project. First, it helps rectify Turkey's global image as an Oriental Fantasy Land. This corrective endeavor, however, clashes with İnal's continued investment in exotic commodity exchange. Second, it codes masculine movement as hard, athletic, direct, angular and feminine movement as soft,

²⁴⁹ Further, İnal frequently appears at academic seminars, discussing contemporary problems in Turkish folk dance with prominent folklorists such as Şerif Baykurtlar, Fikret Dinerliler, and Nida Tufekçiler.

sensuous, indirect, and circular. In this highly-gendered world, young male students leap, attack, and compete to take charge, while women gracefully sway and glide into flirtatious obedience. Socializing together, but rarely touching each other, the dancers define intimacy as honorable family entertainment for secular and Islamist spectators alike. Structured movement patterns and strenuous rehearsal schedules both help create educated, loyal citizens: citizens cosmopolitan enough to tour worldwide and nationalist enough to appreciate their peasant roots.

These bodily and discursive techniques find full expression in what Inal calls “my proudest production:” Dance and Music Mosaic. Synthesizing folk (*kemençe*, *bağlama*, *tulum*, *davul*) and Western instrumentation (drums, base, guitar, trombone) with Ottoman classical art music (*ney*, kettle drums, zither, oud, female singers), it charts the evolution of Turkish performing arts, from shamanistic rituals to Mevlevi dervish dances and from *kilic kalkan* to Zeybek and Ottoman *çiftetelli*.²⁵⁰ In the final tableau, the multimedia performance culminates in the Republic’s 10th Year Anniversary Anthem, the vocal celebration of official secularism. In this teleological Kemalist narrative, female and male performers join hands and voices, passionately marching to the future as nationalist vanguards.²⁵¹ Promoted as urban Ottoman folk dance, *çiftetelli*, or social belly dance, represents a tangential, yet tamed, historic practice or an underdeveloped stage in the evolution of Turkish nationalism.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ *Kemençe* is a stave fiddle; *bağlama* is a long-necked lute; *tulum* is a bagpipe; and *davul* is a large framedrum.

²⁵¹ For a parallel case, see how ethnic dance performances by the Miao, a minority group in Southwestern China, produce teleological, nationalist, Han narratives (Schein, *Minority Rules*, 2000).

²⁵² *Çiftetelli* choreographies were also part of the Ramadan festivities at Feshane. During one visit, I asked the salesperson if the show had any belly dancers (*dansöz*). He responded with an enthusiastic “Yes!” I hesitated for a second and inquired more: “Are you sure that this event includes

It is the Orientalist exotica, however, not the Kemalist mission that titillates tourists. The ideologically-superior folk dance remains as a standardized sideshow or an ethnic flavor at tourist restaurants. In contrast, belly dancers, as the main attraction, elicit more applause, interest, and receive better, if not sufficient, salaries. Moreover, following her performance, the first belly dancer often collects bulky tips in a range of \$10 to \$50, for visiting tables and cheerfully posing with the tourists during brief photo-ops.²⁵³ In this reciprocal transaction, the tourists turn Turkish seduction into postcard memories, while the dancers churn Eastern stereotypes into profit.

As a seasoned businessman, İnal adapts to such market demands, albeit with various reservations and prejudices about belly dance. His stance reflects the larger dilemmas of chasing profits with dubious cultural practices. More importantly, a closer look at the backstage reveals how dance hierarchies are translated to real-life tensions over gendered, classed, and ethnic distinctions.

Belly Dance: The Non-Technique or the Informal “Meat Market”?

“To put it boldly, belly dance sells meat.”

belly dance?” I insinuated that a scantily-clad belly dancer would disturb the devout Muslim consumers of this religious family entertainment. Hearing my surprised tone, a middle-aged woman from the next ticket booth cut in to say “It is not belly dancing, it’s *çiftetelli*” (7 November 2002). This incident illustrates how ideological distinctions between cabaret belly dance and *çiftetelli* are often blurred in daily life and that ideological prescriptions can rarely determine the meaning of performances. My exclusive focus on production is thus limited as it does not consider how performative vocabularies circulate and gain new meaning with spectators and consumers.

²⁵³ This is the tipping routine at tourist restaurants. In one-time gigs or *extras*, some performers also dance to and around tables to collect tips, making instant cash part of their choreography. Depending on the informal contract and shared history, the agent may claim up to 50% of these tips. In other cases, the dancer may share her revenues with the DJ or live musicians to ensure performance quality. See Chapter Four for details on monetary exchange at tourist clubs.

İnal takes great delight in ridiculing my research topic as well as my desire to perform during fieldwork. In his husky voice, he relentlessly asks: “So, you couldn’t find another topic? Girl, are you out of your mind?! Don’t you know that this dance originated in Arabia, not here?”²⁵⁴ Praising the Arab dancers’ musicality, showmanship, and stamina, he privileges Egypt as “the real home” (*anavatani*) of belly dance. I repeatedly try to justify my methodology and site preference, but fail to persuade him.

He approaches me sincerely as a loving, protective father, hoping that his “dirty little nightlife secrets” will deter me from working as a professional belly dancer. I respond with a dreadful commercial metaphor: “Would you ever buy a house without seeing all the rooms first or without checking out the view?” Once he discovers my stubborn--or rather naïve--will, he resorts to sexual innuendo. He winks and tells: “If you really wish to see the inside of this house (meaning the industry), you should go straight to bed” (meaning start sleeping around with bosses, agents, and potentially with him). When all counter-arguments fail, I politely retaliate by introducing my husband, a physically-imposing American dance historian with tap dance and ballet training. In the end, İnal employs me as a dancer for a New Year’s performance for French tourists at the five-star Ceylan Intercontinental Hotel. Let me contextualize this dialogue. İnal’s disdain for belly dance is premised on the familiar, complex dialectic of honor and profit. Evoking nationalist discourses, he, like most other agents and bosses, denominates belly dance a foreign form and, particularly, an Arabic import that threatens Turkish cultural integrity (“Bu dans, aslında Arap kültürüdür”). But as a shrewd

²⁵⁴ İnal also persisted with: “Why can’t you *sell* this project with just the interviews and observations?” (His emphasis).

capitalist citizen, he also criticizes the intermittent anti-Arabic state bans for wrecking the tourist industry, an industry pivotal to Turkish economic development.²⁵⁵ Blaming the market or tourist demand, Inal and others justify compromising cultural/national honor for business advantage.

As elsewhere, the Turkish dancers' revealing costumes, nightlife employment, and economic disadvantage all help intensify the charges of moral degeneracy against them (Nieuwkerk 1995 and 2003, Lorus 1996, Arvizu 2004, Abu Lughod 1997). Inal disparages uneducated and/or poor women for marketing hips and looks for their livelihoods. He boldly adds: "When they ask me, whether they should beg on the streets instead, I tell them 'yes because you are ruining a culture.'" By ruining a culture, he refers to dancers' exposed flesh and increasing availability.²⁵⁶ Elaborating more on their growth in numbers, he observes, "In Antalya, for instance, there is a dancer for 5 million (\$3) at every corner. Housewives and women with hanging bellies or those with disgusting legs (meaning unsophisticated technique) have now become belly dancers. Dirt (*pislik*) becomes belly dancer."

In this discourse, female immodesty and indolence, rather than economic devastation, is rendered as the main cause of corruption. Blaming the victim enables a moral cover for escalating neoliberal economic inequity. But, it is this harsh economic climate with soaring unemployment, inflation, and income disparities that drives less-privileged women to nightlife,

²⁵⁵ In particular, Inal mocks the inefficiency of state policies geared towards regulating dancers' sexuality. He recounts Burdur Mayor's incarceration of touring belly dancers on prostitution charges and how his project of "one morality (*edep*) police for each dancer" failed dismally. He says, "To make the charges disappear, you feed and bribe (\$200) the policeman and send him to a hotel room with the dancer where he sees her hips in action. Next morning, she gets a 'clean' report."

²⁵⁶ Here availability refers to the increasing number of belly dancers. In the rest of the chapter, I also analyze their sexual availability.

in general, and belly dancing, in particular. (For some lower-class women, belly dance, a prevalent social practice, is often their only cultural capital, enabling them some leverage in a competitive market.)

Despite this morality rhetoric, İnal and many other agents prefer disadvantaged employees for *extras*. Out of a lack of choice, most of these dancers settle for tips, instead of salaries, or for very high (up to 50%) agent commissions. Moreover, as I have witnessed at Gar Restaurant, the bosses and agents pressure even the most established dancers into buying scanty costumes or performing sexual innuendos on stage.

İnal's disparaging comments ("dirt becomes belly dancer") mark the dance as an unsophisticated social practice. In his view, this vernacular form, circulating in festive gatherings and on television shows, requires neither the technical cultivation nor the bodily discipline of folk and formal training (such as ballet and contemporary) inculcated through long rehearsals in studio settings. This view assumes that self- or family-trained professional belly dancers improvise with an elusive (non-codified) vocabulary. Yet the dancers' bodily exercise, choreographic expertise, and syntactical arrangements vary from one context to another. Dancers often improvise either with live accompaniment or a new piece of recorded music. In other instances, improvisation helps structure audience participation. These timed improvisations range from mingling with the audience for tips to brief and awkward shimmy lessons for tourists on stage. Some dancers, like Gülnihal, Nergis, and Hale, memorize musical phrases and rehearse assiduously to match their movement to instrumentation. Others rehearse and perfect their phrasing on the job as they frequent multiple clubs a night.

Movement grammar is shared informally in the belly dance circuit. Numerous dancers I have worked with coached me in the backstage or at home on center alignment for turns and

camel undulations. Other informal lessons included cues on weight adjustment or grounding to sustain lengthy and rapid hip shimmies. Didem, a fellow dancer at Sultanas Club, while only 17-years-old, was able to provide perceptive, highly-specialized movement commentary. Pushing harshly into my solar plexus, Didem said, “If you learn to use this (the diaphragm), you will pace and show your movement better (*koşturmadan, paniksiz oynarsan gösterirsin*) and sweat less (*daha az terlersin*)” When you rush, the audience thinks you are an amateur.” Despite her informal (Rom) training and young age, Didem articulates pacing as technical expertise with breathing cues to showcase movement subtleties effortlessly. Here pacing also enhances showmanship whereby dancers reconfigure stage manners for the audience. Didem’s comments illustrate the difficult task of defining technical competence, since the distinction between formal and informal regimen is often blurred in practice.

In the backstage, artistic competence sparks controversy among folk and belly dancers. Claiming sophistication with formal training, most folk dancers scorn the belly dancers’ ignorance and over-exposure: particularly, their costume and “undeserved spot” in the limelight (*sahne çalmak*).²⁵⁷ As well, most folk dancers draw prestige from secular nationalist discourses to construct themselves as the honorable vanguards of Tradition. By contrast, belly dancers, as near-naked, “greedy” (*açgözlü*) merchants of lust, register cultural contamination and unfair competition. In tourist clubs, pay disparities precipitate everyday conflicts. In contrast to the belly dancer’s 20-minute solo, a folk cast--a minimum of 6 dancers--performs several long routines and yet receives only a fraction of the soloist’s salary. Although some belly dancers

²⁵⁷ I derive this observation from casual backstage conversations with folk dancers at Kervansaray, Ceylan Hotel, and Sultanas Club where I performed regularly for nine months. Fellow dancers, Serap, Zehra, Nergis, Hale, Sidelya, and many others, also talked to me about the rivalries among folk and belly dancers.

acquire respectability with performance experience, fame, or marriage, others experience social ostracization through staring, silence, and gossip. To challenge the folk dancers' entitlement, some belly dancers also emphasize the shared vocabulary, particularly syncopated hip and torso isolations, across *çiftetelli* (folk belly dance) and their cabaret style. Hale, for instance, playfully labels folk dancers as "winter belly dancers," rendering coverage, rather than technique, as the sole distinction between these forms.

Despite such daily blurring of techniques, bosses, agents, and even tour operators share İnal's and other folk dancers' contempt for belly dance technique. This contempt affects the audition process and, by extension, the broader tourist production. Auditions take place at private office meetings in which the boss, often in the presence of an agent, assesses the dancer's bust or hip size over drinks, in addition to negotiating salaries and tips. Dancers are encouraged to perform at the club to display their showmanship or their ability to please the audience. Although previous work experience is discussed, neither the dancer nor the boss elaborates on dance training or choreographic skills. Instead, the employer demands punctuality and multiple revealing costumes to guarantee reliability, image diversity, and audience titillation. In tourist clubs, although both parties legalize this transaction with a contract (including negligible salaries, no leave of absence, and minimum health benefits), the agent receives commission off the books. For tourist *extras*, all parties seal the exchange with a handshake, a hug, or a kiss.

Self-reflexive Notes on Employment

My employment history as a belly dancer reflects and complicates some of these dynamics. To audition for the New Year's *extra*, I danced for İnal and his assistants to Arabic

music in a moderately-revealing, hot pink costume in my living room. Showcasing veil work, a drum solo heavy with earthy, but nuanced, shimmies, and snake combinations, my goal was to display technical diversity to a group of dancers and choreographers and, in so doing, to challenge their contempt for the form. (Let me naively justify this attempt in reference to my inexperience with fieldwork and Istanbul's dance circuit).

While watching me, my target audience moved from disbelief to detachment and pity. Following a faint applause, İnal told me in a fatherly tone to “go get dressed” (*git kızım giyin*). In black sweatpants and t-shirt, I attended demurely to his feedback. Inal suggested that I “pump up” the energy with a livelier (*içi geçmiş olmayan*) local music selection such as Tarkan (an internationally-renowned pop singer). He qualified my performance as “sweet but not sexy” (*şirin bir enerjin var, seksi değil*). To ease the awkwardness, Inal provided encouragement: “This French audience will like you. You’re hired!”

Although the informal setting (my home) and the presence of my family undoubtedly skewed the comments, complete obliviousness to technique saturated each fieldsite: the backstage, performance, and post-performance experience across commercial and noncommercial settings. This omission of dance talk helps reconfigure belly dance more as visual titillation than a kinetic vernacular art, a form in which looks --bust or hip size, cleavage, makeup, and hair--matter more than technique. In effect, denying movement sophistication in belly dance remains pivotal to eroticizing and primitivizing its practitioners.

In this informal audition, the dancer's costume indexed a complex politics of intimacy that simultaneously bolstered and defied erotic stereotypes. Inal's instructions (“go get dressed”) reinforced the alleged immodesty of professional belly dance and its practitioners: that they (or we?) are considered naked even in costume. Second, the immodest exposure and

conduct expected of dancers in a commercial (public) setting elicited discomfort in this noncommercial domestic space. Inal's comment registered the impropriety of this performance for a nonkin man, a potential employer, in front of my husband (my male guardian) and my mother (my elder kin). Consolidating gender and age hierarchies, Inal thus intended to save all participants from further embarrassment. It was my transgression of private/public boundaries with gender and class violations that caused embarrassment and disbelief.

Inal's paternalism reminded me of how my privileges--marriage status, education, and wealthy neighborhood--would lend me some immunity from this "lower-class, dishonorable" trade. Despite my best efforts at passing as a belly dancer, some producers would label me an eccentric amateur: a privileged anthropologist/dancer experimenting with dishonor. Inal's motivations were, however, both moral and economic as I, the amateur pleasure-seeker, was hired without pay. (Catering to almost 200 French tourists, this exclusive event cost 100 Euros a piece.)

In contrast to Inal, Zeki Coşkun, the stern owner of Sultanas Tourist Restaurant, employed me with a fixed, \$12 salary (25 million liras). For my formal audition, I performed a well-rehearsed choreography to an exclusively-male, after-hours audience at Regine, the second-floor strip club above the tourist restaurant.²⁵⁸ Pleased with my "energetic, fresh face and body" (*enerjik, taze yüz ve vücut*), Coşkun followed nightlife protocol: he offered me and my agent drinks in his office, while he monotonously told me about the fixed pay without contract, lack of holidays, and his other expectations. Barely listening to my research, Coşkun emphasized instead the commercial (secure profit from a dedicated dancer-researcher) and

²⁵⁸ This audition took place on 2 March 2003, and I started working the next day. At Sultanas, I performed every weekday for the next 9 months.

social (his long-term friendship with my female agent Sema Yıldız) aspects of this intimate commodity exchange. Our conversation turned sour when he noted firmly that he expected his belly dancers to perform on both floors: the strip club and the restaurant. After perceiving my agent's accepting silence, I reiterated the limited, tourism focus of my research. I evoked my fragile immunity to utter unconvincingly: "I really don't have to perform at the nightclub. I can just observe."²⁵⁹

My boss, however, was reluctant to make any exceptions until I framed my hesitation in terms of gender and sexual obligations. Appealing to him as a father and a husband, I mentioned that my research, taken to this extreme (the strip club) could potentially harm my marriage and family. Coskun broke into a faint smile as I spoke of my filial limitations: my American husband who could tolerate only the tourist performance and my father who would have a heart attack if he heard about either venue. Hired as a restaurant performer, I sealed our informal contract with a handshake and a fake smile.

Analyzing these Intimate Economies

These vignettes evoke what anthropologist Ara Wilson labels as the intimacy of capitalist modernity: the complex interplay of market systems with social identities and folk exchange (2004, 8-9, 20). To illuminate the socio-cultural texture of Bangkok's neoliberal transformation, Wilson details how moral economy, as a set of folk categories ranging from sexual and ethnic to kinship and religious affiliations not only infuse, but are also transformed

²⁵⁹ Note here my methodological hypocrisy in demanding full immersion with embodied research, but copping-out at the sight and sound of what I perceived to be sustained harassment.

by, local free-market initiatives (11).²⁶⁰ İnal's and Coşkun's rendition of nightlife labor both elucidate how gender and sexuality, as Wilson argues, help bolster and/or blur the boundary between commercial and noncommercial, personal systems of exchange (2004, 20). Like Thai go-go bars, the Turkish belly dance industry is fraught with daily anxieties over distinguishing the private (honor) from the public (profit).

Selling the intimacy of belly dancers, these employers, like most other club owners and agents, mix folk and market economies as they also frame such entertainment in terms of female, and by extension, familial honor and duties. At first glance, İnal's defense of domestic sanctity and his ongoing commodification of private material--staging sexual Orientalist fantasies--suggest a rigid dichotomy. Upon closer inspection, however, İnal's daily infusion of market endeavor with kinship terminology underscores a continuum. He treats his assistants and some long-term dancers as fictive sisters (*bacı, kızkardeş*) and daughters (*kız*), stripping them of their sexuality in everyday interactions. In so doing, he also binds his employees in a dual "debt calculus": an asymmetrical system of exchange premised on filial and monetary obligations (Wilson 2004, 14).²⁶¹ In other instances, dancers often take on less lucrative or last minute *extras* and sexual favors to "honor" their agent-cum-*agabey* (older fictive brother). In addition to securing regular income, they seek reciprocity. Some dancers with whom I have

²⁶⁰ To put it more precisely, Wilson defines moral economy as "an economy that may rely on markets and money but that is governed or at least constrained by local community values and expectations" (2004, 12). Prior to Wilson, numerous scholars such as E.P. Thompson (1971) and Karl Polanyi (1977) have theorized the personalization of economic relations with an eye on social justice. For a critical overview of the anthropological perspectives on moral economy with an emphasis on James Scott's work, see Sivaramakrishnan (2005, 321-330 and 346-355), Greenhouse (2005, 356-368), and Herzfeld (2005, 369-376).

²⁶¹ To put it more simply, İnal demands from his dancers both loyalty and respect as their father or older brother and high commissions as their business partner.

worked rely on their bosses or agents for protection against stalking customers, police maltreatment and everyday criminalization, particularly if they also work the *pavyon* (strip club) circuit, or to ameliorate in-club tensions with the service staff and folk dancers.²⁶²

Applying commodity logic to intimacy, Coşkun elides the distinction between *pavyon* (strip clubs) and tourist sites, including the variability of performance styles, coverage, and protocol.²⁶³ Coşkun thus characterizes all belly dancers as sex workers regardless of venue and their particular stage manners. His paternalism, like İnal's, serves to both reinforce and to remedy the dancers' moral transgression, and in so doing, obscures the employers' pivotal role in creating and unjustly profiting from such allegedly "immoral" conduct. Not to mention the dismal subtext of women exchanged by kin and nonkin men for heterosexist Orientalist consumption.

Dancers, too, are adept at fusing commercial and folk motives. Rom dancers like Nuran and Dilara, real-life cousins, not only rely on each other but also activate all family, friend, and neighborhood networks to find jobs. As Serap's (Chapter Three) or Didem's stories illustrate, both Rom and non-Rom performers justify nightlife employment as a way to sustain their

²⁶² Such protection is, however, often accompanied by in-club harassment. In other words, while the boss offers protection against stalkers and the police, he may also pressure the dancer into trading sexual favors. Fearing job loss, dancers may give in to such pressures with daily intercourse, blow jobs, anal sex, and private (office) strip sessions.

²⁶³ At *pavyons*, belly dancers are encouraged to engage in *konsomasyon* or selling conversation and drinks (with 10% commission) at the risk of harassment. Their stage performances are erotic, suggestive, and yet distant under blinding spotlights. At some low-class, low-tech--no spotlights--*pavyons* in Aksaray, such as Europa and Misket dancers mingle with the audience for instant, greasy tips. Tourist clubs routines are flirtatious and participatory: the dancer invites the audience to applaud or mimic their movements (see Birgül's number at Orient House in Chapter Four). Last, catering to an all-male clientele, *pavyons* encourage more nudity than the gender-mixed tourist clubs. These distinctions, vary contextually as some tourist club owners require scanty costumes and suggestive choreographies or some dancers mix *pavyon* and tourist performance styles.

families.²⁶⁴ Female Turkish belly dancers share the conundrum of Thai go-go dancers, as “it is the desire to be appropriate daughters that makes them inappropriate women” (Wilson 2004, 93). These narratives confirm Wilson’s main argument for the heterogeneity of lived capitalism, in general, and for the uneven, unpredictable protocols of the informal nightlife sector, in particular (2004, 19, 71). In addition, they also underscore the inextricability of embodied discourses, including the naturalization or dismissal of belly dance technique, from gendered and sexual processes of exclusion.

In order to avoid sensationalizing an already-marginalized topic (sex work and nightlife), Wilson downplays the inequitable effects of folk ascriptions, limiting them to the over-burdening of daughters (2004, 93). But as İnal’s, Coşkun’s and the dancers’ narratives illustrate that the idiom of kinship can also help to sustain contradictory, interlocked systems of patronage and exploitation in Istanbul’s nightlife and beyond.²⁶⁵ In effect, this dual economy bolsters prevalent gender and age hierarchies, patterns of sexual objectification, and income disparities against which most dancers exercise limited leverage. Making the night workers’ continual harassment and economic disadvantage equally visible, rather than sensational, is central to theorizing moral economies fully--with all the embodied bargains and costs involved. Let us explore the ethnic dimension in these asymmetrical encounters.

²⁶⁴ Other dancers, including Sidelya, Nergis, Oya, Gülnihal, and Tanyeli, also commented on the oppressive aspects of filial duty.

²⁶⁵ Jenny B. White’s ethnography, *Money Makes us Relatives*, provides a parallel account of dangerous filial metaphors and oppressive reciprocity between middlemen and lower-class, immigrant female pieceworkers in Istanbul (1994).

Ethnic Complications in Dance Hierarchies

Associated with material and moral deprivation, Rom heritage exacerbates a dancer's alleged promiscuity. Bilge, İnal's assistant and protégé, recounts her astonishment at the inappropriate comportment of Sulukule Rom dancers on a US tour. Speaking of one young dancer, she notes, "this poor girl could not join us for dinner because she did not know how to use a fork and knife. She said they eat with their hands while sitting on the floor."²⁶⁶ Lacking in manners and class, Rom performers are cast as uncultivated and unreliable nocturnal creatures. In the field, I heard many producers, agents, and non-Rom dancers comment on how Rom performers "would sell even their own mother for money" (*para için anasını bile satar*).

Despite the ongoing "renewal" of Sulukule, an old Rom neighborhood, and its inhabitants' movement repertoire, urban myths about lap-dancing young girls in nude (*ciplak subyan*) and inexpensive, but gluttonous, prostitution still circulate in the nightlife circuit. The performers' life-long training is pivotal to such sexual and cultural constructs. Cultivated at home and neighborhood gatherings and festivities (instead of studios), their "natural" technique is simultaneously prized and degraded. Bosses and agents emphasize the Rom dancers' naturalized skill, or informal dance training, to lower their salaries. Alternately, they use this rhetoric of non-technique to market them as erotic ethnic curios: the natural bearers of urban temptation. For show producers and bosses, Rom belly dance, as eroticized ethnic expression, ranks much lower than the prestigious Anatolian folk dances.

Both Rom and non-Rom dancers operate in a complex erotic economy that renders marriage as both economic relief and voluntary honor cleansing. To excuse famous ex-dancer

²⁶⁶ Bilge (2002). Unrecorded conversation at Feshane, 29 November.

Zinnur Karaca's inaccessibility, Bilge, İnal's assistant, asks: "Why should she discuss that past with you when she has been saved (*kurtarılmış*) by her textile mogul husband?" A belly dancing past, as Bilge and others note, evokes both disreputable exposure and sustained financial turmoil. Similarly, Gar Restaurant's chief dancer Nergis tells me she cannot wait for her husband to rise above bankruptcy, saying "When we have security, I can quit this dump (referring to nightlife) and be the mother and wife that I have always wanted to be."²⁶⁷

Zehra, an ex-Kervansaray dancer, confirms Nergis' emphasis on the material and symbolic sanctity of marriage and motherhood. Currently teaching belly dance with Neco, her devout Muslim, salsa and hip hop instructor husband at their private Aksaray studio, she says "If I continue performing, I cannot set an honorable example for my daughter. That is why I quit Kervansaray."²⁶⁸ Zehra's comments reveal the complexities of individual and familial virtue; while she had designated her husband as her honor's chief protector during her Kervansaray years, as a mother, she assumes full responsibility for her daughter's future modesty.

When I relay Zehra's story to Serap, she objects: "But Zehra is one in a million! She just got lucky. Look at this nightlife, Öykü, how many married belly dancers have you interviewed?"²⁶⁹ To justify the dancers' unmarriageability, she adds: "What is a man to do? Which man would like to marry a woman who gets touched by 50 others a night?" As Serap's

²⁶⁷ Nergis (2003).

²⁶⁸ Zehra (2002). Unrecorded conversation, 25 September. I attended their studio, *Bravo Dans Merkezi*, for six months for private dance classes with Zehra. I had met Zehra at the fancy Marmara Hotel workshops in 2001. The juxtaposition of their devout familial life (they live in the Islamist suburb of Başakşehir) and dancing careers was particularly intriguing.

²⁶⁹ Serap (2003). Unrecorded conversation, 1 March.

and others' comments illustrate, belly dancers, making public spectacles of their flesh, seek marriage or male patronage to gain acceptance and security. Marriageability indicates the precarious privatization of a public commodity (the belly dancer's body), and motherhood ensures the full reversal of alleged moral corruption and shame. Let me further explore the constitution and exploitation of erotic/ethnic spectacle.

Sema Yıldız: The Fearless Female Agent, Technician, and Teacher

During one of my night shifts, I rush to meet Sema Yıldız, one of my future mentors, at Kervansaray, a legendary high-capacity tourist restaurant in the heart of Istanbul.²⁷⁰ A young waiter dressed in a black suit and white gloves welcomes me with impeccable manners. Together, we glide down the red-carpeted stairs and past luminous Orientalist oil paintings. I find Yıldız chatting away loudly with her latest Japanese student amidst endless "fantasy photo" clicks and the rambunctious live band.²⁷¹ Flipping her luscious, waist-long black hair, she rises to give me a warm hug and starts bombarding me with the latest gossip about her "girls."²⁷²

After our dinner, we visit the shabby backstage above the kitchen to meet with Kervansaray's three dancers: Oya, Emmune, and Meren. Her "girls" treat Yıldız, their beloved *abla* (older sister), with warm respect, although Emmune, the chief dancer of Lebanese descent,

²⁷⁰ Established in 1949 as a family business, Kervansaray continues to host high-end tourists in three salons with a 900 person capacity. It is located in close proximity to the Hilton and Divan Hotels in Harbiye-Taksim, the city center. For further details, see the club's website: http://www.kervansarayhotel.com/gece/eng/mizda_eng.asp; Internet.

²⁷¹ For a "fantasy photo" descriptions, see http://www.kervansarayhotel.com/gece/eng/foto_galeri_eng.asp; Internet.

²⁷² Yıldız (2002). Unrecorded conversations, 9 December.

and Meren, a newly engaged single mother, both approach me with a fair degree of suspicion.²⁷³ But Oya, Yıldız's current protégé listens intently to my project before exchanging phone numbers. Presenting these relationships to me as an informal resumé, Sema beams at the sight of her own social capital (Bourdieu 1984). Cultivated in and through performance and sugarcoated in kin terms, such informal networks, extending to club owners, other agents, waiters, MCs, DJs, cab drivers, and non-professional dance students, sustain her financially and socially.

Content with my fresh contacts and mental fieldnotes, I wrongly assume the night is over. Around midnight, we head to Yıldız's tiny, cluttered multi-purpose apartment. Drenched in cigarette smoke and a spicy *türlü* (Turkish vegetable medley) smell, this space functions as her dance and recording studio, "office of global affairs," and a Bed and Breakfast for foreign belly dance enthusiasts.²⁷⁴ Here Sema hurriedly sets me in front of her aging computer to display her website. Referring to the foreign biographies of herself, she says, "You were asking about my life. Here it is!"²⁷⁵

As the night breaks into dawn, we continue to chat on the carpet, sitting on the carpet sifting through her voluminous personal archive housed in numerous shoeboxes. These frayed headshots, photographs, and programs testify to her cosmopolitan worldliness as they tell stories of her tours across the Middle East and Europe over the last forty years. Interrupting us,

²⁷³ Emmune later confessed that she perceived me as a rival dancer intent on "stealing her moves" ("*figurlerimi kapmaya geldin sandım*") (2003). Meren was uncomfortable with exposure as she said, "her fiancé's family would reject her if they discovered her nightly trade (*gece isi*)."

²⁷⁴ Yıldız jokes that she conducts all her "global affairs" (*dünya işleri*) in her apartment/office.

²⁷⁵ For these biographies, visit Yıldız's website at: <http://www.semaYildiz.com/articles.html>; Internet.

Yıldız comments on Ayako's freshly squeezed orange juice: "Ayako deserves to be called Ayşel (a Turkish name). I don't [sic] teach these (students) only steps, but also how to serve their guests and elders in our usual Turkish ways. Look at how she has become a domestic wonder (*ev kızı*)!" In return, Ayşel, like other private students, pays \$1000 each month for accommodation, food, daily dance classes, homemade music CDs, and free dinners at multiple tourist restaurants for which Yıldız works as an agent.²⁷⁶ Taken together, Yıldız's environment, contacts, and daily operations highlight both the material and intimate substance of exotic belly dance tourism.

What Is in a Kinetic History?

Occasionally Yıldız breaks into an energetic dance routine with syncopated foot-and-hip-work to music as varied as 9/8 Rom *Karşılama* or 8/4 Turkish *Çiftetelli*. Frustrated, Ayşel and I gaze at the floor-to-ceiling mirrors to see only our failed attempts at mimicking her seasoned musicality. Yıldız's eclectic style operates as a life history in motion. On the one hand, her melodramatic facial expression and hand gestures echo the pathos of the Indian musical films that were highly popular in 1950's Istanbul. Growing up, Yıldız devotedly watched and memorized the song-and-dance routines of Raj Kapoor's *Awaraa* (1951) in the dilapidated, open-air movie-theaters of the conservative Fatih neighborhood. On the other hand, she incorporates Rom social dance steps, such as vigorous vertical belly thrusts, associated hand gestures that evoke domestic chores, and bouncy foot and arm accents on the 5th beat in

²⁷⁶ Ayako (Ayşel) (2003). Unrecorded conversation, 4 February.

9/8 meter pieces. Yıldız owes this technique to her decades-long immersion in Sulukule, or the allegedly corrupt, but aesthetically innovative, Rom ghetto.

Married at 14, Yıldız moved away from her poverty-stricken family with four siblings and only one breadwinner: a Yugoslavian immigrant father who was a fruit and vegetable vendor. After relocating to Karagümruk, off of Sulukule, Yıldız not only gained entry to her husband's Rom family and their social network, but also picked up improvisatory skills: the ability to predict and adjust to musical shifts. For Yıldız, musicality implies identifying instruments and their emotive effect as well as repetitive aural phrases and crescendos. Putting her kinetic past to use, she teaches her students how to respond to instrumentation (zither, violins, and drums) with extended shimmies and undulations.

Subsequent to her early Rom encounter, Yıldız was exposed to new cabaret vocabularies through local belly dance contests and global tours: subtle, intricate hip work layered with vigorous breast shimmies. While touring in Tehran and Khoramshah (1976), Yıldız performed with Lebanese belly dancer Nadia Gamal (1937-1990). She later incorporated Gamal's folkloric Bedouin style, particularly bouncy gallops along with balletic elevation and acrobatics (Rasmussen in Shay and Sellers-Young 2005, 199). Other Middle East tours across Beirut, Syria, and Amman helped Yıldız develop a flamboyant "star" presence with rapid whirls, luscious hair flicks, and tricky double veil routines. Most recently, she traveled to Cairo to participate in the prestigious Ahlan Wa Sahlan Oriental Dance Festival (2006). In Cairo, Yıldız not only accumulated more earthy steps from the Egyptian *baladi* (village folk dance) master, Raqiyah Hassan, but also led workshops in Rom technique.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ See Shay and Sellers-Young (2005, 23) for Raqiyah Hassan's efforts in globalizing belly dance, in general, and Ahlan Wa Sahlan Festival, in particular.

At home, Yıldız worked for prominent tourist restaurants such as Kervansaray, Gar, and the Orient House in addition to multiple *pavyons* (strip clubs): Parisienne, Playshow, Olympia, Sanselize, and Hisar. This employment history translates to a hybrid technique where Yıldız mixes *pavyon* style--sensual self-touching and floor work heavy with pelvic vibrations--and tourist cabaret genre with refined, precise shimmies. Numerous past and present belly dancers share Yıldız's artistic hybridization. Driven by economic necessity, most dancers, particularly the Rom, perform at multiple venues a night, sampling flirtatious floor work at tourist clubs or less-suggestive, economic cabaret style at *pavyons*. Such nightlife migrations and their consequences illustrate the ties between aesthetic subjectivity and material existence in the Turkish belly dance world as elsewhere.²⁷⁸ Left unexplored is the symbolic and economic value of Rom heritage in Yıldız's kinetic history.

What Is in the Name of Rom?

Depending on the context, Yıldız chooses to own or repudiate Rom aesthetic influence. On her website homepage, Yıldız presents herself to foreign world dance consumers as a master teacher of the "Turkish Style Gypsy Dance."²⁷⁹ To compete effectively in the global market of the exotic, she authenticates her kinetic expertise with a promotional life history and informal tours to disenfranchised Rom entertainer families.²⁸⁰ In particular, Yıldız often takes

²⁷⁸ See Desmond 1999 on hula dancing, Savigliano 1995 on tango, and Thomas 2002 on Jamaican folk forms.

²⁷⁹ See <http://www.semayildiz.com/index.html>; Internet.

²⁸⁰ For her full biography, see <http://www.semayildiz.com/home.html>; Internet.

her international students to a multi-ethnic ghetto, Kasımpaşa, to display the Atmacalar family, a musical group with whom she had worked at Kervansaray for decades.²⁸¹ Presented as creative ethnic curios, three generations of home-raised Rom musicians and the precocious four year-old Nese demonstrate musical adaptability as well as participatory and life-long dance training.

This is also an exhibit of starving, liminal artists as nine members of this extended family share a cockroach-infested, dilapidated one bedroom apartment. Seamlessly fusing poverty, effortless technical sophistication, and daily ethnic festivity, these tours to the urban exotic evoke the quotidian shows at the 1893 Turkish Village or the suffering acts of Ottoman sedan bearers, firemen, craftswomen, belly dancers, and Bedouin warriors. Showcasing misery, talent, and social decay, both displays commodify live “primitive” heritage. As such, Yıldız shares the Ottoman concessionaire Roberto Levy’s entrepreneurial wisdom: selling urban ghettos, Kasımpaşa or the Midway Plaisance, in and through marginal spectacle.

In each performance space, Yıldız teaches in and through improvisation, changing steps continually even as she labels these routines choreographies. In addition to confirming her artistic Rom roots (as a “true” Rom dancer only improvises), Yıldız also protects her signature movements. Disallowing American and European belly dance teachers from disseminating such “rare” steps, this elusive strategy ensures a flow of new but ultimately frustrated students. Moreover, Yıldız poses coyly for her website viewers and/or potential clients in a hybrid costume, combining a bodice and sheer full skirt topped with a hip scarf and adorned with

²⁸¹ See a picture of Yıldız with the Atmacalar family under “My Musicians/Kervansaray” in “My Picture Gallery:” <http://www.semayildiz.com/gallery.html>; Internet.

shiny gold coins, colorful beads, and silver spangles.²⁸² In this image, the frame drum, embellished two-piece costume, and Yıldız's suggestive glance evoke the 19th-century Orientalist harem paintings. With a red rose in her long, luscious black hair and the red and black color palette, Yıldız also embodies a generic gypsy dancer.

Yıldız's self-depiction underwrites a discursive strategy shared by most world dance and world beat entrepreneurs. As ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino notes, the marketing of exotic Third World music, much like its dance, plays on "being familiar and yet simultaneously foreign" (2000, 335). Her self-imagery, kinetic mentorship, dance vocabulary, and urban ghetto tours draw on the prototype of "a locally distinct yet cosmopolitan," seductive ethnic Other (Turino 2000, 335). With a detailed global itinerary and technological expertise (a personal website), she further ascribes to worldliness, a worldliness measured in profit and prestige.

Self-ascription Cuts both Ways

Within the local circuit, Yıldız's Rom heritage and fictive kin connections make possible the recruitment of underage dancers from poor ethnic neighborhoods. Yıldız notes that, as an agent, she is committed to "upgrading these uneducated, poorly-dressed naturals" (*bu paspal, cahil ve doğa kızları şekle sokmak*). Sema's Rom employees, once "refined" with makeup, manners and chic costumes, prove more lucrative than others. Pressed for income, these dancers often work more clubs a night, ensuring commission and tips as high as 50% for their agent. Commenting on their limited skills, Yıldız tells me: "Just like them, I had no option

²⁸² For this imagery, see: <http://www.semayildiz.com/gallery.html>; Internet.

but to dance. All those factory jobs [meaning those labor-intensive manual textile work] fired me. At 16, I was unemployed and divorced, but I knew how to dance, you know.”

With highly trained bodies and ears, Rom performers also require less training time and energy. Respecting Yıldız’s might (her ability to make or break a dancer), seniority (age and four decades of job experience), and kin connections, most dancers initially overextend themselves to please their agent/*abla* with high commissions and care rituals. Such rituals include cooking, supportive text messages, and gifts: simple knick-knacks, jewelry, nail polish, CDs, perfumes, and weekly food deliveries. The rare few, such as Asena and Didem, who rise to fame with television shows and prestigious contracts, sever their ties with Yıldız under the restrictions of their new agent/mentor. They also strive to dissociate themselves from a Rom past filled with disreputable *pavyon* performances, or simply from Yıldız’s darker connections.

In her daily negotiations with club owners and/or other agents, Yıldız mentions these Rom connections to gain market advantage; she guarantees the flow of “fresh, low-cost” (*taze ve ucuz*) faces and bodies. Alternately, in the nightclub circuit, Yıldız denies any cultural association to the Rom to avoid common charges of promiscuity, unreliability, and illiteracy (Seeman 2006).²⁸³ She justifies this strategy, commenting: “If they (the bosses) know your past, they will chew you up and spit you out” (*yer yutar seni bu alem*).

Transnational Promises: Yıldız Collaborates with the Local Elite

In contrast to the *pavyon* and tourist circuit, Yıldız deliberately assumes Rom identity among the local intelligentsia and artists. Capitalizing on the avant-garde elite’s recent

²⁸³ See Chapter Two for historical roots of contempt for the Rom in the late Ottoman era.

fascination with ethnic roots, Yıldız has elicited much curiosity, respect and applause. Her artistic collaboration with Baba Zula, an electronic Turkish folk band, highlights the complex politics of labeling. While Baba Zula musicians anchor their “authentic tunes” in Yıldız’s kinetics and costumes, they also use live performance as a marketing strategy for their transnational fusion labels such as PsycheBelly Dance Music (2003) and Duple Oryantal (2005). Produced by the Turkish Doublemoon Records, these labels aim for a world beat market advantage, an advantage embodied by Yıldız’s growing global fame, persistent self-labeling, and Rom expertise. In the local circuit, Baba Zula regularly performs with a different belly dancer at each concert. At Babylon, the Istanbul home of eclectic jazz, blues, and funk, they redeem belly dancers or the ethnic and sexual outcasts for secular bourgeois spectatorship.

“Istanbul’s Children” (*Istanbul Çocukları*), a popular Baba Zula song of redemption, urges the community to “wake up” (*hepiniz kendinize gelin*) and recognize the ubiquitous, televised vistas of blood- and greed-stricken urban violence (*her yerde hep kan ve hurs, silah, şiddet vahşet var*).²⁸⁴ With an elusive politics of inclusion, the song offers resolution through a non-hierarchical, multicultural co-existence. Fusing folk instruments with electronic sounds, Baba Zula celebrates Turkish ethnic, cultural, and class differences, ranging from the Rom, Sunnis, and Jews to the Asians, Alawites, and Kurds and from “those without shoes” to “those with golden bracelets.”²⁸⁵ The band asserts that urban diversity promises nothing but social and artistic harmony as in “the colors of a rainbow” (*tıpkı bir gökkuşağı*).²⁸⁶ As urban

²⁸⁴ For the Turkish lyrics, see Baba Zula’s website: <http://www.babazula.com/roots/nm-lyrics-cp-7>; Internet.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Babazula, *ibid*.

ethnographers have long argued (Smith 1992, Zukin 1995, di Leonardo 1998), such multiculturalist discourses not only sanitize the unjust consequences of gentrification, but also mask the broader displacement of the poor, ethnic, and sexual outcasts. Displaying Yıldız and other belly dancers as tokens of redeemable difference, Baba Zula inadvertently participates in the inequitable process of cultural and urban gentrification: a process in which the rhetoric of tolerance/diversity helps maintain Turkish classed, gendered, and sexual hierarchies.²⁸⁷

This rhetoric of “colorful” ethnic and cultural diversity also saturates the seasonal Hıdırellez festivities in Sulukule: a once-disreputable Rom neighborhood that has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site.²⁸⁸ Undertaken by the local NGOs, academics, artists, and neighborhood inhabitants, this venture fosters “a creative and participatory urban renewal.”²⁸⁹ In her blog, project manager architect Aslı Kıyak İnçin emphasizes several interrelated goals in salvaging the local Rom heritage (*Sulukule’de sosyo-kültürel kayıpların önüne geçmek*).²⁹⁰ Featuring embodied and material exhibits, from photography to open markets, 9/8 rhythm workshops and social belly dance, these yearly Rom pagan rituals, as İnçin suggests, marshal the “native community” (*yerli halk*) towards the “democratic” ownership and promotion of their cultural wealth.²⁹¹ In so doing, “40 Days, 40 Nights Sulukule” challenges the

²⁸⁷ In Chapter Three, I provide a detailed, critical analysis of Istanbul’s urban and cultural gentrification.

²⁸⁸ See Sulukule or Land Walls listed as part of “Historic Areas of Istanbul at <http://whc.unesco.org/sites/356-loc.htm> .

²⁸⁹ See İnçin’s 9 May 2007 entry at <http://40gun40gece-sulukule.blogspot.com/>; Internet.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

municipal plan to demolish some houses and performance traditions within, such as improvisatory social belly dance and music, unprotected by UNESCO. As well, İngin underlines the transnational urgency of this cause by asking: “How are we supposed to become the 2010 European Cultural Capital if we do not protect and strengthen Istanbul along with its cultural colors and dynamics?”²⁹²

Mobilizing Heritage for EU Integration

Along with other prominent Rom performers, such as clarinetist Hüsni Senlendirici and the Ahirkapi Rom Orchestra, Yıldız’s participation in each project illustrates the vital role that proud ethnic self-designation and performance praxis play in defining heritage tourism in Istanbul. These initiatives celebrate stigmatized Rom artists and their embodied repertoire as markers of indigenous political tolerance and transnational cultural awareness. Demonstrating political and aesthetic inclusion, Yıldız’s ethnic body/praxis, among others, indexes Turkey’s EU-adaptability. Her trajectory evokes global synchronicity as it encapsulates Turkish neoliberal meritocracy, “inclusive” ethnic politics, and exchanges of art and heritage within and across borders.

Yıldız is, however, not solely a pawn, but also an able agent in these transnational encounters. Engaging with the Baba Zula and Hıdırellez projects, Yıldız simultaneously boosts her touring opportunities and local recognition, consolidating both commercial and social success. Moreover, just as these collaborations reduce Yıldız to an exotic stereotype, she, as a savvy entrepreneur, uses other kin-performers (the Atmacalar family and underage Rom girls)

²⁹² Ibid.

and their urban experience (Kasımpaşa tours) to sell erotic ethnic spectacle. This intimate economy is infused with, but not reducible to, market logic (Wilson 2004).

In other words, labeling Yıldız as a capitalist strategist does not fully explain what ethnomusicologist Sonia Seeman calls “the complex power of naming” in commercial Turkish Rom performances.²⁹³ In her analysis, Seeman focuses on the contradictory depictions of Rom, ranging from singer Ciguli’s “comical, loveable” image to *Heavy Roman*’s cinematic version of moral erosion and to clarinetist Hüsnü Senlendirici’s international eclectic sound. In each case, indigenous artists, recording companies, audiences, and producers all not only negotiate profit, but also self- or communal expression vis-à-vis shifting Rom characterizations, such as provincial uncultivation, urban decay, and world beat cosmopolitanism. These ventures maintain hypersexual, greedy, and creative images of the Rom, but also reverse gender stereotypes (Ciguli’s aggressive wife) and low-culture associations (Şenlendirici’s worldbeat success).²⁹⁴ As with the 1960s’ mediated *Roman* dance music, non-Rom and Rom collaborations also enable political pan-communal expression (Seeman 2002 and 2006).

Human Costs of Erotic Economies

Following Seeman, I posit Yıldız’s manipulation of Rom categories and praxis as both empowering and limiting. Her profitable “control” over ethnic designation simultaneously reinforces in-community ties and erotic or classed stereotypes in the eyes of fellow performers,

²⁹³ See Seeman’s (2006) introduction in her web article, “Presenting ‘Gypsy,’ Representing Roman” at http://www.umbc.edu/MA/index/number11/seeman/see_0.htm; Internet.

²⁹⁴ On Ciguli’s aesthetic and symbolic repertoire, see Seeman’s “Ciguli: ‘Everyman’ as Embodiment of Ambiguity, Comedy, and Social Reversal” (2006). For Şenlendirici’s transnational projects, see “Hüsnü Şenlendirici: Transforming Roman into ‘World Music.’”

club owners, producers, and transnational audiences. But “the political efficacy of this aesthetic representation,” to use Seeman’s phrase, does not negate the harsh erotic economy of Istanbul nightlife.²⁹⁵ Here negotiation entails everyday abuse, degradation, and sexual violence across the *pavyon* and tourist circuits.²⁹⁶

Melike, an ex-dancer turned agent/dance teacher, solemnly tells me of an assault in front of Playshow, a strip club notorious for mafia connections and prostitution:

I go there to negotiate a night shift (*gece vardiyası*) for Nergis’ sister. But I cannot get in because the headwaiter will not let me. I chat a little with Şeref, the doorman, in the freezing cold. As I head to the street for a cab, the headwaiter yells at me: “Give me your phone number.” I yell back, half-jokingly, “Why, whatcha gonna [sic] do with my number?” He says, “I want it to fuck you.” I turn and scratch his face and then try to escape but I am slipping on ice. He catches me, knocks me down. Nothing else. . . . Şeref just watches. . . . I get up and get a cab.

The attack not only humiliates, but also leaves Melike with a torn spinal cartilage. She mourns the physical pain and her inability to teach rather than the emotional injury. Accustomed to abuse in every form, from police raids on *pavyons* to bosses’ and waiters’ sexual advances, she questions neither the logic nor the operations of nightlife. Subsequently, she even tries to recruit me to elite *pavyons*, viciously objectifying my body: “No one here (Sultanas Club) believes you are married and used (*kullanılmış*). With a fresh skin and young face like that, you look like a 16-year-old virgin (*kız-oğlan-kız*). You would blow away (*aklini basından almak*) those men (meaning the *pavyon* clientele and bosses). Just try it!”

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Zehra, an ex-Kervansaray dancer, along with others told me of the waiters’ sexual slander and/or voyeurism: “They will call you a whore (*orospu*), a cunt (*amcık*) or motor” (a dancer who sleeps around with customers). A fellow dancer also mentioned an incident in which the waiter barged in to her dressing room to masturbate, while she was getting dressed. The club owners’ or customers’ harassment run a wide gamut from single acts of groping during business meetings to tipping to coerced sex, including rape.

In the midst of such misogyny, Yıldız, like Melike, labels herself a savior for nighttime workers: a savior with gender privilege. She thus elaborates: “Young girls prefer me, a female agent, because they know I will not grope (*ellemek*, *asılmak*) or rape (*tecaviüz*) them. They know their *abla* (older sister) will protect them.”²⁹⁷ Fictive kin ties and labels, as dancer Didem also admits, provide some protection against the male employers, wait staff, MCs, and musicians. Didem shares a working strategy: “When I step into a club, I call everyone, even the clientele, *ağabey* (older brother). Then they know I have distance (*soğuk davranmak*) and that I want to protect my honor (*namus*).”²⁹⁸ As Didem’s comments suggest, mobilizing kinship bolsters male paternalism as well as gendered hierarchies embroiled with sexual and material discrimination (Delaney 1991, Sirman 1995 and 2004, White 1994, di Leonardo 1987). This “patriarchal bargain” (Kandiyoti 1988, 1998) or saving female honor for and with the aid of male patrons maintains public moral propriety at the cost of women’s safety and sustenance (Parla 2001, Koğacıoğlu 2004, Singerman and Hoodfar 1996, and Abu-Lughod 1997).

Fallen Women: Kinship as Patronage and Exploitation

Translated to fieldwork, Didem’s kinship strategy remains both uneven and restricted, as many dancers recount stories of vicious sexual coercion by bosses, clients, and co-employees. Daily on- and off-stage harassment, ranging from forced prostitution, beatings, and

²⁹⁷ Also note here Yıldız’s heterosexist assumption that same-sex encounters rule out sex or harassment. Nur, the chief stripper and belly dancer of Playshow, contradicts Yıldız’s comment with: “Women grope (*ellemek*) or approach me with indecent proposals (*asağılık teklif*) all the time.” Some dancers accept harassment as a job requirement and choose agents more on the basis of commission and reputation than on protection. For them, protection against the clientele becomes a priority when the dancer slides down the scale of reputable pavyons, transferring, for instance, from Beyoğlu (downtown) to Aksaray (an Old City neighborhood known for prostitution).

²⁹⁸ Didem 2003.

death threats to repeated rape and slander, challenge the benign, protective role of kinship markers. Assuming modesty as a sister (*bacı* or *abla*), mother (*anne*), or sister-in-law (*yenge*), most dancers attempt but fail to fully desexualize themselves as the erotic associations of nightlife or ethnic markers contradict such efforts. Instead, they become more vulnerable both to economic and sexual exploitation with lowered salaries, free favors, and bruised subjectivities, all forged in the name of intimate ties.

A closer look at the promises and pitfalls of these folk markers cautions us against sanitizing intimacy with either a purely political-economic (Wilson 2004, MacLeod 1996, Özyürek 2006) or a structuralist focus (Giddens 1992, Berlant 2000). Challenging the scholarship to date (Seeman 2006, Scott 1976, 1990, Meneley 1996), I classify the political and folk economies of Turkish nightlife as sexually laden categories and acts with particular material and discursive consequences. To conclude, Turkish belly dancers' simultaneous chronic exploitation and commercial/discursive success suggest how recognition promises neither acceptance nor immunity. These trajectories thus illuminate the inextricable links among inequitable moral politics, erotic commodification, and heritage tourism in contemporary Istanbul.

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