

TURQUERIE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA.

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ABSTRACT

BAHAR S YOLAC: *Turquerie in Nineteenth-Century America*
(Under the direction of Dr. Mary Sheriff, Dr. Glaire Anderson, Dr. Paroma Chatterjee)

The thesis explores the phenomenon of turquerie in nineteenth-century America, that is the fascination with and appropriation of elements of Turkish culture, particularly in interior designs and baths. The paper distinguishes turquerie from Orientalism, considering that the appropriation of Turkish forms accompanied neither imperial designs nor encyclopedic collections of knowledge; nonetheless, some of the Oriental stereotypes perpetuated in American turquerie. Turkish interior decorations and baths both in public and private domains in America reveal that the adoption of turquerie cannot be associated solely with the symbolic meaning of pleasure and voluptuous delights, since the concept of turquerie was multilayered. The adoption of some Ottoman forms, tastes and manners should not be confined to the clichéd rhetorics, but viewed as ‘the Orientalization of the Occident,’ which was as valid as ‘the Occidentalization of the Orient’ albeit differently at various historical temporal and spatial confluences

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Introduction

My thesis explores the phenomenon of turquerie in nineteenth-century America. I mean by turquerie the fascination with and appropriation of elements of Turkish culture, particularly in interior designs and baths. Because turquerie in nineteenth-century America conflated Ottoman, Turkish, Arab, and Persian styles, not distinguishing one from the other, my thesis will define and differentiate the varied ways that turquerie manifested itself in American culture. While making these distinctions, I am guided by how contemporaneous periodicals and newspapers described individual instances of the general category of turquerie. Instead of pursuing a strict formal analysis to illustrate turquerie, I let the periodicals and newspapers of the period define and speak about the phenomenon.

Recently scholars have started exploring the trend of turqueries in the spheres of architecture, landscape, painting, music, and sartorial fashion in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe, but little work has been done on this phenomenon in the United States. Although research on Europe typically reduced Ottoman inspirations to the confines of simple exoticism, Nebahat Avcioğlu, in *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation* (2011) challenged such views. Inspired by her work and the new avenues of research she pioneers, I will explore how Ottoman art and culture were incorporated into American society, and go beyond the few motifs adapted by American artists or few Turkish rugs displayed in American homes. My thesis concentrates on Turkish interior

decorations and baths both in public and private domains in America. My aim is to explore deeper cross-cultural influences and reveal some new layers in the construction of the Orient via turquerie; I will distinguish the latter from the former and emphasize the specificity of the United States compared to the European experience of turquerie. The appropriation of Turkish forms in the United States did not accompany either imperial designs on the Ottoman Empire, or encyclopedic collections of knowledge such as the *Description de l’Egypte* (First Edition 1809-1829)¹.

In the nineteenth century France and Britain not only had a direct and intensive relationships with the Ottoman Empire, they also carried imperial ambitions in competing with each other to carve up the Empire and establish their military and cultural dominance in the region. Geographically the Middle Eastern countries were distant territories for the United States, yet the United States’ government was not completely removed from the area. Despite relatively limited experience, as I explain in my first chapter, Americans were militarily, diplomatically and commercially involved in the Middle East. Trade was always the priority in the bilateral agenda between the Ottomans and Americans to the extent that “one could go further and argue that the economic relations formed the foundation of diplomatic and political contacts.”² During the nineteenth century and until the end of the Ottoman Empire, Washington essentially sought to ensure the continuity of its commercial activities in the area without directly or

¹ *Description de l’Egypte* was a series of publication prepared by French artists, scholars and scientists, who accompanied Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt in 1798-1801. The commission, established by Napoleon in 1802, compiled the large amount of data from the various disciplines for a series of publication, which took over twenty years.

² Cagri Erhan, “Main Trends in Ottoman-American Relations,” in *Turkish-American Relations, Past, Present and Future*, edited by Mustafa Aydin and Cagri Erhan, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004, 6.

indirectly being involved with the European imperial designs; it never fought with the Ottomans or became a party to a European alliance intending to divide the Ottoman lands. At the same time Americans viewed themselves as part of the European/Christian heritage and employed the binary language of the Orient versus the Occident, believing in essence the supremacy of the latter over the former. Although their experience of the Ottomans was different from that of the Europeans, as primary sources of the period and the travelers' account reveal, the Americans shared some common background with them and employed the Oriental stereotypes in *turquerie*.

The old and new continents adopted Turkish styles and manners in different centuries. *Turquerie*, which swept through Europe in the eighteenth century, came to America much later, specifically by the end of the eighteenth century, since during the preceding years America was busy in establishing its national unity and cultural identity. Following its independence America favored the neo-classical style, which expressed best the new republic's virtue and rationality. As John Sweetman observed "the taste for luxury and the ability to indulge in it were not to apply to America until the end of that period."³ The scope of *turquerie* remained limited in eighteenth-century America. Turkish-made covers on chairs, and painted tulips, which were the distant cousins of those from the Saray (palace) in Constantinople, were the initial motifs manifested in America.⁴ They were brought by seventeenth-century German migrants, and used in a restrained manner in pottery, cupboards and mirrors. The impressive group portraits

³ John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 211. Ushak is one of the well-known centers of finely woven carpets, which are also known as Holbein carpets, in reference to their depiction by the sixteenth-century painter, Hans Holbein the Younger.

⁴ Tulip was a highly popular flower and cultural emblem in the Ottoman Empire. 1718-1730 is known as The Tulip Period (*Lale Devri*) during which the tulip craze found its peak.

around a table covered by a Turkish carpet in a way similar to Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors* (1533, London, National Gallery) were a means to convey a social status for affluent American families. Gilbert Stuart's *Lansdowne portrait of George Washington* (1796, National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC) showed the famous leader of the new republic on a prestigious Turkish/ Ushak rug.⁵ In the second half of the eighteenth century John Singleton Copley's portraits of American women in turquerie⁶, donned in loosely fit caftan and turban with ermine robe, revealed one of the first culturally permissible methods for women to break away from the traditional rigidly corseted female fashions. These depictions communicated influences of far distant lands, echoed mainly through Britain, though different than the parental metropolis, reflecting the political and social climate of the colony.⁷

As opposed to a few features of the Turkish world manifested in America in the eighteenth century, the second half of the nineteenth century was swept with turquerie within the larger framework of the "Oriental obsession." Two areas were important in the application of Ottoman art, architecture, and manners in the New World: interior decorations and Turkish baths. The first chapter analyzes the preparatory factors that led to the later growth of turquerie. How did Americans and Turks encounter each other directly? What were the nature of their relationships and the ensuing perception of the Turks in American society? Besides diplomatic and commercial interactions the chapter explores the travel narratives and world's fair exhibits that played a major role in the

⁵ Ibid., 215.

⁶ Such as *Mrs. Thomas Cage* (1771), *Mrs. Adam Babcock* (1774), *Portrait of Rebecca Boyleston Gill* (1773).

⁷ Isabel Breskin, "On the Periphery of a Greater World: John Singleton Copley's "Turquerie" Portraits," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 36, No. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 2001), 97-123.

development of *turquerie* and the Oriental discourse in America. Although distinct from one another, the two concepts strongly intertwined. The nineteenth-century travelers to the Ottoman lands were primarily missionaries, merchants, and tourists on religious pilgrimages. Their travelogues in general portrayed a crusade of heroic Christian sophistication against a repressive, authoritarian and primitive Islamic civilization. Turks were irredeemably barbaric and impediments to Christian civilization and progress. On the one hand these accounts, from famous tourists like Herman Melville, reported the dilapidated, maze-like streets, and degenerate state of the local population, while on the other hand they presented overly-romantic illustrations about the beauty and mystery of the land and its peoples. The world expositions, which boosted the American interest in the Orient, also featured romanticized elements from supposedly everyday life of the Ottomans. The faraway territory was associated in the public opinion with the luxurious, sensuous and effeminate Orient that was often reflected in *turquerie*.

In the chapter on Interior Decorations I elucidate how the Turkish style was defined and illustrated in American interior decoration, where it was used, and what were the motivations behind such choices. Often the Orientalizing of buildings and interiors in Victorian America was associated with the symbolic meaning of pleasure and voluptuous delights, but my analysis of nineteenth-century American interiors, based on the primary source descriptions, suggests that the concept of the Turk/Orient was much more multilayered. In Victorian America, the interior space reflected the identity, and the social status of the owner, who was generally a wealthy male. Such a place necessitated the identification of the owner with the Orient and Orientals whether emulating their luxury, vigor or power. The adoption of *turquerie* also entailed changes in customs and

manners. Sitting on a divan required many changes in the ordinary habits of Americans. First, in Turkish homes shoes would be left at the door and slippers worn inside the house, although newspapers and periodicals of the period did not indicate that Americans adopted this custom. Second, due to the extended width of the divan, sitting entailed removing one's slippers/shoes and bringing the feet onto the divan with either one or both feet tucked into the body, or sitting on one's foot. This was completely counter to the Western practice of keeping one's shoes on and feet planted firmly on the floor when sitting on a sofa. Turquerie also introduced other new habits of sipping Turkish coffee or smoking nargileh. Like Western machinery in the Orient, it could not be adopted per se, but required changes in mentality and manners to a certain extent, which I define as the 'Orientalization' process.

Turkish baths, which I elucidate in the following chapter, attained a wide popularity across the American nation and attracted lavish investments in major cities of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were acknowledged as absolute necessities of an advanced civilization. Their descriptions incorporated some stereotyped Oriental discourses, but baths were not considered merely luxurious, leisurely, and sensual. They were introduced to the American society mainly by physicians as cleansing emporiums and curative agents, both physical and psychological; as a result they were beneficial for all social groups, genders and even for children. In this sense, the science of bathing could be regarded as social reforms brought to the West from the East. Like Turkish interiors, the baths also broadened the boundaries of a typical Orientalist discourse. In spite of many disparaging references to backwardness, the Orient in some aspects was recognized as superior to the Occident and thereby had to be adored

and emulated. The adoption of Turkish bath as an institution also brought its own rituals to the West. It challenged the old habits by opening the way to bathing in the nude or semi-nude together, which also constituted part of the ‘Orientalization’ process.

My exploration of Turkish interiors and baths in nineteenth-century America reveals that the adoption of some Ottoman forms, tastes and manners was not confined to the clichéd Oriental rhetorics, since Turkish interiors and baths expanded the perceptions and boundaries of the Orient through multivalent meanings. Furthermore, their appropriation in the American society represents ‘the Orientalization of the Occident,’ which was as valid as ‘the Occidentalization of the Orient’ albeit differently at various historical temporal and spatial confluences. I believe such an approach will enrich perspectives on cultural contacts and their reciprocal influences.

CHAPTER 1

Turquerie and the Perception of the Turk

Bilateral Relations

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Ottomans and Americans first met directly through trade in North Africa where the regencies had an autonomous status, although ruled by a Turk from Istanbul. Piracy was the main source of revenue for these regencies, and starting in the 1780s American ships carrying cargo to/from Europe were attacked. Nearly three decades of sporadic naval encounters with ‘Barbary pirates’ led American public opinion to consider Middle Easterners as barbaric and brutal.⁸

Although American relations with Ottomans in North African regencies were tense, American commercial vessels started visiting ports, such as Smyrna, Salonica and Beirut in the Ottoman mainland in the first decade of the nineteenth century. They carried American petroleum, kerosene, and imported rugs, coffee, dried fruit and opium. A few American citizens established commercial enterprises in Ottoman lands. In addition to the commercial activities, American missionaries also started philanthropic works in the area, which accelerated in the second half of the nineteenth century. The American-Ottoman Treaty of Trade and Navigation, signed in 1830, remained the main document between

⁸ Cagri Erhan, “Main Trends in Ottoman-American Relations,” in *Turkish-American Relations, Past, Present and Future*, edited by Mustafa Aydin and Cagri Erhan, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004, 4; Naomi Rosenblatt, “Orientalism in American Popular Culture,” *Penn History Review*, 16:2, Spring 2009, 3.

the two states for almost ninety years, until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1920. During that period the main area of bilateral relations was trade, which steadily increased.⁹ “By the 1870s American entrepreneurs were buying nearly one-half of Turkey’s opium crop for resale in China while providing the Ottoman Empire goods ranging from warships to kerosene.”¹⁰ The association of opium with the Ottoman Empire played a significant role in American perception of the East as opulent, luxurious, and languorous, an image that cigarette advertising also exploited.¹¹ In the 1880s the lower prices of Caspian/Russian oil became the main concern of American diplomats and oil companies, as a result during the last decade of the nineteenth century America tried to prevent the distribution of large amounts of Russian oil into the world markets and to guarantee a market for its own petroleum in the Ottoman lands.¹²

Despite the flourishing economic activities, the Ottoman-American relations were sporadically tense, due to various revolts of Christian subjects in the Ottoman Empire. The first major one was the Greek rebellion against the Ottoman Empire in 1821, and the United States viewed it as “a war of the crescent against the cross.” The highly popular

⁹ Cagri Erhan, “Main Trends,” 5-7. In 1830 the volume of trade between the two states was \$1 million. In 1869 it exceeded \$5 million.

¹⁰ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 12.

¹¹ Naomi Rosenblatt, “Orientalism in American Popular Culture,” 4, 8, 9.

¹² Sullivan Samuel Cox, the US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1885, complains in his memoirs that the poorer quality Russian petroleum was sold in the Ottoman market fraudly as American product. “They substitute the poorer Russian article in our American boxes and cans and sell it for the better American.” Samuel Sullivan Cox, *The Isles of the Princess, or the Pleasures of Prinkipo*, New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1888 (Hathi Trust Digital Library), 158.

literary journal, *The North American Review* claimed that “wherever the arms of the Sultan prevail, the village churches are leveled with the dust or polluted with the abominations of mahometanism.”¹³ Travelogues of Protestant missionaries described the Greek independence from the “hated” sway of the Turks as “the banner of cross and freedom” and celebrated the Greek independence as “the crescent, the minaret and the mosque have forever departed.”¹⁴ The famous American sculptor of the nineteenth century, Hiram Powers, eternalized such feelings in his statue of “the Greek Slave” (1844, Florence-Italy). It revealed a Greek slave girl captured by Turks and put up for sale in the Middle Eastern market. She was partially nude, but rendered in white marble in a classicizing tradition that gave the sculpture a sense of aesthetic refinement. Her beauty and youth bespoke of her innocence. Her chained hands exposed her deplorable situation, causing grief and lament in the American population. The cross and locket visible amid the drapery under her right hand indicated that she was a Christian. The statue was the emblem of Christian purity, chastity and suffering under Islamic despotism, and its miniature copies became immensely popular in the American society. The binary logic of the civilized and heroic Occident versus the despotic, primitive and authoritarian Islamic Orient continued and further intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century during the Cretan insurrection, the national movements of the Balkans and the Armenian revolts, although the US never fought directly with the Ottoman Empire or participated in dividing the Ottoman lands with European powers. Despite

¹³ Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002, 12.

¹⁴ Fisher Howe, *Oriental and Sacred Scenes, From Notes of Travel in Greece, Turkey, and Palestine*, New York: M. W. Dodd, 1854, 17 and 67.

some friendly commercial activities and diplomatic relations¹⁵ the stereotype of “terrible Turk” remained strong in the American public.¹⁶

Travelers Accounts

Travel narratives and world’s fair exhibits also played a major role in the development of the American image of the Turks. An American travel vogue, first to Europe, then to the Orient started in the early years of the nineteenth century and exploded by the mid-century. By 1850 an estimated thirty thousand Americans were travelling to Europe, which initiated a keen interest in travelogues.¹⁷ A variety of people such as diplomats, missionaries, merchants, artists, and tourists especially on religious pilgrimages traveled to the Ottoman lands and produced a vast literature on its culture and people, contributing to the American public awareness about the region. These travelogues reported on the one hand the degenerate state of local population and government, while on the other hand presented highly romantic accounts about the

¹⁵ During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1909) diplomatic relations were much closer: during the British occupation of Ottoman Egypt in 1882 the sultan applied to the Americans to act as a moderator between the British and Ottoman Empires. Despite the best American efforts the British occupation could not be stopped. Following the US occupation of the Philippines, in 1899, Americans requested Ottoman help in stopping the Muslim uprising there. Abdulhamid, who was the Caliph of all Muslims, sent a telegram and pledged that the Americans would guarantee their freedom of religious practice. Sultan’s mediation resulted in a tentative treaty between the Americans and Muslims. Cagri Erhan, “Main Trends,” 8.

¹⁶ Cagri Erhan reveals that especially during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, both in diplomatic correspondence and the media coverage in America, the idea of the Turks was limited to adjectives such as ‘ignorant,’ ‘ruthless,’ ‘unspeakable,’ and ‘terrible.’ Cagri Erhan, “Main Trends,” 17-20. For American missionaries’ anti-Muslim and anti-Turk prejudices see Justin McCarthy, “Missionaries and the American Image of the Turks,” ,” in *Turkish-American Relations, Past, Present and Future*, edited by Mustafa Aydin and Cagri Erhan, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004, 26-49.

¹⁷ Kim Fortuny, *American Writers in Istanbul*, Syracuse, New-York: Syracuse University Press, 2009, 31.

beauty and mystery of the land and its peoples.¹⁸ American travelers generally shared the idea of a Christian supremacy against a repressive, authoritarian, and primitive Islamic civilization.¹⁹ Travel books in essence fell prey to the binary Orientalist mindset as Edward Said described in his now- classic *Orientalism* (1978): the superior, rational and civilized West as opposed to backward, barbaric, brutal, and uncivilized Orient. They contributed widely to the American perception of mysterious and disparaging Orient.

Bayard Taylor was one of the prominent travel authors; when he passed away the *New York Times* published his obituary on its front page, on December 19, 1878.²⁰ In 1851 he traveled to the Orient and described a picturesque, romantic and dreamy land in his book, *The Lands of the Saracen* (1854). Even though the title of his book suggests the religious otherness, both his itinerary and practices in Turkey, as a traveler, were beyond the habits of a typical tourist: he discovered less common places, such as Bursa;²¹ he tried

¹⁸ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 15. Some romantic accounts mingled the reality and fantasy to create an Oriental fable echoing in many ways the *Thousand-and-One Nights*. The example is Susan E. Wallace, *Along the Bosphorus*, New York: John B. Alden, 1888.

¹⁹ Missionaries, like Fisher Howe, intend to hoist the banner of the cross and of freedom against the sanguinary banner of the crescent and mosques. Fisher Howe, *Oriental and Sacred Scenes, From Notes of Travel in Greece, Turkey, and Palestine*, New York: M. W. Dodd, 1854, 17, 19, 67, 72. Adna Brown, a well-to-do woman from Vermont on a grand tour extending from Europe to Palestine, wishes in a poor village in Egypt that, “if a Christian civilization could be introduced, there would be no reason why these people should not be the happiest people in the world.” Adna Brown, *From Vermont to Damascus: Returning by Way of Beyrout, Smyrna, Ephesus, Athens, Constantinople, Budapest, Vienna, Paris, Scotland, and England: Also Instructions How to Prepare for Such a Journey*, Boston: Geo. H. Ellis Publisher, 1895, 35. The memoir of Samuel Sullivan Cox, who served as an ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1885, is much more even-handed analysis of the Ottoman government and culture. He dedicated his book to the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and tried to dispel some of the Western stereotypes of the Ottomans. Samuel Sullivan Cox, *Diversions of a Diplomat in Turkey*, New York: Charles L. Webster & Co, 1887.

²⁰ Kim Fortuny also in her book mentions Taylor as one the well-known literary figures and the travel authors of his time. Kim Fortuny, *American Writers*, 38.

²¹ Bursa was an inland place not easily reachable by cruises. Main places visited in Turkey by travelers were Izmir, Troy and Istanbul.

to dine, bath, or even pray at mosques together with locals.²² He had a special affinity with the East as he formulated, “in almost all its aspects, [it] is so essentially poetic, that a true picture of it must be poetic in spirit, if not in form.”²³ Yet, he did not think that the people of the East were capable of achieving progress by themselves, insinuating the necessity of the Western involvement to this end: “.but I cannot avoid the conviction that the regeneration of the East will never be affected at their hands.”²⁴ In 1856, another famous American writer, Herman Melville visited Europe and the Levant. Istanbul, despite its few attractive sights, was often described as wild, unorganized and eerie, with a frightening and intricate labyrinth of streets in Istanbul. The Cistern of Philoxenos (Binbirdirek) was not exotic, but claustrophobic to him, a place to be robbed or murdered, which may have corresponded with the dark and irrational Orient.²⁵

Mark Twain as a journalist visited Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, and published his letters to his paper as a book, upon his return to the United States, under the title of *The Innocents Abroad*. The book remained his bestseller throughout his lifetime.²⁶ His witty satire in the book aimed at dismantling the previous Romantic discourses on the Orient; he condemned travel narratives which raised false expectations with fictitious

²² A typical American tourist at that time would stick to his own group, without trying to intermingle with locals.

²³ Bayard Taylor, *The Lands of the Saracen, or Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily, and Spain*, 189, <http://www.amazon.com/Saracen-Pictures-Palestine-Sicily-ebook/dp/B000JML13E>

²⁴ Ibid., 190.

²⁵ Kim Fortuny, *American Writers*, 7-10. Fortuny comments that Melville’s interpretations may have been conflated with his knowledge of the *Arabian Nights*; attraction, suspense, drama were all fused in one entity.

²⁶ Kim Fortuny, *American Writers*, 31-32.

Orientalist discourse.²⁷ Yet his deconstruction of the Orient attended a demeaning and hateful tone, unlike his sarcasm on Europe, where Twain tried to compensate his negative views with some positive statements. For example, in the Italian countryside he found people stupid and not respectable:

They have nothing to do but eat and sleep and sleep and eat, and toil a little when they can get a friend to stand by and keep them awake. They are not paid for thinking –they are not paid to fret about the world’s concerns..They were not learned and wise and brilliant people – but in their breasts, all their stupid lives long, resteth a peace that passeth understanding. How can men, calling themselves men, consent to be so degraded and happy.²⁸

His black humor accompanies some atonement, such as peace and happiness, which at the end present Italians not repellent, but amiable human beings. Twain lacks such an approach in his description of Istanbul, and its population. His sustained criticism gets a much deeper, and more demeaning tone, without offering any sympathy for the city or its citizens. “The noble picture of Constantinople,” he declares, is only at the distance, while approaching to the port of the city. The boatmen who were supposed to take the travelers from the cruise to the shore are “the awkwardest, the stupidest, and the most unscientific on earth, without question.”²⁹ Ashore was an eternal circus. “People were thicker than bees, in those narrow streets, and the men were dressed in all the outrageous, outlandish, idolatrous, extravagant, thunder-and-lightning costumes that ever a tailor with the delirium tremens and seven devils could conceive of.”³⁰ Turkish women, who draped from head to chin in flowing robes, at the “Great Bazaar,” are also very

²⁷ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, Hartford, Connecticut: The American Publishing Company, 1902, 376.

²⁸ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, 209.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 358-359.

repellent to him: “They looked as the shrouded dead must have looked when they walked forth from their graves amid storms and thunders and earthquakes that burst upon Calvary that awful night of the Crucifixion.”³¹

His lines reveal the superiority of an enlightened, and advanced Western traveler while portraying unflatteringly the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Aziz, whom Twain saw at the Paris exposition before coming to Istanbul. Despite his positive assessments of Napoleon III, his description of Abdul Aziz is quite negative. The sultan is weak, stupid, ignorant, almost, as his meanest slave; he believes in gnomes and genii; he is nervous in the presence of Western railroads, steamboats, and railroads.³² While describing Muslim massacres of Christians in Damascus, in 1861, he discloses openly that he hates the Ottoman Empire and its people of Turks and Arabs:

The thirst for blood extended to the high lands of Hermon and Anti-Lebanon, and in a short time twenty-five thousand more Christians were massacred and their possessions laid waste. How they hate a Christian in Damascus!- and pretty much all over Turkeydom as well. And how they will pay for it when Russia turns her guns upon them again!.....It is soothing to the heart to abuse England and France for interposing to save the Ottoman Empire from the destruction it has so richly deserved for a thousand years....I never disliked a Chinaman as I do these degraded Turks and Arabs, and when Russia is ready to war with them again, I hope England and France will not find it good breeding or good judgment to interfere.³³

World Fairs

Besides travelogues, world fair's exhibits were another source that greatly stimulated the growing interest in the Orient and 'constructed' the Orient to paraphrase

³¹ Ibid.

³² Kim Fortuny, *American Writers*, 40-43.

³³ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, 463.

again Edward Said. During the period under discussion three international exhibitions were held in the United States, culminating in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: the first international fair took place in Philadelphia, in 1876, another followed in Chicago in 1893, and a third in St. Louis in 1904.³⁴ They attracted a considerable number of visitors. Moreover, many artifacts and architectural decorations that were sent from the Orient to exhibitions remained in the United States, to be circulated in the market, thereby stirring further interest in the culture. For example in Philadelphia, Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey erected separate pavilions and much of the material did not return to its homeland, but rather was sold at auction after the fair or was bought by the museums. Likewise in Chicago, to insure the authenticity of the architecture, many original elements were removed from buildings in Egypt –which were replaced with copies- and sent to the fair. They also remained in the United States.³⁵

These international exhibitions offered quick and seemingly realistic impressions of the societies and cultures they purported to represent. One of the telling examples was the Ottoman Pavilion at the 1893 Columbian World Exposition in Chicago. Capitalizing on its previous experiences at universal exhibitions held in Europe, the Ottoman Empire staged a multifaceted display in Chicago. The fair was organized as a “sliding scale of humanity” and civilization: the Western nations were placed nearest to the ‘White City’; farther away, at the ‘Midway’ was the Islamic world, East and West Africa; at the farthest end were the savage races.³⁶ The Ottoman pavilion was at the Midway,

³⁴ The fourth exhibition held again in Philadelphia in 1926, which is beyond the timeline of this research.

³⁵ Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, “Collecting the Orient at the MET: Early Tastemakers in America,” in *Ars Orientalis*, 30:2000, 71-72.

³⁶ Zeynep Celik, *Displaying the Orient, Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992, 83.

representing a semi-civilized culture by its location. The main building, which was a sophisticated and more modern interpretation of the Sultan Ahmed fountain, a landmark in Istanbul, displayed a sense of elegance and luxury (Fig.1). Its interior reflected an Ottoman living room, with couches pushed to the corners and covered by rare rugs; silk draperies hung from walls, and intricately carved wood tables, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, were scattered on a completely covered floor (Fig.2). This main building was surrounded with other Ottoman displays such as the “Turkish Village” with a row of booths of an Oriental bazaar, a restaurant, a mosque, a theater, and a wooden replica of an obelisk that stood in the Hippodrome. Next to the theater were a “Palace of Damascus” and a “Camp of Damascus.” The former represented the residences of rich Turks decorated with wall hangings, a divan and teakwood tables, and the latter a nomadic scene from the Syrian desert. The spaces staged romanticized elements from supposedly everyday Ottoman life ranging from an “oriental wedding ceremony,” to “authentic” races in the Hippodrome, with forty horsemen transported to Chicago with their steeds. Visitors were served coffees, reclined on divans and attended highly sexualized versions of belly dancing. The media reported widely on the new obsession with belly dancing, and sometimes with an ironic tone: *The Chicago Tribune* declared that “the soiled devotees of Constantinople and Cairo corrupted western morals by the seductive allurements of the danse-du-ventre.”³⁷ With luxurious buildings, sexualized belly dancing, and fantastical horse races, the Ottomans displayed themselves for the Victorian

³⁷ Zeynep Celik, “Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World’s Columbian Exposition,” in *Noble Dreams Wicked Pleasures*, edited by Holly Edwards, Princeton: Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000, 77-81. Zeynep Celik, *Displaying the Orient, Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World’s Fairs*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1992, 80-95.

American public with their romanticized splendor; their intention was to capture the Americans through playing on their desire for the exoticism/eroticism of the Orient.

Turkish interiors and baths in nineteenth-century America, which I will introduce in my next two chapters, bear some affinities with the Orientalist discourse that Edward Said so finely analyzed and interpreted. Yet in the case of the United States the adoption of Turkish forms and practices did not necessarily imply controlling the Orient. The Orient was brought into the daily lifestyle of Americans, through an ambivalent process of romanticization/denigration, desire/repulsion, and identification/dis-identification. Appropriation of Turkish forms eventually led to changes in some American customs and practices: this was the ‘Orientalization’ of the Occident. Instead of deepening the binary concept of Orient versus Occident, which the Orientalist rhetoric in essence emphasizes, the process rather suggests a rapprochement between the two. The concepts of “terrible Turk” and “Turk to emulate and identify with” coexisted in an ambivalent atmosphere of multivalent cross-cultural contacts.

CHAPTER 2

Turquerie in American Interior Decorations

Late nineteenth century houses in America seem to display a “cosmopolitan domesticity, both in urban and rural areas”³⁸ In the midst of American commercial and industrial growth, millionaires proliferated and thousands of large houses were built. The capitalist consolidation went hand in hand with “domestic eclecticism.”³⁹ The newly rich householders communicated an enthusiasm for imported goods and styles comprising a large gamut, such as English dining room, Spanish music room, Flemish library, French drawing room and Oriental ballroom. The general designation “Oriental” stands in contrast to the specific ones of “French,” or “Flemish,” nonetheless, the creation of these rooms suggests the process of identification with various cultures at an imaginary level. There was some fantasy involved in the decoration of all these different rooms. In some ways by having all these different rooms as part of the domestic domain, one can think of them creating the “world,” and including the “Orient” in it. For Americans there were various reasons to replicate Oriental/Turkish motives and designs in their houses as well as in their public buildings, which I explore in this chapter.

³⁸ Kristin Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream, 1865-1920,” in *The American Historical Review*, 107:1, February 2002, 57. In rural areas we can think of Olana or Biltmore.

³⁹ Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 7, 259.

In American interiors of the nineteenth century I concentrate on the Ottoman/Turkish space. Instead of a few pieces scattered in the potpourri of cosmopolitan tastes, such as a few Turkish accessories, one or two “love seats,” or a Turkish rug on the floor, my focus will be on rooms that created virtually an Ottoman interior, by which I mean at least a substantial part of the room, such as a corner or the entire room decorated with Oriental themes, where the Turkish accent was more discernible.⁴⁰ I believe that such an extended appropriation of Turkish elements in American daily life necessitated deeper engagement and multivalent identifications with the other culture. Americans lived in Oriental settings they created, both in their public and private realms. While discussing designs and functions of these spaces I will illustrate complex cross-cultural layers, which could not be confined solely to the boundaries of exoticism whether explained as an ephemeral “obsession”⁴¹ or a “wicked vision of pleasure.”⁴²

Brief Guideline on Turkish Interiors in America

My research on contemporaneous periodicals and newspapers covers the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1920. For my research on American interiors, inspired by *turquerie*, I found articles starting in 1870s and culminating in 1890s. They reveal that the concept of the Orient conflates

⁴⁰ For example I did not include Henry Lippett House of Providence, Rhode Island, one of the most opulently decorated mansions of the period, since it had just one Turkish S-shaped conversation chair, also called the “love-seat.” Elizabeth Agee Cogswell, “Henry Lippett House of Providence, Rhode Island,” *Chicago Journals, Winterthur Portfolio*, 17:4, Winter 1982, 226.

⁴¹ John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*

⁴² *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures, Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, ed. Holly Edwards, Princeton, NJ and Oxfordshire, UK: Princeton University Press, 2000.

not only the Ottoman, Turkish, Arab, Persian, Syrian, Egyptian and Moorish styles⁴³ but also embraces a much variegated notion of Chinese, Japanese and Indian. As a result, turquerie in interior decoration often combined all of them. Even though periodicals of the period do not distinguish one from the other, they nonetheless mention distinctively Turkish/Ottoman themes both in texts and images. Those definitions may be different from twentieth-century art historians' categorization: for example the Montana Club could be classified as the Moorish style with its prominent horse-shoe shaped arches on the mantle, whereas it was labeled as a Turkish room, which I will discuss in more detail in the chapter. In my textual and formal analyses of turquerie, I let the periodicals of the period speak for themselves, by which I mean that I continue to use the designations that were used in nineteenth-century America. It is important to keep in mind that, except for Morocco, many Arab lands -from Tunisia in the western North Africa to Syria and Iraq in the Levant- were under the rule of the Ottomans, even though the grip of the sultan was very loose in some cases. Thus, projecting twentieth-century notions of nation-states onto American interior decorations would not reflect the nineteenth-century perceptions.

Definition of Turquerie in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals

Turkish interiors in America bear many similarities with the Ottoman pavilion displayed at the world's exposition in Chicago: upholstered sofas running around the walls, rugs covering almost totally the floor, draperies on walls, doors and ceilings. These essential outlines of Turkish style were used both in private and public interiors. The

⁴³ Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, "Collecting the Orient at the MET," *Ars Orientalis*, 30:2000, 75.

piece de resistance of the furnishings was the canopy divan.⁴⁴ It was a long and wide seat covered with rugs, or the light *Kishkelim*⁴⁵ drapery fabric. In luxurious versions silk upholstery could also be used. Divans were often raised upon a floor and had several cushions to lean against. The style of a divan may be slightly modified from instance to instance, yet its indispensable feature were the pillows of various sizes and styles ceaselessly strewn upon it. Rugs or finely embroidered fabric could be used in their decoration.⁴⁶ Sometimes chairs and sofas were converted into divan style, whose essential feature was having no visible framework by upholstering them completely (Fig.3-4). Circle divans were also popular both in private and public spaces. The Leland Stanford Mansion, in San Francisco, had circle divans in its Music and Art Room (Fig.5). Floors were covered with either fine Turkish or Persian rugs: besides Ushak/Turkey, the Persian rugs of Charbagh, Shirvan, and Shiraz embellished Turkish interiors.⁴⁷ Drapery was another imperative of the Turkish design, whether on walls, doors or ceilings. The canopy on doors was called portiere which could be formed of either rugs or an

⁴⁴ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 22:1, Apr. 1893, 27-30.

⁴⁵ Kishkelim: kilim or kelim is a type of rug produced by tightly interweaving the warp and weft strands to get a flat surface with no pile as in other carpets. They are often not as durable and expensive as pile rugs.

⁴⁶ Laura B. Starr, "Turkish Gold Embroidery," *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 27:4, Jan. 1896, 111-112. According to her, cushions looked "very handsome when thrown up in heavy gold thread."

⁴⁷ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, described the Turkish style in those lines in its several issues. The magazine, the first journal of interior design started in New York City in 1882 and was in publication until 1898. Its objective was to be a high quality trade paper and its target audience was architects, interior decorators, shop owners, manufacturers and salesmen in the trade. Competing magazines at the time were *American Architect*, *Builder and Wood Worker*, and *Carpet Trade and Review*. The mission of the magazine was to educate the public in modern design and taste. *Decorator and Furnisher* enjoyed its greatest circulation in 1888 with 9,100 subscriptions and the decline accelerated with the Panic of 1893. With declining subscriptions, *Decorator and Furnisher* shifted its target audience to be more mass market, but never caught on with the public while at the same time losing its professional audience the key interior magazines of the period. Later *The House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* followed its course. Kathryn Dethier, *Journal of Interior Design*, 17:1, 1991, 37-42.

embroidered fabric from Istanbul, Broussa,⁴⁸ Bagdad or Damascus (Fig.6). According to Sameul J. Dornsife, who studied in detail the American hangings of the nineteenth century, authentic Turkish rugs were brought home by travelers from the East and also imported in great quantities for use in portieres; prayer carpets were hung on walls and doors. This craze for Turkish designs was typical of the eclectic taste of the late nineteenth century. During that period the “Turkomania” and exuberance for Japanese designs were constant whereas designs of Gothic, Elizabethan and Jacobean derivation continued to appear and disappear.⁴⁹ Another important feature to notice was the canopy above the divan; it was draped in multiple folds and particularly supported by Eastern spears.

A Turkish interior was mixed with wide-spans of Oriental styles: stained glass of Moorish design could beautify the windows; the draped ceiling often had a Moorish lamp suspended from its center.⁵⁰ There was no reason why an assortment of the finest down-filled Turkish, Persian, Japanese or Indian embroidered cushions could not be combined on the sofa. Finely embroidered Chinese robes could also form a backdrop to the divan. A Damascus side table inlaid with ivory, or mother-in-pearl, decorated on top with Cairene brass tray and Turkish coffee set often completed the setting. Intricately carved wooden panel separators, whether Syrian, Egyptian or Indian, often ornamented Turkish rooms.⁵¹ People mixed and matched their interior quarters in the nineteenth century,

⁴⁸ Broussa or as called today Bursa. Being on the lucrative Silk Road, it became one of the largest centers of silk trade both in the Byzantine and Ottoman periods and produced fine silk fabrics.

⁴⁹Samuel J. Dornsife, “Design Sources For Nineteenth-Century Window Hangings,” *Chicago Journal, Winterthur Portfolio*, 10:1975, 73-74.

⁵⁰ “An Interior in the Turkish Style,” in *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 25:1, Oct. 1894, 16.

⁵¹ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 24:5, Aug. 1894, 191.

sometimes not through separate theme rooms, but intermingling different styles in one room. One of the most unrestrained mishmashes of styles was revealed in a “Japanese Tea Room,” which combined Japanese features with a Cairene lattice work, and a divan two to three feet in width placed on a dais.⁵² The recess was covered with a prayer rug, the divan with soft rugs, and pillows of different sizes with the Oriental embroidery (Fig.7).

Different Ways of Identification with the Orient and Orientals: Beyond the Wicked Vision of Pleasure

Bachelor Apartments and Harem Fantasies

Often the Orientalizing buildings and interiors in Victorian America were associated with the symbolic meaning of pleasure and voluptuous delights.⁵³ The salient examples of Turkish interiors that could fit into the description of “wicked pleasures” were bachelor apartments, especially in New-York city. Bachelor apartments described by Frank Chafee⁵⁴ and W. R. Bradshaw⁵⁵ delineate very similar interiors, conveying the luxuriousness and male fantasies associated with an Ottoman harem in the Western world. Bradshaw described two separate apartments belonging to two wealthy men, Thomas M. Turner and George A. Kessler. Bradshaw’s description of Kessler’s Arabian

⁵² A platform raised above the floor of the apartment.

⁵³ John Maas, *The Victorian Home in America*, New-York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1972, 101. His analysis does not only include the private interiors, but extend to theaters, clubs, hotels, synagogues. Yet his conclusion points out only the Oriental pleasure and romance.

⁵⁴ Frank Chafee, “Bachelor Bits,” *The Home-Maker*, 1: Feb. 1899, 354 quoted in Kristin Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity,” 70.

⁵⁵ W. R. Bradshaw’s articles are the following: “A New-York Bachelor’s Apartments,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 22:6, Sep. 1893, 212-214 and “Mr. George A. Kessler’s Bachelor Apartments,” *The Decorator and Furnisher* 25:6, Mar. 1895, 207-211.

Room betrays typical traits of an Oriental interior, which could be easily called a Turkish style: a divan occupies the entire side of the room; it is upholstered with finely woven Oriental rugs; the walls are deftly decorated with panels of woven tapestry; a tent-like canopy frames the divan from above (Fig.8). All three bachelor apartments are described as sensuous places. The journalist Chafee admiringly compares a New-York banker's Turkish room to the harem of the pasha.⁵⁶ Its walls were bedecked with tapestries "representing Eastern dancing girls in the most luxurious attitudes." Beside the door stood a life-size nude statue of an odalisque. Kessler's parlor also discloses similar features with the most elegant divans and easy chairs. The most conspicuous object in the parlor was the half-sized figure in white marble of The Ballet Girl. One of sea-shells illustrated the beautiful figure of Venus born through the water, with two pearls forming her breasts. Mr. Turner's apartment welcomes visitors with Turkey-red tapestry hanging the walls and a tent-form drapery suspending from the ceiling of the hall. The center of the ceiling drapery was ornamented by images of Cupids. The reception room was dim with soft lights radiating from the many brass Moorish lamps. Opposite the doorway were two windows. A tapestry panel representing "Flora After the Bath" covered the space between these two windows. The floor space below this panel and the adjoining windows were filled with an immense Turkish divan, some twelve feet in length, covered with saddle-bag upholstery and piled up with embroidered cushions. The office room of Mr. Turner's apartment had a fire-place, "the breast" of which was decorated with thirteenth-century armor and weapons. Interestingly enough his sleeping bed was also a

⁵⁶ Robertson contextualizes the trend in a wider perspective while describing the decorative schemes of smoking rooms in 1880s and 1890s: "Ostensibly Turkish harem girls, Japanese courtesans, or nubile Indian maidens were subservient to the dictates and pleasure of their masculine masters." Cheryl Robertson, "Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle-Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective," *Chicago Journal, Winterthur Portfolio*, 26:2/3, Summer-Autumn 1991, 137.

sumptuous divan in the Turkish style. The wall above the bed was decorated with a painted tapestry of a reclining female figure playing with a bird, apparently reproducing “one of the masterpieces of French art entitled “After the Nap” (Fig.9). Exotic reveries were offered by these Turkish dens. Fantasies of eroticized women were supplemented with symbols of men’s strength and potency. Bachelors’ nests coalesced the imagination of beautiful, erotic and submissive woman with a strong and powerful man. The intersection of such a fantasy may imply the appropriation of Eastern women, and at the same time Western men’s willingness to emulate the Oriental male potency and vigor.

American Tycoons’ Turkish Rooms and Identification with the Absolute Power and Strength of an Ottoman Sultan

The second half of the nineteenth century was the *gilded age*, corresponding to an era of rapid economic growth. “Following the Civil War, between 1870 and 1900, the national wealth rose from \$30,400 million to \$126,700 million. By 1914 it had doubled again, reaching \$254,200 million. A select but a growing group of industrial entrepreneurs controlled this extraordinary capitalist expansion.⁵⁷ The accumulation of capital produced super-rich house owners. Three prominent American tycoons used Turkish features in their sumptuous mansions: Mr. August A. Busch, vice-president and general manager of the Anheuser-Busch Brewing Association, Mr. Jay Gould, the railroad developer and financier, and Mr. Leland Stanford, president of the Central Pacific Railroad, and the founder of the Stanford University. Rather than carrying harem fantasy themes, their interiors reflected their desire to associate themselves with the absolute power, strength and the privileged position of the Ottoman sultan.

⁵⁷ Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 10.

Mr. Jay Gould's mansion was on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Seventh Street, a few blocks below the Vanderbilt mansion in New-York. He combined many European, Near and Far Eastern elements in his house. He replicated Ottoman sultan's bedroom and used a perfect Turkish divani to sleep on.⁵⁸ Mr. Bush, in his residence in St. Louis built up an Oriental hunting room. Its beauty, richness and specificity in details are described "as conceded without a parallel in the country."⁵⁹ The article states that Mr. Busch spent a considerable amount of \$4,000 in fitting up his hunting room.⁶⁰ The Oriental silk curtains, an attractive divan, the cushions covered with antique rugs, and jeweled lamps, were the typical traits of this room.

Among the furniture is a magnificent Turkish divan, covered with rare *Kelims*. This divan as well as the corner seat and recess, are also covered with any number of handsomely embroidered cushions... There are also several small tabourettes, with finest of pearl inlay, all of which were especially imported for this room from Constantinople. In addition, there are three handsome large chairs, covered with fine Shirvan *Kelims*, while any number of choice hassocks and ottomans are scattered promiscuously around the room⁶¹ (Fig.10-12).

Other attractive features of the room were a rare collection of antique swords, scabbards, an old Arab pistol, an old Persian shield, battle axes and old Turkish gun inlaid with ivory. In this exclusive collection only the age of the Turkish gun was pointed out; it was supposed to be nearly 300 years old. Such exclusive antique weaponry could be originally produced for a princely usage in battles and conquests. The luxuriousness of

⁵⁸ "Residence of Jay Gould," *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 2:4, Jul. 1883, 131. For Turkish divans' usage as beds see Frederick Von Schraeder, "Artistic Flat Furnishing," *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 24:1, Apr. 1894, 28.

⁵⁹ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 29:5, Feb. 1897, 134-135.

⁶⁰ If we consider that in 1908 a small house could be purchased under \$1,000, a good-sized brick house in a large city for \$6,000- \$15,000, this was a handsome amount of money to spend for one room. Figures are from Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect*, 123.

⁶¹ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 29:5, Feb. 1897, 134-135.

the room was equivalent to a sultan's palace. The periodical mentioned that on entering the room one imagined himself in a Sultan's palace. Identification with the strength and power of the Ottoman sultan comes into prominence. In different ways, they both rule the world.

During 1875 and 1876, Leland Stanford, president of the Central Pacific Railroad, built in San Francisco one of the country's largest and most opulent mansions, which unfortunately burned to the ground in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.⁶² The California's railroad king hired New York based decorating firm, Pottier and Symus, to erect his dream house, which reflected a real cosmopolitan taste. The iconographic scheme of the first floor of his majestic residence manifests a plethora of styles from the French old regime, classical antiquity, the Renaissance, European baroque, to Indian and Turkish (Fig.13). There were two main rooms devoted entirely to the Oriental mode, Indian and Turkish, which served as a reception room and dining room respectively. Both were designed to entertain guests as semi-private places, and to advertise strongly the wealth, power and personality of the owner. The crimson dining room evoked the feeling of a different locale, that of Turkey, through a mixture of Islamic and classical references. The carpet was Turkish; the upholstery for the chairs was made in Istanbul. Arabesques were painted on the walls and ceiling⁶³ (Fig.14). Such an ostentatious style needed the exuberant princely fortune, as explained by the nineteenth-century writer Harriet Prescott

⁶² Diana Strazdes, "The Millionaire's Palace: Leland Stanford's Commission for Pottier & Stymus, in San Francisco, *Chicago Journals WinterthurPortfolio*, 36:4, Winter 2001, 213-243.

⁶³ Diana Strazdes, "The Millionaire's Palace: Leland Stanford's Commission for Pottier & Stymus, in San Francisco, *Chicago Journals WinterthurPortfolio*, 36:4, Winter 2001, 227.

Spofford.⁶⁴ For her both the Pompeian style, and the Moorish style fit for festal life, luxury, the enjoyment of wealth, ease and beauty. Both of them were sumptuous and sensuous, and only very few privileged wealthy could afford to adopt it.⁶⁵ Extravagant styles, that only a few Americans could afford, referred to the owner's privileged status in the society. The emulation of Turkish styles distinguished one's privileged and princely status in the society.

Diana Strazdes points out that two types of symbolic messages were at work within the Stanford mansion:

The dining room incorporated the conventional references to abundance and reminders of the ancient heritage of hunt and harvest. The drawing room, reception room, and library continued the semiotic role associated with parlors, where residents displayed books, arts, and memorabilia from travel as symbols of their moral, intellectual and cultural development. A second type of symbolic imagery emulated that of palaces. The rooms on the first floor suggested the kingdoms and empires of the past and present: ancient Rome, the Ottoman Empire, India, Louis XIV's France and Flanders.⁶⁶

Stanford, in this framework, draws parallel with the hegemonic powers, including the Ottoman Empire, to pronounce his material power and richness. His hegemony – whether material, cultural or social- resembles that of rulers of the past and present. Stanford does not make any difference whether the ruler was from the West or the East, as long as he could be associated with the absolute power.

⁶⁴ She published twenty-seven articles on household furniture in the weekly *Harper's Bazaar* in 1876 which became the basis of her book *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture*, New-York: Harper and Brothers, 1878.

⁶⁵ Harriet Prescott Spofford, "The Pompeian," in *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture*, New-York: Harper and Brothers, 1878, 131-137; "The Moorish," in *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture*, New-York: Harper and Brothers, 1878, 141-147.

⁶⁶ Diana Strazdes, "The Millionaire's Palace: Leland Stanford's Commission for Pottier & Stymus, in San Francisco, *Chicago Journals WinterthurPortfolio*, 36:4, Winter 2001, 236-237.

Ambivalent Rhetorics of Identification/Dis-Identification

The emulation in affluent houses would distinguish and promote one's status among the wealthy and rich. Yet the process of identification with Eastern ruler takes us to the core of ambivalent rhetorics. Stanford did not seem to make a distinction between Eastern and Western rulers since he was interested in projecting himself on the trajectory of their hegemony. The Ottoman sultans, nonetheless, were portrayed in the West as despotic, not establishing proper models for Westerners. Nebahat Avcioglu explains that labeling the Ottomans as "despots" corresponded to the formation of national identities in Europe, in relation to the Ottoman Empire, in the seventeenth century. Formation of national identities necessitated the demarcation between us and them.⁶⁷ The sultan as a despot had a great power, richness, and women at his disposal. At the same time he was the master in all things that Victorian men yearned for. One wonders though whether they imagined themselves as conquerors of the Orient, or as Oriental conquerors. In American households the weaponry decorating the walls, or canopies suspended by means of a spear, could signify both identification/emulation and dis-identification/denigration. They may refer to sultan's weaponry and by which may implement his rule over the world.⁶⁸ At the same time they may represent trophies of conquest by Western men of Oriental territories, and culture.

⁶⁷ Nebahat Avcioglu, "Ahmed I and the Allegories of Tyranny in the Frontispiece to George Sandys's "Relation of a Journey,"" *Muqarnas*, 18:2001, 205.

⁶⁸ Emma Thacker Kate, "An Oriental Interior," *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 24:2, May 1894, 52. She thinks that canopies suspended with spears over divans were symbols of an Arab/Turkish tent in which the victor in a foray retired after the battle.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans yearned to escape the highly artificial and rapid Western life-styles and sought to idealize the comfort and luxury of the Orient as a refuge. They wanted to be dissolved into the mystical luxury of the Arabian Nights in their private corners.⁶⁹ Even though both European and American life were described in the contemporary periodical as a state of continual evolution toward the higher and more artistic ideals, it was wearing out people. “The great majority of the successful are the victims of overwork and worry.”⁷⁰ “The busy American, when he reaches home...desires a luxurious retreat....Does the Italian Renaissance and French styles of the eighteenth century, the Chippendale and Colonial styles give us that peace of mind and repose” asks one reporter⁷¹. The reply was that the luxuriousness and restfulness of Oriental furnishings were unmatched. In contrast to such portrayals, sometimes the Oriental luxury was associated with the legendary decadence of Sardanapalus⁷² or described as “the barbaric splendors of the Saracens.”⁷³

Even Oriental artifacts had their own ambivalent rhetorics. Eastern artifacts were often praised for their high quality of craftsmanship, with their intricate patterns, harmonious colors. The furnishings, whether Moorish, Hindou or Japanese, were made according to precedent, and often their imitation in the West produced garish results since Western artists did not have similar backgrounds.⁷⁴ Furnishings fashioned by Eastern

⁶⁹ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 22:1, Apr. 1893, 27-30.

⁷⁰ Emma Tracker Kate, “An Oriental Interior,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 24:2, May 1894, 51-52.

⁷¹ Emma Tracker Kate, “Moorish and Japanese Interiors,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 23:4, June 1894, 130-132.

⁷² *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 23:5, Feb. 1894, 179.

⁷³ Frederick Von Schraeder, *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 24:1, Apr. 1894, 28.

⁷⁴ Emma Tracker Kate, “An Oriental Interior,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 24:2, May 1894, 51-52.

people imparted the greatest amount of harmony and restfulness. “In too many of the modern Turkish and East Indian rooms of the present day the effort has been to reproduce the bold, brilliant effects of prismatic colors, so successfully brought about by the primitive artisan of the Far East, the result, unquestionably, of a close and constant study of Nature, but as a rule, when attempted by modern decorators, results in a crude, garish and unrestful conglomeration of reds, blues, yellows.”⁷⁵ At the same time very slow-going and languorous people characterized the East, to whom machinery was not a necessity,⁷⁶ thereby they were unable to accomplish progress like the Westerners. By their nature they were condemned to be backward.

Eastern harems were also situated at a paradoxical cross-section. In the West, harems were often criticized as symbols of women’s degradation and seclusion in male-dominated Oriental societies. The beautiful and submissive reclining odalisque stood as one of the main signifiers of Islamic cultures and societies in the West. Yet in bachelor apartments harem women were conquered and reenacted as part of male fantasies, and highly praised as an interior style in contemporaneous periodicals.

Turkish Interiors as Male Spaces

The hunting rooms, bedrooms or bachelors’ apartments, decorated by Turkish schemes, were typical male spaces, reverberating the new masculinity of the gilded age. The rapid industrial growth and urbanization, in the second half of the nineteenth century had created a new age, and altered the definition of masculinity in the United States. In

⁷⁵ “The Star Theater, New-York,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 27:6, Mar. 1896, 169-170.

⁷⁶ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 25:1, Oct. 1894, 16.

the traditional, agrarian society, manhood had meant autonomy and self-control, but in the new era, fewer and fewer American men owned their own shops, controlled their own labor, and owned their own farms.⁷⁷ As the old image of self-made man started shattering, the entrance of new groups (women, blacks, new immigrants) into the competitive labor market aggravated further the situation for native-born white Americans. As a result the gender identity in terms of manliness had to be redefined. The manhood, against these threats, was constructed on the exclusion of these new groups through antifeminism, racism and nativism, as if this way the gender identity of manliness could be preserved. As Kimmel observed, sexuality became an increasingly important signifier of manliness in the new Gilded Age. “As women, immigrants and black men invaded men’s spheres, masculinity was experienced as increasingly difficult to prove. Sexuality emerged as a central element of American manhood. Middle-class men conceived of their desire for women as one of the hallmarks of a real man.”⁷⁸

The traditional emphasis on controlling one’s desire toward women was replaced by a new display of desire for women. Harem fantasies of bachelors’ apartments were an attempt to recover the threatened masculinity of the newly rich men in the industrialized age. They validated themselves through sexual domination of harem women, and by extension all women. As contemporaneous periodicals revealed the bachelors were mainly the bankers, not the owners of the business, but top managers of new financial corporations. The managers, white-collar salaried employees were particularly hard hit by

⁷⁷ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America, A Cultural History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd Edition, 2012, 62.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 74. The prominence of sexuality in defining new boundaries of manhood in the second half of the nineteenth century, is also explained by Bret E. Carroll, the Editor of *American Masculinities, A Historical Encyclopedia*, Thousand Oaks, CA, London, UK: Sage Publications, 2003, 234.

these newly gendered anxieties.⁷⁹ To find their rung upon the social ladder, and still maintain the sense of manhood, they reflected harem fantasies in their interiors. Both for captains of industries and middle-class managers, achievement of wealth and success established the eroding manhood, threatened by the rapid changes of the industrialized age. For captains of industry, the situation was slightly different since most Americans ranked well below them. As alpha males of the society, their interiors were designed to reverberate their hegemonic power in the society.

Since Turkish interiors were typical male spaces, they were rarely discussed in ladies' magazines, unlike Turkish baths. Only by the end of the century were Turkish corners promoted as girls' rooms, or boudoirs for women. Still in their versions for young females they carried many male features, such as spearheads suspending draperies.⁸⁰ (Fig.15-16). There were a few rich women who created their own spaces. Mrs. Joseph Keppler's apartment in New-York was one of these examples, using turquerie in her private space.⁸¹ (Fig.17). She was a rich widow, and her apartment could have reflected the taste of her deceased husband. Despite the few rich women and their involvement in decoration, the domestic spaces were usually associated with the personality, character

⁷⁹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 77.

⁸⁰ Alice F. Maynor, "Pretty Corners in Girls' Rooms," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, 15:10, Sep.1898, 15. The Turkish style was advised for another female space, for a boudoir, by another contemporary periodical, *The Art Amateur*. It mentioned that people liked to read about imaginary rooms. In one of those imaginary of the house descriptions the Turkish style was designated for the boudoir. The walls were covered with repousse paper, imitating Turkish embroidery, the window was ornamented with arabesque designs. A divan couch was made of one large cushion for a base, and several smaller ones on top. Several Turkish ottomans, a low, small table covered by a Turkish brass tray for tea and coffee, a Turkish stool and bookcase and a small fountain in the center were to complete the Turkish atmosphere. "Some Imaginary Rooms," *The Art Amateur*, 1:4, Sep. 1879, 77-78.

⁸¹ Ada Crisp, "The Home of Mrs. Joseph Keppler," *NewYork Times*, July 11, 1897, 8

and virtues of male owner.⁸² Houses reflected the owners' sense of themselves and their place in the world, and the styles they opted projected their identity to the outside world.⁸³ Cheryl Robertson reveals that only after World War I did women create middle-class domiciles as a female domain, made up in the feminine image of its mistress.⁸⁴ The affluent men with Oriental tastes were championed to be wealthy, powerful, intellectual, cultured, fine, and also the trendy modern men. They had a cosmopolitan taste in creating their private corners of luxury and leisure. Their apartments were proof that "art is world-wide and that many minded men of modern times is willing to accept art products of any kind at their intimate worth."⁸⁵ Interestingly enough though Oriental spaces were touted as suitable for men they were often defined by feminine attributes such as smooth, curved, beautiful and picturesque. This was in contrast with the average American furniture which was hard, boxy and rectangular.⁸⁶ The Eastern products were irregular yet delightful.

In addition to domestic places, Turkish corners or rooms were also applied during that period in public buildings, such as the Montana Club, in Helena, the Star Theater, on Broadway, and the Waldorf Hotel, in New-York. Even though only the Montana Club

⁸² Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect*, 70-71. He also points out that at that time "a house might be described as "sincere," "charming," "masculine," "suave," "demure," "plain-talking." A "feminine" character was not among these vague attributes, also alluding to the fact that the domestic architecture was a male space.

⁸³ Clive Aslet made a similar statement following his analysis of Biltmore and Olana. Clive Aslet, *The American Country House*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990, 47.

⁸⁴ Cheryl Robertson, "Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle-Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective," *Chicago Journal, Winterthur Portfolio*, 26:2/3, Summer-Autumn 1991, 141. 123-141.

⁸⁵ W. R. Bradshaw , "A New-York Bachelor's Apartments," 212-214.

⁸⁶ *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 25:1, Oct. 1894, 16. For some men the overall 'feminization' of American culture was of great concern during that period.

was an exclusive male space, and the other two were open to women, they could be considered as basic male spaces, since they were designed in essence as smoking-rooms for high-end clientele. They betrayed also the basic features of private male spaces.

The Montana Club advertised its Turkish room for its sense of ease and repose.⁸⁷ It used sumptuous pillows and costly furniture coverings, silk window hangings to convey the comfort and luxury to its clients (Fig.18-19). The Star Theater, on Broadway, New York must have been one of the most extravagant theaters in the city. In 1890s it was remodeled. Besides luxurious decoration its auditorium was one of the most spacious ones of the period. “To this end no less than one hundred and fifty seats have been left out from the usual number on the floor of a house of this capacity to make extra elbow and knee room to assure the comfort of its visitors.”⁸⁸ The orchestra was sunk below the level of the floor of the house, thus offering no obstacle to the eye. The boxes and galleries were richly decorated. Its decor combined the “dignity” of the classical style and the “luxury” of the Orient. Besides, only few theaters in New-York could offer to their “patrons” the comfort and the richness of effect of a Turkish smoking room as The Star Theater did (Fig.20). The result at the Turkish smoking-room was a delightful harmony which led to “sumptuous restfulness and repose.”

Another lavish “Turkish salon” was at the Waldorf Hotel, in New-York. The hotel was an iconic establishment for a high-end clientele (Fig.21). Similar to Stanford’s mansion in California, the hotel manifested a plethora of styles in its interior decoration,

⁸⁷ “The Montana Club,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 25:6, Mar. 1895, 215-217. Despite its Moorish style arches on the mantle, the room was called on the illustration as Turkish room.

⁸⁸ “The Star Theater, New-York,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 27:6, Mar. 1896, 169-170.

thereby reflecting a cosmopolitan taste from all over the world. Arched walls with intricately designed patterns, luxuriously upholstered sofas, tent-like hanging canopy, a divan with a profusion of cushions, ivory inlaid wooden side-tables used as a Turkish coffee table, embellished the Turkish salon of the Waldorf-Astoria. The effects of color in the room were particularly praised and the delightful combination of kaleidoscopic colors was recommended to be studied and learned by Western artists.⁸⁹

Even though the Turkish style was used in affluent spaces, cheaper versions were also advertised in the 1890s. The middle class, with draped corners and piled cushions on the divan, mimicked the wealthy (Fig.22). The Turkish corner in the New-York studio of the painter J. Wells Champney in the 1880's illustrates one of these modestly decorated rooms (23). The painter William Merritt's home near Southampton, Long Island, depicted by the artist himself, portraying in it his wife and a visitor, is not titled as a Turkish corner, but the upholstered sofas running around the walls creating an airy room betrays Turkish features of modest quality⁹⁰ (Fig.24).

Turkish Interiors and Orientalization

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Turkish touches were part of the broader enthusiasm for foreign design. These new forms brought also new habits to the American society. The divans often served as places for drinking tea or thick black coffee out of small cups, as well as smoking nargileh. The roomy divans also implied changes in one's sitting position. Instead of properly or primly putting one's toes on the floor, which

⁸⁹ W. G. Mitchell, "The Hotel Waldorf-Astoria, New York," *The American Architect and Building News* (1876-1908), 60:1162, 2 Apr. 1898, 3.

⁹⁰ John Maas, *The Victorian Home*, 178.

would have constrained one's sitting at the very edge of a divan, one was compelled to take off its shoes and sit on one's foot. In Western tradition such a stance was perceived as a poor manner. Yet in some cases instead of an ordinary Western posture, the more comfortable oriental stance had to be adapted.⁹¹

Coda

America's experience of *turquerie* was different than Europeans, and it cannot be reduced to its desire to appropriate and control another culture. Oriental interiors in America reflected the desire to transcend the national boundaries and espouse cosmopolitan tastes. The integration of America into global politics and economy may have necessitated cosmopolitan consumers. Moreover, unlike Europe, at the turn of the nineteenth century despite several attempts to restrict immigration America was still a melting pot, receiving huge numbers of immigrants. High mobility and transiency of America differentiated it from the European cultures, which may have facilitated the development of cosmopolitan tastes. "Eclecticism in one of its meanings points to variety, diversity, and cultural pluralism –familiar conditions in America's democratic melting pot."⁹² The continuous fusion blended peoples, cultures, races within the US (as opposed to 'without' in Europe), which may have facilitated the adoption of foreign forms and customs. In this sense the adoption of Turkish forms does not only espouse wicked pleasures, or the desire to rule the other, but also incorporate in itself a receptivity

⁹¹ "How to Sit on a Divan," *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 19:1, Oct. 1891, 8. Kristin L. Hoganson suggests that the Oriental way of sitting may be a way of liberating American woman, overcoming her primness and old prejudices. In this case, the Oriental interior is not a place of oppression on women but a locus of generating her liberation. Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 31.

⁹² Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House*, 259.

to other people and cultures. Yet this receptivity functioned through a paradoxical process of idealization and denigration.

CHAPTER 3

Turkish Baths

Introduction of Turkish Baths: Beyond the Clichéd Rhetorics of Pleasure and Voluptuous Delights

The advertisement “Hamмам After the Baths” characterized a Turkish bath in San Francisco, in the nineteenth century (Fig. 25). It portrays a nicely curved, semi-naked body of an Oriental female beauty, reclined comfortably on a divan. Two attendants – one a black boy, the other a fair skinned lady of probably the Circassian origin- remind us of harem women as conceptualized in the West: beautiful and submissive. While exposing herself to the voyeuristic male gazes of Victorian America, she epitomizes the luxury and pleasure associated with the Orient: she is about to sip the Turkish coffee and puff on the nargileh. The red color prominently used on the surface of the trade card, and the red necklace, which is the sole ornament on her bare torso, emphasizing both her beauty and nudity, was called the ‘Turkish red’ in the period. The color thereby associates her in the American perception with the Ottoman harem woman. Such an advertisement on Turkish baths would fit perfectly into the mainstream of the Oriental discourse. Yet like the interiors, Turkish baths in the nineteenth-century America, encompassed many rhetorics, and went also beyond such symbolic clichéd meanings. My perusal of American periodicals and newspapers reveals that Turkish baths were initiated in nineteenth-century America mainly by a very special group of entrepreneurs: physicians and doctors. They introduced these institutions as curative and cleaning agents beneficial to all social groups in the society.

Turkish baths were introduced to America in 1860s, a decade earlier than Turkish interiors. Since the initial rhetoric of Turkish baths was different from that of Turkish interiors, they pursued a different trajectory: unlike Turkish decorations they did not initially target affluent people per se, and tended to embrace both poor and wealthy people. The idea of public well being, rather than that of private comfort and luxury was frequently used at their inception. They followed also an opposite direction compared to interiors, going from public to private spaces. Turkish baths were championed, not mainly as male spaces as were interiors, but also as spaces for women and even children. They became often subjects of American ladies' magazines of the late nineteenth century whereas Turkish interiors and styles were rarely covered by them.

The first Turkish bath project was initiated by Christopher Oscanyan in 1855 in New-York without much resonance. He was an Armenian Ottoman, educated in New York University, and later in 1868 was appointed as the first Ottoman consulate in New York⁹³. Oscanyan wrote to the editor of the *New York Observer and Chronicle*, describing the benefits of Turkish baths, which were to appear in his forthcoming book. He criticized conditions of existing baths in New York and urged the editor to appeal to the public for the construction of a genuine one in the city.⁹⁴ In 1861, he again pushed the same subject in the media. *The New York Times*, *The Scientific American* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* all announced the forthcoming project of a Turkish bath in New-

⁹³ "The First Turkish Consulate in New-York City," *Turk of America*, Jan.05,2009, http://www.turkofamerica.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=439

⁹⁴ Nebahat Avcioglu, *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1728-1876*, Farnham, Surrey, England and Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 225.

York which was to be managed by Prof. Oscanyan, a native of Constantinople.⁹⁵ His second attempt also failed as explained in the contemporaneous journal: “In the year 1861, C. Oscanyan, our present Turkish Consul, attempted to start the Bath in New York City on a large scale. But, though he secured the names of many prominent New Yorkers, only a few thousand dollars were subscribed, and the enterprise failed.”⁹⁶ Meanwhile in England Turkish public baths were becoming popular “so much so that between 1856 and 1862 there appeared at least one public bath in every city in Britain.”⁹⁷ David Urquhart, a Scottish diplomat, writer, and philanthropist became a well-known figure in the promotion of Turkish baths; he launched them as places of public cleanliness and health as well as a rare institution that enable interaction among different social classes.

Urquhart’s reputation reached soon the other side of the Atlantic. In 1862 *The Saturday Review* published a detailed article on the “valuable paper” of Mr. Urquhart presented before the *Society of Arts*. The proposal of a general establishment of these baths in hospitals, applied under medical direction to cure many forms of diseases, was in principle warmly welcomed, yet Urquhart’s acclaiming of Turkish tradition over Christian practices seemed to irritate the public: “Mr. Urquhart would do more to advance the cause if he could deny himself the pleasure of exalting Turkish at the expense of Christian ways of acting and feeling. He says that Romans had abused the bath, which the Turks reformed and adopted...Turks were dirty, but reformed and cleaned themselves whereas Christians have remained so.”⁹⁸ Urquhart’s discourse

⁹⁵ Nebahat Avcioglu, *Turquerie*, 225.

⁹⁶ Chas H. Shepard, “The Turkish Bath,” *Oneida Circular*, 12:27, July 5 1875, 213.

⁹⁷ Nebahat Avcioglu, *Turquerie*, 209.

⁹⁸ “The Turkish Bath,” *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, March 15 1862, 13:333.

presented Turkish baths as multifaceted social project, even sometimes overextending their purposes: “politeness is desirable for the people of this country to learn and they may learn it at the bath.”⁹⁹

Even though the initial attempts of establishing Turkish baths in the United States were developed by an Armenian Ottoman, their flourishing could occur only after the success of similar British projects. On Turkish baths the American society emulated in principle the British model. As Avcioglu formulated, the Turkish bath came to New-York not directly from Constantinople, but via London.¹⁰⁰ Actually the first bath that the proprietor launched as the “Turkish bath” started in Boston, but since it consisted of a small hot room in which the bather sat on a stool and stood up while his body was rubbed over with a soaped cloth, it was not considered as a genuine Turkish bath. In 1863 the first authentic Turkish bath under the name of “The Hammam” was established in New-York, by Chas Shepard, a medical doctor, who was inspired by a package of pamphlets, sent to him by his friend explaining accomplishments of Turkish baths in Great Britain. In 1865 Drs. Miller, Wond and Co., succeeded in opening the second authentic Turkish bath in New York, on a much larger scale. Then genuine Turkish baths were opened outside of New York City, in Cleveland, Ohio by Dr. Steeley, in Boston and St. Louis, Mo. by Dr. Adams, and in Milwaukee, Wis., by Dr. Hanson. Later establishments on a much large scale were taken in New-York by Dr. Angel and Dr. Miller. Numerous others

⁹⁹ “The Turkish Bath,” *Saturday Review*, 300.

¹⁰⁰ Nebahat Avcioglu, *Turquerie*, 224-228.

in various parts of the country followed these examples.¹⁰¹ Initially in America physicians predominantly owned Turkish baths, and they inaugurated these establishments as therapeutic agents beneficial for all social groups, genders and even for children. Intensive perspiration at baths was described like an elixir, capable of eliminating symptoms of cold, fever, malarial poison whether in the form of dumb-ague, chills, or fever and ague. Besides physical diseases baths could be served to heal psychological breakdowns, some troubles incident to childhood.

Turkish baths were promoted in the United States as indispensable institutions of urban life. Since initial entrepreneurs were medical doctors they emphasized the curative, prophylactic, and cleansing agents of baths. With their dissemination various other luxurious functions were put forward. Doctors pointed out that if administered properly the baths could heal or prevent many physical and psychological diseases. The flow of perspiration that began in *tepidarium* increases in *caldarium* where the pleasant features of the bath could be experienced. There were roughly seven million pores opening on the surface of the skin, which functioned as “vent-holes” or “sluice gates.” If they were blocked up then the waste matter permeated the tissues of the body, entered the blood current and produced diseases of various kinds. The Turkish bath, by opening the pores, by flushing and allowing free egress to this deleterious matter, cleansed the blood of impurities, gave an impetus to the circulation, and invigorated the entire system. It could relieve a general cold and dispel the fever. It could be palliative to kidney obstructions, gall stones. The bath was the most agreeable therapeutic agent in removing poisonous

¹⁰¹ Chas H. Shepard, “The Turkish Bath,” 213. Dr. Shepard was first to introduce a genuine Turkish bath was also mentioned by Hamilton Deekens, “The Turkish Bath and Its Use as a Therapeutic Agent,” *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, 60:4, Jan.26, 1889, 105.

and effete matter from the body in one hour as opposed to other means in twenty-four hours. Persons who have attended a Turkish bath could develop a perfect immunity against catarrh, bronchitis or neuralgia. In the Turkish bath the skin acquired color, freshness, firmness and elasticity.

All care, all trouble, all anxiety, all memory of the external world and its miserable littleness is chased from our mind; our thoughts are absorbed in rapturous contemplation of the delights of the new world, the Paradise, into which we have just been admitted. The tyrant *Pain!* Even loses his miscreant power. The *toothache*, where is it gone? The *headache* disappears....the pang of *neuralgia*, of *rheumatism*, of *gout* all have fled...*This is the Calidarium, pain enters not here.*¹⁰²

The media often published individual benefits of baths such as “this single bath so soothed my nervous system,” “Oh, I feel so clean! Cleanliness comes next to godliness, because it promotes it” One of the female figures, who led “temperance meetings” and fought fiercely against the use and sale of liquor in all public places, including in some Turkish baths, was given a bath at Windsor Hotel, Chicago, and declared that “It’s the first one of the things I ever had, and I like it. I feel like new.”¹⁰³ Such stories were supported by some other medical stories; for example Dr. A. S. Douglass reported the incredible improvement of health on one of his patients who had asthmatic problem. The patient in his article was stated saying “I think the baths have done to me what medicine would not and I believe could not have done in the same, or a much greater length of time.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² A. Hamilton Deekens, “The Turkish Bath and Its Use as a Therapeutic Agent,”¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰³ “Turkish Bath Causes Joy to Smasher: Carrie Nation Says the Moslem Bathing Process is Decidedly Great,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 14, 1901, 1.

¹⁰⁴ A.S. Douglass, M.D., “The Turkish Bath: A Doctor Cured,” *The American Socialist Devoted to the Enlargement and Perfection of Home*, 2:1, Jan. 4, 1877, 5. It seems that the media till the turn of the century emphasized solely positive aspects of baths; after that the negative incidents such as heart failures or death at Turkish baths were also reported. One incident is about a lawyer, Robert Goeller, who was a

Ambivalent Rhetorics

Baths: Eastern or Western Institutions?

Besides describing baths as Turkish institutions, the media also emphasized that at the origin they were essentially adopted from the ancient Western tradition, whether Greek, Roman, Byzantine or Irish. Attending Turkish baths was in essence like finding one's own Western heritage. The "sweathouses" for example, which stood as heirlooms of ancient people, could still be found in Ireland; they functioned on the similar system of therapeutic perspiration as Turkish baths.¹⁰⁵ Although descriptions varied slightly, the Greco-Roman legacy was pointed out often and sometimes with exaggerated numbers as in the case of *Chicago Daily Tribune*. The article mentions that the Greeks had baths, but they never attained the magnificence nor the extent of those of Rome. In Greek history, both the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* describe warm baths in terms of contempt and characterized baths as "effeminate." On the contrary, the principal occupations of old Romans were bathing, eating and drinking. Two public baths of Pompeii, which were uncovered in 1824, occupied an area of 10,000 square feet. The Baths of Diocletian were 200 feet long and 100 feet wide, and included a swimming pool that could accommodate

brother-in-law of Supreme Court Justice P. H. Dugro. He lived on Brooklyn Heights, and before attending a club dinner he went to take a bath and had a heart attack there. "Dies in Turkish Bath: Fatty Degeneration of the heart Takes Lawyer Robert Goeller," *New York Times*, Apr. 10, 1910, 1. Another heart failure incident was reported in Baltimore: "Dead in Turkish Baths: Jacob Nevins of Cleveland Found in Bottom of Pool," *The Sun*, Jun. 1, 1909, 12. *The Washington Post* carried another death case, related to the murder of a wealthy customer by a black attendant, supposedly in an attempt to seize his \$1,500 worth of a diamond ring, to its front page: "Tragedy in Turkish Bath: One of St. Louis' Wealthiest Citizens Foully Dealt With," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 24, 1902, 1

¹⁰⁵ A. Hamilton Deekens, "The Turkish Bath and Its Use as a Therapeutic Agent," *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, 60:4, Jan. 26, 1889, 105

18,000 people.¹⁰⁶ A similar story, though without such exaggerated numbers could also be found in *New York Times*.¹⁰⁷ In addition to the Roman influence, Emma P. Telford pointed out the influence of Byzantine baths on the Ottomans. She mentioned the famous baths of Constantine in Constantinople, “although these baths were smaller than those of Rome, they were not less elegant,...and later they acquired the Byzantine characteristics of prodigality and gorgeousness.”¹⁰⁸ A medical periodical of the period shared the same opinion that the bath system, used in Rome, was carried by Constantine to his new capital and later became Turkish baths.¹⁰⁹ Emphasizing the Western origin of Turkish baths might have helped to adopt the unusual traditions of the ‘other,’ making the ‘unfamiliar’ more ‘familiar,’ thereby facilitating its widespread acceptance in the American society. If Turkish baths were superior to Christian practices of the period, as claimed by Urquhart, such a Western genealogy would comfort better Western minds.

Even though the Britain and America adopted Turkish style baths, they deserved the lion’s share in the current development of baths, instead of the Turks, since they were the first ones to develop them scientifically, and turn them into medically controlled therapeutic agents. The magazine argued that “our modern so-called Turkish bath, however, would be more appropriately named the ‘Anglo-American’ bath, as to this country and to England belong the honor of having first introduced the dry air system.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ “Turkish Baths,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1884, 22.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Emma Paddock Telford, “The Turkish Bath, A Social Centre of the Orient,” *Godey’s Magazine*, 134:799, Jan.1897, 63.

¹⁰⁹ A. Hamilton Deekens, “The Turkish Bath and Its Use as a Therapeutic Agent,” *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, 60:4, Jan.26, 1889, 105.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

An Idealized or Repulsive Institutions?

Usually medical doctors reviewed Turkish baths as indispensable therapeutic agents to society. Rarely hot baths were repudiated in the media as injurious and only in cases where there was a tendency to heart disease.¹¹¹ Any negative view was immediately counterbalanced with a positive one, enumerating several medical practices on both sides of the Atlantic. To the weakest heart patients two baths a day was counseled, which would result in their strengthening.¹¹² Such medical advices may have been due to many doctors' direct ventures with baths.

As one of the periodicals quoted, the crying need of the age was more bathing, getting rid of the dirt, disease breeding germs and hideous microbes settle on the skin.¹¹³

Chicago Daily Tribune epitomized women's reasons to go to Turkish baths as follows:

Fat women took baths to get thin and thin women to get fat. Plain women go there with the hope of becoming beautiful, beautiful women in order to preserve their beauty, sick women to get well, old women to look young, tired women to feel rested. Stylish women go there because it is fashionable, dainty women because it is luxurious, ordinary women because it is clean.¹¹⁴

These were highly idealized functions of baths, though they were not gender specific, and could be extended to men. Sometimes men, like women attended baths as

¹¹¹ "The Turkish Bath: Its Hygienic Effects – Opinions of Dr. Hammond," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 16, 1884, 9. In the article headvised that tepid baths, instead of hot baths, were beneficial to the majority of people. Yet negative opinions were rigorously and promptly reprimanded.

¹¹² Haskell, L P, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 24, 1884, 4. Interestingly, the reply to Dr. Hammond's negative views was published in a more prominent page, 4 as opposed to 9 on the same paper. The newspaper on Dec. 21, 1884, page 22, carried another interview with a doctor recommending the use of baths for treatment, but this is not a direct response to Dr. Hammond; nonetheless it was another supportive article.

¹¹³ "Come Join the Order of the Turkish Bath Stoics: It will Do Wonders for Your Boneless, In-Growing Figure!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1911, 14.

¹¹⁴ "Trying a Turkish Bath," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 19, 1888, 16.

beauty parlors, “a magic beautifier, rendering a dazzling complexion.”¹¹⁵ Some luxurious places offered manicures and pedicures,¹¹⁶ and such cosmetic treatments were not limited to ladies of the period, but extended also to men. Losing weight and being fit were also reasons for men to go to baths to look more handsome and sometimes to be better athletes. *Los Angeles Times* announced that Frank Chance, a famous baseball player for Angels, spent all night in a Turkish bath. “He was boiling out and getting down to [proper] weight for this week’s baseball battles with the Seals.”¹¹⁷

Articles on Turkish baths often embody paradoxical ideas, both extremely idealizing and denigrating them. While extolling the beauty of Turkish women, *The Decorator and Furnisher* refers to a supposedly Turkish proverb: “beauty is first born of the bath.” It wishes that ‘American belles’ get indoctrinated with this idea and follow the Turkish tradition.¹¹⁸ The statement may insinuate other male fantasies related to Eastern women, but in essence the encouragement of imitating the ‘other’ is relevant. The desire of following the ‘other’ as a model was often balanced or even negated by its denigration: Turks could not set a social paradigm for Americans: if ablutions made someone clean they stood for physical cleanliness since: “The Turks and Arabs have never been particularly clean in moral sense.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ In Turkish Bath Rooms: How Two Jolly Washington Girls Slay Have a Time of It,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 1889, 3. There were articles dedicated entirely to the skin health as in “The Value of the Turkish Bath for the Face,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 12, 1903, E5.

¹¹⁶ “In Turkish Bath Rooms,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 1889, 3.

¹¹⁷ “Turkish Bath May Put Chance Back on the Job,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 13, 1916, III3.

¹¹⁸ “The Modern Bath,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 10:3, June 1887, 78-79.

¹¹⁹ “Turkish Baths,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1884, 22.

Conspicuously luxurious baths, with intricate and complicated settings of marble, lavishly upholstered divans, long bath rituals, massages, were described as having ‘Sardanapalian’ atmosphere.¹²⁰ Sardanapalus was known in history as the last king of Assyria and portrayed as an extremely rich and decadent figure. In this sense Turkish baths may refer to his exorbitant luxury, debauched life-style, and despicable self-indulgence.

Some people idealized the bath adventure whereas others earnestly did not like it, considering it an Oriental torture on the body. A female correspondent of *Missouri Republican* went to New-York, visited one of the Turkish baths, like a big city attraction, and declared openly that she did not like it and her first experience was to be the last one: there was a suffocating steam, a boiling temperature which “cooked her anatomy and physiology,” which was followed by a “mighty tank of cold water,”¹²¹ (the cold water practice is not the typical Turkish tradition but must have been the result of Turco-Russian bath practices in the US). Among the writers, the journalist and travelogue Bayard Taylor¹²² described his bath experience as unforgettable and heavenly as quoted in the contemporary periodical:

“Mind and body are drowned in delicious rest, and we no longer remember what we are; for gently sleep steals upon our senses; as gently clouds dissipate, and we are born again into the world, and walk forth instinct with a new life.”¹²³

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “A Woman in a Turkish Bath,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jul. 14, 1872, 6. If I combine her case with the man from Cleveland who died of a heart attack in a Turkish bath, in Baltimore (footnote 26), I may suggest that both were from smaller towns and wanted to experience Turkish baths in big cities they traveled to. Baths must have been one of the big city enchantments of the period.

¹²² When he passed away *New York Times* published his obituary on its front page, on December 19, 1878.

¹²³ A. Hamilton Deekens, “The Turkish Bath and Its Use as a Therapeutic Agent,” *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, 60:4, Jan.26, 1889, 105.

Almost a decade later Mark Twain in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) revealed rather a disappointing experience of the bath despite the fact- as he put it- “after for years and years I have dreamed of the wonders of Turkish bath.”¹²⁴ In his book he gives a vivid description of the tortures he underwent in a Turkish bath and almost flayed alive with the jack-plane (the shampooing brush). Twain must have attended a poor quality bath in Constantinople (Fig.26), since he mentions the rickety chairs, worn-out towels, yet this does not change in essence the procedures applied at baths. For others such a torture was worth for the end result. “Miss Dorothy Drew is tortured, tickled, roasted, and frozen, but after it is over she feels decidedly better.”¹²⁵ She likened what she lived to the sin, suffering and triumph in the end. “If you have known the reward following the purification of the soul by pain then you can understand a Turkish bath.” She insinuates the Christian belief that suffering is a test to your faith and ultimately leads to the award of purifying your soul. Through such an analogy she verifies the pain she felt during the massage and bath. Suffering existed in the Western culture through obeying to the Father’s will, but it had also its Eastern roots since in the same article she also declares that “I obeyed like the females of the Arabian Nights.” Her example is telling to indicate that in adoption of baths and their rituals many different and contradicting ideas intermingled. Who is obedient? The Eastern or the Western person or both? Could we idealize the baths or conceive them as Oriental tortures to body?

¹²⁴ Mark Twain, “*The Innocents Abroad*,” The American Publishing Company, Hartford, Connecticut, 1902, 376.

¹²⁵ “A Turkish Bath,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 18, 1888, 3.

Turkish Baths and Their New Rituals

In the United States between 1860 -1920, some premises combined Turkish with Russian baths, and few included medical and electrical steam baths as revealed in some trade cards of the period (Fig.27-29). Turkish and Russian baths were more widespread in the country, and Turkish baths were treated as “Queens of Baths.”¹²⁶ As a result the architectural display and rituals followed in essence those of Turkish baths.

Turkish baths were considered as dry baths, whereas Russians as vapor baths. Russian baths, which consisted in staying for a while in a small room filled with hot steam followed by a cold plunge, was viewed as optional whereas Turkish baths were viewed as absolute part of human health. Besides the medical periodical, *Medical and Surgical Reporter*,¹²⁷ the *Chicago Tribune* published an article pointing out the superiority of Turkish baths over Russians:

Having familiarized myself with its [Turkish baths'] *modus operandi* and practical benefits...both in this country and in Great Britain,..and recognized by leading medical men as one of the greatest remedial agents known in science...It is time to discriminate between Turkish and Russian baths, institutions so entirely distinct in their methods and results...Turkish is a dry, hot-air bath, where Nature comes to the relief of the body.. accomplishing simply and effectually the end desire: profuse perspiration..On the other hand the steam, vapor, and hot-water baths do not produce any great amount of perspiration.¹²⁸

The Riverside Baths, up on West 69th Street, established in 1896 by Dr. Simon Baruch, applied three kinds of baths, the rain bath, the Turkish and the hydriatric. The

¹²⁶The term was coined by M. L. Holbrook, “The Turkish Bath,” *Herald of Health*, 6:2, Aug. 1865, 50.

¹²⁷ A. Hamilton Deekens, “The Turkish Bath and Its Use as a Therapeutic Agent,” *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, 60:4, Jan.26, 1889, 105.

¹²⁸ L.P.H., “Turkish versus Russian Baths,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jul. 20, 1872, 5.

latter was given under prescriptions from physicians, and was charged 10 cents, the former 5 cents whereas the Turkish baths 25 cents. The proprietor explains that

A Turkish bath is worth three times as much as an ordinary bath as far as the cleansing of the body is concerned, and perhaps if people could only take one bath a week, it would be well to have the Turkish.¹²⁹

In essence the interior designs of baths in America followed the paradigm of Turkish baths: it consisted of three main rooms: *apodyterium* (also called *frigidarium* or cooling room), *tepidarium*, and *caldarium* (also called *sudatorium* or hot room), each separated usually by a door. The first room was to undress; the fresh towels and soaps were served here, only some cheap baths did not include such services. In luxurious baths this section would have a marble fountain in the middle surrounded by slightly raised platforms decorated with divans and cushions and separated by low or high partitions. These corners were designed for individual use and customers could come and rest there while eating, drinking or smoking *nargileh*. The intermediate room, which had usually between 100-110 degrees Fahrenheit, was to recline and get ready for the *caldarium* where the temperature raised to 125-130 or in some cases to 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Floors and walls of the bath were heated with underneath pipes, sometimes so hot that they could not be touched with bare hands or feet; roofs in the hot room had conical chimneys of tin or lead which carried off the surplus steam. Later such chimneys were abolished since electrical ventilation systems were introduced to Turkish baths. In the hottest, innermost section the bather would receive a shampoo and a massage on marble slabs, and recline on lounge chairs (Fig.30). In more modest establishments, like

Lexington Avenue baths in New York, more humble service and setting were provided at

¹²⁹ “Turkish Baths in a Box, That is the Way Some Nice Girls Take Them Occasionally,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1899, 22. Despite being the most luxurious one, the charge for Turkish bath was lower than many others on the market since the establishment had only the box and not the hot room.

the hot room (Fig.31-32). Ordinary baths designed for poor people did not have such facilities.

The contemporaneous periodicals and newspapers reveal that upper and middle-class Americans, both men and women spent long hours at baths, socializing with each other naked or semi-naked. As my examples attest, baths became the daily or weekly routine in American life for both genders. Before attending his regular club dinner it was usual for a man to go first to a Turkish bath, or a congressman prior his congressional session. Not only talks, but drinking and eating, like in the Ottoman Empire, were also included during these long hours. This is what I call the ‘Orientalization’ or ‘Ottomanization’ of America.

The *Washington Post* reported that in the Russian section of a bath the steam interposed a veil, interceding with chatting and socialization, whereas in the dry-heat rooms of Turkish section, mainly in the cooling room, ladies could be swathed in blankets and reclined on divans to indulge in eating, drinking or a “perfectly lovely gabfest”¹³⁰ (Fig. 33). Another journalist who sent a female relative to ladies’ bath reported that some women played chess, others read newspapers;¹³¹ some women even organized sewing circles at baths.¹³² Baths usually served drinks, but in some upper-end baths, like Beacon Hill or Guild Row in Washington luncheons could be ordered.¹³³ It is also

¹³⁰ “Plump Ladies Do Have a Time of It Splashing Around in a Turkish Bath,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 29, 1910, 13.

¹³¹ “Turkish Baths” A Reporter Makes the Rounds of Several Establishments,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1884, 22.

¹³² “Gossip in Turkish Baths,” *The Washington Post*, Mar. 13, 1892, 12.

¹³³ Ibid.

reported that regular customers attended such establishments once a week, twice a week, sometimes every other day, and they spent long hours to enjoy what was described as the Oriental luxury. Apparently some working women visited Turkish baths regularly as well. The favorite hours of bathing of a New-York nun were in the morning before she had a grand promenade in the avenue.¹³⁴ In this sense, in America, baths assumed similar social functions as in the Ottoman Empire with long socializing hours, combining bathing, chatting, eating and drinking.

Long socializing hours were not specific to women. Some male clients used Turkish baths as “all-night houses,” namely eating and consuming alcohol all night long at baths. One Turkish bathing establishment was reported to have been kept open all night and it was busiest from midnight to early morning. During these “midnight ablutions” “the customers come in every stage of intoxication; some are brought by friends too far gone to direct their own wandering steps; others are lightly drunk, stupidly drunk, hilariously drunk, singing, dancing, yelling and occasionally resurrecting the rather musty battles of the late political campaign.”¹³⁵ The hot room was used to sober-up drunken people through the steam process. Besides the resuscitating process these evening houses were reported to be places where “liquor was indulged freely.” Another report had a satire in its headlines: “A Turkish Bath Was Too Much,” since a client drank

¹³⁴ “Trying a Turkish Bath,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 19, 1888, 16.

¹³⁵ “Turkish Baths: A Reporter Makes the Rounds of Several Establishments,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1884, 22. It is interesting to notice the gender differentiation in reporting: in case of women it was trivial friendly and gossipy talks whereas in case of men meaningful political discussions.

so much that he had to be taken to the police station where “he rapidly recovered and was allowed to go home in company with his brother.”¹³⁶

As a result of the perceived health benefits and new ways to enjoy (socializing, eating, sewing, drying out), Turkish baths gained a wider popularity across the nation, especially in the major cities of the East Coast and the nation’s capital. In 1888 *The Atlanta Constitution* circulated that in the posh quarter of the city, under the Traders’ bank building; Atlanta embraced a first-class Turkish bath institution with best and finest system in America.¹³⁷ In 1902, *The Sun* announced the opening of a new luxurious Turkish baths in the basement of the New Auditorium Theatre in Baltimore. Its lavish decoration with white-tiled walls, stone concrete floors and white marble slabs, together with electric chandeliers of burnished brass, and great steam pipes covered with asbestos, cost a handsome amount of \$50,000.¹³⁸ In 1903 *The Washington Post* harbingered that The Lafayette Turkish and Russian Baths, under Lafayette Opera House, had been thoroughly overhauled, repainted, re-decorated and refurnished throughout. Ventilation and sanitary conditions had been brought to perfection. “The Lafayette baths now may be truly said to be the largest and best equipped south of New-York.”¹³⁹ At the turn of the nineteenth century *The Washington Post* mentioned the “foul air problem” at the Capitol, caused by the “Turkish bath apparatus located in the sub-cellar just beneath the House

¹³⁶ “A Turkish Bath Was Too Much,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 22, 1896, 4.

¹³⁷ “Turkish: That is the Bath You Get Under Traders’ Bank Building,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 6, 1888, 7.

¹³⁸ “\$50,000 Turkish Baths: Manager Kernan’s New Enterprise To Be Opened Soon,” *The Sun*, Dec. 11, 1904, 7.

¹³⁹ “The Lafayette Turkish and Russian Bath House: Undergoes Important Improvements,” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 14, 1903, 8.

Chamber. The complaint is now made that the vapor from these baths fills the adjacent spaces with moisture and...suffocating odors.” The main question was whether these baths should be demolished or not.

Just how necessary these baths are to the cause of intelligent and patriotic legislation, we do not really know....But if they be not indispensable –if the average Congressman can arrange to get a bath somewhere before he goes to the Capitol and if the restaurant and the committee-room can furnish an article of cold tea that does not require treatment more than once a day- then why not take out the apparatus and give the atmosphere a chance?¹⁴⁰

These articles suggest that at the turn of the century Turkish baths still attracted lavish investments in major cities of the United States and they were considered as absolute necessities of an advanced civilization. Even after causing tremendous problems under the Capitol the discussion was not to abolish them immediately but to ponder whether an alternative place could be found in replacing the trouble-making one. Before going to the Capitol it was customary for a Congressman to attend a Turkish bath and sip his cup of tea.

Almost a generation after they were initially introduced to America the Turkish baths were not viewed just mere luxury, but an indispensable practice of a civilized nation. As a result there was an extensive effort to generalize them for the poorest segment of the population. In 1875, more than a decade after establishing the first genuine Turkish bath, under the name “Hammam,” Dr. Chas Shepard declared that the Turkish bath was still in its infancy in America.¹⁴¹ Another decade later, in 1886, *New-York Times* proclaimed that “the Turkish bath, now well established in this country.” It seems though they were well established mainly “for the men and women of culture,

¹⁴⁰ “Foul Air and Turkish Baths,” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 1895, 4.

¹⁴¹ Chas H. Shepard “The Turkish Bath,” *Oneida Circular*, Jul. 5, 1875, 213.

wealth, and position, including merchants, bankers, clergymen, lawyers, and physicians, with their families.”¹⁴² This was a disappointment since the era “measured the national progress by the use of soap.” “The standing of a community can to day be closely gauged by the extent to which it uses the Turkish bath.”¹⁴³

To have a Turkish bath at home was a luxury, and only few could afford it. Later “steam boxes” were offered as an alternative to the extravagant private set ups. In 1880s some moderate scale baths used “steam boxes” for their clients. Instead of heating and steaming the whole room, it was sufficient to heat up these boxes, which was not a typical Turkish bath feature, but innovation of an industrial society. These steam boxes were later adopted for private household uses for middle and upper class families. Any small room, in the house which had a “hard finish” upon the walls so they would not peel or crack in the dampness could have “steam boxes” or “steam chairs.” The room had to be stripped of all furniture. The window was then opened the “veriest trifle,” and a small frame covered with stout canvas was placed in the opening. This insured the ventilation since without the fresh air the Turkish bath was not going to be a success.¹⁴⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune* advertised the Turkish bath box at home as a “fad with up-to-date women” (Fig.34). A bathrobe or pajamas could be worn inside the box. If the heat distressed the user she was advised to wear a rubber ice cap! The box was so convenient that the person could read a book or have a cup of tea with friends. Again here the bathing is viewed not a personal or private procedure, but rather a social practice.

¹⁴² On that issue the following resources are useful: “The Turkish Bath,” *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1886, 5; Peter B. Flint, “Baths Had a Fashionable History,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1977, 33; “Turkish Bath Five Cents, But It Is Like A Bad Dream,” Jul. 24, 1904, PS4.

¹⁴³ “The Modern Bath,” *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 10:3, Jun. 1887, 78-79.

¹⁴⁴ Lilian Russel, “Turkish Bath at Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 8, 1896, 13.

Later much cheaper versions of these cabinets were introduced to the market, and apparently produced the same results.¹⁴⁵ Some advertisements were for laboring classes and they claimed that a Turkish bath at home cost only 2 cents. It was a means to gain a vigorous health without the need of using drugs¹⁴⁶(Fig.35). A Turkish bath in a box was sometimes offered by peddlers and did not cost as much as regular baths.¹⁴⁷ For cleanliness the box bath had to be taken each day, but once a week the Turkish bath was required in public places to perfect circulation, beautify the skin, and invigorate the health.

Turkish Baths: Socialization Process for a Minority Group

Some Turkish baths were appropriated by gay men; this was the only function which was not touted openly by the media, but dismissed subtly. Charles Demuth's painting *Turkish Bath* (1916) most likely depicted the Lafayette baths, New-York's most popular gay bathhouse at the time (Fig. 36). Gay bathhouses appeared in New-York by the turn of the century, yet Lafayette Baths, at 403-405 Lafayette Street, was the favorite social gay center, frequented by the early modernist composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes, the painter Charles Demuth, and the affluent white men of disparate ethnic backgrounds, native or foreign born Italians, Irish, Jews and Scandinavians. Another famous Turkish – Russian bath was the Everard, which was originally a church, and converted into a bathhouse in 1888 by James Everard, a prominent brewer and financier.

¹⁴⁵ "Turkish Baths at Home: Folding Tubs Evolve a New Departure in Beauty Baths," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 8, 1897, 40.

¹⁴⁶ *The Crisis, Labor Number*, Sept. 10, 1919.

¹⁴⁷ "Turkish Baths in a Box: That Is The Way Some Nice Girls Take Them Occasionally," *New York Times*, May 7, 1899, 22.

Even though it is not certain when gay men began patronizing the Everard, they began to do so by World War I. As an establishment it attracted the same type of well-to-do clientele as Lafayette.¹⁴⁸ According to George Chauncey baths played an important role as gay social centers since the management did not only tolerate homosexual activity, but did safeguard it by excluding non-gay customers due to their intolerant attitudes toward gays. These were the only spaces appropriated by gay men since other commercial establishments or open spaces –streets, parks, and restaurants- were not theirs alone. The period was risky for gays since they could be easily arrested and charged with degenerate disorderly conduct. A charge of a sort was such an ignominious felony that in 1916 when the police raided the Lafayette, its manager committed suicide before the conclusion of his trial, “apparently because of the distress at the public revelation that he managed a homosexual rendezvous.”¹⁴⁹ As the history of Turkish baths suggest, by the second half of the nineteenth century upper and middle classes’ preoccupation with their own body intensified so much that baths became highly respectable and fashionable resorts for them. As a subculture group, gays imitated and appropriated rituals of the dominant culture and turned traditional male spaces into their own. Baths were safe havens where they could pursue homosexual interests they had to hide in other settings; they could extend their social network and create their own social collective memory. Turkish baths served as model institutions to incorporate one of the marginalized subgroups in the society. As the first publicly appropriated spaces, baths secured the visibility of a minority group initially among themselves, but eventually to the outsiders; in this sense

¹⁴⁸ George Chauncey, *Gay New York, Gender, Urban Culture, and Making of the Gay World, 1890-1940*, New-York, NY: Basic Books, 1994, 216-217.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 215.

they might have helped their socialization and their future –perhaps still partial- incorporation into the society.

Coda

Turkish baths swept the American nation starting the mid-nineteenth century and culminating through the end of it. Even though same premises often combined different varieties, Turkish baths were considered the “Queens of Baths.”¹⁵⁰ As a result their interior architectural designs and rituals followed Turkish customs and manners with long socializing hours, including drinking and eating as naked or semi-naked. Turkish baths were not perceived solely as pure leisurely and luxurious institutions but also considered as cleansing emporiums and curative agents. Cleanliness and health were considered one. Besides being “virtual temples to the body”¹⁵¹ for wealthier people they were considered as sanitary and hygienic establishments for everyone. They were a means to enjoy a healthy existence and to prolong life. As separate buildings, or attached to the grand hotels¹⁵² or club houses, and later as features of splendid houses they occupied mostly affluent public and private spaces. As such public venues they bestowed a social status and privilege for their patrons regularly attending them, by creating occasions to the wealthiest and the most cultured families of the city to see each other. Finally Turkish baths were considered as part of social reforms to create a clean and healthy society. They were one of the absolute necessities of a modern person and a civilized nation. A

¹⁵⁰The term was coined by M. L. Holbrook, “The Turkish Bath,” *Herald of Health*, 6:2, Aug. 1865, 50.

¹⁵¹ The term was coined by Peter B. Flint, “Baths Had a Fashionable History,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1977.

¹⁵² The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, which was an important marker of the elite culture of the time, featured Turkish-Russian baths in its premises. Annabel Wharton, “Two Waldorf-Astorias: Spatial Economies as Totem and Fetish,” *The Art Bulletin*, 85:3, Sept. 2003, 528. 523-543

conversation overheard by a journalist from *Chicago Daily Tribune* at an affluent hotel in Chicago, reveals that when one traveler declared that he would go and take a bath, his friend exclaimed with surprise “A bath in Winter time?”¹⁵³ If not bathing during the Winter season were a common attitude among some Americans as this article suggests, then attending Turkish baths daily or weekly for long hours was definitely a significant change in the American society. Those Turkish establishments brought their own rituals to the New Continent and resulted to the ‘Orientalization’ of the society to a certain extent.

¹⁵³ “Turkish Baths: A Reporter Makes the Rounds of Several Establishments,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1884, 22.

CONCLUSION

My research on Turkish interiors and baths, covering the period between 1800 to 1920, indicates that Turkish interiors and baths attained a wide popularity in America, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, and within the larger framework of the “Oriental obsession.” Turquerie in the United States, espoused paradoxical concepts of ‘barbaric Turk’ and ‘Turk to emulate and identify with,’ which in turn created its own ambivalent rhetoric of romanticizing/denigration, desire/repulsion, and identification/dis-identification. In this sense turquerie in the United States betrayed some affinities with the European Oriental discourse. Yet unlike the European experience, the turquerie in the United States did not accompany any imperial ambition or encyclopedic collection of knowledge. Also compared to Europe, during the period under consideration, America was still a ‘melting pot, despite adoption of some anti-immigrant laws. Cultural variety and diversity of the American culture contributed to the receptivity to another culture and its adoption into the daily lives of American people.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ According to the US Census Bureau, which started publishing statistics on immigration in 1850, the flow of people to the United States increased significantly between 1850-1920. The number of immigrants in 1850 was 2.2 million, which more than doubled in 1870 reaching 5.5 million people. Despite some restrictive immigration laws, the number of immigrants attained 10.3 millions in 1900, and 13.9 millions in 1920. Turkish/Ottoman immigration was relatively minimal during those years. Many Americans worried about the “yellow peril” in that period and as a result restrictive immigration laws were promulgated against the Chinese and Japanese, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, or Japanese Gentleman’s Agreement in 1908. According to Balgamis and Karpat, in 1820-1921, half a million Ottomans of mix ethnicities (Greeks, Sephardic Jews, Armenians and a small number of ethnic Turks) immigrated to the United States. *Turkish Migration to the United States: From Ottoman Times to the Present*, ed. by A. Deniz Balgamis and Kemal H. Karpat, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

American experience with Turkish interiors and baths could not merely be confined to the clichéd Oriental rhetoric of pleasure and voluptuous delights. While bachelor apartments fit into the wicked vision of pleasure, Turkish interiors, adapted by American captains of industry, betrayed the desire to identify with the hegemony of an Eastern ruler. Likewise Turkish baths could not be considered merely as ‘virtuous temples to body.’ They were introduced by American doctors and physicians as curative, prophylactic, and cleansing agents, functioning for the well-being of the whole American society. In this sense, both interiors and baths reveal multi-valent processes in cross-cultural encounters.

The adoption of *turquerie* also entailed the change in customs and manners, which I called the ‘Orientalization.’ Turkish interiors introduced new habits of sipping Turkish coffee from small cups or smoking *nargilehs*. A roomy *divan* required changes in the ordinary sitting position of Americans. Turkish baths changed also the concept of Western bathing as a private practice; bathing became part of a social experience. Americans began bathing together as naked or semi-naked, while at the same time enjoying talking, eating, and drinking. Baths were conceived as an indispensable element of an advanced civilization, so much so that, when the Turkish bath under the Capitol filled it with a suffocating odor, the discussion was not to abolish the bath immediately, but to find ways of replacing it, since it was crucial for a congressman to attend a bath prior a congressional session.

Within the framework of ‘Orientalization,’ *turquerie* in America does not only reveal the deep crevasse of the Occident versus the Orient, but also suggests a rapprochement between the American and Turkish cultures. The process of

‘Orientalization’ of the American society was as valid as “the Occidentalization of the Ottoman Empire, and the Turks.” My emphasis of the former was to contribute and complement the latter, since longtime it has been the sole focus of scholarly analyses.

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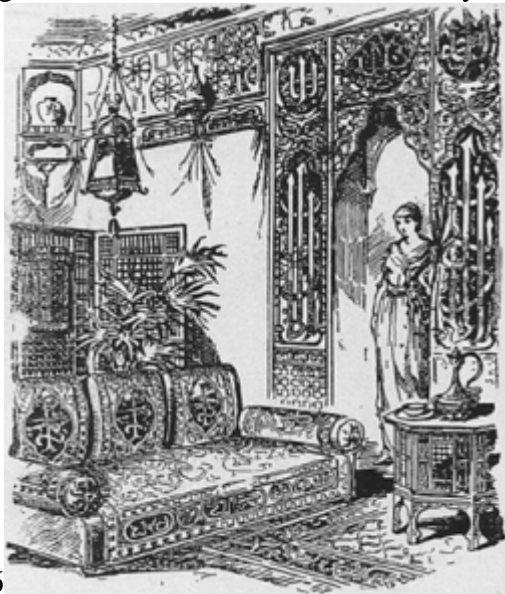


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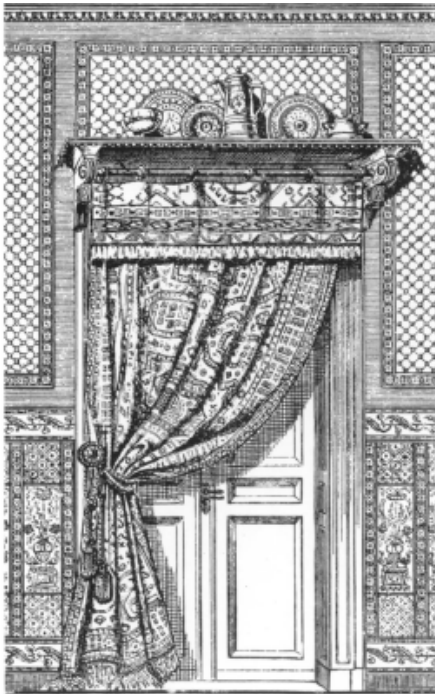


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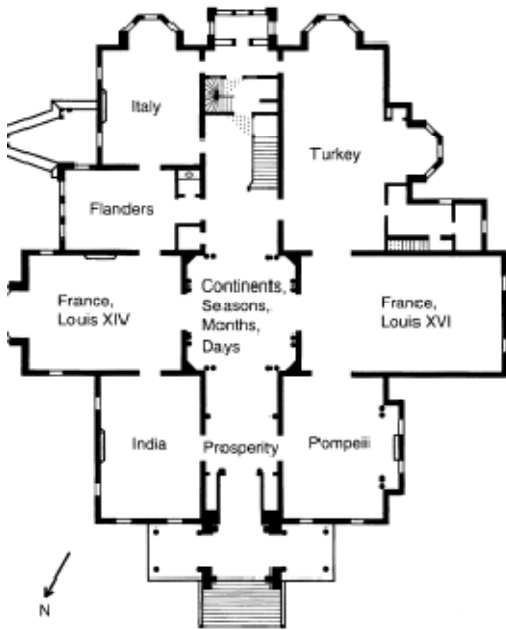


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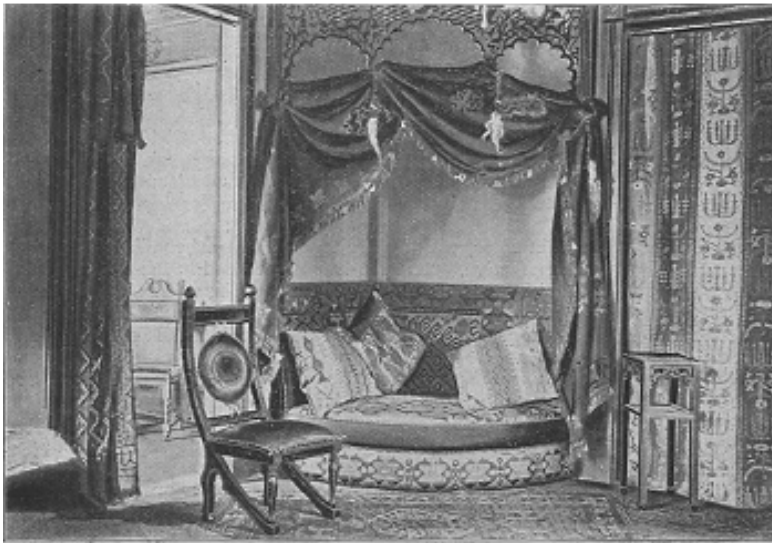


Figure 18: Cosy Corner in Turkish Room in Montana Club, The Decorator and Furnisher, 25:6, Mar. 1895, 215-217



Figure 19: Mantel in Turkish Room in Montana Club, *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 25:6, Mar. 1895, 215-217

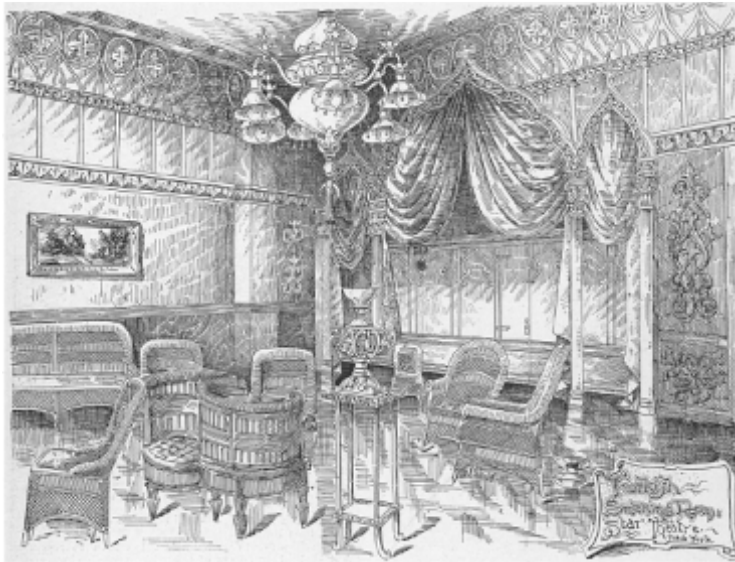


Figure 20: Turkish Smoking-Room of The Star Theater, New-York, *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 27:6, Mar. 1896, 169-170



Figure 21: Turkish Suite in Old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Art Bulletin, 85:3, Sept. 2005, (from Boldt, Waldorf-Astoria)

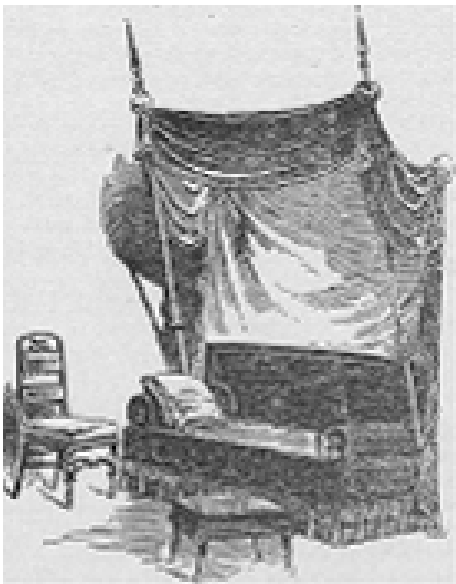


Figure 22: A Canopied Divan, The Decorator and Furnisher, 24:5, Aug. 1894, 191



Figure 23: The Turkish Corner in the New-York studio of the painter J. Wells Champney, John Maas, *The Victorian Home in America*, New-York, Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1972, 109.



Figure 24: "A Friendly Call," painted in 1895 by William Merritt Chase, showing his summer home near Southampton, Long Island. John Maas, *The Victorian Home in America*, New-York, Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1972, 178

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Figure 26: Mark Twain at the Turkish Bath, *The Innocents Abroad*, Hartford, Connecticut: The American Publishing Company, 1902, 378.

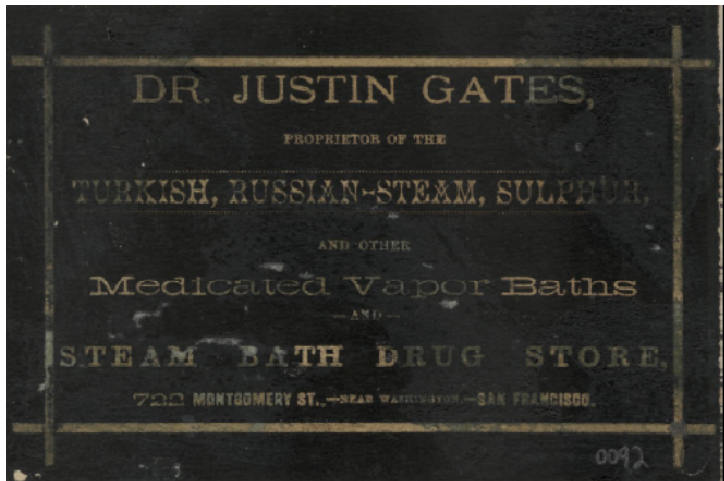


Figure 27: Justin Gates & Bros. 1881. Turkish & Russian Baths, proprietor of the Turkish, Russian-steam, sulphur, and other medicated vapor baths. San Francisco, California, Trade Card, 12x8cm, AAS Copy

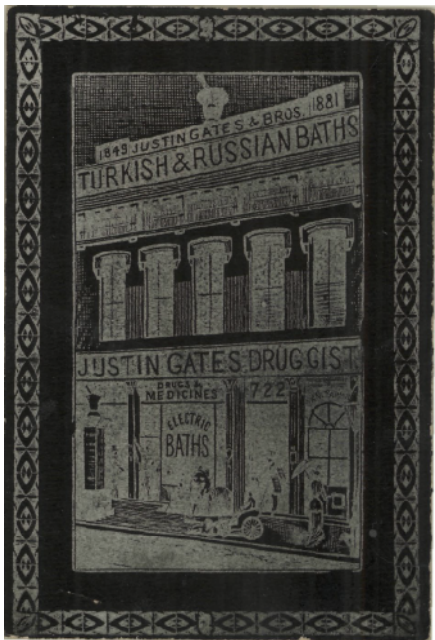


Figure 28: Another Trade Card of Justin Gates & Bros

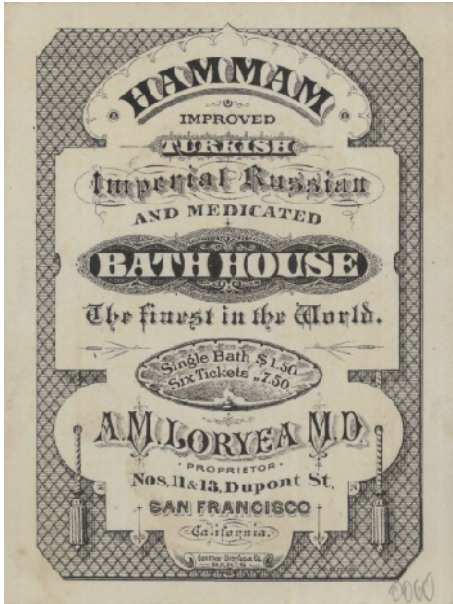


Figure 29: Another Trade Card from San Francisco, California

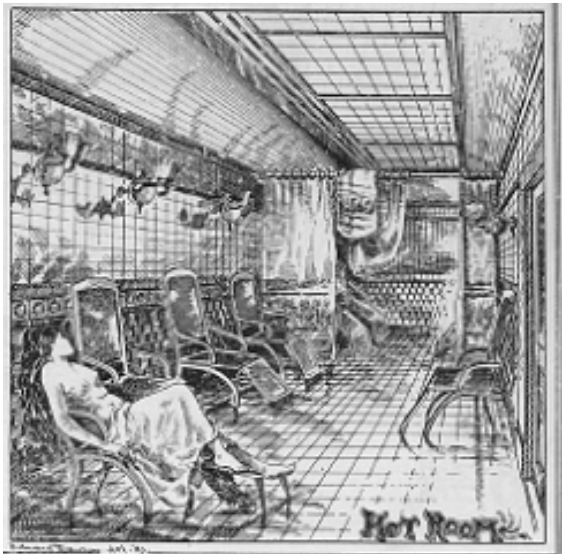


Figure 30: "The Modern Bath," The Decorator and Furnisher, 10:3, Jun. 1887, 78-79.



Figure 31: The Lexington Avenue Baths, at 61 Lexington Avenue N.Y, owned by E. C. Angell, M.D., The Centennial Crescent, Published at the Lexington Avenue Baths, Feb.2, 1876.



Figure 32: The More Modest Hot Chambers at the Lexington Avenue Baths, The Centennial Crescent, Published at the Lexington Avenue Baths Feb.2, 1876.

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Figure 35: The Crisis, Labor Number, Sept. 10, 1919.



Figure 36: Turkish Bath by Charles Demuth in George Chauncey, Gay New York, Gender, Urban Culture, and Making of the Gay World, 1890-1940, New-York, NY: Basic Books, 1994, 206.

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