# TRIUMPH OF COMMERCIALISM: THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN EXOTICA AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION OF 1893

**A Master's Thesis**

**by**

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**September 2008**

*To Paul…*

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
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ANKARA

September 2008

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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# ABSTRACT

## TRIUMPH OF COMMERCIALISM: THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN EXOTICA AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION OF 1893

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September 2008

This thesis attempts to indicate how the concessionaires of the Middle Eastern exhibits in the Midway Plaisance at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 trafficked in centuries-old stereotypical Muslim images in the United States to realize a large financial profit at a time when American consumer culture was starting to emerge, and how they succeeded against such weaker competitors as the World's Parliament of Religions and individual efforts made by official bodies such as the Ottoman government. In a larger context, it deals with the subject of how the American advertising and entertainment industries of the twentieth century adopted the practices of the Midway entrepreneurs by using Oriental stereotypes to generate profits.



**Keywords:** 19th Century Chicago, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago Fair of 1893, Midway Plaisance, Orient, Oriental stereotypes, 19th Century American-Muslim Contacts

# ÖZET

## TİCARİ ANLAYIŞIN GALİBİYETİ: 1893 DÜNYA KOLOMBİYA FUAR'INDA ORTA DOĞU'LU EGZOTİK SERGİLERİN TİCARİ BİR BOYUT KAZANMASI

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Bu tez 1893 Dünya Kolombiya Fuarındaki Midway Plaisance'ta Orta Doğulu ülkelerin sergilerini teşhir etmekle yükümlü olan imtiyaz sahibi temsilcilerin, Amerikan tüketici kültürünün ortaya çıkmakta olduğu bir dönemde, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde yüzyıllardan beri yer etmiş klişe Müslüman imajını kullanarak büyük bir ticari kar elde etmeye çalışmalarını ve zayıf rakipleri olan Dünya Dinler Parlamentosu ve Osmanlı hükümeti gibi resmi kurumlar tarafından yürütülen bireysel çabalar karşısında nasıl başarılı olduklarını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Daha geniş bir bağlamda, bu çalışma, yirminci yüzyıl Amerikan reklamcılık ve eğlence endüstrilerinin klişe Oryantal imajını kar elde etmek amacıyla kullanmış olmalarının, Midway girişimcilerinin uygulamalarını benimsemiş olduklarını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** 19. Yüzyıl Şikago, Dünya Kolombiya Fuarı, 1893 Şikago Fuarı, Midway Plaisance, Doğu, Oryantal Klişeler, 19. Yüzyıl Amerikan-Müslüman Bağlantıları

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profit and the need to provide entertainment in the Chicago Fair, this thesis would not have reached its final form.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

> *Here all nations are to meet in laudable emulation on the fields of art, science and industry, on the fields of research, invention and scholarship, and to learn the universal value of the discovery we commemorate; to learn, as could be learned in no other way, the nearness of man to man, the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of the human race. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the exalted purpose of the World's Columbian Exposition. May it be fruitful of its aim, and of peace forever to all the nations of the earth.*
>
> George R. Davis, *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition* [1]

Such was the message given by George R. Davis, the director-general for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, in the introductory address for the dedication ceremonies delivered in Chicago on October 21, 1892. Similar to its counterparts held in different cities of the world in years preceding and following 1893, one of the most prominent goals of the Columbian Exposition, other than highlighting the progress of mankind in the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of Americas by Columbus, was international peace. These lofty goals, however, competed with the potential for

[1] George R. Davis, "Introductory Address" in *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition: Historical and Descriptive, Memorial Volume* (Chicago: Stone, Kastler & Painter, 1893), 140.

moneymaking in the Midway Plaisance, which, according to historian Henry Davenport Northrop, "might have been properly named 'World's Amusement Center.'"[2]

In the midst of the confusion of events defining late nineteenth-century United States, e.g. economic depression, labor unrest, progress, industrialization, urbanization, nativism, territorial expansion, and uncertainty about the future, the White City of the World's Columbian Exposition epitomized an ideal republic, with achievements in the industries, sciences and arts, and a perfect city with its uniform beaux-arts architecture and high culture representing the most advanced civilization.[3] In the midst of this dignity stood the Midway Plaisance with its various irregular structures erected by the guest nations, who came to Chicago upon the invitation of U.S. President Benjamin Harrison.[4] Under the direction of Sol Bloom, an entertainment entrepreneur, the Midway, composed of numerous privately sponsored concessions, formed the fair's carnival-like side show, where the exotica of the Orient such as the *danse du ventre* became some of the most popular distractions.[5] By capturing the interest of the public in things exotic, the concessionaires of the Midway Plaisance exploited stereotypical scenes of the Orient, turning them into high-profit commodities for their commercial objectives.

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[2] Henry Davenport Northrop, *The World's Fair As Seen in One Hundred Days* (Philadelphia: Ariel Book Company, 1893), 675.

[3] See David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 1-44, and Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

[4] The invitation for the nations in the proclamation was as follows: "And in the name of the Government and of the people of the United States, I do hereby invite all the nations of the earth to take part in the commemoration of an event that is preeminent in human history and of lasting interest to mankind, by appointing representatives thereto, and sending such exhibits to the World's Columbian Exposition as will most fitly and fully illustrate their resources, their industries and their progress in civilization." See *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition: Historical and Descriptive*, 57.

[5] In "Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Exposition Universelles," *Assemblage*, No. 13 (Dec., 1990), 34-59, Zeynep Celik tells the story of how the belly dance became a representative Islamic art form, a commercial icon at the universal expositions.

In fact, knowledge of the Orient and Oriental was not a new concept for many Americans by the time the fair opened in 1893. From the late eighteenth through the mid nineteenth centuries, when Americans were engaged in periodic conflict with the Muslim powers based on the Barbary Coast of the Mediterranean, Islamic elements became an inspiration for literary works at home.[6] In the nineteenth century, reports of American missionaries from the Middle East became another means of learning about Muslims. With the invention of the steamship, traveling became easier and tourism companies multiplied in the United States, thus making visits to distant exotic lands more accessible to the average person. Tourists, writers, painters, and archeologists began flooding into the Middle East in search of exotica and returning with expensive artifacts from Islamic lands. In the late nineteenth century, Americans had a new opportunity to encounter the Orient at home, though not necessarily in a pleasant and welcoming way, as in the sometimes awkward arrival of Muslim immigrant groups such as Syrians and Arabs. What many Americans were looking for in the Orient, however, was not the reality of poor Muslim immigrants living miserably on street corners without a shelter, but rather exotic novelties, fairytale-like spectacles, or the eroticism of the harem. In the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the concessionaires focused on

[6] In his book, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Timothy Marr explores the American perception of the Islamic world from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. His focus on the early national period is rather original, bringing out how patriots used Islamicist images of Mohammed and the Sultans to dramatize British exploitation of American colonies. Marr also presents the stories of American missionaries in Islamic lands as well as explaining how some Americans took the Muslim practice of restraining from alcohol and the humane slavery system of Islam to support the Temperance Movement and the abolition of slavery at home. Another prominent work on the historical interaction of Americans with the Muslim cultures is Holly Edwards, ed, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), which includes a story of Orientalism in America in high art and popular culture from the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century. Malini Johar Schuller's *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998) is a useful source that tells how literary works on the Orient reflect the political significance of the Orient in the United States.

the latter to successfully focus the attention of the public on the Midway Plaisance, thus exploiting both the negative and positive images of the Orient for their commercial aspirations while attracting as many people as they could to make a huge profit.

While the individual entrepreneurs of the Midway were dedicated to making large profits by using those Oriental motifs, there were other facilities in the fair that had non-commercial goals, even spiritual ones, in their representations of different cultures and religions. One of these was the World's Parliament of Religions, "the crowning event of the World's Congresses of 1893,"[7] which was held under the authority of the World's Congress Auxiliary. Symbolizing the spiritual element of the Columbian Exposition, this event promised universal peace through a friendly assembly that was open to all nations. It listed, as one of its objects, promoting and deepening "the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths, through friendly conference and mutual good understanding, while not seeking to foster the temper of indifferentism, and not striving to achieve any formal and outward unity."[8] By June 1891, more than three thousand invitations were sent out to religious leaders in many countries for the purpose of creating a display of how humans could co-exist in religious harmony.[9]

Despite its noble and spiritual objectives, however, the World's Parliament of Religions did not present a flawless model of peace among religions. In his critical study, Clay Lancaster describes incidents that reveal the more negative facets of the

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[7] Burg, 263.
[8] John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1, (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893), 17. The year after the Columbian Exposition of 1893, John Henry Barrows compiled a two-volume work of 1600 pages recording the speeches, meetings and the most significant aspects of the World's Parliament of Religions. As the most comprehensive work, containing all parliament speeches, this two-volume book edited by Rev. John Henry Barrows is an invaluable record of the Parliament of Religions.
[9] Ibid, 10, 11.

Parliament. First of all, the representatives of each religion failed to resist the temptation to prove the superiority of their religion over others. Secondly, inappropriate words were heard being used against groups, as when referring to Moslems as Mohammedans, or certain speakers were shouted down with cries of "shame" in disapproval of their speech, thus contradicting the basis and purpose of the Parliament conferences. Moreover, as Lancaster has stated, the slogan of the gathering from the Old Testament, "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?" did not hold much promise of welcoming the representatives of Far Eastern religions.[10] Therefore, the Parliament of Religions could not fulfill its initial objectives and became a forum for competition and struggle among religions.

Another non-commercial effort in representing the Oriental culture was made by official representatives of the Ottoman Empire, the only Muslim country with a national building on the main fairgrounds as well as a Turkish village in the Midway Plaisance. The Ottoman government sought to display positive Muslim images by downplaying the exotic influence, but could not fully succeed in this goal, as the business of the show was handled by a contracted company, Ilya Suhami Saadullah & Co., which showed no hesitation in emphasizing extreme exoticism despite the concern of Sultan Abdulhamid II in Istanbul, for whom the Ottoman "self-portrait" was crucial.[11] Next to the loud, visual, and entertaining shows provided by this commercial operator, when combined

[10] Clay Lancaster, *The Incredible World's Parliament of Religions at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893: A Comparative and Critical Study* (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1987), 8-38.
[11] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 150. Deringil devotes a complete chapter to "the Ottoman Self-Portrait," which includes the story of the involvement of the Ottoman Empire in the World's Columbian Exposition from the Turkish perspective. It explains how concerned the Sublime Porte was in displaying a positive Turko-Muslim image overseas, but how they conflicted with themselves in choosing certain exhibits that stimulated 'otherness,' especially when transferring the work to an individual company. For a complete story, see Deringil, 150-165.

with the spectacles of the Cairo Street, the Algerian Village and other Islamic concessions of the Midway Plaisance, the more sedate Turkish displays in the specialized buildings of the White City remained as silent and colorless items lost in the crowd.[12] Therefore, the exhibits such as the Abdulhamid albums depicting the modernization of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century,[13] and the Turkish female writer Fatma Aliye Hanim's books symbolizing educated Turkish women in the library of the Women's Building, which depicted the woman as a respectable dignity who belongs to a family rather than a commodity for amusement such as in *dans du ventre*, served merely as a small part of a wider exhibition that had no further meaning to the visitors.

Nevertheless, there were some acknowledgements that the popular exhibits of the Midway Plaisance were not accurately or fully representative of the Muslim cultures being depicted. Just as the photographer James J. Gibson ennobled the imagery of the Orientals in the Midway with his dignifying portraits,[14] there were some positive accounts of Muslims that did not share the overly stereotypical and commercial aspects of the Plaisance shows. For example, journalist Marian Shaw suggested, "The people of

[12] In her essay, Zeynep Celik argues that minds were prejudiced in certain ways towards the Oriental exhibits in the Columbian Exposition. She argues that the authentic sets designed for the World's Fairs in the nineteenth century formed a significant part of American perceptions of the Orient. See Zeynep Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition" in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, ed. Holly Edwards (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 77-97, and Celik's *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[13] After accepting the invitation for the Chicago Fair, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Abdulhamid II, ordered the preparation of an album depicting the most modern aspects of the Ottoman society. Having been exhibited at the Fair, this album, which included 1819 photographs and 51 albums, was later donated to the Library of Congress. See William Allen, "Abdülhamid II Koleksiyonu," translated by Vasıf K. Kortum, *Tarih ve Toplum* 25.5 (Ocak 1986): 16-19. For the article in its original language, see William Allen, "The Abdul Hamid II Collection," *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (April-June 1984): 119-45.

[14] For more information about the photographs of the James J. Gibson, see Julie K. Brown, *Contesting Images: Photography and the World's Columbian Exposition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 82-85.

the Midway are typical only to a certain extent. They represent some phrases of foreign life, but its life in its most whimsical aspect, and it would be as unfair to take them as representatives of their respective nations as to take Buffalo Bill's 'Wild West' show as typical of American life."[15] Similarly, Gustav Kobbe in *The Century* magazine emphasized the fake nature of the Midway that was perfectly designed for moneymaking, as he wrote:

> In the Midway Plaisance is probably the greatest collection of 'fakes' the world has ever seen. The proprietors thereof rejoice, however, in the proud title of 'Concessionaires.' Whenever I grew tired of formal sight-seeing I would stroll down the Plaisance (which was so popular that everybody soon got the knack of pronouncing it correctly) to the Egyptian temple. Here was the greatest fakir of them all. I am proud to say that he was an American.[16]

As the spiritual facilities of the fair failed to achieve their initial goals, it became clearer as to how the commercial concessionaires of the Midway Plaisance with Sol Bloom as the manager could be so successful in earning profit by exploiting the popular American interest in the exoticism of the Orient. While using the Orient to refer to the Middle Eastern Muslim societies at the Chicago Fair of 1893, this thesis does not aim to make an Orientalist argument along the model of Edward Said's claims. In the complete text that follows, use of the terms 'Orient' or 'Oriental' refer to the representations of Muslim/Middle Eastern countries—that is, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Persia, Tunisia and the Ottoman Empire—made at the Chicago Fair. This thesis attempts to indicate how the concessionaires of the Midway Plaisance at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 trafficked in centuries-old Muslim images in the United States to realize a large financial

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[15] Marian Shaw, *World's Fair Notes: A Woman Journalist Views Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1992), 56.

[16] Gustav Kobbe, "Sights at the Fair," *The Century* 46.5 (September 1893): 643-655, 653.

profit at a time when American consumer culture was starting to emerge, and how they succeeded against such weaker competitors as the World's Parliament of Religions and individual efforts made by official bodies such as the Ottoman government. In a larger context, it deals with the subject of how the advertising and entertainment industries of the twentieth century adopted the practices of the Midway entrepreneurs by using the Oriental stereotypes for their profit-making activities.

There are numerous articles and books related to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, but the most relevant ones for this thesis are limited to those describing the commercial aspect of the Midway Plaisance, especially the Muslim-themed exhibits. One of the main sources on the use of Oriental elements in Midway at the dawn of the emergence of a big entertainment industry in the United States is *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930,* edited by Holly Edwards, which is a collection of articles documenting various stages of Orientalism in the United States. In fact, the essays in this edited volume define the two significant stages of the idea of the Orient in the United States. Before the Columbian Exposition, exposure to the Orient occurred in high art, when the artists either traveled to the Middle East or composed their pictures at home using their imaginations. After the fair, however, the Orient was no longer a desired object of high art because it had become an item of mass consumption in the United States. In the last section of the book, "Catalogue of the Exhibition," Holly Edwards in her various essays summarizes the story of how the early twentieth-century advertising, film and fashion industries successfully used the Oriental images to sell their products. Edwards gives examples of how American tobacco companies used Oriental names and images to promote their products; of how the exotic experiences of the Orient became subjects of American

movies; and of how "a hint of the East became a marketing asset,"[17] even in fashion. A more specific and comprehensive work on the theme of the Orient in American and European movies is *Orientalism in Film* by Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar.

Another prominent work, *Amusing The Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*, by historian John F. Kasson, tells the history of the birth of the great amusement parks at the Coney Island, along with a mass culture that came to define the American public. As a work of cultural history, this book indicates that the World's Columbian Exposition, situated on a timeline between the projects of New York's Central Park and Coney Island, was one of the most important sources of recreation in the late nineteenth century United States. According to Kasson, "Steeplechase, Luna Park, Dreamland, the three great enclosed amusement parks that sprang up at the turn of the century," were mostly modeled on features found on the Midway of the Columbian Exposition, "like the 'Streets of Cairo' and other attractions but on a much grander scale."[18] The parks at Coney Island were harbingers of the great American theme parks such as Disneyland that opened later in the mid twentieth century.

In order to understand the motives of the concessionaires in Midway Plaisance at the Chicago Fair, it is necessary to understand the financing and politics of the universal expositions in the nineteenth century. Paul Greenhalgh's *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* devotes one entire chapter to the funding systems of the international expositions in Britain, France, and America. Explaining the role and motives of governments in supporting

[17] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 232.
[18] John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), 54.

international fairs, Greenhalgh remarks on the significance of popular entertainment as a guarantor of enough attendance to cover the high overhead costs, and points to these fairs as the beginning of mass international popular culture.

The richness of the guidebooks and histories written in 1893 about the Columbian Exposition is proof of the popularity and widespread influence of the event in the nineteenth-century United States.[19] Regardless of the campaigns against Chicago in New York and Europe, however, Chicago, reflecting the rising commercial culture of the late nineteenth-century America as the home of the entrepreneur, whose "public image…extreme wealth and … conspicuous taste, made him a genuine American hero,"[20] proved its success with a total attendance of 27,529,400 at the end of the World's Fair in October 1893.[21]

In his article "A Contest of Cultures," historian James Gilbert remarks that, "The Middle Eastern section at the heart of the Midway offered visitors entertainment and a 'taste of the Orient'—a combination which proved commercially highly successful."[22] Indeed, the commercialism of the Midway became so successful that it even "began to

[19] Some of the most particular books written to commemorate the Columbian Exposition are Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair: An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893* (Chicago and San Francisco: The Bancroft Company, 1893); Julian Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1893); Robert Anderton Naylor, *Across the Atlantic* (London: The Roxburghe Press, 1893); John J. Flinn, *Guide to the World's Fair Grounds, Buildings and Attractions* (Chicago: The Standard Guide Company, 1893) and *The Best Things to Be Seen at the World's Fair* (Chicago: The Columbian Guide Co., 1893)*;* Rand, McNally & Co., *A Week at the Fair Illustrating the Exhibits and Wonders of the World's Columbian Exposition with Special Descriptive Articles* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, Publishers, 1893); *The Artistic Guide to Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition: Illustrated* (Chicago, Philadelphia, Stockton, Cal.: Monarch Book Company, 1892); and *The Dream City, A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1893).

[20] Burg, 6.

[21] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition: Historical and Descriptive*, 38.

[22] James Gilbert, "A Contest of Cultures," *History Today* 42 (July 1992), 35.

encroach upon and redefine the White City,"[23] which was supposed to represent the more noble and refined facets of the World's Columbian Exposition. In the end, Daniel Burnham, the Director of Works for the Columbian Exposition and Frederic Law Olmsted, the great architect who planned the landscape of the exposition, suggested enlivening the White City with Midway motifs: "Why not," Olmsted continued "hire exotic figures in native costume—'varieties of the "heathen,"' he "put it—from the Midway?"[24]

The commercial success of the Oriental elements at the Chicago Fair raises the question of why Americans were so interested in the exotic. In order to supply background information for understanding the American relationship to the Orient, the second chapter of this thesis will give a history of the American perception of the Muslim world up to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Starting from the first American contacts with the Muslim world of the Barbary Coast, and examining relations to the Ottoman Empire, and then turning to reflections of the American missionaries, tourists, artists, archeologists in the Muslim Middle East, this chapter will be a preparation for evaluating the contacts of Americans with the Islamic representatives in the World's Fair.

The third chapter deals with the core subject of this thesis, the commercial Muslim displays in the Midway Plaisance. This chapter will explain how the Midway Plaisance, which was originally designated to be the ethnology section of the fair with an educative purpose under the charge of the Harvard professor Frederick W. Putnam, became an entertainment arena directed by Sol Bloom. It will describe each of the

[23] Ibid, 38.
[24] Kasson, 23.

concessions, representing Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Persia and the Ottoman Empire, along with their individual sponsoring companies, and analyze how these concessionaires were more interested in a style of display that would provide popular entertainment for the highest profit, rather than in a less spectacular museum-like presentation.

The fourth chapter details positive attempts at the fair to represent Oriental cultures and religions. The World's Parliament of Religions, the most prominent event with a non-commercial purpose in the World's Columbian Exposition, will be addressed in the first part of this chapter. Following this, the exhibits of the Ottoman government emphasizing modernity serve as a case study of displays that had to compete with the entertainment shows of the Midway concessionaires. The deficiencies of these representations will also be considered. In the last section of this chapter, the photography in the Midway Plaisance forms another case of study of how amateur photographers favored the conventional and stereotypical images of the Muslim inhabitants in the Midway Plaisance and had a more widespread influence than those like photographer James J. Gibson, whose pictures of different groups in the Midway were dignified in their portrayals but not as influential as the amateur ones as they were less in numbers.

Following these chapters, this thesis will conclude by remarking on the success of the commercial shows of the Midway relative to the spiritual and non-commercial venues at the fair such as the World's Parliament of Religions. In this section, besides examining the reasons that helped the concessionaires of the Midway Plaisance to become successful, the consequences of the Midway being a popular amusement center of the Columbian Exposition will be explained. As the Middle Eastern part of the

Midway Plaisance at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition proved to be highly successful, entertainment entrepreneurs in subsequent decades already had a template for how to appeal to the public. In short, the Midway Plaisance, other than influencing later American expositions, left a major mark on the American entertainment industry. As such, the influence of the Midway's popular entertainment culture based on the Middle Eastern exotica—in other words, the legacy of the Oriental Midway Plaisance—on the advertising and entertainment industry of the twentieth century United States is examined in the concluding chapter.

# CHAPTER 2

# AMERICAN-MUSLIM CONTACTS ON THE EVE OF THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

Unlike the early twentieth century, when the cultural components of the Islamic lands became a vital source for the advertisement and the entertainment industries in the United States, it was not yet a highly commercial culture that defined the American relationship to the Orient prior to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The association with the Muslim world up to the late nineteenth century occurred mainly by means of Americans traveling to Middle Eastern lands rather than Muslims coming to the United States. When the United States became interested in the Oriental trade, the search for ports on the Barbary Coast led to a crisis with the Algerians that symbolized the first overseas American contact with Muslims. The same period witnessed American missionary activity in the Orient following the foundation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Bradford, Massachusetts in June 1810. When traveling opportunities increased as a result of improvements in sea transportation

systems and tourism companies, American tourists could travel to the Orient to visit the Holy Lands and explore the novelty of exotica. Only during the late nineteenth century, when the Muslim immigrants first started arriving to the United States, could Americans meet people from Islamic lands at home.

It was those American contacts with Muslims and their reflections in the United States that laid the foundations for American consciousness of the Islamic world, which was to come to life spectacularly in Chicago by the entertainment entrepreneurs at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Without any preceding knowledge of the Oriental, the rising consumer industry of the late nineteenth-century United States would not have been as successful in marketing the exotic. This chapter contains a brief history of American contacts with Muslim countries, which awakened public consciousness in the United States between the late eighteenth and the late nineteenth centuries, with emphasis on the Algerian conflict, relations with the Ottoman Empire, American missionaries in the Middle East, tourists touring the Islamic lands, and finally, the incorporation of American visits to the Orient in popular Americana.

### 2.1. Crisis on the Barbary Coast and Reflections in the U.S.

After the Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1776, U.S. involvement in the Mediterranean trade caused problems for Americans, as the Muslim countries on the Barbary Coast did not officially recognize the United States. Left without the support of the British Empire, which was a recognized power in the North African countries, Americans became involved in conflicts with the Barbary States, especially in the form of attacks from their corsairs. According to scholar Malini Johar Schueller, "the drama

began in July 1785, when Algerians captured the *Maria*, a Boston schooner"[25] as well as the *Dauphin.* "These ships" as historian Timothy Marr adds, "with their combined crew of twenty-one, were taken into Algiers where ten would languish in captivity for more than a decade, seven would die from disease, and four others would be privately ransomed."[26] A similar aggression occurred only eight years later, when "North Africans again sailed out from the Straits of Gibraltar in 1793 and rounded up nine more American ships between October 8 and 23, to which two more ships were added in late November, raising the total number of American captives to nearly 120."[27]

After signing a treaty in July 1796, American captives were freed on condition that the United States pay ransom for its citizens. This humiliation provoked Jefferson into taking action against North African states, such as U.S. destruction of a Tripolitan vessel in 1804 and the attack by American marines on Derna in 1805, which eventually resulted in U.S. victory: "The attack ended with the first dramatic show of USAmerican [*sic*] prowess, as the marines raised U.S. flag on the city walls."[28] What is more noteworthy here than American victory against the Barbary States is, however, the interpretation of U.S. captivity and the news of victory at home.

In the young republic of the United States, the heroic experiences of Americans in the Barbary States became a fascinating source of inspiration for a series of published literary works, including narratives, poems, memoirs, letters, plays, songs, and political writings, in which, in the words of Holly Edwards, "American citizens were celebrated as the noble victims of savage tribesmen, ruthless pirates, or other benighted

[25] Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 45.
[26] Marr, 30.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Schueller, 46.

barbarians."[29] Some of the works inspired by the Algerian conflict were Peter Markoe's *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (1787), Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), Washington Irving's *Salmagundi* (1808), James Ellison's *The American Captive* (1812), John Stevens Jones's *The Usurper* (1841),[30] and *The Wanderings of William* (1801), *The Narrative of the Captivity of John Vandike* (1801), and *History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin*, published twelve times from 1800 to 1828.[31]

Although many of these works reflected the tyranny of the Barbarians while praising American freedom, works such as *Slaves in Algiers* reflected "the power of the national fantasy of female virtue to convert patriarchal despotism."[32] As popularly perceived from the American experiences in Algiers and published works in the United States, the Algerian male, "with his harem of obedient women, represented a moral degeneracy and sensual excess."[33] In this context, the idea of the harem, which, eventually, would be one of the most desirable aspects of the Orient in the market of the exotica, was already forming in the minds of Americans as one of the most representative aspects of Islamic culture.

Exploitation of the Algerian crisis for political use was very common in the late eighteenth century. An example of this, as described by Marr, occurred in New York in 1787, when John Jay admonished New Yorkers that "if they refused to ratify the new Constitution, 'Algerians could be on the American coast and enslave its citizens who

[29] Holly Edwards, ed., "A Million and One Nights: Orientalism in America," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 20.
[30] Schueller, 49.
[31] Marr, 46, 47.
[32] Ibid, 50.
[33] Schueller, 47.

have not a single sloop of war.'"[34] The depiction of American conflict with the Barbary States was a useful propaganda tool. Similar expressions of patriotism inspired by the battles on the Barbary Coast took a permanent form with the "Marines Hymn," which is the official hymn of the U.S. Marine Corps. Labeled as the oldest official song in the U.S. Armed Forces, this hymn from the 1890s immortalized American involvement in the Tripolitan War. Its original verses are as follows:

> From the halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoli,
> We fight our country's battles, on the land as on the sea.
> Admiration of the nation, we're the finest ever seen;
> And we glory in the title of United States Marines.[35]

These works represent some of the first instances of American opinion of Islamic lands. In a timeline of the formation of consciousness of Muslim culture in the United States, they served as components in a long-term construction of stereotypes that would emerge as commercially valuable assets by the end of the century. Interestingly, however, some American experiences of the Barbary Coast also reflected the early American attraction to the exotic. According to Marr, "several sailors even converted to Islam or 'turned Turk' including one Lewis Heximer who assumed the name Hamet Amerikan." Moreover, "when the captive sailors from *Philadelphia*," another American vessel in the Tripolitan War, "were finally restored to Washington, D.C., they were welcomed by thousands of spectators who were fascinated by the Turkish dress and long beards that they patriotically wore as badges of their exotic experience."[36]

[34] Marr, 39.
[35] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marines'_Hymn
[36] Marr, 65.

## 2.2. American Relations with the Turkish Empire: Trade, Diplomacy & the Missionaries

In general, times of war tend to be fruitful periods for the production of literary works at home. Patriotism, heroism, and emotionalism at their heights allow authors to rationalize the war in their minds while forming and popularizing conceptions of the evil enemy. This was the case for works written in the United States during the conflict with Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli. American relations with the Ottoman Empire, unlike those characterizing North Africa, developed through negotiations and the foundation of diplomatic relations in the nineteenth century.[37] In fact, American trade in the Mediterranean and missionary activities created the basis for diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire. While ongoing diplomacy with the Ottomans was a crucial factor in stabilizing relations between the two nations, closer American-Turkish contacts in the Mediterranean and in Anatolia contributed to the building of Turkish/ Muslim images in the United States.

In fact, categorizing the cultural impacts of various Islamic groups in the nineteenth century United States is rather problematic because of the fact that Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries most commonly regarded Muslims as "Turks." As "the Turks" was "a label frequently and indiscriminately applied to all

[37] In fact, at the time of the American wars with the Northern African countries, Tripoli, Algeria and Tunisia were parts of the Ottoman Empire with an autonomous state structure. Since they were far from the central Ottoman Empire, the local leaders, rather than the Ottoman Sultan, were in charge of running these states. Therefore, American contacts with these Northern African countries and with the Ottomans can be considered as largely separate matters. At the time of the crisis, American relations with the Barbary States developed independent from those with the Ottoman Empire. In the following decades, these Northern countries became colonies of European powers: France invaded Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881, although Tripoli remained under Ottoman rule until World War I.

contemporary Muslims,"[38] it often indiscriminately combined images and expressions associated in the nineteenth century United States with various Muslim groups. Generally speaking, however, the Turkish influence on American cultural and social context in the mid nineteenth century was most pronounced in fashion and literature.

After the U.S. victory in the Barbarian wars, it became safer for the American ships to pass through the Mediterranean to conduct trade. Having resolved the conflicts in North Africa, the Ottoman port in Izmir became the center for the American trade with the Levantine. By 1809, the number of American trade ships entering the Izmir port reached twenty, which was to increase subsequently in the following years.[39] As the frequency of American trade contacts with the Turkish increased, it became a more common subject of books, such as, for example, Henry D. S. Dearborn's 1819 work entitled *A Memoir on the Commerce and Navigation in the Black Sea*, which publicized trading opportunities with Turkish ports in the United States, while defining the traders from Izmir as honest and hardworking.[40] On May 7, 1830, the United States signed a treaty of commerce and friendship with the Ottoman Empire, which established the first diplomatic ties between the two nations.[41] In 1862, another treaty of commerce was signed, which was followed by a variety of activities, such as the export of American land weaponry and naval equipments to the Ottoman Empire as well as the employment of American experts in the modernization of the Turkish navy.

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[38] Marr, 91. For a more detailed description of the use of the terms "Islam," "Mahometanism," "Mohammedanism," "Turks," etc., see the Introduction of Marr's *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*.

[39] Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Kökenleri*, (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları,2001),74.

[40] Ibid, 76.

[41] Roger R. Trask, "The United States and Turkish Nationalism: Investments and Technical Aid during the Ataturk Era," *The Business History Review* 38.1 (Spring, 1964), 58-77, 58.

During this period of increasing American commercial and diplomatic relations with inhabitants of Ottoman lands, a large variety of cultural exchanges took place. The most obvious Turkish influence on the Americans could be noticed in women's and soldiers' styles of clothing and dress. As Edwards points out, "in 1851, a small group of suffragists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Amelia Bloomer, adopted a uniform," based on the Turkish model, "consisting of voluminous pantaloons worn under a knee-length dress with a fitted bodice and full skirt. Bloomer's newspaper *The Lily* published illustrations of this type of ensemble along with letters from satisfied wearers, doctors, and other interested parties."[42] Moreover, as Marr writes, "when assessing this period of dress reform in their memoirs, Elizabeth Cady Stanton acknowledged that the Bloomer was 'an imitation in part of the Turkish style,' and Elizabeth Smith Miller, who many women's rights advocates believed had initiated the costume, noted that her first act of rebellion was to don Turkish trousers."[43] Eventually, however, the Bloomer costume became very controversial, gaining considerable notoriety during the years 1851-52, and it later became worn primarily for tasks requiring more physical labor.[44]

Another influential Turkish trend in fashion even entered the military zone in the early 1860s, when American regiments wore the Zouave uniform during the Civil War. In fact, it was originally the French military that established the Zouave troops in 1830 by adopting an Algerian name and a Turkish-style dress.[45] It was the decision of the commander Colonel Elmer Ephraim to adopt the Zouave dress and start a Zouave mania

[42] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 227.
[43] Marr, 283.
[44] Edwards 227, Marr 282. See photograph on page 86 in Appendix A.
[45] Marr, 292.

in the United States, upon hearing the fame of the French Zouaves in the 1850s.[46] As Marr added, it was "the exoticism of the Zouave uniform and drill" that "offered a romantic view of military life that eventually helped to inspire enlistments in over fifty Zouave units in the Union and Confederate armies that fought in every campaign of the war from Bull Run to Appomattox."[47]

In terms of the American presence in the Middle East, missionaries are noteworthy as they represented a different source of American contact with the Muslims in the nineteenth century. In 1820, missionaries Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons came to the main port city of Izmir and started learning Greek, followed by a series of trips to the southern Anatolia to collect information about various ethnic groups such as Armenians, Kurds, and Greeks. By 1890, the number of missionaries in the Ottoman Empire reached one hundred and seventy-seven, which indicates the increase in the American population inhabiting the Turkish land.[48] While the missionary enterprise itself is the subject of comprehensive study, what matters for this chapter is the role of American missionaries in shaping the popular knowledge about Islamic lands in the United States and thereby contributing to the formation of certain Muslim images.

When Levi Parsons, one of the first American missionaries in Turkey, wrote a letter to his sister in 1820 describing "the fearsome stature of the Turk," his remarks could be considered unexaggerated reflections of the view of missionaries about Muslims: "'What would you think of a man approaching you of gigantic stature, long beard, fierce eyes, a turban on his head, which if stretched out would make a blanket,

[46] Ibid, 288.
[47] Ibid. See photograph on page 86 in Appendix A.
[48] Erhan, 86-7, 190.

long flowing robes, a large belt, in which were four or five pistols and a sword?'"[49] It is no coincidence that Parsons's definition was a rather negative assessment of the Turk, but this was the manner in which missionaries often evaluated the Muslim societies they encountered in the Middle East. On the other hand, Levi Parsons' description of an Oriental despot recalls an exotic scene that could be a perfect part of a musical or a movie by the end of the century, attracting the attention of millions while making a big profit.

Other than the formal missionary reports, a series of novels were written in the mid-nineteenth century United States that featured themes of missionary conversion and the rescue of harem women by independent and intelligent missionary women.[50] One of the most prominent novels about missionary conversion was Maturin Murray Ballou's *The Turkish Slave* (1850), which contains the following description of Constantinople in its epigraph:

> Fair city of the dreamy East, proud daughter of the sea
> With thy thousand mosques and minarets…
> The gilded caique, the opium ship, the Turkish boatman's song…
> From very childhood we have dreamed of romance and of thee![51]

These lines show the pronounced exotic tone of these novels, even those written by a missionary such as Rev. Henry Harris Jessup, who, "after seventeen years as a missionary in Syria, published his account of the American mission" in *The Women of the Arabs*.[52] In addition to the aforementioned works, another novel written by Ballou was *The Mahometan and His Harem* as well as James Boulden's *An American Among the Orientals: Including an Audience with the Sultan, and a Visit to the Interior of a*

[49] Marr, 82.
[50] Schueller, 79-80.
[51] Ibid, 82.
[52] Ibid, 83.

*Turkish Harem*. As Schueller notes, "even missionaries were not immune from conjuring up to stereotypical images of Eastern women to popularize their works."[53] Therefore, unlike the formal missionary reports that claimed the superiority of the Christianity while condemning Muslim practices, the informal missionary works served to promote exotic imagery of the Orient in the United States.

### 2.3. American Tourists in the Orient

For reasons other than military, trade or missionary enterprise, Americans started traveling to the Middle East mainly for touristic purposes in the early nineteenth century, though not under the format of typical tourist practices. In fact, it was the changing geopolitics of the Near/Middle East around the mid-nineteenth century, such as the defeated North African power and developing diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire, which made the Eastern lands more accessible for American tourists. Encouraged by improving traveling conditions of the period, these Americans flowed to the East, where they took inspiration for their art that would bring a taste of the exotic to the American public at home.

Other than small pilgrim groups visiting the Holy Lands after reading travel books published in the United States, artists and writers made up a huge portion of these Americans who made individual trips to the Orient. Upon arriving, these tourists either formed their own opinions about the Muslim populations of the Middle East or simply remained uninterested in the people, as they would rather focus on the exotic lifestyle of which they could temporarily pretend to be a part. Rather than getting lost in the past, American tourists' Oriental experiences turned into long-lasting memories with the

[53] Ibid.

production of many travel memoirs and paintings as well as the transport of exotic artifacts back to the United States and the building of Oriental-style mansions for the wealthy. Capturing the American curiosity about the exotica, the rising market industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century United States brought the Orient to "department stores and mail order catalogues" that were made possible by import firms such as Tiffany and Company.[54]

Among the most popular Eastern travel accounts of the first half of the nineteenth century were John Lloyd Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* (1837), George William Curtis's *Nile Notes of a Howadji and The Howadji in Syria* (1851-52), and Bayard Taylor's *Poems of the Orient* (1854) and *The Lands of the Saracen* (1855).[55] Deriving inspiration from their time spent in the Orient, these authors went even further by adopting "Eastern clothing and the strange freedom it symbolized, finding 'both dignity and poetry in the inertia of Oriental life.'"[56] These writers' adoption of and intimacy with Oriental life proved to be rather strong and successful as their writings gained widespread publicity in the United States. As Edwards noted, these travel writings were often published in magazines before coming out as books, and became immensely popular.[57]

In terms of American artists who traveled to the Muslim lands in search of exotic themes for their paintings, there is a long list of works by various artists. However, when considered in terms of their aesthetic and commercial impacts in the United States, Frederick Edwin Church and Louis Comfort Tiffany stand out. Most famously known by

[54] Holly Edwards mentions the artist Louis Comfort Tiffany and the Tiffany & Co. in several parts of *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*. See pages 30-31, 163-166,183-85.
[55] Marr, 267-68.
[56] Ibid, 269.
[57] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 120.

his paintings *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* (1870) and *Sunrise in Syria* (1874), Frederick Edwin Church's religiosity was the key inspiration for his trip to the Orient. Upon his return to the United States after staying in the Eastern lands for more than a decade, Church decided to incorporate his knowledge and experiences of the Middle East into the design of a mansion named Olana, located above the Hudson River in New York.[58] When Church was in the Middle East, he collected exotic artifacts, "'rugs—armour—stuffs—curiosities…old clothes, (Turkish) stones from a house in Damascus, Arab spears—beads from Jerusalem—stones from Petra and 10,000 other things,' filling fifteen crates."[59] Furnished with Oriental artifacts inside and its surface designed with an exotic taste, Church's mansion in the middle of New York recalled far-off Eastern lands while acting as an harbinger of "the growing materialism and commodity fetishism that would come in ensuing decades."

Taking Frederick Church's construction of a personal Oriental villa one step further, Louis Comfort Tiffany, one of America's most celebrated artists, turned his painting career into a lucrative business after returning from his visit to North Africa in the 1870s. "As the son of Charles Lewis Tiffany (1812–1902), founder of Tiffany & Company, the fancy goods store that became the renowned jewelry and silver firm, Tiffany chose to pursue his own artistic interests in lieu of joining the family business."[60] Successor to this entrepreneurial empire, Tiffany brought the exotica into American homes, where the Orient was incorporated into daily life. As large department

[58] Ibid, 30, 124, 177-80.
[59] Ibid, 177.
[60] Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen and Monica Obniski, "Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933)," in *Timeline of Art History*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, July 2007, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tiff/hd_tiff.htm> (29 May 2008).

stores and mail-order businesses improved, interior decoration with an exotic touch became more accessible to average people, not just the wealthy.[61]

Presenting the worldliness of the exotica to the American public through Tiffany & Co., Louis Comfort Tiffany, like Frederick Church, preferred to present a fantasy Oriental life within his New York house, where he "lived most of his adult life engulfed in Oriental luxury."[62] As William Leach writes, "when Alma Mahler, composer Gustav Mahler's wife, visited Tiffany's Manhattan apartment in late 1890s, she thought she had entered a Persian retreat, a mysterious 'Paradise…filled with palms, divans, panes of flowering light, lovely women in iridescent gowns.' It was, she wrote, 'a dream! *Arabian Nights* in New York.'"[63] This craze for decorating houses under the influence of Oriental exotica became a common practice among the wealthiest Americans in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, before the reproduction and marketing of fake exotic artifacts for the middle class in department stores. As the exotic gradually became more alluring to the American public, even those who had never traveled to the Orient were able to experience the novelty of the East in their houses and workplaces.

### 2.4. First Acts in a New Stage: The Exotic in America

After popularization of the exotic, there emerged a new group of Americans who either produced Oriental works or imitated Oriental life in the United States without even having traveled to North African or other Middle Eastern lands. One example was the prominent artist William Merritt Chase, who created exotic artwork inspired by

[61] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 185.
[62] William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 105.
[63] Ibid, 105.

Oriental interior decoration, such as *The Moorish Warrior* (1878), in his studio in New York.[64] Working among a "density of exotic artifacts" and dressing in "red fez, perhaps a flowing cape," Chase's imagination became fully engrossed in an Oriental scene typical of the Islamic Middle East. However, Chase also furnished his studio with an Oriental flavor in keeping with a "strategy of self-promotion" among "the competitive art market of late-nineteenth century New York."[65]

As interest in the Orient became more widespread in the United States, publishing companies did not remain passive; instead they sought to fascinate the American public with exotic tales originating in Islamic literature itself. As early as the 1840s, *The Arabian Nights*, or *Thousand and One Nights*, became accessible to the American reader in the form of translations by Edward William Lane, John Payne, and Richard Burton.[66] As the craze for all things Oriental developed with growing speed, it even spread its influence by the 1870s to a number of fraternal organizations (like today's Shriners, for instance), such as " the Order of the Alhambra, the Bagmen of Bagdad, and the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine," which "established long-lasting recreational rites that incorporated and burlesqued islamicist dress, titles, and oaths."[67]

Lost in this fantasy-land of an Orient imagined along the lines of the exotic world of *The Arabian Nights*, Americans were not aware that a number of Middle Eastern Muslims had been immigrating to the United States for economic reasons. As Jane I. Smith remarks, the earliest Muslim immigrants arrived between 1875 and 1912

[64] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 31, 175-76.
[65] Ibid, 175-76.
[66] Ibid, 170. See the illustration for *Thousand and One Nights* on page 87 in Appendix A.
[67] Marr, 294.

from rural areas of present-day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel, and gradually settled in places like New York, Quincy (Massachusetts), North Dakota, Dearborn (near Detroit), Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.[68] Arabs comprised the vast majority of early Muslim immigrants, who worked primarily in mines, mills, railroads and factories or as individual peddlers, and who lived in poverty while experiencing the hardships of adapting to a new culture.[69] Oblivious to the presence of unpleasant, desperate, and poor visitors from the lands of Islam, who were small in size, Americans preferred to remain in their "Oriental dreams," following the worldly desires for the exotic, which would be fully on stage in Chicago at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

[68] Jane I. Smith, "Patterns of Muslim Immigration," *Muslim Life in America—Office of International Information Programs, U.S Department of State* http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/muslimlife/immigrat.htm > (11 June 2008).
[69] Ibid.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE EXOTIC ON MARKET: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE FAIR

"There was never before such an 'aggregation,' as the circus men say, of side show wonders, as in the Midway Plaisance, which, being 600 feet wide as well as a mile long, gives plenty of elbow-room for the display, and the result is like a city by itself."[70] As the site for attractions not included in the regular Exposition programme, the Midway Plaisance, with its "long street of buildings with minarets and domes of a quaint character,"[71] stood independently from the White City, which, with its grandeur, epitomized the material development and progress of the United States. While the Midway was originally listed under the Columbian Exposition's Department of Ethnology, which was devoted to educational purposes under its chief officer Frederick W. Putnam, professor of anthropology at Harvard, the reassigning of the Midway to entertainment entrepreneur Sol Bloom, who served as manager of amusements, turned it

[70] Northrop, 675. See page 88 in Appendix B to view a photograph of the Midway Plaisance.
[71] *The Artistic Guide to Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition*: *Illustrated* (Chicago, Philadelphia, Stockton, Cal.: Monarch Book Company, 1892), 283, 294.

into a stage for exotic shows. As this movement towards popular entertainment was further reinforced by the profit-seeking concessionaires who took charge of the exhibits of the foreign nations, the Midway Plaisance became "an arena of popular amusement and the preferred destination of thrill-and pleasure-seekers."[72]

By blending various elements, such as Sol Bloom's insistent emphasis on the exotica and the concessionaires' display of selected Islamic stereotypes to attract huge crowds, this chapter will explain how entertainment inspired by the Orient became the most popular attraction in the Midway Plaisance, even to the extent of influencing the culture of the White City and encouraging it to host amusing spectacles similar to those in the Midway. After relating how the Midway was transformed from a proposed ethnological museum to a commercial arena directed by Sol Bloom, the second part of this chapter will describe the exhibits of the Islamic countries represented by the concessionaires in the Midway Plaisance and demonstrate how the stage shows, particularly the *dans du ventre*, became the vehicles by which the entrepreneurs sought to attract the public's attention. In the final section, the financial success of the Midway will be considered along with how the commercialism of the area influenced the White City and even the areas surrounding the fairgrounds of the Columbian Exposition.

### 3.1. On the Eve of the Victory of the Popular Amusement

After a growing debate and conflict among the cities of St. Louis, Washington D.C., New York and Chicago, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution on February 25, 1890 selecting Chicago as the host city for the World's Columbian Exposition. A

[72] Judy Sund, "Columbus and Columbia in Chicago, 1893: Man of Genius Meets Generic Woman," *Art Bulletin* 75.3 (September 1993): 443-66, 455.

year later, in January 1891, less than two and half years before the opening of the exposition on May 1, 1893, the great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, under the authority of the Chief of Construction Daniel Burnham, started preparing the grounds of Jackson Park for the enormous fair site.[73] After the site was completed, Julian Ralph in 1893 described the area that became the White City as "a picturesque islet that anyone would vow had been made by nature and by her slow processes."[74] The other side of the exposition grounds, which was not under the official supervision of the fair architects, was the Midway Plaisance, the one-mile stretch of land devoted to foreign and private exhibits where each represented country was responsible for erecting its own buildings and attractions. In the World's Columbian Exposition, "the Midway would become home to the exotic amusements and attractions that were not part of the exposition proper—representing the first 'side-shows' ever featured at a world's fair."[75]

Recalled as the center for amusements in the Chicago World's Fair, the Midway Plaisance was "planned originally to keep within hailing distance at least of ethnology and having everything conducted on a dignified and decorous basis."[76] Before the opening of the exposition, "there existed strong sentiment that no cheap entertainment be permitted to clutter the magnificence of the White City."[77] However, financial

[73] The transformation of the Jackson Park area into the fair grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition was not an easy job: The land that Frederic Law Olmsted chose to transform was described as "a treacherous morass, liable to frequent overflow, traversed by low ridges of sand and bearing oaks and gums of such stunted habit and unshapely form as to add forlornness to the landscape…the surface a quagmire, seeming utterly inadequate to bearing the weight of ordinary structures." See Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Colombian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 (*Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 8-21.
[74] Julian Ralph, *Chicago and the Worlds Fair* (1893), quoted in Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Colombian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 14-15.
[75] Bolotin and Laing, 15.
[76] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 41.
[77] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World is a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 62.

considerations overshadowed the noble purpose of setting up an educative and dignified Midway Plaisance under the authority of Professor Putnam. As Robert W. Rydell suggests, the earlier indecision about introducing popular amusement into the exposition was resolved after carefully considering the previous international expositions as models:

> That as late as spring 1892 no firm plans had been made for the exhibits to be located on the Midway suggests the ambivalence felt by many exposition backers, harking back to the precedent of the Philadelphia Centennial, about making popular entertainment part of the spectacle. But once again the example of the Paris fair loomed large. Concessionaires had contributed over $700,000 to the coffers of the 1889 exposition…. As it became apparent that instruction and entertainment could complement one another, the fairgoer became more than welcome to ride the Ferris wheel or to sip a glass of Dr. Welch's grape juice while waiting in line to see Fatima perform her titillating hootchy-kootchy dance.[78]

Once the issue of turning the Midway into a popular entertainment site was laid to rest, the fair directorate hired Sol Bloom to reorganize the site. By the end of the Columbian Exposition, the fair's planners would admit that, as John F. Kasson stated, "the Midway's privately sponsored commercial attractions proved more popular than the White City's free cultural exhibits."[79]

Generally speaking, the funding and administrative systems of the American fairs barred the government from direct control of exposition matters. For instance, rich sponsors, such as Marshall Field, George Pullman, Cyrus McCormick, Gustavus Swift and Philip Armour, financed the Columbian Exposition.[80] Therefore, "commercial concerns prevented government from controlling the event in the way Prince Albert dictated the atmosphere of the Great Exhibition or Napoleon III controlled the first

[78] Ibid.
[79] Kasson, 23.
[80] Greenhalgh, 38-39.

Exposition Universelle."[81] Regardless of whether it had direct control over exposition matters, however, the U.S. government gave financial support to the World's Columbian Exposition. In his Proclamation of December 24, 1890, U.S. President Benjamin Harrison stated that "a sum not less that $ 10,000,000, to be used and expended for the purposes of said Exposition has been provided," with an additional appropriation of $ 2,500,000 on January 18, 1892.[82] In general, instead of expecting profit from these international fairs, governments sought to achieve widespread publicity and propaganda value from the promise of large attendance at the fair. Therefore, attendance and gate receipts were crucial factors both for financing and justifying the international fairs politically.[83] Conscious of this fact, the board of directors of the Columbian Exposition realized that technology and architecture alone, in the White City, would not be sufficient to attract millions to the fair grounds; the key to high attendance was popular entertainment.

In keeping with the idea of creating a popular amusement zone in the Chicago Fair, Sol Bloom, a twenty-three-year-old entrepreneur with various accomplishments in the theatrical world of San Francisco, assumed the position of manager of amusement concessions in the Midway Plaisance. Born to a Polish-Jewish immigrant family in 1870 in Pekin, Illinois, Sol Bloom made a successful career for himself, starting from selling newspapers and working in a brush factory, continuing with various business ventures such as importing, advertising, and theatrical concessions, and finally becoming U.S. Representative in the 68th Congress on March 4, 1923 and chairman of the House

[81] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 38- 39.
[82] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 56-58.
[83] Greenhalgh, 41-42

Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1939.[84] Upon being appointed to his new task in the Columbian Exposition, Sol Bloom changed the character of the Midway from what Frederick W. Putnam had originally intended. Considering "his great strength to be spectacular advertising," Bloom "placed notices in publications around the world to make it known that the Midway was to be an exotic realm of unusual sights, sounds, and scents."[85] In Bloom's words,

> There was never any question about Professor Putnam's qualifications as head of the ethnological section, but to have made this unhappy gentleman responsible for the establishment of a successful venture in the field of entertainment was about as intelligent a decision as it would be today to make Albert Einstein manager of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.[86]

Putnam would have agreed with Bloom on this matter, as he "told a Harvard colleague that he was anxious to get that whole Indian circus off his hands."[87] By drawing on his theatrical experience, the young entrepreneur Sol Bloom managed to turn the Midway Plaisance into an amusement park featuring "Middle Eastern exhibits, including dancing, the Street in Cairo, and the Algerian and Turkish exhibits at the center of the strip, around the Ferris Wheel."[88] As Bloom expressed upon his visit to the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris, the exotic shows of the Orient meant more to him commercially than the traditional and historical European exhibitions:

> I came to realize that a tall, skinny chap from Arabia with a talent for swallowing swords expressed a culture which to me was on a higher plane than the one demonstrated by a group of earnest Swiss peasants who passed their days making cheese and milk chocolate. I acknowledged to myself that the spiritual intensity

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[84] The New York Public Library, "Guide to the Sol Bloom Papers," *The New York Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts Division Accession Sheet,* http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/rbk/faids/bloomsol.pdf (19 June 2008).
[85] Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, And Madness At The Fair That Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 160.
[86] Sol Bloom, *The Autobiography of Sol Bloom* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1948), 119.
[87] Larson, 141.
[88] Gilbert, 38. See page 89 in Appendix B to view the map of the Midway Plaisance.

> of the performance presented by a troupe of Bedouin acrobats exceeded the emotional power of a pre-Renaissance tapestry.[89]

With his entrepreneurial experience, Sol Bloom had the foresight to predict what would make the Midway Plaisance of the Columbian Exposition a popular district, and he demonstrated his skill in commercial activities to his academic colleagues by making the Middle Eastern exotica the center of his new theatrical stage in Chicago.

### 3.2. The Midway Plaisance: An Exotic Carnival

Before the Chicago Fair opened its gates on May 1, 1893, Julian Ralph in *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair* described the Midway Plaisance as such: "Whereas the Exposition proper is designed to show a visitor 'the earth for fifty cents,' this addendum," that is, the Midway, "will be filled with things calculated to draw a visitor's last nickel, and to leave his pocket-book looking as if one of Chicago's twenty-story buildings had fallen upon it."[90] Humorous in his definition, Ralph was not far from predicting what the Midway Plaisance would come to signify. Hosting every kind of popular entertainment for the audience, with the exotica as the crowd favorite and the Ferris Wheel as the Midway's most visually commanding centerpiece,[91] the

[89] Bloom, 106.
[90] Julian Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1893), 206.
[91] The Ferris Wheel was the chief wonder of the Chicago Fair of 1893. Described as the most conspicuous object in the Midway and as the mechanical wonder of the fair by Hubert Howe Bancroft, this structure was named after its artificer, George Washington Gale Ferris. The Ferris Wheel was to the Columbian Exposition what the Eiffel tower was to the Paris Exposition of 1889. See, Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair: A Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893* (Chicago and San Francisco: The Bancroft Company, 1893), 868.

concessionaires could charge an additional fee for most shows and exhibits on the Midway,[92] unlike the White City, which had a general admission fee of 50 cents.

As *The Chicago Daily Tribune* made clear, the concessionaires of the Plaisance agreed with the fair directors to give a quarter of their gross receipts to the World's Fair Treasury.[93] Making the Midway displays more popular with audiences was a guarantee of high levels of attendance at the fair, which worked in the interests of both the concessionaires and directors of the fair. The Oriental attractions of the Midway gave the fair visitors a chance to experience the Orient in Chicago, while satisfying the concessionaires desire for commercial success. What follows is an examination of the Middle Eastern section of the Midway Plaisance, which hosted the most exotic and some of the most popular attractions for visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition.

### 3.2.1. Algerian and Tunisian Village

A French colony in 1893, Algeria was formally listed under France among the foreign nations participating the Columbian Exposition.[94] Located in the center of the Midway Plaisance next to the Street in Cairo, the Algerian and Tunisian Village featured various Oriental attractions, ranging from bazaars and camel drivers to swordsmen and snake charmers "eating scorpions, carrying snakes familiarly about, cutting and piercing

[92] Some of the admission fees to the Middle Eastern attractions in the Midway Plaisance were as follows: Algerian Village $ 0.25, Moorish Palace $ 0.25, Persian Building $ 0.50, Street in Cairo: Egyptian Temple $ 0.25, Street Performances $ 0.25, Camel Rides $ 0.50, Donkey Rides $ 0.25…Turkish Village: Constantinople Sedan Chairs, Per Hour: $ 1.00, Constantinople Street Scene $ 0.50, Constantinople Syrian Photos $ 0.25, Constantinople Tribe of Bedouins $ 0.25, Tunisian Exhibit and Café Free. See, John J. Flinn, *The Best Things to Be Seen at the World's Fair* (Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893).
[93] "Investors in Doubt," *Chicago Daily*, January 26, 1893, pg. 1, "Appeal Of The Concessionaires," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1893, pg. 4.
[94] Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair*, 236.

themselves with evil-looking weapons."[95] The *dans du ventre*, which was a great success in Paris, was performed in the Algerian and Tunisian Village as it was in almost every other Middle Eastern section of the exposition.

In fact, the Algerian exhibit in the Chicago Fair of 1893 was an imitation of a village shown at Paris in international expositions held in 1867, 1878 and 1889.[96] Having visited the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris, Sol Bloom found the exhibits of the French colonies the most fascinating of all the exhibits, with the Algerian Village as his favorite,[97] and quickly seized on a commercial opportunity to be exploited in the United States. As he wrote later in *The Autobiography of Sol Bloom*:

> The Algerians themselves were genuine beyond question, and what was really important was that they presented a varied entertainment that increased in excitement in proportion to my familiarity with it. I knew that nothing like these dancers, acrobats, glass-eaters, and scorpion swallowers had ever been seen in the Western Hemisphere, and I was sure that I could make a fortune with them in the United States.[98]

Bloom moved quickly. Around a week before the Paris exposition closed, Sol Bloom had a conversation with Monsieur Guinon, the French manager of the Algerian Village in the Exposition Universelle, and "for 5,000 francs, or approximately $1,000," as Bloom wrote, he "bought a two-year exclusive right to negotiate a contract to exhibit the Algerian Village in North and South America."[99]

Upon his return to the United States, Bloom worked to display his Algerian Village in New York, but found no interest. In 1890, when Sol Bloom first heard of plans for an exposition in Chicago, he anticipated that it would be the best place for

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[95] Ibid, 208.
[96] Flinn, *The Best Things to Be Seen at the World's Fair*, 167. See page 101 in Appendix B.
[97] Bloom, 107.
[98] Ibid, 107.
[99] Ibid, 108.

displaying his Algerian exhibit, but he did not know yet that he would instead obtain a higher position at the fair. In 1892, when Bloom was still looking for a way to set up an amusement concession at the fair, Mike de Young, a San Francisco-based commissioner of the Columbian Exposition, offered Sol Bloom the position of manager of all amusement concessions in the 1893 Fair. For $ 1,000 a week, which, according to Bloom, was a sum no less than the salary of the President of the United States, $ 50,000 per year, he agreed to take charge of the Midway Plaisance and approved his Algerian Village to be one of the amusement concessions in the World's Columbian Exposition.[100]

By the mid-April of 1892, Sol Bloom received a cablegram notifying him that his Algerian troupe was on the way to the United States, one year earlier than expected. Turning this misunderstanding into a profit became Bloom's task. As early as the middle of the summer of 1892, part of the Algerian Village was built and started giving regular performances for visitors who came daily to the grounds at Jackson Park for a preview of the fair.[101] By September 1892, eight months before the official opening of the fair in May 1893, Sol Bloom had already "covered his costs and begun reaping a generous profit."[102] By the end of the fair, Bloom's Algerian Village proved to be a financial success.

Similar in character to the other Middle Eastern-themed concessions in the Midway, the Algerian and Tunisian Village offered the visitors exotic scenery with depictions suggestive of desert life. While charming its visitors, this part of the Algerian and Tunisian Village was still defeated by the concert hall, which, according to

[100] Ibid, 110-118.
[101] Ibid, 122-123.
[102] Larson, 208.

Bancroft, was a favorite not for its music but for its dancing-girls. In comparison with the Parisian coryphée, as Bancroft wrote, the Algerian dancing girl was clothed and did not display any tightly hosiered limbs, so the scenery was far from being vulgar:

> From a bench we are all seated side by side with the orchestra, one of the damsels steps forward and begins to dance, swaying her lithesome form in rhythmical fashion, at first slowly and then in accelerated measure. As the orchestra warms to its work her figure appears to tremble and undulate, as though in an ecstasy of delight; for the motion is rather of the body than of the feet, yet agile and far more graceful than the pirouetting of a premiere. As a rule only one girl dances at a time, each introducing some special feature, while the rest look on with critical eye and applaud when applause is deserved. Among the most pleasing is the scarf dance, where the performer waves scarfs above her head while posing in symmetrical attitudes.[103]

The Oriental dance shows in the Algerian concert hall were the main attractions of this particular village. While "prudish American women left the performance outraged, young girls left giggling," and "men left seeming 'to think they had the worth of their money.'"[104] On the other hand, Sol Bloom in his autobiography admitted that he greatly admired those performances:

> I never got tired of my own Algerian Village…. What artists they were! Particularly the ballet troupe, with their great specialty, the *danse du ventre*. People still talk about it. It is regrettable—or, if anyone should choose to disagree, it is at least a fact—that more people remember the reputation of the *danse du ventre* than the dance itself. This is very understandable. When the public learned that the literal translation was 'belly dance' they delightedly concluded that it must be salacious and immoral. The crowds poured in. I had a gold mine. As a matter of strict fact, the *danse du ventre*, while sensuous and exciting, was a masterpiece of rhythm and beauty; it was choreographic perfection, and it was so recognized by even the most untutored spectators. Whatever they hoped to see, they were enchanted by the entertainment actually placed before them.[105]

[103] Ibid, 877.

[104] Burg, 222-23.

[105] Bloom, 134-35.

Proving to be a particularly powerful draw and the center of attraction in the Algerian and Tunisian Village, the *dans du ventre*, however, did not remain unique to the Algerian theater. Noticing its popularity with the crowds of the fair, the other concessionaires of the Midway Plaisance, representing Egypt, Persia and the Ottoman Empire, used the *danse du ventre* as a profit-generating commodity, occasionally crossing the limits of the moral code of the nineteenth century American society, and therefore, causing protest from some parts of the society, especially women, as will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.2.2. The Street in Cairo

On May 28, 1893, *Chicago Daily Tribune* announced the opening of the Cairo Street, and reported that it "revealed to throngs of visitors all the picturesque beauty and strangeness of 'Masr-al-Kahia'…with its gardens and squares, its temples, its minaret, its delicately carved towers, and its buildings of elaborate Arabesque architecture ornamented with fantastic draperies," where visitors found "the happiest lot of Orientals that ever invaded a strange city."[106] While Egypt, a British colony at the time of the exposition, originally declined to take part in the fair, it had assured that it would aid and encourage those of their citizens who desired to be exhibitors.[107] It was George Pangalo, the manager of a bank in Egypt, who, though not Egyptian by birth, was a citizen of Cairo and was granted the concession of the Street of Cairo.[108] Listed as an informal participant in the fair, the Egyptian concession in Chicago was a larger reproduction of

[106] "Cairo Street Open," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1893, pg. 1. See page 91 in Appendix B.
[107] *The Artistic Guide to Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition*, 278, 359.
[108] "Cairo's Quaint Streets," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 25, 1891, pg. 3.

the Rue de Caire at the 1889 Paris Exposition.[109] Max Herz, the chief architect of the Khedive, conceived the plan for the Cairo Street of the Columbian Exposition, and was allowed to come to America to assist in the construction of the site.[110]

On March 9, 1893, *Guildhall*, the steamer carrying 175 residents of Cairo recruited by George Pangalo, as well as twenty donkeys, seven camels, an assortment of monkeys and deadly snakes, set sail from Alexandria, Egypt for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.[111] Like other Islamic concessions in the Midway, the Street in Cairo provided a certain picture of Oriental life and was one of the main places of interest for the fair visitors: "Donkey and camel rides were indulged in, and was the source of boisterous fun. The theater offered the Egyptian rendition of the genuine native muscle dance. A fine mosque with a beautiful minaret, the Luxor temple of mummies, Soudanese huts and jugglers and marts for the sale of Egyptian wares were to be seen on this oriental street."[112]

The Street of Cairo, as the informal representative of Egypt in the Chicago World's Fair, was a complete commercial display intended to attract the highest attendance. "Each day," as one commentator noted, "there were fist fights in the street," which "were staged to attract attention to the exhibit. The hiring of 'pretty American girls' dressed in Egyptian garb to work in the various concessions underscored the fact that this exhibit was intended to bring profits to its organizers."[113] Another commentator said that the hosts of the Street of Cairo were "after the fleeting penny for which

[109] Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair*, 236, 208.
[110] Northrop, 689.
[111] Larson, 208.
[112] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 42.
[113] Eric Davis, "Representations of the Middle East at American World Fairs, 1876-1904," Abbas Amanat and Magnus Bernhardsson, eds., *The United States and the Middle East: Cultural Encounters*., New Haven, CN: Yale University Center for International and Area Studies, 2002, 342-85, 366.

everybody in the Midway Cairo has great respect and desire."[114] Subsequently, the whole affair of the Cairo Street proved to be an obvious financial arrangement:

> The organizing of the Cairo street by the firm Raphael and Banyakar, the reference to one Roberto Levy who was responsible for the Egyptian employees at the Midway, the fact that Khedive's architect, Max Herz, designed the street, and that the Khedive's personal photographer, G. Lekegian, sold photographs of the exhibit, suggests that this was an itinerant group of 'professional' fair employees who probably had some financial arrangement with the Khedive and the Egyptian government to mount the exhibit.[115]

Like its Muslim counterparts in the Midway Plaisance, the attractions and performances on Cairo Street charged an extra fee over the normal price of admission to the fair. Even to use one's own camera required paying $ 1.00 to the official photographer of the street.[116] Under manager George Pangalo, this concession became the most successful Midway attraction, as its shareholders realized more than a one hundred-percent profit from their investment by the end of the fair.[117]

The Street in Cairo was one of the first amusements to feature exotic dancing in America. Like Sol Bloom, entrepreneur George Pangalo, aware of the popularity of *dans du ventre*, made it one of the main attractions in the Egyptian concession. The presentation of the belly dance as a popular Islamic form in the Midway Plaisance, however, was not a new practice. As Zeynep Celik and Leila Kinney make clear, in 1878, when theaters were first introduced in the Universal Exposition of Paris, belly dances formed the core attraction despite the various other activities presented, such as local daily life, weddings, and shopping at a bazaar accompanied with music. By 1889,

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[114] Ibid, 366.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Tudor Jenks, *The Century World's Fair Book for Boys and Girls* (New York: The Century Company, 1893), 63.
[117] Chicago Historical Society, "The World's Columbian Exposition," *Chicago Historical Society: The History Files*, 1999 <http://www.chicagohistory.org/history/expo.html> (18 November 2007).

in the Exposition Universelle in Paris, there were on average two thousand spectators per day who came to watch the Egyptian belly dancers. According to Celik and Kinney, exoticism was dependent upon trade and transportation; therefore, the belly dance, packaged in ways that were economically profitable, became a representative Islamic art form at the universal expositions. Helped by the entertainment industry, the *danse du ventre* became a form of stereotype that gained currency at the world's fairs.[118]

Popular in the eyes of many visitors seeking entertainment on the Street in Cairo, belly dancing, however, did not always find positive responses from the audience. While "some enthusiasts pictured the dancing girls as 'splendid specimens of oriental beauty' and their dances as peculiar but skillful and natural," other spectators had doubts about the magnificence of this dance.[119] A photograph with the caption "A Dance in the Street of Cairo Theatre" in *The Dream City, A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, described this exotic dance in a rather unpleasant tone:

> The young woman in the center of the stage, who is represented in books of travel as an Eastern houri, is about to render the celebrated danse du ventre…. We are to understand that this development has increased her beauty in the Oriental imagination, as it has certainly lessened it according to Western canons of taste…. No ordinary Western woman looked on these performances with anything but horror, and at one time it was a matter of serious debate in the councils of the Exposition whether the customs of Cairo should be faithfully reproduced, or the morals of the public faithfully protected.[120]

Indeed, some members of the Board of Lady Managers, after visiting the Midway Plaisance, were shocked when they witnessed the belly dance in Oriental theaters, as *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported on August 4, 1893, and in a board meeting held on

[118] Zeynep Celik and Leila Kinney, "Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles," *Assemblage* 13 (1990): 34-59, 35, 39-42.
[119] Burg, 222.
[120] "A Dance in the Street of Cairo Theatre," *The Dream City, A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition* (St. Louis, Mo.: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1893), n.p.

August 3, they "requested that the objectionable theaters be shut down forthwith and not reopened while the Fair continues." Mrs. Barker, one of the lady managers, expressed her experiences of these features of the Midway as follows:

> I went down on the plaisance yesterday impelled by a sense of duty. I never have been so grieved or shocked in my life as the things I saw. I shall most certainly oppose inviting the women who perform at the theaters there to meet, socially, the members of this board. They are, many of them, not representatives of foreign nations, but women of Chicago, chosen to act those disgusting parts. Can you endure the thought that your sons and your daughters should witness such spectacles? I consider it our duty rather than to entertain these people to enter a protest against them and demand that the places where they perform should be closed.[121]

Upon the request of the Board of Lady Managers, a Committee of Investigation went to the Egyptian, Algerian, Persian, and Turkish Theaters to take necessary action, but found out that dances in the Cairo Street were permitted by contract.[122] "Notwithstanding the indignation of the Board of Lady Managers, the *danse du ventre* proceeded," as David Burg remarked, and "plenty of other visitors welcomed the opportunity to spectate in the Cairo theatre."[123]

### 3.2.3. Persian Palace

With the expectation of attracting Americans "by setting up their shops, where the weaving of carpets, rugs and shawls, the engraving of metals, the labor of lapidaries, and the manufacture of Persian candies" could be seen, a company of Persians arrived in Chicago on April 9, 1893.[124] The Persian Palace was a reproduction of a portion of the

[121] "Want Midway Dances Stopped," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 4, 1893, pg. 1.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Burg, 222.
[124] "The Persian Palace," *The Dream City, A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, n.p.

royal residence of the shah of Ispahan, with a large hall on the first floor decorated with Persian taste, and a restaurant with a teahouse on the second floor as well as various booths nearby with the weavers of traditional Persian handicraft.[125] While the original idea of the Persian Palace was laudable, as noted in *The Dream City*, the manager of this attraction soon realized that "the genius of Midway Plaisance was pleasure and not instruction."[126] With the idea of enlivening the Persian Palace with some real entertainment, the people working at the site brought "the greatest Oriental star, Belle Baya, the prize beauty of the Paris Exposition of 1889, and other dancing girls, who were nothing more nor less than young women of Paris, educated in the cafes chantants of that pleasure-seeking city."

This new kind of amusement certainly made the Persian building a more popular place for those who cared for such entertainments. Actually, it was exclusively a male audience who came to the Persian theater to gape at a so-called Arabian odalisque giving a performance.[127] As quoted from the 1893 book *The Magic City* by David F. Burg, "Fatima, of Persian theatre," compared to the chief Algerian dancing girl, "was more lithesome, and executed the *danse du ventre* with a wild abandon that called for repression by the authorities."[128] According to Hubert Howe Bancroft, the entertainments in the Persian theater, such as the dancing girls, were of questionable character.

As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported, upon the investigation of a committee, which was in fact the same authority that examined the Cairo Street before, director-

[125] Bancroft, 863.
[126] "The Persian Palace," *The Dream City, A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, n.p.
[127] Burg, 223.
[128] Ibid.

general George R. Davis ordered the closing of the Persian theater, and gave a notice on August 5, 1893 to Manager Debbas, Assistant Manager Bustang, and Akoun Beneteny, who had personal supervision over the girls. Assistant Manager Bustang characterized the interference as an outrage, and said the Fair officials would have to answer for it in the courts:

> Every day since the Fair opened we have been having trouble and are getting sick of it. This concession is backed by an Oriental gentleman worth $25,000,000 and he will spend all the money necessary to protect his interests. They talk about the dances here being improper. I don't consider them half as bad as the high-kicking, the split, the serpentine, and shadow dances done by the girls in tights on the theater stages. They are the true native dances of Persia and the girls are always dressed in loose-fitting costumes instead of tights.[129]

Clearly, the development in the Persian concession to turn it into a more popular and profitable place was not a very successful enterprise, unlike the Algerian and Egyptian concessions, whose managers were experienced entertainment entrepreneurs.

### 3.2.4. Moorish Palace

In *Guide to the World's Fair Grounds, Buildings and Attractions*, John J. Flinn wrote that the Moorish Palace was proclaimed as the most interesting exhibit on the Plaisance.[130] Owing this title to the beauty of its architecture, the Moorish exhibit was a more museum-like enterprise than a popular amusement center, unlike other Muslim concessions in the fair. Attending the World's Columbian Exposition as an independent country with a display that cost $150,000, Morocco charged August Fidler, a Chicago

[129] "Persian Girls Do not Dance," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 6, 1893, pg. 2.
[130] John J. Flinn, *Guide to the World's Fair Grounds, Buildings and Attractions* (Chicago: The Standard Guide Company, 1893), 66.

architect, with designing its building after the style of the Alhambra.[131] As a beautiful reproduction of Moorish architecture, this exhibit had a palm garden with a continuous labyrinth, copied from the famous Alhambra in Granada, as well as splendid appointments, elaborate decorations, and fine groups in wax.[132] While lacking an Oriental theater with the famous live shows of the *danse du ventre*, the Moorish Palace had Oriental wax figures with exotic implications. There was "a realistic group in the innermost recesses of the Harem, a sheik surrounded by his favorites…. For his amusement an odalisque is tripping through a dance. The favorite wife, a beauty with pink cheeks, plump arms and long dark tresses has fallen asleep, with her head resting on her lord's knee."[133] Not causing any controversy at the fair, the Moorish Palace, despite not being as popular and as commercial as the Cairo Street or Algerian Village, was still regarded as an attraction worth seeing, and absolutely contributed to the fair visitors' interest in the Midway.

### 3.2.5. Turkish Village

Among all the Muslim countries represented at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the Ottoman Empire was unique with its exhibits situated both in the main fair grounds of the White City and the popular Midway Plaisance.[134] Upon being

[131] Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair*, 237, 211.
[132] Flinn, *The Best Things to Be Seen at the World's Fair* (1893), 175.
[133] Ibid, 177.
[134] The Ottoman government had a main Turkish Building situated among the national pavilions in the Jackson Park. There were also Ottoman displays in the specialized buildings of the White City: Several caiques, boats and sedan chairs in the Transportation Building, some quantity of agricultural produce from the Bursa region in the Agriculture Building, industrial products in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, specimens of all kinds of wood in the Mines Building as well as books of Fatma Aliye Hanim in the Library of the Woman's Building and Abdulhamid Albums depicting the modernization of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. See, Zeynep Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 77, 83-84.

invited by the U.S. President to be represented at the World's Fair, the Sultan Abdülhamid II lost no time in accepting, as the fair was a good opportunity to portray the Ottomans with a positive image in the United States. Demanding a desirable location in the Fair, the Sublime Porte contracted the task of preparation to a commercial firm, Ilya Suhami Saadullah & Co., which was represented by concessionaire Robert Levy.[135]

Highly concerned with its self-image at the World's Fair of 1893, "the Ottoman government intentionally sought to avoid objectionable—unregulated—displays of things oriental—from dancing girls to dervishes to wild Arab Bedouin."[136] As Selim Deringil stated, stringent conditions were laid down for the Turkish theatre, as "no plays injurious to the honor and modesty of Muslim women or damaging national honor and prestige" were to be performed in this exhibit.[137] Moreover, the contract with Ilya Suhami Saadullah & Co. included the construction of a mosque for the Muslim prayer, on the condition that:

> Proper Muslim etiquette should be observed at all times and visitors to the fair be admitted [into the Mosque] only at the discretion of the [Ottoman] representatives…. No plays injurious to the honor and modesty of Muslim women or damaging to national honor and prestige are to be performed in close proximity to a 'mosque', as seen in the Egyptian exhibit at the Paris exhibition.[138]

Not long after, however, the Ottoman officials realized that there were other faculties in the fair whose priority was moneymaking rather than presenting a good image. According to the report of the Ottoman minister to Washington, Alexander Mavroyeni, while the Ottoman mosque properly served the religious needs of Muslims after the opening of the exposition, "'Nestorians' had built a mosque outside the perimeter of the

[135]Deringil, 155. See page 92 in Appendix B to view a photograph of the entrance of the Turkish Village.
[136] Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (June 2002): 768-96.
[137] Deringil, 155.
[138] Ibid, 155-56.

fair and were charging money to display 'Muslim devotional practices.'" Upon this disturbing development, as Deringil added, the Ottoman Minister Mavroyeni "intervened with the Chicago city authorities to have the 'mosque' closed down."[139]

The Turkish Village in the Midway Plaisance, attractively arranged by Robert Levy, consisted of a street in imitation of one of the old streets in Constantinople. Its displays originally included selections from Ottoman culture, such as luxurious pavilions and bazaars, costly articles of furniture and decoration, sedan bearers, a Persian tent, a bazaar with 40 booths, a candy factory selling the most popular Oriental sweets, a refreshment pavilion, and a mosque erected by special permission of the Ottoman government.[140] The exhibit, which placed the "Palace of Damascus," showing the domicile of wealthy Turks, alongside the "Camp of Damascus," featuring tribal lifestyles, served as a center of authentic activities for the fair visitors. In the Palace, there was a daily "oriental wedding ceremony," while the Tent scenery showed "Arabs in traditional costumes, 'squatting about as at home' and smoking their narghiles."[141] The Turkish theater produced comedy and tragedy, and showed oriental engagements, weddings, receptions, funerals, merry-making, battles and scenes from every phrase of life with every musical instrument of oriental type, ancient and modern.[142]

Similar to the practices of the other Muslim countries' concessions in the Midway, the Turkish Village employed a number of American girls to work as cashiers, barmaids, and saleswomen, while demanding that they dress in Oriental costume. To have all the costumes in keeping with the surroundings was a way to make things look

[139] Ibid, 156.
[140] Bancroft, 855-57.
[141] Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 78.
[142] Flinn, *The Best Things to Be Seen at the World's Fair*, 180-81.

more natural, as one of the managers of the site reported to *Chicago Daily Tribune*, but it was also an indication of the commercial nature of the concession. Unexpectedly, however, the American girls hired to work in the Turkish village for the performance of the show turned out to cause trouble for the managers, when they refused to wear "the aforesaid costume including gorgeous bloomers, as that particular brand of trousers affected by Turks and other Orientals." A pretty young woman said, "Yes, we have heard that we are to be decked out in Turkey clothes, but at first we had no objections to make except that we would have to dress our hair differently…But we didn't know then that the costumes would be made any other way than the style we are accustomed to." As the report continued, the young lady declared vehemently that she wouldn't wear the horrid things even if she had to go out on strike.[143]

Regardless of Sultan Abdulhamid's concern about displaying the Turkish Empire respectfully, an emerging series of problems in Chicago complicated his efforts to make a proper presentation. First of all, "the goods scheduled to arrive for the Ottoman pavilion" were late and "many needed repair." Following this, "the Navy display, consisting of the sultan's ceremonial state rowing boats," went missing. The Ottoman officials lamented that the field where the Ottoman hippodrome was to be built was "at present a morass of mud." Moreover, the original contract kept the firm responsible for paying the expenses of the Ottoman company that came to Chicago, such that, when the firm went bankrupt, the Ottomans were left without support. As Selim Deringil concluded, "the officers were duly shipped back at the earliest possible date."[144]

[143] "Object to Bloomers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1893, pg. 1.
[144] Deringil, 159.

Subsequently, at a time when everything was going downhill, the company with the task of organizing the Ottoman concession no longer felt any compulsion to follow the Sultan's rules, and the Ottoman exhibit eventually turned into a complete profit-seeking concession. As a solution to recover financially, the Turkish theater soon capitalized on the *dans the ventre*. Notwithstanding the fact that the Ottoman Sublime Porte in Istanbul was concerned about respectable presentations of the Turkish female, the "original and financially unsuccessful display intended for good Christians, 'Life in the Holy Lands: Scenes from Biblical Days…A Moral Show'" in the Turkish theater turned into a show named "Life in the Harem. Dreamy Scenes in the Orient. Eastern Dances. The Sultan's Diversions," and it successfully "managed to attract great crowds,"[145] compensating for earlier losses of the same concession.

### 3.3. Midway's Victory

"As a concession to popular tastes," the Midway Plaisance, in the words of James Gilbert, was "a riot of entertainments and exhibits, most devoted to money-making."[146] Speaking of the exotic people of the Midway, one commentator said: "They have not come thousands of miles merely to add a picturesque feature to this wonderful exhibit. Almost all of them are professional traveling showmen, who pitch their tents in whatever portion of the globe offers the greatest inducement in hard cash. All the profuse explanations that they are here by the special permission of Sultan of this or Emperor that is bosh."[147]

[145] Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 81. See page 93 in Appendix B.
[146] Gilbert, 34.
[147] Davis, 363-64.

Indeed, the Midway Plaisance, with the Middle Eastern concessions as its core, became so popular and commercially successful that it even influenced the culture of the White City. After touring the White City, Frederick Law Olmsted found the "expression of the crowd too business like, common, dull, anxious and care-worn," and told Daniel Burnham that "more incidents of vital human gaiety [were] wanted"[148] in the main fair grounds. Olmsted suggested enlivening the White City with "unexpected festive elements" such as "masquerades, singing children, musicians, colorful peddlers" as well as exotic figures hired from the Midway.[149] It was August 1893, when the management responded "to the cry for popular fêtes," and "had decided to unburden all things classical and make the Exposition a popular one in every sense of the word."[150]

The commercialism of the Midway Plaisance even reached outside the fair grounds. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which was located very close to the exposition entrances as an unofficial amusement zone, occupied fifty acres and had a covered grand-stand that had a seating capacity of 18,000,[151] and attracted a big audience from those passing along the way to the fair. Like Sol Bloom and other successful entrepreneurs of the Midway Plaisance, William Cody predicted that a taste of the Middle Eastern exotic would make his show more popular, so "both Zouave troops and Arab horsemen comprised an important sideshow" of his "Wild West extravaganza,"[152]

[148] Kasson, 23.
[149] Ibid.
[150] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition* (1893), 37.
[151] *A Week at the Fair: Illustrating the Exhibits and Wonders of the World's Columbian Exposition with Special Descriptive Articles* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company Publishers, 1893), 246.
[152] Marr, 296.

along with demonstrations of horsemanship, battle, murder, sudden death, and barbarism.[153] Cody made a million dollars from the fair.[154]

The end of the fair was financially satisfactory for many. Speaking of the financial condition of the Exposition Company, Vice President of the Exposition Ferdinand W. Peck at the close of the fair said that the exposition had truly been a success in every sense: The total attendance to the fair was 27,529,400 people, which was almost half of the U.S. population, over 62,000,000 people in 1890; the total amount of the gate receipts was $10,500,000, and the amount paid into the treasury of the exposition by the concessions was $3,500,000,[155] which was an amount equal to only one quarter of the concessionaires' gross receipts, according to the agreement made before the exposition started.[156]

As Hubert Howe Bancroft reported, Middle Easterners or those depicting them who worked on the Midway Plaisance took home a considerable sum of money, "the Turks from $200 to $300, the dancing girls at least $500, and the donkey boys a larger amount. Of the last many had enough to purchase a camel or a number of donkeys on their return to Cairo, where they would probably start a business for themselves."[157] As *The Dream City* explained, "the Arabs came to the World's Fair to make money" and each was able to return home "between five hundred and six hundred dollars, which, in his own country, raised him to a rank of much consequence in society."[158]

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[153] *A Week at the Fair: Illustrating the Exhibits and Wonders of the World's Columbian Exposition with Special Descriptive Articles*, 246.
[154] Larson, 381.
[155] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 40, 53.
[156] "Investors in Doubt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26, 1893, pg. 1, "Appeal Of The Concessionaires," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1893, pg. 4.
[157] Bancroft, 883.
[158] "Donkey Boys in the Street of Cairo," *The Dream City, A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, n.p.

Sol Bloom, the manager of the Midway Plaisance and the concessionaire of the Algerian Village, emerged from the fair a rich young man and the *danse du ventre*, as the core attraction of the Midway theaters, became an unforgettable legacy of the World's Columbian Exposition. As Bloom put it, "Almost at once this dance was imitated in amusement parks all over the country. As it became debased and vulgarized it began to acquire the reputation that survives today—the reputation of a crude, suggestive dance known as the 'Hootchy-Koothchy.'"[159]

[159] Bloom, 135.

# CHAPTER 4

# THE FAIR FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE: THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS, TURKISH EXHIBITS IN THE WHITE CITY, AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE MIDWAY

On December 24, 1890, Benjamin Harrison, the President of the United States, issued a proclamation inviting all the nations of the earth to take part in the World's Columbian Exposition with their exhibits that would "most fitly and fully illustrate their resources, their industries and their progress in civilization."[160] While one of the initial goals of this celebration in Chicago was to demonstrate the world's material advances in arts and industries, intellectual and moral progress, having a powerful impact on human development, was also recognized as an indispensable part of the exposition. Standing independently from the entertainment culture of the Midway Plaisance, the World's Parliament of Religions represented the largest spiritual undertaking of the Columbian Exposition. Held under the World's Congress Auxiliary as a non-commercial supplement to the Fair, the Parliament aimed to present the state of the world's religions

[160] *Dedicatory and Opening Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition,* 57.

in a peaceful conference, which brought together Eastern and Western cultures and religions of the world in the Columbus Hall of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Similar in character to the World's Parliament of Religions, there were other facilities in the exposition that aimed to represent foreign cultures, especially those of the Islamic lands, for a non-commercial purpose. One example of these presentations came from the Ottoman Empire, which contributed to the exposition exhibits depicting the progress of Muslim culture and religion, such as the albums prepared by order of the Sultan Abdulhamid, and the books written by a Turkish woman named Fatma Aliye Hanim. Likewise, there were others that displayed Muslim nations in a positive and less commercial light. The portraits of photographer James J. Gibson, for example, captured the various Midway characters in relatively dignified and respectable poses. However, despite all of the efforts to present the intellectual and moral progress of the world's nations in an amicable and honest manner, neither the World's Parliament of Religions, nor the other exhibits depicting the Islamic nations in a progressive light, became as successful as the popular and commercial displays of the Midway in achieving their respective aims.

### 4.1. The World's Parliament of Religions

The Parliament of Religions originally sought to make connections between the great religions of the world in hopes of securing international peace by emphasizing the common truths of the various religions, not their particular differences. However, the outcome of the conference was not necessarily consistent with strengthening ties among religions and nations. As the committee in charge of organizing the Parliament of Religions discovered, "many favored the Parliament from the profound conviction that it

would show forth the superiority and the sufficiency of some particular form of Christianity. Others favored it from the feeling that their own religion had been misunderstood, and that they had cherished important truths which others would do well to heed."[161] Moreover, as the responses to the invitations to join the Parliament started coming in, notes of dissent were soon heard. While many Christian journals in America announced their opposition to the proposed Parliament, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States passed a resolution expressing its disapproval of the Parliament.[162]

Originating from different countries, the many voices opposing the Parliament of Religions made it clear that sentiment in favor of the Congress Committee's aims to foster brotherhood among religions was not universal. Some of the most adamant opposition came from Abdulhamid II, the Sultan of Turkey, who in this period held the title of caliph with the aim of uniting all Muslims under his rule.[163] Another strong opposition came from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in his letter gave this absolutist opinion: "Christian religion is the one religion."[164] The list of opponents to the Parliament was by no means limited to those two. As Rev. F. Herbert Stead said, "no man will attend the Parliament and be expected or supposed 'to regard all other faiths as equal to his own'… The Parliament of Religions simply recognizes the fact, which is indisputable, that there are on this planet a number of religions, among which

[161] John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1, (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893), 15.
[162] Ibid, 18-19.
[163] Abdulhamid used the title of caliphate to increase the solidarity of Muslim nations. During this period, Islamicism was the most common ideological power that aimed to bring all Muslims under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.
[164] Barrows, 21.

Christianity numerically counts one."[165] According to Bishop F. D. Huntington, "Christ and his Church would not be honored at the proposed parliament," while Bishop Charles C. Grafton of Fond du Lac wrote, "civilization, which is making the whole world one, is preparing the way for the reunion of all the world's religions in their true center Jesus Christ."[166] Rev. E. J. Eitel of Hong Kong expressed an even more bitter hostility: "Let me warn you not to deny the sovereignty of your Lord by any further continuance of your agitation in favor of the Parliament not sanctioned by his Word."[167] Finally, Dr. Jamaspji Minocherji, the high-priest of Bombay, said, "We believe that Christianity is to supplant all other religions, because it contains all the truth there is in them and much besides, revealing a redeeming God."[168]

Notwithstanding this staunch opposition, the Parliament of Religions, after more than two years of preparation, was inaugurated in the Hall of Columbus, which contained an audience of four thousand on September 11, 1893. Charles Carroll Bonney, the President of the World's Congress Auxiliary, declared in the opening address that, "when the religious faiths of the world recognize each other as brothers, children of one Father, whom all profess to love and serve, then, and not till then, will the nations of the earth yield to the spirit of concord and learn war no more."[169] John Henry Barrows, Chairman of the General Committee on Religious Congresses, expressed similar sentiments when he said, "we are here as members of a Parliament of Religions, over which flies no sectarian flag, which is to be stampeded by no sectarian war-cries, but where for the first time in large council is lifted up the banner of love, fellowship,

[165] Ibid, 22.
[166] Ibid, 25.
[167] Ibid, 26.
[168] Ibid, 28.
[169] Ibid, 67.

brotherhood," adding, "we are not here to criticize one another, but each to speak out positively and frankly his own convictions regarding his own faith."[170]

While the Parliament of Religions aimed to present the religions of the world objectively, without intending to demonstrate any superiority of one to another, a series of acts conflicted with the initial goals of this assembly. First of all, while the first act of the gathering was meant to be a common prayer, phrases like "praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost" from the One Hundredth Psalm and the Lord's Prayer[171] were obviously addressed only to Christian listeners, even though the conference hall also held representatives of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shintoism, and Taoism, among others. The act of choosing a prayer unique to Christianity paralleled the Old Testament slogan of the Parliament, which read "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?" As Clay Lancaster remarked, this "offended the representatives of the more advanced religions of Farther Asia" in "considering God a father image."[172] Secondly, aside from his wishes for a humanity united under the peace of religions, Chairman John Henry Barrows announced in his inaugural address that it was the Christian faith that had those elements and divine forces fitted to the needs of all men, and that Christendom held up the Parliament of Religions as a torch of truth and love which could prove the morning star of the twentieth century.[173] The conflicting messages that marked the start of the gathering were in fact a prelude to the unfortunate course of events that actually increased ill will among members of different faiths.

[170] Ibid, 75-76.
[171] Ibid, 66.
[172] Lancaster, 29.
[173] Ibid, 73-74.

One event that caused notable bitterness occurred when Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb, the only Muslim to present a paper at the Parliament of Religions, delivered a speech on "The Spirit of Islam." Webb told the audience that there was no Muslim on earth who did not believe that Islam would ultimately be the universal faith, and later expressed that neither polygamy nor holy war were in fact a part of the Islamic system, but reflected misunderstanding due to the lack of books in English conveying the true character of the religion.[174] According to John Henry Barrows, the reading of this paper was "attended with strong and even violent and impatient expressions of disapproval on the part of the hearers. At the outset of the paper, these demonstrations, in the form of hisses and cries of 'Shame!' were so emphatic that the speaker seemed deterred from pursuing the line of discourse on which he entered."[175]

On the same day as Webb's speech, in which he opined, "I believe Islam will be the religion of Protestant America," the *Chicago Daily Tribune* wrote, "The tables are turned. Orthodox ministers and Christians of this country are to be given the opportunity to see the missionaries of the religions of the Orient working among the enlightened people of this country."[176] The following day, on September 21, the same newspaper devoted more space to the views of Mohammed Webb, explaining his reasons for defending polygamy among Muslims and his opinions of the Parliament of Religions. Webb's response was no less provocative than the emotional reaction of the audience to his earlier speech: "If Christianity is the true system it will prevail undoubtedly. If it is

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[174] John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*, vol. 2, 989-99.
[175] John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1, 127.
[176] "Missions of Islam," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1893, pg. 1.

false then it will go down, as it deserves to go down. Now, as the Mussulman says, it all rests with God, and what is right will prevail."[177]

Reactions to Mohammed Webb were not subdued. One response to Webb's defense of polygamy and holy war came from Rev. Dr. George E. Post of Beirut, who laid aside his speech scheduled for September 22—"How Can the Methods of Christian Missionaries be Improved?"—in favor of reading from the Koran to prove that Webb's ideas were misleading to an American audience. Holding a copy of Koran in one hand, Post said sarcastically:

> I hold in my hand a book which is never touched by 200,000,000 of the human race with unwashed hands, a book which is never carried below the waist, a book which is never laid upon the floor, a book every word of which to these 200,000,000 of the human race is considered the direct word of God which came down from heaven. And I propose, without note or comment, to read you a few words from this sacred book, and you may make your own comments upon them afterwards.[178]

Then, Post continued his speech by reading passages that included instructions to propagate the religion by sword and praises for polygamy.[179]

The tendency to seek to demonstrate the superiority of one's religion during the Parliament conferences was not limited to the dispute between Mohammed Webb and George Post. In general, many participants of the World's Parliament of Religions at some point in their respective speeches felt a need to remark upon how their religion was better than the other faiths. Rev. Joseph Cook of Boston, whose subject was "The Century of Modern Missions a Prophecy of Final Triumph," commented on the results

[177] "Mr. Webb Explains Himself," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1893, pg. 2.
[178] John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*, vol. 1, 140.
[179] Ibid, 140.

of the Parliament, saying: "The result of that comparison of faiths has convinced us that Christianity has a rival in no religion…. Max Muller has said that there will never be any book that will dazzle the Bible. The more the study of comparative theology has been extended, the more the Bible stands as the only book worthy to occupy the top shelf."[180]

Nonetheless, there were some who acknowledged that the Parliament speeches and papers amounted to little more than opinion and journalism. According to Rev. Dr. P. S. Henson, there was a great deal of speculation but little research done in the Parliament of Religions:

> The people and the newspapers think we are going to obtain a universal religion, one that will be acceptable to every one. What a wonderful religion that would be! … At this parliament of Religions they are soliciting for a universal religion, and among the babel of voices a man is uncertain which way to turn or which to take. Bewildered, confused with this confliction of opinions what is a man to do?[181]

In fact, despite the goal of bringing pious men of diverse faiths together in a fraternal conference without seeking to promote indifference, the Parliament of Religions more effectively served to promote peace among the Christian sects. According to Clay Lancaster, the manner of representing outside religions at the Parliament resembled a Christian missionary inviting a Moslem or Brahman into his own home, such that "other religions were listened to more out of social courtesy than as an expression of warm feelings or liberalism."[182]

On September 28, 1893, the World's Parliament of Religions came to its close in the Halls of Washington and Columbus of the Art Institute in Chicago, with eager crowds pushing up against the doors. According to David F. Burg, "for the Americans

[180] "Cook On The Results," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 2, 1893, pg. 8.
[181] "Skeptical Of The Parliament," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1893, pg. 7.
[182] Lancaster, 28-29.

the educative value of speeches by various faiths only peripherally familiar to the New World was inestimable."[183] The *Chicago Daily Tribune* proclaimed the Parliament of Religions, with an estimated attendance of 200,000 persons, as the most remarkable of all the gatherings held under World's Congress Auxiliary.[184] Yet, when compared to the total attendance to the World's Columbian Exposition, which was 27.5 million, participation in the Parliament conferences seems minimal. Moreover, the skeptical and even hostile attitudes of the participants towards each other at times indicated that the diverse faiths were not really seeking mutual understanding and cordial fellowship, which overshadowed the original goals of the religious gathering. Consequently, the World's Parliament of Religions, while the largest spiritual exhibit of the Columbian Exposition, remained controversial and so failed to support the main goal of the World's Congress Auxiliary, which was "to promote the progress, prosperity, unity, peace, and happiness of the world."[185]

### 4.2. Turkish Exhibits in the White City

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire witnessed a series of modernization reforms based on Western models. This was a period when the Ottoman Sublime Porte was conscious of the need to attend international exhibitions to "achieve greater recognition in the West."[186] In the World's Columbian Exposition, the effort to maintain Ottoman identity as the only great Muslim power consisted of avoiding representations of the Empire as under-civilized on the international stage. For Sultan

[183] Burg, 266.
[184] "The World's Fair Congresses," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1893, pg. 12.
[185] Bancroft, 921.
[186] Davis, 378.

Abdulhamid II, forming exhibits that depicted the modern aspects of the empire would facilitate construction of a positive Ottoman portrait in the 1893 World's Fair. According to Zeynep Celik, the creation of Abdulhamid II's photograph albums and the selection of the publications of an Ottoman woman writer, Fatma Aliye Hanim, to be presented at the World's Columbian Exposition, served as correctives to Orientalist stereotypes in the fair.[187] Unlike the popular exotic displays of the Midway Plaisance that caught the attention of the fair visitors, however, these Turkish exhibits in the buildings of the White City were like small spectacles among the innumerable exhibits in a huge museum.

Upon deciding to participate in the Chicago World's Fair, the Sultan Abdulhamid II ordered the preparation of a collection of photograph albums, which was presented as a gift to the Library of Congress after being displayed at the fair itself. Today, the Abdulhamid II Collection, consisting of 51 albums and 1819 photographs, represents the most significant ensemble of nineteenth-century Ottoman visual documents in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.[188] In the light of the modernization reforms of the nineteenth century, those photographs sought to present a modern Turkish image; therefore, pictures depicting the exoticism of the East, such as scenes from the harem, traditional arts or street vendors, were deliberately excluded from the collection.[189] As Sultan Abdülhamid II communicated to his private secretary: "Most of the photographs taken [by European photographers] for sale in

[187] Zeynep Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition" in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 83-84.
[188] William Allen, "Abdülhamid II Koleksiyonu," translated by Vasıf K. Kortum, *Tarih ve Toplum* 25.5 (Ocak 1986): 16-19, 16. For viewing the complete photograph collection of Abdulhamid II , see, The Library of Congress, "Prints & Photographs Online Catalog- Abdul Hamid II Collection," *The Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division Prints & Photographs Online Catalog-Abdul Hamid II Collection*, 21 December 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/ahiiquery.html >.
[189]Allen, 17.

Europe vilify and mock Our Well-Protected Domains. It is imperative that the photographs to be taken in this instance [the Chicago Fair] do not insult Islamic peoples by showing them in a vulgar and demeaning light."[190] Accordingly, Abdülhamid ordered that "all photographs taken were to be vetted by the Palace before they were sent to Chicago."[191]

Inside these albums, the photographs depicted examples of modernization in education, military, and architecture. The most striking photographs of the collection showed small groups of students representing their schools, such as the military students in modern uniforms, in order to emphasize the reform efforts. Other photos depicted architecture, such as nineteenth-century Istanbul palaces with beaux-arts design or factories, docks and arsenals, some of them still under construction, stressing industrialization and continuing development. Despite these efforts to accent the modernity of the Ottoman Empire, however, some photographs were deficient or counterproductive in this regard. For example, a photo showing a military medical school where the students were examining a cadaver recalled a blood curdling scene rather than one emphasizing modernity. Another photograph showing the well-off students of Muhendishane-i Berr-i Humayun, a modern military school, also captured an outsider looking inside the fence of the school, implying that not everyone in society could get the benefits of these modern institutions. While some of the photographs aimed to demonstrate the existence of modern Ottoman women, the messages from different photos were conflicting. For instance, the students of the Ruchdié Girls' School, while seeming to wear modern clothing, were just young girls of primary-school

[190] Deringil, 156.
[191] Ibid, 156.

age, unlike the patients of the Women's Hospital, who were covered adult women not facing the camera.[192]

The other Turkish exhibit with a modern emphasis contained the books of Fatma Aliye Hanim, which were displayed in the Library of the Woman's Building at the Columbian Exposition. Originally, as the organizers of women's exhibits were interested in inviting foreign women to Chicago, they also sent a letter to Valide Sultan, the spiritual mother of Sultan Abdülhamid II, asking her to facilitate the attendance of Turkish women in the fair. Unexpectedly, this invitation letter was offensive to the Turkish Sublime Porte, which sent a notice to the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire remarking that Valide Sultan, an old lady who rarely left the Palace, did not want to receive such offers again.[193] Nonetheless, the writer Fatma Aliye Hanim, who was among the few highly educated intellectual women of Turkish society at the time, agreed to send her three books to Chicago upon receiving an invitation from Edith Clark, the cataloguer of the Woman's Library of the World's Fair.[194]

In contrast to the image of the women displayed in the popular exotic shows of the Midway Plaisance, the Woman's Building was the one Fair venue where women were represented on a dignified basis in arts, literature, and science. The Woman's Library, one of the most important features of the Woman's Building, contained the writings of both American and foreign women. While more than four thousand books from almost all American states overwhelmed the foreign books, which numbered more

[192] Allen, 17-18.
[193] Erhan, 373-74.
[194] Zeynep Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition" in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 92.

than three thousand,[195] books from Muslim countries were extremely few, including one work on astronomy in Arabic and three books from the Ottoman Empire by Fatma Aliye in Turkish.[196]

Fatma Aliye Hanim's books were significant in terms of symbolizing educated Turkish women in the Chicago World's Fair. The first book, *Hayal ve Hakikat*, was a novel suggesting that the families should raise their daughters with education and intellect and not pressure them into choosing an arranged marriage partner. The second book, *Mahazarat*, also a novel, told the story of a high-level Turkish family, whose male and female members of the house lived separately. This novel was critical of the social pressure on women on the issue of divorce, indicating that it was an unfair situation for women to have to continue their lives as slaves to their husbands. The third book, *Nisvan-i Islam*, was an analysis of the status of women in Islam.[197]

Despite the significant message sent by the inclusion of Fatma Aliye Hanim's books in the Library of the Women's Building in Chicago, these written works were no more than visual exhibits to the fair visitors. Firstly, the books were not translated into English, as Edith E. Clarke noted; therefore, even their titles meant little to the visitors of the library. Secondly, it is questionable that these three books by a Turkish woman author were even visible among the thousands of other books. Thirdly, there were voices

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[195] These numbers are estimated according to a statement of the number of books received at the Woman's Library on May 30, 1893. According to the same statement, the foreign nations sending books to the Woman's Library were Arabia, Belgium, Bohemia, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. See, Maud Howe Elliot, *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 137.

[196] Edith E. Clarke, "List of Books in the Library of the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893," *A Celebration of Women Writers*, 8 August 1894, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/clarke/library/library.html> (19 February 2008).

[197] Mübeccel Kiziltan, "Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar: Fatma Aliye Hanım." *Journal of Turkish Studies* 114 (1990): 283-323, 285-91.

that gave words to women's condition in the Muslim world, arguably a more effective way of capturing the attention of the crowds than displaying the silent visual books on the shelves of the library. For example, Mary Page Wright, an American missionary with eight years of experience in Turkey, delivered a paper to the Congress of Women, where she "reiterated that women were 'held to be essentially inferior to men,' that they were 'ignorant' despite the recent emphasis placed on their education, and that polygamy and seclusion in harems made their lives 'monotonous and sad.'"[198]

Despite the richness of the books and newspaper articles in 1893 about the World's Columbian Exposition, neither the photography albums of Albulhamid II nor the books by Fatma Aliye Hanim were mentioned in detail in any American source. Considering the vast number of the exhibitions of the White City, however, this is not a surprising consequence. On the other hand, the fact that the publicity given to the exhibits of the Midway Plaisance, the Middle Eastern section being the most popular one, was reflected in almost all of the exposition guide books and frequently in newspapers once again demonstrated the preference for amusement over education. Subsequently, visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition preferred to see cultural displays that also entertained them and confirmed their beliefs and prejudices, or provided them with thrills, regardless of all the attempts to educate them.

### 4.3. Photography in the Midway

The World's Columbian Exposition coincided with a period of rapidly developing consumer culture, when the Kodak camera began to deprofessionalize

[198] Zeynep Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition" in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 92-93.

photography in the 1890s. Within a single act of pushing a button, an amateur could then make an image without even owning a darkroom.[199] Undoubtedly, the living-people exhibits of the Midway Plaisance represented a popular destination for amateur photographers. As Carl Koerner wrote: "To be able to add to my album photos of these different nations [sic] clothed as they are in their exact national dress" was "a far more interesting souvenir than photographs of the Exposition buildings."[200] In the words of Julie K. Brown, "the amateur photographer, the 'camera-fiend with his weapon,' was encouraged to 'collect' images from the Midway, and the cameras were designed to do this with a minimum effort."[201] While the amateur photographers at the Columbian Exposition favored the conventional poses of the stereotypical Oriental, the photographer James J. Gibson, however, followed a different pattern, preferring to make more dignified portraits of the Midway characters.

A Canadian portrait photographer, James J. Gibson had initially contracted to do the photographic-pass work for the exposition. While Gibson's genuine interest was commercial portrait work, his assignment to one of the photography related works of the Columbian Exposition gave him an opportunity to make portraits of the members of the various countries represented on the Midway Plaisance.[202] Gibson's portraits of the different national groups on the Midway were "distinctively individual, empathetic, and dignified in their portrayal," as could be viewed in *The Chicago Times Portfolio of the*

[199] David E. Nye, "The Emergence of Photographic Discourse: Images and Consumption," in *Consumption and American Culture*, eds. David E. Nye and Carl Pedersen (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1991), 37.
[200] Julie K. Brown, *Contesting Images: Photography and the World's Columbian Exposition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 110.
[201] Ibid, 110.
[202] Ibid, 83.

*Midway Types*.[203] In this published work, for example, Gibson's portrait of an Algerian dancer, "one of the performers of the controversial 'dans-du-ventre' on the Midway Plaisance, was devoid of any reference to the exotic, sensual, or physical aspects of the dance, aspects that were often exploited in journalistic accounts."[204] Similarly, the caption of a photograph entitled "Rosa, The Turkish Dancer" did not contain any denigrating comments: "Everyone visiting the Midway saw Rosa, whose graceful dancing gave her great reputation. She became famous for her whirling, which was often prolonged for twenty-five minutes. She was a good singer and musician."[205] In this context, "Gibson's photographs of these subjects also contrasted sharply with the conventional representations of Middle Eastern women that overseas commercial firms constructed and produced…for the tourist trade."[206]

The amateur photographers visiting the Midway Plaisance, on the other hand, sought out conventional images with recognizable symbols. As the concessionaires were conscious of "the commercial value of their own images, as well as the insatiable demand of amateurs for 'snaps' of their own entertainment," they charged amateurs an extra fee of one dollar to use their own cameras in the concession.[207] One of the most popular of all the photographic subjects on the Cairo Street was, for example, "'the great nodding camels docilely following their tiny boy leaders,' with their women riders giving 'shrieks of dismay' on their 'amusing' dismounting."[208] Interestingly, if a person wanted to photograph the inhabitants of the Cairo Street and elsewhere, this required

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[203] Ibid, 83.
[204] Ibid, 83.
[205] "Rosa, The Turkish Dancer," *The Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types*, part 1 (Chicago: The American Engraving Company Publishers & Printers, 1893). To view more photographs from Gibson's published work, see Appendix…
[206] Brown, 83.
[207] Ibid, 106, 108.
[208] Ibid, 108.

another extra charge, resulting in a bargaining process between the photographer and the subject to negotiate a proper fee.[209] Moreover, upon negotiating the price, the subjects of the Midway often assumed one of the conventional poses or postures that they knew pleased amateur photographers. For example, "the amateur photographer Carl Koerner, on paying twenty-five cents to photograph two Turkish sedan-chair bearers on the Midway, noted that they immediately adopted a pose of 'standing with heads and shoulders erect, with one foot a little in advance of the other as if in the act of walking.'"[210]

Inside the amateur photographs, individuals became objects rather than human beings as in the portraits of James J. Gibson. The amateur photographers, when trying to snap the exotic, unconsciously sought to capture the images that they had seen before, and therefore, simply replicated the standard images of the Orientals in the Midway Plaisance. In a larger context, this was a process that contributed to the popularity as well as the financial success of the Midway. As the amateurs outnumbered professional photographers, regardless of the publication of works like Gibson's *The Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types*, dignifying the Midway characters with respectable depictions, the Oriental subjects of the Midway Plaisance contributed to the commodification process of the exotica at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

[209] Ibid, 110.
[210] Ibid, 110.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

> *The commercial motive has forced its way to the surface and has become the controlling influence… The object of the Fair is now frankly proclaimed to be that of making as much money for its stockholders. Amusement, of cheap and even vulgar sorts, is being substituted for education, because most people prefer being amused to being instructed.*
>
> The *Dial*, 1893[211]

It was just a month before the closing of the World's Columbian Exposition when the *Dial* magazine announced the objective of the Fair to be moneymaking, thus contrasting with remarks originally made during the opening ceremonies. Indeed, it was clear by the end of the fair that the spirit of commercialism had infused the cultures of both the Midway and the White City; therefore, commerce came to define the Chicago Fair, as James Gilbert has argued in "A Contest of Cultures."[212] Since the object of the fair became "making as much money" as possible, the exotic displays of the Midway Plaisance, as a popular preference of the crowds, proved to be more valuable financially than the noble but unexciting exhibits of the White City.

[211] Gilbert, 38.
[212] Ibid, 39.

As Perry R. Duis wrote in *Challenging Chicago: Coping with Everyday Life, 1837-1920*, "the enormous popularity of the Midway demonstrated anew that people were willing to pay to be amused."[213] Drawing millions of people from overseas and various parts of the United States, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 was proof that there was a big audience in need of entertainment and recreation. People basically came to the fair to have fun, and they did. This intention of the crowds was obvious even in May 1893, when the exposition had just gotten underway. Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer wrote in *The Century* magazine:

> There must be many who do not intend to visit Chicago because of any profit they may gain. They are going because they hope to amuse themselves. They, too, will have their reward… Perhaps they will spend less time within the true boundaries of the Fair than in the great annex called the Midway Plaisance, where a merely commercial ingenuity has been allowed fuller sway. Here, however, they will see many amusing, strange, or beautiful sights, some of which have hitherto been visible only in far odd corners of the world, while others have never before been seen at all.[214]

For those masses of people who came to the fair to seek amusement, most flocked to the Midway Plaisance, which quickly overshadowed the White City. Nathaniel Hawthorne's son Julian eloquently expressed that the Midway certainly became the main draw of the fair: "The Midway Plaisance could not take the place of the Fair, but the Fair would not be half as delightful as it is without the Plaisance."[215]

In this sense, it was the concessionaires' role to meet the audience's demand for entertainment and recreation, and they successfully completed their task under the entrepreneurial leadership of Sol Bloom, the manager of the Midway Plaisance. What

[213] Perry R. Duis, *Challenging Chicago: Coping with Everyday Life, 1837-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 215.
[214] Schuyler Van Rensselaer, "At the Fair," *The Century* 46.1 (May 1893): 3-14, 7-10.
[215] Julie K. Rose "The World's Columbian Exposition: Idea, Experience, Aftermath." *American Studies at the University of Virginia*. 1 August 1996. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/title.html> (18November 2007).

the concessionaires of the Middle Eastern exhibits most strikingly accomplished was, however, to cater to an American audience that was receptive to centuries-old images of the Orient in the United States. By placing snake charmers on the exotic streets of the Midway with a mosque or putting *dans du ventre* in the Midway theaters, thus recreating a harem typical of Eastern palaces, the concessionaires provided a kind of entertainment for fair visitors that already resonated with their beliefs and prejudices. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the Midway Plaisance and its activities became the main attractions of the World's Columbian Exposition. While it was not the first time in the history of world's fairs that the Midway attractions achieved the greatest popularity, it was only after 1893 that Midway-type shows with a Middle Eastern flavor began to influence various forms of entertainment, such as theaters, movies, or songs.

Subsequently, in the World's Columbian Exposition, neither the White City, with its high arts and technology representing modernity, nor the World's Parliament of Religions, as a convention centering on spiritual matters, could serve as the Midway Plaisance did in terms of meeting the mass desire for entertainment and spectacle. As a popular exhibition area, the Midway Plaisance certainly attracted a wider audience than the World's Parliament of Religions, which appealed only to those who had special interest in spiritual matters. In fact, the Parliament of Religions was the first of its kind to exhibit religion in an international exposition, and it stood as the symbol of the moral progress next to a fair that largely celebrated America's material progress. While the Parliament of Religions, with its aim of securing international peace, succeeded in gathering representatives of the world's religions in one place, it did not, however, always embody a perfect example of human brotherhood among the members of different religions, as most of the religious delegates focused on proving the superiority

of their own religion during the Parliament conferences. On the other hand, the parliament talks, even if popular with a certain kind of group that was interested in religious matters, did not become a widespread interest of those fair visitors who crowded into the Midway Plaisance, the center of amusement.

As a result, the Parliament of Religions remained a typical conference that only temporarily brought people holding a similar goal together. The World's Columbian Exposition made it clear that there was an American people in pursuit of amusement in the late nineteenth century, and this was indeed an aspect of the emerging culture of consumption in the United States. In addition, as fair visitors preferred to see the more colorful aspects of the Oriental in the Midway Plaisance, instructional efforts to display a modern image of Islamic nations, as exemplified by Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II's selection of exhibits depicting modernity or photographer James J. Gibson's dignified photographic portrayals of Middle Eastern representatives of the Midway Plaisance, did not achieve much success. As the fair ended, it was the Midway Plaisance that left an indelible mark on the Columbian Exposition and would have further influence in the coming decades.

Only two years after the World's Columbian Exposition closed its gates at the end of October 1893, Coney Island introduced its own Cairo Street on the immediate outskirts of New York City. Before the show started, various calls could be heard touting the fair: "This way for the Streets of Cairo! One hundred and fifty Oriental beauties! The warmest spectacle on earth! See her dance the Hootchy-Kootchy! Anywhere else but in the ocean breezes of Coney Island she would be consumed by her

own fire! Don't rush! Don't crowd! Plenty of seats for all!"[216] Camels, elephants, belly dancers, the Turkish harem, and all other typical representatives of the mysteries of the Orient that came to New York aroused the curiosity among the members of a new audience waiting impatiently to witness this exotic novelty.[217] The performer of the *dans du ventre*, "dressed in a richly ornamented costume, sensuously swaying to the music of finger cymbals as she posed for the photographer," again provided a captivating scene for the audience, as she transported them "beyond routine surroundings and lured them toward the seraglio" with her "powerfully theatrical presence."[218]

While Oriental attractions borrowed from the Midway of the World's Columbian Exposition were an obvious source of inspiration for the amusement parks of Coney Island, entertainment events of subsequent American fairs, in the experienced hands of veteran showmen, featured similar themes. However, this process of commercial exploitation of the Oriental theme was not unique to American international expositions in particular. In the early years of the twentieth century, the American entertainment industry, realizing the popularity of the oriental theme, responded to what they thought audiences desired, with theaters, movies, dance halls, songs and novels exploring the Orient as well.

Among the most popular novels, Robert Hichen's *The Garden of Allah* (1904), which narrated "a conflicted love affair in the North African desert," enjoyed such an enormous popularity in the United States that in 1907 it became a Broadway play.[219] In 1918, the play *Omar the Tentmaker* featured a spectacular exhibit that made the legend

[216] Kasson, 53.
[217] Ibid, 53-54.
[218] Ibid, 54.
[219] Holly Edwards, ed., "A Million and One Nights: Orientalism in America," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, 43-44.

of the *Rubáiyát* real.[220] Similar in theme to Hichen's novel, *The Sheik* (1919) by E. M. Hull became a movie in the 1920s. As a romantic melodrama starring Rudolph Valentino, *The Sheik,* according to Holly Edwards, "affected America almost as profoundly as the World's Fair had done some thirty years earlier."[221] In order to meet an expanding interest in the Oriental theme, "every year between 1910 and 1920, film distributors handled between four and six romantic and action melodramas set in North Africa," such as *Aladdin and His Lamp, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, With Lawrence in Arabia,* etc.[222] In addition to written and visual expressions of interest in Oriental themes, some American songwriters of the time participated in this process with their lyrics depicting the themes of romance and the harem. Arthur Gillespie and Edna Williams's "My Turkish Opal Constantinople" (1912), Irving Berlin's "In My Harem" (1913), M. David and W. Hewitt's "Arabian Nights Intermezzo" (1918), and Abner Silver's "Give Me the Sultan's Harem" (1919) are some examples of the popular music of the day recalling such alluring themes as the desert, romance, the harem, etc.[223]

Actually, it was not just the entertainment industry that exploited the Orient for marketing purposes at the beginning of the twentieth century. The emergence of the advertising industry also coincided with a time when the Oriental theme was "perhaps the most popular of all merchandising themes in the years before World War I."[224] The most striking example of how the Orient was used to sell new brands occurred in the

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[220] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930,* 213.
[221] Ibid, 49.
[222]Matthew Bernstein, "Introduction," in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,* Eds. Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 3.
[223] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 214. See page 95 in Appendix C.
[224] Leach, 104. See pages 94-95 in Appendix C.

marketing of tobacco products. For example, the American Tobacco Company frequently used Oriental names to represent a particular brand of cigarettes, such as the Fatima brand, which was "widely marketed with a coquettish harem girl peeking out from behind a diaphanous veil to entice buyers into self-indulgence," and the Mogul and Omar brands, depicting images on their packages with romantic and exotic features.[225] Similarly, the Camel brand quickly dominated the market with its distinctive camel logo, which was actually "based originally on a dromedary that passed through Winston-Salem with Barnum and Bailey's circus."[226]

In fact, the emphasis on the Orient that those varied businesses used to cater to the desires of the people was a practice symbolic of a larger phenomenon that occurred in the American economy beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, under the influence of the process of industrialization, there emerged a market-driven culture of consumer capitalism in the United States, which depended on being able to supply what people demanded. Therefore, at a time when the value of everything was determined by the demand of the consumer, American business understood the marketing value of the Oriental theme and "whatever the complexity of the widespread interest in things oriental," it supplied "the principal means for their transmission and for the creation of a new national dream life for men and women."[227] The strategies that the entertainment and advertising industries used to meet the needs of an American audience by selling the Orient was therefore "the consequence of alliances among diverse institutions, noneconomic and economic, working together in an

[225] Holly Edwards, ed., "Catalogue of the Exhibition," 203-204.
[226] Ibid, 204.
[227] Leach,107.

interlocking circuit of relationships to reinforce the democratization of desire and the cult of the new."[228]

Consequently, the Chicago Fair transformed the notion of the Orient within a larger change in American society. As a result of the practice of using the Oriental theme in advertising mass-produced products, the commodification of the exotica in the Midway Plaisance of the Chicago Fair broadened in its dimension, such that the exotic, reduced to familiar stereotypes, became a necessary commercial ingredient in the marketplace of the early twentieth century. Now, the Oriental representatives of the Midway Plaisance became permanently ingrained commodities of American consumer capitalism.

[228] Ibid, 9.

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# APPENDIX A. Illustrations Related to Chapter 2

*The Employees of the Hope Webbing Company Wearing Bloomers, 1918*
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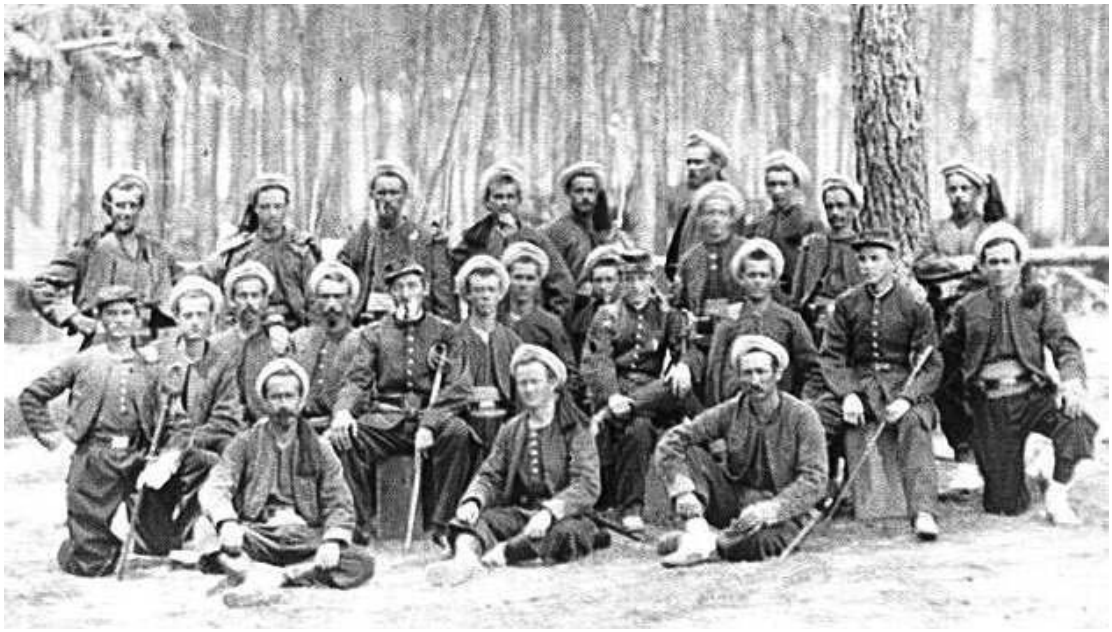

*American Zouave Soldiers in the Civil War*
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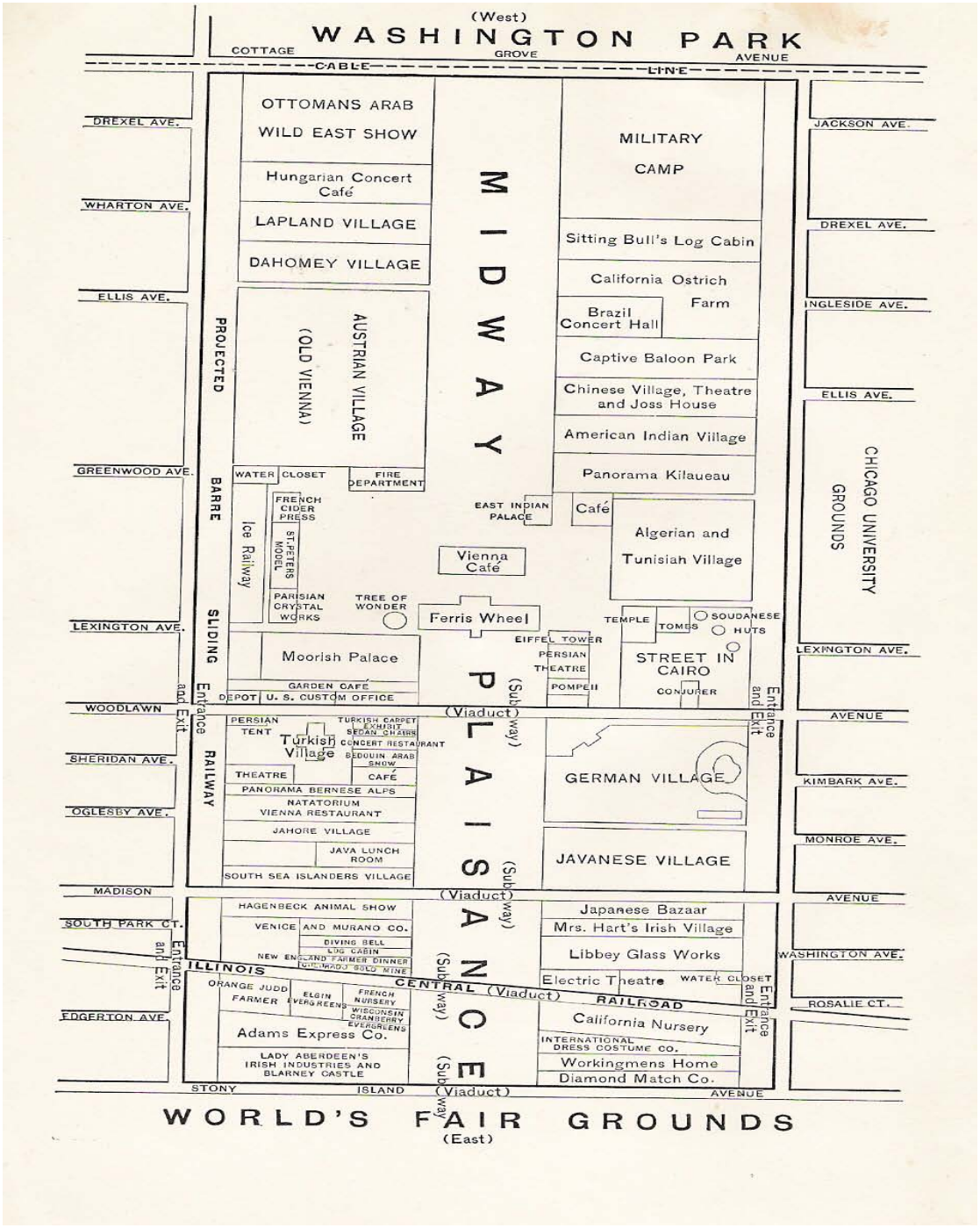
# APPENDIX B. Illustrations Related to Chapter 3

*A View of the Midway Plaisance from the Ferris Wheel*
Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing. *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 41.




*Map of Midway Plaisance*

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*Algerian Theatre*

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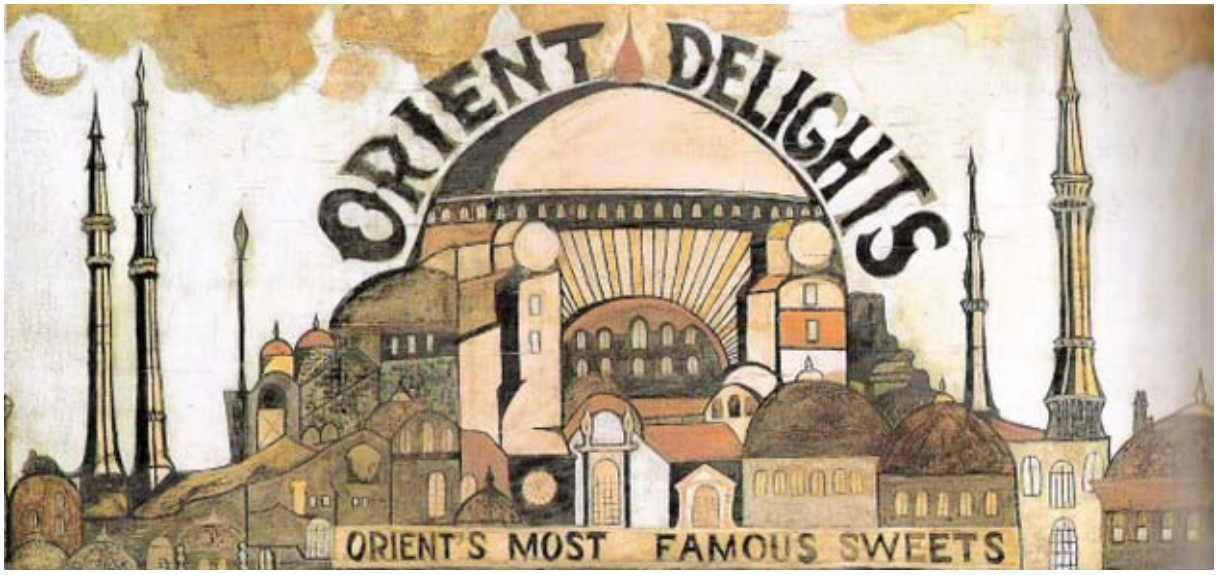
*Egyptian Swordsmen in the Street of Cairo*
Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing. *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 129.


*Turkish Village, World's Columbian Exposition*
Holly Edwards. *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 79.


*Turkish Bazaar, Midway Plaisance*
Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing. *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 139.


Cartoon From *World's Fair Puck*, 4 September 1893
Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 81.

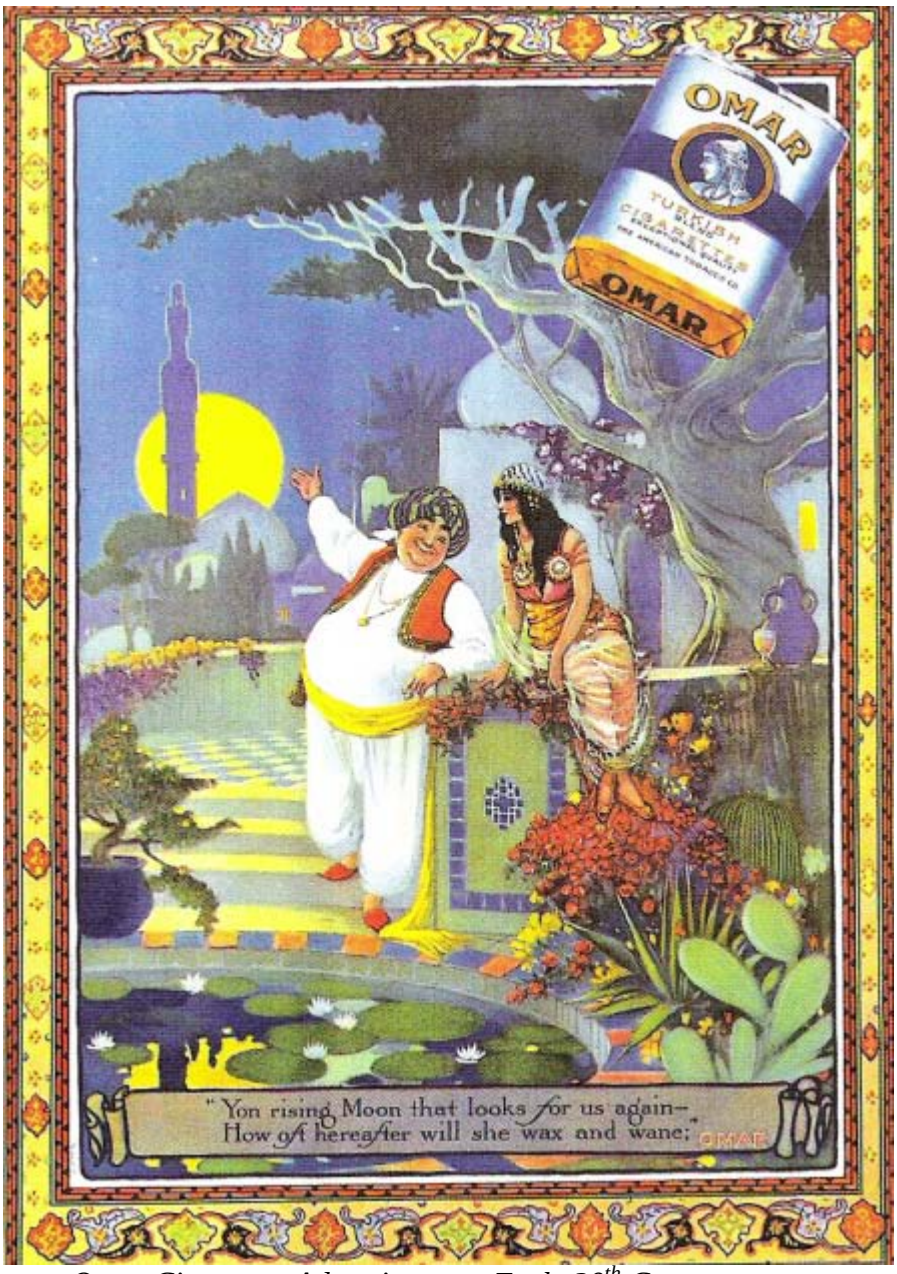
## APPENDIX C. Illustrations Related to Conclusion



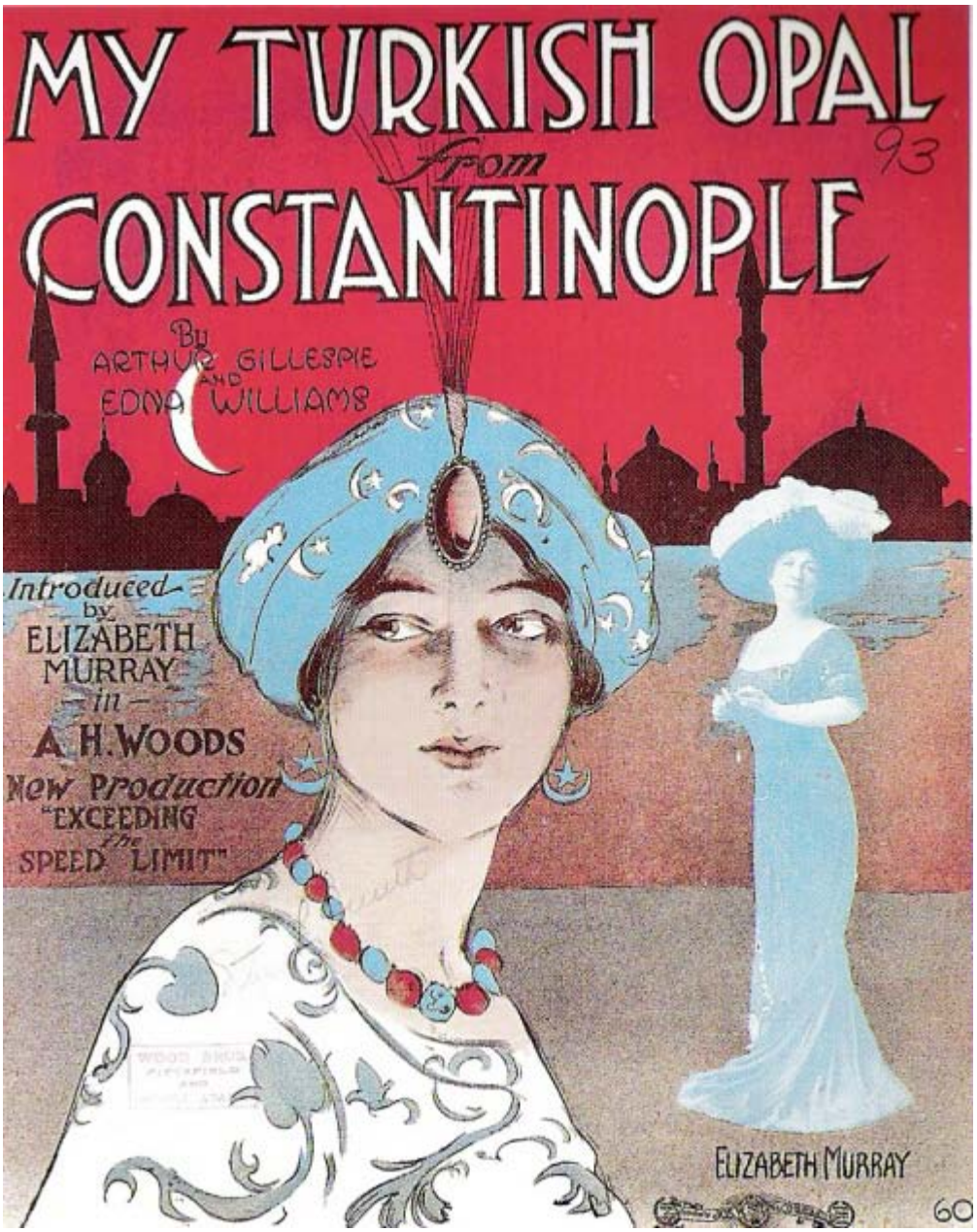

*Orient Delights Trade Sign*
Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 200.



*Fatima Cigarettes Advertising Sign*
Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 204.




*Omar Cigarettes Advertisement, Early 20th Century*
Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 205.




*My Turkish Opal Constantinople, 1912*

Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 215.