

Konrad Petrovsky

Keeping One's Composure: Levantine Femininities in Hammer-Purgstall's Travel Accounts and Memoirs

1 In the name of good taste

In December 1799, literally in the very last issue of the century, the Weimar-based *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* (Journal of Luxury and Fashions) published an anonymous letter from Constantinople with the title “On the high stilt shoes of Greek women. Excerpt from a letter from Constantinople.”¹ For the largest part, this “letter” contains a lengthy French poem entitled “*Les Galenses ou Galoches. Dediées à toutes les Dames qui en portent à Pera,*” purportedly written by a “friend” bewildered at the sight of a particular kind of footwear, so popular among the Greek womenfolk of Constantinople.

“When”, asks the anonymous author, “when will you stop, Ladies and Damsels, to stir up the just wrath of a man who cherishes the Belles, [...] – Until when will you wear this wood, which you name Galoche? But which – pardon this reproach – much to your chagrin will never be more than a piece of furniture out of its place, a false foot, or a stilt? How long will you wear, against all Taste and Graces, these ridiculous playthings, these unbearable stilts?”²

Eventually, the anonymous author invites the ladies to step down from their wooden “pedestals” in order “to undertake an impartial examination”³ of this

1 [Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall], Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe der Neugriechinnen: Auszug eines Briefs aus Constantinopel, in *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* 14 (December 1799), pp. 605–658, here pp. 611–622. All translations are the author's.

2 “Quand, quand cesserez-vous / Mesdames et Mesdemoiselles / D'exciter le juste courroux / D'un homme qui chérit les Belles, [...] – Jusqu'à quand l'on portera / Ce bois, que vous nommez Galoche / Mais qui, – pardonnez ce reproche –/ Malgré Vous jamais ne sera / Qu'un meuble fort hors de sa place / Qu'un pied postiche, d'une échasse. / Jusqu'à quand donc porterez Vous / En dépit du Goût et des Grâces / Ces très ridicules joujous, Ces insupportables échasses.” Hammer-Purgstall, Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe, pp. 614–615. French orthography according to the original print. In the Greek dialect of Constantinople the terms γαλότσα and γαλέντζα both mean “clogs.”

3 “Montés sur le beau piedestal / Mes Belles daignez en descendre, / Avec mou daignez entreprendre / Un examen impartial.” Hammer-Purgstall, Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe, p. 615.

fashion trend that proves to be a violation of the rules of good taste voiced in the name of all gentlemen.

The poem unfolds a maze of jocular and caustic remarks that revolve around the motif of Oriental (female) customs under the critical scrutiny of the Western (male) gaze. Hence, “you imitate the despots, starting with their boots first.”⁴ For no one else but Cyrus, the Persian king,⁵ made up for his small size by elevating himself on high shoes, thereby reducing everyone else to the status of a slave.⁶ Stilt shoes are therefore considered the despicable vestiges of Oriental despotism, compromising the “classic beauty” of their female wearers. If this is the case, so the author continues sarcastically, “if from an eastern Seraglio you imitate the airs, imitate them with all consequence. Cover your faces and necks, surround yourself with old eunuchs; Oh, how well it becomes you! But no! – Adorable descendants of the beauties of ancient Hellas, flee the Harem’s trinkets, imitate the charming modes of these elegant Athenian women, whose charms are your own!”⁷

To the author’s frustration, any attempt to retrieve the grace and beauty of the ancients is inevitably compromised by the repelling sight and sound of modern shoes. Therefore, the Western gentleman’s interest is trapped between the young ladies’ undeniable charms and his disenchantment with their unattractive footwear, as expressed in the following couplets: “Fancy now a European gallant; he is at your feet, waiting to receive your commands. But what a surprise! Instead of your feet, he kisses – a stilt, an arid wooden horse. Or image yourself being cruel and farouche, while he, trying to temper your anger, embraces your knees. How surprised must he be to discover his darling not standing firm but shaking like a pivot in a hole.”⁸ Eventually, the author, imitating the revolution-

4 “Vous imitez donc les despotes/ Commençant d’abord par leurs bottes.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe*, p. 616.

5 Cyrus II King of Persia (c. 600–530 BCE).

6 A footnote explains: “It was Cyrus who introduced elevated shoes as a distinctive mark of Kings” (“C’est Cyrus, qui institua la chaussure élevée comme une marque distinctive des Rois”). Hammer-Purgstall, *Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe*, p. 616.

7 “Si d’un Serail oriental / Vous imitez les étiquettes, / Imitez les jusqu’à la fin. / Couvrez Vos visages et nuques, / Entourez Vous de vieux eunuques ;/ Ah ! Que cela Vous iroit bien / Non ! – adorables descendantes / Des beautés de l’antique Hellas, / Fuyez des Harems le fatras, / Imitez les modes charmantes / De ces Atheniennes galantes, / Dont Vous possédez les appas!” Hammer-Purgstall, *Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe*, p. 616.

8 “Allons mettre plutôt en train / Un adorateur européen. / Il est à Vos pieds, il y passe / Son temps à recevoir vos loix – / Quel étonnement! – Il embrasse, / Au lieu de Vos pieds, une échasse, / Un aride cheval de bois. Ou bien mettez qu’une autre fois / Vous trouvant tout à fait cruelles, / Pour adoucir Votre courroux, / Il embrassera Vos genoux. / Le voilà bien surpris,

ary pathos of his times, calls out for an act of liberation in the name of good taste: "Burn your fatal crutches, or throw them into the sea! Because rather than your dummy legs, and rather than those quirks and whims it is good taste that must be dear to you,"⁹ only to conclude with a thinly veiled masochist fantasy: "For his indiscreet manner do always mistreat the poet [...]. Rip these verses apart but – please – if you want to crush them, I beg you, get off your stilts and crush them with your beautiful feet."¹⁰

As I found out recently, this piece of poetic entertainment was written by none other than the young Joseph von Hammer, the later world-renowned Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), during his first years as a translator at the Austrian embassy in Constantinople. A first hint to his authorship is provided by his two-volume monograph *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus*, published in 1822, which reproduces the "letter" along with other material as part of an extensive supplement.¹¹ It is only in his memoirs, written throughout the 1840s, that the highly distinguished, and by then retired, scholar explicitly acknowledged his authorship of the satirical poem "that eventually spoiled my chances with the women of Pera."¹²

The cited excerpts from the young Orientalist's coquettish poem offer a very early example of female presence in his highly diverse work. Though not fully representative, the poem testifies to Hammer-Purgstall's acute awareness of fashion¹³ and social etiquette, his sense of perception regarding gender conduct as well as his own expectations thereof. Moreover, it exemplifies the blend of classical and Oriental erudition with which he likes to approach these delicate issues

que sa Belle / Ne tient pas ferme mais chancelle/ Comme des pivôts dans leurs trous." Hammer-Purgstall, *Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe*, pp. 619–620.

9 "Brulez vos beguilles fatales / Ou bien jetez les dans la mer; / Car plus que vos jambes factices, / Et plus que lune et caprices, / Le bon gout Vous doit être chère." Hammer-Purgstall, *Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe*, p. 621.

10 "Pour sa manière indiscreète / Maltraitez toujours le poète; [...] Dechirez les vers – mais, de grace – / Voulez Vous les fouler, je prie, / Demettez Vous de Vôte echasse / Et foulez les de Vos beaux pieds." Hammer-Purgstall, *Über die hohen Stelzenschuhe*, pp. 621–622.

11 Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus örtlich und geschichtlich beschrieben* (2 vols., Pest 1822), vol. 2, pp. LXVIII–LXXIV, 116.

12 "Womit ich es mit allen Perotinen [...] verdorben hatte." Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (unpublished manuscript, c. 1841–1852), III, 14, p. 24 (= p. 202). On this work, henceforth quoted as "Erinnerungen" and the quotation method use here see below, note 21.

13 This aspect of his work has passed almost unnoticed with the notable exception of Donald Quataert, *Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997), pp. 403–425.

that cannot conceal his own desires and oftentimes surprisingly outspoken fantasies.

A closer examination of his travel-based writings on the Levant, including three monographs and large sections of his unpublished memoirs, will reveal the importance of these and other motifs that, already on account of their number, lend themselves to a gendered reading of Hammer-Purgstall. The present chapter, however, pursues the modest goal of offering some clues to an alternative approach to an author whose reputation and productivity has given way to rather stereotyped interpretations that completely ignore the elementary role of sociability and self-fashioning.

Before returning to representations and imaginations of women in Hammer-Purgstall's travel-related writings and trying to reassess his writings particularly vis-à-vis the dominant Orientalism paradigm, I would like to briefly address the nature of Hammer-Purgstall's travel narratives which, to my knowledge, has not been discussed so far.¹⁴

2 Itinerant knowledge

Born in 1774 in Graz (Styria) to the civil servant Joseph Hammer and his wife Anna, Joseph Hammer Jr. entered the preparatory school of the Academy of Oriental languages at the age of fifteen. The Academy was an institution created under the auspices of Empress Maria-Theresia (1717–1780) and was specifically designed for the training of a loyal and professional diplomatic staff in the eastern Mediterranean, which, at that time, was tantamount to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ After two diplomatic missions to the Ottoman Empire from 1799 to 1800 and then, from 1802 to 1807, he returned to Vienna amidst the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars.¹⁶ While the imperial high authorities, most notably Clemens Wenzel Lothar Prince of Metternich (1773–1859) himself, thwarted his desire to

14 The only, yet certainly hard to find, exception is Harald Heppner, *Die Reisen Hammer-Purgstalls ins Osmanische Reich und ihre kulturellen Rückwirkungen*, in *Blätter für Heimatkunde* 54 (1980), pp. 111–118.

15 On the Oriental Academy see Ernst Dieter Petritsch, *Erziehung in 'guten Sitten, Andacht und Gehorsam': Die 1754 gegründete Orientalische Akademie in Wien*, in Marlene Kurz et al. (eds.), *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna et al. 2005), pp. 491–502. For an overview see David Do Paço, *L'Orient à Vienne au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford 2015), pp. 19–64.

16 On the first period see Sibylle Wentker, *Joseph von Hammer-Purgstalls erste Reise nach Istanbul im Spiegel seiner 'Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben'*, in *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 25 (2005), pp. 225–247.

return to active diplomatic service, Joseph von Hammer (who became von Hammer-Purgstall in 1835) continued to be in charge of Oriental affairs as interpreter and librarian of the Imperial library in Vienna. This less demanding employment gave him plenty of time to indulge in literary and historical studies that largely drew on the knowledge and material accumulated during his years in Istanbul.¹⁷

Probably the most prolific scholar in Ottoman, Persian, and Arabic literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, the key proponent of the emerging discipline of Orientalism in the sense of Oriental studies (although he never held a university position)¹⁸ and, eventually, founding president of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (in 1847), Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall is conspicuously missing from the vast and growing literature dedicated to travel writing. This oversight dovetails with the extremely selective reception of his work, characterized by over-magnification of some parts and complete oblivion of others. Asking about the reason of his omission implies, of course, invoking the shifting trends in scholarship on travel narratives. Thus, for a long time, travel writings, travelogues, and other related terms denoted a rather insignificant and minor literary genre and thus were not deemed appropriate for inclusion among such well documented scholarly works as the ones discussed here. In contrast, the rising interest in travel writing in the last few decades led to an almost complete axiomatic reversal, by emphasizing the autobiographical elements and by paying privileged attention to an author's personal experience while encountering other places or people.¹⁹ Again, from the same point of view, Hammer's writings were not considered first-rate representatives, since, as he testifies himself, one of his primary tenets was "to efface his subjectivity as much as possible from his writings" and, instead, to exclusively privilege the information about the place he visited (see the full quotation below). This testimony notwithstanding, a number of Hammer-Purgstall's works explicitly originate from what he calls *Selbstansicht*, literally autopsy, meaning that he

17 Surprisingly, a comprehensive biography of Hammer-Purgstall is still missing. Besides numerous biographical sketches in the vast literature on his writings, the most complete account of his life is provided by Walter Höflechner et al. (eds.), *Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall: Briefe, Erinnerungen, Materialien. Teil 1: Einleitung – Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. Eine Skizze – Erinnerungen*, 2nd ed. (Graz 2018), accessed 4 April 2022, <<https://hdl.handle.net/11471/559.10>>.

18 On Hammer-Purgstall's contested role in the emergence of the academic study of Oriental cultures and languages see Klaus Kreiser, 'Clio's poor relation': *Betrachtungen zur osmanischen Historiographie von Hammer-Purgstall bis Stanford Shaw*, in Klaus Kreiser (ed.), *Türkische Studien in Europa* (Istanbul 1998), pp. 33–52; Sabine Mangold, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft': Die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2004).

19 For a brief overview of the study of travel writing and competing definitions of the genre see Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London 2011), pp. 9–33.

could witness things with his own eyes and did not have to rely exclusively on second-hand information. This holds true for the following works based on his (mostly private) perambulations in the eastern Aegean and Propontic: *Topographische Ansichten gesammelt auf einer Reise in die Levante* (Topographic surveys, collected on a journey to the Levant, Vienna 1811), *Umblick auf einer Reise von Constantinopel nach Brussa und dem Olympos und zurück über Nicäa und Nicomeden* (Panorama of a journey from Constantinople to Bursa and Olympos and back via Nicaea and Nicomedia, Pest 1818) and the already mentioned two-volume *Constantinopolis und der Bosporus* from 1822.²⁰ Finally, as if confirming the fundamental relevance of traveling, or more specifically of knowledge gathered through traveling, his immensely voluminous and largely unpublished *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Memories of my life) prove to be a real treasure chest for his two sojourns in the Levant (especially the books III–VIII, for the period 1799–1801, and books XII–XVI for the second period).²¹ Written between 1841 and 1852, when he was already in his seventies, these memoirs, according to Hammer-Purgstall himself, were supposed to supplement the allegedly sober style of the three aforementioned works with a profoundly personal tinge:

20 On the latter see Céline Trautmann-Waller, *Constantinopolis* (1822) de Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall ou la capitale ottomane vue par un philologue autrichien, in Sophie Basch et al. (eds.), *L'orientalisme, les orientalistes et l'Empire ottoman de la fin du XVIIIe à la fin du XXe siècle* (Paris 2011), pp. 219–237. For the sake of completeness, one should also mention *Zeichnungen auf einer Reise von Wien über Triest nach Venedig und von da zurück durch Tyrol und Salzburg im Jahre 1798* (Berlin 1800), a collection of travel letters “far more subjective than the later surveys” (“weit mehr subjektiv als die späteren Ansichten”. Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 11, p. 17 (= p. 162)), written before his first mission to Istanbul in the spirit of late Enlightenment *Völkerkunde* and Habsburg imperial patriotism. See Catherine Carmichael, *Ethnic Stereotypes in Early European Ethnographies: A Case Study of the Habsburg Adriatic c. 1770–1815*, in *Narodna Umjetnost* 33 (1996), pp. 197–209, particularly pp. 205–206 on Hammer’s depictions (*Zeichnungen*).

21 Unfortunately, his memoirs have been known exclusively through the highly abridged and mutilated edition published by Reinhart Bachofen von Echt in the series *Fontes rerum Austriacarum* (Diplomatiaria et acta 70) in 1940. The autograph has about 5,900 handwritten pages (compare the Bachofen von Echt edition with 415 pages) consisting of 246 fascicles, which are organized in 68 chronological units called “books.” Thanks to the efforts of Walter Höflechner, the typewritten copy of the autograph from the 1930s can be accessed online (accessed 4 April 2022, <<http://gams.uni-graz.at/archive/objects/o:hpe.band3.2-5.1.1.2/datastreams/PID/content>>). The autograph is kept in the special collection of the University Library of Graz (without shelf-mark). As for the citation, I follow the conventional method of indicating the book number in Roman numerals, the fascicle number and the page number of the manuscript, followed by the continuing page number of the typescript in brackets. I would like to express my thanks to Thomas Csanády from the University Library of Graz for granting me access to the manuscript.

Several objective remarks from my diary, which I kept during my two-time stay in Constantinople, have already been included and compiled in the work on Constantinople and the Bosphorus; other more subjective remarks, which were removed with the intent of avoiding all personality in my descriptions of places and journeys and to wipe out the subject of the writer as much as possible, may find here their place denied to them there.²²

The first of these descriptions, *Topographische Ansichten*, is largely based on the notes he had taken in the Aegean on an official mission to accompany the British campaign against the French invading army in Palestine and Egypt in late 1800,²³ while *Umblick auf einer Reise* and *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus* are based on the notes he had taken on various occasions between the fall of 1802 and the summer of 1806. On this second diplomatic mission to Constantinople, although formally promoted to the position of secretary to the imperial embassy (*Legationssekretär*), he found himself sidelined by the ambassador Ignaz Lorenz von Stürmer (1752–1829) already from the beginning. Thus, chronically underemployed and frustrated, he had plenty of time to pursue his scholarly interests, as we can glean from numerous passages of his memoirs.²⁴

This corpus of writings offers plenty of valuable indications both of Hammer's use of travelogues and of his own standards, epitomized by the two terms *Selbstansicht* and *Buchforschung*, in other words, personal experience and the study of books. Thus, in his foreword to the *Topographische Ansichten*

22 "Mehrere objektive Bemerkungen meines während meines zweimaligen Aufenthaltes zu Constantinopel geführten Tagebuchs sind bereits in dem Werke Constantinopolis und des Bosphorus aufgenommen und zusammengestellt worden, andere subjektive, welche aus Vorsatz in meinen orts- und reisebeschreibenden Werken alle Persönlichkeit zu vermeiden und das Subjekt des Schreibenden so viel als möglich auszulöschen, beseitigt worden mögen hier den ihnen dort verweigerten Platz finden." Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 11, p. 17 (= p. 162); for similar remarks see Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XIII, 54, p. 14 (= p. 613).

23 As we learn from his memoirs, he was also keeping his diary in Egypt, but he considered his stay too short for meeting his own requirements of a proper travel narrative. See Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, VIII, 36, p. 11 (= p. 462).

24 See, for example, Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XIII, 55, p. 21 (= p. 625): "So many new acquaintances of interesting people and places [...] had to compensate for my unpleasant relationship with my Jesuit boss" ("So viele neue Bekanntschaften von interessanten Personen und Orten [...] mußten mich für das Unangenehme des Verhältnisses mit meinem jesuitischen Chef schadlos halten"). Indeed, Ignaz Lorenz von Stürmer had been a Jesuit before he entered the diplomatic service and made it to the imperial *internuntius* at the Sublime Porte from 1802 to 1818. Throughout the books XII to XIV, there are several references to this unsatisfying professional situation and his numerous excursions, especially during summertime, when the diplomatic delegations usually relocated from Pera to Büyükdere on the shores of the Bosphorus.

from 1811, he introduces extensive perambulations as a privileged method of gathering knowledge in addition to book-based research:

There is nothing so common in our days as travelogues, and nothing so rare as good ones. The more the field of science and the sphere of human knowledge widens, the greater the demands which the educated reader puts on educated travelers. The satisfaction of these requirements almost exceeds the powers of a single human being [...] In addition to a depiction of the realms of nature, the demanding reader also expects the observing visitor of foreign countries to provide the history of the peoples and their governments; he wants to know not only how the sea and the land have moved and changed for millennia, but also how culture and the play of human passions have stirred and unfolded in the last decades. A good and complete travel description must therefore include not only the history of nature and nations, but also philology and politics [...].

However, he also notes, with feigned modesty: “Of all of this, the readers will find little or nothing in this book, which therefore does not want to and cannot be a travel description.”²⁵

For these reasons, of all his aforementioned writings, it is rather *Constantinopolis und der Bosporus* that, according to Hammer, can be called a travel account. There, after having presented a critical inventory of Western travel narratives,²⁶ he lays down his own principles in detail:

With these models in mind, the writer of these lines used the time of sojourning twice at the Porte uninterruptedly to undertake excursions to the city and its surroundings, to consort with their inhabitants, to read their writings, thereby gathering profound knowledge about the location and nature of these places, as well as on the customs and morals of the Ottomans, their constitution and administration, briefly about their history in the broadest

25 “Nichts ist so häufig in unsern Tagen als Reisebeschreibungen, nichts so selten als gute. Je mehr sich das Gebieth der Wissenschaften und der Umkreis menschlicher Kenntniss erweitert, desto grösser die Anforderungen, welche der gebildete Leser an den gebildeten Reisenden stellt. Die Befriedigung dieser Anforderungen übersteigt fast die Kräfte eines einzelnen Menschen [...] Ausser der Darstellung der Natur in ihren Reichen verlangt der vielfordernde Leser vom beobachtenden Besucher fremder Länder auch die Geschichte der Völker und ihrer Regierungen; er verlangt zu wissen, nicht nur wie sich Meer und Land seit Jahrtausenden bewegt und gestaltet, sondern auch wie sich Cultur und das Spiel menschlicher Leidenschaften in den letzten Jahrzehenden geregt und entfaltet haben. Eine gute und vollständige Reisebeschreibung muss daher nicht nur Natur- und Völkergeschichte, sondern auch Philologie und Politik umfassen. [...] Von Allem dem finden die Leser nichts oder wenig in diesem Buche, das daher auch keine Reisebeschreibung seyn will und kann.” Hammer-Purgastall, *Topographische Ansichten*, pp. III–IV.

26 For his own use of travel writings see the extensive bibliography in Joseph von Hammer-Purgastall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs*, größentheils aus bisher unbenützten Handschriften und Archiven (10 vols., Pest 1835), vol. 10.

sense of the word [...]. In this work he puts before the eyes of the reader the sum of collected local knowledge that is based on both observation and research.²⁷

Similarly to most of his fellow scholars of history and philology, Hammer's studies largely drew on travel narratives. Moreover, Hammer was a major promoter of editing Ottoman travel accounts,²⁸ among which Evliya Çelebi's (1611–c. 1687) famous *Seyahatnâme* (Book of Travels), one of the key narrative sources for Ottoman studies, which would have remained unknown to modern scholarship (at least for some time) if Hammer-Purgstall had not come upon it in Istanbul.²⁹

To conclude this overview, travel writings were not subordinate in Hammer-Purgstall's preoccupations, but a key piece of knowledge production – both source, reference, and subject of criticism. Therefore, to speak of itinerary knowledge as one central feature of Hammer-Purgstall's work is more than just a figure of speech. Keeping in mind that his observations are explicitly or implicitly knitted into a web of references to other writings (historical or travel narratives, Western or Oriental) that are beyond the scope of this chapter, in the following I would like to direct my attention to a constitutive part of Hammer-Purgstall's sphere of observation, namely female and effeminate environments in the writings relating to his two stays in the Levant between 1799–1801 and 1802–1807.³⁰

27 “Solche Vorbilder ins Auge fassend, hat der Schreiber dieser Zeilen die Zeit seines zweymahligen Aufenthaltes an der Pforte ununterbrochen benützt, um durch Ausflüge in die Stadt und ihre Umgebungen durch Umgang mit ihren Bewohnern, und durch Lesung ihrer Schriften sich über Lage und Beschaffenheit des Orts, über Sitten und Gebräuche der Osmanen, über ihre Staatsverfassung und Staatsverwaltung, kurz über ihre Geschichte, im weitesten Sinne des Wortes, gründliche Kenntnisse zu sammeln [...] So legt er in diesem Werk [...] die Summe seiner durch Selbstansicht und Bücherforschung gesammelten örtlichen Kenntnisse vor Augen.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus*, vol. 1, pp. XXIII–XXIV.

28 See the inventory of editions in Caspar Hillebrand, *Ottoman Travel Accounts to Europe: An Overview of their Historical Development and a Commented Researchers' List*, in Bekim Agai, Olcay Akyıldız, and Caspar Hillebrand (eds.), *Venturing Beyond Borders: Reflections on Genre, Function and Boundaries in Middle Eastern Travel Writing* (Würzburg 2013), pp. 53–74, 227–262.

29 He provided the first, if only partial, translation of it into English: *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the Seventeenth Century by Evliyâ Efendi (Evliya Çelebi)* (2 vols., London 1834 and 1850; reprint: London 2007). For further details see Caroline Finkel, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's English Translation of the First Books of Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme* (Book of Travels), in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25/1 (2015), pp. 41–55.

30 The literature on gender and travel is, of course, vast. For my limited purpose, I took particular inspiration from Alain Grosrichard, *Structure du sérail: La fiction du despotisme asiatique dans l'Occident classique* (Paris 1979) (English translation: *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East* [London 1998]); Dagmar Heinze, *Fremdwahrnehmung und Selbstentwurf: Die*

3 Levantine femininities and the scholarly self

From the vast literature on Hammer-Purgstall, the representation of female gender – from metaphorical allusions to real-life encounters – is completely absent, although it is salient for a variety of reasons. To begin on a very manifest level, women feature prominently when it comes to his own experiences in the diplomatic milieu, in moments of friendship, during leisure time, or other circumstances. Secondly, the sheer recurrence and the tone of these encounters throughout Hammer's memoirs clearly testify to his affective involvement and to his sexual desires about which he is surprisingly forthright. Therefore, rather than "side issues," these remarks, observations, and descriptions prove to be constitutive of the construction of his own persona as an enlightened diplomat and sensitive erudite with a privileged access to what he calls "Oriental wisdom" (*morgenländische Weisheit*).³¹

Against this background, one may highlight the following set of recurring themes: a) feminine symbols and metaphors, b) linguistic erudition gained through female acquaintances, c) the tension between desire and scholarship, d) unsettling experiences of gender ambiguity.

3.1 Feminine figurations of the Orient

Not surprisingly for a scholar well educated in the classics at the turn of the nineteenth century, for Hammer the figure of Oriental knowledge becomes feminized just as the feminine figure of knowledge becomes Orientalized.³² These

kulturelle und geschlechtliche Konstruktion des Orients in deutschsprachigen Reiseberichten des 19. Jahrhunderts, in Karl Hölz et al. (eds.), *Beschreiben und Erfinden: Figuren des Fremden vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main 2000), pp. 45–92; Irvin Cemil Schick, *The Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse* (London 1999); Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900* (Berkeley et al. 2006).

³¹ On scholarly self-fashioning see Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum, Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories, in *Science in Context* 16/1–2 (2003), pp. 1–9; Lorraine Daston, *Die wissenschaftliche Persona: Arbeit und Berufung*, in Theresa Wobbe (ed.), *Zwischen Vorderbühne und Hinterbühne: Beiträge zum Wandel der Geschlechterbeziehungen in der Wissenschaft vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Bielefeld 2003), pp. 109–136.

³² The literature on this topic is vast. For a short, yet very inspiring introduction to this intricate relationship in Western thinking see Karl-Heinz Kohl, *Cherchez la femme d'Orient*, in Gereon Sievernich and Hendrik Budde (eds.), *Europa und der Orient: 800–1600* (Munich 1989), pp. 356–367.

motives can already be found in an early poem written in 1796 and reproduced in his memoirs serving as proof of his Orientalist vocation: "Get up, You noblemen! Get up! Break up the locks, Abduct the beckoning graces of knowledge from the harems! Should they keep on waving forever, being enviously sealed off?"³³ Thus, the well-educated male scholar is summoned to liberate the "Graces of knowledge" from the harem, symbolizing both Oriental ignorance and cruelty. As we learn from the same poem, Persia, another embodiment of Oriental knowledge and the paragon of Hammer-Purgstall's intellectual aspirations, is also filled with grief over scholarly neglect.³⁴ In the same vein, it is hardly surprising to find Constantinople herself, the place Hammer-Purgstall lived in for so many years and painfully missed later on, represented as an empress in the dedication to his two-volume *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus*: "Even if Constantinople had never been the throne of the Greek and Turkish empires, she would still reside, on the grounds of her ancestral majesty and innate beauty of nature, as the empress among the cities, receiving the tribute of the world which lays at her feet two continents and two seas."³⁵ One could go on enumerating examples that show how the exaltations of historical places, personal acquaintances, or reading experiences add up to an image of the Orient as the epitome of desire itself. It certainly comes as no surprise that Hammer-Purgstall, at the time the most vociferous advocate of fusing the Western poetic tradition with the Oriental genius, was a major proponent of this attitude.

Of course, there were limits to these unbridled exaltations. This was particularly the case when it came to the "harem," this perennial object of Western obsession or, according to Alain Grosrichard's classical study of Western representations – "this imaginary focus of *jouissance*."³⁶ Hammer's rendering of the

33 "Ihr Edlen! auf! auf! Sprengt die Schlösser auf, Entführet die mich winkenden Grazien Des Wissens aus Haremen! Sollen Neidisch verschlossen sie ewig winken?" Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, II, 9, 16 (= p. 134). The complete poem, entitled "An die Freunde der Literatur. Dem Hrn. Bernard v. Jenisch im Namen der Kaiserlichen Akademie der morgenländischen Sprachen gewidmet," originally appeared in the leading literary journal *Der Neue Teutscher Merkur* 3 (1796), pp. 309–313.

34 Here, the historical reference is to the Russian assault on the Persianate Chanate of Derbent in May 1796.

35 "Wäre Constantinopel auch nie der Thronszitz des griechischen und türkischen Kaiserthums gewesen, stände dieselbe doch durch angestammte Majestät und angeborne Schönheit der Natur unter den Städten als eine Kaiserinn da, die Huldigung der Welt empfangend, welche ihr dieselbe durch zwey Erdtheile und in zwey Meeren zu Füßen legt." Hammer-Purgstall, *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus*, vol. 1, p. IX.

36 "Ce foyer imaginaire de la jouissance." Grosrichard, *Structure du sérail*, p. 159. For an incisive survey see Jocelyne Dakhlia, *Entrées dérobées: L'historiographie du harem*, in *Clio, Histoire*,

theme is highly ambivalent: conventional, dismissive attributions – see the dungeon of the “graces of knowledge” in the poem cited above, or else, the depository of “trinkets” (*fracas*) in his French poem on the Greek stilt shoes – alternate with levelheaded, at times appreciative, descriptions of some of its social aspects.³⁷ Quite indicative of this ambivalence is a lengthy account of his visit to the ruins of the former sultan’s palace in Bursa which he speaks of as both “the pure sanctuary of women’s honor and dignity” and “the enclosure, where the beautiful half of our race in Asia has been humiliated for centuries.”³⁸

3.2 Women and language(s)

In fact, in Hammer’s personal experience the aforementioned “graces of knowledge” were more than just an erudite cliché. According to his memoirs, he owed his knowledge of languages partly to female acquaintances. Already during his first year, he took Arabic reading lessons with the wife of a certain Aide (fl. around 1799), an Armenian from Aleppo – “a real Arab woman full of spirit and fire who, albeit at an advanced age, most courteously approved of my request to read in Arabic with me.”³⁹ He is very eager to clarify that he was also attracted to her daughters, who could, however, not distract him from the joys of reading *Antar*, the classic Arab chivalric novel, with their mother. This way, “my morning hours were devoted to office work, reading of *Antar* and talking to the old woman, the evening hours to walking on the quay in Bujukdere with young girls. I learned to speak Arabic in the morning and Modern Greek in the evening.”⁴⁰

femmes et sociétés 9 (1999), pp. 37–55; Irvin Cemil Schick, *The Harem as Gendered Space and the Spatial Reproduction of Gender*, in Marilyn Booth (ed.), *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, London 2010), pp. 69–84.

³⁷ See, for example, Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 13, p. 16 (= p. 184); VI, 27, p. 15 (= p. 331).

³⁸ “Der so reinen Zufluchtsstätte der Ehre und Würde der Frauen [...] dem Zwinger [...], wo durch die schöne Hälfte unseres Geschlechtes in Asien seit Jahrhunderten entwürdiget wird.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Umblick auf einer Reise*, pp. 43, 45. The entire passage reads like a fascinating ride through the different meanings of the place in the Westerner’s mind.

³⁹ “Eine echte Araberin voll Geist und Feuer wiewohl schon in vorgerücktem Alter, meine so gleich an sie gestellte Bitte mit mir arabisch lesen zu wollen, auf das zuvorkommendste gewährte.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 13, p. 6 (= p. 179).

⁴⁰ “Meine Morgenstunden waren den Kanzleiarbeiten, der Lesung des *Antar*’s und dem Gespräche mit der alten Frau, die Abendstunden dem Spaziergange auf dem Quai von Bujukdere mit

The acquaintances of Greek ladies, alluded to in this passage, features prominently in Hammer's memoirs. While their attire was the object of the satirical poem cited at the beginning, numerous passages show that he was particularly charmed by their way of speaking:

Right from the very beginning, I was very fond of this [their conversations], and the often repeated flattery of the women and girls among themselves like *Psyche mu*, my soul, *Kardia mu*, my heart, mixed with cries of Turkish *Aman* and Italian *O dio!* – all of this sounded very sweet in my ear that likes to retain these and other Greek phrases, so that, only by associating with the *kokonas* of Pera, as later with the *domnizzas* of Jassy, without master and muse, I learned to speak modern Greek as much as necessary for social conversation with them.⁴¹

By “*Domnizzen*” (from Romanian “*domniță*” for “young lady” or “princess”) Hammer refers to the female members of the Greek nobility in Moldavia, where he spent his last year in the Ottoman Empire, until mid-1807. Although he does not conceal his feelings for several women he fell in love with in Constantinople as well as later in Jassy (Iași), again, he is eager to assure the potential reader of his memoirs that he “now courted several boyar ladies at the same time for the sake of progress in Modern Greek.”⁴²

By adding up examples of this kind, not only do we get a vivid impression of a gentleman versed in the “art of conversation,”⁴³ but there is also plenty of evidence that Hammer accredited women with a privileged relationship to language. Here, one could invoke his contribution from 1809 to the debate on the

jugen Mädchen gewidmet; Morgens lernte ich arabisch, Abends neugriechisch sprechen.” *Erinnerungen*, III, 13, p. 9 (= p. 178).

41 “Diesem [ihrem Gespräch] war ich gleich von allem Anfang her hold, und die so oft wiederholten Schmeichelworte der Frauen und Mädchen unter sich wie *Psychi mu*, meiner Seel, *Kardia mu* mein Herz, vermischt mit den Ausrufen des türkischen *Aman* und des italienischen *o Dio!* tönnten mir höchst lieblich im Ohr, welches dieselben und andere griechische Phrasen gern behielt, so daß ich bloß durch den Umgang mit den *Kokonas* Peras, so wie später mit den *Domnizzen* Yassis so viel, als zur gesellschaftliche Unterhaltung mit denselben gehört ohne Meister und Muse neugriechisch sprechen gelernt.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 12, p. 24 (= p. 176).

42 “So machte ich nun des Fortschrittes im Neugriechischen willen mehreren Bojarinnen zugleich den Hof.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XV, 63, p. 7 (= p. 7).

43 On conversation as a central medium of the Enlightenment see Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation* (New York 2005) (Italian original: *La civiltà della conversazione* [Milano 2001]).

so called “language of flowers,” allegedly used by harem ladies and communicated to him by Greek and Armenian women who had access to the palace.⁴⁴

While there is obviously a good dose of sublimated libido in these descriptions (which I will return to in the next paragraph), this is not to say that, in Hammer’s mind, women figure only as some sort of auxiliaries to male scholarship without being capable of it themselves. An example was Euphrosyne Mavroyeni (1778–1850), a member of the Greek aristocracy, who devoted herself “to science and to no one else”:

I found her in such a tiny cabinet that the four walls of it were no higher and only a little longer than the four large maps of the four continents [...] with which they were covered [...]. She was sitting with an old Greek priest, with a long, silver beard flowing over his chest, at a lectern with a tome of a Greek church book on it, which she read with him. Although she was not expecting a visit, she was wearing bright red make-up, as was the case with all distinguished and wealthy Greek women at home, as well as numerous jewelry on her fingers and arms, and figures of birds and animals were embroidered on her magnificent dress. I apologized for my astonishment at the strange wallpaper of the study cabinet and the garments of the students, by invoking with embarrassment that I did not know what to study here first – the geography of the wall, the jewels on the hand, the embroidery of the dress, the hymns from the book, or astronomy from her young bright eyes. I had already learned so much Modern Greek that I could tell her this in her own language.⁴⁵

Of course, despite being surprised, Hammer does not miss the chance to exhibit his own wiliness.

⁴⁴ In Hammer’s memoirs there is only a passing reference to this topic, which he elaborated on in his essay *Sur le langage des fleurs*, in *Fundgruben des Orients* 1 (1809), pp. 32–42.

⁴⁵ “[D]en Wissenschaften und sonst Niemandem”: “Ich fand sie in einem so winzigen Kabinette, daß die vier Wände desselben nicht höher und nur wenig länger als die vier großen Karten der vier Erdtheile [...], womit sie bedeckt waren [...] Sie saß mit einem alten griechischen Priester, dem ein langer, silbener Bart über die Brust floß, vor einem Kirchenpulte auf dem der Foliant eines griechischen Kirchenbuchs aufgeschlagen lag, den sie mit ihm las; wiewohl sie keinen Besuch erwartete, war sie doch hochroth geschminkt, trug, wie dies bei allen vornehmen und reichen Griechinnen auch zu Hause der Fall, zahlreichen Schmuck an Fingern und Armen und [an] ihrem prächtigen Kleide waren Figuren von Vögeln und Thieren eingestickt; ich entschuldigte das Erstaunen in das mich die seltsame Tapete des Studienkabinetts und der Anzug der Studierenden versetzte, mit der Verlegenheit, daß ich nicht wiße was hier eher zu studieren[:] die Geographie von der Wand, die Juwelen von der Hand, die Stickerei [uncertain reading] von dem Kleid, die Kirchenlieder aus dem Buch oder die Astronomie aus ihren jungen strahlenden Augen. Ich hatte bereits so viel Neugriechisch gelernt, ihr dies in ihrer Sprache sagen zu können.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XIV, 58, p. 24 (= p. 658).

3.3 The trials of the erudite gentleman

Doing conversation, however, is not only about quick-wittedness, but also, and even more importantly, about self-control and restraint. It becomes a necessity in the various interactions of diplomatic life, from official ceremonies to the dinner parties in Pera and Büyükdere, and even more imperative in the unfenced field of private encounters. As a matter of fact, attending balls and soirées proved to be a frustrating duty for the young and low-ranking Hammer. Consequently, the description of such events, as the following scene in 1799, brims with scorn and sarcasm for the rigid and shallow conventions:

In this circle [of diplomats], there could be no question of personal validity based on wit, knowledge or other social skills [...]. Even the girls measured their dancers on no other scale than the more or less distant prospect of their potential performance as future suitors. The young, beautiful, and amiable women of the diplomatic corps, of which there were, in fact, no more than three educated European women (the wife of the English minister [i.e. *chargé d'affaires*] Spencer Smith, of the Prussian minister, baroness von Knobelsdorf, and, later, the wife of the English ambassador, Lady Elgin)⁴⁶ made, of course, laudable exception from this diplomatic backwater [*Krähwinklelei*]. Yet, as the youngest language boy [*Sprachknabe*], I stood too far outside Pera's etiquette [i.e. refined society] to be able to talk much or to even court them.⁴⁷

Even though his memoirs were written more than forty years later, he can barely conceal his frustration over the fact that, due to the stern difference of class, the gentlewomen of Pera (of European or local origin) were simply not within his reach. Still, Hammer is anxious to single out individual women from the mass of diplomats he usually qualifies as a dim-witted flock of real or would-be aristocrats. In contrast to the generic way women are oftentimes represented in Ori-

46 Constance Smith (née de Herbert Rathkeal, 1785–1829); Spencer Smith (1769–1845); Philippine von Knobelsdorff (née Freiin van Dedern to de Geldern, 1772–1860); Mary Hamilton Bruce, Countess of Elgin (née Nisbet, 1778–1855).

47 “Von persönlicher Geltung in diesem Kreise [perotischer Diplomaten] durch Geist, Kenntniß oder andere gesellschaftliche Talente war keine Rede [...]. Selbst die Mädchen maßen ihre Tänzer nach keinem anderen Maßstabe, als nach dem der mehr oder weniger entfernten Aussicht auf die Möglichkeit des Auftretens der Tänzer als einmalige Freyer. Die jungen, schönen, und liebenswürdigen Frauen des diplomatischen Corps, welches deren bis auf drei zählen konnte (die Frau des englischen Ministers Spencer Smith, die des preussischen, die Baronin von Knobelsdorf und später die des englischen Botschafter Lady Elgin) machten von dieser diplomatischen Krähwinklelei freilich als gebildete Europäerinnen löbliche Ausnahme, aber als jüngster Sprachknabe stand ich denselben nach der Etikette Pera's viel zu ferne, als mit ihnen viel sprechen oder den Hof machen zu dürfen.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 12, p. 12 (= pp. 170–171).

ental travel literature, in Hammer's memoirs we thus find several individualized portrays. Apart from the ladies mentioned in the quotation and the aforementioned Ms. Aide, lengthy passages are devoted to conversations with a "Madame Varsy" (in Egypt),⁴⁸ "Kadinka Raab" (Pera),⁴⁹ Smaragda Mavrocordatos (Moldavia),⁵⁰ and most notably, "Madame Marini" (Pera), with whom he fell in love in his second period in Constantinople and who, avowedly, made him lose his composure.⁵¹

While Hammer habitually passes sarcastic judgments on the women – as he does on the men – of the refined society of Pera, apparently overplaying his own unreturned affections with contemptuous remarks on their lack of refinement, he is also very anxious to point out that even in situations of erotic attraction he is capable to control himself, guided only by the Eros of knowledge. Usually, these encounters are couched as scenes of hermeneutic quest – as, for instance, for the better understanding of Homer's *thalamos*⁵²: "I finally found the Thalamos as a treasure chest and sleeping room in today's bedrooms, in which the female clothes and other treasures are kept in front of a lamp burning in front of the Panagia [Virgin Mary]; I rediscovered the Thalamos of Juno who adorns herself for the act of love."⁵³ Yet, before concupiscence takes over, the scholar comes to his senses: "I was startled, as if by blasphemy, when, after having studied Homer, I caught myself reading and appreciating him mainly with regards to etho- and ethnography rather than a masterpiece of poetry."⁵⁴ Maintaining or resuming the appropriate composure in delicate moments is a recurring strategy for reinstating his erudite self. This, on the one hand, prevents him from uncon-

48 Elisabeth Varsy (née Dormer, 1753–1828).

49 Catharina Raab (née Pisani, fl. around 1800).

50 Smaragda Mavrocordatos (née Mourouzis, 1784–1848).

51 Theresa Marini (b. around 1770), the illegitimate daughter of the former Austrian Ambassador and later minister of foreign affairs (*Staatskanzler*) Johann Amadeus Franz von Thugut (1736–1818). See Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XIII, 55, pp. 7–12 (= p. 620–622) and XIV, 56, pp. 3–21 (= pp. 630–637).

52 Θάλαμος, the women's chamber or bedroom.

53 "Endlich fand ich den Θάλαμος als Schatz- und Schlafkammer in den heutigen Schlafzimmern wieder, worinnen vor einer vor der Panagia brennenden Lampe die Kleider der Frauen und andere Kostbarkeiten aufbewahrt werden, ich fand den Thalamos der Juno wieder, die sich zum Werk der Liebe schmückt." Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 13, p. 10 (= p. 181).

54 "Ich erschrak wie vor einer Blasphemie, als ich nach vollendeter Lesung Homer's mich darauf ertappte, daß ich denselben hauptsächlich in etho- und ethnographischer Beziehung und nicht als ein Meisterwerk der Poesie gelesen und gewürdigt." Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 13, p. 11 (= p. 181).

trolled indulgence while, on the other hand, it allows him to explore the liminal zones of taboo.

Similar “ethnographic explorations” (*ethnographische Erkundungen*) take up considerable space in Book VI of his memoirs, dedicated to his stay in Egypt. They include the customs of Arabian women (*die Sitten und Manieren arabischer Frauen*) such as the manners inside the harem (*die Sitten und Manieren des Harems*), an account of the stout body ideal of beauty, as well as an exploration of the physique of Copt and Abyssinian women (*Physiologie der Koptinnen und abessinischen Mädchen*) for whose closer examination (*sie näher zu prüfen*), as he assures us, he felt neither curiosity nor desire.⁵⁵ Borrowing an observation from Irvin Schick (on Bronislaw Malinowski, but perfectly fitting within our context), the following passages from Hammer’s description of his stay in Rosetta (Rashid) intimate that “ ‘scientific language’ was not the only form in which sex entered his mind during his long and apparently celibate journeys.”⁵⁶ Thus, fascinated by the Egyptian belly dancers, the “almahs,” which he also calls “holy slaves of the Asian Aphrodite” (*Hierodulen der asiatischen Aphrodite*) or “priestesses of Vulgivaga” (*Priesterinnen der Vulgivaga*),⁵⁷ Hammer approached one of those dancers after having witnessed her enticing performance – not to satisfy his carnal desire, as he is anxious to clarify, but his thirst for knowledge:

[A]s [priestesses of Vulgivaga] they could not tempt me, but I was thinking of an ethnographic and antiquarian fantasy that I would have liked to satisfy for my instruction as an inquisitive traveler. I would have loved to see the most well-proportioned of them undressed, to see for myself whether her physique, like some claim, is like the female figures on the ancient sculptures of Egyptian temples and palaces. One wink was enough to have her join me as my companion, she led me outside the village to a deserted site with half-dilapidated and half-uncovered mud huts, which reminded me only too much of the Esquiline gardens of Horace [...]. She led me into a room where there was nothing but the empty mud walls and the bare earth that seemed to be a hen house, the door was closed, but there was no lock, no bolt to lock it; I gave her a Spanish thaler, intimating that I do not ask for anything except to see her completely undressed. This, she replies, is impossible because it is against the Law, except for this, she would be completely at my command. Yet my repeated pleas and proposal were in vain, I showed her another one, two, three more Spanish thalers – all in vain, she could not be made to show more from her bosom down and from her ankles upwards, more than she had already revealed to the onlookers of her dance. Greater exposure is against the Law, disposing of herself is her legal revenue, but

55 Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, VI, 27, pp. 15–20 (= pp. 330–332).

56 Schick, *Erotic Margin*, p. 79.

57 A disparaging sobriquet of Venus.

it must be done in a lawful manner without showing her innermost secret. So I returned from my antiquarian philological excursions without having achieved anything.⁵⁸

Indeed, this passage would be worth a series of comments. Let it suffice to say here that the entire scene, featuring the representative of the invading power (Hammer accompanied the British military expedition against the French) offering money to the Egyptian belly dancer to strip herself naked before the intruder's greedy eye, articulates the gendered power relation of colonialism in a most blatant way. It is also true, however, that the paragraph reveals the limits of such an encroachment, for the dancer voices her refusal which is recorded and respected, albeit reluctantly, by Hammer-Purgstall.

3.4 Witnessing transgressions of rules and roles

Accepting these limits to his "antiquarian-ethnographic fantasies," Hammer continues to be puzzled by the astonishing difference between "European" and "Asian" female attitudes towards sexual morality:

The reluctance of the Muslim women to be completely exposed (besides their indubitable abstinence in other respects) is one of the strangest contrasts of European and Asian morality. Poor but chaste Italian and English girls often sit or stand as models at painting aca-

58 "Als solche konnten sie mich nicht verlocken, aber mir ging eine ethnographische und antiquarische Fantasie durch den Kopf, die ich gerne zu meiner Belehrung als wissbegieriger Reisender befriediget hätte. Ich hätte die wohlgebildete derselben ganz gerne entkleidet gesehen, um mich durch den Augenschein zu überzeugen, ob ihr Körperbau wie Einige behaupten, ganz derselbe wie der weiblicher Figuren auf den alten Skulpturen ägyptischer Tempel und Paläste sey. Ein Wink genügte, sie mir als Begleiterin zuzugesellen, sie führte mich außer des Dorfes auf eine wüste Stätte mit halb verfallenen und halb unbedeckten Lehmhütten, die mich nur zu sehr an die esquilinischen Gärten des Horaz [...] erinnerte [...]. Sie führte mich in ein Gemach wo Nichts als die leeren Lehmwände und die blosse Erde, und das ein Hühnerhof zu seyn schien. Die Thür wurde zugemacht es war aber kein Schloss, kein Riegel da sie zu verschließen; ich gab ihr einen spanischen Thaler mit dem Bedeuten ich verlange dafür gar Nichts als daß sie sich mir ganz entkleidet zeige; Dies erwiderte sie sei unmöglich, indem es wider das Gesetz, bis auf dies, stünde sie mir ganz zu Gebote; meine wiederholten guten Worte und Anträge blieben aber vergebens, ich zeigte ihr einen, zwei, und bis auf drey spanische Thaler, alles vergebens sie war nicht dazu zu bringen vom Busen hinunter und vom Knöchel hinauf mehr sehen zu lassen als sie schon im Tanze den Schaulustigen Preis gegeben; größere Entblößung sei wider das Gesetz, sich selbst Preis zu geben sei ihr erlaubter Erwerb, aber dies müsse auf gesetzmäßige Weise ohne dass sie ihr Geheimstes zu Schau stellte, geschehen. So kehrte ich von meinem antiquarischen philologischen Ausfluge unverrichteter Dinge zurück." Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, VII, 29, pp. 4–7 (= pp. 348–349).

demies with veiled faces, and not a single man can pride himself on having laid down on their bodies with anything but their gaze; Muslim haeterae offer anything but the sight of their bare secret charms, while honorable Muslim women under the strictest custody of the harem, abiding by its customs and the laws, amuse themselves with the voluptuous, sikyonian⁵⁹ dances of the almahs and the grossest indecencies of the Chinese shadow play, whose hero, like any other human being, is of ordinary stature yet very well-hung as a man and wears his Greek Hercules's testicles as big as himself, loaded in front of him on an ox cart.⁶⁰

Dancing and shadow plays (alluded to in this passage) as well as other forms of popular entertainment caught the particular attention of the ever curious scholar and embassy agent, who usually describes them at length, albeit with ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, Hammer took advantage of these performances to study their presumed ancient origins, to collect samples of spoken Arabic or Turkish (for which he gives many examples throughout his memoirs), or to observe the audience's behavior. On the other hand, in many cases these forms of entertainment profoundly shook his sense of decency since, besides the explicit sexual humor, the transgression of conventional or anticipated gender roles was pervasive. "What I saw and heard by far exceeded my expectation of the most shameful things. Only the faithful narrative can enable Europeans who are alien to such abominations to make a correct judgment of the rottenness of Turkish customs or rather bad customs, especially if they learn that not only depraved men, but also harem women were entertained by this spectacle."⁶¹

59 "*Sikynnisch*", used by Hammer on several occasion to denote a special kind of lascivious dance, is most probably a corrupt form of "*sikyonisch*" which refers to the Peloponnesian city state of Sicyon (Σικυών), famous for its painting school and theatre. His use of the term is idiosyncratic.

60 "Die Scheu der Mosliminen vor gänzlicher Enthüllung bei sonstiger zweifelloser Enthaltbarkeit ist einer der sonderbarsten Kontraste europäischer und asiatischer Sitte. Arme aber züchtige italienische und englische Mädchen sitzen und stehen auf Malerakademien oft mit verhülltem Gesichte als Modelle, ohne dass irgend ein Mann auf ihrem schönen Leibe anders als mit den Blicken geruht zu haben sich rühmen kann; moslemische Hetären gewähren alles nur nicht den Anblick ihrer unverhüllten geheimen Reize, und ehrbare Mosliminen, die unter der strengsten Obhut des Harems, der Sitte und den Gesetzen desselben getreu, erlustigen sich an den wollüstigsten, sikynnischen Tänzen der Almen und an den gröbsten Unanständigkeiten des chinesischen Schattenspiels, dessen Held von gewöhnlicher Statur wie andere Menschenkinder, nur als Mann mehr als riesig begabt, seine griechischen Herkuleshoden so groß wie er selbst auf einem Ochsenwagen geladen vor sich zur Schau trägt." Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, VII, 29, pp. 7–9 (= pp. 349–350).

61 "Was ich gesehen und gehört, hatte meine Erwartung des Schändlichsten bei weitem überstrichen. Nur die getreue Erzählung kann Europäer, denen solche Greuel fremd, zum richtigen Urtheil über das Fäulniß türkischer Sitte oder vielmehr Unsitte befähigen besonders wenn sie

Again, as can be seen in this passage, Hammer was shocked not so much by the ribaldry of language and contents, but by the fact that even women enjoyed this type of amusement, which was out of line with the gendered behavior he had observed otherwise.

Like so many other travelers to the Levant, Hammer was particularly outraged by another type of transgression, namely by the presence and company of effeminate men in the taverns of the Ottoman capital.⁶² Yet again, his indignation at the sight of male belly dancers (the so-called *köcek*) or what he calls *Lotterbube* (“scoundrels” or “hustlers”) could not outweigh his unabashed fascination with this display of sexuality. Having plunged on several occasions into the nightlife of the city, the young Hammer experienced

profound disgust with the unnatural moral corruption [...] especially of the Janissaries, whose *yamak* [= auxiliary troops] were nothing more than Greek hustlers [...]. To convince myself of the unbelievable with my own eyes, I once visited a tavern in Galata at night, where Greek boys were performing sikyonian dances before the eyes of Janissaries and sailors. Except for a few curious strangers such as myself, the whole audience consisted of only three categories, i.e., catamites paid by their lovers, abominable men who paid to abuse them, and more disgraceful old men who paid others to be abused by them, three categories of outlaws of morality, which the Turks call *puşt*, *gulampara* and *ibne* [different ways for saying faggot].⁶³

erfahren, daß dieses Schauspiel nicht nur die Unterhaltung von verderbten Männergesellschaften, sondern auch die der Frauen im Harem.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XII, 51, p. 10 (= pp. 582–583). Hammer claims that such “abominable and hideous fantasies could only proliferate in the mud of Turkish tyranny and barbarism, while these things have never been reported of from Persia” (“Anderes Ungeheures und Abscheuliches verderbter Phantasie und Sitte [...] konnte nur im Schlamme türkischer Tyrannei und Barberei zu Constantinopel wuchern. In Persien, so viel aus Reisebeschreibungen bekannt, ist nie dergleichen erhört worden”). Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, XII, 51, p. 9 (= p. 582).

62 Serkan Delice, *The Janissaries and Their Bedfellows: Masculinity and Male Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Istanbul*, in Gul Ozyegin (ed.), *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures* (Farnham 2015), pp. 115–136.

63 “Tiefe Abscheu vor der unnatürlichen Sittenverderbniß [...] besonders der Janitscharen, deren Jamak Nichts weiter als griechische Lotterbuben. [...] um mich von dem Unglaublichen mit eigenen Augen zu überzeugen besuchte ich einmal in der Nacht eine Taverne in Galata, wo griechische Knaben sikynnische [sic] Tänze aufführten, und Janitscharen und Galiardschi die Zuseher; Die ganze Versammlung bestand, ein Paar neugieriger Fremder wie ich abgerechnet, nur aus drei Klassen nämlich aus Lotterbuben, die von ihren Liebhabern gezahlt wurden, aus schändlichen Männern welche dieselben zahlend missbrauchten und aus noch schändlicheren Alten, welche Andere um von ihnen missbraucht zu werden zahlten, drei Klassen von Auswürflingen der Sittlichkeit wofür dem Türken die Benennungen *Puscht*, *Ghulampara* und *Ibne* gang und gäbe sind.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen*, III, 12, p. 21 (= pp. 174–175).

Since girlish boys subverted the accepted gender binarity, catamites, to use the historically more accurate term for male prostitutes, were, not only in Hammer-Purgstall's mind, the epitome of the most unsettling aspect of Oriental sexuality. Curiously enough, these scenes were not too scandalous to be related at length. This way, the standard display of feigned indignation, indicated by expressions such as "depraved," "bewildering," or "abominable," proves to be a necessary framing for the voyeuristic lust for giving vivid depictions of such sceneries. As such, they serve as indications of the supposedly solid moral stature of the scholarly observer who passes the test of unsettling realities.

4 Towards a gendered reading of Hammer-Purgstall beyond the Orientalist paradigm

In his sweeping study of the sexual discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, Dror Ze'evi identifies two competing attitudes – "one more favorable and open to local discourse, the other hostile and unflattering" – that characterized descriptions of Eastern sexual morality in Western travel writings in early modern times.⁶⁴ Since the turn of nineteenth century and then particularly throughout the Tanzimat period (during Hammer-Purgstall's lifetime), this opposition became more nuanced while also intensifying. "While some chose to depict local sexuality as an instance of a different but no less moral outlook, in other accounts sexual behavior in the Ottoman world assumed an all-embracing character as an endemic vice that represents not only a morally depraved society but also morally corrupt politics."⁶⁵

Most scholars would agree that Hammer-Purgstall should be placed in the first, more sympathetic and more judicious, group. It is true, however, that numerous passages cited in this chapter could just as well be invoked to demonstrate a pervasive Orientalist substratum to his writings. Already in his French poem from 1799, we find claims for Western superiority in the name of taste and refinement and a dismissal of Asiatic despotism combined with a specifically gendered gaze on the Levant. Also, particular narrative elements (such as the concomitance of sexual repression and perversion), corresponding imageries

⁶⁴ Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500 – 1900* (Berkeley, London 2006), p.152.

⁶⁵ Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, pp. 155, 157.

(the feminine allegories in the depiction of moral decay of state and society), and rhetorical figures (the interplay of attraction and repulsion as a prominent way of framing the discourse of the other) are reminiscent of well-established discourses on the Orient. To single out these elements, however, would lead to a highly selective if not distorted reading of Hammer-Purgstall whose exceptional – and eccentric – position within the Orientalist mainstream of the early nineteenth century has been demonstrated by numerous scholars who pointed out the complex and intimate relationship Hammer-Purgstall entertained with the Orient.⁶⁶ Based on the material discussed above, it is clear that, for Hammer as for so many other contemporaries of the Austrian scholar, the despicable aspects of Oriental sexuality – the display of homosexuality, pederasty, and the seclusion of women as the most common triplet – are the paragon of the moral and political depravation of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁷ However, these elements are far from dominating his depiction of gender, let alone the overall narrative.

Focusing on a few examples that could easily be expanded, I have tried to outline the various ways in which feminine imagery, female encounters, and feminine or effeminate environments in Hammer-Purgstall's writings on the Levant are presented and used for his self-fashioning. Needless to say, a truly gendered reading of Hammer-Purgstall would require much more than could be offered here. First, one would need, if not a broader focus on gender as such, a second focus on the (self-)construction of masculinity as a necessary corollary to the representations of femininity. Moreover, a wider material basis, including his historical works, translations, and poems would certainly contribute to refin-

⁶⁶ For the most prominent appraisal of Hammer-Purgstall, although offering a similarly selective reading, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia* (Princeton 2018) (German original: *Die Entzauberung Asiens: Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* [Munich 1998]). On Hammer's (contested) literary and philological achievements see Klaus Kreiser, *Eine langatmige und unergiebiges Polemik? Die Fehde zwischen Heinrich Friedrich von Diez und Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall*, in Christoph Rauch and Gideon Stiening (eds.), *Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751–1817): Freidenker – Diplomat – Orientkenner* (Berlin, Boston 2020), pp. 243–272; Kreiser, 'Clio's poor relation', pp. 47–52; Mangold, *Eine "weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft"*, pp. 79–82. On Hammer's awareness and dialogue with contemporary Ottoman historiography see Christoph Neumann, *Primärquelle und Sekundärliteratur im Dialog: Zu den Beziehungen zwischen Ahmed Cevdet Paşa und Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall*, in Nurettin Demir and Erika Taube (eds.), *Turkologie heute: Tradition und Perspektive. Materialien der dritten Deutschen Turkologen-Konferenz, Leipzig, 4.–7. Oktober 1994* (Wiesbaden 1998), pp. 211–224.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that his views on the Arab-speaking world and most notably on Persia (see above n. 61) are different.

ing our understanding. Despite these limitations, a series of preliminary conclusions can be drawn.

The focus on Orientalism, as inevitable as it is in the analysis of Western writings on the Levant, proves of limited use in understanding Hammer-Purgstall's views on female and effeminate spaces and their role for his self-understanding, which would rather call for a broader contextualization. With this aim, I would like to cite three largely accepted research findings concerning the interplay of gender roles and societal organization at the turn of the eighteenth century. First, we need to keep in mind the largely male-dominated homosocial organization of society in its various segments, with gradual, but not radical, differences between the Habsburg and the Ottoman realms. Thus, in the eyes of (predominantly male) observers, female presences in homosocial settings were *a priori* marked as other, especially when it came to observe female spaces cross-culturally.⁶⁸ Second, the era of late Enlightenment and Revolution prove to be a watershed for the firm establishment of gender roles according to the binary male/female distinction with its corresponding societal consequences.⁶⁹ The emergence of a male bureaucratic state apparatus was, thirdly, both contributory to and representative of this development.⁷⁰ Accordingly, well-known clichés such as the decrepit Empire run by the harem, or the effeminacy of its rulers, directly feed into this gendered political imagery of a feminized, deficient state.

Hammer's depictions of the female gender indeed appear in consonance with these general trends of his time and are certainly "less Orientalist" than the *prima facie* impression one might get from the enumeration of occasional instances. Rather, the, at times caustic and dismissive, tone in his memoirs ulti-

68 The issue has been discussed in many places. Suffice it to mention Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York 1985), a study that introduced the term into the social and historical sciences.

69 See the influential essay by Karin Hausen, *Die Polarisierung der 'Geschlechtscharaktere': Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben*, in Werner Conze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 1976), pp. 363–393 (English translation: *Family and Role-division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century – An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life*, in Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (eds.), *The German Family: Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany* (London 1981), pp. 51–83).

70 Stefan Brakensiek, *Die Männlichkeit der Beamten: Überlegungen zur Geschlechtergeschichte des Staates im Ancien Régime und an der Schwelle zur Moderne*, in Jens Flemming et al. (eds.), *Lesarten der Geschichte: Ländliche Ordnungen und Geschlechterverhältnisse* (Kassel 2004), pp. 67–88; Francis Dodsworth, *Masculinity as Governance: Police, Public Service and the Embodiment of Authority, c. 1700–1850*, in Matthew McCormack (ed.), *Public Men: Political Masculinities in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke 2007), pp. 33–53.

mately testifies to the affective involvement and intellectual standards of a character who displayed similar attitudes when it comes to describe female acquaintances in London or Vienna. Moreover, by family background and education, Hammer-Purgstall was a representative – and declaredly so – of the Enlightened state bureaucracy in its specifically Austrian, Josephinist guise. His fundamental belief in the virtues of meritocracy turns him into a caustic critic both of what he would call Oriental indolence and fatalism and of the shallow formalism and rigidity of the Habsburg monarchy in particular.⁷¹ Of modest upbringing, yet extremely talented, very industrious, but lacking the recognition he was expecting both of state bureaucracy and academia, Hammer was concerned with conveying an appropriate image of himself throughout his life, culminating in his monumental *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*. There, the way he likes to present himself very much conforms to the late eighteenth-century image of the self-controlled gentleman, polite and refined, yet critical of both rudeness and punctiliousness.⁷² His scholarly interest helped him to maintain an ironic, sometimes even critical distance to the various official positions he held over the years. Also, the frequent occurrence of women in his memoirs (including numerous extensive and praiseful portrayals) invites the hypothesis that with female acquaintances Hammer, both emotionally and intellectually, found alternatives to (or at least occasional relief from) the otherwise barren milieu of bureaucracy he was at constant odds with for the longest part of his life.

As the passages cited show, the tone of sober description is frequently shot through by personal comment and even prejudices (most of them probably shared by his contemporaries), just as those passages suggesting intimacy and sexual desire are tempered with wake-up calls of scholarly self-restraint. This painstaking quest for equilibrium, maybe the most fundamental feature of his male self-fashioning, finds its equivalent in his general framing of the “Eastern Question” that largely coincides with his own biography. Thus, despite the concerns Hammer shares with regards to the political present and future of the Ottoman Empire, the keynote of his writing sets him apart from the large majority of contemporary comments that were suffused with the feeling of civilizational superiority.⁷³ In contrast to this growing opinion, instead of looking for signs of

71 On his intellectual profile see the incisive remarks by Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Terror and Toleration: The Habsburg Empire Confronts Islam, 1526–1850* (London 2008), pp. 130–151.

72 For an overview of research on conceptions of masculinity in the early modern era see Karen Harvey, *The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800*, in *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005), pp. 296–311.

73 In this sense see his preface to Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs*, vol. 1, pp. XIII–LVII.

decay, Hammer-Purgstall responded to the manifold impressions of his travels with infinite curiosity, sympathy, or outright enthusiasm, in constant search for “the genius of the places described.”⁷⁴

74 “Der Genius der beschriebenen Orte.” Hammer-Purgstall, *Umblick auf einer Reise*, p. X.

