



Reorienting Orientalism: Ottoman Historiography and the Representation of Seventeenth-Century French Travelogues

Oryantalizme Yeniden Yön Vermek: Osmanlı Tarihyazımı ve On Yedinci Yüzyıl Fransız Seyahatnamelerinin Tasvirleri

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary discourse on orientalism has stigmatized early modern European travelogues, leading many scholars to reject them as viable sources of Ottoman history. Yet on closer examination, the orientalist biases associated with these works come primarily from nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, who misinterpreted and manipulated them, rather than from the sources themselves. This study investigates how and why subsequent scholarship misrepresented seventeenth-century French travelogues on the Ottoman Empire. It argues that these accounts constitute a valuable and underutilized resource for historians.

Keywords: Travel, Travel literature, Europe, Historiography

ÖZ

Oryantalizme dair çağdaş söylem erken modern Avrupalı seyahatçileri lekelemiş ve bu yüzden birçok bilim insanı Osmanlı tarihinin tutarlı kaynakları olarak kendilerini göz ardı etmiştir. Bununla birlikte, daha yakından incelendiğinde, söz konusu çalışmalara yönelik yanlı tutumun, eserlerin kendisinden ziyade bunları yanlı yorumlamış ve manipüle etmiş 19 ve 20. yüzyıl bilim insanlarından kaynaklandığı görülmüştür. Bu çalışma sonraki bilimsel çalışmaların Osmanlı İmparatorluğu üzerine kaleme alınmış 17. yüzyıl Fransız seyahatnamelerini neden ve nasıl yanlı sunduğunu incelemekte ve bu anlatıların tarihçiler için değerli ve iyi kullanılmamış kaynaklar olduğunu öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Seyahat, seyahatnameler, Avrupa, tarih yazıcılığı



France enjoyed particularly close political, economic and cultural ties with the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century. In this context, a number of French citizens spent time in Ottoman society and documented their experiences in detailed travel accounts. Prior to the late twentieth century, these travelogues furnished an important source base for Western scholars of early modern European and Ottoman history. Contemporary scholars, however, largely misrepresent, avoid or ignore these sources. The reason for this shift has much to do with Orientalism – both the phenomenon itself and the publication of Edward Said’s classic work.¹ Orientalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries revived these works in liberal interpretations that reflected their own cultural biases. They also neglected to sufficiently contextualize such accounts or pair them with Ottoman sources. As a result, seventeenth-century French travelogues were used to support and perpetuate arguments about the weakness and inferiority of the Ottoman Empire, even though the original sources provided little to no basis for such arguments. The appearance of Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978, subsequent discourse surrounding this work, and the reorganization of the Ottoman archives since 1989 have together helped Ottomanists to identify and eradicate the vestiges of Orientalism. At the same time, the field remains wary of early modern European travelogues due to their association with this problematic tradition. Yet a comparison of such sources with the grand narratives they ostensibly inspired shows that the Orientalist biases associated with seventeenth-century French travelogues come primarily from the scholars who manipulated them, rather than from the sources themselves. This study seeks to disentangle the accounts of seventeenth-century French travelers to the Ottoman Empire from their representation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship.² It examines how and why these sources have been misinterpreted over time, and it argues that they remain an undervalued resource for scholars of Ottoman history.

A wide variety of French citizens visited the Ottoman Empire during the seventeenth century. Most travelogues from this period were the works of diplomats and merchants, but captives, pilgrims and leisure travelers also contributed to this literature.³ The experiences and

1 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978 (Said, *Orientalism*).

2 This study focuses on the accounts of seventeenth-century French travelers, who tended to be more cosmopolitan and less biased toward Ottoman society than their contemporaries in other European countries and than later European travelers, likely due to France’s relatively strong diplomatic and economic ties with the Ottoman empire at the time. As I show here, however, such geographic and temporal distinctions are often overlooked by modern scholars.

3 Prominent examples of this literature include: Jean Chardin, *Journal du voyage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes Orientales, par la Mer Noire & par la Colchide qui contient le voyage de Paris à Ispahan*, London 1686 (Chardin, *Journal du voyage*); Laurent d’Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d’Arvieux*, Paris 1735 (D’Arvieux, *Mémoires*); Laurent d’Arvieux, *Voyage dans la Palestine, vers le grand emir, chef des princes arabes du désert, connus sous le nom de Bedouins*, Amsterdam 1718; Antoine Galland, *Journal d’Antoine Galland pendant son séjour à Constantinople*, Paris 1881; Antoine Galland, *Voyage à Constantinople, 1672-1673*, présentée et annotée par Charles Schefer, Paris 2002; Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, *Relation nouvelle d’un voyage de Constantinople*, Paris 1680; Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier, en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes, pendant l’espace de quarante ans*, Paris 1679; Jean de Thévenot, *Relation d’un voyage fait au Levant*, Paris 1664 (Thévenot, *Relation*); and Jean de Thévenot, *Voyages de M. de Thevenot en Europe, Asie, & Afrique, divisez en trois parties*, troisième ed., Amsterdam 1727.

impressions of French travelers varied significantly according to their occupation, individual means, personality and interests, the length of their voyage, and when they visited the empire. These were not exclusively elite travelers; they hailed from a range of backgrounds and served in a variety of roles. In most cases, those who chose to publish accounts of their travels had spent considerable time in Ottoman society, making them more than mere tourists.

The Chevalier Laurent d'Arvieux and Antoine Galland, two of the most prolific seventeenth-century travelers, illustrate the breadth of French travelers' backgrounds as well as the depth of their encounter with Ottoman society. D'Arvieux hailed from a noble family of limited means, and he initially arrived in the Ottoman port of Smyrna (Izmir) to pursue commerce. After becoming proficient in regional languages and Ottoman culture, he served as an advisor to the French ambassador in Istanbul and later as French consul in Aleppo. He ultimately spent over thirty years in the Ottoman Empire and published a series of works recounting his voyage as well as various translations and dictionaries of Near Eastern languages. His reflections on Ottoman society are warm, insightful and extremely detailed. He grew particularly fond of the Bedouin, with whom he spent considerable time. At one point, he boasted of being mistaken for "a veritable Bedouin," and he praised Arabs as "the best people in the world."⁴

His contemporary and associate Antoine Galland hailed from more humble origins. His aptitude for languages originally supplied his passport to Istanbul, when he was hired as secretary to French Ambassador Nointel at the age of twenty-four. Like d'Arvieux, Galland's experience in the Ottoman Empire spanned multiple decades and involved a number of voyages and roles. Galland's work is also very complimentary of Ottoman society, but it exudes a different flavor than that of his compatriot. Galland was particularly interested in Ottoman literary culture and spent much of his spare time acquiring rare books, some of which he later translated. He is best known for providing the first French translation of *The Arabian Nights*, making it available to a European audience. Other notable French travel writers on the Ottoman Empire and Islamic world in the seventeenth century include Jean de Thévenot, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, François Bernier, Jean Chardin, Jean du Mont, Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, and Michel Baudier. In general, these travelers exhibited an impressive degree of intercultural competence and cosmopolitanism. They portrayed Ottoman society in a rich and sympathetic light and actively contested common French stereotypes about Ottoman culture, religion and administration.

In the nineteenth century, when Europe again enjoyed a close but less reciprocal relationship with the Near East, seventeenth-century French travelogues were picked up by Western European scholars hungry for information that would inform and support

4 Quoted in Deirdre Pettet, "A Veritable Bedouin," in *Distant Lands and Diverse Cultures*, edited by Glenn J. Ames and Ronald S. Love, Westport 2003, pp. 22, 23 (Pettet, "A Veritable Bedouin"). Translation is Pettet's.

imperialist ventures. Such self-described “Orientalists” revived this literature in biographies, translations and commentaries, and integrated it into the systematized version of Ottoman history now termed “Orientalism.”⁵ In the Ottoman case, this narrative generally comprised negative stereotypes about Ottoman culture, society and religion; the assumption that Ottoman administration was corrupt, despotic and weak; and the strict differentiation of East and West, suggesting that Europeans had little to gain from their neighbor to the southeast. Moreover, in the nineteenth century – and indeed for most of the twentieth – scholars typically divided Ottoman history into three periods: expansion, consolidation and decline. According to this periodization, the empire sputtered into gradual, continuous decline after 1566, when the death of Sultan Suleiman I “the Magnificent” brought an end to its “Golden Age.” This Orientalist version of Ottoman history, however, is not supported by seventeenth-century French travelogues or by Ottoman sources, and it contradicts key developments of the time. The *Turquerie* movement, which characterized France’s shifting relationship with the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, did not represent a derogatory, belittling attitude toward a weakening state, but rather a shift from ignorance and fear to interest, awareness, engagement and enchantment. Likewise, the maintenance of diplomatic and economic agreements between the two powers during this period indicates that France continued to view the Sublime Porte with respect, as a worthy partner.

Most of the scholarship responsible for generating and perpetuating the decline paradigm, along with other misrepresentations of Ottoman history, appeared before the formal opening of the Ottoman archives in the 1989.⁶ Before that date, most Ottomanists drew heavily on European sources simply because they had limited access to Ottoman documents. Yet their use of European sources does not explain or excuse certain weaknesses in this literature. Seventeenth-century French travelers provided a wealth of information about the Ottoman Empire for modern Western scholars. The latter, however, added their own cultural biases

5 Key nineteenth-century French Orientalists included Silvestre de Sacy, his student William de Slane, and Joseph de Hammer, among others. For a general description of the Orientalist renaissance in European literature, see Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 67-69. The practice of reviving seventeenth-century French travel literature has remained popular in modern scholarship. In addition to the works discussed here, see for example Glenn J. Ames and Ronald S. Love, eds., *Distant Lands and Diverse Cultures: The French Experience in Asia, 1600-1700*, Westport 2003; Carl Göllner and Martin Luther, *Chronica und Beschreibung der Türkei*, Köln 1983; Leleh Labib- Rahman, “Sir Jean Chardin, the Great Traveller (1643-1712/3),” *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* XXIII, no. 5 (1981), pp. 309-318; Michele Longino, *French Travel Writing in the Ottoman Empire: Marseilles to Constantinople, 1650-1700*, New York 2015; Vanezia Parlea, “Un Franc parmi les Arabes”: *Parcours oriental et découverte de l’Autre chez le chevalier d’Arvieux*, Grenoble 2015; Albert Vandal, *L’odyssée d’un ambassadeur: Les voyages du marquis de Nointel (1670-1680)*, Paris 1900 (Vandal, *L’odyssée d’un ambassadeur*); and Stephane Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs dans l’Empire ottoman XVI^e - XVII^e siècles: bibliographie, itinéraires et inventaire des lieux habités*, Ankara 1991.

6 Heath W. Lowry, “The Reorganization of the Ottoman Archives,” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 13, no. 2 (1989), pp. 107- 111.

and preconceptions to such sources, reframing perceptive and relatively accurate descriptions of Ottoman society within the master narratives of Orientalism.

Contemporary historians have made progress in addressing the inconsistencies of their Orientalist predecessors, but these efforts are uneven and incomplete. Revisions in Ottoman history also await acknowledgement and acceptance within other subfields. Notably, limited interaction between historians of Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire means that outdated scholarship continues to influence Europeanists, perpetuating an anachronistic understanding of Ottoman history. Both Western European and Ottoman historiographies suffer from this lack of inter-communication. Because the Western European framework neglects the Ottoman side of affairs and Ottomanists tend to respond in kind, subjects relevant to both are often overlooked. For example, communication, diplomacy and cultural ties between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire tend to fall into the cracks along with other points of contact between these geographical subfields. Hence, the longstanding Franco-Ottoman alliance is often ignored or sidelined in the history of France as well as that of the Ottoman Empire, and historians on both sides tend to downplay or oversimplify the impact of Ottoman culture on France. Scholars have begun to address these issues, but much work remains to be done.⁷

In addition, historiography has so far failed to exhume satisfactorily the identities of early modern French travelers, explain their motivations and interests, and locate them within broader cultural, geographical and historical contexts. Meanwhile, the vestiges of Orientalism continue to haunt contemporary scholarship, leading historians inadequately versed in this “archeology of knowledge” to adopt and perpetuate archaic narratives.⁸ In particular, contemporary scholars often read seventeenth-century French travelogues through an Orientalist lens, rather than focusing on or engaging the sources themselves.⁹ This paper

7 For Franco-Ottoman relations, see for example Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and H. Batu, *L'Empire Ottoman, la République de Turquie et la France*, Istanbul 1986; Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 1987 (Göçek, *East Encounters West*); Dorothy M. Vaughan, *Europe and the Turk: A pattern of Alliances, 1350-1700*. Liverpool 1954; and Nicolas Vatin, *Les ottomans et l'occident (XVe-XVIIe siècles)*, Istanbul 2001. For recent studies of the impact of Ottoman culture on France, see for example Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime*, Oxford 2008; Alexander Bevilacqua and Helen Pfeifer, “Turquerie: Culture in Motion, 1650-1750,” *Past & Present*, no. 221 (2013), pp. 75-118; Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, Oxford 2009; Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski, *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2010 (Hosford and Wojtkowski, *French Orientalism*); Marcus Keller, “The Turk of Early Modern France,” in *L'Esprit Créateur* 53, no. 4 (2013), pp. 1-8; Marcus Keller and Javier Irigoyen-García, *The Dialectics of Orientalism in Early Modern Europe*, London 2018 (Keller and Irigoyen-García, *Dialectics of Orientalism*); E. C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760*, Chicago 2013.

8 The term “archeology of knowledge” is Foucault's. See Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris 1969.

9 This tendency is particularly pronounced among French, British, and American scholars, who consequently form the principle target of this study.

represents a tentative attempt to address such problems. The first section connects Said's conception of Orientalism to seventeenth-century French society. The second section exposes common misrepresentations of seventeenth-century French travelogues – and Ottoman history – by Orientalist scholars. The final section shows how this system of misinformation continues to impact the field of history today.

Orientalism and French Society

Orientalist influences on contemporary scholarly perceptions of seventeenth-century French travelogues owe much to two key factors: the Ottoman image in early modern Europe and, somewhat paradoxically, Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In his ground-breaking work, Said chronicles a process, beginning with the European Enlightenment, of constructing and systematizing Western European conceptions of the "Orient." European scholars used this monolithic term well into the twentieth century to refer to the vast range of cultures lying between Europe and the Pacific Ocean, including the Ottoman Empire, Persia, India and China. The study of this region was termed "Orientalism" and its students, "Orientalists." The principal qualifications for this title comprised linguistic skill and membership among the European educated elite, to which analytical abilities, knowledge of history and firsthand experience were secondary.

In *Orientalism*, Said argues that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries marked the beginning of the development of the West's systematized conception and containment of the "Orient," which eventually bred full-scale Orientalism in the nineteenth century. Western European stereotypes about the Ottomans were actually well in place before the seventeenth century, but they continued to develop during this period alongside the changing relationship between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire. As Europeans gained knowledge about the Ottomans and as the empire's perceived threat to Europe declined, images of the "bloody and cruell Turke" began give way to more sympathetic characterizations in popular Western European culture.¹⁰ In general, European stereotypes trivialized, exaggerated and even invented elements of Ottoman society. Likewise, seventeenth-century Western Europeans displayed an avid but selective interest in the Ottoman Empire, tending to focus on its most exotic, romantic aspects. Popular subjects included Turkish dress, Turkish baths – including the nefarious practices rumored to occur there – and the "Seraglio," which inaccurately came to be associated with the Sultan's harem.¹¹

10 C. A. Patrides, "'The Bloody and Cruell Turke': The Background of a Renaissance Commonplace," *The Renaissance Society of America* 10 (1963), pp. 126-135; Eve R. Meyer, "Turquerie and Eighteenth-Century Music," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7, no. 4 (1974), p. 481 (Meyer, "Turquerie and Eighteenth-Century Music").

11 For an explanation of this process of redefinition, see Thévenot, *Relation*, p. 43.

French travelers to the Ottoman Empire were forced to navigate this array of stereotypes and preconceptions in interpreting their experience, and their works demonstrate a complex relationship toward the dominant views of their compatriots. On one hand, they sought to exonerate the Ottomans and to disabuse their European audience of offensive misconceptions. On the other hand, the desire to achieve publication and extensive readership of their works, in addition to their own biases, encouraged them to cater to their audience's interests and beliefs. Amanda Eurich has identified this tension between actual observation and the attempt to satisfy popular demand in the work of Jean Chardin.¹² As Eurich explains, Chardin's "desire to offer a critical eyewitness account of his travels" was mitigated by "the temptation to satisfy the expectations of European elites, steeped in classical historiographical tradition and the wonderbooks of the Middle Ages."¹³ Yet, while travelogues were influenced by current European perceptions, they were also distinct. In "Turquerie and Eighteenth-Century Music," Eve Meyer elucidates the difference between French traveler's experiences and the stylized image of the Ottomans in France in the realm of music. She explains, "Transcriptions of Turkish music and descriptions of performance practices were available in the various travel books; however, eighteenth-century composers were not yet concerned with ethnomusicology."¹⁴ Instead, composers commonly transposed authentic Turkish music into typified Oriental motifs.

Despite this and other manifest distinctions between the representation of Ottoman society in seventeenth-century French travelogues and the Ottoman image in seventeenth-century French society, modern scholarship often confounds the two. Nineteenth-century Western scholars began the trend of blurring the lines between early modern French travelers and French society when they interpreted early modern travel accounts in ways that aligned with their preconceptions and beliefs. While Orientalists have long since entered their historiographical grave, their amalgamation of these two distinct perspectives continues to plague the field of history. Indeed, even some of the greatest critics of Orientalism – including Said himself – have unwittingly accepted its legacy through their assumption that seventeenth-century French travelers' perspectives on the Ottoman Empire reflected the dominant views of seventeenth-century French society and, more broadly, Europeans.

The publication of Said's *Orientalism* expedited the demise of Orientalist narratives and spurred the necessary reexamination and revision of Ottoman scholarship. At the same time, the discourse it generated has unnecessarily and inappropriately stigmatized early modern

12 Amanda S. Eurich, "Secrets of the Seraglio: Harem Politics and the Rhetoric of Imperialism in the *Travels* of Sir Jean Chardin," in *Distant Lands and Diverse Cultures*, edited by Glenn J. Ames and Ronald S. Love, Westport 2003, pp. 47-70 (Eurich, "Secrets of the Seraglio"). See also Chardin, *Journal du voyage*.

13 Eurich, "Secrets of the Seraglio," p. 50.

14 Meyer, "Turquerie and Eighteenth-Century Music," p. 483.

French travel literature.¹⁵ The appearance of Said's magnum opus instantly associated the title with an antiquated tradition of Western insularity and prejudice, transforming it into an explosive, pejorative term that Middle East historian Nikki Keddi has described as "a generalized swear- word."¹⁶ Thus, self-proclaimed "Orientalists," whose number already had begun to decline after World War II, have now all but ceased to exist.¹⁷

Said defines Orientalism broadly "as a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient."¹⁸ As he points out, Orientalism is largely a definition in terms of an outgroup or "Other," epitomized in the claim by Lord Cromer, who administered British Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that "the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European."¹⁹ This perceived East/West dichotomy is represented in contrasts between Western strength and Eastern weakness, Western order and Eastern passion, Western democracy and Oriental despotism, and other divisions.²⁰ Through this process of definition, Orientalism was schematized, becoming "a system of moral and epistemological rigor," in other words, a "science."²¹ This system, notes Said, "imposed limits upon thought about the Orient."²² Said classifies these restrictions:

The limitations of Orientalism are ... the limitations that follow upon disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region. But Orientalism has taken a further step than that: it views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West.²³

As this passage suggests, Orientalists adopted a monolithic approach to their subject's history and culture. By assuming a single identity for the entire territory of the East throughout history, Europeans solved the problem of containing and explaining something great, varied, complex and constantly changing. Orientalists used the same stereotypes, myths and exoticism to describe Istanbul, Beijing and Bombay because, in their view, "Orientals were almost everywhere nearly the same."²⁴

15 Discourse and debate surrounding Said's *Orientalism* continues to this day, over forty years after its appearance. For recent contributions, see for example Hosford and Wojtkowski, *French Orientalism*; Keller and Irigoyen-García, *Dialectics of Orientalism*; and Wael B. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge*, New York 2018.

16 Nikki R. Keddie, *Women in the Middle East*, Princeton 2006.

17 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 53.

18 Said, *ibid*, p. 95.

19 Said, *ibid*, p. 39.

20 Said, *ibid*, pp. 32, 45, 187.

21 Said, *ibid*, pp. 67, 191.

22 Said, *ibid*, p. 43.

23 Said, *ibid*, p. 109.

24 Said, *ibid*, p. 38.

Although he identifies the existence of Orientalist characteristics much earlier, Said dates the appearance of systematic – and systemic – Orientalism to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, around the time of the French occupation of Egypt in 1789.²⁵ He maintains that the apex of European expansion between 1815-1914 coincided with an increase in Orientalism and that decolonization brought about its gradual decline. The principal characters in Said’s narrative appear centuries after the deaths of most seventeenth-century French travelers to the Ottoman Empire, and he correctly distinguishes early modern European travelers from the harbingers of Orientalism. While earlier travelers were able and even eager to consider themselves in an Eastern setting, according to Said, by the nineteenth-century, “to be a European in the Orient *always* involves being a consciousness set apart from, and unequal with, its surroundings.”²⁶ Yet Said does reach back far enough in history to acknowledge some seventeenth-century French travelers. His categorization of Galland as an early Orientalist, in whose work “a certain sense of superiority appears here and there,” is strained.²⁷ Said refers only to Galland’s preface to Barthelemy d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque orientale*.²⁸ He overlooks the bulk of Galland’s oeuvre regarding the Ottoman Empire and the Near East, including his multiple travelogues, though these other works offer a much clearer and more comprehensive expression of Galland’s immense knowledge and appreciation of Ottoman society. This oversight suggests that Said’s understanding of Galland may have been tainted by Orientalist scholarship, making even Orientalism’s most famous adversary a victim of its legacy.

Orientalist Interpretations of French Travelogues

Although Said’s focus is on later periods and on European perceptions of the East in general, his findings have major import for early modern Ottoman historiography and, consequently, seventeenth-century French travelogues. As much as the latter may have been free of Orientalist biases, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars who interpreted and exploited them fit neatly into Said’s model.²⁹ In this way, seventeenth-century French travelogues played a key role in the establishment of Orientalism in Ottoman historiography. This section exposes Orientalism’s impact on modern scholarship engaging French travelogues. For convenience, I use the term “Orientalist” here to identify scholars whose works exhibit Orientalist biases, even if they were not self-proclaimed Orientalists. References to seventeenth-century French travel books appear in a vast number of scholarly texts, and it would be neither possible nor productive to survey all of them here. Rather, this

25 Said, *ibid.*, p. 155.

26 Said, *ibid.*, p. 157.

27 Said, *ibid.*, p. 65.

28 Said, *ibid.*, p. 65; Barthelemy d’Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale*, Paris 1697.

29 My study focuses on twentieth-century scholarship for convenience and because these later examples provide stronger support for my claim about the persistence of Orientalist perspectives. However, the nineteenth century offers abundant examples as well.

section focuses primarily on French and British literature and examines three major areas of interest and misinterpretation: culture, administration and religion. The works engaged in this section, however, are representative of wider trends.

Ottoman culture and society are popular themes in modern studies of seventeenth-century French travelogues. In 1963, W. H. Lewis, a British historian and elder brother of author C. S. Lewis, published *Levantine Adventurer: The Travels and Missions of the Chevalier d'Arvieux, 1653-1697*.³⁰ This biography also attempts to describe Ottoman city-life in general, drawing on the accounts of other seventeenth-century French visitors and on Orientalist scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lewis accepts early modern French travel literature as an accurate source of information about Ottoman society, but he does not interpret this source accurately. Instead, he freely blends the views of his sources with his own perspective. In effect, *Levantine Adventurer* says more about Lewis and Orientalism than it does about seventeenth-century French travelogues. While Lewis claims to present a picture of early modern Ottoman society based on European travelogues, the biases and inaccuracies of his work result not from these sources but rather from an inherited Orientalist tradition.

Lewis's account includes abundant Orientalist stereotypes about Ottoman temperament. Notably, he posits common seventeenth-century French travelers' views of the "Turk" without quoting or referencing any particular source:

Frenchmen resident in the Levant in the seventeenth century are unanimous in their liking for the Turk, whilst all admit, like d'Arvieux, that he had his faults. He was very arrogant, thought his race the bravest on earth, and believed that Allah had created the world for his people's sole use; he despised education; he was a homosexual, and so far was he from concealing the fact that all his songs which were not about wine were about boys; and he was very avaricious.³¹

In contrast, Lewis supports his acknowledgement of Ottomans' positive qualities with a quote from Jean de Thévenot:

But on the other hand all agree that Turks "were good people, keeping excellently the commandment to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them ... honest, and esteeming honest men, whether Turks or Christians."³²

These two passages neatly illustrate the gulf between seventeenth-century French travelers and their Orientalist interpreters. As the latter passage suggests, d'Arvieux, Thévenot and

30 W. H. Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer: The Travels and Missions of the Chevalier D'Arvieux, 1653-1697*, New York 1962 (Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*).

31 Lewis, *ibid*, p. 26. Parts of this passage seem to be loosely based on text from d'Arvieux and Thévenot.

32 Lewis, *ibid*, pp. 26-27. Lewis quotes Thévenot, *Relation*, pp. 111-115. Notably, Lewis's translation removes Thévenot's reference to Jews, suggesting that, in Lewis's opinion, they were not "honest men."

their contemporaries worked concertedly to deconstruct the very stereotypes that Lewis attributes to their perspective.

Lewis devotes considerable attention to issues of health, sanitation and morality. His work perpetuates Orientalist stereotypes by portraying the Ottoman Empire as a haven for the plague, suggesting that it ravaged “the whole of the Levant” once every seven years.³³ According to Lewis, “Turkish fatalism refused to consider common sense precautions; Allah had sent plague for some good reason and would take it away in his own good time.”³⁴ This explanation represents a common Orientalist narrative that, in contrast to Europeans, Orientals accepted the plague as a burdensome but necessary part of life, rather than as something that could be treated and controlled. Yet references to disease and plague are notably absent from the seventeenth-century French travelogues upon which Lewis’ work is supposedly based. While issues of health and disease seem not to have bothered French visitors to the empire, such stereotypes were present back in France. For instance, due to French health concerns, the ambassador Mehmed Efendi and his retinue were quarantined for nearly fifty days upon their arrival in France in 1720, before they were declared uninfected and allowed to proceed. The experience left the ambassador extremely frustrated, but, according to his translator, he grew more tolerant when he began to realize that Western Europeans viewed the Ottoman Empire as “a country where the plague reigned every day.”³⁵ He described the quarantine in detail, drawing attention to the excessive precautions of the French given “their extreme fear of contracting the disease.”³⁶

Ottoman cleanliness was also a popular theme in Orientalist interpretations of seventeenth-century French travelogues. Lewis goes so far as to claim, “The secrets of the envied good health of the Turk were his personal cleanliness and his tranquil attitude towards life, neither of them qualities which distinguished the Frank.”³⁷ Lewis offers a lengthy description of Turkish baths based on accounts of d’Arvieux and other travelers. He notes suggestively that any nakedness “was an unpardonable offence” and to be caught in the bath during the period reserved for women “was a capital crime.”³⁸ These comments are especially remarkable in view of his earlier blanket characterization of Turks as homosexual.³⁹ Lewis further complicates his admiration for the benefits of Ottoman cleanliness by characterizing bathing restrictions as oppressive, even though early modern travelers did not necessarily agree. Referencing instead

33 Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*, p. 33.

34 Lewis, *ibid*, pp. 33-34.

35 Alî Efendi, Morali Seyyid et Seyyid Abdürrahim Muhibb Efendi, *Deux ottomans à Paris sous le Directoire et l’Empire: Relations d’ambassade, récits traduits de l’ottoman, présentés et annotés par Stéphane Yerasimos*, Arles 1998. Quoted in Göçek, *East Encounters West*, p. 21.

36 Göçek, *East Encounters West*, p. 21.

37 Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*, p. 24.

38 Lewis, *ibid*, p. 25. Lewis cites Thévenot, *Relation*, pp. 59-61.

39 Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*, p. 26. See above.

nineteenth-century English travel writer Alexander William Kinglake, he laments, “One begins to understand Kinglake’s complaint that ‘even the licentiousness generally accompanying the Turkish way of life cannot compensate for the oppressiveness of that horrible outward decorum which turns the cities and palaces of Asia into deserts and gaols.’”⁴⁰

As Lewis’s inclusion of Kinglake’s derogatory description of “Asia” suggests, Orientalist scholars frequently distorted or ignored earlier travelers’ perceptions of Ottoman administration. Their works overwhelmingly accept and perpetuate the paradigm of Ottoman decline, despite its absence from seventeenth-century French travel literature. Clarence Dana Rouillard’s *The Turk in French History, Thought, and Literature (1520-1660)* is a prime example of the resilience of this paradigm even in the face of blatant, ample evidence against it.⁴¹ First published in Paris in 1938, it represents an astute and detailed survey of early modern French documents regarding the Ottoman Empire. The text’s value is limited, however, by its promotion of a clear, simplistic model of Ottoman decline. For instance, Rouillard attributes the increase in European recreational travel to the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century to a weakening Ottoman state. In addition, the section on “the Turk in French literature,” which in other ways represents the strongest part of the book, imposes an overly strict chronology. It presents a clear progression in the attitudes of French writers on the Ottomans from formulaic demonization and hatred, to curiosity, and then to pleasant familiarity. While Rouillard’s observations are generally sound, he goes too far in his attempt to categorize and periodize French thought and perceptions. Rouillard’s teleological framework and his application of Ottoman declensionism are not supported by the travel accounts he surveys. Such elements suggest over-dependence on European sources, ignorance of Ottoman perspectives and the inheritance of Orientalism.

Misrepresentations of Ottoman administration also appear in modern scholars’ engagement of the paradigm of Oriental despotism. The modern version of this concept owes much to Karl Wittfogel’s 1957 masterwork *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*. Drawing examples from China and India as well as the medieval and early modern Islamic world, Wittfogel posited a stark distinction between “Oriental” and “Occidental” forms of absolutism.⁴² In the context of Ottoman historiography, references to despotic administration

40 Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 25. Lewis quotes Alexander William Kinglake, *Eothen*, New York 1845, p. 148.

41 Clarence Dana Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought, and Literature (1520-1660)*, Paris 1941 (Rouillard, *Turk in French History*).

42 Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, New Haven 1957. See also Franco Venturi, “Oriental Despotism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 1 (1963), pp. 133-142. For recent studies engaging this paradigm, see Tom Kaiser, “The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000), pp. 6-34 (Kaiser, “Evil Empire”); Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “Romantic Attitudes toward Oriental Despotism,” *The Journal of Modern History* 85, no. 2 (2013), pp. 280-320; and Lucette Valensi, *Venice et la Sublime Porte: La naissance du despote*, Paris 1987.

often appear in passing without explanation, revealing just how pervasive this paradigm was. For instance, W. H. Lewis describes the “distress” that Ottoman despotism inflicted on inhabitants:

Living as he did under a despotism in which even his house was his own property only for so long as it pleased the Sultan, the Turk had perforce cultivated a fatalism which showed itself in an imperturbable tranquility. In times of distress, fear or grief could be soothed with opium.⁴³

Orientalists also perpetuated this narrative by explaining away positive representations of Ottoman administration. For example, in an extensive study of seventeenth-century French travel literature published in 1924, French scholar Geoffrey Atkinson argues that Michel Baudier’s sympathetic portrayal of the Ottoman state was actually a critique of “inequality in France in 1625, and that he found a way to express these views in a book about the Turks.”⁴⁴

In addition to misrepresenting early modern Ottoman culture and administration, Orientalists severely distorted religious practices in the Ottoman Empire, again supporting their points with reference to seventeenth-century French travelers. British scholar Frederick William Hasluck’s *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, published in 1929, is a prime example of the Orientalist approach to religion in Ottoman history.⁴⁵ Hasluck’s thesis, in broad terms, is that the spiritual superiority of Christianity over Islam was evident throughout the long Ottoman reign in the Middle East. He supports this claim through contemporary scholarship as well as travel literature from various periods of Ottoman rule. The accounts of d’Arvieux and Thévenot figure prominently in his documentation, and he also incorporates an extraordinary number of sources in English, French, German and Greek, revealing extensive linguistic knowledge. Ottoman documents, however, are notably absent from his source base. Although he generally does not question the legitimacy of his sources, including travel narratives, he does liberally manipulate and interpret them.

Like many Orientalists, Hasluck presents Islam as a temporal and cultural monolith, and he indiscriminately combines sources from diverse periods and locations. For instance, he cites *Arabian Nights* together with a passage from d’Arvieux as evidence of Muslims’ “superstitious respect” for the “secular magic” of statues and reliefs.⁴⁶ The differences in time, place, and nature of these two sources do not concern Hasluck, nor does he see any problems

43 Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 25. Lewis cites Vandal, *L’odyssée d’un ambassadeur*, p. 223.

44 Geoffroy Atkinson, *Les relations de voyages du XVII^e siècle*, Paris 1924, p. 43 (Atkinson, *Relations*). Translation is mine. Atkinson cites Michel Baudier, *Histoire générale du serral, et de la covr du Grand Seignevr; empereur des Turcs*, Paris 1633 (Baudier, *Histoire générale du serral*). Atkinson makes the same argument regarding Baudier’s writing on China (Atkinson, *Relations*, p. 85).

45 Frederick William Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols., edited by Margaret M. Hasluck, Oxford 1929 (Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*).

46 Hasluck, *ibid.*, I, p. 189.

in using them to explain the present. Much of his text is devoted to religious conflict, so he deliberately cites passages that emphasize the fractious side of inter-faith interaction. His chapter “Arrested Urban Transferences” contains the section “Fatal Entry,” in which he lists cities and churches and other locations considered fatal to non-members of a religion. This section draws largely on the works of the seventeenth-century French travelers d’Arvieux and Thévenot, but he groups their information together with evidence from John Mandeville, a likely fictitious personality of the late-medieval period, and Josephus, who lived in Rome in the first century CE.⁴⁷ Hasluck quotes d’Arvieux’s claim that the first Muslims to enter a certain church that had been converted into a mosque “lost their lives; in this way, God punished their excessive curiosity.”⁴⁸ He also states that, according to another seventeenth-century French traveler, all Jews and Muslims who entered the Church of S. Thomas on Zion died “either immediately or within three days,” but his claim lacks a specific reference or quote.⁴⁹ In the same context, he cites Mandeville to support his assertion that “no Christian can live long in the Persian city of Chardabago,” and he alludes to “the inscription warning strangers away from the Temple of Herod at Jerusalem on pain of death, mentioned by Josephus.”⁵⁰ The result is a cluttered amalgam of questionable historical merit, from which emerges a picture of religious intolerance and hostility. It is not difficult to see how this and other Orientalist texts corroded the value of seventeenth-century accounts, making them appear no more legitimate or historically accurate than Mandeville’s *Travels*.

At the same time, Hasluck and other Orientalists acknowledged certain positive aspects of Ottoman faith and religious administration. Citing d’Arvieux, Hasluck explains that both Turks and Christians worshipped “side by side” in the house of Judas at Damascus because it could not be converted into a mosque.⁵¹ Hasluck’s nod toward Ottoman toleration is similar to Orientalists’ take on Islamic charity. Lewis is particularly vocal on this subject. Citing Thévenot, he explains, “The Turk’s religion obliged him to give a fortieth part of his goods to the poor, an obligation very generally recognized.”⁵² Hesitant to award the Ottomans too much credit, however, Lewis is careful to note the extraordinary nature of their altruism. He comments, “This rather surprises us when we consider how brutal were some aspects of Turkish life.”⁵³ Similarly, Hasluck is cautious not to overstate the role of charity in Ottoman society. He suggests that the Islamic practice of leaving food on tombs is associated with a “belief in a life in the grave,” though he admits, “Less credulous ages explained the custom

47 Hasluck, *ibid*, I, p. 22. See also Hasluck, *ibid*, I, pp. 75, 23.

48 D’Arvieux, *Mémoires*, II, p. 347. Quoted in Hasluck, I, pp. 25-26.

49 Hasluck, *ibid*, I, p. 23.

50 Sir John Mandeville, *The Voyages and Travels of Sir John Maundeville*, London 1899, p. 205; Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XV, 14. Cited in Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, I, p. 23. Hasluck also cites Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, Book XIV, to End*, London 1907.

51 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, I, p. 23. Hasluck cites d’Arvieux, *Mémoires*, II, p. 456.

52 Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*, p. 32. Lewis cites Thévenot, *Relation*, p. 96.

53 Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*, p. 31.

as being devised to enable the deceased to exercise a vicarious charity to men (graves being commonly on frequented roads).”⁵⁴

Likewise, Atkinson finds creative ways of explaining French travelers’ unmistakably positive references to religious practices. He generally considers sympathetic references to Islam in seventeenth-century travel literature to be veiled exhortations for Christians. His interpretation is based in part on a comment by Thévenot, who observed that the respect and devotion with which Muslims treated their faith “certainly teach us a lesson in devotion.”⁵⁵ He posits the same explanation for Baudier’s praise of Ottoman charity, “One can say truthfully that the Turks surpass all of the other peoples on earth, including the Christians, in the exercise of charity.”⁵⁶ Atkinson explains that though such criticisms appear to target Christian doctrine, they are actually designed “to critique not Christianity but impious Christians.”⁵⁷ He also finds a dubious explanation for Huguenot traveler Jean Chardin’s claim that his Eastern travels won him a greater understanding of the Bible.⁵⁸ Atkinson pointedly remarks that Chardin’s *Voyage*, published in London in 1686, would have been much less likely to appear in France.⁵⁹ For Atkinson, Chardin’s risqué comments and his relation of an Indian version of the story of Adam and Eve served only one possible purpose, “the satisfaction of his readers’ curiosity about the exotic.”⁶⁰ In this way, he casts Chardin as a sensationalist and a questionable historical source.

According to Atkinson, his own work is one of the first serious scholarly attempts to examine seventeenth-century travel literature, which was neglected for its “mediocrity” and the widespread belief that many accounts described “imaginary voyages.”⁶¹ Yet his and other Orientalists’ attempts to win more legitimacy for these sources has had the opposite effect. In this vein, Atkinson’s suggestion that French travelers’ descriptions of Islamic piety were merely attacks on impious Christians naturally might lead his readers to question such travelers’ engagement with Ottoman society – or whether they even left France. In reality, while seventeenth-century French travelers did criticize French religion, government and society, their accusations were informed by their positive experiences abroad. This context makes their accounts much more insightful and valuable than Orientalists implied or recognized.

54 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, I, p. 251.

55 Thévenot, *Relation*, p. 95. Quoted in Atkinson, *Relations*, p. 156.

56 Baudier, *Histoire générale du serrail*, p. 90. Quoted in Atkinson, *Relations*, p. 155.

57 Atkinson, *Relations*, p. 155

58 Chardin, *Journal du voyage*, Preface.

59 Atkinson, *Relations*, p. 148.

60 Atkinson, *ibid*, p. 149.

61 Atkinson, *ibid*, p. 2.

The Legacy of Orientalism

Even as contemporary scholars of European and Ottoman history have waged and won the war against Orientalism, they have inherited Orientalist interpretations of early modern European travel literature. This archaic framework has contributed to the widespread assumption that seventeenth-century French travelogues were heavily biased, stereotyped, negative and broadly representative of perspectives in Western European society. In “The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture,” Thomas Kaiser effectively sheds light on the origins of the Orientalist paradigm of Ottoman despotism. Yet he incorrectly assumes that this paradigm was promoted through travel books and that it was already endemic in seventeenth-century France. He opens his provocative essay by generalizing, “As previous scholarship has shown, the French image of the Ottoman Empire prior to 1700, notwithstanding occasional references to its efficiency and military prowess, was overwhelmingly negative.”⁶² While Orientalist sources might support this claim, it ignores the influence and perspectives of seventeenth-century French travelers as well as other developments such as the Franco-Ottoman alliance and the *Turquerie* movement. Yet Kaiser references seventeenth-century French travel accounts as evidence. He proceeds to argue that, in eighteenth-century France, the Ottoman Empire “was widely seen as the most perfect embodiment of a ‘despotism’ common to most ‘Oriental cultures,’” and he attacks “travel books” as a principal perpetrator of this image:

Ottoman Turkey was heir to all the traditional disparaging Christian tropes regarding Islamic culture – its hypocrisy, baseness, and licentiousness – which the many crusading tracts, histories, travel books, and other literature on the empire, only slightly informed by firsthand experience, endlessly repeated in their lurid narratives of cruelty, violence, ignorance, and corruption.⁶³

Kaiser cites three sources in support of this argument. One is Rouillard’s *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature*. The other two are Norman Daniel’s *Islam and the West*, published in 1960, and Robert Schwoebel’s *The Shadow of the Crescent*, published in 1967.⁶⁴ The works of Daniel and Schwoebel cover early periods outside the bounds of this study, and they share with Rouillard’s text the unmistakable traces of Orientalism. A direct examination of seventeenth-century French travel literature would have led Kaiser to different conclusions, or at least to question his assumptions. His misrepresentation of the sources shows that, even as he seeks to expose Orientalism, he has internalized its legacy.

62 Kaiser, “Evil Empire,” p. 8.

63 Kaiser, *ibid.*, p. 8.

64 Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh 1960; Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)*, New York 1967. Cited in Kaiser, “Evil Empire,” p. 8.

Kaiser is not unique in relying on Orientalist readings of travel literature. William Roosen also bypasses primary for secondary, Orientalist sources in his article, “Early modern diplomatic ceremonial: a systems approach.”⁶⁵ In particular, he references Laurent d’Arvieux for information that his notes reveal actually comes from W. H. Lewis.⁶⁶ Similarly, Deirdre Pettet, in recent study of d’Arvieux, acknowledges Lewis as a useful source without mentioning any of the weaknesses or limitations of his representation of d’Arvieux’s *Mémoires*.⁶⁷ The reliance on Orientalist literature has less dramatic consequences in these cases than in Kaiser’s article, but it remains a problematic practice.

Modern scholarship occasionally betrays the author’s unconscious absorption of Orientalist tropes even when they are not employed directly. In this vein, Sibel Bozdogan ironically evinces an Orientalist inheritance in her critique of Orientalism, “Journey to the East: Ways of Looking at the Orient and the Question of Representation.”⁶⁸ In this article, Bozdogan associates early modern travelogues with the Orientalist discourse into which they were later incorporated. Bozdogan’s main purpose “is to make a distinction between two understandings of voyage: that of the early Orientalists and that of Le Corbusier in *Voyage d’Orient*.”⁶⁹ Bozdogan’s definition of “early Orientalists,” which is never clearly defined, apparently refers to early modern European travel literature. In particular, she mentions Henry Blount’s *A Voyage into the Levant* (1636), Tavernier’s *Six Voyages* (1677), and Jean du Mont’s *A New Voyage to the Levant* (second edition, 1696).⁷⁰ Bozdogan suggests that such accounts were an integral part of what Said has called “Orientalizing the Orient,” maintaining that, for these and other European travelers, “the act of travelling itself appears as a Western attribute par excellence – an occasion of pride distinguishing the European sensibility from the Otherness of the Oriental.”⁷¹ Bozdogan’s comment suggests that she has misunderstood Said’s attack on Orientalism to encompass all past writing on Asia. References to Orientalist historiography, however, are notably absent from Bozdogan’s article, as are citations for the travelogues she targets. The only early modern traveler actually quoted is Jean du Mont. In this way, Bozdogan’s essay is weakened by ignorance of her sources and the legacy of Orientalism.

For Bozdogan, Le Corbusier’s open-mindedness constituted an extraordinary exception to French travelers’ perceptions of Ottoman society. Similarly, contemporary scholars who have studied a single text within the extensive genre of seventeenth-century French travel

65 William Roosen, “Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach,” *Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 3 (1980), pp. 452-476.

66 Roosen, *ibid.*, p. 466. Roosen cites Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer*, p. 26.

67 Pettet, “A Veritable Bedouin.”

68 Sibel Bozdogan, “Journey to the East: Ways of Looking at the Orient and the Question of Representation,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 41, no. 4 (1988), pp. 38-45.

69 Bozdogan, *ibid.*, p. 38.

70 Bozdogan, *ibid.*, p. 38.

71 Bozdogan, *ibid.*, p. 40.

literature are often struck by their source's perspicacity and insight, especially when they continue to accept Orientalist interpretations of early modern European travelogues in general. Glenn Sundeen models this type of exceptionalism in "Thévenot the Tourist."⁷² In a typical example, Sundeen exclaims, "Perhaps even more remarkable is Thévenot's rare ability to ignore the prevalent cultural religious biases of his time and to describe the Muslim Turks in what comes across as a fair and sympathetic manner."⁷³ Sundeen also differentiates Thévenot's perspective from that of other French travelers. He argues, "This understanding was in severe contrast to many of his contemporaries such as Michel Baudier, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, and Guillaume-Joseph Grelot."⁷⁴ He calls Tavernier "chatty and anecdotal" and accuses him of sensationalism, along with Michel Baudier, who "popularized glowing stereotypical stories of debauchery and cruelty in the Ottoman Empire" even though he "might not even have visited the Levant."⁷⁵ While this charge against Baudier may be true, Sundeen likely adopted it from Rouillard.⁷⁶ In general, Sundeen's characterizations imply limited familiarity with these other sources.

Although Sundeen's treatment of Thévenot is somewhat skewed, his piece correctly identifies seventeenth-century French travelers as generally more attuned and sympathetic toward Ottoman society than their English contemporaries.⁷⁷ Contemporary scholars frequently overlook such distinctions, lumping together European travelogues regardless of when or where they were produced. Thus, Dror Ze'evi's inattention to nationality undermines his argument in "Hiding Sexuality: The Disappearance of Sexual Discourse in the Late Ottoman Middle East."⁷⁸ Drawing on Said's conceptualization of Orientalism, Ze'evi chronicles the development of Ottoman sexual norms in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. He acknowledges that, prior to the nineteenth century, European descriptions of Ottoman morality were "often merely descriptive," but he also holds early modern European travelers largely responsible for growing Ottoman discomfort with sexual discourse and perceptions of sexual deviance.⁷⁹ He suggests that European travelogues cultivated a discourse of "heteronormalcy," in which certain Ottoman practices were branded as "unnatural," and that these accounts influenced Ottoman attitudes through their diffusion into Ottoman intellectual circles. Ze'evi's main focus is on late Ottoman society, and he

72 Glenn Sundeen, "Thévenot the Tourist: A Frenchman Abroad in the Ottoman Empire," in *Distant Lands and Diverse Cultures*, edited by Glenn J. Ames and Ronald S. Love, Westport 2003, pp. 1-20 (Sundeen, "Thévenot the Tourist").

73 Sundeen, *ibid.*, p. 3.

74 Sundeen, *ibid.*, p. 7.

75 Sundeen, *ibid.*, p. 7.

76 See Rouillard, *Turk in French History*, p. 251.

77 Sundeen, "Thévenot the Tourist," p. 17, note 37.

78 Dror Ze'evi, "Hiding Sexuality: The Disappearance of Sexual Discourse in the Late Ottoman Middle East," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 49, no. 2 (2005), pp. 34-53.

79 Ze'evi, *ibid.*, p. 46.

successfully demonstrates that nineteenth-century travelers and Orientalists across Europe negatively portrayed Ottoman morality and sexual practices. His support for the emergence of this trend in early modern travel literature, however, is less sound. Although he references d'Arvieux, his evidence comes primarily from a single source, the English diplomat Paul Rycout, who served as consul to Smyrna in the mid-seventeenth century.⁸⁰ This example seems somewhat cherry-picked, especially given that d'Arvieux and his fellow seventeenth-century French travelers tended to challenge European stereotypes of Ottoman exoticism, immorality and sexual deviance.

The examples provided here are not intended to disparage or single out certain works but rather to illustrate broader problematic, ongoing historiographical trends. The misrepresentation of seventeenth-century French travelogues remains all too common in contemporary Ottoman and European historiography. Even more often, however, such accounts are simply ignored or overlooked by contemporary historians. This lacuna is particularly obvious and troubling in contemporary Ottoman historiography. References to d'Arvieux, Galland, Thévenot, Tavernier, Chardin, Baudier, and other prominent seventeenth-century French travelers are conspicuously absent from both specialized studies of early modern Ottoman society as well as major surveys of Ottoman history.⁸¹ While French travelers' perspectives have significant potential to complicate and contest dominant historiographical narratives about early modern European perceptions of the "Orient," they arguably hold even greater value for Ottoman historiography. Here, they represent a rich and complementary source of insight, particularly as contemporary Ottomanists seek to move toward more nuanced and progressive areas of investigation, such as cultural and intellectual history, gender and the environment.

Conclusion: Reorienting French Travelogues

In his work, Said makes clear that Orientalism did not fully crystallize until the nineteenth century, and most seventeenth-century travelers escape his notice and critique. Scholars influenced by Said, however, have not always been so careful. Seventeenth-century French travelogues, which once stoked the flames of Orientalist master narratives, have become fuel for today's anti-Orientalism. Of course, not all modern Western scholarship reflects this trend. French historian Robert Mantran's *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle*, despite appearing in the midst of Orientalist literature in 1962, offers a refreshing departure from the common historiographical assumptions of its time and of later scholarship.⁸² Mantran achieves this distinction in part by drawing on an immense range of sources, including documents

80 Ze'evi, *ibid.*, p. 46-47.

81 See for example Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, New York 2002; Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World around It*, London 2006; and Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923*, London 2012. Galland is mentioned once in Faroqhi (Faroqhi, *ibid.*, p. 25), and Tavernier gains a single reference in Finkel (Finkel, *ibid.*, p. 216).

82 Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle*, Paris 1962.

from the archives of Istanbul, Paris and Venice; Ottoman manuscripts and chronicles; and European travel books along with numerous scholarly studies. Certain subjects in particular, such as Istanbul's art, architecture and cosmopolitan culture, rely heavily on the accounts of seventeenth-century French travelers, including Thévenot, Tournefort, Grelot and Galland. Unlike many other modern Ottomanists, Mantran openly esteems these travelers' accounts, calling their descriptions "extremely useful."⁸³ His work shows careful attention to the subtleties of his sources, and he clearly is interested in gleaning information from them, rather than fitting them into a preconceived framework, Orientalist or otherwise. A more current example of the potential value of French travelogues for Ottomanists can be found in Fariba Zarinebaf's *Mediterranean Encounters: Trade and Pluralism in Early Modern Galata*.⁸⁴ Like Mantran, Zarinebaf draws from a wide range of sources including Ottoman archival documents as well as Ottoman and European travel accounts. As she explains, "French residents like Jean Thévenot left vivid impressions of life in the new suburb of Pera," noting European travelogues' potential to illuminate otherwise obscure subjects.⁸⁵

These and other studies that have successfully engaged seventeenth-century French travel literature alongside Ottoman archival documents and other traditional sources affirm that, when used carefully and conscientiously, they represent a rich and largely untapped resource for contemporary scholars. Yet while these examples are certainly not the only modern works to use seventeenth-century French travel accounts constructively, there have been few others. The publication of *Orientalism* may have inadvertently frightened scholars away from such sources. In the wake of Said's work, the distinction between seventeenth-century French travel narratives and their Orientalist misrepresentations remains blurred in both European and Ottoman historiography. In stark contrast to the formulaic, patronizing Orientalism common in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature on early modern Ottoman history, seventeenth-century French travelogues tend to be perceptive, complementary and highly individualized. These accounts must be freed from their Orientalist association so that they can be used effectively, valued and enjoyed.

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83 Mantran, *ibid*, pp. 639, 667.

84 Fariba Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters: Trade and Pluralism in Early Modern Galata*, Oakland 2018.

85 Zarinebaf, *ibid*, p. 68.

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