

A CRITICAL READING OF THE OTTOMAN-TURKISH HAMMAM AS A REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE OF SEXUALITY (1)

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representation; representational space;
spatial practice; sexuality.

1. This paper is based on the author's PhD thesis completed under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Belgin Turan Özkaya in 2014. However, additional data and references have been used to extend the scope of the paper and to support the main argument.

2. The marble platform placed in the centre of a hammam, also known as the belly stone

3. The marble basin placed by the walls of a hammam for private bathing

INTRODUCTION

In October 2011, an article on hammam culture was published in the popular magazine *National Geographic Türkiye*. The article, entitled "Hamam: Mental and Bodily Refinement" (*Hamam: Ruhsal ve Bedensel Arınma*), was written by the Turkish journalist Hülya Vatansever in an autobiographic style, introducing traditional bathing rituals and bathing objects as well as the spatial ambience of hammams. The article was based on direct experiences of the author and supported with historical and mythical background.

What is critical about this article is not merely the populist language of the text itself, which intends to attract a wide readership of such a popular publication, but, in particular, the use of visual materials, which add an acceptable degree of sexuality and eroticism. The cover page of the issue showed the painting "The Women's Bath" (1889) by the French Orientalist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, which depicts a naked white woman sitting on a wooden bench in the foreground and two other sitting by the pool just behind her. In the background, there is an arched niche, where four headscarfed and fully dressed black women are seated, probably representing the slaves of the white women in the front (**Figure 1**).

On the first page of the article, the readers see the painting *L'Esclave blanche* (White Slave) (1888) by another French Orientalist painter Jean Lecomte, which similarly depicts a naked white woman sitting and smoking by a pool inside a hammam, in front of two fully clothed black women. The article was also supported by photographs particularly taken to show bathers realizing traditional rituals in various positions and locations inside the hammam. One of these, next to the painting "White Slave", showed a traditional henna ritual, in which a group of half-naked women sit on the *göbektaşı* (2) watching a belly dancer in the centre (**Figure 2**). Another photograph showing a half-naked woman standing and pouring water by a *kurna* (3) in the corner of a hammam (**Figure 3**) was introduced by

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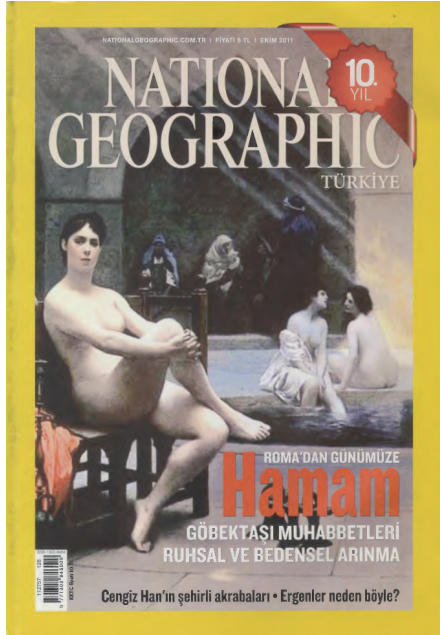


Figure 1. Cover page of the *National Geographic Türkiye* magazine, Issue: 126, October 2011.

Figure 2. First two pages of the article 'Hamam: Ruhsal ve Bedensel Arınma' by Hülya Vatansever, the *National Geographic Türkiye* magazine, Issue: 126, (October 2011): 94-95.

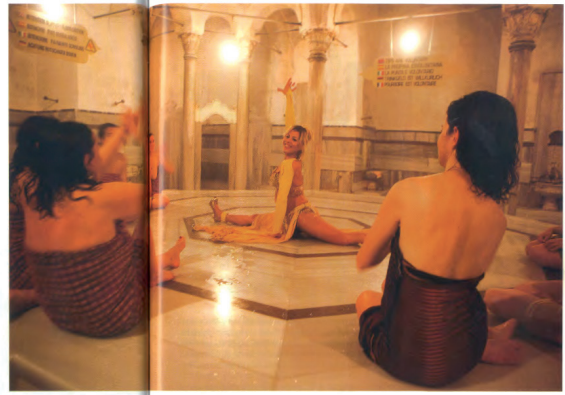


Fransız orientalist ressam Jean LeClerc'in 1888 tarihli *Biraz Kötü Tahlül* adlı tablosu Türk hamamı efüncüsünü Avrupalıdaki yansıtmalarından (sağa). Çeşneliği hamamı gibi turistik hamamlar, yemektan konuya çapılı organizasyonlar yapar. İhtiyaş içeren için dansöz çarpmak da mümkün (sağda).

van Hülya Vatansever

Bugün kendimi şımartmaya karar verdim. En yakın arkadaşımınla birlikte, gösterişli bir sultan hamamının içiğündeyiz. Üzerimizde peştamaller, ayaklarımızda takunyalılar, elimizde sabunlar, keseler, taraklar... Birazdan kapı açılacak, su, buhar ve köpükten oluşan buğulu dünyamız içinde kaybolacağız. Bedenimizle birlikte ruhumuz da, bütün kirlerden arındırmayı vaat eden hamamın halvetlerinde sultanlara yararış, şifa, keyif ve muhabbet dolu bir gün geçireceğiz. Ağır ahşap kapının açılmasıyla bedenimizi yoğun bir sıcaklık kaplıyor... Göbektaşına serpe serpe uzanmış kadınları; kimi keseleniyor, kimi köpüklere bulanmış masaj yapıyorlar. Bir tas dolusu sıcak suyu başımdan aşağı döküyorum.

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Bir tas, bir tas daha... Bu loş kubbenin altında kendimi ana rahimimde gibi hissediyorum. Sıcak, korumada, bütün kargılardan uzak...

Bu hilerimde hamam sefasına diğünün anemini velle ölmüş. Hilerden tutup beni ilk kez hamama götürelişimde, benim ilkokula bile başlamıştım. Soğuk bir kaş gününüdü ve bütün mahalle toptanmış çokuk çocuk hamam yoluna dışarıya çıkıyorduk. Çantalarımız terakle çamaşlıklar keseler, beyaz sabunlar ve bavalırlarla doluydu. Soyunup hamama girilgenimle yaşadığım şaşkınlığı hıllı hatırlıyorum. Sözü kuzulain, memme şükranın, dev göbektaşıyla, o güne kadar gördüğüm en ilginç yerdi. Utelük anem dahi, ilk defa kadınları bir kadez çapık görüyordum. Çevresindeki kadın-

ların rahatlığından olsa gerek, şaşkınlığım uzan sızırmedi ve kendimi hamamın büyüüne kaplıyordum.

Herkes bir karnamın başına geçti, önce tas tas su döküldü, sonra gülüş çimbiş her muhabbet döküldü. Kimi göbektaşında, kimi saçlarına kına raktı, kimi rastık ekeli göderice. Benise göbektaşına uzadım, çevresindeki murluk konuşmaları ve musabaklırdan ilkanı suyun sesini diğileneşer buldum. Sonra gurezler kıldı, bir kadın şarkılar söyledi, hamamcı kadın kocaman bir tabak soyluışa meyve ikram etti. Hamamdan

Güncel: Hülya Vatansever, yaklaşık 10 yıldır Anadolu'da kenteleşmiş hamam kültürünü araştırıyor.

HAMAM 95



Figure 3. A photograph showing a bathing woman in a hammam, by Serra Akcan, the *National Geographic Türkiye* magazine, Issue: 126, (October 2011): 109.

the author with the claim that "the scenes which inspired the Orientalist painters can be found in hammams today" (Vatansever, 2011, 90-109).

This article was certainly not the first piece of popular literature that represented visually the Ottoman-Turkish hammam as a space of sexuality beyond its traditional bathing function. Since the 1930s, many books, newspaper and magazine articles on hammam culture have been enriched by paintings of naked or half-naked figures bathing, sitting, reclining and/or chatting in a (homo)erotic manner, even though such images do not necessarily represent the content of the relevant article. However, it could be argued that because these erotic paintings are often used in association with photographs of various activities and rituals taken in the real hammam space, it becomes difficult, at least for the non-specialist reader, to differentiate the representational from the real, leading to a construction of an idealized image of the hammam space.

The French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's theory on space is quite useful in understanding how much effective and indicative the representations of a space may be to transform the perception of real space into a conception of representational space. Lefebvre explains the (social) production of space in a tripartite conceptual framework: (1) spatial practice, (2) representations of space, and (3) representational space. Spatial practice (perceived space), as Lefebvre (1991, 33) suggests, "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation". It also "ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion" which "implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance" among the members of the society (Lefebvre, 1991, 33). Representations of space (conceived space) are "tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which these relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" (Lefebvre, 1991, 33). Lefebvre (1991, 38-9) further considers representations of space as "the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)" that "identify what is lived and what is perceived". Representational space (lived space) is "directly lived through its associated images and symbols". For Lefebvre

4. The hottest chamber in a typical Ottoman-Turkish hammam building

(1991, 39), “this is the dominated – and hence passively experienced space – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate”.

In case of the Ottoman-Turkish hammams, the Lefebvrian framework works through a dialectic in which (bodily) sexuality becomes a key issue in the production of hammam space. The dominance of representations of the Ottoman-Turkish hammam conceived within Orientalist and traditional norms and codes of sexuality mean that the hammam space is re-constructed as a representational space of sexuality. This space has been appropriated by these codes and norms, and the experience shaped by them. In such states of normative conception and experience, it becomes nearly impossible to perceive the non-normative spatial and sexual practices, most of which are concealed behind an idealized hammam image, produced in the service of global and local tourism, as well as norms of public morality.

This paper aims to critically understand how the Lefebvrian framework applies to the production of hammam space through an analytical approach. In the first section, comparative analyses of the pictorial representations of the hammam produced in three different approaches are provided: Orientalist, traditionalist and hybrid. Thus, the codes of sexuality and gender identity in these representations, which conceptualize the hammam as a female-only space confined to the *sıcaklık* (4) chamber, by means of their re-productions in popular media are revealed. The second section analyzes how this conception has led to the re-construction of the hammam as a representational space of sexuality through its representations in popular Turkish movies, as well as its experience in hotel hammams in the form of an auto-ethnographic discovery. In the final section, based on the data derived from ethnographic and historical researches on hammam culture, the author indicates how the non-normative spatial practices in the hammam are concealed by means of heterosexual and homoerotic norms of sexuality and gender identity coded in representations and general public conception.

PICTORIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUALITY IN THE HAMMAM

The histories of European Art and Turkish Art concern various pictorial productions on Ottoman-Turkish hammams in which different approaches are taken for the representation of sexuality in hammam. One major period of such productions in the history of the European Art is the 19th century, during which hammam scenes were produced by the French Orientalist painters such as Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Jean-Léon Gérôme and Edouard Debat-Ponsan, particularly depicting bathing women and interiors of the women’s section of a hammam. In their paintings, we can observe a tendency that foregrounds “the bodily sexuality” of bathers, and represents the hammam space as “a deviant paradise” full of naked or semi-naked female bodies (Pasin, 2014, 64). The main motivation for this approach, as Renda (2011, 395) highlights, derives from “the European audience’s search for an Eastern image created by the Western literature and art and supported particularly by the Orientalist targets of the French”. Considering that it was impossible for these male painters to witness the interiors of a women’s bath, this approach seems to have been aimed at achieving the Orientalist target of portraying an idealized Eastern woman in such a privatized space.



Figure 4. *Après le bain* (After the Bath) by Jean-Léon Gérôme, 19th century, William Henry Haussner and Frances Wilke Haussner, The Haussner's Restaurant Collection, Baltimore, (Sotheby's Online Catalogue, 2010).

Figure 5. *Le Bain* (The Bath) by Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1880-85, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Mildred Anna Williams Collection, (Source: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Photo Services Department, de Young Museum).

Figure 6. *Le Massage* (The Massage) by Edouard Debat-Ponsan, 1883, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, Photo: Daniel Martin.

Similar to the painting on the cover page of the *National Geographic Türkiye*, in almost every hammam painting by Gérôme, the women were depicted in the *sıcaklık* section, sitting, reclining, chatting and/or smoking in a relaxed and uninhibited manner, yet very few were actually bathing. Their skins were coloured in a bright, almost white tone, contrasting with the diffused and dark atmosphere of the interior space, to over-emphasize their bodily sexuality (5). In addition, Gérôme framed his compositions in such a way that the interior space was only partially seen, arousing a curiosity as to what could be happening in the space outside the compositional frame (Figure 4) All these characteristics can be read as visual codes to construct an "Oriental mirage" (6) in the minds of the potential audience.

As another visual code, Gérôme and Ponsan often portrayed a female couple of different races in their paintings. In *Le Bain* (The Bath) (1880-85) by Gérôme, for instance, we see a pale-skinned white woman with a black hair is facing back and sitting on a wooden cage while a black woman soaps her back (Figure 5). In a similar vein, Ponsan in his painting *Le Massage* (The Massage) (1883) depicted a strong black odalisque figure with a worn skin giving a massage to her smooth-skinned mistress lying on a marble counter (Figure 6). In both paintings, the main figure is a completely naked white woman facing away from the viewer positioned at a focal point, whereas the semi-naked black woman has a secondary role, reflected both visually by means of colour tone, and positioning and functionally, as she services the main figure. This code of interracial female intimacy can be said to accomplish two ideological targets. First, it implies the existence of a racial hierarchy in functioning of the hammams which is "an attitude quite suitable for the 'master-slave' duality of orientalist and colonialist history construction" (Bal, 2010, 21). Second, it reflects the possibility of an interracial homosexual relation among women in the hammam space, where the presence of a black servant not only "enhances the pearl beauty of her white mistress" but also addresses a "traditionally signified lesbianism" (Nochlin, 1989, 49).

In the painting *Le Bain Turc* (The Turkish Bath) (1862) by Ingres, one of the mostly referred Orientalist hammam paintings, the imaginary approach of representing female sexuality and homoeroticism reaches a peak (Figure 7). In this painting, Ingres depicted innumerable women sitting and lying on *sofas* inside a single hammam space of indeterminate size. Similar to the

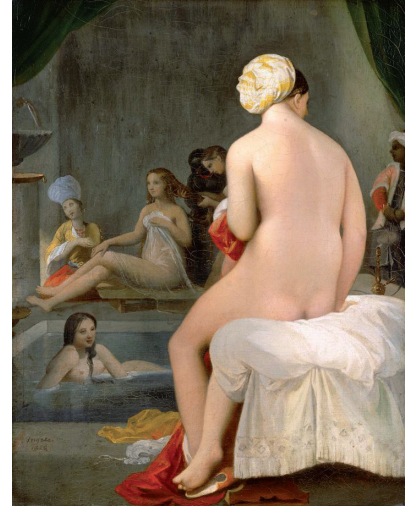




Figure 7. *Le Bain Turc* (The Turkish Bath) by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1862, Musée du Louvre, Paris, (Source: Visit the Louvre Catalogue, Artlys, Versailles, 2005, 98).

Figure 8. *Baigneuse de Valpinçon* (The Valpinçon Bather), by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1808, Musée du Louvre, Paris, (Source: Visit the Louvre Catalogue, Artlys, Versailles, 2005, 98).

Figure 9. *La Petite Baigneuse, dite L'Intérieur de harem* (The Little Bather in the Harem), by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1828, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



compositions of *Gérôme*, all the white women are completely naked, whereas the only two black women are partially dressed. They are positioned in a rather intimate manner, some even intertwining and lying upon each other, displaying a homoerotic ambience. The art historian Roger Benjamin describes this ambience as “an erotic site of unrelieved intensity” created by not only “the implied lesbianism of several foreground figures” but also “the dominating masculine voyeurism suggested by the construction of the picture as a peephole view onto a zone forbidden male access” (Benjamin, 2001, 15). In this respect, (homo) eroticism among bathing women in the 19th century Orientalist painting seems to have been created to satisfy the fantasies of a patriarchal audience, rather than to represent it as an identity category that may take form in such privatized public spaces as the hammam.

Another indicator of the highly constructed realm of the hammam scene is the female figure in the forefront of the *Le Bain Turc*, who is sitting backwards and playing an instrument (7). Ingres used different versions of this figure in other paintings as a visual code, enhancing the peephole male voyeurism since the paintings are “at once inviting and withholding themselves from the viewer” (Yeazell, 2000, 28). The figure appears in *Baigneuse de Valpinçon* (The Valpinçon Bather) (1808) and *La Petite Baigneuse. Intérieur de harem* (The Little Bather in the Harem) (1828) (Figures 8 and 9).

Compared to Ingres, *Gérôme* and Ponsan, the Italian painter Fausto Zonaro, who spent many years in the Ottoman lands at the end of the 19th century, followed quite a different approach. In his hamam paintings, he not only depicted the women in the *sıcaklık* chamber of a hammam in the act of bathing, but also showed them in the *soğukluk* while entering the hammam, and in another chamber, probably a private space in *soyunmalık* (8), while cooling off, relaxing and smoking before leaving the hammam. Zonaro’s women are neither naked nor at the borders of their bodily corpulence in contrast to the paintings of Ingres, *Gérôme* and Ponsan, who positioned them in an exhibitionist manner in compliance with the Western aesthetic pleasure for the Eastern female body. Moreover, their skins are coloured in a harmonious tone with that of the space, so that they do not appear as glossy figures simply sprinkled on a dark and blurry background, but rather as an integral part of the spatial setting in which they act (Figure 10). We could therefore assert that rather than the mere

5. This over-emphasis of white female bodies in the Orientalist painting could be claimed to be a stylistic continuation of the Baroque figuration in painting. An article entitled “Delacroix’s Painted Copies after Rubens” by Barbara Ehrlich White (1967) supports this claim. In this article, White investigates how the pioneer French Orientalist painter Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix produced twenty-nine replicas of the late works of the Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens. In some of these paintings, Delacroix “eliminates much of the architecture and space in order to focus on the interrelationships among figures” and in others he “concentrates on one or on part of a figure” (White, 1967, 37).

6. This phrase was used by Roger Benjamin as a metaphor to signify the unstable view which the travelling artists have of their subject (Benjamin, 2001, 7).

7. Ruth Bernard Yeazell, highlights that “... the *Bain Turc* commemorates his [Ingres] decades-long obsession with some eye-witness records – descriptions of Turkish women at their bath that he had first encountered in the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu ...” and that “Sometimes in the late 1830’s, he [Ingres] copied out several lengthy extracts from them into his notebooks ...”, but probably “the painter never actually read the text, but only recorded what he wished to remember from a loosely translated dictation” (Yeazell, 2000, 36-7).

8. The entrance room of a hammam, where users change their clothes before and after bathing



Figure 10. Hamam paintings by Fausto Zonaro, (Source: Kayaoğlu and Pekin, 1992, 47-52).

9. A thin cloth to wrap the body inside the hammam

10. Joan Wallach Scott describes the approaches of feminist historians in studying the historical construction and conceptualization of gender as twofold: “first, descriptive – referring to the existence of phenomena or realities without interpreting, explaining or attributing causality; second, causal – theorizing about the nature of phenomena or realities, seeking an understanding of how and why these take the forms they do” (Scott, 2000, 77-8).

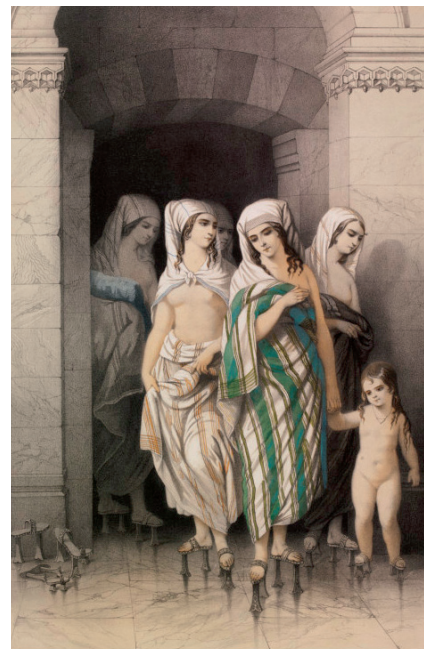
bodily sexuality of women, Zonaro emphasized their gender identities as mothers, relatives and friends.

There are two other paintings that exemplify this approach followed by Zonaro. In the *Une dame en costume turc avec sa servante au hammam* (A lady in Turkish costume with her servant at the hammam) (1740 circa.) by the French painter Jean-Étienne Liotard, we see a woman holding a smoking stick (*çubukluk*) in her left hand giving directions to her young servant (*halayık*) girl holding a bowl (*hamam tasi*) full of bathing equipment. Both



Figure 11. *Une dame en costume turc avec sa servante au hammam* (A lady in Turkish costume with her servant at the hammam) (1740 circa) by Jean-Étienne Liotard, 1740 circa, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, (Source: Kayaoğlu and Pekin, 1992, 55).

Figure 12. *La Turquie; Entrée Au Bain* (Entering the Bath), by Camille Rogier, 1846-8, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, (Source: Kayaoğlu and Pekin, 1992, 49).



11. In this respect, Renda claims that “Zonaro’s paintings are different from the subjective and imaginary paintings of many Orientalist painters who aim to depict the naked and semi-naked women in an exotic environment rather than documenting the bathing habits” (2011, 395).

12. Accordingly, Hans Peter Duerr shares the following *hadiths* of the Prophet Mohammad who initially commanded: “Avoid visiting those spaces called hamam” and “If a woman gets undressed in a place other than her husband’s house, her contact with the God will be cut”. As he was later convinced that these spaces are “not sinful places but cleaning and purification venues”, he changed his mind stating that “Anyone visiting a hamam should get clothed” (Duerr, 1999, 76). This right was confirmed by Ebusuud Efendi, the chief jurisprudent of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (ruled 1520-66)” (Ergin, 2009, np).

figures are fully dressed in traditional costumes and wearing very high clogs (*nalin*) (**Figure 11**). In *La Turquie; Entrée Au Bain* (Entering the Bath) (1846-8) by the French painter Camille Rogier, we see a mother and young daughter in the front, and other women, probably relatives or friends, following them into a hammam. Again, all the women are fully dressed in *peştamals* (9) and wearing *nalin*, reflecting primarily their gender role in the community (**Figure 12**).

The representation of femininity in the paintings of Zonaro, Liotard and Rogier could be considered a descriptive usage of gender associated with the study of items related to women, such as bathing dresses (*peştamal*) and accessories (*nalin*, *hamam tası*), rather than understanding their social and cultural nature (10). In other words, these painters undertake a conventional mission of introducing stages, spaces and products of a traditional bathing ritual in a hammam. In this context, although their compositions look relatively more realistic than the Orientalists (11), they pictorialized another constructed reality, in opposition to that of Ingres, Gérôme and Ponsan, in which the bodily sexuality of a bathing woman is not explicitly displayed, in compliance with the Islamic norms of morality (12).

The third approach in representing sexuality in the hammam is a hybrid one that combines the imaginary Orientalist approach of Ingres, Gérôme and Ponsan with the traditionalist approach of Zonaro, Liotard and Rogier. The painting titled “*Bain public des femmes Mahométanes*” (The Public Bath of Mohammedan Women) (1787) by the French painter Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, depicts the *sıcaklık* section of a women’s hammam using a larger and symmetrical compositional frame within which the overall interior space surrounded by massive walls on which *kurnas* are fixed, as well as portraying a dome with small openings allowing light into the space (**Figure 13**). The representation of sexuality in this painting ranges from women dressed in traditional costumes with their children sitting on the belly stone (*göbektaş*), to semi-naked women bathing by the marble basins (*kurna*).

Figure 13. *Bain public des femmes Mahométanes*, by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, 1787, in D’ohsson, Mouradgea. *Tableau Général de l’Empire Othoman, divisé en deux parties, dont l’une comprend la Législation Mahométane; l’autre l’Histoire de l’Empire Othomane*, vol. I, Paris, De l’imprimerie de Monsieur, PL. 13, The Gennadius Library, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Figure 14. The women bathing in the hammam, in *Zenanname* by Enderunlu Fazıl, 1793, Istanbul University Library.

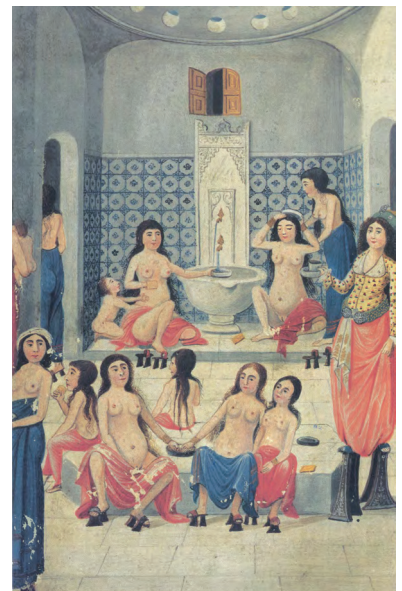




Figure 15. A painting by Münif Fehim Özerman showing the interior of a women's bath, (Source: Hayat Journal, İstanbul: Şevket Rado, 22 Temmuz 1965).

A painting which is produced as part of the manuscript *Zenannâme* by the Ottoman poet Enderunlu Fazıl in 1793 also shows the overall *sıcaklık* space with side walls, niches and openings, *göbektaş* as well as a partial dome. In this painting, we see various white women, most of whom are semi-naked bathing in relaxed manner, their genital organs partially visible (**Figure 14**). Due to its colour use and drawing style, resembling a caricature more than a painting, it does not reflect a (homo)erotic or exotic hammam ambience as in the Orientalist paintings, yet neither does it fully reflect a traditional approach, due to depiction of the mother figures in an exhibitionist manner. A painting by the Turkish illustrator Münif Fehim Özerman dated 1965, best exemplifies this hybrid approach through the association of various codes used by the Orientalists and the traditionalists, such as naked and semi-naked women sitting, reclining, chatting, bathing in erotic poses, a black slave figure, and also a mother with two children, as well as a partially-drawn *sıcaklık* space, the size of which cannot be easily estimated (**Figure 15**).

There is one common aspect in all three approaches. Even though they had no right to witness the interiors of a women's hammam, these male painters have mainly represented female sexuality and/or femininity in their hammam scenes, partially based on hearsay but mainly on their imagination. Especially, in the paintings following the third approach, the *sıcaklık* space is closely associated with female culture, by means of integrating within a single compositional frame the codes of idealized (homo)eroticism and traditional gender roles. In other words, these paintings create a conception of the hammam serving only women, and the *sıcaklık* chamber is the only space in which they bathe, relax or socialize in that building.

RE-CONSTRUCTING THE HAMMAM AS A REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE OF SEXUALITY

These pictorial representations, described above, have been widely reproduced in popular books and magazines since the 1930s, together with contemporary hammam photographs in order to visually support

13. See, for instance, the articles *Kadınlarm Eski Hamam Âlemleri* (1953), *Türk Hamamı Tarihe Karşıyor* (1982), *Tarihten Günümüze Hamamlar ve Hamam Kültürümüz* (2003), *Yabancı Seyyahların Dilinden Osmanlı Hamamları* (2003), and the books *Eski İstanbul'da Gündelik Hayat* (1992), *A Light onto a Tradition and Culture: Turkish Baths* (2005), *Hamam: Osmanlı'da Yıkınma Geleneği ve Berberlik Zanaatı* (2006).

14. A female slave or a concubine in a harem, called *cariye* or *odalık* in Turkish

15. See the scene (18:34) from the film '*Harem Suare*' by Ferzan Özpetek, 1999, DVD by Kanal D Home Video).

16. See the scene (43:48) from the film '*Harem Suare*' by Ferzan Özpetek, 1999, DVD by Kanal D Home Video).

17. See the scene (25:03) from the film '*Tosun Paşa*' by Kartal Tibet, 1976, DVD by ULUS Video

18. See the scene (48:45) from the film '*Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz*' by Ezel Akay, 2009, DVD by Horizon International.

the literary knowledge on hammams (13). Whether produced in an Orientalist, a traditionalist or a hybrid approach, these paintings are clearly imaginary by nature, and create a kind of constructed reality that could never match with the reality. Hence, they are not expected to give either factual knowledge about the social and sexual relations among the bathers, or spatial knowledge about the particular hammams where these relations might have occurred.

However, these paintings have been so freely and regularly re-produced in various media that they have formed a public conception through which the hammam is re-constructed as a representational space of sexuality. In other words, the more frequently they are re-produced and re-presented in media, the more realistic they become, at least for the non-specialist public who are unable to challenge the social, cultural and ideological orders that affect their production. In this context, whether they reflect the hammam space as a (homo)erotic environment for the Western audience or a traditional bathing venue for the conservative local audience, these pictures provide the potential viewers with a conditioned mindset, in which their images of hammams are entirely influenced by the scenes depicted in these paintings.

Several popular Turkish films produced in the late 20th century contributed to this re-construction by means of revitalizing the hammam scenes of the well-known paintings in an audio-visual medium. The hammam scenes of the film *Harem Suare* (1999) directed by Ferzan Özpetek, for instance, incorporate many visual codes of sexuality inherent in the Orientalist paintings, such as nakedness, being uninhibited, multi-racial intimacy and male voyeurism. One of these scenes depicts a fully naked white woman, an European *odalisque* (14) in the Ottoman harem, facing away from camera, sitting on a wooden cage, while her servant, a semi-naked black woman bathes her very similar to Gérôme's *The Bath* (15). In another scene, the same *odalisque*, lying on the *göbektaş*, is given a massage by the black servant, as in *The Massage* painting by Ponsan (16). Moreover, with reference to the observed woman of Ingres, a black male *eunuch* (*harem ağası*) watches the bathing *odalisque* through a lattice, representing an exaggerated code for male voyeurism. Yet, in both scenes set in the *sıcaklık* section of a harem hammam, the camera frames a large angle of view, showing most of the space, including other women bathing by marble basins (*kurna*), who are mostly concealed in Orientalist paintings.

Compared to *Harem Suare*, the hammam scenes in the films *Tosun Paşa* (*Tosun Pasha*) (1976) directed by Kartal Tibet and *Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz* (*Seven Husbands for Hurmuz*) (2009) directed by Ezel Akay, women are represented in a more traditional manner, resembling the paintings of Zonaro, Liotard and Rogier. In the hammam scene of the *Tosun Paşa*, for instance, we see clothed women of various ages, sitting on the *göbektaş*, eating, playing instruments and singing (17), while the women in the hammam scene of the *Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz* are lying and chatting on *göbektaş*, dressed in traditional costumes (18). It is significant that neither film shows women actually bathing; the hammam is rather depicted as an intimate space devoted to female communication, entertainment and sociability.

In a Lefebvrian perspective, the conception of a space which is coded in its various representations dominates not only the perception but also the experience of that space through these codes. In this respect, the domination of codes of sexuality regarding hammam culture, re-produced

in various visual and audio-visual media, has led to them becoming norms of promoting and re-vitalizing this culture in the 20th century. Art historian Nina Cichocki discusses this normative transformation within the context of both global and internal tourism. In terms of global tourism, she mentions that “[f]or foreign tourists, a *hamam* visit is part of a codified visiting routine ...” and “[t]his codified vision has been reinforced by Orientalist paintings of the nineteenth century, more recent travel books, travel magazines, coffee table books, television programs and ... films” (Cichocki, 2005, 106). She further claims that “[i]n this way, the *hamam* has come to symbolize the epitome of the sensual Orient that many tourists wish to experience ...” and furthermore they “promise to offer tourists an authentic experience of Turkish culture” (2005, 107).

Support for Cichocki’s argument has already been provided in the first section through the analysis of the codes of sexuality embedded in various pictorial representations of hammams. However, a further analysis is required to reveal how the hammam has been re-constructed as a representational space of sexuality for the local visitor. With reference to the critical theorist Mary Louise Pratt, Cichocki describes this re-construction as a “rediscovery” which occurs “as a result of what Pratt has called ‘auto-ethnography’ and in a manner that can be called internal tourism” (Cichocki, 2005, 107). This autoethnographic rediscovery works in such a way that a Turkish individual who has never or rarely experienced a hammam, but has seen the images of hammam interiors in popular books, magazines or films, is conditioned to accept any bathing venue labeled as a *Hamam* as an essential representation of a traditional bathing culture remaining from the Ottoman past; and furthermore, to have an expectation of a sensual and/or sexual ambience similar to those images when visiting such venues (19).

A contemporary example of such an autoethnographic rediscovery is the inauthentic hammams placed in the spa and wellness centers of some luxurious hotels in Turkey. The spatial organization of these centers is like a world exposition consisting of a single unified space in which various booth-like-chambers, each of which represents a specific bathing culture, such as the Finnish sauna, the Russian steam room, the Italian jacuzzi, the Roman thermal pool, meditative Thai and Bali massage rooms and the Ottoman-Turkish hammam, are located side by side. Naturally, in such an eclectic architecture, it is questionable how close each chamber is to its original state in functional and structural terms. However, the lack of authenticity of the hammam within this exposition is particular since it derives not only from its being taken out of its physical and social context, but also from the reduction of its tripartite spatial structure to a *sıcaklık* stereotype (20).

In the main corridor of a spa and wellness center, it is common to see a door labeled “the Turkish Bath” or “Hamam”, which may be placed next to a sauna, a fitness room or changing cabins. Whatever its external placement is, this door is always aligned with the central axis of its internal space. So, as the visitor opens the hammam door, the first image s/he sees is the symmetrical and vertical composition of the *sıcaklık*, as represented in many paintings, films and photographs: beams of daylight streaming down from the dome down onto a rectangular, circular or octagonal *göbektaşı* placed underneath. Yet, this stereotypical composition conceals the artificiality of the dome and the lighting, the inferiority of the wall patterns, as well as inappropriate leveling of the marble basins (*kurna*) and the

19. For the critical theorist Mary Louise Pratt, the term “autoethnography” or “autoethnographic expression” refers to “instances to which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s terms” (Pratt, 2008, 9).

20. For a further analysis of the *sıcaklık* stereotype in hotel hammams, see Paşin, B. “Fantasies of Bathing: Hotel Hamams as Orientalized Stereotypes”, 2012.



Figure 16. The interior of the hammam in Akbulut Hotel in Kuşadası, photo by the author.

21. See the advertisement photograph of the hammam in Akbulut Hotel in Kuşadası, retrieved from [<http://www.hotelakbulut.com/akbulut/tr/spa-wellness>] Access Date 30.08.2015.

22. See the advertisement photograph of the hammam in Hotel Lidya Sardes Thermal & Spa in Salihli, Manisa, retrieved from [<http://lidyatermalotel.com/index/rg.aspx?idr=27>] Access Date 30.08.2015.

seatings (*seki*) surrounding the space (**Figure 16**). In other words, the hotel hammam is a representational space re-constructed to provide a 'reality effect' for the preconditioned gaze of the visitor, in which a picturesque symmetry supersedes the originality of the space. Within the constructed meta-reality of a spa and wellness center, the hammam becomes an image to be observed, rather than a place to be experienced.

In this picturesque ambience of a hotel hammam, sexuality once again becomes a key element in its representation in hotel advertisement brochures and websites. The photographs which are particularly taken to reflect this ambience incorporate various codes of sexuality inherent in the paintings analyzed in the first section; yet manipulating them for the sake of marketing. In some photographs, the hammam is represented as a female-only space, in which Orientalist codes of sexuality are associated with traditional gender norms, as in the paintings following the third approach. In these images, a few women wearing *peştamals* are sitting in a relaxed manner by the *kurnas*, but not bathing, and a woman is given a soap massage on the *göbektaş* (21). In comparison, other photographs represent the hotel hammams as unisex spaces where men and women can bathe, be massaged and spend time together (22). Since most hotels do not force gender separation in the use of spa and wellness centers, it can be claimed that these unisex representations reflect a certain degree of reality. Yet, what is critical here is the articulation of heterosexual norms of the society and homoerotic codes of pictorial representations in an inauthentic hammam, which is a public space where neither heterosexual nor homosexual relations are possible. Compared to the traditional day-long visits of women in public hammams, the visitors' stays are brief and mostly confined to the traditional scrubbing and soap massage. In this respect, the hotel hammam can be considered an example of a representational space which is quite different from its original state, both conceptually and physically.

CONCEALMENT OF NON-NORMATIVE SEXUAL PRACTICES IN THE HAMMAM

As the Lefebvrian framework suggests, when the space is re-constructed as a representational space dominated by certain codes of representation, the perception of actual spatial practices in that space based on more complex social relations becomes almost impossible (Lefebvre, 1991, 40-41). This applies both for the re-productions of hammam paintings in popular media, as well as its re-constructions in a different context, such as the hotel hammam. In the paintings depicting the women's section of the hammam, (homo)eroticism among women is concept which has become as normalized as their traditional gender identities. This is clearly expressed in the paintings following the third approach, where various codes of female sexuality are readily associated in order to represent a female-only space. However, these representations disregard certain practices, defined as "competence" and "performance" by Lefebvre (1991, 33), which do not conform to the normative conceptions of female sexuality.

These non-normative practices have been treated by various scholars. Two Ottoman social life scholars, Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (2010, 258) describe the hammam as "a microcosm of the world outside, reflecting the social divisions and political upheavals of the society beyond its walls." This implies that the women's relations in the hammam were not as intimate and peaceful as represented in popular media. For example, at

21. The coldest entrance section of a hammam for clothing and resting before and after the bathing ritual, also known as *soyunmalık*.

22. Bereket (2003, 104) considers this traditional model as "an extension of the dominant sex typing and gender schema in [Turkish] society at large", which is "defined by rigid sex roles during anal penetration ... one partner being the masculine *aktif* and the other being the effeminate *pasif*..."

23. See the scene (01:07:21) from the film 'Hamam' by Ferzan Özpetek, 1997, DVD by Marmara Productions.

times of political divisions among the janissaries from different regiments, their wives also fought in hammams with bowls and clogs (Boyar and Fleet, 258). In terms of social divisions, the hierarchy among women in a hammam was not only based on racial differences, as represented with the "white master/black slave" duality in the paintings of Gérôme and Ponsan, but also on religion. Boyar and Fleet (2010, 258) informs that "Non-Muslims ... were to be distinguished from Muslims by wearing a special marker, a ring on their *peştamals*". Furthermore, "[t]hey were to change in a different place, were not to be given clogs, and had to wash at separate spots" (Boyar and Fleet, 2010, 258).

While the shared activities of female cleanliness and beauty inside the hammam strengthened "the bond within any specific group of women" (from a similar income level, religious or social status), it actually reinforced another aspect of social division by setting "boundaries towards those not included" (Ergin, 2009, np). This has been reflected on spatial practices in various chambers of the hammam. For instance, Tülay Taşçıoğlu highlights that "inside the *camekân* (23), the women were separately seated by corners in accordance with their intimacy and social status" (Taşçıoğlu, 1998, 118).

Various forms of conflict, yet different from those of the Ottoman period, could be observed in the contemporary use of women's hammams in Turkey. The women's studies scholar Elif Ekin Akşit conducted a participatory research in a traditional hammam in Ankara. In this, she emphasizes "the culture of conflict" in the women's section, which mostly occurs, as she observed, "in the entrance of the hammam around a big table rather than the interior as a result of ethnic and class differences." (Akşit, 2009, 141). By means of in-depth and focus group interviews, transect walks and regular visits, Akşit was able to understand the hammam as "a changing space where women negotiate their status, social positions and safety in an urban environment" (Akşit, 2011, 277). However, we rarely see these divisions or conflicts in contemporary representations, most of which depict the women in a peaceful and/or homoerotic manner in the *sıcaklık* chamber, as in the case of 19th century Orientalist paintings.

The conception and re-construction of the hammam as a female-only space in various media have also concealed the non-normative sexual practices in the men's section. The British painters Thomas Allom and William Henry Bartlett represent the male bathers as sexually neutral (asexual) beings, thus normalizing their patriarchal status with regard to the so-called "immoral" and "lustful" femininity prevalent in various media analyzed in the previous sections. In the *soyunmalık* depictions of Allom and Bartlett, we see semi-naked or fully-dressed male customers resting, smoking or being served by the hammam attendants (*tellak*) before leaving (**Figure 17** and **Figure 18**). In a *sıcaklık* depiction by Allom, we see a man sitting by a *kurna* and bathing himself and another man being scrubbed by a *tellak* (**Figure 19**). According to Renda (2011, 377), these paintings are "more realistic in depicting the architectural details of the hammam interiors and privileged customers served by *tellaks*" and they "draw attention to the importance of public hammams open to people from various classes and professions" rather than the male figures themselves. In other words, there is no reflection of any homoerotic code of sexuality or gender identity peculiar to the bathing men.

In the history of Turkish Arts, we rarely come across the depiction of male homosexuality, an identity which is believed to be almost exclusive to

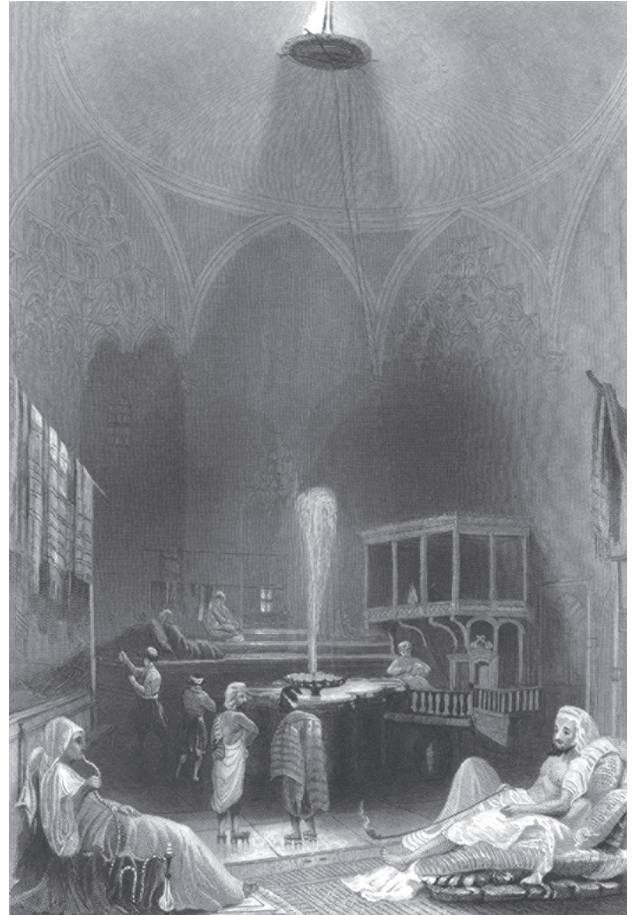


Figure 17. Outer Cooling Room of the Bath near Psamatra Kapousi, Thomas Allom, 1838 c., Source: IBB Atatürk Kitaplığı. (top left)

Figure 18. Cooling Room of a Hamam, William Henry Bartlett, 1838 circa, Source: IBB Atatürk Kitaplığı. (right)

Figure 19. The Interior of a Hamam, Thomas Allom, 1838 circa, Source: IBB Atatürk Kitaplığı. (bottom left)

the *tellaks*. In the illustration *Huban-ı Tellak*, which is produced as part of the manuscript *Hubannâme* by the Ottoman poet Enderunlu Fazıl in 1793, a *tellak* figure standing by a *kurna* is depicted as being rather effeminate in terms of his facial expression, body proportion and dressing (**Figure 20**). In the painting of an entertainment scene in the men's section of a hamam by Münif Fehim Özerman (1899-1983), young boys are dancing for a middle-aged male audience. In this painting, the boys' slim feminine bodies and dancing style contrast with their macho-looking and



Figure 20. *Huban-ı Tellak*, in *Hubannâme*, by Enderunlu Fazıl, 1793, Istanbul University Library.

Figure 21. The illustration of dancing boys in a hamam, by Münif Fehim Özerman, date: unknown, Halil Bezmen Collection.



24. The Head of the Chamber of Hammam Managers reacted negatively to the sexual scenes of the film 'Hamam' shown at in Zeyrek Çinili Hamam in İstanbul, 01 November 1997, Milliyet Newspaper Archives.

25. Today, generally, hotel hammams only become a female-only space when there is a special event such as a bride bath or a henna ritual (Pasin, 2012).

masculine audience (Figure 21). These representations are coded with a heteronormative conception of sexuality, in which the men who appear to have the potential for homosexual relationships are identified according to their sex-roles as *aktif/pasif*, conforming to the male/female dichotomy, in which the *pasif* male is considered an effeminate homosexual (24).

This heteronormative conception of homosexual relations among men is partially subverted in the film *Hamam* (1999) by Ferzan Özpetek. In one of the scenes, we see the two male characters, Mehmet and Francesco, caught in the act of an intimate relationship in a private chamber of a historic hammam in İstanbul by Francesco's wife (25). Before this sudden experience, the characters, neither of whom look effeminate, have noticed at each other occasionally and communicated intimately in various scenes of the film. Serena Anderlini-D'Onofri (2004, 172) describes this relationship as a "bisexual/bicultural game placed at the centre of the diegetic space [which] enables the inner transformations that make the characters capable of creating a sustainable emotional environment around themselves." Even though the bodily intimacy of these two bisexual men in the hammam was merely temporary, and turned out to be nothing more than an emotional game, the film received negative reactions in the Turkish popular media from hammam managers, who denied the existence of such relations in hammams (26). This shows how potentially manipulative the representations of the hammam are in legitimizing the role of men in a heteronormative society. While the effeminate *tellak* figure, a permanent attendant of the hammam, is tolerable as long as he plays the role of a woman within the norms of *aktif/pasif* dichotomy, a temporary intimacy among men that may occur in the most private chambers of a hammam is considered a threatening behavior.

In a recent PhD dissertation entitled "A Critical Reading of the Ottoman-Turkish Hammam as a Queered Space" (Pasin, 2014), it is argued that it is not realistic to claim that all sexual practices in the men's section of a hammam conform to the heterosexual norms as depicted with the effeminate *tellak* figure, neither is it possible to affirm the managers' claim about the lack of homosexual relations in hammams. The case studies conducted in the men's sections of particular hammams in İzmir, Ankara and İstanbul within the scope of this dissertation present two significant findings that disprove these normative preconceptions. First, the men visiting these hammams do not merely take normative sex roles such as effeminate homosexual man or macho-looking masculine man, but "incorporate various gender identities: gay, heterosexual, bisexual and transsexual" (Pasin, 2014, 13). Second, they visit the hammam for various aims: to closet their gender identities, to engage in casual sex, and to construct homosocial solidarity networks (Pasin, 2014, 49). Hence, the spatial and sexual practices in the men's section of the hammam are much more complex than in the way they are conceived, represented and coded in popular media.

CONCLUSION

Two concluding remarks from this study enable us to critically read and understand how sexuality becomes a key issue in the production of hammam as a representational space of sexuality. First, it is referred as an ideological tool of manipulation within the contexts of Orientalism and Auto-ethnography. Male and female homoeroticism coded in most of the representations are not considered immoral, as long as they visually

satisfy the Western eye, while conforming to the traditional gender roles of an Eastern society. In the advertisement brochures of most of the hotel hammams, for instance, female homoeroticism which does not even exist in spatial practice of those hammams, is referred as a marketing strategy (27). Yet, as the ethnographic researches have shown, the women's section of the original Ottoman-Turkish hammams, as enclosed privatized spaces where a homosexual relation is more likely to exist, actually function as stages of homosocial power relations and class hierarchies, rather than homosexual intimacy.

In a similar vein, male homoeroticism in the men's section of the hammam is readily associated with the effeminate *tellak* figure, while non-normative identities and homosocial practices that may occur among the male bathers are ignored both in European and Turkish Art. The picturesque symmetry of the *sıcaklık* section further supports this ideological approach, by blurring those identities and practices, both visually and cognitively, behind its multi-sensory ambience composed of limited natural light, steam and humidity. Besides heteronormative conservatism, this is another reason why a temporary homosexual intimacy which may well occur as a result of this sensually-appealing atmosphere of the hammam, as in the case of Mehmet and Francesco in the film *Hamam*, arouses the disapproval of those who can neither see nor know what actually occurs.

Second, the hammam is one of the best exemplary cases for such a critical reading of sexuality in space. Although in the social history of the Ottoman-Turkish society, other spaces allow users of the same sex to socialize, such as women's harem, men's coffeehouse, due to its historical specificity reflecting the traces of a 500-year-old bathing custom and functional nature that requires bodily nakedness, the Ottoman-Turkish hammam provides an appropriate environment to witness whether the codes of sexuality produced in representations apply to their contemporary use. If so, this would show that the Lefebvrian framework proposes not merely a unidirectional process of spatial production in which spatial experience is dominated by codes of representation, but a cyclic one in which the user, in turn, starts questioning the constructedness of his/her experience in space. In case of hotel hammams, this constructedness seems inevitable, as their existence is based on marketing strategies of global and local tourism. However, it would be problematic to expect to see a pictorial ambience, whether Orientalist, traditionalist or hybrid, in an existing historical hammam, since the traditional bathing customs are no longer maintained, and the figures in those paintings never existed.

In addition to these remarks, the major premise of this study is to open up a unique area of academic research associating hammam architecture with sexuality. The existing scholarly work on hammams mainly focuses on their formal, functional, structural and technical aspects as part of the sub-disciplinary areas, such as Architectural History and Restoration (Pasin, 2014, 52-63). Having considered a popular magazine article as the departure point of a critical argument, this study has focused on representational aspects of sexuality in hammam space, as distinct from the positivist objectives of previous works. Gaining new and critical insights into other aspects of sexuality in hammams would be a valuable aim for future research.

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A CRITICAL READING OF THE OTTOMAN-TURKISH HAMMAM AS A REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE OF SEXUALITY

As much as being a physical bathing space, the Ottoman-Turkish hammam is a representational space which is sexualized through various codes and norms. In this study, based on Lefebvre's tripartite theoretical framework on the production of space, the hammam is critically read as a representational space of sexuality. By means of multiple visual, audio-visual sources and research data, it is aimed to understand how these codes and norms of sexuality are perceived, conceived and experienced in the production of the hammam space. In the first section, comparative analyses of various pictorial representations in which the hammam is constructed as a female-only space, are made. In the second section, how the hammam is re-constructed as a representational space of sexuality is analyzed through its re-presentation in popular Turkish movies, as well as its experience in the hotel hammams. Finally, how the non-normative spatial practices in the hammam are concealed by means of heterosexual and homoerotic norms of sexuality and gender identity, are shown.

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Osmanlı-Türk hamamı; temsiliyet; temsili mekân; mekânsal pratik; cinsellik.

CİNSELLİĞİN TEMSİLİ BİR MEKÂNI OLARAK OSMANLI-TÜRK HAMAMININ ELEŞTİREL BİR OKUMASI

Osmanlı-Türk Hamamı fiziksel bir yıkanma mekânı olduğu kadar çeşitli kodlar ve normlar yoluyla cinsiyetlendirilmiş temsili bir mekândır. Bu çalışmada, Lefebvre'nin mekânın üretimi üzerine üçlü kuramsal çerçevesine bağlı olarak, hamam cinselliğın temsili bir mekânı olarak okunmaktadır. Çoklu görsel, işitsel-görsel kaynaklar ve araştırma verileri aracılığıyla, bu cinsellik kodlarının ve normlarının hamam mekânının üretiminde nasıl algılandığının, kavrandığının ve tecrübe edildiğinin anlaşılması hedeflenmiştir. İlk bölümde, hamamın yalnızca kadınlara özgü bir mekân olarak inşa edildiği resimsel temsillerin karşılaştırmalı analizleri yapılmıştır. İkinci bölümde, hamamın Türk filmlerindeki temsilleri ve otel hamamlarındaki tecrübeleri yoluyla cinselliğın temsili bir mekânı olarak nasıl inşa edildiği analiz edilmiştir. Son olarak, hamamdaki normatif olmayan mekânsal pratiklerin heteroseksüel ve homoerotik cinsellik ve cinsel kimlik normları aracılığıyla nasıl gizlendiği gösterilmiştir.

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