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Nina Ergin

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OTTOMAN ROYAL WOMEN'S SPACES

The Acoustic Dimension

Nina Ergin

In their discussion of space in relation to gender, historians of women in the Middle East so far have focused primarily on physical and visual access. This paper argues that women's acoustic space merits closer consideration, especially since acoustic methods of communication very often could and did exceed the limits of vision and visually bounded space. This argument is based on three different case studies concerning Ottoman royal women of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: (1) harem women's auditory access to imperial council meetings; (2) common petitioners' auditory access to the mother of the sultan as she traveled by carriage through the imperial capital during her frequent processions; and (3) Qur'anic recitation and prayers as commissioned by female mosque patrons. These case studies have more wide-ranging implications in that they allow for conceptual experimentation leading towards a refinement of the categories of private/public, male/female space, based on the permeability of acoustic space.

When we speak of women's spaces, which sounds do we usually imagine therein? Is it full of noise—of an infant fussing and a husband asking for dinner? In contrast, when envisioning Virginia Woolf's iconic "room of one's own," our imagination is generally restricted to the visual image of a pleasantly appointed study room.¹ If sound matters at all there, it is the smack and clatter of a typewriter (or nowadays faint tapping on a keyboard), or the absence of sound, allowing the occupant to concentrate on a creative, productive task. Maybe because scholars in their professional life mostly inhabit the latter space, an almost complete absence of sound has permeated the study of women's spaces, regardless of period and culture.² This lack is curious in Middle Eastern gender history, given the importance of sound in Islamic civilizations, from the call to prayer to Qur'anic recitation, from orally performed poetry to women's songs.³

This article focuses on the spaces used by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman royal women secluded in the harem—the mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, and consorts of the sultans ruling over the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923).⁴ After having explicated three concepts underlying the spatial segregation of genders in Islamic civilizations, I will provide background information on the function and structure of the Ottoman imperial harem. This is followed by an argument for occasionally shifting our attention from vision to sound when discussing Muslim women's

lifeworlds. I will present three case studies to that effect: harem women's auditory access to the imperial council in the Topkapı Palace, which served as a center of power almost continuously from the fifteenth to the later nineteenth century; petitioners' access to harem women during processions; and harem women's auditory communication with the public via Qur'an recitation. After considering the rules of acoustic communication in different contexts, I conclude with some broader implications: recently refined categories of space predicated on such divisions as private/semi-public/public or female/male/eunuch may be questioned based on the permeability of acoustic space.

Harem, Avret, Muhaddere

Derived from the Arabic root "h-r-m," meaning both "forbidden" and "sacred," the term *harem* denotes any space to which access is restricted or prohibited, more specifically the private quarters within a residence which only women and male (usually consanguine) household members could access. By extension, secluded female household members were also called "harem." Their numbers included not only wives, unmarried female relatives, concubines, and female slaves, but also under-age boys and castrated male slaves. Within the harem, female elders, usually the mother of the male head of household, held the position of greatest authority. A mark of respectability and privilege, seclusion for women did not entail confinement to the private quarters of their residence at all times. They could move in public as long as they had the male household head's approval and for such legitimate reasons as pilgrimage to Mecca, bathhouse visits, family visits, or prayer at saint's tombs, and as long as they remained veiled and accompanied by a retinue—these conditions could vary with the historical and cultural context.⁵ Women's legal rights, regardless, remained protected under canon law (*shari'a*), and they could communicate with the world outside via proxies (*vekil*) and servants.

The concepts of *avret* and *muhaddere* also require consideration to define the shape (in terms of space, vision, and sound) that female seclusion took in the Ottoman Empire of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶ The former is derived from the Arabic '*awra*, and in Ottoman Turkish means "anything usually kept concealed from public view," specifically those "parts of the body that, by religious law, have to be covered," and by extension "woman; wife."⁷ Exactly which body parts should be covered remained controversial; here it is significant that the term implies notions of (not necessarily gender-specific) privacy and private space. An important hint about the privacy of the Prophet's female family members *vis-à-vis* unrelated male visitors occurs in *sura* 33:53:

And when ye
 Ask (his [i.e. the Prophet's] ladies)
 For anything ye want
 Ask them from before
 A screen: that makes
 For greater purity for
 Your hearts and for theirs.⁸

Thus, a curtain or screen guarded visual privacy while allowing acoustic communication between non-related males and females, communication that was further regulated in *sura* 33:32:

O Consorts of the Prophet!
 Ye are not like any
 Of the (other) women:
 If ye do fear (Allah),
 Be not too complaisant
 Of speech, lest one
 In whose heart is
 A disease should be moved
 With desire: but speak ye
 A speech (that is) just.

Thus, while the Qur'an did not object to communication between men and (elite) women, this was bound to the condition that the woman's voice was not flirtatious and potentially leading to temptation and, subsequently, social and moral disorder (*fitna*).

The Sayings and Deeds of the Prophet (*ahadith*) collected in the *Sahih al-Buhari*—which the Ottomans, who in their majority adhered to the Hanefi rite, consulted—are more stringent than the Qur'an in framing women's voices as something to be concealed. One entry concerns women in the mosque, where in the early centuries male and female prayed together. Narrated Abu Huraira: "The Prophet said, 'The saying 'Sub Han Allah' is for men and clapping is for women.' (If something happens in the prayer, the men can invite the attention of the Imam by saying 'Sub Han Allah,' and women, by clapping their hands)."⁹ In accordance with this passage, the Ottoman chief jurisprudent (*seyhülislam*) Kemalpaşazade (d. 1534) considered women's voices (*avret*) a part of the body that needed to be concealed to render her modest and respectable.¹⁰

Kemalpaşazade's most influential successor, Ebussuud Efendi (d. 1574), did not specifically refer to voice when defining the term *muhaddere*—a "veiled, modest (woman), [and] virtuous lady."¹¹ In response to a question about the degree of seclusion required to render a woman as such, he wrote: "It is not conformity to the prescriptions of the noble Shari'a that is

the essential element in being muhaddere. That is why non-Muslim women can also be muhaddere. A woman is muhaddere if she does not let herself be seen by persons other than members of her household and does not set about taking care of her affairs in person."¹² Ebussuud Efendi in essence expressed that respectability was predicated on women's absence from the public gaze—in other words, the invisibility of their bodies—and the availability of proxies who could handle any of their business located in public space. Hence, financial means were a necessary precondition to afford private quarters large enough for secluded female household members, as well as domestic personnel.

The Ottoman Imperial Harem

The highest socio-economic status in Ottoman society was the imperial household, its harem's most crucial task being to produce an heir to the throne to make sure the dynasty's continued existence. In contrast to Orientalist notions of the harem as an erotically charged environment, this involved a tightly regulated system that trained girls and young women—most of them slaves—for service to the dynasty, a system administered by the sultan's mother (*valide sultan*), who through this office received great prestige and financial rewards.¹³ For harem women, service to the dynasty may have meant marriage to a member of the Ottoman elite—likely, a man who had been trained in the palace school and experienced a youth similar to his bride's. This would later lead to manumission, or, in the ideal scenario, giving birth to the sultan's son and therefore putting herself in the position to become the next *valide sultan*.

The physical space where the *valide sultan* wielded her authority over the sultan's younger "famliy" members (female and under-age male), the female slaves in training, and the servants consisted mainly of the harem buildings within the Topkapı Palace (Fig. 1, section C), as well as in her private residence(s) in other parts of the city, to which she could retire during the summer months and on other occasions.¹⁴ Still visible today, the imperial harem within the Topkapı Palace consisted of a conglomeration of private apartments for higher-ranking residents, multi-purpose rooms for others, hallways, open courtyards, and many other rooms added over the centuries, altogether forming an increasingly cramped labyrinth that could house as many as 436 residents in 1652.¹⁵ Physical access was through a gate in the second courtyard, as well as from the third courtyard where the sultan's private quarters were located, so that the staff could enter and exit without breaching rules of propriety. In spite of the cramped conditions, it was a desired goal of harem women to remain in the Topkapı Palace—in

1 site of the Old Council Hall **2** Public Treasury **3** quarters of black eunuchs **4** Archives **5** Chancery **6** Public Council Hall **7** gate connecting the Harem to the second court

Figure 1. Ground plan of the harem and imperial council hall in the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul, 1459–1473, with later additions. Source: Sabiha Gölöğlu, after Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, Plate 11.

the center of power—and not be “exiled” to the Old Palace, the first imperial residence erected by Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481), where aging and out-of-favor harem women resided.¹⁶

The personnel serving Ottoman royal women and mediating between the space they inhabited and the world beyond, included eunuch slaves and non-Muslim women. Castrated male slaves had figured among courtiers in empires as geographically and temporally diverse as Mesopotamia in the second millennium BC, China under the Zhou Dynasty, Byzantium, and the medieval Islamic world (the latter two would serve the Ottoman dynasty

as a model for continuing this practice).¹⁷ Because of their physiological inability to create a lineage of their own, their loyalty to their ruler or master was assumed to be absolute. Their functions ranged from guardianship over important religious sites and palaces to military command and domestic service. While the Ottomans employed eunuchs for all of these functions, it is the office of the *kızlar ağası* (Agha of the Maidens) or *dariüssade ağası* (Agha of the Abode of Felicity, meaning the imperial harem) that concerns us here.¹⁸ As a “third gender” and in-between category, eunuchs could cross boundaries and thresholds between profane and sacred, commonplace and royal, male and female—even if crossing the latter was considered morally dubious.¹⁹ Although the *kızlar ağası*, who resided in quarters immediately inside the harem’s main entrance (Fig. 1, no. 3), could enter the harem proper, he would not ordinarily do so. He likely depended on several female servants assigned from within the harem to conduct most communications.²⁰

Another type of go-between was the *kira* (from the Greek word for “lady”), a personal agent to the *valide sultan*.²¹ The first instance of such an agent can be found among the servants of Hafsa Sultan, mother of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566): a Jewish lady who had converted to Islam and accepted the name Fatma Hatun (d. 1548). Usually of Jewish faith, high-ranking socio-economic status, and conversant in at least one European language, Fatma and her successors—the Sephardi Esther Handali to Nurbanu Sultan (*valide sultan* 1574–1583), the Italian Esperanza Malchi to Safiye Sultan (*valide sultan* 1595–1603), and so on—served to maintain diplomatic contacts between their mistress and foreign embassies, in some cases even with the Doge of Venice and the Queen of England.²² They personally solicited, accepted, and delivered gifts and favors; they conducted written correspondence, still preserved in various archives.²³ Their power as conduits to the *valide sultan* was considerable. Not only Ottoman subjects were very much aware of this situation—for Esperanza Malchi, it led to her murder in 1600 by rebels angry over her wealth and political influence—but also foreign emissaries. Edward Barton, the joint representative for England and France at the end of the sixteenth century, remarked that “because my selfe [*sic*] cannot come to the speech of the Sultana, and all my busines passe [*sic*] by the hands of the said Mediatrix, loosing her friendshippe [*sic*], I loose the practick [*sic*] with the Sultana...”²⁴

From Vision to Sound

The work of the historians Leslie Peirce and Madeline Zilfi, and the art historians Ülkü Bates and Lucienne Thys-Senocak, among others, has contributed much to our understanding of how Ottoman royal women

experienced and negotiated their lifeworlds, inside and outside the harem; how they extended their agency beyond the harem walls by means of go-betweens and informants, letters and other missives; how they made themselves visible in the urban space through the processions in which they participated and through their monuments; and how female patrons of architecture manipulated the gaze for visual access where propriety made physical access impossible.²⁵ A poignant example of the latter is the royal pavilion of the Yeni Valide Mosque Complex in Istanbul (built 1597–1665), which was designed so as to allow Hadice Turhan Sultan (d. 1683), the mother of Mehmed IV (r. 1595–1603), to monitor key points of the complex, including the imam's entrance to the mosque, and the entrances to the mausoleum, the school, and the market.²⁶

The emphasis on visual aspects of Ottoman women's spaces and the gaze is reflected in the titles of many (art) historians' seminal publications. The historian Gavin Hambly introduced his edited volume with "*Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History*," while the art historian D. Fairchild Ruggles did so with "*Vision and Power: An Introduction*."²⁷ The historian Yvonne Seng has written on "*Invisible Women: Residents of Early Sixteenth-Century Istanbul*," her colleague Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr on "*Women in the Public Eye in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul*," and Thys-Şenocak on "*Gender and Vision in Ottoman Architecture*."²⁸ Given the parameters of art history and the scant attention that historians, until quite recently, paid to sensory modalities other than sight, this virtually exclusive emphasis on vision is not surprising; however, a rapidly growing body of scholarship based on sensory anthropology has prepared the ground for Middle Eastern historians to apply a sensorial framework to their own subjects.²⁹

Ottoman women's acoustic spaces have been mentioned in the existing literature only in passing;³⁰ yet as the following case studies on women's access to the imperial council, on non-related men's access to royal women, and on recitations and prayers sponsored by women will show, it merits close attention, especially since auditory access and acoustic methods of communication often exceeded the limits of vision and visually bounded space. They were also less easy to control and held great practical and symbolic significance in an era when people individually and collectively oriented themselves to the rhythms of the call to prayer or the church bells.³¹ I do *not* propose to negate the importance of the visual dimension of women's space, but simply to shift the focus in order to arrive at a more integrated idea of Ottoman women's experiences. Smell, taste, and touch were also part of these experiences and avenues of communication—via food, perfume, flowers, textiles, and other objects inviting touch—but these fall outside the limits of this study.

Royal Women's Auditory Access to the Imperial Council

The auditory access that residents of the Ottoman imperial harem had to imperial council meetings in the Topkapı Palace was made possible by spatial proximity between the harem quarters and the administration offices—the meeting hall, the chancery, and the archives (Fig. 1, no. 6, 5, 4). In the hall, viziers met four times a week to discuss state business and listen to petitions (Fig. 1, no. 6; Fig. 2). On the northern wall, there is a latticed window, constructed under Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566) and following in function an earlier arrangement introduced under Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1444–1446; 1451–1481) in his old council hall (Fig. 1, no. 1). This arrangement occurred after a commoner rudely asked who the sovereign was; thenceforth, the sultan listened to council meetings from behind a curtain³²—“unseen but omniscient.”³³ Under Murad III (r. 1574–1595), the harem buildings were extensively renovated, as evidenced by an inscription containing the completion date of 1587–1588 over the entrance gate.³⁴ Probably part of this cycle of renovations was an aperture above the window (Fig. 2). Based on the architectural evidence of the corridor that connects the sultan's private quarters, the harem, and the space behind the window, the art historian Gülru Necipoğlu has convincingly argued that “this same corridor also enabled women and black eunuchs to watch political discussions in the Council Hall from a round hole [i.e., said aperture] above the sultan's royal window...”³⁵ Politically inclined harem women could thus stay apprised of current events and developments and shape their own actions accordingly.

It can hardly be a coincidence that this aperture was likely added under Murad III, son of the formidable Nurbanu Sultan who wielded tremendous political power and who, as *valide sultan*, served as an astute political advisor to her son, even if her death may have precluded her from enjoying this newly introduced auditory access to council meetings.³⁶ In terms of the space that Nurbanu's successors could access, the aperture significantly added to its size. Although in quantitative terms the added acoustic space was not particularly large, in qualitative terms it mattered a great deal: the information that harem women could acquire through auditory access to this single room was more valuable than, for instance, that derived from the random ambient noise of the larger urban acoustic space. It may be worth examining the acoustic space of the entire imperial harem with the help of sound maps that visualize the sound levels and acoustic access of different locations, but such an endeavor falls victim to word-count limitations here.³⁷ There remains also the question whether such a powerful *valide sultan* as Nurbanu was on occasion more than a passive recipient of

Figure 2. Sultan's window and aperture granting harem residents auditory access to the Imperial Council Hall, Topkapı Palace. Source: Author's photograph.

information. Two seventeenth-century Ottoman chroniclers indeed report how Kösem Sultan (d. 1651), grandmother of Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687), made her voice vehemently heard in the imperial council hall, even going so far as to berate a leading statesman.³⁸

Auditory Access to Royal Women during Processions

The second case study concerns the auditory access *to* Ottoman royal women, and by extension to the sultan. In the late sixteenth century, the female dynasty members—especially the *valide sultan*—became increasingly involved in the elaborate processions representing the ruling house. Usually, the sultans staged processions every Friday when going from the Topkapı Palace to one of the imperial mosques for congregational prayer, departing for and returning from military campaigns, leaving the Topkapı Palace to visit other royal residences, and attending various celebrations and festivals. Such occasions presented an opportunity for subjects to convince

themselves of the wealth, power, and legitimacy of their sovereign. They could, moreover, approach the sultan, usually seated on horseback and surrounded by a retinue, to submit a petition and seek justice.³⁹

While some scholars have argued that the number of sultanic appearances decreased after Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), the historians Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet posit that, with rare exceptions, this was not the case.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is possible that Nurbanu did appear in public more often than her son Murad III, who was criticized by his viziers and the contemporary chroniclers Selaniki and Mustafa 'Ali for remaining in the palace and devoting himself to leisure activities.⁴¹ Moving between the Topkapı Palace, her own private palace on the Marmara Sea, and her mosque complex on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, Nurbanu traveled in a horse-drawn carriage, shielded by lattice screens and curtains and surrounded by a retinue (Fig. 3). Many chroniclers, ambassadors, and travelers describe the splendid processions of the different *valide sultans*, within the capital and among different cities, as separate or as double processions with their sons' processions.⁴²

For the purpose of examining acoustic space, one particular incident in 1600, as related by Selaniki, is of interest. When Safiye Sultan, mother of Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603), returned from her private residence to the Topkapı Palace, a group of unemployed seminary (*medrese*) graduates stopped her carriage to complain about an official accepting bribes from unqualified persons in return for positions that were rightfully theirs: "Your favors to the people of the world are abundant. Accept the blessings of the clerics who pray for you, and make Ahizade Abdülhalim Efendi military judge over us [instead of the corrupt official]."⁴³ In communicating with the strictly secluded, most powerful of Ottoman women, these proper and righteous *medrese* graduates did not have visual access to Safiye behind the carriage's lattice screens and curtains, but they did have auditory access (Mehmed III was not accessible, since he traveled by boat along the Bosphorus, but the group later also complained to the imperial council). In the end, their petition was granted. That auditory access to the *valide sultan* was more effective than visual access may be understood from a hypothetical question: if the *medrese* graduates had been allowed to see Safiye, but not permitted to talk to her or give her a written document, would their petition have been successful?

As the female members of the Ottoman dynasty traveled through Istanbul in their carriages, the urban space to which they had visual access was greatly enlarged by the acoustic dimension even while restricted by screens and curtains. They could perceive the soundscape of the city, with its great variety and acoustic signals, not only the petitioners addressing them. Rather than being a passive recipient, however, the *valide sultan* sometimes did speak during processions, apparently without violating

Figure 3. Carriage of the sultan's mother. Source: Franz Taeschner, *Alt-Stambuler Hof- und Volksleben : Ein türkisches Miniaturenalbum aus dem 17. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Lafaire, 1925).

the rules of propriety. Hadice Turhan Sultan (d. 1683) saw it fit to call out "Don't be afraid, my sons (*Korkma oğlancıklar*)" to a member of the French ambassador's retinue who feared he had made himself suspect by sneaking a glance at her.⁴⁴ Based on such anecdotal evidence, one may argue that although their bodies were visually absent from public space, Ottoman royal women were present acoustically and able to participate by speaking out when they felt it was warranted.⁴⁵

Qur'anic Recitations and Prayers Commissioned by Women

While the previous two case studies addressed royal women's auditory access to politically significant space and the access that non-related males had to them personally, the present example will illustrate how women could manipulate the auditory environment of others. The widely audible Qur'anic recitations that mosque patrons usually endowed together with their buildings were not necessarily a gendered way of broadcasting identity and power; both male and female patrons equally participated in this practice. Yet recitations could serve *muhaddere* women as a means to communicate messages—both personal and political, however subtly

mediated through Qur'anic text—that could reach a broader audience of Muslim worshippers. Although not fluent in Arabic, the majority of listeners would have been able to follow Qur'anic recitation, since most Istanbulites received at least rudimentary education in mosque complexes' or neighborhoods' primary schools (*mektepe*), where they memorized the most important *suras*. Presented with visual or auditory cues, they would have been able to recall these *suras*. Many mosque complexes, moreover, included institutions of higher learning whose students knew the Qur'an by heart, providing a knowledgeable audience.⁴⁶ The fact that, with few exceptions, mosque complexes were named after their patron—in the case of such women, after their rank, as *valide* (mother) or *haseki* (favorite)—indicates that the audience was cognizant of the link between the space in which they listened to Qur'anic recitation, the patron sponsoring the recitation program, and the message conveyed by the verses chosen.⁴⁷ This type of acoustic space, therefore, should be included in this discussion, based on the example of the Atik Valide Complex, commissioned by Nurbanu Sultan and designed by Mimar Sinan (completed 1586).⁴⁸

The Atik Valide Complex is comprised of a mosque, *medrese*, primary school, convent for mystics, schools for Qur'an recitation and hadith scholars, soup kitchen, inn, hospital, and bathhouse.⁴⁹ I have previously argued that Mimar Sinan conceived of his major mosques as finely tuned instruments meant to sound the Qur'an as a text-as-event, in a reenactment of the original revelation. He even integrated sounding vessels in the domes to ensure a beautiful performance of the holy text.⁵⁰ Based on the endowment deed (*vakfiye*), one can reconstruct the soundscape Nurbanu created through her patronage.⁵¹ In the mosque, there were a total of 148 employees: 121 recited the Qur'an (some as a whole, others only a *sura* or several verses, some for the benefit of the Prophet, the sultan, or the patron); 30 recited the creed—"there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet"—a thousand times; and 7 served as salaried worshippers. In addition to the employees, the recited texts and the beneficiaries of the blessings, the recitation schedule can also be recreated: after morning prayer, ten employees recited the creed, followed by one person reciting *sura* 36 (Ya Sin), generally considered the heart of the Qur'an since it addresses the central doctrine of Revelation and the Hereafter as well as the central figure of the Prophet. Another thirty employees then recited the first third of the Qur'an. Another thousandfold recitation of the creed and the reading of the second and last third of the Qur'an came after the noon and afternoon prayers, respectively. Before the evening prayer, a reciter chanted *sura* 3 (Al 'Imran), providing a general view of the history of religions and stressing Christians' duty to accept Islam. The night prayer concluded with a recitation of *sura* 67 (al-Mülk), contrasting the superficial world of mankind with the Hereafter and

describing the spiritual so as to make it humanly comprehensible. Fridays were marked as holy through additional recitations, with a salaried worshipper extolling the Prophet, Nurbanu, and Murad III, and a reciter chanting the last two verses of *sura* 2 (al-Baqara).⁵²

The selection and timing of *suras* 36 (Ya Sin), 3 (Al 'Imran), and 67 (al-Mülk) made for a conventional and "gender-blind" recitation program. Based on a survey of the *suras* recited in sixteen of Mimar Sinan's mosques in Istanbul, one may count nine mosques where *sura* 36 (Ya Sin) was recited after morning prayer, eight where *sura* 3 (Al 'Imran) was chanted after afternoon prayer, and six where 67 (al-Mülk) occurred after evening/night prayer.⁵³ In Nurbanu's mosque, one may single out *sura* 3 (Al 'Imran), since verses 21–30 emphasize the duty of non-Muslims to accept Islam and therefore may allude to the patron's personal history: she entered the imperial harem as a Christian slave girl in 1537 and converted to Islam.⁵⁴ Nurbanu furthermore commissioned one reciter to read verses 2:285–286, which did not occur in the other surveyed mosques—such an unusual choice must at least have caught the attention of the complex's *medrese* students if not the less-educated listeners. They were recited after Friday noon prayers, when the entire congregation was present and the message reached the largest audience possible. The persons attending would have heard the following verses:

(285)

The Messenger believeth
In what hath been revealed
To him from his Lord,
As do the men of faith.
Each one (of them) believeth
In Allah, His Angels,
His books, and His Messengers.
"We make no distinction (they say)
Between one and another
Of His Messengers." And they say:
"We hear, and we obey:
(We seek) Thy forgiveness,
Our Lord, and to Thee,
Is the end of all journeys."

(286)

On no soul doth Allah
Place a burden greater
Than it can bear.
It gets every good that it earns,
And it suffers every ill that it earns.
(Pray:) "Our Lord!
Condemn us not

If we forget or fall
Into error; our Lord!
Lay not on us a burden
Like that which Thou
Didst lay on those before us;
Our Lord! Lay not on us
A burden greater than we
Have strength to bear.
Blot out our sins,
And grant us forgiveness.
Have mercy on us.
Thou art our Protector;
Help us against those
Who stand against Faith."

To understand this choice of verses, knowledge of late-sixteenth-century political developments is essential, and a parallel reading of the endowment deed wherein Nurbanu announced her intentions as patron provides further guidance for interpretation.⁵⁵ The reign of her son Murad III was marked by a lack of military accomplishment and his increasing withdrawal from the public. The viziers and intellectuals who criticized the sultan for not conforming to the ideal of the warrior-sultan also implicitly criticized the sultan's mother who derived her own power and status through him. It seems Nurbanu selected these verses to respond along the following lines: nobody can claim to be perfect, neither the sultan, nor his mother; God does not impose burdens greater than those who have to carry them can bear and will accept from each person the duty they are able to offer; this duty may be spiritual, as in the case of Murad III's role as caliph presiding over all Muslims rather than as warrior; his critics commit a grave sin since they "stand against faith." Thus, Nurbanu reinforced an image of herself as desiring personal redemption, of her son as spiritual leader, and of her son's critics as unjustified and sinful.⁵⁶ Given the restricted means by which Ottoman royal women could disseminate political statements to the subjects, the acoustic space of Nurbanu's mosque facilitated the broadcasting of her message, acting as a mouthpiece that allowed her to address a larger audience.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Over the past decades scholars have thoroughly reassessed the well-worn binary of private *versus* public space as equated with female *versus* male space and reshaped it into a spectrum. The historian Abraham Marcus interrogated the concept of privacy—for which no Arabic equivalent word

exists—in Ottoman Aleppo, separating the ideal (physical and domestic privacy behind walls, but still great social familiarity among neighbors) from the real (densely crowded quarters where gossip thrived).⁵⁸ The sociologist Janet Abu-Lughod determined not only gender segregation and the resulting need for visual privacy as crucial factors shaping Islamic urban space, but also the existence of a third spatial category—a “semi-public” space in the form of dead-end residential streets serving as extension of the space women can traverse without veiling.⁵⁹ “Public” political decisions (e.g., marriage alliances), furthermore, were made within the “private” sphere, and both genders used various strategies to deploy power in either sphere.⁶⁰ Finally, wealth, age, and position within the life cycle constituted critical boundaries circumscribing access to public space, more so than gender.⁶¹ Yet when considering physical space—the space that secluded women perceived with their senses and through which they moved—we cannot completely dismiss the distinction of private *versus* public. The dossier “Women’s History in the New Millennium: Rethinking Public and Private” also points in this direction, and in a follow-up article, the historian Mary P. Ryan “plead[s] the case for refining rather than discarding the language of public and private, for presentist, futurist, and historical reasons.”⁶² This investigation into the acoustic aspects of private and public spaces indeed suggests one such refinement: the physical boundary between the two was more akin to a permeable membrane easily punctured by sound.

In Istanbul’s public space a case in point is the *valide sultan*’s carriage, as mobile private space whose membrane was acoustically penetrated by the male petitioners. In terms of vision, propriety dictated a unidirectional puncture from inside, creating what Abu-Lughod calls a “strangely asymmetrical reality”—the *valide sultan* could see unrelated men, but they could not see her.⁶³ Hadice Turhan Sultan deemed it proper to speak and therefore create an acoustic symmetry. Still, the advantage was the royal women’s, as they could see, hear, and make themselves heard if they found it appropriate.

The membrane between female / private and male / public space could be penetrated by intermediary persons having access to both. These included the above-mentioned eunuchs and *kiras* acting and speaking on royal women’s behalf. While they were indispensable for maintaining a segregated imperial household, for acoustic access as that facilitated by the aperture in the council hall, other avenues existed—independent of eunuchs, *kiras*, and servants—through which royal women gathered information, even when the sultan himself did not talk “business” with them. It is more apt to think of the boundaries between these spaces as dotted lines, rather than solid ones to be transgressed only by intermediaries.

The nature of the different channels of acoustic communications across these dotted lines—whether they worked through window screens or

carriage curtains—and their rules of usage were dependent on context.⁶⁴ Even in the formal setting of an entertainment inside the imperial harem, the presence of blindfolded non-related male musicians was acceptable. Bobovi, a page and court musician of Polish origin, who in the seventeenth century worked in the Topkapı Palace, writes about this arrangement: “The musicians of the chamber [...] sometimes play in the Sultan Valide’s apartments. They are introduced blindfolded to sing and play their instruments and, always and on all sides, the eunuchs observe them to prevent anyone from raising their head. They smack them when they budge even a little. I assure you that it is very tiring and uncomfortable to be a musician at this price and, in such privileged situation, be deprived of the sight.”⁶⁵ Thus, the “acoustic penetration” of secluded women’s space by men was still deemed proper, if only under stringent conditions to make sure no “visual penetration” occurred.⁶⁶

To give a contrasting example for rules governing acoustic communication outside the world of royal women, in courtrooms the protection of the law took precedence over elite women’s status as *muhaddere*, as evidenced in the rulings (*fetava*, sing. *fetva*) of the above-mentioned Ebussuud Efendi. Secluded women relied on *vekils* to manage their affairs in court, but their appointment, which had to be testified by two witnesses, was not legally valid if testimony relied on acoustic communication only, for example, from behind a door or curtain.⁶⁷ Secluded women could abuse the situation and pretend to be another person to gain advantages. In Peirce’s words, “[t]he mufti’s rulings focused on managing the practice of female seclusion—that is, preventing abuses both to the individuals concerned and to communal relations when seclusion interfered with community members’ responsibilities towards one another.”⁶⁸ Given that Ebussuud Efendi felt compelled to stop this practice, the acoustic mode of communication between secluded women and non-related men through closed doors and curtains (or with the latter blindfolded) must have been widely utilized—enough to create opportunities for manipulation. In concrete terms, not all channels of acoustic communications were equal, and one learned how to use them properly, implying that one could also abuse them.

In the Atik Valide Mosque—and other monuments commissioned by women—the categories of public and female space collapsed into each other and any boundary disappeared. Indeed, not even a monument was necessary to turn public into female space. If women could afford to endow Qur’an recitation at already-existing mosques or tombs, as was customary, then did they not turn the spaces where the recitation could be heard into spaces “of their own,” even if “only” acoustically?

A consideration of the acoustic dimensions of Ottoman royal women’s spaces offers a strikingly different framework for dealing with spatial as-

pects of gender segregation and seclusion. Such a consideration should be extended to encompass other spaces Ottoman women of all ranks inhabited. To provide one further example to which an acoustic “paradigm” may be applied, urban women’s domestic spaces may offer a unique appearance from this perspective.⁶⁹ The screens (*kafes* in Turkish, *mashrabiyya* in Arabic) that gave residents privacy in the dense street fabric of Middle Eastern cities allowed residents to hear everything on the street below, from street peddlers’ cries to the conversations of men. Houses were constructed of wood, plaster, and other light materials; they were far from sound proof.⁷⁰ Little auditory privacy existed, and neighbors easily communicated from window to window without visually revealing themselves. Among many others awaiting study, this is just one tantalizing instance of acoustic communication that extended women’s reach beyond visually bounded space and that will allow further conceptual experimentation necessary for refining categories of male/female, private/public space and the ways in which they relate to each other.⁷¹

NOTES

¹I begin with Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, since the essay was based on her lectures at Girton and Newnham Colleges in Cambridge, UK, and since this article is based on a presentation at the conference “The Ottoman Woman: A Comparative Perspective,” Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies, Newnham College. I thank Kate Fleet and Ebru Boyar for creating a most congenial and productive atmosphere. The article greatly benefited from participants’ comments, as well as comments by Murat Ergin, Lucienne Thys-Senocak, and the anonymous reviewers. Any remaining mistakes are my own. Writing coincided with my post-doctoral fellowship at the Kunsthistorische Institut Florenz, whose support I gratefully acknowledge.

²A rare exception is Carolyn Valone, “The Art of Hearing: Sermons and Images in the Chapel of Lucrezia della Rovere,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31 (Fall 2000): 753–77.

³See Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur’an* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2001); Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur’an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland: White Cloud, 1999); and Navid Kermani, *Gott ist schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (Munich: Beck, 2000). On poetry and songs by women, see Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qattan Bezirgan, eds., *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).

⁴The term “space” here means a material entity as perceived and bounded by human sensory experience, and a physical container of social practices constitutive of gender relations. On “space” in feminist scholarship, see Jane Rendell, “Gender Space,” in *Gender Space Architecture*, eds. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (London: Routledge, 2000), 101–11.

⁵On gender segregation from historical, anthropological, and textual perspectives, see Leila Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); and Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an: Traditions and Interpretations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶I am indebted to Nur Sobers-Khan for suggesting to consider *avret*.

⁷The Arabic *'awra* means "defectiveness," but also "genitals." Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 4th enl. and rev. ed. (Ithaca: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 769. On *avret* in the Qur'an, see El Guindi, *Veil*, 140–43. See also James Redhouse, *Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: Sev, 1997), 98.

⁸All Qur'anic quotes are from *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, transl. and ed. 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali (Beltsville: Amana, 2001).

⁹*Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 2, book 22, no. 295, 296, accessed 15 July 2012, <http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/hadith/bukhari/>.

¹⁰Şemseddin Ahmed Kemalpaşazade, *Fetava*, Süleymaniye Library, MS. Dar ül-Mesnevi 118, fol. 79a.

¹¹Redhouse, *Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary*, 789.

¹²Ertuğrul Düzdağ, Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi *Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun, 1983), 56. Translation by Leslie Peirce, "'The Law Shall not Languish': Social Class and Public Conduct in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Legal Discourse," in *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female "Public" Space in Islamic/Iate Societies*, ed. Asma Afsaruddin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 140–158, quoted on 142.

¹³On the harem in Orientalist imagination, see Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East* (London: Verso, 1998), 123–65; and Irvin Cemil Schick, *The Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse* (London: Verso, 1999).

¹⁴On royal women's private palaces, see Tülay Artan, "The Kadirga Palace: An Architectural Reconstruction," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 201–11; and idem, "The Kadirga Palace Shrouded by the Mists of Time," *Turcica* 21 (1994): 55–124.

¹⁵Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 122.

¹⁶On the Old Palace, see Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 3–4, *passim*; see also Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 119–25.

¹⁷For an introduction, see Ayşe Ezgi Dikici, "Obscure Roots, Solid Foundations: A Comparative Study on the Architectural Patronage of Ottoman Court Eunuchs" (MA thesis, Koç University, Istanbul, 2009); for a biography, see Jane Hathaway, *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (London: One-world, 2005).

¹⁸Here I treat this court office as a monolithic institution, although it clearly evolved over the centuries. See Baki Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness: The Politics of 'Race' in the Early-Seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire in the Light of the Life and Work of Mullah Ali," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13 (Spring 2007): 73-95, quoted on 78; Yıldız Karakoç, "Palace Politics and the Rise of the Chief Black Eunuch in the Ottoman Empire" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2005); and İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1945), 181-83.

¹⁹For a study of eunuch-guardians of the Prophet's tomb, which also touches upon the notion of boundaries, see Shaun Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

²⁰Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 136. On female harem staff, see Maria Pia Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," *Turcica* 32 (2000): 23-24; Baki Tezcan, "Eunuchs," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia* vol. 1, ed. Josef Meri (London: Routledge, 2006), 241-242, quoted on 242.

²¹The "classic" study on this topic is J.H. Mordtmann, "Die jüdischen Kira im Serai der Sultane," *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 32 (1929): 1-38. Unfortunately, this publication was not available to me.

²²On harem women as diplomatic contacts according to Venetian sources, see Pedani, "Safiye's Household."

²³For such correspondence, see Susan Skilliter, "The Letters of the Venetian 'Sultana' Nur Banu and her Kira to Venice," in *Studia Turcologica Memoriae Alexii Bombaci Dicata*, ed. A. Gallotta and U. Marazzi (Naples: Herder, 1982), 515-36; and idem, "Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Safiye to Queen Elizabeth I," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. S. M. Stern (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 119-57.

²⁴Quoted in Skilliter, "Three Letters," 148.

²⁵Ülkü Bates, "Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey," in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 245-60; idem, "The Architectural Patronage of Ottoman Women," *Asian Art* 6 (1993): 50-65; Leslie Peirce, "Shifting Boundaries: Images of Ottoman Royal Women in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Critical Matrix* 4 (1988): 43-82; idem, *Imperial Harem*; idem, "Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order: The Vocabulary of Gender in Early Modern Ottoman Society," in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Madeline Zilfi (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 169-96; idem, "The Law Shall not Languish"; idem, "Gender and Sexual Propriety in Ottoman Royal Women's Patronage," in *Women, Patronage and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 53-68; Madeline Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Lucienne Thys-Senocak, "The Yeni Valide Mosque Complex at Eminönü," *Muqarnas* 15 (1998): 58-70; idem, "The Yeni Valide Mosque Complex of Eminönü, Istanbul (1597-1665): Gender and Vision in Ottoman Architecture," in *Women, Patronage and Self-Representation*, 69-90; idem, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan*

(Burlington: Ashgate, 2006); idem, "Space: Architecture, the Ottoman Empire," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, Suad Joseph (Leiden: Brill, 2007), vol. 4:514–18; and idem, "The Gendered City," in *The City in the Islamic World*, ed. Selma Jayyusi (Leiden: Brill, 2008), vol. 2: 877–93.

²⁶Thys-Şenocak, "Yeni Valide Mosque Complex (1597-1665)," 80–85.

²⁷Italics mine. Gavin Hambly, "Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage and Piety*, ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 3–27; D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Vision and Power: An Introduction," in *Women, Patronage and Self-Representation*, 1–16.

²⁸Italics mine. Yvonne Seng, "Invisible Women: Residents of Early Sixteenth-Century Istanbul," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, 241–68; Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Women and the Public Eye in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, 301–324; Lucienne Thys-Şenocak, "Yeni Valide Mosque Complex (1597–1665)."

²⁹David Howes, ed., *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993); David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); and David Howes, ed., *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2005). Historians have also begun to examine acoustic dimensions. For an overview, see Mark M. Smith, ed., *Hearing History: A Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

³⁰See Thys-Şenocak, "Gendered City," 883.

³¹On church bells creating acoustic communities, see Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

³²Mehmed Hemdemi Çelebi Solakzade, *Solakzade Tarihi*, ed. Vahid Çabuk (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1989), vol. 1:364.

³³Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 20.

³⁴For a detailed account of the renovations, see Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 165–175.

³⁵Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 175.

³⁶On Nurbanu, see Peirce, *Imperial Harem*; Pınar Kayaalp-Aktan, "The Atik Valide Complex: A Testament of Nurbanu's Prestige, Power and Piety" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2005).

³⁷On sound maps, see R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977), 264–67.

³⁸Mustafa Naima, *Tarih-i Naima: Ravzat ül-Hüseyn fi Hulasat-i Ahbar el-Hafikayn* (Istanbul: Matbaa-yi Amire, 1281–83 [1864–66]), vol. 4:395; see also Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 251–252; Katip Çelebi, *Fezleke-i Tenvarih* (Istanbul: Ceride-i Hevadis Matbaası, 1286–87 [1869–1870]), vol. 2:329; see also Thys-Şenocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, 26.

³⁹On imperial processions, see Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28–41.

⁴⁰Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 192; and Boyar and Fleet, *Ottoman Istanbul*, 31.

⁴¹On Murad III's reign, see Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), vol. 1:100–432.

⁴²On a 1668 procession, see Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Nouvelle Relation de l'Interieur du Serrail de Grand Seigneur contenant plusieurs singularitez qui jusqu'icy n'ont pas esté mises en lumiere* (Paris: Chez Gervais Clouzier, 1681), 158–61. For further eyewitness accounts, see Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 193–98.

⁴³Selaniki, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, vol. 2:826–27. Translation by Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 197.

⁴⁴In the French rendition, *Corkma oğlangiklar*. Antoine Galland, *Journal d'Antoine Galland pendant son séjour à Constantinople (1672–1673)* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1881), vol. 2:72.

⁴⁵One may argue that elite men were also visually absent from public space, like Sultan Mehmed II behind the window in the council hall; still, elite men were expected to show themselves on symbolically significant occasions.

⁴⁶Nina Ergin, "The Soundscape of Sixteenth-Century Istanbul Mosques: Architecture and Qur'an Recital," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67 (2008): 204–221, quoted on 208.

⁴⁷On recitation programs propagating mosque patrons' personal messages, see Nina Ergin, "A Multi-Sensorial Message of the Divine and the Personal: Qur'anic Inscriptions and Recitation in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Mosques," in *Calligraphy and Architecture in the Muslim World*, ed. Mohammad Gharipour and Irvin Cemil Schick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 105–118. On discernible connections between patrons' status and recitation programs, see idem, "A Sound Status among the Ottoman Elite: Architectural Patrons of Sixteenth-Century Istanbul Mosques and their Recitation Programs," *Music, Sound and Architecture in Islam*, ed. Michael Frishkopf and Federico Spinetti (forthcoming).

⁴⁸Due to word-count limitations, one example must suffice here, but many more Ottoman mosques sponsored by female patrons (and their recitation programs) await study.

⁴⁹On the complex, see Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 280–92; Kayaalp-Aktan, "Atik Valide Complex."

⁵⁰Ergin, "Soundscape."

⁵¹Versions of the document are in the General Directorate of Endowments' archives (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*), Ankara; here I use D. 1766. On other versions, see Kayaalp-Aktan, "Atik Valide Complex." For a table of reciters, see Ergin, "Soundscape," 211.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 208, Table 3.

⁵³Ergin, "Multi-Sensorial Message."

⁵⁴On Nurbanu's biography, see Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 92.

⁵⁵See Pinar Kayaalp-Aktan, "The Endowment Deed of the Atik Valide Mosque Complex: A Textual Analysis," in *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Nina Ergin, Christoph Neumann, and Amy Singer (Istanbul: Eren, 2007), 261–73.

⁵⁶Cf. Kayaalp-Aktan, "Endowment Deed," 266–69.

⁵⁷Female mosque patrons could also manipulate the auditory environment by hand-picking preachers (*vaiz*). For Hadice Turhan Sultan hiring the fundamentalist Vani Efendi, see Thys-Şenocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, 201.

⁵⁸Abraham Marcus, "Privacy in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo: The Limits of Cultural Ideals," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18 (1986): 165–83.

⁵⁹Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City: Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 155–76.

⁶⁰Peirce, *Imperial Harem*; Dina Rizk Khoury, "Slippers at the Entrance or Behind Closed Doors: Domestic and Public Spaces for Mosuli Women," in *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, 105–27; Margaret Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770–1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

⁶¹Peirce, "Seniority."

⁶²Leonore Davidoff, "Gender and the 'Great Divide': Public and Private in British Gender History"; Sandra Lauderdale Graham, "Making the Private Public: A Brazilian Perspective"; Carole Turbin, "Refashioning the Concept of Public/Private: Lessons from Dress Studies"; Elizabeth Thompson, "Public and Private in Middle Eastern Women's History"; *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (2003); and Mary P. Ryan, "The Public and the Private Good: Across the Great Divide in Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 2 (2003), 24.

⁶³Abu-Lughod, "Islamic City," 167.

⁶⁴I am indebted to Will Smiley for drawing this point to my attention.

⁶⁵C. G. Fisher and A. Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 10 (1985), 56.

⁶⁶Did harem women perform music such that non-related men could hear their voices? I am not aware of textual sources describing such an event, but min-

ature paintings do show female musicians. See Nancy Micklewright, "'Musicians and Dancing Girls': Images of Women in Ottoman Miniature Painting," in *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, 153–68. In the nineteenth-century Dolmabahçe Palace, harem women performed music in a room that allowed for acoustic permeability; the harem women sent a prepubescent girl to the men's section to inquire what the guests thought of their performance. See Leyla Saz, *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans: Daily Life at the Çiragan Palace during the 19th Century: Memoirs of Leyla (Saz) Hanimefendi* (Istanbul: Peva, 1995). I thank Suraiya Faroqhi for this reference.

⁶⁷Peirce, "The Law Shall not Languish," 148.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 149.

⁶⁹This dimension has been marginally addressed in previous studies. Marcus writes about Aleppo: "Face-to-face encounters with neighbors were frequent and unavoidable; activities and conversations in the domestic courtyards, especially in the small houses, could be overheard by neighbors and passers-by." Marcus, "Privacy," 176. Minna Rozen devotes a few sentences to auditory privacy in her "Public Space and Private Space: Among the Jews of Istanbul in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Turcica* 30 (1998): 331–346, quoted on 344.

⁷⁰See Stéphane Yérasimos, "Dwellings in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul," in *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph Neumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), 275–300.

⁷¹A significant contribution towards such refinement is Marilyn Booth, ed., *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Unfortunately I became aware of it too late to incorporate it in this essay.