

Imagining Turkish Literature: Between the French Republic of Letters and the Ottoman  
Empire

By

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## Abstract

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This study traces the emergence of the category “Turkish literature” within the French-speaking scholarly community in eighteenth-century Europe. By uncovering forgotten debates in the eighteenth century among French scholars, courtiers, and diplomats about the existence of Turkish literature, I show how the articulation of the notion of literature drew boundaries between France and the Islamic world. These debates offer insight into how competing definitions of “Turk” and “literature” conditioned whether the French Republic of Letters integrated or excluded Ottoman “men of letters.”

My analysis of French definitions of Turkish literature highlights two core themes: politeness as literature and the borderlines between French and Ottoman. In the chapter “Worthy of Crossing the Sea,” I show the fluidity of both categories in the words of Jean de Laroque. A journalist writing for the widely read *Mercure de France*, Laroque used his native Marseille as a template for his beliefs about the Muslim Ottomans, leading him to define literature as an active commerce among persons. In a series of letters published in the periodical *Mercure de France* between 1732 and 1738, Laroque emphasizes the role of the court in policing the society of men of letters. The following chapter, “People before Print” builds on this court-centered and interpersonal definition of Turkish literature, arguing that the reactions of the Parisian academic milieu to the establishment in 1727 of the first Arabic movable-type press at the Ottoman court contrasts with ongoing cultural exchanges between French and Ottoman diplomats. Rather than representing a threshold, I reveal, print was actually ancillary to the activities of the Republic of Letters. Rather, French men of letters perceived Turkish literature as the product of Ottoman elite formation and the circulation of manuscripts. These manuscripts, in turn, provided the source material for a number of translations of Oriental tales. The chapter “The Snake in the Library” examines the collections published by French Orientalists Pétis de La Croix,

Caylus, and Cardonne from 1707 to 1770. Close readings of these three authors' adaptations bring to light the representation of a "Turkish style." Over the course of the century, this style comes to replace references to Ottoman poetics with a generic and self-referential Orientalist literary corpus. Together, the analyses conducted in these three chapters demonstrates the importance of elite and court-centered practices to the integration of Islamicate culture within the Republic of Letters.

Ultimately, the findings of this dissertation contribute to two fields of study that have witnessed a resurgence of interest in recent years. First, by exhuming long buried debates about Turkish literature, I provide a more comprehensive account of the movement of Muslims and the circulation of Islamicate culture in Europe in the eighteenth century. In addition, I add my work to an emerging critique of center-periphery models of "world literature" by retracing the historical processes by which Orientalism comes to absorb Turkish literature into the French Republic of Letters.

For Usree

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER I: Introduction: What was Turkish Literature?.....	1
Definitions .....	3
Literature and politeness.....	4
Translation.....	7
Turkish Literature in the French Imagination.....	7
Articulating the debate.....	11
CHAPTER II: Worthy of Crossing the Sea: Jean de Laroque and the Turkish Republic of Letters, 1732-38 .....	14
Jean de Laroque .....	16
Commerce and Knowledge .....	17
Laroque in Paris.....	19
Reading Laroque's Turkish Literature Letters.....	21
An Overview.....	21
Text, Transaction, Translation.....	26
Sympathy, Taste, and All the Well-learned Politesse.....	29
Star (and Crescent) Academy.....	33
Discussion.....	38
CHAPTER III: People before Print: <i>Gens de Lettres</i> , the Ottoman Printing Press, and the search for Turkish Literature.....	40
Introduction.....	40
The Ottoman Printing Press and the Republic of Letters.....	41
Sofia 1738: Diplomacy and literature.....	45
Paris 1727: Initial French reactions to the Ottoman printing press.....	47
The Ottoman Press and Dreams of Europe.....	51
The Renegade.....	53
The Frenchman.....	57
Turkish Literature after Print.....	62
Education.....	63
The Seven Stars.....	67
Conclusion.....	71
CHAPTER IV: The Snake in the Library: From Turkish Manuscripts to Turkish Style in the Oriental Tale.....	72
A Tale Told by a Turk to a Turk.....	73
Two Readers.....	75
Reconstructing Turkish Style.....	76
Hiding Jesus.....	78
Caylus's Boring Stories.....	79

A Deceitful Pact.....	80
The Element of Surprise.....	83
Losing Faith.....	87
Strict Laws and Universal Passions.....	89
Universal Style.....	91
Discussion.....	94
CHAPTER V: Conclusion: A More Natural Division.....	95
Loves of Sadiki Efendi.....	95
The Case for Turkish Literature.....	98
Final Thoughts.....	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	102

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction: What was Turkish Literature?

This project traces the emergence of the category “Turkish literature” within the French-speaking scholarly community in eighteenth-century Europe. I bring to light unstudied debates about the existence and definition of Turkish literature over the course of the century, but especially in the years between 1727 and 1743, when interest in the question intensified among French scholars and diplomats. These debates reveal the fluidity of beliefs about both Turkish identity and what constitutes literature during this period. They offer insight into how competing definitions of “Turk” and “literature” conditioned whether the French Republic of Letters integrated or excluded Ottoman “men of letters.” In this dissertation, I contend that the ultimate outcome of these efforts to define Turkish literature was a counterfeit history of Turkish authorship, modeled on European modes of knowledge and artistic production. Instead of rendering a description of the literature of the Ottoman Empire, the French conceived of a literary corpus that mirrored their own practices and beliefs. This corpus comprised of, on the one hand, personal encounters between French and Ottoman subjects and, on the other hand, the serendipitous accumulation of textual objects and manuscripts that reached Paris via Istanbul. This definition of “Turkish literature” thus captures a network of exchanges cultivated between Paris and Istanbul, while at the same time replacing Turkish history with the story of French efforts to make sense of those exchanges. This story reflects belief in a universal Republic of Letters grounded in shared codes of conduct.

In making this argument, I contribute to two fields of scholarship in which there has been a resurgence of interest in recent years. First, by exhuming long buried debates about Turkish literature, I provide a more comprehensive account of the movement of Muslims and the circulation of Islamic culture in Europe in the eighteenth century. This is the focus of the two edited volumes *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*, published in 2011 and 2013. This collective work reconstitutes in all its complexities a relationship of integration and *interconnaissance* (mutual familiarity) in which the inhabitants of Europe and Morocco and the Ottoman territories participated.<sup>1</sup> Focused on early modern Europe and the Mediterranean, the collection of studies in these two volumes fills in gaps in the historical accounts of early modern Europe that had resulted in the belief that, prior to the cultural encounters of nineteenth-century colonialism, the presence of Islam in Western Europe was exceptional or non-existent.<sup>2</sup> Literature, in this project, constitutes a form of presence and familiarity that results from both material and interpersonal exchanges between French and Ottoman subjects. I show that through the definition of literature, the French Republic of Letters not only established cultural

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<sup>1</sup> See Dakhliia, J. and Vincent, B., “Introduction: Les musulmans en Europe occidentale au Moyen Âge et à l'époque moderne: une intégration invisible” in *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*, vol. I, (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011), 7-29, 13; and Jocelyne Dakhliia, “Une archéologie du même et de l'autre: Thomas-Osman d'Arcos dans la Méditerranée du XVIIe siècle,” in *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*, vol. II, 2 vols. (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013), 61-163, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Dakhliia and Vincent, “Introduction,” 9-12.

continuities but also drew the frontiers between Europe and Islam that colonialism and the rhetoric of secularism would come to exacerbate and reify.

A second contribution this study makes is to the growing scholarship on world literature. I draw connections between the universalist aspirations of the Republic of Letters in the eighteenth century and the development of the contemporary notion of world literature. Until recently, studies of world literature have drawn an unequal map of the world, in which peripheral literatures are dominated by centers of world literature, such as Paris and London. Franco Moretti, for example, writing in 2000 conceives of world literature as analogous to international capitalism in which a periphery is “intersected and altered by” a core that “completely ignores it.”<sup>3</sup> His solution to this imbalance, “distant reading,” proposes to include answers about “the great unread”<sup>4</sup> works of peripheral cultures to questions that had heretofore only been asked of European (core) literatures. Pascale Casanova, in *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), also advances a center-and-periphery model, defined as an “international literary space” organized around a center situated at the “Greenwich meridian of literature.”<sup>5</sup> Casanova measures “aesthetic distance” from this center as a question of historical time: a literary corpus is defined temporally in relationship to an accepted, central canon.<sup>6</sup> A peripheral language in this unequal organization can achieve “literariness,” through translation, “an act of consecration that gives [dominated authors] access to literary visibility and existence.”<sup>7</sup> The inequality of literary space in Casanova’s telling, however, obscures the very historical processes through which “peripheral” literatures have been mediated. The center-periphery model of Casanova’s “World Republic of Letters” is thus taken for granted: literary history occurs at the core in the development of European national literatures but not on the periphery.

Two new studies, Aamir Mufti’s *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* and Michael Allan’s *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of reading in colonial Egypt* show how colonialism and Orientalism shape, respectively, the definition of a world literary canon and the conditions for studying literature.<sup>8</sup> My findings reveal that the same processes that Aamir Mufti and Michael Allan identify as the product of nineteenth-century colonialism—orientalist practices of translation, canon formation and defining the terms by which a cultural production is valued as literary—parallel, in fact, the constructive practices of French “Men of Letters” in eighteenth-century Paris and Istanbul. While many recent studies have struggled to delineate the specific nature of Orientalism in the period before colonialism, I reveal that attitudes towards Islamicate literature show consistency over time and across a changing power differential.

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<sup>3</sup> Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 1 (2000): 54–68, 55–56.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B DeBevoise (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 87–125.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt*, 2016 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) and Aamir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

In this introductory chapter, I first address the difficulty of defining the terms “Turk” and “Literature” in the eighteenth century. Next, I introduce a major theme of this dissertation: the rapprochement of literature and politeness. I then provide some historical background for this study, by detailing different ideas about Turkish literature leading up to the eighteenth century. Finally, I outline the three chapters of this project.

## Definitions

An analysis of the discussions about Turkish literature in the eighteenth century requires, first, an understanding of how the constituent parts “Turk” and “literature” were used at the time. The question of Turkish literature could only come about through the explicit awareness of a Turkish identity among the French. In the sources used in this project, the word “Turk” is juxtaposed with a number of other identities. Often the Turks are considered as part of the collective “Orientals,” grouping them with Persians and Arabs. To the difference of the latter two, however, Turk carries with it the connotation “Muslim” while also referring to Ottoman identity. Christine Isom-Verhaaren, writing on the sixteenth century use of the term, notes, “to Christians living in western Europe at this time, “Turk” was used not to describe an ethnic identity but a religious and political one.”<sup>9</sup> The eighteenth century sees a development of the use of “Turk” in opposition to “the first Arabs” whose territories they conquered and to the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, such as Arabs and Tatars.<sup>10</sup> The authors and correspondents studied here use “Turk” to mean a number of things: Muslim and Ottoman, but also ethnic Turk.

If the definition of Turkish literature brings some clarity to what was intended by the identifier “Turk,” the meaning of “literature” was itself malleable and dynamic over the course of the eighteenth century. Its meaning changes from one text to the next – in some texts construed broadly as “letters and sciences”<sup>11</sup> and in others assuming the meaning of “*l'étude*,” or the study of *belles-lettres*.<sup>12</sup> For the present purposes, I ask the narrow question of how literature was defined at different moments in order to *become* Turkish. This no longer becomes a disciplinary question, then, but one of institutional construction of knowledge. I recast, then, the problem set forth by Michael Allan in his investigation of the changing valences of *adab*: “defining what literature is becomes inseparable from how it comes to matter. And how it comes to matter turns critically on the institutions that come to frame how we read.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the competing conceptions of Turkish literature held different stakes as they defined Turkish culture in relationship to Europe. Throughout the eighteenth century, one institution played a major role in the process of shaping the definition of literature: the Republic of Letters.

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<sup>9</sup> Christine Isom-Verhaaren, “Shifting Identities: Foreign State Servants in France and the Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 109–34, 113.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Laurens, *Les Origines Intellectuelles de L'expédition d'Égypte: L'orientalisme Islamisant En France (1698-1798)* (Istanbul: Éditions ISIS, 1987), 33.

<sup>11</sup> See E. Natalie Rothman, “Dragomans and ‘Turkish Literature’: The Making of a Field of Inquiry,” *Oriente Moderno* 93, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 390–421, doi:10.1163/22138617-12340023.

<sup>12</sup> Peter France, *Politeness and Its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Allan, *World Literature*, 93.

The Republic of Letters, emerging in the sixteenth century with the consciousness of national literatures,<sup>14</sup> comprises of the networks and activities of a community of scholars and gentlemen preoccupied with the collection of knowledge derived from diverse sciences and texts.<sup>15</sup> A figurative Republic, it is defined metaphorically in the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* as “men of letters in general, understood as if they made up one body.”<sup>16</sup> The Republic of Letters is associated both with Habermas’s conception of the public sphere, as the “literary public sphere,” and as an expression of public opinion counterbalancing the realm of the Court.<sup>17</sup> Dena Goodman remarks that the Republic of Letters is “a polity parallel to the monarchy but entwined with it[.]”<sup>18</sup> Although the notion of a parallel “citizenship” articulated within the Republic of Letters is crucial to its portrayal as the site of articulation of the Enlightenment project,<sup>19</sup> what comes to light through the definition of Turkish literature is the former aspect, its dependence upon the values, levers, and patronage of the monarchy. From this perspective, I build upon Anne Goldgar’s argument in *Impolite Learning*. She posits that a scholarly, or *érudit*, Republic of Letters faded with the advent of the public sphere, and the figure of the “man of letters” was overtaken by the professional writer, or *belle-lettriste*.<sup>20</sup> This study, then, provides a snapshot of a rearguard, conservative cultural and aesthetic movement that, unexpectedly, opened channels of intercultural exchange.

#### Literature and politeness

This dissertation project contends that the articulation of world literature in the eighteenth century was made possible through the practices of elite forms of sociability. Exchanges between Ottoman and European, and between Istanbul and Paris, were ensured by the primacy of sociability, i.e. “politeness,”<sup>21</sup> among the values of the Republic of Letters. Daniel Gordon offers as a definition of sociability “the disposition and manners of humans who understood that their interests were intertwined with the interests of others[.]”<sup>22</sup> Drawing a distinction between the Enlightenment and the “*érudit* Republic of Letters[.]” Goldgar pinpoints in the latter “the continuity of personal relationships as the primary vision for a community which tried to think communally[.]”<sup>23</sup> The continuity of personal relationships depended, then, upon a shared value of sociability; it remained

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<sup>14</sup> Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des Lettres*, Europe & Histoire (Paris : Bruxelles: Belin ; De Boeck, 1997), 23-7.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Bots and Waquet, *La République des Lettres*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 51-6; and Daniel Roche, *Les Républicains Des Lettres: Gens de Culture et Lumières Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 151-73.

<sup>18</sup> Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), *Acls Humanities E-Book*, *Acls Humanities E-Book*, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.03988>, 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 242.

valid on a smaller scale – for example, within a provincial academy – as well as among nations. The international vocation of the Republic of Letters demanded that relationships among nations were not constrained by national or religious boundaries. Lorraine Daston brings to the fore the importance of this principle of tolerance to attitudes towards the participation of Huguenots in the Republic of Letters.<sup>24</sup> Alastair Hamilton reinforces this point, albeit expanding upon it to assert of the Republic of Letters, “all its members would have called themselves Christians, scholars were expected to rise above confessional loyalty.”<sup>25</sup> Both Jocelyne Dakhliya and Sonja Brentjes present cases of the openness and toleration of the Republic of Letters towards Muslim correspondents and travelers.<sup>26</sup> Thus the principle of “continuity” in the Republic of Letters enabled its openness across national and confessional boundaries.

The fallacy underpinning the notion of a transnational Republic of Letters holds that the adherence to values emic to the community of letters emancipates the Republic of Letters from the exercise of Court power. On the one hand, this is reconfigured as cosmopolitanism; in studies of the Enlightenment, this emancipation is attributed to the independent space of the salon.<sup>27</sup> Antoine Lilti has refuted this point claiming that the salons were “venues of entertainment for polite elites, and were deeply rooted in court society.”<sup>28</sup> By analogy Casanova contrasts the “fiction” of the notion of literature as “something pure, free, and universal” with an “international literary law” that maintains imbalances of power and recreates a dynamic of center and periphery displaced from the nation towards the value of literariness.<sup>29</sup> This dissertation project, concurring with both Lilti and Casanova, shows that both the power dynamics of polite court society and of literariness invest the construction of the concept of Turkish literature.

This power, I argue here, is exercised through politeness. Evaluating the literariness of the Turk equates with ascertaining whether or not he<sup>30</sup> is polite. In *Politeness and its Discontents*, Peter France illuminates the ways in which politeness constructs the Other in France and England from 1660 to 1760. He posits, “the confrontation between ‘rudeness’ and civilization has been a constant structuring principle in the European mind. The principle has operated mainly in the minds of the ‘civilized,’ who define their society, manners and speech by opposition to what they call savage, barbarous, uncouth.”<sup>31</sup> The widespread perception of the Ottomans at the turn of the eighteenth century is precisely that they are barbarous and thus have no literature.

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<sup>24</sup> Lorraine Daston, “The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment,” *Science in Context* 4, no. 2 (1991): 367–86.

<sup>25</sup> Alastair Hamilton, *Introduction*, in Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert, and Bart Westerweel, eds., *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005), 1–11, 1.

<sup>26</sup> See Dakhliya, “Une archéologie du même et de l’autre,” and Sonja Brentjes, “The Interest of the Republic of Letters in the Middle East, 1550–1700,” *Science in Context*, no. 12 (1999): 435–68.

<sup>27</sup> Goodman, *Republic of Letters*.

<sup>28</sup> Lilti, Antoine. “The Kingdom of Politesse: Salons and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Paris.” *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 1, no. 1 (2009): 1–11.

<sup>29</sup> Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> It will become apparent in the course of this study that the realm of Turkish literature that concerns the French Republic of Letters is exclusively male.

<sup>31</sup> France, *Politeness and Its Discontents*, 204. See also Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, who makes a similar point about sociability: “the rise of sociability was a ‘revolution’ that separated ‘civilization’ from ‘barbarism’” (130).

However, over the course of the eighteenth century, a different rhetoric seeking to display the politeness of the Turk emerges in the writings of journalists, correspondents, and authors. My dissertation will show how the Turks are integrated into the Republic of Letters through the portrayal of their politeness.

Politeness and literature overlap in both texts and institutions. An essential component of politeness is “learning of a certain type – generally known as *belles lettres*, and eventually literature.”<sup>32</sup> In addition, academies were an institution of politeness. They provided a means for local elites to engage in the arbitration of politeness among men of letters. Peter France holds that “it was not so much a case of *belles lettres* polishing the young, as of learning being cast in a polite mould.”<sup>33</sup> France also cites the association of certain written genres with politeness. These include the maxim, dialogue, letter, and essay, all of which extoll “the polite values of ease and unpretentiousness (*le naturel*).”<sup>34</sup> This *naturel* is the distinguishing feature of the polite person. I demonstrate in the following chapters that these elements: academies, learning, and textual representations of politeness all combine to shape a definition of Turkish literature. In fact these elements are associated to such an extent that Turkish literature and politeness are rhetorically equivalent.

The social context of politeness shifts, however, away from the court and towards a society bound by the notion of natural law. Daniel Gordon traces this development of the idea of politeness from the appanage of the Court to the moral universe of the Enlightenment, from “a select company of refined individuals” to a “universal morality” that “was nothing other than politeness writ large with the help of natural law.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Gordon traces the development of sociability from an order imposed by “the exercise of royal power” to one of “self-police.”<sup>36</sup> This transformation is important because, I contend, the weakening of the court’s role in arbitrating politeness disrupts, in fact, the personal continuities that maintained Turks and Europeans on equal footing in the Republic of Letters.

Further, religion added a source of tension in the articulation of a polite society. Gordon traces the dual discourse that held religion as an obstacle to sociability,<sup>37</sup> even as there remained a belief that Christianity was a more polishing religion.<sup>38</sup> For these reasons, the personal continuities between Turk and European formed around the bond of politeness were stretched not only by religious distinctions, but also by differences of religiosity. I trace in this project the ways in which French writings about and translations of Turkish literature sought to resolve this religious tension.

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<sup>32</sup> France, *Politeness and its Discontents*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

## Translation

Given that Turkish literature refers to the production of knowledge in a different language – primarily Ottoman Turkish, but also in Arabic and Persian – theories of translation come to bear on its articulation. Politeness, however, is also at stake in the process of translation. According to Peter France, translation “implies the assimilation of foreign bodies. To translate is to carry across, to invade a foreign territory and bring back a prize which is then made available to enrich the native store, to infuse new blood into the traditional culture.”<sup>39</sup> While translation first may have functioned to reinvigorate French society with the polish of the classics, the translation of works from other cultures provided the French with models over which they could arbitrate their acceptance or rejection. Turkish literature represents one such model.

The idea of translation as a prize is present as well in the formulation of translation offered by Finbarr Flood in *Objects of Translation*. Flood conceives of translation as a process that not only adds value to a given text, but also highlights the materiality of the work itself as a coveted object that reflects upon the identity of translator, the sponsoring court, and the sovereign territory alike.<sup>40</sup> France, starting in the 1660s, sees the proliferation of objects, inscriptions and manuscripts brought over the Mediterranean from Istanbul to Paris. Men of letters apply their erudition to create value from these curiosities as they become readable in the form of letters, orations before scientific academies, articles in learned periodicals, and published translations.

The prestige of translation, described by Flood, accurately describes this circulation in the Republic of Letters of gifts and manuscripts brought back from Istanbul. It also mirrors the process whereby a text becomes recognized as literary that Michael Allan relates in his discussion of the announcement of the Rosetta Stone to French scholars in Egypt: “When scholars approach a text deemed a work of world literature, the text takes on life as an object, and is described from a point of origin to its point of dissemination. In this way, it functions as an artifact, an index of the world from which it is seen to stem, and meaningful on account of how it fits within a world literary system.”<sup>41</sup> As this dissertation project traces the trajectories of French and Turkish envoys, curios, and manuscripts between Istanbul and Paris, it will show how Turkish literature becomes readable. The Turk fits into the world literary system of the time, the Republic of Letters, both as a product of these exchanges and as the object of translation.

### Turkish Literature in the French Imagination

That Turkish literature became an object of the French imagination in the eighteenth century is the result of a number of factors. Marcus Keller asserts that “the Turk” was “the main oriental figure occupying the French imagination” since the first

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<sup>39</sup> France, *Politeness and its Discontents*, 151.

<sup>40</sup> Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> Allan, *World Literature*, 45.



siege of Vienna in 1529.<sup>42</sup> France enjoyed an alliance with the Ottoman Empire from the time of François I. Under his reign, Guillaume Postel established the first European embassy to Istanbul in 1535. Within the framework of Franco-Ottoman relations, accounts of the Ottoman Empire brought home to the French diverse portrayals of the Ottomans, their faith, and the administration of the Empire. This curiosity was systematized by the end of the seventeenth century into a practiced study of the Orient.

Nicholas Dew traces in his cultural history, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, the development of the institutions and the construction of networks of Orientalism as the product of the strategy of the Gallican Counter-reformation.<sup>43</sup> Instigated by Colbert, schools of *Jeunes de langues* were formed to train French youths in the languages of the Ottoman Empire: Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. The court-sponsored expeditions to the Levant acquire from the Eastern Christian communities proof of transubstantiation at the time of the Church's foundation. This served the Gallican church by promoting Louis XIV's role in defending the Church against the claims of the Reformation. The Sieur de La Croix, a French envoy to Istanbul in the 1670s documented a number of these affirmations from the Eastern Church in *La Turquie Crétienne sous la Puissante Protection de Louis Le Grand, Protecteur unique du Cristianisme en Orient*,<sup>44</sup> a publication whose title makes the ambition of Louis XIV to rival Rome for leadership of the Church. In part as a byproduct of these missions and in part through the concerted efforts of different networks of erudition, embassy staff and travelers to the Levant accumulated a number of manuscripts in Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, without any bearing to the original intent of the missions sponsored by Colbert and the Royal Librarian Abbé Bignon.

The question of Turkish literature, then, remained tangential to the institutions of Orientalism at the cusp of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, there were significant works of criticism that accounted for the role of the Orient in literary production, among them Adrien Baillet's *Jugemens des Savants* (1685-86) and Huet's *Traité sur l'Origine des Romans* (1669).<sup>45</sup> In the narratives developed by these authors, Arabs and Persians, and the ancient Hebrews, developed a literature of the imagination. The fable originated in the Orient and was absorbed by the Greeks. According to Baillet, the Turks razed the culture of the Arabs who preceded them. For Huet, they lacked full understanding of their inheritance.

The publication of the *Bibliothèque orientale* in 1697 largely captures the perception of the Ottomans in the Republic of Letters at the time. In his *Discours pour servir d'un Preface* to the *Bibliothèque orientale*, Antoine Galland, who would later gain notoriety for his translation of the *Mille et une nuits* (1704-1710), sought to dispense with the reputation of the Turks as ignorant and uncultured. He distinguishes between attitudes towards Arabs and Persians, and the attitude towards Turks:

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<sup>42</sup> Marcus Keller, "The Turk of Early Modern France," *L'Esprit Créateur* 53, no. 4 (2013): 1-8, doi:10.1353/esp.2013.0045, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30-36.

<sup>44</sup> Sieur de Lacroix, *La Turquie crétienne, sous la puissante protection de Louis le Grand, protecteur unique de cristianisme en Orient*(Paris: Chez P. Herissant, 1695).

<sup>45</sup> Adrien Baillet and Bernard de La Monnoye, *Jugemens des savans sur les principaux ouvrages des auteurs*. (Paris: C. Moette, 1722); Pierre-Daniel Huet, Fabienne Gégou, and Jean Chapelain, *Lettre-Traité de Pierre-Daniel Huet sur l'origine des romans; Édition du tricentenaire, 1669-1969. Suivie de La lecture des vieux romans* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1971).

Truth be told, we give some credit to the Arabs, and they pass for having once applied themselves to the cultivation of the sciences. One attributes politeness to the Persians, and one does them justice. Yet, by their name alone, the Turks are so denigrated, that it usually suffices to name them in order to represent a barbarous, crude, and completely ignorant Nation, and by their name, one means to speak of those who are under the domination of the Ottoman Empire.

il faut dire la verité, on fait quelque grace aux Arabes, & ils passent pour avoir autrefois cultivee les sciences avec grande application. On attribuë de la politesse aux Persans, & on leur fait justice. Mais, par leur nom seul, les Turcs sont tellement décriez, qu'il suffit ordinairement de les nommer pour signifier une Nation barbare, grossiere, & d'une ignorance achevée, & sous leur nom, l'on entend parler de ceux qui sont sous la domination de l'Empire Ottoman.<sup>46</sup>

Galland shows that, despite the common grouping of *les Orientaux*, opinion has drawn clear distinctions among Arabs, Persians, and Turks. Among these groups, the Turks are excluded from the concessions that are made either to Persians or Arabs. Moreover, Galland highlights the ambiguity of using the word “Turk” to identify those who are governed by the Ottomans. He does not, however, make clear how he would use the term, and whether or not it would be more accurately applied to the Ottomans, themselves.

On the question of the contributions of the “Turks” to sciences and letters, Galland comes to their defense, affirming that “they concede nothing to the Arabs nor to the Persians in the sciences and in the *belles Lettres* common to these three Nations, and they cultivate them almost from the beginning of their Empire.” (ils ne cedent ni aux Arabes, ni aux Persans, dans les sciences & dans les belles Lettres communes à ces trois Nations, & qu'ils les cultivent presque dès le commencement de leur Empire.)<sup>47</sup> Galland enumerates the theologians, historians, and poets of the Ottoman court, citing this last category as “a sign of the delicacy of their spirit” (une marque de la delicatesse de leur esprit).<sup>48</sup> On the subject of Turkish poetry, Galland concludes:

in whatever Nation, Poetry has over Prose, the fact that it is expressed more nobly, and that it paints things with brighter colors, which can only come from politeness and delicacy of spirit.

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<sup>46</sup> Barthélemy d'Herbelot et al., *Bibliothèque orientale, ou, Dictionnaire universel: contenant généralement tout ce qui regarde la conoissance des peuples de l'Orient : leurs histoires et traditions véritables ou fabuleuses ... Leurs religions, sectes et politique ... Leurs gouvernement, loix, coûtumes, moeurs, guerres, & les révolutions de leurs empires ... Leurs sciences, et leurs arts ... Les vies et actions remarquables de tous leurs saints, docteurs, philosophes, historiens, poëtes, capitaines, & de tous ceux qui se sont rendus illustres parmi eux, par leur vertu, ou par leur savoir ... Des jugemens critiques, et des extraits de tous leurs ouvrages ...* (Paris: Compagnie des Libraires, 1697), i recto.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

en quelque Nation que ce soit, la Poësie a cela par dessus la Prose, qu'elle s'exprime plus noblement, & qu'elle dépeint les choses avec des couleurs plus vives, ce qui ne peut partir que de la politesse & de la délicatesse de l'esprit.<sup>49</sup>

Against ignorance, Galland holds up the patronage of both sciences and literature by the Ottomans. In addition to religious and legal scholars, he raises specific examples of writers whose activity depends upon the court: Historians and Poets. That Galland elevates Poetry over Prose is especially important to our understanding of the discussion of Turkish literature. It is an inevitable observation for a scholar of Galland's erudition, given the prestige that poetry held at the Ottoman court. Further, the fact that Poetry enjoyed such a reputation, yet goes unmentioned in the majority of discussions of Turkish literature in the eighteenth century appears to be a paradox. If it is a paradox, though, Galland bears at least some responsibility for the persistence of this contradiction, given that his translation of the *Mille et une nuits* skipped over the extended verse passages embedded within the prose. The translation of one genre, the Oriental tale, and the omission of the other, poetry, will be the focus of the chapter entitled "The Snake in the Library."

Two works that were published in the first decade of the 1700s capture the situation of Turkish writing in translation within the broader context of the Oriental imagination. The *Mille et une nuits*, translated by Galland from Arabic manuscripts and, in part, from his conversations with a Maronite interpreter Hanna, enjoyed popular success. This collection sparked interest in the Oriental tale, and inspired a number of imitations. Galland's preface is noteworthy for his assertion that the tales would accurately portray the customs and manners of the Orient:

They must be all the more pleasing for the manners and customs of the Orientals, by the ceremonies of their religion, pagan as well as muslim ; and these things are better portrayed in them than in the authors who had written about them and in the accounts of travelers. All the Orientals, Persians, Tatars and Indians, are distinguished in them and appear as they are, from the sovereigns to those of the lowest condition.

Ils doivent plaire encore par les coutumes et les mœurs des Orientaux, par les cérémonies de leur religion, tant païenne que mahométane ; et ces choses y sont mieux marquées que dans les auteurs qui en ont écrit et que dans les relations des voyageurs. Tous les Orientaux, Persans, Tartares et Indiens, s'y font distinguer, et paraissent tels qu'ils sont, depuis les souverains jusqu'aux personnes de la plus basse condition.<sup>50</sup>

Welch writes that Galland's translation of the *Mille et une nuits* represents a turning point from foreign fictions being received as something pleasurable, diverting and at the same time edifying. With the *Mille et une nuits*, the text could be interpreted as a faithful

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Antoine Galland, Jean-Paul Sermain, and Aboubakr Chraïbi, *Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes. I* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 21.

representation of customs and manners. Welch writes that Galland's translation has come to exemplify literature's complicity in the reproduction and dissemination of pervasive cultural beliefs about the East."<sup>51</sup>

A discussion of French beliefs and debates about Turkish literature sets in motion important questions with regard to the practices and relationships of power at play in Orientalism. Several recent works have sought to grapple with Orientalism in the context of the *Ancien régime*.<sup>52</sup> In Mufti's formulation, this is an often uncomfortable process that seeks to separate the "humanists" from the "racists."<sup>53</sup> (28)

The focus of this project on "Turkish literature" defined by the French, extends two recent contributions to the critical reassessment of the term "World literature." Michael Allan, for one, encourages the analysis of "the term 'literature'" through developing a better understanding of the "literary disciplines into which texts are born."<sup>54</sup> In Allan's case, this analysis takes place within the context of Arabic literary criticism and the modern inception of Arabic literary criticism. Allan uses as an example, the formalization of the term *adab*. My intervention, in the context of French academic life, draws together academic discourses about sociability and Ottoman literature. Walking back "literature" to a moment of intense cross-cultural exchanges, I show how the French practice of "literature" allowed for permeability with Ottoman practices of *adab* – thus evoking a shared moment where the discipline of literature was inexact and constructed through sociability. "[D]efining what literature is becomes inseparable from how it comes to matter. And how it comes to matter turns critically on the institutions that come to frame how we read."<sup>55</sup>

Allan's work further describes the secularization of practices and pedagogies of literature within colonial Egypt. The work of Aamir Mufti shows the process by which English translation by Orientalists "invented" the idea of Indian literature as a unified, national literature. He dates this process back to the work of British colonial administration. This project, however, shows how French Orientalists set this process in motion much earlier, in the early 1700s.

## Articulating the Debate

My first chapter analyzes the letters on Turkish literature of the Marseillais journalist and traveler Jean de Laroque. I demonstrate two sets of boundaries: those that circumscribe literature and those that incorporate the Turk into the Republic of Letters.

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<sup>51</sup> Ellen R. Welch, *A Taste for the Foreign: Worldly Knowledge and Literary Pleasure in Early Modern French Fiction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 144.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism and the Ancien Régime* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2008); Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); and A. Bevilacqua and H. Pfeifer, "Turquerie: Culture in Motion, 1650-1750," *Past & Present* 221, no. 1 (November 1, 2013): 75-118, doi:10.1093/pastj/gtt019.

<sup>53</sup> Mufti, *Forget English*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Allan, *World Literature*, 93.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Neither category is fixed, but constantly evolving in relations to the institutions of the Republic of Letters and the circulation of people and writings across the Mediterranean. I argue that Laroque defines Turkish literature both as dynamic and inscribed within a tightly governed social and historical trajectory. Yet this definition itself is fleeting and corresponds to a moment of intense cultural exchange with the Ottoman Empire. I show that Laroque, writing in the *Mercure*, effaces the distinction traced by Anne Goldgar between “the erudite and *mondain* public” that parallels an emerging class of *belles-lettrists* – writers – writing “literature” that came from outside the communal realm of the Republic of Letters.<sup>56</sup> Laroque’s definitions of both Turk and Literature remain both worldly and erudite. He draws upon beliefs about good taste and politeness, and relies upon the elite regulation of both to maintain the easy circulation of Turks within the Republic of Letters.

In my second chapter, I examine French reactions to the Ottoman printing press, arguing that, although print was central to the discourse about the Ottomans’ capacity to create literature, it was at the same time ancillary to the actual activities of the Republic of Letters, especially where defining Turkish literature was concerned. These activities constituted a system for generating and sharing knowledge and included the cataloguing of manuscripts, personal correspondence, and other interpersonal interactions. I trace two parallel narratives: first, that of the French reception of the printing press and, second, the efforts of a French diplomat to define Turkish literature a decade later. Read together, these narratives reveal that both beliefs about print and interactions between French and Ottoman intellectuals spoke to anxieties about the integration of the Turkish subject into the European Republic of Letters. Without the context of the broader aim of the search for Turkish literature, the story of print at the Ottoman court disproportionately emphasizes a narrative of Europeanization.

In my final chapter, I argue that the trajectory of the Oriental tale in translation is to strip it of its context and to resituate it within French reading practices. From manuscript to print, the tales collected and published in French are given a new, European genealogy. I show this by analyzing three collections of Oriental tales, *L’Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Visirs, Contes turcs* (1707) by Pétis de La Croix, *Contes orientaux tirés des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roy de France* (1743) by Caylus, and the *Mélanges de Littérature orientale* (1770) by Cardonne.<sup>57</sup> Pétis de la Croix translates his source text directly from an Ottoman Turkish cycle of stories; Caylus and Cardonne use Turkish sources to varying degrees, juxtaposing them with other sources in Arabic and Persian. Although the sources themselves are not representative of Ottoman literary production, each work proposes to represent Ottoman and Oriental storytelling, at risk of conflating the two.

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<sup>56</sup> Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 231.

<sup>57</sup> François Pétis de La Croix et al., *Histoire de la sultane de Perse et des vizirs* (Paris: Champion, 2006); Anne Claude Philippe Caylus, *Contes Orientaux Tirés Des Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Du Roy de France*, 2 vols. (La Haye, 1743), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101073245639>; and Denis Dominique Cardonne, *Mélanges de Littérature Orientale : Traduits de Différens Manuscrits Turcs, Arabes & Persans de La Bibliothèque Du Roi*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hérisant, 1770), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433061373373>.

What sets the work of the different authors – Pétis, Caylus, and Cardonne – apart is their relationship with the original texts. The manuscripts collected for the Royal Library were not initially intended for publication. In particular, the Oriental tales themselves were the object of scholarly translation exercises for the *Jeunes de Langue* training in Istanbul to become interpreters for the French embassy.<sup>58</sup> This unlikely leap from pedagogical tool to print publication makes the question of the stylistic features of the end product all the more intriguing. In the following analysis, then, I will focus on how the texts are redefined for different readerships, both from the Ottoman source material to its French adaptation, and, over time, to convey different beliefs about Turkish literature. I will show the different ways in which these works construct a “Turkish style” and to what end. In addition, I will demonstrate how the different French authors confine these works to the realm of Muslim storytelling, even while promising an appeal to French readers.

These chapters, taken together, bring to light the diverging paths of two conceptions of literature. One, dependent upon print, enforces borders of literature within divided linguistic and national spaces. Literary history begins with recognition, translation, and circulation within a European national space. This conception of literature has been the predominant focus of scholarship on Orientalism. This focus on print and translation, however, only compounds the distorted map of the center-periphery world literary space depicted by Casanova as the World Republic of Letters. In this project I show the limits of this conception of literature and point towards another path. Politeness as literature, I contend, is more representative of the beliefs about literature shared by members of the Republic of Letters at the cusp of the Enlightenment. By taking into account the practices of the Republic of Letters to give meaning to Turkish literature, I show a different kind of literary space – hierarchical but not centered, dynamic and connected.

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<sup>58</sup> See, Berthier, Anne, “Turquie ou Turcologie,” in *Istanbul et les langues orientales: actes du colloque organisé par l’IFEA et l’INALCO à l’occasion du bicentenaire de l’Ecole des langues orientales, Istanbul, 29-31 mai 1995*, ed. Frédéric Hitzel, Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, and École des langues orientales vivantes (France), *Varia Turcica* 31 (Paris, France: L’Harmattan, 1997), 283-317.

## CHAPTER II

### Worthy of Crossing the Sea Jean de Laroque and the Turkish Republic of Letters, 1732-38

In a lengthy letter appearing in the French periodical *Mercure de France* of July 1738 and addressed to a M. Maillart, a magistrate from the Artois region, the editor Jean de Laroque notes the former's mistaken assumptions about the literature of the Turks: "you expressed to me some surprise, not having presumed that there were among the Turks Fabulist Authors, predisposed against this Nation, by the widespread prejudice that refuses it all kind of literary discipline and erudition." (vous m'avez marqué quelque étonnement, ne présumant pas qu'il y eût chés les Turcs des Auteurs Fabulistes, prévenu contre cette Nation, par le préjugé commun qui lui refuse toute sorte de discipline littéraire et d'érudition.)<sup>1</sup> Laroque, in this letter, labors to dispel what he sees as a mistaken belief that the Ottoman Empire had eradicated from its territories the literary cultures – whether Arab or Byzantine – that had preceded it. Here, Laroque uses the example of an activity, authorship, and a genre, the fable, which can be understood as common to European culture and rooted in classical traditions. But this is hardly the only understanding of Turkish literature possible. Across several letters published in the *Mercure* from 1732 to 1738, Laroque explores and asserts the existence of Turkish literature in a variety of forms, all of which reflect upon the elasticity of this term in the Republic of Letters.

This chapter analyzes the letters on Turkish literature of Jean de Laroque in order to demonstrate two sets of boundaries: those that circumscribe literature and those that incorporate the Turk into the Republic of Letters. Neither category is fixed, but constantly evolving in relations to the institutions of the Republic of Letters and the circulation of people and writings across the Mediterranean. I argue that Laroque defines Turkish literature both as dynamic and inscribed within a tightly governed social and historical trajectory. Yet this definition itself is bound by circumstances and corresponds to a moment of intense cultural exchange with the Ottoman Empire.

Although the cultural influences of France's rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire were manifested in a number of ways starting in the 1670s, discussion of the existence of Turkish literature intensified in the 1730s. This was the result of a number of factors. First, the 1720-1 embassy to Paris of Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi drew great public interest and resulted in the publication of a translation of the ambassador's travel memoirs. Second, in 1726 Ibrahim Müteferrika, a Hungarian-born Ottoman bureaucrat, and Said Mehmed Effendi, the son of Yirmisekiz, obtained the Sultan's permission to establish a court-sponsored printing press using Arabic movable type. Finally, France was closely involved with the Ottoman Empire on a number of diplomatic fronts, including

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<sup>1</sup> Jean de Laroque, "LETTRE de M.D.L.R. écrite à M. Maillart, ancien Avocat au Parlement, au sujet de la Fable Turque du Kaïmak, &c. et de la prétenduë permission de boire du vin, accordée aux Janissaires, &c.," *Mercure de France*, July 1738, 1476.

the negotiation of the 1740 Peace of Belgrade and the renewal of its capitulations – a series of trade concessions negotiated between the Porte and the Palais de France in Istanbul. As the Ottoman embassy and the news of the printing press raised questions about Turkish letters and sciences, the shuttling to and from Istanbul of a number of diplomatic attachés provided the opportunity to answer these questions. The Marseillais Jean de Laroque is representative of a cadre of Frenchmen whose networks and travels abroad positioned them to satisfy this growing curiosity and to answer to skepticism about Turkish literature.

As an editor of the periodical *Mercure de France*, Laroque held a particularly privileged voice in these discussions as he was able to reach a wide and *mondain* public. Through Laroque’s perspective, it is possible to understand the social bonds and incentives that enabled within France the construction of a body of knowledge about the Ottoman Empire. General beliefs about politeness in eighteenth-century France condition these social networks and their activities. The relationship between France and the Ottoman Empire was subject to what Peter France terms “the confrontation between ‘rudeness’ and civilization” that was “a constant structuring principle in the European mind.”<sup>2</sup> Literature was a way to police this confrontation. I argue in this chapter that Laroque’s definition of literature integrated the Turks into Europe by articulating the passage from “rudeness” to “civilization.” Laroque’s definition accomplishes this by defining literature dynamically as the product of men of letters — their taste, their politeness, and their organization into academies.

The hand academies had in regulating the Republic of Letters is rooted in its connection to the monarchy. Daniel Roche cautions against an easy association between the academies and the Enlightenment.<sup>3</sup> He singles out, rather, two important aspects of the academies’ functions: first “a kind of continuous liaison with the power of the king” and, second, “the control of forms of expression and the mastery of a uniform and unified language that fundamentally distinguishes a moral and social human, and defines an ethos that is at once civic and cultural.”<sup>4</sup> The exercise of power through the academy to make knowledge and men of letters alike conform to a polite ideal of human conduct is essential, as I show, to Laroque’s advocacy of academies. It is this uniformity and attachment to the court that enables the passage from “rudeness” to “civilization.”

I will examine three aspects of Laroque’s letters in this chapter. First, I will show how literature, in Laroque’s conception, is predicated upon the translatability of everything into text. In the following two sections, I will show how Laroque defines literature as politeness, although this politeness, in order to integrate the Republic of Letters depends upon the regimentation of royal patronage and scientific academies. Before delving into these three aspects of Turkish literature, I will outline Laroque’s life and how his Marseillais origins condition his beliefs about literature and then provide an overview of the content of Laroque’s letters in the *Mercure*. This analysis of Laroque’s

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<sup>2</sup> France, *Politeness and Its Discontents*, 204.

<sup>3</sup> Roche, *Les Républicains des Lettres*, 157-71.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 160: “un type de liaison continue avec le pouvoir royal[,]” and “le contrôle des formes d’expression et la maîtrise d’un langage normalisée et unifiée qui fondamentalement distingue un type humain, moral et social, précise une éthique civique et culturelle à la fois.”



definition of Turkish literature offers detailed insight into the cultural institutions and intercultural exchanges that placed both French and Turkish literature along a continuum within a Republic of Letters. This deepens our understanding, then, of how this expansive Republic conceived of circulated the notion of a “world literature.”

### Jean de Laroque

Jean de Laroque’s career traces an aspirational arc with its origins in Marseilles’ merchant class and the elusive academic prestige at its horizon. The *Mercure de France*, the French periodical where he settled in as a coeditor, provided a resting point perhaps just short of his own sights, but offered him a tribune to expound upon affairs of erudition and relate anecdotes of interest to a broad readership that spread to the upper echelons of the court and throughout the provinces. This biographical sketch will show, first, how his Marseillais and Parisian networks situated him within the Republic of Letters and, second, how he sought to establish his expertise about the Ottoman Empire.

One measure of Laroque’s ultimate influence is the publication in 1754, nine years after his death, of a pseudo-memoir, *Memoires de Monsieur de La Rocque contenant ses Voyages et Avantures en Turquie, en Perse, aux Echelles du Levant, &c.* This memoir, part *bildungsroman* and part travel narrative, recounts a number of delicate negotiations which Laroque is alleged to have accomplished on behalf of the Crown in Istanbul, Baghdad and beyond. Despite the fact that the publisher assures the reader that he has spoken with the author to confirm the veracity of the memoirs, the content in no way corresponds to events in Laroque’s life, as his own accounts and activity as an editor for the *Merucure* show. Yet, the narrator’s modest preamble demonstrates the erudition concerning the Orient with which Laroque was credited:

The shores of the Bosphorous, the Ports of the Levant, the banks of the Nile, of the Euphrates, of Senega [sic]& the seas of America, are not places where one develops a pure and delicate style. Modern Greek, Turkish, and Arabic, which I learned successively out of necessity, have all the more corrupted in me the use of my mother tongue, since I hardly studied it according to the rules of Vaugelas and the other French Grammarians.

Les rivages du Bosphore, les Echelles du Levant, les bords du Nil, de l'Euphrate, du Senega & les mers de l'Amerique, ne sont pas des Lieux où l'on se forme un style pur & delicat. Le Grec moderne, le Turc, & l'Arabe, que j'ai successivement appris par devoir, ont d'autant plus corrompu en moi l'usage de la langue maternelle, que je ne lai gueres étudié dans les regles de Vaugelas & des autres Grammairiens François.<sup>5</sup>

The wide range of destinations and languages cited in this apology for the quality of Laroque’s written French allude to the number of letters he published in the *Mercure* that

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<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, *Memoires de Monsieur de La Rocque Contenant Ses Voyages et Avantures En Turquie, En Perse, Aux Echelles Du Levant, &c.*, 2 vols. (La Haye: Isaac Beaugard, 1754), 1-2.

discuss the Orient. As will be shown in the analysis of Laroque's letters on Turkish literature, he engages vehemently with minor linguistic points in both Arabic and Turkish. Of course, the timeline of his memoirs puts him in Istanbul during the embassies of Villeneuve and Castellane, when Laroque was actually comfortably ensconced in Paris, in his role as an editor of the *Mercure de France*. Moreover, the modesty concerning his written French – a standard formula in the prefatory remarks of Orientalists from François Bernier to Cardonne – is incongruous for a man whose career was devoted to editing the works of others and who carried out intellectual debates with the *Journal des Savants* in his own contributions to the *Mercure*. Finally, the anonymous author of the memoirs truly mischaracterizes Laroque by claiming his birthplace as Paris. His origins in Marseilles, as I show, were formative for the real Laroque. His beliefs about his hometown's tradition of commerce and his entry to Paris as an outsider provide him with rich analogies for the marginal position of the Ottomans in the European Republic of Letters.

### Commerce and Knowledge

Jean de Laroque was born in Marseilles in 1661 to a family of merchants with important ties to the commercial interests of Louis XIV's France. During Laroque's childhood, the monarchy established policies to encourage, including the "1669 Edit sur la franchise du port de Marseille" that invited Levantine merchants to set up business in Marseilles.<sup>6</sup> In her study *Between Crown and Commerce*, Junko Takeda shows how such policies, forged from Colbert's mercantilism, "obscured the distinction between French and foreign subjects, native Marseillais citizens and naturalized ones, by imagining Marseille as a melting pot of diverse Frenchmen."<sup>7</sup>

As a result, Laroque had an understanding, at an early age, of the cultural intermingling of merchants from that sea's various ports. Given his family ties to trade, he had networks across the Eastern Mediterranean: he counted the French consul in Cyprus among his relatives, and one uncle was the French consul in Aleppo; the latter would later serve as General Director of French Commerce in the East Indies.<sup>8</sup> His father Pierre, according to Jean, was among the first merchants to bring coffee to France, following his travels to Istanbul and the Levant in 1644.<sup>9</sup> Laroque acknowledges, however, that his father's "curiosity" (*curiosité*) about coffee and his importation had little effect beyond his circle of friends who, like him, "took up the manners of the Levant" (*avoient pris les manieres du Levant*).<sup>10</sup> This anecdote can be found in the historical treatise on coffee that Laroque appended to the 1716 publication *Voyage dans l'Arabie Heureuse*. Although credited as the work's author, it does not reflect his own travels, but rather his

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<sup>6</sup> Junko Thérèse Takeda, *Between Crown and Commerce: Marseille and the Early Modern Mediterranean*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Jean de Laroque, *Voyage de Syrie et du Mont-Liban*, (Paris: André Cailleau, 1722), vol. 1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Jean de Laroque, *Voyage de l'Arabie heureuse*, (Amsterdam: Steenhouwer & Uytwerf, 1716), 309.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

correspondence with the captain of a trade expedition to Yemen whose notes he edited, annotated and published.

Laroque's preoccupation with trade is apparent from the dedication of his first published work, the 1716 *Voyage de l'Arabie heureuse*, to the Comte de Pontchartrain. He signaled his gratitude to Colbert's successor for "[t]he singular protection with which you honor Commerce, or to say it better, the dedication that you give to all that can contribute to its growth" ([l]a protection singuliere dont vous honorez le Commerce, ou pour mieux dire, l'application que vous donnez à tout ce qui peut contribuer à son accroissement).<sup>11</sup> The importance given to Pontchartrain's role in expanding trade is reiterated when Laroque profiled himself in a feature on the intelligentsia of Marseille in the *Mercure de France* thirteen years later. Laroque found it important enough to mention in this piece the fact that he had dedicated the *Voyage de l'Arabie* to Pontchartrain.<sup>12</sup>

The *Voyage de l'Arabie heureuse* strongly links the expansion of trade credited to Pontchartrain to an extension of knowledge about the Orient and its inhabitants. Assembling notes on a trade expedition provided by a "Director of a Company of Traders from Saint-Malo" (Directeur d'une Compagnie de Negocians de Saint-Malo),<sup>13</sup> Laroque signaled in this work a strong association between overseas trade and scientific curiosity, citing the appeal by Simon Ockley, the Cambridge Orientalist, for the correspondences exchanged between European merchants and their Arab counterparts. Laroque agreed with Ockley that these letters offered a means to understand "the spirit, and the manner of expression of Orientals" (le genie, & la maniere de s'exprimer des Orientaux).<sup>14</sup> Echoing Montesquieu, Laroque believes there is a mutually beneficial relationship between trade and cultural understanding. "Commerce" took on multiple valences in the eighteenth century. According to Peter France, the word "is to be understood in a broad sense, meaning not only buying, selling and exchange, but more generally the process of negotiation, haggling and bargaining, the 'trucking and bartering' that Adam Smith saw as an essential part of the human make-up."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it was also applicable to "social intercourse of all kinds[.]"<sup>16</sup> Given this broad understanding of commerce, Laroque naturally saw the potential for the correspondence of merchants to reveal "the spirit" of a nation. The commerce of letters – no matter what the subject – provides one important element of his definition of Turkish literature in the *Mercure* sixteen years later.

The close association between commerce and knowledge needed to be explicitly asserted by Laroque is evident elsewhere in his writings. His travels to Lebanon and Syria were greatly facilitated by his relationships with merchants, and his preface to the travel narrative of Laurent d'Arvieux spoke of Arabs who "cultivate Commerce and the Arts"

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, \*3r-\*4v.

<sup>12</sup> Jean de Laroque, "Marseille Sçavante, ancienne et moderne, &c. Suite de la Lettre écrite par M.D.L.R. à M.R.," *Mercure de France*, January 1729, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Laroque, *Voyage de l'Arabie heureuse*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, \*6v.

<sup>15</sup> France, *Politeness*, 99.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

(cultivent le Commerce et les Arts).<sup>17</sup> Yet this explicit assertion of trade's important role in acquiring knowledge did not garner a wide consensus. Laroque acknowledged that his birthplace of Marseilles was looked down upon due to its status as a port city. Takeda describes negative associations attached to Marseilles due to its trade with the Levant: "Writers warned that commerce brought 'Asian' despotism, disease, and immorality closer to Europe, particularly through ports that served as open doors to 'Asian' mores, habits, and illnesses."<sup>18</sup>

Laroque's ambitions for Marseilles thus had to grapple with this association between Marseilles and the Levant. Significantly, Laroque's advocacy for the establishment of a scientific and literary academy in Marseille was to presage his argument on behalf of Turkish literature. Writing in the *Mémoires de Trevoux* in 1717 in support of this project, Laroque stated that among its detractors figured "our traders" (nos négocians) whose claims rested on "the great trade and on the maritime situation of the city of Marseilles, a circumstance, they say, unfavorable to an academic establishment" (le grand commerce & sur la situation maritime de la ville de Marseille, circonstance, dit-on, peu favorable à un établissement académique).<sup>19</sup> I will discuss at greater length Laroque's arguments to reconcile Marseilles' history of trade with his aspirations to see an academy founded – an ambition realized in 1724 – below. Here, it is important to underscore his belief that Marseilles' legitimacy would pass through the foundation of an academy. As if he saw the Ottomans as naturally paired with Marseilles, Laroque – as I will show below – applied the same belief to the Turks.

## Laroque in Paris

It is not clear when Laroque moved his base from Marseille to Paris. There, however, he was quick to extend his network and gain entry in the parlors of the most renown Orientalists. He shows up first in Antoine Galland's Paris diaries in September 1709 announcing the publication of his travels to Mount Lebanon, which he had undertaken in 1689.<sup>20</sup> Serving as secretary to an aristocrat from Normandy, the Marquis de Bethune, Laroque took up the habits of other "men of letters," collecting and commenting on medals, curios, and Oriental inscriptions.

In addition, he implicated himself in the publication of works that received serious attention from scholarly circles, as exemplified by their reviews in the *Journal des savants* and the *Mémoires de Trevoux*. He edited and published the first edition of fellow Marseillais Laurent d'Arvieux's travel memoirs, published posthumously in 1717. The

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<sup>17</sup> Jean de Laroque, ed. "Avertissement" in Laurent d'Arvieux, *Voyage fait par ordre du Roi Louis XIV. dans la Palestine vers le grand Emir, Chef des Princes Arabes du Desert connus sous le nom de Bedouïns, ou d'Arabes Scenites, qui se disent la vraye posterité d'Ismaël fils d'Abraham, où il est traité des mœurs & des coutumes de cette nation, avec la description generale de l'Arabie, faite par le Sultan Ismaël Abulfeda, traduite en François sur les meilleurs manuscrits, avec des notes, par Mr. D.L.R.*, (Paris: André Cailleau, 1717), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Takeda, *Between Crown and Commerce*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Jean de Laroque, "LETTRE ECRITE PAR MONSIEUR de La Roque À M. Rigord, Subdelegué de l'Intendance de Provence À Marseille Sur Le Projet D'établir En Cette Ville Une Académie Des Sciences & Des Belles Lettres," *Memoires de Trevoux*, January 1717, 142.

<sup>20</sup> Galland, Frédéric Bauden, and Richard Waller, *Le Journal d'Antoine Galland (1646-1715): La Période Parisienne*, 2 vols., (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 1:230.

*Mémoires de Trévoux* praised his work: “Here is another gift that Mr. de la Roque offers to the public” (Voici un nouveau present que Mr. de la Roque fait au public).<sup>21</sup> He had a hand in another important posthumous publication, Pétis de la Croix’s translation of the *Zafar-nameh*, a Persian history of Tamerlane. He both edited and wrote the introduction of this volume. In addition to his associations with Galland, Pétis de la Croix, and d’Arvieux, which he would tout in his later contributions to the *Mercure*, he built his credibility as an expert on the Ottoman Empire with occasional contributions to the *Mercure*, including a 1721 article on the origin of the term “la Porte Othomane.”<sup>22</sup> Eventually, in 1724, Laroque’s brother Antoine took over sole ownership of the *privilège* of the *Mercure de France*. Jean would come to be his main collaborator and an assiduous editor and contributor to the *Mercure* from this point on. This afforded the brothers a comfortable annual revenue of six to seven thousand pounds until Antoine’s death in 1744.<sup>23</sup>

Despite his lack of official recognition from the *Académie des Inscriptions et des belles-lettres*, Jean de Laroque managed to carve out a place and a voice for himself within the academic questions of the day pertaining to the Orient. He carefully cultivated a network of established scholars – Galland and Pétis – and by seeking out an editorial, rather than an authorial role, Laroque made himself both useful and recognized.

In addition to cultivating contacts in Paris, he developed a network that extended to Istanbul. For his article on the etymology of the Sublime Porte, Laroque credits the assistance of another acquaintance, Pierre Vincent Desroches. Laroque traces their friendship back to Desroches’ appointment as secretary to the Vicomte d’Andrezel who assumed the responsibilities of French ambassador to Istanbul in 1724. Eulogizing Desroches in the *Mercure de France* of September 1736, Laroque gratefully asserts that, for the aforementioned article, his friend was “able to consult the clever Turks of Constantinople on a subject that was largely suited to their expertise.” (en état de consulter les habiles Turcs de Constantinople, sur un sujet qui est fort de leur compétence.)<sup>24</sup> Laroque describes their rapport as a “literary exchange” (commerce littéraire).<sup>25</sup> According to Laroque’s eulogy, it was in part through his relationship with Desroches that he was able to extend his contacts within the *Palais de France* in Istanbul after Andrezel’s death in 1727. Meanwhile, Desroches switched patrons, moving from the embassy to the camp of the Hungarian exile Ragozy, and then back to the *Palais de France* under Villeneuve’s auspices – a move which Laroque claims to have facilitated. Desroches and the access with which he provided Laroque provided for a steady source of material on the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Laroque claims that Desroches characterized his task of translating a report on Ottoman-Safavid peace negotiations as frustrating due to, among other things, the inexactitude of their language, and “infinite repetitions as the

<sup>21</sup> “Article CX,” *Mémoires de Trévoux*, September 1717, 1475.

<sup>22</sup> Jean de Laroque, “La Porte Othomane. Explication de Ce Terme, Par Monsieur de La R\*\*\*,” *Le Nouveau Mercure*, June/July 1721, 1-15.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Todd, “La Rédaction Du ‘Mercure de France’ (1721-1744): Dufresny, Fuzelier, La Roque,” *Revue d’Histoire Littéraire de La France* 83, no. 3 (1983), 440-41.

<sup>24</sup> Jean de Laroque, “Ve LETTRE de M. D. L. R. Écrite a M. Maillart, Ancien Avocat En Parlement, Sur Quelques Sujets de Litterature.,” *Mercure de France*, September 1736, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1983.

Turks do, as unbearable as they are useless” (une infinité de repetitions à la Turquie, aussi insupportables qu’inutiles.)<sup>26</sup> These remarks, Laroque’s appreciation of their “literary exchange,” and the fact that the addressee of his last letter, after Desroches’s death in 1736, is different, point towards Desroches as being the likely recipient of Laroque’s letters on Turkish literature.

### Reading Laroque’s Turkish Literature Letters

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the content of Laroque’s letters in the *Mercure de France* arguing for the recognition of Turkish literature. Between September 1732 and July 1738 Jean de Laroque published four letters about Turkish literature in the *Mercure*. The first three letters share the heading “*Lettre sur la Littérature des Mahométans, et sur celle des Turcs en particulier*” (Letter on the Literature of the Mohammedans, and on that of the Turks in particular). Ranging in length from eight to sixteen pages in duodecimo, the letters all support Laroque’s initial contention: “The Orient has always had and still has today, Men of Letters; the Sciences and Fine Arts are cultivated there” (L’Orient a toujours eu et a encore aujourd’hui des Gens de Lettres de Profession ; on y cultive les Sciences et les Beaux-Arts).<sup>27</sup> By using the terms “Gens de Lettres de Profession,” “Sciences,” and “Beaux-Arts,” Laroque sought to incorporate the Orient into the Republic of Letters.

These letters are little known. For this reason, I provide summaries below of each of Laroque’s letters with the purpose of elucidating, first, the overarching argument Laroque makes for the recognition of Turkish literature within the Republic of Letters, and, second, the variety of practices that characterize the discourse of men of letters in the first half of the eighteenth century.

### An Overview

The first letter, from the September 1732 issue of the *Mercure*, argues against the implicit objection that there is an incompatibility between Islam and Literature. Laroque opens with the assertion that “[t]he Orient has always had and still has today, Men of Letters; the Sciences and Fine Arts are cultivated there[.]” He refers to the writings of the Quran, without citing from it. Instead, he alludes to commentary – “one of the oldest Mohammedan Doctors, said” (un des plus anciens Docteurs Mahométans, disoit) – and oral tradition.<sup>28</sup> Laroque then shifts from religious doctrine to the historical precedent set by the Arab caliphs. He extends the support for scientific inquiry and philosophy among Arab caliphs to “the other Mohammedan Princes contemporaries or successors to the Caliphs” (Les autres Princes Mahométans contemporains ou successeurs des Califes), drawing upon examples ranging from an Ottoman Grand Vizier of the early 1700s to the tenth- and eleventh-century Qarakhanid dynasty of Central Asia and an early twelfth-

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Jean de Laroque, “Extrait d’une Lettre écrite par M.D.L.R. à M\*\*\* sur la Litterature des Mahometans, et sur celle des Turcs en particulier,” *Mercure de France*, September 1732, 1933.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1933.

century ruler of Khwarizm in Iran.<sup>29</sup> In his historical argument, Laroque thus moves from the Arab caliphs to three examples from ethnic Turkic dynasties. As additional proof of the cultivation of the Turks, Laroque brings to bear diplomatic letters written by the Ottoman sultans. He then evokes the life and work of the Ottoman bibliographer and historian Katip Çelebi and his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, which – Laroque notes – may be found in the Royal Library and in those of Colbert and Pétis de la Croix *files*. Laroque closes with an exhortation to travel to the East with an open mind and appends at the end a copy of the Latin translation of a letter from the late fifteenth-century Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II to Pope Alexander VI. This first letter, then, uses an argument based on historical precedent, tracing the roots of Turkish literature through both religious sources and examples of past academies. Laroque’s letter recreates a network centered on the Royal Library, where Pétis de La Croix and Galland, his mentors, draw their manuscript evidence of the existence of Turkish literature. The very use of a letter from an Ottoman Sultan reproduces the work of the Republic of Letters, which concerned itself not only with the exchange of scholarly correspondence, but social visits where a document such as this letter by Sultan Bayazid II would have been discussed and deciphered.

The second letter, published in the *Mercure* of December 1733, focuses on the question of overcoming a French prejudice that would discount the existence of Turkish literature. The letter is addressed specifically to an unnamed correspondent based in Istanbul. Laroque recalls the prejudices with which he had himself first arrived in the Levant. He credits his interactions with Galland and Pétis de la Croix for changing his mind about the Turks. Lengthy elegies of both men follow. Laroque quotes extensively from both Galland’s preface to the *Bibliothèque Orientale* and from the Comte de Marsigli’s *Stato Militare dell’ Imperio Ottomanno*. Laroque concludes his argument by urging his correspondent to improve his Turkish, which, he writes “is not a very difficult Language and with which, I believe, you are already initiated; this would put you in a position to enter more often into this large City [...] and to learn for yourself, by consulting with Men of Letters, etc.” (qui n’est pas une Langue fort difficile, et dans laquelle je vous crois déjà initié; cela vous mettrait en état d’entrer plus souvent dans cette grand Ville [...] et de vous instruire par vous-même, en conferant avec les Gens de Lettres, &c.)<sup>30</sup> Implicit in Laroque’s counsel is the ease of access for his correspondent of Ottoman men of letters. With the term “*Gens de Lettres*,” Laroque presupposes a continuity of roles within the Republic of Letters for both Frenchmen and Ottomans.

Up to this point, then, Laroque makes few positive arguments to prove the existence of Turkish literature. He provides, rather, counterarguments to commonly held negative assumptions. Since these are based on prejudice, Laroque, maintains, an unprejudiced, better informed correspondent would be able to recognize Turkish literature. While his correspondent is in Istanbul, Laroque contends from Paris that he is nonetheless better informed about Turkish literature. This is due not only to his overcoming his prejudice, but to his social rapport with Pétis and Galland. Thus,

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1935.

<sup>30</sup> Jean de Laroque, “Seconde Lettre de M.D.L.R. Sur La Littérature Des Mahometans, et Sur Celle Des Turcs En Particulier,” *Mercure de France*, December 1733, 2827.

networks prove essential in developing an informed consensus on a subject of import to the Republic of Letters.

With the advice that his correspondent should improve his Turkish, Laroque changes the subject – roughly halfway through the letter – and broaches a linguistic quarrel. He criticizes the use of the designation *Sophi* for the Safavid emperor. Then, he changes the subject again, in order to discuss a Persian inscription from a Turkish leather portfolio sent to him by his correspondent in Istanbul. He had also received an inscribed letter seal from Turkey. After offering a translation of this inscription, Laroque lingers on the allusion to Muhammad’s wife Aisha, and provides a two-page disquisition about the figure of the Prophet’s wife. Laroque concludes the letter with the description of a sketch of the Hagia Sophia Mosque and a discussion of the water supply to the cisterns beneath the mosque. Devoted to the author’s own ruminations about language, leather, the Quran, and architecture in Istanbul, this second letter impresses upon the reader Laroque’s far-reaching connections both to a previous generation of Orientalists and to his peers currently traveling in Istanbul. The gift-giving and different curios mentioned in the letters reveal the activity of his networks and show him engaged in social interactions essential to the day-to-day of a member of the Republic of Letters.

Laroque’s third letter, appearing in February 1735, continues to lean on the reputation of Pétis de la Croix while also forefronting the importance of developing profiles of Turkish “men of letters” in order to support his assertion of the existence of Turkish literature. This letter, which trails off into a personal quarrel with Jean-Baptiste Labat, sheds light on different mechanisms of gatekeeping within the Republic of Letters. Only the first half of this letter is devoted to the subject of Turkish literature. Laroque addresses the same correspondent as in his last letter:

I notice, Monsieur, with pleasure that your prejudices on the subject of the Literature of the Muslims have diminished a bit since reading my last Letter, and that, in general, you have begun to treat them fairly; but it remains difficult for you to concede the Chapter as to the Turks [...] despite all that you can see for yourself in the Capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Je m’aperçois, Monsieur, avec plaisir que vous préjugés au sujet de la Litterature des Mahometans diminuent un peu depuis la lecture de ma dernière Lettre, et qu’en general vous commencés de leur rendre quelque justice ; mais vous avés encore de la peine à vous rendre sur le Chapitre des Turcs [...] malgré tout ce que vous pouvés voir par vous-même dans la Capitale de l’Empire Ottoman, où vous résidés[.]<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Laroque resituates the article as an ongoing dialogue between himself and an expatriate Frenchman in Istanbul. He marks changes in the attitude of the correspondent that would have taken place in the past fourteen months – ideally mirroring the progress in the views of the *Mercure*’s readers. However, he sets out his task as more specifically focused on the Turks themselves, as a people, rather than on the culture of Muslims.

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<sup>31</sup> Jean de Laroque, “Troisième Lettre de M.D.L.R. Sur La Litterature Des Mahometans, Sur Celle Des Turcs En Particulier; Et Réfutation D’un Exposé Du R.P. Labat, Dans Le III. Tome Des Memoires Du Chevalier d’Arvieux,” *Mercure de France*, February 1735, 237.



Laroque regrets that he would not have the pages with which to draft “the Literary History of this Nation, up to the present time” (l’Histoire Litteraire de cette Nation, jusqu’au tems present).<sup>32</sup> Instead, he presents only one example, that of the Abbasid-era philosopher Al-Farabi, described as “a truly savant Turk, from before the Turkish Nation had any exchange with those of Europe” (un Turc veritablement sçavant, avant que la Nation Turque eût aucun commerce avec celles de l’Europe).<sup>33</sup> The following pages consist of a reprinting of the article “FARABI” from the *Bibliothèque orientale*. Al-Farabi, who wrote on philosophy, metaphysics, physics, government, and music, adapted Aristotelian philosophy to Islamic theology, emphasizing the primacy of the notions of “being” and “oneness.”<sup>34</sup> Although al-Farabi was a tenth-century philosopher writing in Arabic, Laroque places the emphasis on the writer’s Turkic origins, referring to him as “un Turc veritablement sçavant”, “ce Turc”<sup>35</sup> and “ce sçavant Turc.”<sup>36</sup>

The choice of Laroque to cite the *Bibliothèque orientale* on al-Farabi, a philosopher writing in Arabic in the tenth-century A.D., is significant precisely because it points to a definition of the Turkish nation, channeled through Arabic historiography, that was new to French Orientalists. Originating most likely from the Transoxiana region of Central Asia, al-Farabi was not defined as ethnically Turkish in biographical sources until the thirteenth century. Sources such as Ibn Khallikan and Abu’l-feda belong to what Dimitri Gutas designates as a “pro-Turkish tradition,” that has “the purpose of documenting a Turkish ethnic origin for Fārābī[.]”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Ibn Khallikan’s entry in his biographical dictionary *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-anbā’ al-zamān* begins by designating al-Farabi as “the Turk,” (al-turkī).<sup>38</sup> Ibn Khallikan asserts that al-Farabi arrived in Baghdad speaking Turkish (and a number of other languages) but with no knowledge of Arabic.<sup>39</sup> A later source, Abu’l Fedā’s, renders this more explicit, writing “And he was a Turkish man” (wa kāna rajulan turkiyyān).<sup>40</sup> It is not surprising then that the only two biographies cited by Laroque’s source, the *Bibliothèque orientale*, are Abu’l Fedā and Ibn Khallikan.<sup>41</sup> Thus, when Laroque defines al-Farabi as “ce sçavant turc,” he unwittingly carries forward the agenda of two thirteenth-century biographers. The influence of these biographical sources is important because they echo Laroque’s very specific references to ethnically Turkish, Central Asian dynasties in his first letter. This reveals a marked departure from standard usage of “Turc” as another word for Muslim, promoting instead a distinctly ethnic and nationalist usage that has been carried forward from original source material.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>34</sup> Damien Janos, “Al-Fārābī, Philosophy,” ed. Kate Fleet et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, , [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/al-farabi-philosophy-COM\\_26962](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/al-farabi-philosophy-COM_26962).

<sup>35</sup> Laroque, “Troisième Lettre,” 239.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>37</sup> Dimitri Gutas, “FARABI I. Biography,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, December 15, 1999, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farabi-i>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt El-A’yān (Biographies of Illustrious Men)*, ed. Ihsān Abbās, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 19\_\_), 153, and for the translation: Ibn Khallikān, *Ibn Khallikan’s Biographical Dictionary*, trans. Mac Guckin de Slane, vol. 3 (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1961), 307.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā’il ibn ‘Alī, *Al-Mukhtaṣar Fī Akhbār Al-Bashar*. ([Constantinople, 1869), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.s435830.104>.

<sup>41</sup> Herbelot et al., *Bibliothèque orientale, ou, Dictionnaire universel*, 337.

To further support his argument for the existence of Turkish literature, Laroque cites as evidence the instructions given by Colbert to Pétis de la Croix  *fils*  to “apprise himself particularly of the Sciences and the Arts cultivated in the different Lands he was to visit” (de s’instruire particulièrement à l’égard des Sciences et des Arts cultivés dans les différens Pays qu’il devoit voir).<sup>42</sup> That Pétis succeeded in this mission is attested to by the official recognition he had received from the Marquis de Nointel, then ambassador to the Ottoman court.

Again, about halfway into his letter, Laroque changes the subject to a common source of confusion about the name of Ayub Sultan mosque in Istanbul, which several French travelers believed was named after the biblical Job. He uses this confusion to bring up his dispute with Labat about the latter’s recent re-edition of the memoirs of Chevalier d’Arvieux. This third letter shows Laroque’s investment in court hierarchies – both in the approbation of Pétis’s collection of manuscripts and in his argument with Labat – as a policing mechanism for the Republic of Letters.

Laroque concludes with a note about the visit of the Ottoman ambassador Mehmet Effendi, declaring that the new title accorded him of *Hadgi* was a sure sign that he was “a true Turkish savant, and a Man of Letters in all forms” (un vrai sçavant Turc, et un Homme de Lettres dans toutes les formes).<sup>43</sup> In this one letter, then, Laroque elevates the status of three “Turks” to that of exemplary men of letters: Farabi, Katip Çelebi, and the ambassador Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi.

In the fourth and final letter, published in July 1738, Laroque responds to questions that arose in response to a Turkish fable published in the *Mercure* in December 1737. Covering thirteen pages, the article takes up the subject of the fable and its explanatory footnotes and responds as well to a rumor, provoked by a report in a dispatch from the *Gazette de France*, that the Ottoman soldiers, the janissaries, were given permission to drink wine. Laroque devotes several pages to the meaning of the word *Kaïmak*, before entering into a five-page exegesis on both the Quranic prohibition of wine and the possibility that the janissaries would receive official permission for its consumption. He concludes this discussion with a Turkish proverb that allows him to return to the fable that initially inspired the letter.

Taken together, these four letters provide a richer context with which to elucidate the social and reading practices that marked the construction of knowledge about the Orient within the Republic of Letters at the time. The free flow of erudition and conversational shift from subject to subject are representative of the style found in worldly journals like the *Mercure*, which Peter France credits with playing “an essential role in the creation and maintenance of a polite culture of sociability.”<sup>44</sup> This culture of politeness served a dual function, according to France: not only did it aid with the diffusion of ideas to a wider circulation, but it also circumscribed its participants within a class of elites. Laroque invites the Turks into this culture of sociability in two steps. First, his letters demonstrate his own mastery of this culture by articulating his networks in

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<sup>42</sup> Laroque, “Troisième Lettre,” 243.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>44</sup> France, *Politeness and its Discontents*, 75.

Paris and Istanbul and highlighting his participation in the exchange and circulation of curiosities from the Ottoman Empire. Having established his own credentials, Laroque crafts a genealogical narrative around individuals and institutions – denoted as Turkish – which were instrumental in maintaining a culture of politeness. Thus, Laroque centers his definition of Turkish literature on the functions of a Turkish court. He highlights the role of the Turks in the circulation and translation of objects and texts; the maintenance of a culture of politeness and good taste, and the establishment of literary academies.

### **Text, Transaction, Translation**

In this section, I take a closer look at the circulation of objects and texts described in Laroque's letters. These reveal translation to be a core activity of the Republic of Letters that ascribes to objects their literariness. For Laroque, translation assumes the broad meaning accorded to it in Flood's *Objects of Translation*, which conceives of translation as a process that not only adds value to a given text, but also highlights the materiality of the work itself as a coveted object that reflects upon the identity of translator, the sponsoring court, and the sovereign territory alike.<sup>45</sup> In Allan's formulation, translation is the process by which an object becomes a literary text – reflective of a type of reading in which it “functions as an artifact, an index of the world from which it is seen to stem, and meaningful on account of how it fits within a world literary system.”<sup>46</sup> This system, for Laroque, is the Republic of Letters.

Laroque considered translation to be a function of courtliness and a sign of cultivation. He praises the Ottomans for the translations sponsored by the Porte. “[T]he Turks[,]” he wrote, “translated into their language the finest works of the Arabs and Persians” (les Turcs ont traduit en leur Langue les plus beaux Ouvrages des Arabes et des Persans).<sup>47</sup> But translations do not exist only at the court level; they are required within micro-level, person-to-person transactions. With the regular circulation of gifts within the Republic of Letters, each individual object requires a type of reading, or translation, that reveals its meaning both at the point of origin and in the hands of its recipient.

Possessing or seeing physical documents functions for Laroque as the conferring of legitimacy from one hand to the next. The transactions that see this legitimacy change hands ensure that knowledge is maintained within an intimate, circumscribed circle of experts: men of letters. Laroque asserts at frequent intervals his possession or proximity to the text to which he alludes. Of the diplomatic correspondence written by the Ottoman sultans and entered into evidence for the existence of Turkish literature, Laroque boasts, “I have two of them, of which one is the Turkish original, both of which cannot be found anywhere else” (J'en possède deux, dont l'une est l'original Turc, lesquelles ne se trouvent point ailleurs).<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Colbert's and Nointel's instructions and attestation of merit provided respectively to Pétis de la Croix, were the material

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<sup>45</sup> Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 7-8.

<sup>46</sup> Allan, *World Literature*, 45.

<sup>47</sup> Laroque, “Extrait d'une Lettre,” 1937.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1937.

translation of his erudition. “I have a copy” (j’ay une copie),<sup>49</sup> Laroque declared of Colbert’s written mandate. Although he did not own a copy of Nointel’s attestation, Laroque had indeed seen it: “this token, the original of which I have seen, signed *Olier de Nointel*, sealed and dated the 27 March 1679” (ce témoignage dont j’ai vû l’Original, signé *Olier de Nointel*, scellé et datté du 27. Mars 1679).<sup>50</sup> As if to compensate for not having the document under hand, Laroque provided the information on its seal – its authenticating information – in order to assure the reader that he really had seen the original. His insistence on the materiality of letters and documents, the attention to how they are dated, demonstrates that they serve a purpose beyond their written content.

The disposition towards translatability further ensures that an object, text, or person can join this circle. The gemstone seal Laroque receives is an example of how an object can lend itself to an easy translation. The seal, Laroque writes, “without a doubt, served as a Seal for some devout Muslim of distinction, because one reads these Arabic words, very well engraved in Persian characters: *Mazhar ila faiz Aichay*, meaning, *protected by the favors of Aichay*” (sans doute, servi de Cachet à quelque dévot Musulman de distinction, car on y lit ces mots Arabes, tres-bien gravez en caracteres Persans: *Mazhar ila faiz Aichay*, c’est-à-dire, *protégé par les faveurs d’Aichay*).<sup>51</sup> The literal word-for-word translation is not Laroque’s end, however. The inscription, instead, reveals the character of its former owner. It thus becomes a means to bridge the two forms of sociability: the respectable Muslim sealing letters for his correspondence and Laroque as translator of the seal imparting knowledge within his own network of correspondents (and, by extension, the readership of the *Mercure*). Moreover, Laroque adds value to the object by using it as the pretext to discuss the historical figure of Aicha, her importance in the Muslim tradition, and even her “renown” [renommé] in the political history of the Arabs.<sup>52</sup> This passage from Muslim letter writer to his seal, then to the seal’s inscription and the cultural insight it imparts illustrates the way in which gift-giving fuels scholarship in the Republic of Letters. That Laroque’s response was to decode the meaning for his correspondent reveals the debt engaged in such gift-giving – what his correspondent acquired by virtue of being in Istanbul, Laroque repaid with his erudition. The value-added of translation in these exchanges – long a common use of personal networks in the Republic of Letters – was the possibility of adding a transcultural dimension.

The curios sent to Laroque by his correspondent are no less translatable than the Ottoman manuscripts acquired officially for the Royal Library by Pétis. These manuscripts, such as Katip Çelebi’s bibliographical work *Kashf azh-Zhunun*, which was partially translated by Galland and entirely by Pétis, offered a means by which to become acquainted with Turkish Letters. More importantly, though, Turkish Literature was characterized by Laroque according to the Turks’ positive disposition toward translatability. At the close of his first letter Laroque reprints the Latin translation of a letter from the Ottoman sultan Bayazid II to Pope Alexander II. What Laroque finds particularly noteworthy in this piece of correspondence is not the eloquence of the prose,

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<sup>49</sup> Laroque, “Troisième Lettre,” 243.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>51</sup> Laroque, “Seconde Lettre,” 2830.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2831.

but rather the use of the Christian calendar to date the letter: “which can only be seen as a kind of politeness on the part of Bayazid” (qui ne peut être regardé que comme une espece de politesse de la part de Bajazet).<sup>53</sup> When the Bayazid uses the Christian calendar to date his letter, he is facilitating translation. This creates the possibility for texts from the Islamicate world to circulate within the Republic of Letters.

Translation also serves as a structuring mechanism for Laroque’s letters: it offers the possibility of discrete lessons in culture while reinforcing the writer’s broad authority to make claims about Turkish literature. In his four letters, Laroque uses the translation of a “culture-specific item”<sup>54</sup> to situate an object or aspect of Turkish culture within the context of its production. In his second letter, where he disputed the use of the word “*Sophi*” to designate the Safavid emperor, he pleaded that although “usage,” here its “conservation” through repetition, may be the determining factor in the adoption of a word into a language, enforcing appropriate vocabulary was, in this case, a matter of “History and Critique” and not merely grammar.<sup>55</sup> Thus, getting “*Sophi*” right was a matter of rendering its meaning transparent to the French (“naturalization”) and a means of refusing its exoticism. Laroque leveled similar criticism against the error made by travelers who believed that the Mosque of Ayub acquired its name because it housed the “sepulcher of the Patriarch Job” (la sépulture du Patriarche Job).<sup>56</sup> Exasperated, Laroque bemoaned the fact that so many travelers to Istanbul “were content to name this Mosque, without bothering themselves about its nomenclature, nor the historical fact that it encapsulates” (se sont contentés de nommer cette Mosquée, sans s’embarrasser de sa dénomination, ni du fait historique qu’elle renferme).<sup>57</sup> Getting the meaning of these words right represented for Laroque, broadly, getting History right.

Laroque’s ability to translate and situate the cultural and historical valences of different texts and objects were hampered by what were likely insufficient language skills. That Laroque may not have had the mastery of Oriental languages that his erudite disquisitions let on is evidenced by one of his encounters with Galland, recorded in this latter’s journal. Galland reports meeting with Laroque in January 1710 about a letter that had come into Bethune’s possession. Galland revealed to Laroque that it was the copy of a letter written by Soliman the Magnificent to François Premier.<sup>58</sup> Laroque’s request for Galland’s help reveals that, despite his arcane linguistic quarrels about the meaning of *Sophi* and other Persian and Turkish lexical items, his own knowledge of the languages of the Ottoman Empire was inadequate at best. It is, in fact, because of these limited language skills that Laroque put so much at stake on the translation and implications of individual words. Understanding the etymology of *Sophi* or *Porte Othomane* was a more manageable task than staking out arguments over large passages from manuscripts. The same can be said for Laroque highlighting the date on Bayazid’s letter rather than its

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<sup>53</sup> Laroque, “Extrait d’une Lettre,” 1937-8.

<sup>54</sup> See Javier Franco Aixelá, “Culture-Specific Items in Translation,” in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, ed. Román Álvarez and M. Carmen-África Vidal (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 52-78.

<sup>55</sup> Laroque, “Seconde Lettre,” 2828-29.

<sup>56</sup> Laroque, “Troisième Lettre,” 245.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>58</sup> Galland, *Journal*, 2:63.

turns of phrase. Whether Laroque had texts translated for him or did it himself, the activity of translation was a vital element of his transactions with other men of letters.

Translation, for Laroque, is a social transaction. It recasts the correspondence of men of letters as a linguistic exchange. The movement between languages and the circulation of letters reveal literature to be a fluid category. Its meaning emerges from the transactions between men of letters. This fluidity recalls Sonja Brentjes's depiction of the circulation of knowledge in the Republic of Letters:

The territorial, cognitive, and religious boundaries were much more flexible and permeable than their confinement to Western Europe implies. Knowledge in specific forms and appearances was a good so eagerly sought and so highly cherished that it allowed not only Oriental Christians entrance into the Republic, but also Jews, Muslims, and heathens, as individuals and as texts or other material evidence.<sup>59</sup>

Writing of the travels to the Middle East by members of the Republic of Letters, Brentjes illustrates not only the hybrid construction of knowledge in Early Modern Europe but also the equivalencies drawn among fairly distinct carriers of erudition: people, manuscripts, books, and objects such as coins and leather bags. Laroque shows us that the translatability of everything, the ability to take on new value in others' hands, allows for literature to free itself from the confines of cultural epithets.

### **Sympathy, Taste, and All the Well-learned Politesse**

Cultural differences bring with them certain prejudices, and Laroque faults prejudice for the widespread skepticism about Turkish literature. He responds to this prejudice with a portrait of the Turks that highlights the personal attributes of taste, erudition, and politeness. There is a "strange prejudice" (*une étrange préjugé*), he claims, characterized by the belief that "Mohammedism has absolutely destroyed in its Empire all that is called good taste and erudition" (*le Mahometisme a absolument détruit dans son Empire tout ce qui s'appelle bon goût et érudition*).<sup>60</sup> The elements of "good taste" (*bon goût*) and "erudition," cited here, reflect aspects of literature that are exercised socially and subject to cultivation. They are essential to the definition of Turkish Literature,

Laroque defines literature such that it may exist independent of text, as a form of personal performance of good taste, politeness, and erudition. Laroque's Istanbul-based correspondent Desroches models this type of performance. Laroque describes him as "*omnis homo*: Political, Historian, Critic, Humanist, and a singularly good Poet." (*omnis homo*: Politique, Historien, Critique, Humaniste, et singulièrement bon Poète.)<sup>61</sup> Laroque recalls fondly that Desroches "excelled especially in the style of Marot, elegant and playful, as bears witness the Song that had such a following, that it is yet to be forgotten in Paris (*excellait sur tout dans le genre Marotique, élégant et badin, témoin la Chanson*

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<sup>59</sup> Brentjes, "The Interest of the Republic of Letters in the Middle East," 465.

<sup>60</sup> Laroque, "Extrait d'une Lettre," 1933.

<sup>61</sup> Laroque, "Quelques Sujets de Litterature," 1983.

qui a tant couru, qu'on n'a point encore oubliée à Paris).<sup>62</sup> Laroque retains of Desroches the portrait of a man who was capable of displays of erudition and talent in different subjects. What he singles out to fill out this portrait is a song written early in Desroches's career that made an impression in Parisian society. Laroque's eulogy of Desroches, as a man of letters, reflects in tone and content his praise for the Turkish man of letters.

It certainly does not help Laroque's case that, as Jennifer Tsien writes in *The Bad Taste of Others*, the poet Marot and the *Mercure de France* figure among the names "that appear repeatedly as examples of bad taste to be avoided[.]"<sup>63</sup> To explain good taste, as Tsien points out, was much more difficult, but it was believed to be something that could be universally appreciated. Presenting different formulations of good taste in the first half of the eighteenth century, Tsien opposes two groups, academics who propose a "quasi-theological system of beauty"<sup>64</sup> and "*mondains*" whose "writings theorize art according to conceptions of politeness, pleasure, and elitism."<sup>65</sup> Laroque defines Turkish literature in line with this *mondain*, aristocratic conception of taste. Taste being something felt instinctively and bodily, it was a law that reason necessarily succumbed to. According to Tsien, this point of view rooted in a sensual reaction was paradoxically universal. Bad taste, then, could only be the result of impairment, prejudice or ignorance.<sup>66</sup>

The word "prejudice" (*préjugé*) returns in Laroque's second letter in December 1733. There he bemoans the fact that his correspondent shared "the general Prejudice that the Turks are of a crass ignorance, little curious to get out from it, etc." (*le Préjugé general que les Turcs sont d'une ignorance crasse, très-peu curieux d'en sortir, &c.*)<sup>67</sup> According to Laroque, this prejudice would lead to its own form of ignorance: "Prejudice, by the way, that prevents, that removes the desire to learn for oneself and to reach the discovery of the truth" (*Préjugé, pour le dire en passant, qui empêche, qui ôte l'envie de s'instruire et de parvenir à la découverte de la vérité*).<sup>68</sup> Was Jean de Laroque arguing against a straw man or was there indeed a common sentiment about the ignorance of the Turks?

Prejudice surfaces in several descriptions of the Turks with which Laroque would have been familiar. Already in 1727, hailing the establishment of a printing press at the Ottoman court, the *Journal des Savants*, then edited by the Royal Librarian Abbé Bignon, reflects a common prejudice – the belief that the Turks' religious beliefs had turned them against the sciences. The *Journal* stated, "[t]he Turks have finally cured themselves of their ridiculous prejudices toward the sciences, of which Printing is the principal support" (*Les Turcs se guérissent enfin de leurs ridicules préjugés au sujet des sciences, dont l'art de l'Imprimerie est le principal soutien*).<sup>69</sup> Another example of the belief in the ignorance of the Turks appears in the exhaustive work of criticism *Jugemens des Savans sur les*

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Jennifer Shianling Tsien, *The Bad Taste of Others: Judging Literary Value in Eighteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10642648>, 44.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-54.

<sup>67</sup> Laroque, "Seconde Lettre," 2820.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> "Nouvelles Litteraires de Constantinople," *Journal des Savants*, February 1727, 121.

*principaux ouvrages des auteurs*, first published in the 1680s but reprinted in the 1720s and consulted by Laroque. Adrien Baillet wrote:

Many have remarked that the progress of the Sciences and the Arts ordinarily follows that of Arms. This is a reflexion they have made on the History of the state of the Greeks, the Romans, and even the Arabs, and one can say that it is verified still today by our Monarchy. But it is difficult for one to make of it a universal rule, since the prodigious success of Ottoman arms has not yet been followed by a similar effect up until now.

Plusieurs ont remarqué que le progrès des Sciences & des Arts suit ordinairement celui des Armes. C'est une reflexion qu'ils ont faite sur l'Histoire de l'état des Grecs, des Romains & des Arabes même, & on peut dire qu'elle se vérifie encore aujourd'hui dans notre Monarchie. Mais il est difficile qu'on en puisse faire une règle universelle, puisque le succès prodigieux des armes Ottomanes n'a été encore suivi d'aucun effet semblable jusqu'ici.<sup>70</sup>

Part of his first volume “Des Préjugés,” this statement about the Ottomans serves as a preamble to Baillet’s analysis of different prejudices held regarding authors based on national origin, but only encompassing those nations that belong to “the informed world” (le monde savant).<sup>71</sup> In his section “Des Orientaux,” Baillet included Jews, Egyptians, Arabs, Persians, and Indians, but not Turks. Thus, *Jugemens des Savans* confirmed a long-held belief reiterated by Laroque that “since the conquests of the Turks in the Levant, especially since the fall of Constantinople, this Nation, that one always assumes to be an enemy of Letters and scholarship, has abolished all type of science and erudition over in that Country” (depuis les conquêtes des Turcs dans le Levant, sur tout depuis la prise de Constantinople, cette Nation, qu’on suppose toujours ennemie des Lettres et des études, a aboli toute espece de science et d’érudition en ce Pays-là).<sup>72</sup> According to Baillet, the military dominance of the Ottomans only serves to emphasize their lack of curiosity and ignorance. Laroque recasts Baillet’s point, and frames his own contention on the favorable terms of “science and erudition.” Laroque’s definition of Turkish literature encompasses both the innate elitism of “good taste” and the active cultivation of knowledge. Influenced by his readings of Baillet, Laroque highlights the importance of taste as a qualifying criterion for nations’ membership in the Republic of Letters.

One way of revealing good taste and erudition is through politeness. Again addressing European criticism of the Turks, Laroque criticizes a double standard: “Where does one not find even in Europe, rudeness of manners and ignorance? One also finds taste, Politesse, and Erudition, when nothing prevents one from seeking it” (Où ne trouve-t-on pas dans l’Europe même, de la rusticité et de l’ignorance? On trouve aussi du goût, de la Politesse, et de l’Erudition, quand rien n’empêche d’en chercher).<sup>73</sup> Here, Laroque pleads for the universality of both ignorance and good taste. They are found alike in Europe and in the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>70</sup> Baillet, *Jugemens des savans.*, 1:78.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Laroque, “Extrait d’une Lettre,” 1936.

<sup>73</sup> Laroque, “Seconde Lettre,” 2827-8.



In opposition to coarseness and ignorance, Laroque defines the qualities of a man of letters. These qualities – taste, politeness, and erudition – are rooted in attitude and manners. We see in Laroque’s description of Desroches these qualities cultivated and memorably on display through his popular Parisian song. I bring up the portrait of Desroches, because Laroque extends the same elements to his portraits of Turkish men of letters.

Laroque situates his portraits of Turkish men of letters within court settings. There is first, as mentioned above, the question of the graciousness shown by Sultant Bayazid II, who had dated his letter to the Pope according to the Christian calendar. As shown above, Laroque believes this can only be interpreted “as a kind of politeness.” Other Turks who earn such praise from Laroque include Katip Çelebi and the more ambiguously Turkish, Abbasid-era Islamic philosopher Al-Farabi. Of Katip Çelebi, Laroque describes him as “the first attaché of the Chief Secretary of State of the Ottoman Court” (premier Commis du Secretaire d’Etat en Chef de la Cour Ottomane) and “one of the cleverest men of his time” (un des plus habiles hommes de son temps).<sup>74</sup> Al-Farabi’s writings are given summary treatment by Laroque, especially compared with the lengthy narration of his appearance at the court of Sayf Al-Dawlat, a prince of the Hamdanid dynasty in tenth century Aleppo. There, by playing the *oud* he “put the entire Assembly into such a good mood, that they all began to laugh full-throatedly; after which, having another Tune sung, he made them all cry” (il mit toute l’Assemblée en si belle humeur, qu’ils se mirent tous à rire à gorge déployée; après quoi, faisant chanter une autre Piece, il les fit tous pleurer).<sup>75</sup> The affect of Farabi’s appearance at the court is evocative of aristocratic politeness and good taste. The spontaneous emotional response of Farabi’s audience suggests that his talent has tapped into a universal vein of beauty and feeling. That Farabi is valued here, for his worldly performance and not his writings, confirms that the notion of literature prized by Laroque reveals itself through the mastery of the conventions of sociability.

This ability to evoke varied registers beyond what the written page alone could fully convey is the mark of Laroque’s men of letters. The musical memory of Desroches and the versatile style of Farabi each point to an appeal to good taste and the social conventions of the court – even if the participants, like Laroque, al-Farabi, and Desroches themselves, were outsiders to this milieu.<sup>76</sup>

By articulating a definition of literature that was consistent with politeness and good taste, Laroque invoked a worldly common ground that favored the integration of the Turk into the Republic of Letters. The encounter of the polite Turk was not so far removed that it required Laroque to have recourse to the holdings of the Royal Library. In an account from the *Mercure* of 1717, a dispatch from Toulon describes a visit with a Turkish ambassador during his quarantine: “We go almost every day to smoke with him and to drink his Coffee. He’s a very polite Turk, who understands French and speaks it a

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<sup>74</sup> Laroque, “Extrait d’une Lettre,” 1938.

<sup>75</sup> Laroque, “Troisième Lettre,” 240. This anecdote, cited from the *Bibliothèque orientale*, was drawn from Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt El-A’yān*, 155.

<sup>76</sup> Laroque, the son of Marseilles merchants, sought entry into the Parisian academic milieu and was dependent on his relationship with the Marquis de Bethune to cultivate his Parisian networks, until his brother obtained the *privilege* for the *Mercure*. Desroches switched patrons several times in Istanbul. Al-Farabi is portrayed as the itinerant Turkish philosopher who found favor at the illustrious court of Sayf al-Dawlat in Aleppo.

little” (Nous allons presque tous les jours fumer avec lui, & boire de son Caffé. C'est un Turc très poli, qui entend le François & le parle un peu).<sup>77</sup> This politeness came at a cost, as the naval quartermaster delegated by the administrators of Marseille noted, writing to request more money for the envoy's path from Toulon to Paris, since the Ottoman, “Mehmet Baarin Aga,” had a habit of “making gifts of Coffee, Tobacco, and drinks to all those who came to meet him.” (faisant presentes du Caffé, du Tabac, et des boissons à tous ceux qui se presentent.)<sup>78</sup> Practices of sociability were the precondition to the display of erudition. While the Republic of Letters, as framed by Laroque, remained universal, it was not concentric with the circle of Parisian scholarly society. The next section will discuss how Laroque crossed this threshold.

### Star (and Crescent) Academy

In *The Bad Taste of Others*, Tsien shows how the *gens de lettres* were positioned as “gatekeepers of all disciplines” to manage the overabundance of books made possible through print.<sup>79</sup> With new avenues of expertise, the men of letters were called upon to “discern the good from the bad.”<sup>80</sup> Laroque's letters provide a blueprint for how expertise about the Orient was constructed at a time when many of the institutions that enabled the transmission of texts, artifacts, and people between Paris, Marseille and Istanbul had been adequately established. There were positions of Royal Interpreters; Professorships designated to the instruction of Arabic and Persian; Abbé Bignon was firmly ensconced in the Royal Library and had sent a number of missions to the Echelles du Levant to ferret out Byzantine and Oriental manuscripts; the *Écoles des Jeunes de Langue* in Istanbul had begun training interpreters and translators for the French Crown; and the *Compagnie des Indes orientales* opened up trade beyond the Mediterranean extending to the Indian Ocean. Travel accounts, networks with prominent Orientalists, and exotic merchandise all provided means to diffuse information about the Orient to the French Republic of Letters. Given the opening of these various channels for developing expertise, there was an equal need for men of letters to police and consecrate what stood for legitimate knowledge. This policing constituted the active exercise of “erudition” that Laroque promotes in his letters. The two mechanisms for creating this erudition were the social networks of the Republic of Letters and the establishment of academies, which allowed for a court-sanctioned production of erudition.

Laroque highlights the role of his own social networks in cultivating his knowledge. He credits Pétis de la Croix and Galland both with educating him on the subject of Turkish literature. They are for him “the company I have long kept with several elite savants of Oriental erudition, who had spent a part of their life [there] with a great reputation of virtue and love for the truth” (le long commerce que j'ai eû avec plusieurs sçavans d'élite en érudition orientale, qui ont passé une partie de leur vie dans une haute

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<sup>77</sup> “A Toulon...,” *Le Nouveau Mercure*, August 1717, 176.

<sup>78</sup> “Letter from Toulon,” July 4, 1717, J 1564, Archives de la Chambre de commerce de Marseille (ACCM).

<sup>79</sup> Tsien, *Bad Taste of Others*, 23.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

réputation de vertu, et d'amour pour la vérité).<sup>81</sup> But Pétis's own erudition was consecrated, as Laroque mentions, by the official approbation issued by Colbert and the ambassador Nointel. By asserting his own proximity to Pétis, Laroque claims by extension this approbation.

The capacity of social networks to maintain and abide by hierarchies cannot be overemphasized. Laroque's Republic of Letters, though bound by politeness, also requires that sanctioned expertise radiate outward from the court. Laroque's dispute with Jean-Baptiste Labat is instructive in this regard. Laroque criticizes Labat's reedition of Laurent d'Arvieux's memoirs. First, he indicates that Labat has left uncorrected factual errors in his own version of the memoirs. He criticizes gaps in the author's description of Istanbul and chastises d'Arvieux for misinterpreting the meaning of the name "Stamboul."<sup>82</sup> Then, he offers some faint praise to Labat's new edition – "it's a work that deserves to cross the sea" (c'est un Ouvrage qui mérite de passer la Mer).<sup>83</sup> What rankles Laroque however, is Labat's insinuation that his own 1717 edition of d'Arvieux's memoirs was misleading. Gesturing towards the popularity and clarity of style of Laroque's edition of d'Arvieux's memoirs, Labat writes that he may have just tabled his plan for the third volume:

This cautioned me to refer to the Account of M. de la Roque, what I would have had to say following the order of the original Memoirs that I have in my hands, without daring to hope that the Public would greet my edition as well as that of this esteemed Writer. I would have done so, if some people to whom I owe respect had not made me understand that I should not allow Public to linger in the mistaken beliefs that the Account of M. de la Roque had left it with, and that I was under an obligation to disabuse it.

Cela m'avertissoit de renvoyer à la Relation de M. de la Roque, ce que j'en devois dire en suivant l'ordre des Mémoires originaux que j'ai entre les mains, ne devant pas esperer que le Public reçût celle que je lui donnerois aussi bien que celle de ce célèbre Ecrivain. J'aurais pris ce parti, si des personnes à qui je dois du respect ne m'avoient fait comprendre que je ne devois pas laisser le Public dans l'erreur où la Relation de M de la Roque l'a jetté, & que j'étois dans l'obligation de le détromper.<sup>84</sup>

Labat impugns the reliability of Laroque's edition, published eighteen years earlier, and which, he contends misrepresented the order of d'Arvieux's travels. One can glean from Labat's accusation the minor acclaim Laroque benefitted from as a writer. Yet, Labat also dismisses Laroque as being merely that: a "writer." The use of the word "Ecrivain" in

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<sup>81</sup>Laroque, "Seconde Lettre," 2821.

<sup>82</sup>Laroque, "Troisième Lettre," 248.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>84</sup>Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires Du Chevalier d'Arvieux, Envoyé Extraordinaire Du Roy À La Porte, Consul d'Alep, d'Alger, de Tripoli et Autres Échelles Du Levant : Contenant Ses Voyages À Constantinople, Dans l'Asie, La Syrie, La Palestine, l'Égypte et La Barbarie.... T. 3 / Recueillis... de Ses Mémoires Originaux et Mis En Ordre Par Le R. P. Jean-Baptiste Labat...*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Labat, 6 vols. (Paris: Charles-Jean-Baptiste Delespine, 1735), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k104925n, 3:2>.

Labat's foreword to the third volume is pointed and seeks to separate the expertise and erudition –assumed by Labat himself – from the activity of the journalist.

This is not a characterization to which Laroque takes kindly. In response to Labat's veiled reference to "people to whom I owe respect" (des personnes à qui je dois du respect), Laroque responds vehemently that "there is not a least trace of permission nor approbation from his Superiors, who on the contrary particularly disapproved the Point that has given rise to this article in my Letter" (il n'y a pas le moindre vestige de permission ni d'approbation de ses Superieurs, lesquels au contraire ont desapprouvé en particulier l'Endroit qui donne lieu à cet article dans ma Lettre).<sup>85</sup> Dismissing a formulation of "respect" that would parallel Labat's, Laroque speaks more directly, alluding to Labat's superiors. Laroque could have relied on the tribune offered by his editorial work for the *Mercure*. This is not sufficient, however, and Laroque seeks to implicate himself within the hierarchies of the court and the academies. Laroque appeals, thus, to a tightly controlled model for the dissemination of knowledge.

Laroque's advocacy for the Academy of Marseilles is instructive in this regard. His investment in the project was born from the consciousness that his (and d'Arvieux's) place of origin was excluded from the Republic of Letters. The absence of an academy in Marseilles represented to Laroque an obstacle to Marseilles' recognition as a city that could contribute to the Republic of Letters. Implicitly, Laroque presages Pascale Casanova's *World Republic of Letters* geographic configuration of Paris as the capital and arbiter of the Republic of Letters.<sup>86</sup> Laroque saw Marseille excluded much like Istanbul from this territory of intellectual exchange. Yet the association between Marseille and Istanbul was not merely by analogy, but palpably through trade and, as illustrated above, the function of receiving and caring for Ottoman envoys to Paris. Moreover, trade, as shown by Takeda, was considered to have a corrupting influence on the sciences and arts. Laroque was duly concerned, then, that the easy flow of merchant vessels between Marseilles and other ports along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean was obstructing his aspirations for his city. The counterargument he came up with, and issued both as a tract and in a letter to the *Mémoires de Trevoux*, was that Marseille has always maintained a culture of trade and sciences together:

Marseilles has always been a maritime city and one of great trade; and Marseilles has not failed to cultivate Letters, to have a renown Academy, and to produce over the ages pertinent subjects for the Sciences. Besides, what veritable incompatibility can one find between commerce and literature? Without recalling here the examples from Antiquity, that of the number of Germans, Flemish, English, Dutch, and Italians, etc. who have equally succeeded, even jointly, in both trade and the study of Letters, destroys [sic] this supposed incompatibility.

Marseille a été de tous tems ville maritime & d'un grand commerce ; & Marseille n'a pas laissé de cultiver les Lettres, d'avoir une fameuse Académie, & de produire dans tous les tems des sujets propres pour les Sciences. D'ailleurs, quelle

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<sup>85</sup> Laroque, "Troisième Lettre," 251-2.

<sup>86</sup> See Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 82-91, and 127-31.

incompatibilité véritable & nécessaire trouve-t-on entre le commerce & la littérature ? Sans rappeler ici les exemples de l'Antiquité, celui de quantité d'Allemands, de Flamands, d'Anglois, de Hollandois, d'Italiens, &c. qui ont réussi également, & même conjointement, dans le commerce & dans l'étude des Lettres, détruit cette prétendue incompatibilité.<sup>87</sup>

Laroque argues both by historical precedent and, notably, by comparison. Signaling the coexistence of trade and literature in the contemporaneous examples of the English, the Dutch and others, Laroque brings into evidence the fallacy of the belief in the incompatibility of literature and trade. He also argues by precedence that Marseilles, having always had a tradition of both literature and trade, would have thus maintained that culture. The only missing element between the Marseilles of antiquity and the city of his eighteenth-century present was the former academy of Marseilles, which Laroque proposed to resurrect. For Laroque, then, an academy of letters is necessary for the consecration of the work of men of letters.

Laroque's letter in the *Mémoires de Trévoux* in support of the establishment of an academy was centered on the historical precedence of the arts and letters in Marseilles, for which the academy of Antiquity played a pivotal role. Addressing what he saw as the same misperception of the tradition of arts and sciences in the Ottoman Empire, he made an analogous argument. In his earliest plea for recognition of the Turkish cultivation of letters and sciences, Laroque draws upon an arcane historical precedent. Drawing upon the histories of different Central Asian dynasties in his first letter on Turkish literature, Laroque provides examples of academies that thrived under their empire. Of the Qarakhanid dynasty, he cites the example of "Kedder Khan, who reigned in Transoxiana or Turkestan in the fifth century of the Hijra" (Kedder Kan, qui regnoit dans la Transoxane, ou le Turkestan, dans le Ve Siècle de l'Hégire).<sup>88</sup> According to Laroque:

He had formed an Academy that was assembled in his presence, being himself seated on a raised platform, at the foot of which were three large basins full of gold and silver that he distributed to the Academy members according to the value and the merit of their works. This Prince always had at his court a hundred or so elite scholars who accompanied him everywhere and to whom he conferred large pensions.

Il avoit formé une Académie qui s'assembloit en sa présence, étant assis sur une Estrade élevée, au pied de laquelle étoient quatre grands bassins remplis d'or et d'argent, qu'il distribuoit aux Académiciens, suivant le prix et le mérite de leurs Ouvrages. Ce Prince avoit toujours à sa Cour une centaine de Sçavans d'élite, qui l'accompagnoient partout, et auxquels il donnoit de grosses pensions.<sup>89</sup>

As for the Khawarzmian prince, Atsiz, "he often assembled an academy in the middle of his court to discuss *Belles Lettres*, and he rewarded scholars according to their merit and that of their productions" (Il assembloit souvent au milieu de sa Cour une Académie pour

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<sup>87</sup> Laroque, "Projet d'établir une Académie," 142-3.

<sup>88</sup> Laroque, "Extrait d'une Lettre," 1935.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 1935-36.

conferer sur les Belles Lettres, et il récompensoit les Sçavans suivant leur mérite et celui de leurs productions).<sup>90</sup> It is unmistakable from these descriptions that the Turkic rulers of over five hundred years before Laroque's time had anticipated precisely the model of erudition propagated by the academies established by Colbert and whose proceedings were frequently reported on in the French-speaking periodicals. Laroque lauds Colbert for recognizing the importance of seeking out Turkish literature through Pétis's agency. Here he also praises, though in Turkish garb, the system of pensions set in place by the Academy of Inscription to distribute patronage and foster a court-sanctioned culture of letters and sciences. That this model would be translated retrospectively into a genealogy of Turkish institutions of poetry and knowledge testifies to Laroque's conviction that the role of producing literature is guaranteed by the court.

The example of Al-Farabi used by Laroque also emphasizes the necessity of Court patronage: "[Farabi] first came to the Court of this Prince, where there was always a great competition of Men of Letters" ([Farabi] vint d'abord à la Cour de ce Prince, chez lequel il y avoit toujours un grand concours de Gens de Lettres).<sup>91</sup> The academy as an institution, then, frames Laroque's discussion of Turkish and Arabic learning around the relationship between men of letters and the court.

Laroque was not the first to translate the academy into the Ottoman milieu. Pétis de la Croix, in his manuscript translation of Katip Çelebi's *Kashf azh-zhunun*, comes upon the Arabic word "*ma šar*" used by poets and authors to address a group of their peers or a group of elites, and translates it as "Academy" after tentatively considering "society."<sup>92</sup> In a side-by-side translation, Pétis takes "*anā usarraytuhu ilā ma šari akābir il- 'ulimā*" (I have confided it to the esteemed assembly of the greatest of scholars) and translates it as "I have dedicated [this work] to the ~~societ~~ Academy of the most perfect scholars" (Je l'ay dedié a l'~~a societ~~ Academie des Scavans les plus parfaits).<sup>93</sup> Unsure as to how best to translate the notion of an elite group of scholars, Pétis uses the most readily available analogy from the French model for producing knowledge. Further in his translation, where Katip Çelebi defines the science of *adab* – what we might call the science of literature – Pétis transliterates the heading "*ylm aladab*," and in turn translates it as "the science of Arabic *belles lettres*" (science des belles lettres Arabes). Pétis adds a note for the reader in the margin of the page that refers to "the science of the arabesque Academy" (la science de l'Academie arabesque).<sup>94</sup> It is not surprising that Laroque learned from Pétis, whose translation of Çelebi he mentions in the *Mercur*. This understanding of *adab* – "literature," in the work of an Ottoman polymath writing in Arabic – made its way to France both literally through the activity of academies and metaphorically, due to the paradigm of literary creation that consisted in elite, court-centered, academic activity.

If this understanding of Turkish literature did not begin with Laroque, neither did it end with him. A translation of Italian traveler Giambattista Toderini's *De la Littérature*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 1936.

<sup>91</sup> Laroque, "Troisième Lettre," 239.

<sup>92</sup> Mustafa ibn Abdullah Katip Çelebi, "Kashf uz-h-zhunūn 'an asāmī'l-kutūb wa'l-funūn, « Qui dissipe les erreurs en ce qui concerne les titres des livres et la nature des diverses branches de la science », Accompagné d'une traduction française," trans. François Pétis de La Croix (Paris, 1703 1702), Arabe 4462, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

*de Turcs* (first published in 1787) reached France in 1789; he brought to a new generation many of the same arguments made by Laroque in the 1730s. Of his three volumes, in fact, the second was almost entirely devoted to the illustration of the merits of different “Turkish Academies.” Using a familiar argumentative style, Toderini hails the Ottomans, asserting that:

Even before the taking of Constantinople, the Ottoman princes made this generous disposition shine, by founding, at a level just as noble, and among the tumult of arms and in the middle of the ferocity of wars, many academies of literature and religion.

Avant même la prise de Constantinople, les princes ottomans firent éclater cette généreuse inclination, en fondant, sur un plan aussi noble, parmi le tumulte des armes & au milieu de la férocité des guerres, beaucoup d'académies de littérature & de religion.<sup>95</sup>

Toderini, then, reprises Laroque’s historical arguments, reaching past beyond the conquest of Constantinople in order to establish the precedent of academic activity and, by extension, the cultivation of literature among the Turks. By the time Toderini’s Turkish literature was published in France, in fact, Laroque would not have been insulted to be considered a “writer,” as Labat called him, rather than a man of letters. Reaching France at the cusp of the Revolution, Toderini’s detailed descriptions of Turkish academies appear blithely unaware of the transformations of the Republic of Letters. The same arguments of historical precedence and courtliness could no longer obtain for the Turks a place in this new republic.

## Discussion

What the distance separating Toderini, Laroque, and even Pétis shows us is the natural fit that the academic model and elite discourses of politeness and taste held for Turkish literature. When the understanding of literature is at its most dynamic and fluid, the passage from one shore of the Mediterranean to the next is similarly easy. When everything can be translated into text, there is no need to form criteria of judgment about a given piece of writing or philosophical tract. Laroque, writing in the *Mercure* does not show an awareness to the distinction traced by Anne Goldgar between “the erudite and *mondain* public” that parallels an emerging class of *belles-lettrists* – writers – writing “literature” that emerged from outside the communal realm of the Republic of Letters.<sup>96</sup> Laroque’s definitions of both Turk and Literature remain worldly and erudite. He draws upon beliefs about good taste and politeness, and relies upon the elite regulation of both to maintain the easy circulation of Turks within the Republic of Letters.

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<sup>95</sup> Giambattista Toderini, *De La Littérature Des Turcs*, trans. M. l’abbé de Cournand, 3 vols. (Paris: Chez Poinçot, 1789), 2:2.

<sup>96</sup> Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 231.

In Laroque's account, however, Turkish men of letters draw their legitimacy from the policing of a Turkish court – or, rather, courts – that are imagined reflections of France. Although Laroque boasts of an intimacy with the Ottomans gained both through his family's commercial ties and his own commerce with the Orientalists Pétis and Galland, he chooses to reflect an unfamiliar territory. It is not enough for Laroque to tie together a Mediterranean past in which Marseilles and Istanbul share a common tradition of cultivating the letters and sciences. His definition of Turkish literature, rather, unravels those ties, and substitutes for an account of the Ottoman court and its history models of Parisian sociability. Thus, by asserting for Turkish literature a place in the European Republic of Letters, he walls off the Ottomans from their own traditions.



## CHAPTER III

### People before Print

#### *Gens de Lettres*, the Ottoman Printing Press, and the search for Turkish Literature

##### Introduction

In this chapter, I examine French reactions to the Ottoman printing press, arguing that, although print was central to the discourse about the Ottomans' capacity to create literature, it was at the same time ancillary to the actual activities of the Republic of Letters, especially where defining Turkish literature was concerned. These activities constituted a system for generating and sharing knowledge and included the cataloguing of manuscripts, personal correspondence, and other interpersonal interactions. I trace here two parallel narratives: first, that of the French reception of the printing press and, second, the efforts of a French diplomat to define Turkish literature a decade later. Read together, these narratives reveal that both beliefs about print and interactions between French and Ottoman intellectuals spoke to anxieties about the integration of the Turkish subject into the European Republic of Letters. Without the context of the broader aim of the search for Turkish literature, the story of print at the Ottoman court disproportionately emphasizes a narrative of Europeanization.

This chapter brings into focus how early accounts of the press reflect beliefs both about the transfer of knowledge from Europe to the Orient and about reason and religion in the Islamic world. The advent of print at the Ottoman court was greeted in France as the triumph of learning over Islamic prejudice. The reputations of Said Mehmed Effendi and Ibrahim Müteferrika, the founders of the press, largely contributed to the portrayal of print as exterior to Ottoman culture. The current privileged position of the bicultural intermediary in Mediterranean Studies has compounded this perception of the press as a disruptive technology transfer. The establishment of the Ottoman printing press, however, must be reconsidered within a number of continuities: the correspondence, cataloguing of manuscripts, and interpersonal interactions that constituted a system for generating and sharing knowledge in the Republic of Letters well into the eighteenth century.

I show that different narratives of the press's inception and the lives of its founders reveal two major preoccupations of the French Republic of Letters: on the one hand, the integration of the Ottomans into a universalist community and, on the other, the compatibility of Literature and Islam. Although print was central to the *discourse* about the possibility of Ottomans to create literature, I argue that it was at the same time ancillary to the actual *activities* of the Republic of Letters, especially where defining Turkish literature was concerned. The correspondence of Charles de Peyssonnel, secretary to two successive French ambassadors to Istanbul from 1735 to 1747,<sup>1</sup> in fact,

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<sup>1</sup> Biographical information on Peyssonnel may be found in Henri Auguste Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), 2.740n2 and Anne Mézin, *Les Consuls de*

reveals a notion of literature rooted in the ways individuals lived and learned. The major contribution of this chapter, then, is to situate the different narratives about the Ottoman printing press within contemporary discourses about the construction of literature.

### The Ottoman Printing Press and the Republic of Letters

In 1726 Ibrahim Müteferrika, a Hungarian-born Ottoman bureaucrat, and Said Mehmed Effendi, the son of the former Ottoman ambassador to France, obtained the Sultan's permission to establish a court-sponsored printing press using Arabic movable type. The first book, a Turkish translation of an Arabic grammar manual, was issued three years later. Copies of the next fifteen publications were provided to the Marquis de Villeneuve, the French ambassador, who shipped them to the Comte de Maurepas, French minister of the Navy, for inclusion in the Royal Library.<sup>2</sup>

The introduction of print at the Ottoman court was received by members of the French *Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres* with great enthusiasm.<sup>3</sup> News quickly spread of the press to the broader Republic of Letters through the major periodicals, the *Gazette de France*, the *Journal des Savants*, and the *Mercure de France*.<sup>4</sup> The establishment of the press was hailed in these accounts as a breakthrough for the production of knowledge in the realm of the Muslim Turks – an advance that, the French believed, had previously been held back by an Islamic prohibition. The *Mercure* rejoiced, “[t]he Mufti no longer opposes this Enterprise, of which he recognizes the usefulness to the Nation” ([I]e Mufti ne s’oppose plus à cette Entreprise dont il reconnoit l’utilité pour la Nation 2916).<sup>5</sup> In the absence of a print culture, French scholars contended, the Turks could have no Literature – a word that encompassed both letters and sciences.

In *Paper before Print*, Jonathan Bloom puts the European Print revolution in context by identifying the making of paper as its own revolution in the way knowledge was fashioned and spread. Focusing first on its use at the Abbasid court to create manuscripts, he shows how its adoption in Europe facilitated the rapid expansion of print. Bloom argues for a reevaluation of the contribution of paper to how knowledge is

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*France au siècle des Lumières (1715-1792)* (Paris: Ministère des affaires étrangères, Direction des archives et de la documentation, 1998), 487-90.

<sup>2</sup> For a general overview of the Müteferrika press and the French interest in its production see Henri Omont, ed., *Documents sur l'imprimerie à Constantinople au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1895) and *Nouveaux documents sur l'imprimerie à Constantinople au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1926); Wahid Gdoura, *Le Début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie: Évolution de l'environnement culturel, 1706-1787* (Tunis: Université de Tunis, Institut supérieur de documentation, 1985); G. Duverdier, “Savary de Brèves et Ibrahim Müteferrika : Deux drogmans culturels à l’origine de l’imprimerie turque,” *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, no. 3 (1987): 322–59; Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 108-15; Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 215-23; and Maurits H. van den Boogert, “The Sultan’s Answer to the Medici Press? Ibrahim Müteferrika’s Printing House in Istanbul,” in *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, ed. Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert, and Bart Westerweel (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005), 265–90.

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire de l’Académie Royale Des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Avec Les Mémoires de Littérature Tirés Des Registres de Cette Académie*, vol. 7 (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1733), 2.

<sup>4</sup> “De Constantinople,” *Gazette de France*, January 18, 1727, 25-26; “Nouvelles Littéraires de Constantinople,” *Journal Des Savants*; and “Untitled,” *Mercure de France*, January 1727, 122.

<sup>5</sup> “Untitled,” *Mercure de France*, December 1729, 2916.

fashioned, pointing out that, “Islam's ‘failure’ to accept printing has often been seen as the key moment when the rough parity that had existed among all these cultures began to dissolve and the once-great Islamic civilization began to ‘decline[.]’”<sup>6</sup>

The portrayal of the Ottomans as latecomers to print feeds into more generalized discourses about Islam, modernity, and secularism. Talal Asad, in *Formations of the Secular*, draws out the arguments of European historians of Egypt who portray “the spread of printing and the emergence of a reading public as critical developments” of a secular culture.<sup>7</sup> Both Bloom and Asad critique narratives that link print to modernity to the extent that they rely on a definition of progress that parallels Europeanization. Asad further shows how the secular, in particular, is defined to exclude the Muslim from the idea of Europe:

The de-essentialization of Islam is paradigmatic for all thinking about the assimilation of non-European peoples to European civilization. The idea that people’s historical experience is inessential to them, that it can be shed at will, makes it possible to argue more strongly for the Enlightenment’s claim to universality: Muslims, as members of the abstract category “humans,” can be assimilated or (as some recent theorists have put it) “translated” into a global (“European”) civilization once they have divested themselves of what many of them regard (mistakenly) as essential to themselves. The belief that human beings can be separated from their histories and traditions make it possible to urge a Europeanization of the Islamic world.<sup>8</sup>

Integration, then, passes through a process of casting off what is Islamic and adopting European norms. The notion held by the French that Islam prohibited print led to the printing press being portrayed in precisely this light – the move was made by the Ottomans to shed Islamic superstitions and adopt print from the Europeans, thereby joining the universal Republic of Letters.

This conventional narrative of the introduction of print at the Ottoman court remains influential today.<sup>9</sup> How accurate, though, was this portrayal of print as a civilizational frontier to the beliefs and behavior of the Republic of Letters? Although vaguely defined since its emergence in the fifteenth century, the Republic of Letters refers not only to a community of scholars and gentlemen preoccupied with the collection of knowledge derived from diverse sciences and texts, but also to the body of knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 217.

<sup>7</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 222-25.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-70.

<sup>9</sup> Gdoura, *Le Début de L'imprimerie Arabe*; Göçek, *East Encounters West*, and Jenny Mander, “Turkish Delight?: Confecting Entertainment for Ottoman Guests in Eighteenth-Century France,” *L'Esprit Créateur* 53, no. 4 (2013): 139-51, doi:10.1353/esp.2013.0041, for example, point towards the embassy of Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi to Paris in 1721 as the origin point of the transfer of print technology to the Sublime Porte, a claim which presupposes an Ottoman Empire that had been largely heretofore sealed off from Europe giving the embassy itself the force of a cultural breakthrough. The notion that the Ottomans were intellectually closed off to the cultures of Europe prior to the nineteenth century is advanced most notably in Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982).

constituted from this process of accumulation.<sup>10</sup> It is defined figuratively by the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* as “men of letters in general, understood as if they made up one body[.]”<sup>11</sup> Three other characteristics are essential to understanding how the question of Turkish print came to concern the Republic of Letters: first, its dynamic dimension as the product of actual “letters,” or the correspondence of its constituent members; further, its institutional and material iterations in the form of libraries, periodicals, and regional and royal academies. The *Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres* founded by Colbert in 1666 was an example of the latter. While constituting a group of erudites who believed themselves to be involved in an egalitarian enterprise, the members of the academy also benefitted from the sanction of the monarchy through a system of pensions. Finally, members of the Republic of Letters were not necessarily professional writers.

The question of the ability of the European Republic of Letters to integrate the Other has long preoccupied scholars. Pascale Casanova attempts to proffer a broad theory of the integration of different nations within a “world literary space” that constitutes the focus of *The World Republic of Letters*. This space is constructed through a relationship of domination and subordination in which “the richest spaces are also the oldest[.]”<sup>12</sup> In Casanova’s account, France’s “literary capital” earned through its national literary history “imposed itself as universal.”<sup>13</sup> This delineation of power within the Republic of Letters reinforces by design the notion of a cultural lag between France and the Ottoman Empire. After all, if the Ottomans only acquired literature with the advent of the printed book, their “national literature” would in fact be much younger. However, Casanova’s theory rests on a literary history extrapolated from a contemporary market of literary value rooted in the circulation of the printed book. As the title of this chapter asserts, however, the concern of the Republic of Letters at the time of the establishment of the Ottoman print was not the book but the man of letters. The relationship of center to periphery and dominant to dominated, between Paris and Istanbul, then, must be reevaluated in light of this measure.

There is a rich field of scholarship focused on the relationships among individuals within the Republic of Letters across cultural and confessional divides. Lorraine Daston introduces the question of the receptivity to and translation of foreignness within the Republic of Letters, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in “The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment.”<sup>14</sup> Daston illustrates the various articulations of the principle of impartiality among men of letters over this period in order to enable the affiliation of Protestants and foreign subjects.

Works by Sonja Brentjes, Nicholas Dew and Jocelyne Dakhlia have sought to elucidate this question more precisely through the prism of relations between European scholars

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<sup>10</sup> Bots and Waquet, *La République des Lettres*, 23-27, outlines several key characteristics of the Republic of Letters. My definition also relies on Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, which distinguishes the men of letters (*gens de lettres*) of the Republic of Letters from the emerging Enlightenment figure of the professional writer, or *écrivain*.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Bots and Waquet, *La République Des Lettres*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>14</sup> Daston, “The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment.”

and correspondents and their counterparts in the Islamicate Orient.<sup>15</sup> Brentjes reinforces Daston's emphasis on the flexibility of the Republic of Letters with specific examples of its permeable territorial and cognitive boundaries. These enabled the transfer of Jewish and Muslim texts and the passage of subjects of all faiths from the Orient to Europe. Dew examines, in particular, texts and travel accounts and the ways in which French curiosity structures the absorption of knowledge from the Ottoman Empire, India and China in the late seventeenth century. The scholarship that focuses on boundaries of the Republic of Letters reveals that as the Republic expands the notion of the Other begins to break down in favor of maintaining a continuous and collaborative knowledge construction.

Dakhliya, in her 2013 study of the life and correspondence of Thomas-Osman d'Arcos, *Une archéologie du même et de l'autre* (An Archeology of Self and Other), methodically chips away at the notion of Otherness in favor of a fuller understanding of the social functions adopted by her subject, the Tunisia-based renegade d'Arcos. In her analysis of his different interactions with the Marseillais Peiresc and his settled life in the service of his Muslim patron Mami Ferrarese in Tunisia, Dakhliya asserts that d'Arcos participated in the Republic of Letters as a European while assimilating in Tunisia as a Muslim. The case of Thomas-Osman d'Arcos points to the ways in which function constructs identity as much as the borders between empires and faiths.

This nuanced approach to identity provides a new perspective with which to analyze the exchanges between diplomats in Istanbul and Paris. The two protagonists of the account of the establishment of the Ottoman printing press, Said Mehmed Efendi and Ibrahim Müteferrika, were immersed in the diplomatic culture of the Ottoman court, and their Ottoman identity should be understood accordingly. In his functions as a diplomatic liaison Müteferrika met the French diplomatic attaché Charles de Peyssonnel in Sofia in 1739. Rereading the narrative of the Ottoman printing press in the light of Peyssonnel's letters on Turkish literature reveals the extent to which the Republic of Letters was more concerned with identifying continuities than drawing borders. By revealing this gap between rhetoric and personal relationships, I show how French discourses about Islam and print – although fossilized in the current historiography of the Ottoman press – were only part of broader attempts to define Turkish literature.

After reviewing the initial reports about the Ottoman printing press (in the section "Paris 1727"), I examine more closely the desire of the Court to use the printing press to unearth early Christian manuscripts in Istanbul and have them printed by the Ottoman press ("The Ottoman Press and Dreams of Europe"). I then illustrate how contradictory portraits of Ibrahim Müteferrika and Mehmed Said Effendi ("The Renegade and the Frenchman") both shape and undermine the belief that the press represents a transfer of civilization. The final section of this article, "Turkish Literature after Print," will mine the correspondence of Charles de Peyssonnel for its contributions to our understanding of the printing press in the broader context of French curiosity about Turkish literature. It is

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<sup>15</sup> See Sonja Brentjes, "Pride and Prejudice: The Invention of a 'Historiography of Science' in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires by European Travellers and Writers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Religious Values and the Rise of Science in Europe*, ed. John Brooke and Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2005), 229–54; Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*; and Dakhliya, "Une archéologie du même et de l'autre."

with the encounter of Peyssonnel and the printer Müteferrika, then, that I begin this discussion.

### Sofia 1738: Diplomacy and literature

In the spring of 1738, the Ottoman Empire was fighting a war on three fronts: skirmishes on its Eastern flank with the new conqueror of Persia, Nadir Shah; a drawn out war with Russia over access to the Black Sea; and the Hapsburgs to the West, who saw Russia's aggression as an opportunity to reclaim lands on its Eastern frontier. As the Grand Vizir advanced his camp to Sofia to oversee the military campaign, he was accompanied by an envoy from the French embassy, Charles de Peyssonnel. Peyssonnel, a native of Marseille, had joined the ambassador, the Marquis de Villeneuve, in Constantinople as his personal secretary three years prior. The French had sought, through Villeneuve's mediation, a resolution to the war that would weaken the Hapsburgs and this mission culminated in 1739 with the Peace of Belgrade. Dispatched to Sofia alongside the Grand Vizir, Peyssonnel was tasked with providing the French court with coded updates on the progress of the campaign.

In the Vizir's camp, Peyssonnel had as his neighbor a figure who had gained a degree of notoriety in France ten years earlier. Ibrahim Müteferrika served the Ottoman court in several functions. Biographical information about Müteferrika is limited and often in dispute. Other than his own confession narrative, *Risale-i Islamiyye* (written around 1710), the most detailed contemporary account of his life was provided by Hungarian nobleman César de Saussure. According to Saussure, the Hungarian-born Müteferrika had been a Calvinist minister before his capture and enslavement by the Ottomans between the ages of eighteen and twenty in 1692 or 1693.<sup>16</sup> Broader consensus holds that he was born in the town of Kolozsvár (present day Cluj in Romania) in 1675, before being conscripted by the Ottomans and converting – whether by force or not – to Islam.<sup>17</sup> He gained a reputation for his erudition among the administrative ranks of the court, where he was appointed to the corps of *müteferrika*, an administrative elites attached the Sultan and charged with diverse tasks. He served the court equally as a diplomat, participating in negotiations with the Hapsburgs and the Czar in 1715 and 1716. His knowledge of Hungarian, Arabic, Persian and Latin made him the go-between between the court and different foreign envoys, most notably the Hungarian exile Ferenc Ráczky beginning in 1720, and the French renegade Comte de Bonneval in the years before the latter's death in 1747.

At the time he met Müteferrika, Peyssonnel had been introduced to the Marquis de Caumont by Villeneuve. Born in Avignon in 1688, Caumont left for Paris after his studies to gain a worldly education, but that lasted only a year and a half. Burdened by a property to manage and significant family obligations, he rarely left his estate in Avignon,

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<sup>16</sup> César de Saussure, *Lettres de Turquie, 1730-39, et Notices, 1740, de César de Saussure*, (Budapest, 1909), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015030644903>, 93-94.

<sup>17</sup> This biographical sketch of Ibrahim Müteferrika draws principally on Omont, *Documents sur l'imprimerie à Constantinople*; Gdoura, *Le Début de l'imprimerie arabe*; Boogert, "The Sultan's Answer to the Medici Press?" and Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 118-19.

but corresponded with a number of members of both the Academy of Inscriptions in Paris, and the Academy of Letters and Sciences of Marseilles. Caumont was an exemplary member of the Republic of Letters: scholarship and collection were his main avocations, and he sought out the correspondence of Voltaire and the exiled Hungarian Prince Ragoczy.<sup>18</sup> He had contacted his friend and correspondent, Villeneuve, to solicit news of the Ottoman printing press. Caumont was preoccupied with the Turkish tradition of letters and sciences: defined as “literature.”

The definitions of literature in the French-speaking Republic of Letters to which Caumont belonged changed over the generations. Adrien Baillet’s *Jugemens des savans*<sup>19</sup> specifically addressed different ways in which different nations told stories. The *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*<sup>20</sup> incorporated an array of genres, though its specific purpose was the announcement of print publications from across Europe. The *Mercur de France*, published from 1672 up to the French Revolution, framed news and literary events in the form of a long conversation — in its initial iteration as the *Mercur galant* in the mode of wit, debate, and rumor — before taking up the publication of Oriental tales, scientific treatises, and erudite letters. Underneath these different periodicals and treatises on literature, however, were meaningful interpersonal relationships: drawn out correspondences and memoirs read at academies. Such was the relationship Caumont actively pursued with Villeneuve, until this latter put him in touch with Peyssonnel, and such was also the relationship formed between Peyssonnel and Müteferrika.

A lawyer by training, Peyssonnel figured among the founding members of the *Académie des Sciences et des Lettres* de Marseille in 1726. It was likely his membership among this community of savants that made him appear the ideal person to answer Caumont’s questions. His coding done, this was a task to which Peyssonnel applied himself with great relish. And it is Caumont’s curiosity that led him to pursue a friendship with his neighbor twenty-five years his senior, Müteferrika. He writes to Caumont, in a letter dated May 12, 1738:

On the other side, I have Ibrahim efendi as a neighbor; you know of him, no doubt; he’s the founder of the Turkish printing press; Hungarian by nation, formerly a minister; now a Turk; he’s a good fellow, and I don’t know for what he reason he changed his Religion. He has an enterprising mind; more laborious than knowledgeable, he has conserved some shade of Latin, which puts me in a position to converse with him without an interpreter; he’s the most appropriate man to give me the clarifications you request about the ingenuity of the Turks and the taste for the sciences they believe themselves to hold; I have formed a friendship with him for this purpose and out of love for you[.]

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<sup>18</sup> For more information about Caumont, see the introduction by Henri Duranton to the edition of his correspondance with Jean Bouhier: Joseph de Seytres Caumont, *Lettres Du Marquis de Caumont, 1732-1745*, ed. Henri Duranton, Jean Marcillet-Jaubert, and Bernard Yon, *Correspondance Littéraire Du Président Bouhier*, no 6-7 (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 1979), 3-9.

<sup>19</sup> Originally published in 1685-6, this nine-volume work was reissued in an augmented edition in 1722; thus it remained very relevant to the time period under consideration in this paper.

<sup>20</sup> Founded by Pierre Bayle, this periodical was published in Amsterdam and appeared at irregular intervals from 1684 to 1718.

J'ai d'un autre coté pour voisin, Ibrahim effendi ; vous le connoises sans doute ; c'est le fondateur de l'imprimerie Turque ; hongrois de nation ; jadis ministre ; aujourd'hui Turc; c'est un fort bon homme, et je ne scai a propos de quoy, il a changé de Religion. C'est un esprit a projet ; plus laborieux, que sçavant, il a conservé quelque teinture de la langue Latine, ce qui me mit a portée de converser avec luy, sans interprete; c'est l'homme plus propre a me donner les éclaircissements que vous demandes sur le genie des turcs et le goust qu'ils pensent avoir pour les sciences ; j'ai lié amitié avec luy, dans cette vüe, et pou[r] l'amour de vous[.]<sup>21</sup>

Over several years of correspondence with Caumont, Peyssonnel would turn to the Hungarian printer for information about Turkish literature, and sought his intervention in order to obtain a treatise on the subject — a project that had become mired up in the bureaucracy of the Ottoman court and further impeded by the inexplicable procrastination of a French dragoman. Peyssonnel's efforts and his reliance on Müteferrika culminate more than a decade of intense interest in the question of Turkish literature, largely brought about by the establishment of the Ottoman printing press. The perception of the press and Müteferrika's biographical details, inasmuch as they were known, brought to the surface two major preoccupations of the French Republic of Letters: on the one hand, the integration of the Ottomans into the Republic and, on the other, the compatibility of literature and Islam.

#### Paris 1727: Initial French reactions to the Ottoman printing press

As news of the Ottoman press spread, French reactions brought to the fore both acclaim for its benefits to *la littérature* and the conviction that the arrival of print at the Porte had occurred in spite of Islamic prejudice and prohibition. The news reached the members of the *Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres* on January 7, 1727, when the secretary, Nicolas Fréret, shared news he had received from Istanbul of the Sultan's decision to establish the press. The register of the Academy shows that this announcement was greeted with great hope for *la littérature*. It had long been speculated, in fact, that there were

in the Levant, and particularly in the Palace, a number of manuscripts that have not yet been printed, and perhaps complete collections of authors of whose works we only have part, such as *Polybius, Pompeius Trogus, Diodorus of Sicily, Livy, Tacitus*, etc.

dans le Levant, et en particulier dans le Serrail, nombre de manuscrits qui n'ont point esté imprimez, et peut-être des exemplaires entiers d'auteurs que nous

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<sup>21</sup> "Lettres Autographes Du Marquis DE VILLENEUVE, Ambassadeur de France À Constantinople, et de Son Secrétaire, M. DE PEYSSONNEL, Adressées Au Marquis de Caumont, À Avignon." (Paris, 1742 1729), NAF 6834, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 81r-v.



n'avons qu'en partie, comme le *Polybe*, le *Troque Pompée*, le *Diodore de Sicile*, le *Tite-Live*, le *Tacite*, etc.<sup>22</sup>

In the *Mémoires de l'Académie* published three years later, the establishment of the press was highlighted as “a deed that would be of equal interest to the good of Letters and the Honor of the Academy” (un fait qui intéresse également le bien des Lettres; & l'Honneur de l'Académie)<sup>23</sup> and placed, moreover, at the very beginning of its annals for the years 1727-30, before the usual accounting of membership changes. The *Mémoires* continue:

Mehemet Effendy, Ambassador to the Porte, and Zaïd Aga his son who had followed him to France, having returned to Constantinople, spoke there with such admiration of all they had seen here, and principally of the way in which we cultivate the Letters and the Arts, that despite the prejudice and the natural indolence of the Turks, the form and principles of their government, and even the spirit of the Mohammedan Religion, one saw at the end of the year 1726 a genuine Printing Press established in Constantinople under the auspices of the Grand Vizier and the authority of the Sultan.

Mehemet Effendy, Ambassadeur de la Porte, & Zaïd Aga son fils qui l'avoit suivi en France, estant retourné à Constantinople, y parlèrent avec tant d'admiration de tout ce qu'ils avoient vû icy, & principalement de la manière dont on y cultivoit les Lettres & les Beaux Arts, que malgré la prévention & l'indolence naturelle des Turcs, la forme & les maximes de leur gouvernement, l'esprit même de la Religion Mahométane, on vit sur la fin de l'année 1726 une véritable Imprimerie établie à Constantinople sous la protection du Grand Vizir & l'autorité du Sultan.<sup>24</sup>

Shortly after the press's establishment was announced to the Academy, the *Journal des savants*, a French scientific and literary periodical edited by Abbé Bignon, the Academy's president hailed the news that “[t]he Turks have finally cured themselves of their ridiculous prejudices about the sciences, of which the art of printing is the principal pillar” ([I]es Turcs se guérissent enfin de leurs ridicules préjugés au sujet des sciences, dont l'art de l'Imprimerie est le principal soutien).<sup>25</sup> The early reports of the Ottoman printing press in France thus abound in such backhanded compliments. It is both good news for the Republic of Letters and a reflection of a character deficiency among the Turks and their religious and political establishment that it has taken so long. While the efforts of the Ottomans are to be lauded, the French see, even in the roots of the project itself, a sign of their own supremacy.

In December 1729, the *Mercure de France* followed the lead of the *Journal des Savants*, proclaiming that “The Mufti no longer opposes this Enterprise, of which he recognizes the usefulness to the Nation” (Le Mufti ne s'oppose plus à cette Entreprise dont

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<sup>22</sup> Omont, *Missions Archéologiques*, 1:394.

<sup>23</sup> *Histoire de l'Académie Royale*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> “Nouvelles Littéraires de Constantinople,” February 1727.

il reconnoit l'utilité pour la Nation).<sup>26</sup> As in the *Mémoires* of the Academy and the first report of the *Journal*, the *Mercure* pitted the religious establishment against the innovation of print, framing the Mufti's fatwa approving the press as a concession to progress.

At the time of the announcement in the *Mercure de France*, the first editions of books printed by the Ottoman press were arriving in the hands of Maurepas and Bignon in Paris, expedited by Villeneuve, then ambassador to Constantinople. This led to acclamations in the *Journal des Savants*. Reporting on the first books issued by the press, the *Journal* cites the treatise published by Müteferrika, the founder of the press, in introduction to his first printed book, a classical Arabic dictionary in Ottoman translation. The *Journal* paraphrases loosely and at length Müteferrika's treatise on print.<sup>27</sup> Selectively, the editors of the *Journal* take up the argument — ninth among eleven enumerated points — that most clearly pits the advances of Christian rulers in the realm of print against the negligence of the Islamic Ottoman Empire, but neglects sections that argue for the preservation of Ottoman history and works of science. By presenting this as the treatise that sought to appease the *'ulema* and garner their approval for the printing press, the *Journal* obscures the internal logic that brought about the press in favor of a storyline that exacerbates a religious and civilizational gap.

This version of events would become fossilized in the history of the Ottoman press. In one of the more comprehensive book studies of the Ottoman printing press, Wahid Gdoura, writing in the 1980s, describes the ignorance separating the Ottomans from the rest of Europe before the reign of Ahmet III (1703-30). According to Gdoura, the Ottomans had lived in “autarky” before the 1700s.<sup>28</sup> Gdoura presents the Ottoman press, then, as the direct result of Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi's embassy to France and the interest his son Said showed for the printing press while in Paris. Addressing the lack of mention of the press in the Ottoman ambassador's memoirs, Gdoura posits that this was perhaps “out of fear of the conservatives” or to better carry out his plans for the printing press with his son.<sup>29</sup> Fatme Müge Göçek shares Gdoura's perspective of Yirmisekiz Çelebi's mission and its impact in the Ottoman Empire, casting the adoption of French technologies as a question of success or failure.<sup>30</sup> Szyliowicz's earlier study locates resistance to the press not only in the power of the roughly 90,000 calligraphers responsible for manuscript production, but also in the failings of the Ottomans' backwards-looking governance model: “when the press was introduced, the Ottoman Empire was a centralized patrimonial state with a traditional orientation, one towards the past rather than the future.”<sup>31</sup> Even scholarship concerned with Müteferrika's contemporary success as a printer, have sought answers to

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<sup>26</sup> *Mercure de France*, December 1729, 2916.

<sup>27</sup> “Nouvelles Littéraires: Turquie,” *Journal Des Savants*, January 1730, 56-58.

<sup>28</sup> Gdoura, *Le Début de L'imprimerie Arabe*, 190.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>30</sup> Writing recently in *L'Esprit Créateur*, Jenny Mander draws on Göçek in order to claim that Abbé Prévost's fictional scenario in the *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité* by which a captured Frenchman inspires the Ottoman adoption of print “does not so much distort as condense the historical facts” (see Mander, “Turkish Delight?” 141-43).

<sup>31</sup> Joseph S. Szyliowicz, “Functional Perspectives on Technology: The Case of the Printing Press in the Ottoman Empire,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 11 (1986): 251. Faroqhi deems the figure of 90,000 cited by Szyliowicz and drawn from the seventeenth-century account of the Italian Conte di Marsigli to be “a considerable overestimate” while still supporting the significance of the copyists in the resisting the spread of print (Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005, 96).

questions such as whether or not the typeface for the print originated in Europe or Istanbul and whether or not Müteferrika had sincerely converted to Islam.<sup>32</sup>

The portrayal of the printing press as a rupture with the Ottoman past and as the direct result of a brief visit to Catholic France by an Ottoman ambassador and his son necessarily distorts the picture from the Ottoman side. This narrative of first contact belies the circulation of printed books in the Ottoman Empire since the sixteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, before the Müteferrika printing press, there were other attempts to usher in print at the Ottoman court. Bloom points out that Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevi advocated the adoption of the press already in the 1640s.<sup>34</sup> Bloom's account situates the singularity of the enterprise — Said's and Müteferrika's "success" — within the broader social context of the Empire. He echoes Szyliowicz's argument that the cadre of copyists at the Ottoman court formed a social bulwark against the advent of print. An account by the French interpreter LeGrand delivered to the Royal Librarian Anisson-Duperron in 1776 further supports this theory. LeGrand claims that the opposition of the copyists was "supported by some legists who brought in religion" (*soutenu par des gens de loi qui y intéressoient la religion*),<sup>35</sup> suggesting that Islam was invoked as a pretext to maintain the status quo.

Given the same context as Bloom, however, Orlin Sabev maintains the singularity of the Müteferrika press as an individual endeavor that battled resistances rooted not only in the powerful cadre of copyists but also in the cultural appreciation of calligraphy as an art.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, after considering Peçevi's and Katip Çelebi's admiration for the art of print in the early seventeenth century, Sabev cites the lack of any direct recommendation for its adoption as a justification to dismiss these early murmurings about print at the Ottoman court. Whereas "some pre-eighteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals felt the want of printing," Sabev holds, "the Ottomans did not feel a crucial need for printing."<sup>37</sup> By mitigating the context of print in the Ottoman Empire before the Tulip era, scholars carry forward fossilized, eighteenth-century, narratives about the press's genesis and viability that are predicated upon a notion of modernity rooted in "Westernization"<sup>38</sup> and the spread of secularism. These theories about the Müteferrika press rest, in turn, largely upon the shoulders of its founder and his Christian origins. As will be discussed below, the

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<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Boogert, "The Sultan's Answer to the Medici Press?" and Orlin Sabev, "The First Ottoman Turkish Printing Enterprise: Success or Failure?," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London ; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 63–89.

<sup>33</sup> See Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 219–21 and Göçek, *East Encounters West*, 110–12.

<sup>34</sup> Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 222.

<sup>35</sup> Omont, *Documents Sur L'imprimerie À Constantinople Au XVIIIe Siècle*, 20–21.

<sup>36</sup> Orlin Sabev, "Waiting for Godot: The Formation of Ottoman Print Culture," in *Historical aspects of printing and publishing in languages of the Middle East: papers from the Third Symposium on the History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East, University of Leipzig, September 2008*, ed. Geoffrey Roper (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 114.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>38</sup> "Westernization" is itself a weighted concept, with implicit missionary and religious connotations. While acknowledging that the term can often be more obfuscating than explanatory as to the actual definition of "the West," I use the term here cautiously and as an heuristic. See Usree Bhattacharya, "The 'West' in Literacy," *Berkeley Review of Education* 2, no. 2 (2011): 179–98.

personal beliefs of Müteferrika and the sincerity of his conversion to Islam are perceived to be determining elements in the establishment of the Ottoman press.

Müteferrika's treatise on print and the fatwa of the Mufti both portray print as a continuation of and means of preserving the tradition of sciences cultivated by previous generations. It is this belief in the continuity of Turkish letters and sciences both before and after print that marks the uniqueness of the *Mercure's* editorial line. While the *Journal des Savants* shares the words of a correspondent in Istanbul, the *Mercure* subverts this correspondent's expertise. Citing the same report that appeared one month earlier, in January 1730, in the *Journal*, the *Mercure's* editors list the same three titles of the Ottoman incunabula received by the Marquis de Villeneuve.<sup>39</sup> However, after mentioning the geographical work *Cihan-numa* by Katip Çelebi, the *Mercure* adds,

The Author of the Letter that is written from Constantinople has not, doubtless, learned about *Hajj Khalifa*, Author of the second book; because he could have added that this author, whose reputation is not slight, is a Modern Turk of Constantinople [...] and he is noted as one of the cleverest men of his time.

L'Auteur de la Lettre qui nous est écrite de Constantinople, n'a pas, sans doute, été instruit au sujet d'*Haggi Calfah*, Auteur du second des Livres ; car il auroit pu ajouter que cet Ecrivain, dont la réputation n'est pas petite, est un Turc Moderne de Constantinople [...] & il a passé pour l'un des plus habiles hommes de son temps.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the *Mercure* puts its Istanbul correspondent in the awkward position of lacking awareness of the very literature he claims to be transmitting. At the same time, by vaunting the merits of Katip Çelebi, the *Mercure* shifts the focus of the story from the innovation of the printing press, presented as a singular and well overdue achievement for the Ottomans, to the accomplishments of Katip Çelebi. Since Katip Çelebi's career and renown, according to the *Mercure*, are independent of and predate their printed form, the division between printed book and manuscript can hardly be held up as the boundary between prejudice and wisdom. With the readership of the *Mercure de France* extending well beyond the court to the bourgeoisie, the regional academies, and even to the embassy staff in Istanbul, the break from this divisive discourse is significant. The resistance to the claims bandied about in the *Journal des Savants* and at meetings of royal academy members, belies a broader view among the Republic of Letters that the health of letters and sciences depended largely on the individual contributions of *Gens de Lettres*, and not on the medium of transmission. The portrayal of print as a major breakthrough, however, served the interests of an elite coterie among the *Académie des Inscriptions* that was serving the ambitions of the French court to represent the interests of the Counter-Reform.

### The Ottoman Press and Dreams of Europe

What is left out of this story told from the perspectives of Fréret, Bignon, and the institutions of the Republic of Letters is the French court's self-serving interest in the

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<sup>39</sup> *Mercure de France*, February 1730, 357.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

press. As shown in the early reports greeting the advent of Ottoman printing, the great hopes invested in “literature” referred not to Turkish learning at all, but rather to the prospect of the Ottoman press turning out heretofore unknown editions of Latin and Greek authors. These aspirations, although evidenced neither in Müteferrika’s treatise on the reasons for the adoption of print nor in the purposes of the press that figure in the Sultan’s *firman* (decree), were explicit in the initial reports of the press released in the *Journal des Savants*, the *Mercure*, and the *Gazette*. Each periodical took up the report that, if the press for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish was successful, Said planned to establish a press for Greek and Latin works in Istanbul.<sup>41</sup>

This unfounded claim would have originated from the correspondence between Said and Abbé Bignon, and, in particular, from this latter’s wishful thinking. As royal censor, royal librarian and president of the Academy, Bignon held great sway both over what was worth printing and what was considered literature. He now saw Said as occupying an analogous position to his own, atop the regulation and production of letters and sciences. Having met Said and his father, Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, during their journey to Paris in 1721, he sought to rekindle their earlier bond on the occasion of the press’s establishment. In March 1727 Bignon wrote to Said: “I imagine that among the oriental books that are in the library of the Ottoman emperor, one could find several old one in the Greek and Latin languages, about which our scholars are quite curious and of which we have no copies in France nor in our neighboring countries” (*Je m’imagine qu’entre les livres orientaux qui sont dans la bibliothèque de l’Empereur ottoman, il s’en trouve plusieurs anciens en langue grecque et latine, dont nos sçavans sont fort curieux et que nous n’avons point en France ny même dans les pays voisins*).<sup>42</sup> Bignon was alluding to the rumored holdings of classical works maintained by the Byzantine emperors and then preserved by the Ottomans after the conquest of Constantinople. He was thus seeking out a European substrata buried under the foundations of the Ottoman Empire. Other than the rumors, however, little more than fantasy was fueling this enterprise. It was speculated at the time that these manuscripts had been entirely burned by the Muslim conquerors, yet Bignon and his fellow members of the Academy held out hope to find something of value through Said’s intervention.

It was with satisfaction, then, that Bignon received in November 1727 a positive response from Said to his leading inquiry. First, the patron of the press enclosed proofs of the first pages of the Vankuli dictionary that was to be the first book published at the court, and he promised to send the royal librarian two copies of each print edition, “either in Turkish, in Arabic, or in Persian, and in whatever other language we print” (*soit en turc, soit en arabe ou en persan, et en quel autre idiome qu’on imprime*).<sup>43</sup> Then, he lamented the lack of qualified personnel to compile a catalogue of the Sultan’s library holdings in Greek and Latin.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the secretary of the Marquis de Bonnac, the former French ambassador to the Sublime Porte, who delivered Said’s response to Maurepas, had been

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<sup>41</sup> “De Constantinople,” *Gazette de France*, 26; “Nouvelles Littéraires de Constantinople,” *Journal des Savants*, 121; and *Mercure de France*, January 1727, 122.

<sup>42</sup> Omont, *Missions Archéologiques*, 1:397.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:400.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

searching under the former's auspices for the very works that interested Bignon. When the latter seized the opening offered by Said to expedite to Constantinople the sorely needed antiquarians, he favored over Bonnac's secretary two of the Academy's own, François Sévin and Michel Fourmont.

Bignon wrote to Maurepas soliciting his resources to form the mission, highlighting the importance of the Topkapi palace library to the history of Catholic doctrine:

One might find there items of the utmost importance, both for religion and for history: treatises of the Fathers of the Church, or of other writers since the Greek Orthodox schism, that would wonderfully prove the tradition of the Church concerning Transubstantiation and on other points of faith, the books of Polybius, those of Livy, and a thousand other authors that we have sought fruitlessly for so many years[.]

Il s'y trouvera apparemment des pièces de la dernière importance, et pour la religion et pour l'histoire : des traités de Pères de l'Église, ou d'autres écrivains depuis le schisme des Grecs, qui prouveroient merveilleusement la tradition de l'Église sur la Transsubstantiation et sur les autres points de foy, les livres de Polybe, ceux de Tite-Live et mille autres auteurs que l'on désire inutilement depuis tant d'années[.]<sup>45</sup>

Bignon's appeal to the minister of the Navy stems from the original logic of the collecting expeditions to the Orient organized nearly sixty years prior by Colbert, of which Antoine Galland was among the most illustrious participants. The collection of texts pertaining to the early church and testimonies upholding Catholic doctrine from the Eastern churches served the interests of the counter-reformation and Louis XIV's defense of Catholicism. As Dew points out, "an important aspect of how the royal library was conceived [was] as an archive of documents that supported theologico-political claims[.]"<sup>46</sup> At the French court and the Academy of Inscriptions, news of the establishment of the Ottoman printing press, then, was applauded as a concession of the Empire's Muslim establishment to the rising tide of science, even as it served as the pretext for inaugurating discussions with Said over the search for manuscripts intended to shore up Catholic doctrine at home. Although print held symbolic importance for the Republic of Letters, as evidenced by the enthusiasm with which the French periodical press greeted its arrival at the Porte, the search for manuscripts remained among the primary activities of the academic expeditions to the Levant.

## The Renegade

While the French sought to take advantage of the press's establishment to shore up the arguments of the Counter-reformation, they also projected Christian and French

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:402.

<sup>46</sup> Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, 34. The tract, *La Turquie Chrétienne sous la puissante protection de Louis le Grand* (1695) by the Sieur de La Croix, an aide to the French Ambassador to Istanbul, the Marquis de Nointel from 1670 to 1686, bears witness to the intensity of efforts to collect testimonies of the Armenian, Maronite, and Greek Orthodox churches to support Church doctrine and to position France at the forefront of the Counter-reform. See also, Omont, *Missions Archéologiques*, 1:182-83.

identities onto its founders. The different rationales used to explain the establishment of the press, in spite of what were portrayed as significant religious barriers, weighed heavily upon the personalities of the founders Said and Müteferrika. The direct contacts and biographical sketches that circulated about both men suggested that the introduction of print culture at the Ottoman court was attributable to, for Said, a youthful journey to France and, for Müteferrika, a Christian upbringing. The description of these figures as cultivated scholars and atypical Turks contributes to the notion of literature articulated by members of the Republic of Letters.

In the *Journal des Savants*' earliest mention of the Ottoman press, the correspondent highlights the advisory role played by "a Renegade monk who has been here for some time, and who is noted to be a very erudite man" (un Moine Renegat qui est ici depuis quelque temps, & qui passe pour un très-sçavant homme) referring to Müteferrika.<sup>47</sup> Müteferrika's conversion is a recurring motif in the descriptions of him that reached French shores. Fourmont, writing to Maurepas on March 29, 1729, asserts that Müteferrika was the sole protector of the printing press, describing him as "a Hungarian Franciscan renegade, called there Ibrahim Effendi, who sputters only some shreds of history and geography" (un cordelier hongrois renégat, appelé là Ibrahim Effendi, qui ne balbutie que quelques lambeaux d'histoire et de géographie).<sup>48</sup> In a letter to Villeneuve, dated November 15, 1737, the French dragoman De Laria raised doubts about the sincerity of Müteferrika's conversion, attesting to his enjoyment of wine.<sup>49</sup> Peyssonnel's account six months later, cited above, states, "Hungarian by nation, formerly a minister; now a Turk; he's a good fellow, and I don't know for what he reason he changed his Religion[.]"<sup>50</sup> It is unclear from Peyssonnel's letters whether he ever sought out a rationale behind Müteferrika's conversion, and all we have to go by is his own statement of ignorance. His Christian origins do become useful, however, as Müteferrika's knowledge of Latin provides the two with a lingua franca.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, rumors swirled around Europe attributing different origin stories to the Ottoman printer, describing him not only, as shown above, as both a Protestant (as per Peyssonnel) and a Catholic (as per Fourmont), but also as a Jew.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> "Nouvelles Littéraires de Constantinople." See also the *Mercure de France*, January 1727, which describes Müteferrika as "a Renegade, who has been in Constantinople for a long time" (un Renegat, qui est à Constantinople depuis long-temps) and "De Constantinople," *Gazette de France*, which uses the same language as the *Journal*, describing Müteferrika as "un Moine Renegat."

<sup>48</sup> Omont, *Missions Archéologiques*, 1:542.

<sup>49</sup> See Albert Vandal, *Une Ambassade Française En Orient Sous Louis XV: La Mission Du Marquis de Villeneuve, 1728-1741* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit, et Cie., 1887), 282; and Sabev, "First Ottoman Turkish Printing Enterprise," 81, and "Portrait and Self-Portrait: Ibrahim Müteferrika's Mind Games," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, no. 44 (2014): 109.

<sup>50</sup> "Lettres Autographes..." 81r. When citing this letter in his 1987 article on the printing press, "Savary de Brèves et Ibrahim Müteferrika," Duverdier inserts the confessional specification "Unitarian" in brackets (353-54), stemming from claims made by Niyazi Berkes in his 1962 piece on Müteferrika, "İlk Türk Matbaası Kurucusunun Dinî ve Fikrî Kimliği," *Belleten* 26, no. 104 (1962): 715-37. Baki Tezcan postulates correctly that Duverdier himself added these brackets, perpetuating an unconfirmed theory about Müteferrika's religious beliefs prior to conversion (see Baki Tezcan, "İbrahim Müteferrika ve Risâle-i İslamiyye," in *Kitaplara Vakfedilen Bir Ömre Tuhfe: İsmail E. Erünsal'a Armağan*, ed. İsmail E. Erünsal et al. (Istanbul: Ülke Armağan, 2014), 545-46 (also noted in Sabev, "Portrait and Self-Portrait," 107-08 and 107n23). Duverdier's bracketed insertion is further compounded by the fact that the BNF record number cited in his article was either incorrect or had been changed since.

<sup>51</sup> "Lettres Autographes..." 81r.

<sup>52</sup> See Tezcan, "İbrahim Müteferrika ve Risâle-i İslamiyye," 545-51; and Sabev, "Portrait and Self-Portrait," 108-11.

Situated in their context, however, the observations about Müteferrika's Christian past are closely tied to the success of the printing press only in the early reports from the *Journal des Savants*. Fourmont's letter, highly critical of the printing operation, pokes holes in previous claims about Müteferrika's erudition. De Laria's remarks about the convert's wine-drinking serves less to cast doubts about the sincerity of his conversion than to report to the French ambassador the means by which the dragoman has used this predilection to wheedle information from him. In fact, for those who had made direct contact with Müteferrika in Istanbul, his status as a Hungarian convert would not have been unique, given the systematic integration of converts into the Ottoman government through *devshirme* and patronage.

In fact, De Laria's observations and their place in Albert Vandal's account of the negotiation of the 1940 Treaty of Belgrade published in 1887 remind us that Müteferrika encountered many of the correspondents who would come to characterize him as a Man of Letters not in his role as printer, but as a diplomatic liaison and interpreter. Villeneuve's successor as ambassador, Castellane, wrote to the Marquis d'Argenson, then Louis XV's secretary for foreign affairs, to brief him on the Ottoman court. His report highlighted Müteferrika's role as a gifted advisor:

We have become accustomed to have in him a certain confidence that accords him almost the profile of a State advisor. [...] his credit grows moreover given the character of the Drogram of the Porte, who, intimidated by the rueful death of his predecessor, avoids to the extent possible to involve himself too much in matters and is not disinclined to pass on the risk of the most delicate among them to İbraïm Effendi.

on s'est accoutumé a avoir en luy une certaine confiance qui luy donne presque le relief d'un conseiller d'Etat. [...] son credit augmente d'ailleurs par le caractaire du Drogram de la Porte, qui intimidé par la morte funeste de son predecesseur, évite autant qu'il peut de se trop immiscer dans les affaires et n'est pas fâché de rejeter sur İbraïm Effendi, le risque des plus delicats.<sup>53</sup>

Castellane's portrait of Müteferrika, although it does introduce him as "a Hungarian former apostate" (un ancien apostat hongrois) and "director of the Turkish printing press" (directeur de l'imprimerie turque) stresses rather the embassy's reliance upon him as a statesman with the potential to promote French interests.<sup>54</sup> It is in this same political context that Müteferrika encountered Peyssonnel. Their different appraisals of Müteferrika are colored by his function as a representative of the Ottoman court. The fact that one role, that of humanist, advanced the other, that of diplomat, must be taken into account when assigning Müteferrika the role of border crosser. His intermediary status was precisely what was required of him by his Ottoman patrons. Baki Tezcan, addressing thus the rumors about his conversion, offers the convincing opinion that "[i]t also may be

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<sup>53</sup> "Lettres Diverses, Parmi Lesquelles on Remarque Des Lettres Du Comte de Bonneval À Peyssonnel (1745-1747)" (Paris, 1747 1740), NAF 5104, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 63.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*



that buttering up his interlocutors, he told Catholics like Michel Fourmont that he was a former Catholic, and Calvinists like César de Saussure, that he was a former Calvinist, all while avoiding going into any details.”<sup>55</sup> In a similar vein Tijana Krstic, who like Tezcan analyzes Müteferrika’s theological treatise *Risale-i Islamiye*, notices how he mobilizes a number of tropes from an ensemble of courtly conversion narratives and concludes: “Müteferrika saw it as a convenient means to jump-start his career[.]”<sup>56</sup>

The interpersonal relations that shaped the understanding of Müteferrika through his multiple roles with the Ottoman court are important to keep in mind when assessing his posterity as a printer. His former faith, while remarkable to those who met him, actually grew in importance in the European periodicals that conveyed news of the press from a distance. And twentieth-century historiography has only amplified the significance of his Christian past. Although not uncommon to find converts in various positions of Ottoman governance, Krstic notes “at the turn of the twentieth century, European historians began to postulate that renegades were in fact the secret of the Ottoman success, since Turks did not have the ‘civilizational requirements’ to establish an empire.”<sup>57</sup> The moments at which conversion becomes the predominant object of study, then, are important front lines in debates about influence of Europe and its resistance.

Speculation about Müteferrika’s original faith and whether or not his conversion was voluntary and sincere has gained wide currency in scholarly debates since Niyazi Berkes’s 1962 study. Rejecting the idea that Müteferrika was forcibly converted to Islam as suggested by Saussure, Berkes advances the thesis that Müteferrika was a Unitarian whose embrace of Islam was compatible with his religious learnings. This prefaces the case for representing Müteferrika as a proto-secularist in his 1964 work, *The Rise of Secularism in Turkey*, arguing that Müteferrika’s interest in Unitarianism “was no longer connected with matters of religious controversy, which had ceased to be of dominant concern in Europe where religious freedom was a fact and was already bearing fruit. His interest lay in science.”<sup>58</sup> In even more recent studies, Müteferrika’s Christian origins are cast as the determining factor in an outlook that allowed him to push for the adoption of the printing press. Writing in 1985, Gdoura follows Berkes’ lead arguing that European Christianity was simply more permissive of scientific advances that overrode controversy: “[Müteferrika] found that profanation had never been an obstacle for the Christians, avid to master sciences and overtake the Muslims.”<sup>59</sup> Sabev, on several occasions, not only expands upon this description of a Müteferrika indebted to Christian civilization, but also reiterates long held doubts about his conversion.<sup>60</sup>

In these readings, Müteferrika is both a vessel for the transmission of European culture and a bicultural subject. He is at once determined by his culture of birth, and yet

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<sup>55</sup> Tezcan, “İbrahim Müteferrika ve Risâle-i Islamiyye,” 551: “Hatta belki de sohbet arkadaşlarının nabzına göre şerbet vererek, Michel Fourmont gibi Katolikler’e, eski bir Katolik, César de Saussure gibi Kalvinistler’e de eski bir Kalvinist olduğunu söylemiş, fakat ayrıntılara girmekten imtina etmiş.”

<sup>56</sup> Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 118.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 39.

<sup>59</sup> Gdoura, *Le Début de L'imprimerie Arabe*, 196.

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., Sabev, “The First Ottoman Turkish Printing Enterprise: Success or Failure?” 81; and Sabev, “Portrait and Self-Portrait,” 110.

uniquely capable of forming a bridge to a culture that he has ostensibly eschewed. Dakhliia accurately describes this thinking as symptomatic of historiographies of “Islamic humanism,” which seek to explain innovation in the Islamicate world through the role of converts and religious minorities who act as “the carriers of a dynamic of European knowledge and designated suppliers of the curios and of learning of the Orient.”<sup>61</sup> Obviously, this narrative weighs heavily on conjecture about Müteferrika’s personal conscience, which itself betrays a modernist ideology of self-consciousness. Applied to Müteferrika it presupposes a mechanism of agency underlying conversion that is hardly evident for his social context.<sup>62</sup>

## The Frenchman

While Müteferrika’s contributions to the Ottoman printing enterprise have grown in importance over time, it is easy to forget that Mehmed Said Effendi’s name was most closely and visibly associated with the press in France in the decades immediately following its establishment. Known to the French from his first trip to Paris alongside his father in 1724 and celebrated upon his 1742 return as Ottoman ambassador himself, Said (1699-1761) occupied a distinct place in the emerging French public sphere, where he was the object of much fascination and literary fancy. Jenny Mander suggests that the popular writer Saint-Foix based the narrator Nedim Coggia from his *Turkish Letters* (1732) on the ambassador’s son.<sup>63</sup> He also merits a mention in Foucheret de Montbron’s 1750 novel *Le Cosmopolite, ou le citoyen du monde*.<sup>64</sup> Most notably, Voltaire centers the satirical tract *De l’horrible danger de la lecture* (1765) on Said Mehmed Effendi. In Voltaire’s work, Said is credited with bringing the technology of print to Istanbul from “a small State named Frankrom” (un petit État nommé Frankrom)<sup>65</sup> and the religious opposition to print is played up: “it appeared good to Muhammad and to us to condemn, proscribe, anathematize the aforementioned infernal invention of the printing press” (il a semblé bon à Mahomet et à nous condamner, proscrire, anathématiser ladite infernale invention de l’imprimerie).<sup>66</sup> Voltaire’s endorsement of Said, in particular, explains the persistence of such Gallic, Republican praise for Said as Gdoura’s description: “brilliant man who admired French freedom.”<sup>67</sup> The French focus on Said, moreover, perpetuates the notion that print technology was imported from France.

Said came to embody the ideal Turkish man of letters, which in many tellings meant he was practically French. Upon Said’s promotion to the post of deputy to the Grand Vizir in August 1746, the Comte de Bonneval, himself a renowned French convert

<sup>61</sup> Dakhliia, “Une archéologie du même et de l’autre,” 113.

<sup>62</sup> On this point, see Talal Asad, “Comments on Conversion,” *Conversion to Modernities*, 1996, 263–73; and Webb Keane, “From Fetishism to Sincerity: On Agency, the Speaking Subject, and Their Historicity in the Context of Religious Conversion,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 04 (1997): 690.

<sup>63</sup> Mander, “Turkish Delight?” 128.

<sup>64</sup> Louis Charles Foucheret de Monbron, *Le cosmopolite, ou, le citoyen du monde* (1750), ed. Édouard Langille (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2010), 3.

<sup>65</sup> Voltaire, *De L’horrible Danger de La Lecture ; Suivi De, Livres ; Liberté D’imprimer ; Fanatisme*, ed. Hervé Loichemol (Montélimar: Voix d’encre, 2006), 13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Gdoura, *Le Début de L’imprimerie Arabe*, 195.

to Islam, stated in a letter to Peyssonnel, “This one is French to the core” (Celuy cy est françois a bruler).<sup>68</sup> Peyssonnel, had informed Caumont in a letter before Said was to return to France on his own embassy that he was practically homesick for Paris: “he has conserved a polish of his Paris, of which he misses his stay there; naturally timid, here he is in a violent state, and French freedom is always present in his mind to make more bitter the slavery, from which even the powerful of this country are not exempt” (il a conservé un vernis de son Paris, dont il regrette sincerement le sejour ; naturellement timide, il est icy dans un etat violent, et la liberté françoise est toujours presente a ses yeux pour luy rendre plus amer l’esclavage dont les grands meme ne sont pas exempts dans ce païs).<sup>69</sup>

That Said spoke French proficiently was one of the reasons for his easy adoption among the French Republic of Letters. In a special edition of the *Mercure de France* devoted to his embassy in 1742, he garners this effusive praise:

In saying above that this Minister, given the great traits of which he is possessed, is considered esteemed and welcomed by all, we must add that this is a surplus of pleasure for him and for those Persons with whom he is obliged to speak, to understand and to speak, as he does, perfectly well our language, which he began to learn in his youth during his first Voyage, which he has since cultivated, and of which he has taken up again its proper practice during his Embassy, through reading our best Books and through conversation with those Persons who speak it best; it is thus that one may say of this worthy Ambassador, that he needs no help to make himself understood, and to understand all that one would want to say to him; such that Interpreters are useful to him only for ceremony and for the dignity of his character.

En disant ci-dessus que ce Ministre par les grandes qualités qu’il possède, est considéré, estimé & souhaité par tout, nous devons ajouter que c’est un surcroît d’agrément pour lui, & pour les Personnes avec lesquelles il est obligé de s’entretenir, d’entendre & de parler, comme il fait, parfaitement bien notre langue, laquelle il a commencé d’apprendre de jeunesse dans son premier Voyage, qu’il a cultivée depuis, & dont il a repris le bon usage durant son Ambassade, par la lecture de nos meilleurs Livres & par la conversation des Personnes qui parlent le mieux ; ensorte qu’on peut dire de ce digne Ambassadeur, qu’il n’a besoin d’aucun secours pour se faire entendre, & pour entendre tout ce qu’on veut lui dire ; enfin que les Interpretes ne sont pour lui d’usage, que pour la cérémonie & pour la dignité de son caractère.<sup>70</sup>

The ambassador, engages in three types of activities that Jean de Laroque — then co-editor of the *Mercure* — recommended as instrumental to appreciating Turkish literature: being well versed in the nation’s books; speaking with cultivated local informants in their own

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<sup>68</sup> “Lettres Diverses,” 232.

<sup>69</sup> “Lettres Autographes...” 92r.

<sup>70</sup> “Son Voyage À Fontainbleau,” *Mercure de France*, June 1742, 989-90.

language; and observing certain politesses, here the formal ceremonies befitting an ambassador.<sup>71</sup>

The view of Said from the French embassy in Istanbul, however, could be quite different from that of the elites in Paris. Different French envoys saw him as largely unhelpful, and his command of French was even seen as a liability to their own interests with the Porte. After leaving Istanbul for a broader mission in Venice and Greece and frustrated in his ambitions to obtain manuscripts from the imperial library, Fourmont wrote to the Comte de Maurepas:

Having arrived in Constantinople, our first concern has been to gain information about the credit of [Said Effendi] at the Porte, the progress of the printing press, and the state of the library of His Highness. We learned that [Saïd Efendi] and even his father could not be of any help to us, in regards to the commission that His Majesty honorably bestowed on us; that the printing press was still making slow progress and continued to operate only with difficulty, as much due to the ignorance of those responsible for it as to the discredit of [Said Effendi], who started it[.]

Arrivez à Constantinople, notre premier soin a esté de nous informer du crédit de Zeïd Aga à la Porte, du progrès de l'imprimerie, et de l'état de la bibliothèque de sa Hautesse. Nous avons appris que Zeïd Aga et même son père ne pouvoient nous servir en quoi que ce fust, par rapport à la commission dont Sa Majesté nous a fait l'honneur de nous charger ; que l'imprimerie alloit toujours fort doucement et ne se continuoit qu'avec difficulté, tant à cause de l'ignorance de ceux qui l'ont entreprise qu'à cause de l'ignorance de ceux qui l'ont entreprise qu'à cause du discrédit de Zeïd Aga, qui l'a commencée[.]<sup>72</sup>

Already prior to the mission, Bignon had expressed to Maurepas his doubts that Said had actually intended to invite French expertise to assist in cataloguing the library's holdings.<sup>73</sup> Fourmont merely confirmed that the patron of the printing press was ill-placed to assist them, and that furthermore, he bore little responsibility over the library itself, adding in his letter to Maurepas that he had learned, "that, as far as the library is concerned, it has suffered several fires and that [Said Effendi] was not at all the librarian but the treasurer of Anatolia, a man quite difficult to get a hold of" (qu'à l'égard de la bibliothèque, elle avoit souffert plusieurs incendies et que Zeïd Aga n'étoit point le garde mais le thrésorier de l'Anatolie, homme d'un accez fort difficile).<sup>74</sup>

During the embassy of the Comte de Castellane (1741-7), Said became reputed for, on the one hand, his collusion with the Comte de Bonneval, and on the other hand, his timidity. He was seen as unwilling to advocate for the French, despite what were deemed

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<sup>71</sup> Peyssonnel mentioned Laroque's articles in his letter to Caumont from January 24, 1739, but expressed skepticism as to their intellectual merit ("Lettres autographes..." 91r-91v)

<sup>72</sup> Omont, *Missions Archéologiques*, 1:543.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:408-09.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:543.

his natural affinities. When Said was named *Kyaha* (deputy) to the Grand Vizir, Castellane explicitly dismissed Bonneval's congratulatory tone. The ambassador wrote to d'Argenson on August 7, 1746 acknowledging the good reputation Said enjoyed based on his previous visits to France, before raising his own apprehensions that Said, due to his weak nature, would counter their aims, "rather than expose himself to the reproach of being Partial to the French" (plutôt que de s'exposer au reproche d'être Partial pour les françois).<sup>75</sup> In contrast to the praise accorded to Said among French men of Letters, Castellane's concerns reveal a less flattering side. As the cultivated patron of the printing press and a French-speaking ambassador, Said enjoyed great acclaim in France; as a powerful Ottoman statesman, he fell short, and his supposed sympathies floundered on the rocky shores of court politics. His expression of loyalty to the Ottoman court left Castellane unimpressed with the judgements of Peyssonnel and Bonneval.

Castellane further portrayed Said as a venal statesman disgusted with the French after having squandered the monetary gifts he had received from the French court during his embassy and having failed to obtain a sufficiently ample contribution to his coffers from the Marseille Chamber of Commerce upon his departure. Expressing his satisfaction at seeing Said deposed in 1747, he wrote to a French envoy to Saint Petersburg on March 12 of that year, stating that, "he has forgotten all that France has done for him, and he is instead incensed against us, notwithstanding all the attentions that I have lavished on him since his return from France" (il a oublié tout ce que la France a fait pour luy, et qu'il est au contraire ulcéré contre nous, nonobstant toutes les attentions que j'ay eües pour luy depuis son retour de France).<sup>76</sup> In the same letter, the French ambassador mentions the difficult position in which Said's perceived affections for France placed him at the Ottoman court. The very qualification which had been an asset in Paris — Said's proficiency in French — became in fact a liability in Istanbul:

when he was appointed Ambassador to France, he put on the act in front of the Grand Vizier of having what I said to him interpreted, out of the fear that one would suspect him of knowing French and of coming off as just as infidel as those whose language he spoke, I didn't doubt that he had trouble keeping face in a meeting where he would blush to show himself either zealous or ungrateful towards France, one being as perillous to his manner of thinking as the other was dishonest.

lorsqu'il fut nommé Ambassadeur en France, il affecta devant le GV de se faire interpreter ce que je luy disoit, de peur qu'on ne le soupçonne de sçavoir le françois et de ne passer pour aussi infidele que ceux dont il parloit la langue, je ne doutois pas qu'il n'eut été embarassé a composer sa contenance dans un entretien, ou il auroit rougi de se montrer zélé ou ingrat envers la France, l'un etant aussi périlleux dans sa façon de penser que l'autre etoit déshonnéte.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Letter from Castellane to d'Argenson, August 7, 1746, in "Lettres Diverses," 222r.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 324v.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*,

Castellane returning to Said's nomination as ambassador after six years — more or less the span of his own embassy to Istanbul — speculates upon his counterpart's internal conflicts and divided loyalties through the prism of his own frustrations with Said's failings as an ally to the French court. Castellane is not merely interpreting Said's choices in this anecdote, but he is also projecting upon the Ottomans beliefs about language and a specific vision of French identity. Whereas upon the Ottoman ambassador's visit to France, his use of French afforded him purchase in the Republic of Letters, Castellane holds that language conveys to the Ottomans both imperial loyalties and religious identity. Said opts to speak to the ambassador in Ottoman, foregoing the immediacy of French in a way that signals his affiliation with his own court's hierarchy and interpersonal codes. This is portrayed by Castellane, however, as tied to both his religious affiliation and his judgement of the French faith as infidel. Moreover, it is portrayed as dishonest to Said's private feelings.

As with Müteferrika's conversion, then, Said's conscience becomes a matter of speculation, with several interlocutors guessing at his heartfelt identification with French values and language, and Castellane from Istanbul, backed up by the Marseille Chamber of Commerce, offering quite the contrary opinion – imagining Said as a duplicitous and fickle instrument of the Sultan. Unlike Müteferrika, however, Said never raised any doubts over the sincerity of his religious faith. In fact, the subject of his beliefs simply never comes up in the numerous mentions made in French periodicals and correspondence about the ambassador's son and high-level Ottoman statesman. Nonetheless the belief that the motivations of Said and Müteferrika could be determined based on, respectively, deepseated cultural and religious affinities penetrates their portrayals in the press and correspondence from Paris and Istanbul.

It is noteworthy that Said's language choices are used to deduce his "true" feelings. Peyssonnel also socially situates Müteferrika through his use of Latin. He writes to the Marquis de Caumont on July 9, 1739:

I see that you are grateful to Ibraïm effendy for his knowledge of Latin; be warned, the case is of an apostate; it is not the Muslim who knows Latin (because Muslims don't learn this language), it's the former minister who has not yet been able to forget the Latin that he had learned some time ago[.]

Je vois que vous scavez bon gré a Ibraïm effendy de scavoir le latin ; prenes garde ; il s'agit d'un apostat ; ce n'est pas le musulman qui scait le latin (car les musulmans n'apprenent pas cette langue) c'est le jadis ministre, qui n'a pas pû oublier encor, le latin qu'il a sçu autrefois[.]<sup>78</sup>

Latin, here, stands in for Said Effendi's French as the language of the infidel. Yet Ibrahim's Latin is not that of an infidel but a renegade. Through language, then, Peyssonnel divides Müteferrika against himself: he is a Muslim for whom Latin is an impossible language, and yet Peyssonnel is able to exhume the former minister's Christian past. Thus, Peyssonnel communicates with the Christian and not the Muslim renegade. This unmediated

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<sup>78</sup> "Lettres Autographes..." 118r.

communication, by its very possibility, separates Müteferrika from his peers in the Ottoman administration.

Taken together, however, the examples of Said's strategic use of French and Müteferrika's equally shrewd use of Latin demonstrate that both representatives of the Ottoman state were able to leverage language to convey a European identity when circumstances warranted it. Of course, they may have also enjoyed the facility of conversing in Latin or French with their counterparts. Within the limits of what we can ascertain, though, is the evidence that diverse cultural registers were largely available to French and Ottoman diplomats independent of some innate intermediary identity.

The fact that both Said and Müteferrika were cast as individuals internally divided between Turkish and French, Muslim and Christian, has come to represent *a posteriori* the possibility of printing by the Ottoman court. These perceptions — of the Frenchman and the renegade — remain the operative readings of both individuals in much current scholarship. The insistence on their necessary dualism reinforces the narrative of a civilisational lag, and it is maintained today in the popularly held belief that Islam is unable to reform itself.<sup>79</sup>

Framed only within the literary debates of the eighteenth century, however, the pure erasure of politics – of Castellane's and Fourmont's voices, for example – from the portrayals of Mehmed Said Effendi and Ibrahim Müteferrika reveals the primacy of personality for the Republic of Letters. Their assumed receptivity to French ideas and Christian values justified not only the possibility of the printing press in Istanbul, but also the existence of literature among the Turks. It is significant, then, that the first mentions of Müteferrika in the *Mercure* and the *Gazette* both characterize him with the same word: *Littérature*. In this way, they are the inheritors of the *Mercure's* Katip Çelebi and different embodiments of the continuity of Turkish Literature. This literature, I show in the following section, not only predated the press in the French imagination, but also persisted independently of it.

### Turkish Literature after Print

The interactions between Peyssonnel and Müteferrika ten years after the first dispatches about the Ottoman printing press reached France reveal that print, rather than a condition of literature, was its byproduct. Through his conversations with the Ottoman diplomat and printer, Peyssonnel articulated a version of Turkish literature that was dependent upon people, not print. The insights Peyssonnel conveys to Caumont largely pertain to the education of Ottoman elites – in particular, what Peyssonnel calls “*gens de*

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<sup>79</sup> For examples of this discourse in the mainstream press in both English and French, see Abdenour Bidar, “Lettre D'un Musulman Européen. L'Europe et La Renaissance de L'islam,” *Esprit*, no. 296 (2003): 9–31, and “Lettre ouverte au monde musulman,” *Marianne*, (October 13, 2014), [http://www.marianne.net/Lettre-ouverte-au-monde-musulman\\_a241765.html](http://www.marianne.net/Lettre-ouverte-au-monde-musulman_a241765.html); Irshad Manji, “Islam Needs Reformists, Not ‘Moderates,’” *Wall Street Journal*, May 7, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703992704576305412360432744>; Ayaan Hirsi Ali, “Why Islam Needs a Reformation,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-reformation-for-islam-1426859626>; Daniel Pipes, “Can Islam Be Reformed?,” *Commentary Magazine*, July 1, 2013, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/can-islam-be-reformed/>; and Félix Marquardt et al., “Islam : Un Appel À La Réforme,” *Le Point*, April 21, 2015, [http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/islam-un-appel-a-la-reforme-21-04-2015-1923015\\_23.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/islam-un-appel-a-la-reforme-21-04-2015-1923015_23.php).

loy.” Peyssonnel draws the conclusion that their individual aspirations level the terrain that otherwise separates Turks and Frenchmen. In what follows, I will highlight two episodes from Peyssonnel’s correspondence with Caumont: first, his reflections on an elite’s education, and second, his attempts to obtain a treatise on the subject from an Ottoman informant. While Peyssonnel’s encounters and the ideas he develops from them are startling in the cultural continuities they reveal, his letters also show the limitations of reasoning by comparison – a logic based, in the words of Jocelyne Dakhliya, on a relationship of “false reciprocity” that presupposes boundaries that may not actually exist.<sup>80</sup>

Dakhliya identifies the use of comparison on the basis of European norms as a “dangerous” method of analysis:

[Comparison] is only ever established on a falsely reciprocal basis. To compare, one bases one term on an already constituted object, bearing a history, and one searches, in a supposedly different culture, its equivalents. The belief in the existence of a frontier is thus at the heart of such a process, and it is beyond this border that one will define as identical what was possibly only the same, continuous reality[.]<sup>81</sup>

This comparative logic is often used to transplant Islamic terms out of context in order to attribute a false equivalency. By trying to discover Turkish literature for Caumont, Peyssonnel falls into this habit of mind that searches for equivalencies, but also redraws borders. As shown in the following section, Peyssonnel’s efforts to determine equivalencies between French and Ottoman social hierarchies articulate a gap between the French and the Ottoman man of letters, even as he insists that each is on equal footing.

## Education

I now turn to examining Peyssonnel’s letters to show how he assimilated education into the broader category of literature. In a letter to the Marquis de Caumont on January 24, 1739, he wrote:

Given your desire to become familiar with the literature of Turkey; I have sent to you in my first letter, a general outline of the different stages through which men of letters may pass, from the simple pupil up to the Mufti; and I promised to provide you next with an idea of their course of study.

pour l’envie que vous avez de connoitre le litterature de la Turquie ; je vous ay envoy  par ma premiere lettre, un plan general des differents etats par ou peuvent passer les

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<sup>80</sup> Jocelyne Dakhliya, *Le Divan Des Rois: Le Politique et Le Religieux Dans L’islam*, Collection Historique (Paris: Aubier, 1998), 18.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*: “[La comparaison] ne s’instaure jamais que sur une base fausement r ciproque. Pour comparer, on se fonde sur un objet constitu , d j  dot  d’une histoire, et l’on recherche, en une culture suppos e autre, ses  quivalents. La croyance en l’existence d’une fronti re est donc   la base d’une telle d marche, et c’est par-del  cette limite que l’on d finera comme identique ce qui n’ tait peut- tre qu’une m me r alit , continue[.]”



gens de lettres, depuis le simple ecolier jusques au Mufty ; et je vous promis de vous donner ensuite une idée du cours de leurs etudes.<sup>82</sup>

The broad perspective of literature offered by Peyssonnel in his letters — and presumably shared by Caumont — begins with education. By Peyssonnel’s logic, education or the process of becoming an *homme de lettres*, or “man of letters”, is an integral part of literature. Peyssonnel follows the thread of education as literature all the way through to a man of letters’ career choices.

Peyssonnel introduced his subject with a simple division: “Here one knows only men of war and men of law” (On ne connoit icy, que les gens de guere et les gens de loy).<sup>83</sup> He expands upon the latter, explaining, “this second class brings together what in France we would call the clergy and the robe; because it is from the same assemblage that one would draw the priesthood and the magistrates” (cette seconde classe, reünit ce qui en France nous appellerions le clergé et la robe ; car c’est du meme corps, qu’on tire les ecclesiastiques et les magistrats) and adding that this was analogous to Muhammad, who as prophet was also “legislator” (legislateur).<sup>84</sup>

With this introduction to the education of the Ottoman man of letters, it is clear that Peyssonnel has singled out the class of *gens de loy* as his men of letters. There are two themes that animate Peyssonnel’s description of the education of this class. On the one hand, he proceeds through comparison, attempting to establish equivalencies between French and Ottoman social hierarchies — in fact, he uses the expression “Muslim hierarchy” (hierarchie musulmane)<sup>85</sup> — on the other hand, he pauses at the pairing of religion and lawmaking. The conception of Muhammad as a lawmaker or legislator gained currency in France with the circulation in manuscript form of Boulainvilliers *Life of Mahomed*, which was printed posthumously in 1729.<sup>86</sup> Boulainvilliers offered a positive revision of the figure of the Muslim prophet. The characterization of Muhammad as a lawmaker nevertheless gave rise to the narrative that religion and the state were inseparable in Islam, as in Montesquieu’s account in his 1735 work *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence*: “The Arabs left their land to extend their religion and empire that Mohammed had founded with the same hand.”<sup>87</sup> Peyssonnel here echoes a widely circulating discourse about Islamic empire and uses it in turn as an heuristic to better explain to Caumont the category “*gens de loy*,” or the Ottoman counterparts to French men of letters.

This logic is sustained throughout: On the one hand, Peyssonnel uses an analogy in order to help his correspondent understand the duties of the Ottoman subject. On the other hand, he draws awareness to the ways in which the amalgamation of religion and law under Ottoman rule breaks down the analogy. For example, Peyssonnel labels a *Mollah* “a type of Doctor of the Sorbonne” (un espece de Docteur de Sorbonne), who “appoints major judges, and since religion and the law are joined together in this country, one may even

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<sup>82</sup> “Lettres Autographes...” 90r.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 8iv.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 82v.

<sup>86</sup> Henri Boulainvilliers, *La vie de Mahomed* (London ; Amsterdam: P. Humbert, 1730).

<sup>87</sup> Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence ...*, ed. Gonzague Truc (Paris: Garnier frères, 1967), 123.

compare a mollah to a [provincial governor] and to an archbishop” (remplit les grandes judicatures et comme la religion et la loy, sont reünies dans ce païs, on peut en meme temps comparer un mollah, a un seneschal et a un archevêque).<sup>88</sup>

*Mollah* is what Javier Franco Aixelá calls a “culture-specific item.”<sup>89</sup> The culture-specific item results from “a conflict arising from any linguistically represented reference in a source text which, when transferred to a target language, poses a translation problem due to the nonexistence or to the different value [...] of the given item in the target language culture.”<sup>90</sup> Aixelá identifies two broad strategies for the translator faced with such an item: conservation, defined as “acceptance of the difference by means of the reproduction of the cultural signs in the source text,” and naturalization, which consists in the “transformation of the other into a cultural replica.”<sup>91</sup> Peyssonnel chooses both to conserve *Mollah* and to naturalize it. But his efforts to transform the word into its French replica leave him with three options; *Docteur de Sorbonne, seneschal, archevêque*: each on its own is inadequate. There is no one-to-one correspondence. His language reveals the shortcomings of linguistic and cultural comparison. This tension undergirds his struggle to cast Turkish literature in French terms.

But this tension would not be there were it not for Peyssonnel’s desire to fit the Turkish man of letters within the French mold. In a particularly thoughtful passage, Peyssonnel compares the education of an Ottoman bureaucrat with that of a member of the French *petite noblesse*. He remarks that, without any particular ambition, one can merely live one’s life, much as in France. It is the measure of one’s ambition that sets the terms of one’s studies:

The term of studies is not fixed at all; one studies until one is as knowledgeable as is necessary for one’s stated goals. If these goals are limited and the pupil has little ambition, he works to become an imam or a *cadi*; that is to say to acquire the benefit of a mosque[.]

Le temps des etudes n’est point déterminé ; on etudie jusques a ce que l’on soit aussi sçavant qu’il est nécessaire de l’estre pour les vües qu’on se propose. Si ces vües cont bornées et que l’ecolier n’aye pas beaucoup d’ambition, il travaille a etre imam ou *cadi* ; c’est a dire beneficier de quelque mosquée[.]<sup>92</sup>

At the end of this passage from his letter to Caumont, Peyssonnel crossed out the word “church” “*eglise*” and replaced it with “mosque” (*mosquée*) consciously seeking to undercut his reasoning by analogy at the point where the comparison would be too uncomfortable: where Islam would bleed into Christianity.

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<sup>88</sup> “Lettres Autographes...” 82v.

<sup>89</sup> Aixelá, “Culture-Specific Items in Translation.”

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>92</sup> “Lettres Autographes...” 81v-82r.

Peyssonnel shows a natural, almost sympathetic, understanding of the Ottoman student. His use of “ambition” as a motive for study erases borders between the modest Ottoman bureaucrat and his French counterpart and, importantly, assumes the ability to speculate about the former’s mindset, his spirit. The use of “*eglise*” flows forth from this narrative, the product of the natural identification of a servant of the French court with one of his Ottoman peers. He shows, then, the influence of his talks with Ibrahim Müteferrika the printing and diplomatic liaison and others who informed his letters to Caumont his French interlocutor. Yet, he literally draws the line at the frontier of religion. The equivalency between French and Ottoman “men of letters” is strained because “Mosque” does not translate to “Church,” but has its own word. To claim that the realm of Islam corresponds so effortlessly to that of Christianity would be blasphemous.

The same self-censoring occurs in his subsequent letter, from January 24, 1739:

the more one’s belltower fades from sight, the more one finds to prove to oneself that Reason is of all Countries and that men resemble each other more than one would think, no matter in which climate they are born; I would not wish to compare a Dervish to a Monk, nor a Muslim who regularly goes to the Mosque with the bourgeois of Paris who attends his Parish services; this comparison would be odious; we have the advantage of the true Faith[.]

plus on perd son clocher de vüe, plus on trouve a se convaincre que la raison est de tous les Pays et que les hommes se ressemblent plus entr’eux que l’on ne pense, sous quelques climats qu’ils soient nés ; je ne voudrois pas comparer un Dervich avec un Chartreux ni un musulman qui va regulierement a la Mosquée avec le bourgeois de Paris, qui frequente sa Parroisse ; cette comparaison seroit odieuse ; nous avons l’avantage de la vraye Religion[.]<sup>93</sup>

This passage is remarkable for what Peyssonnel conveys from his own personal experience, as a diplomat who has “lost sight of his hometown.” At least, on a metaphorical level, he anticipates Montesquieu’s theory of climates to highlight inherent commonality rather than inherent difference. Rather than building a case for the science and learning of the Turks, he allows for the presupposition that they are equal in their capacity for reason. However, the logic of comparison can only extend in Peyssonnel’s writing up to the frontier between Christianity and Islam. His adventurous opinions on the universality of reason break down along religious lines.

What stands out in Peyssonnel’s broad narratives about the education of the Ottoman bureaucrat is, first, the sense of sympathy he expresses about the life of the Ottoman *gens de loy* – which is not surprising given that Peyssonnel is a lawyer by training. Moreover, Peyssonnel unequivocally links the question of literature to that of education. This education, however, applies specifically to the Ottoman administration and does the work of elite formation necessary to the Republic of letters. Even as Islam consistently

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 92v.

disrupts his explanation of the formation of the Ottoman elite, the fact that he retains elite formation as the benchmark for “literature” is significant.

## The Seven Stars

In this section, I explore how a treatise supposedly about literature was reduced to a religious text. In his efforts to oblige Caumont and his interest in Turkish literature, Peyssonnel sought out a treatise on the education of the Ottoman man of letters. In the preceptor of the Ottoman *Raïs Effendi*'s (chancellor) children he believed he had found the ideal informant to do the job. He sought from this interlocutor the follow-up to his previous tableau of the education of the Ottoman man of letters: “I asked him for the state of the different sciences studied by the Turks, the choice of books that they consult for each science, the colleges where they are taught” (c'est a luy je demandai un etat des differents sciences auxquelles les Turcs s'appliquent, du choix des livres qu'ils consultent sur chaque science; des colleges ou on les professe).<sup>94</sup> In order to persuade the tutor, Peyssonnel argued that, “most nations reproached the Turks for being blind or one-eyed, and I was favorable to showing in France that Turks have eyes, like other men” (la pluspart des nations se reprochoient aux Turcs d'être aveugles ou borgnes, et que j'étois bien aise de faire voir en France que les Turcs ont des yeux, comme les autres hommes).<sup>95</sup> The interest in defining Turkish literature both establishes a difference and then seeks to bridge that difference through the metaphor of Turkish eyes. Turkish literature remains sought after because it remains unfamiliar or unknown. Yet this ignorance is projected onto the Turks themselves — a perception Peyssonnel underscores with the metaphor of blindness. Writing in 1739, after the activity of Müteterrika's press was suspended, the question of Turkish literature remains as vibrant as before print came to the Ottoman court. And Peyssonnel argues that having a literature is a fundamental human quality shared by French and Turk alike. The strength of his argument rests largely on his chosen criteria, which focus on processes, such as studying, selecting and teaching, rather than on books alone.

Peyssonnel's approach in obtaining answers about the Ottoman course of study appeared to bear fruit. He continues in his letter to Caumont: “I have since learned that he is working on a dissertation that will have a broader range than what I had dared to promise myself” (j'ay sçu depuis qu'il travaille à une dissertation qui aura plus d'étendue que je n'avois osé me le promettre).<sup>96</sup> This dissertation carried great promise for Peyssonnel and was the subject of frequent updates over the next two years. In May 1739, five months after his first mention of the dissertation, Peyssonnel announces that the study had been confiscated by the tutor's patron over offending words in a dedicatory letter to the ambassador. Moreover, “he expanded too much upon things that concerned the Mohammedan Faith” (il s'est trop etendu sur des choses qui interessent la Religion mahometane).<sup>97</sup> A correspondent of Caumont, Jean Bouhier, informed of this obstacle,

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from Peyssonnel to Caumont, January 24, 1739, in *Ibid.*, 90v.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 90v-91r.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 103v-104r.

writes on July 30, 1739, “It is upsetting that the publication of the dissertation on Turkish literature has been stopped. It would have been curious and would have taught us on this matter many things that we don’t know. But the spirit of the Inquisition intervenes everywhere” (Il est fâcheux qu'on ait arrêté la publication de la dissertation sur la littérature turque. Cela aurait été curieux et nous aurait appris sur ces articles bien des choses que nous ignorons. Mais l'esprit d'inquisition se fourre partout).<sup>98</sup>

In order to obtain the release of the treatise, Peyssonnel first pleads with the embassy’s dragoman, and when that proves futile, he plans to use an upcoming meeting between Villeneuve and the Grand Vizir “in order to get this work, as much as the other clarifications, that I believe could please you” (pour avoir tant cet ouvrage que les autres éclaircissements, que je croirois pouvoir vous faire plaisir).<sup>99</sup> That Peyssonnel intends to secure the treatise on Turkish sciences through the intervention of the ambassador at the highest levels of the Ottoman court appears laughable on the surface. The embassy bureaucrat suggests that his cultural diplomacy is in service of Caumont’s pleasure, although the pleasure referred to here can be more specifically construed as the satisfaction of his curiosity. Nevertheless, that Peyssonnel proposed a high level intervention indicates that this would not appear so far-fetched to a much admired member of the Republic of Letters and fellow member of the Marseille Academy of Letters and Sciences.

In place of the treatise, Peyssonnel suggested he might offer a “canvas” (canevas) consisting of a catalogue “of the Arabic books that form the course of study of the Turks” (des livres arabes, qui forment le cours des études des turcs).<sup>100</sup> Although he did not have any expertise to offer on the catalogue, Peyssonnel planned to “embellish [it] with conversations that [he] would have with the men of letters who [he] would come across” (broder des entretiens que j’aurai avec les gens de lettres, qui me tomberont sur la tête).<sup>101</sup> In the absence of the dissertation he had promised to Caumont, Peyssonnel returns, then, to where he began with Müteferrika: finding men of letters who could talk to him about Turkish learning. The tableau painted by Peyssonnel’s ambitions shows a milieu where he could easily engage with his Ottoman counterparts on a number of literary subjects. Such encounters, in fact, are not uncommon in his correspondence and draw attention to the degree to which the definition of Turkish literature was a process of constant articulation, adjusted and corrected based on the accumulation of personal encounters.

Two months later, the dissertation is referred to as having suffered a “catastrophe.”<sup>102</sup> In October of the same year (1739), Peyssonnel announces that having reached a peace treaty — the negotiations of the Treaty of Belgrade — he was able to broach the subject of the dissertation and finally receive a copy. He instructs Caumont to request a copy of the translation from Villeneuve, “by attesting to M. the ambassador the service he would render unto the republic of letters in making this work public” (en temognant a M

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<sup>98</sup> Caumont, *Lettres Du Marquis de Caumont*, 205.

<sup>99</sup> “Lettres Autographes...” 104r.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 104r.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 117r.

l'ambassadeur le service qu'il rendra à la république des lettres, en rendant cet ouvrage public).<sup>103</sup> However, one year later, the dissertation has still not been translated, sitting with Julien-Claude Galland, the nephew of Antoine Galland and a dragoman-in-training.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, in September 1741, Peyssonnel sends the treatise to Caumont, noting with frustration his effort to have it translated by Barouth, a former interpreter for the Royal Library. The difficulty was such, however, that Barouth was only able to translate the titles of each rubric, and this is what is passed along to Caumont.<sup>105</sup> Caumont passes along this edition to the Royal Library in 1742.<sup>106</sup> Although described since its inception as a study of Turkish literature, the Ottoman text, preserved in the French National Library, is now considered one of the first major studies of the Ottoman school, or *madrassa*, curricula.<sup>107</sup> Given the title *Kevâkib-i Seb'a*, (*Seven Stars*), the work's preamble does not name Peyssonnel but credits the French with initiating the project.<sup>108</sup> How this treatise made its way from a personal favor seeking answers about Turkish literature to a groundbreaking document cataloguing the early modern Ottoman madrasa curriculum is further proof of the disciplinary divisions that, applied retrospectively, obscure continuities that existed between cultures and were given expression as literature. An informal attempt to draw continuities between Turkish literature and the French Republic of Letters is now cordoned off as an archival document with a niche historical value in the study of the sciences and education in the Ottoman Empire.

Twelve years later, in 1754, Julien-Claude Galland, who was one of the two interpreters who had indefinitely stalled the translation of the preceptor's dissertation, publishes a treatise on the pilgrimage to Mecca and the Muslim catechism, translated from Arabic manuscripts. He also inserts a short treatise on Turkish sciences under the heading, *Traduction d'une Dissertation de Zehny Effendy sur les Sciences des Turcs, & sur l'ordre qu'ils gardent dans le cours de leurs études* (Translation of a Dissertation by Zehny Effendy on the Sciences of the Turks, and on the order they occupy in their course of study).<sup>109</sup> The content, focusing on the course of studies of the Turks, corresponds with that of *Kevâkib-i Seb'a*. Moreover, the pseudonymous Ottoman author, Zehny Effendy, concludes his tract with the date stamp, "Completed the year of the Hijra 1152, which equates with the year 1739 of the Christian Era" (Fait l'an de l'Hegyre 1152, qui revient à l'an

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 120r.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Peyssonnel to Caumont, October 3, 1740 in *Ibid.*, 132v-133r.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Peyssonnel to Caumont, September 26, 1741, in "Précis encyclopédique scientifique, en turc, rédigé sur les ordres du raïs el-koultab Moustafa Efendi, sans titre, ni nom dauteur" (Paris, 1741), Supplément turc 196, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 2v.

<sup>107</sup> Cevat İzgi, *Osmanlı medreselerinde ilim*, 2 vols. (Topkapı, İstanbul: İz, 1997) 1:68-77, is the primary source for this reading of the treatise, and it is noteworthy to see his version taken up in an educational research handbook: Sümer Atkan, "Curriculum Research in Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic," in *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*, ed. William F. Pinar (New York: Routledge, 2013), 503. ), 502-10. See also Baki Tezcan, "Some Thoughts on the Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Science," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, no. 36 (2010): 149.

<sup>108</sup> "Précis Encyclopédique Scientifique," 5v.

<sup>109</sup> Julien-Claude Galland, *Recueil Des Rits et Des Cérémonies Du Pélerinage de La Mecque, Auquel on a Joint Divers Écrits Relatifs À La Religion, Aux Sciences & Aux Mœurs Des Turcs* (Amsterdam: Desaint et Saillant, 1754), <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb304764660>, 85-98.

1739 de l'Ere Chrétienne).<sup>110</sup> Framed within a new context focused on religious ritual, Galland's adaptation of *Kevâkib-i Seb'a* shows how print translations of Ottoman work were reductive and focused on religious difference.

Peyssonnel's hard work seeking out answers about Turkish literature finally went to press, then, although tucked away in a volume more broadly devoted to Islamic rites and articles of faith. With the transformation from Ottoman manuscript to French printed book, Galland reified Turkish learning within the scope of religious practice. Moreover, the publication of this translation by Galland was to reflect a shift into how information about Ottoman culture circulated in France beginning in the 1740s. In the system of personal development and establishing rapport that assumed the heading "literature," print culture conjured up an unnatural division. For the French "men of letters," the promise of the Ottoman printing press held a symbolic import that was out of sync with the *practices* of the Republic of Letters. These practices – "literature" – favored personal relationships and accessed different roles that were by turns cultural, intellectual, and political.

Peyssonnel, sitting down in his camp in Sophia to reach out to Caumont at the urging of his ambassador, Villeneuve, writes of his state of mind:

I have written and coded all that I had to write and code; and I have to myself the rest of the day; lying lazily on some carpets, I must one way or another partake in the Oriental relaxation, which makes the delights of this country; my gratitude would be complete, if I was accustomed to smoking; I am happy only by half, I take my coffee without sugar; my valet brings me some from hour to hour; I have only to clap my hands; it's the bell with which the Muslims call their valets; I ring like them as well; and I am dressed the same; my mustache is beginning to grow, but it won't be long before it curls.

j'ai écrit et chiffré, tout ce que j'avois à écrire et à chiffrer ; et j'ai à moy le reste de la journée ; mollement couché, sur des tapis, il faut bon gré mal gré que je goûte du repos oriental, qui fait les délices de ce pays ; ma gratitude seroit parfaite, si j'étois accoutumé à fumer ; je ne suis heureux qu'à demi, je prends le café sans sucre ; mon valet m'en apporte d'heure en heure ; je n'ai qu'à frapper dans mes mains ; c'est la clochette avec laquelle les Musulmans appellent leurs valets ; je cloche aussi comm'eux ; et suis habillé de même ; ma moustache est naissante, mais elle ne tardera pas à friser.<sup>111</sup>

Peyssonnel narrates his metamorphosis from a diplomatic attaché sending coded dispatches to the French court to a foreigner becoming accustomed to the ways of his hosts. His hands ring for service, and his face inexorably grows Turkish. However, the reader — here, the Marquis de Caumont — knows that Peyssonnel is not really becoming Muslim. The writer is not two people with one plume. He is merely tapping into a form of cultural expertise accessed through his first-person experience. Though the story is familiar, the stakes in Peyssonnel's self-presentation are relatively low. His free expression

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>111</sup> "Lettres Autographes..." 81r.

across different cultural and functional registers does not challenge the reified divisions of secular Europe and the Islamic Orient. For all that his search for Turkish literature reveals both the continuities and tensions between French and Turkish interlocutors in Istanbul, his identity remains stubbornly French and his voice muted.

### Conclusion

The different French discourses about print challenge our assumptions about both borders and identity. By casting the Müteferrika press as the outgrowth of its founders' dual consciousness rather than the product of imperial policies agitated by strategic considerations and the weight of previous attempts to introduce print at the Porte, the prevailing narrative of the Ottoman printing press corroborates Asad's argument cited above that a normative view of European civilization as universal is predicated upon "[t]he idea that people's historical experience is inessential to them" and that Muslims, in particular can join this universal civilization only "once they have divested themselves of what many of them regard (mistakenly) as essential to themselves[.]"<sup>112</sup> The analytical gesture that brings Müteferrika's Christian origins under a particular focus is symptomatic of an ideological orientation that implicitly – even when adopting notions of mobility or arguing for the reconstitution of an East-West embrace – creates unequal divisions and false comparisons.

After the fact, print was to determine the perception of Ottoman advancement in the letters and sciences even until today. Yet, Peyssonnel's activities in Istanbul reveal the primacy he accords his personal encounters in the articulation of the border between prejudice and wisdom. Understanding his search for Turkish literature forces us to reconsider the portrayal of Said and Müteferrika in different French writings of the time. In point of fact, the French held a double discourse. On the one hand, the Ottoman printing press was assumed to prove that Islam itself placed boundaries in the development of letters and sciences. This, in turn, justified the personal exertions and expense associated with the various expeditions to the Levant to uncover the Christian substrata of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Said and Müteferrika through their personal attributes represented the possibility of the Turkish subject to be assimilated within the Republic of Letters.

Peyssonnel's letters, informed by his encounters with Ottoman subjects such as Müteferrika and the Chancellor's preceptor, argue for an expanded understanding of identity that is expressed through reciprocal and hierarchical relationships. A Republic of Letters grounded in the education of elites with ties to Court institutions cultivates a number of shared values, such as curiosity, ambition, and politeness. These values played important roles in the articulation of who or what is welcomed into the Republic of Letters and—importantly—in what ways. The French search for Turkish literature in the years surrounding the establishment of the Ottoman press, then, depended not on the spread of print but rather upon individual efforts to understand the Turkish man of letters.

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<sup>112</sup> Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 169-70.



## CHAPTER IV:

### The Snake in the Library From Turkish Manuscripts to Turkish Style in the Oriental Tale

This chapter focuses on the representation of “Turkish style” in three narrative collections that were adapted mostly from Turkish manuscripts held in the *Bibliothèque du Roi*. These collections – *L’Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Vizirs* (1707) by Pétis de la Croix, *Contes orientaux tirés des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roy de France* (1743) by Anne Claude Philippe de Caylus, and *Mélanges de Littérature orientale traduits de différens manuscrits Turcs, Arabes et Persans de la Bibliothèque du Roi* (1770) by Denis Dominique Cardonne – offer French readerships examples of the genre of the Oriental tale. Pétis de la Croix translates his source text directly from an Ottoman Turkish cycle of stories; Caylus and Cardonne use Turkish sources to varying degrees, juxtaposing them with other sources in Arabic and Persian. Although the sources themselves are not representative of Ottoman literary production, each work proposes to represent Ottoman and Oriental storytelling, at risk of conflating the two.

The Oriental tale was not representative of Ottoman writing up to and including the eighteenth century. Hatice Aynur defines a number of genres prized at the Ottoman court of the time; there are not prose genres.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, French readers had little exposure to Ottoman poetry in printed works. Instead, the translation of the *Mille et une nuits* by Antoine Galland in 1704 generated tremendous interest in the Oriental tale, extending well into the Revolutionary era, when the genre served as a popular means to convey political ideas through allegory. In the vein of these later allegories, many Oriental tales indulged in pastiches of the style of the *Mille et une nuits* with little but the pretext of original source material. The texts in this chapter are significant, then, because they do in fact draw from translations of Ottoman manuscript sources, most of which were collected for the Royal Library between 1670 and 1753.

What sets the work of the different authors – Pétis, Caylus, and Cardonne – apart is their relationship with the original texts. The manuscripts collected for the Royal Library were not initially intended for publication. In particular, the Oriental tales themselves were the object of scholarly translation exercises for the *Jeunes de Langue* training in Istanbul to become interpreters for the French embassy.<sup>2</sup> This unlikely leap from pedagogical tool to print publication makes the question of the stylistic features of the end product all the more intriguing. In the following analysis, then, I will focus on how the texts are redefined for different readerships, both from the Ottoman source material to its French adaptation, and, over time, to convey different beliefs about Turkish literature. This analysis will show the different ways in which these works construct a “Turkish style” and to what end. In addition, I will demonstrate how the different French authors confine these works to the realm of Muslim storytelling, even while promising an appeal to French readers. I will analyze the works in chronological

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<sup>1</sup> Hatice Aynur, “Ottoman Literature,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 487-92.

<sup>2</sup> See Berthier, Anne, “Turquerie ou Turcologie.”

order, beginning with the *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse* and concluding with *Mélanges de Littérature orientale*.

### A Tale Told by a Turk to a Turk

In 1707, in the shadow of the recent success of the *Mille et une nuits*, another collection of oriental tales appeared in France. This section argues that Pétis de la Croix uses his translation, *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Vizirs*, to recast Turkish literature for an erudite readership. I will focus on both the reception of the collection, subtitled *Contes turcs*, and the modifications made by Pétis to the translation in order to convey a more prestigious register of Turkish writing.

The *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse* garnered attention from three of the major periodicals that traced publications in Europe at the time: the *Journal des savants*, the *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*, and the *Mercure galant*. In his preface, François Pétis de la Croix fils (1653-1713) describes these tales as the work of "a Turk who relates in his style to another Turk Stories of Princes and Kings of different nations" (C'est un Turc qui debite à sa manière à un autre Turc des Histoires de Princes et Rois de différentes nations).<sup>3</sup> He insists, in fact, upon this authenticity, declaring "They are not at all the work of a French imagination which, harboring a foreign title, has hoped to advance its own fictions" (Ils ne sont point l'ouvrage d'une imagination française qui, à la faveur d'un titre étranger, ait voulu hasarder ses fictions).<sup>4</sup> He names the author as "Chéc Zadé, preceptor of Amurath the second" (Chéc Zadé, précepteur d'Amurath second).<sup>5</sup> Pétis insists on the authenticity of the work, referring throughout the preface to the Turkish voice, and anticipating the objections of his readers to its strangeness and harsh treatment of women.

The nineteen tales included in Pétis's *Sultane de Perse* are woven within a frame narrative about a star-crossed Persian prince, Nourgehan, and his passionate stepmother Canzade, the titular "Sultana of Persia." After having his chart drawn by the court astrologer, Nourgehan is compelled to maintain absolute silence for forty days in order to avoid the misfortune written for him in the stars. Canzade takes advantage of Nourgehan's silence to make amorous advances on the prince, while at the same time cajoling him to overthrow his father, Hafikin, and lay claim to his kingdom. When Nourgehan strikes her, drawing blood, the spurned sultana vows revenge and reports to Hafikin that his son assaulted her after she refused to plot against him. A furious Hafikin prepares to have his son executed before daybreak. This invites a conflict between the Persian emperor's wife and his viziers. The viziers line up to plead for mercy for Nourgehan by relating stories of women's mendaciousness and betrayal, to which Canzade responds with tales of sons who betray their fathers. Predictably, Hafikin veers between the impulse to carry out Nourgehan's death sentence and the decision to spare his son's life.

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<sup>3</sup> Pétis de La Croix, *Sultane de Perse*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Drawn from a source text consisting of eighty embedded tales, the stories themselves vary widely in plotting and tone. Some are steeped in religious references, including a playful spiritual reflection on the Prophet's *miraj* – the tale of his ascension to the seven heavens – in the story of *Chéc Chahabeddin*, a portrayal of the mercy and the miracles of Jesus in *Histoire d'un tailleur et de sa femme*, and a sufi parable, *Histoire des Trois princes obtenus du ciel*. In other stories, Pétis wrangles with the homoeroticism of the *Histoire du brachmane Padmanaba et du jeune Fyquai*, in which the mystic Padmanaba becomes infatuated with a young yoghurt-drink vendor, only to have the boy and his mother betray him in order to lay claim to his subterranean treasure. In contrast to many of the original tales, which have only vague geographical references and nondescript types as characters, Pétis largely embellishes his translation, offering up exotic locales and names and multiplying characters. One of the clearest examples of this is the *Histoire du Prince de Carizme et de la Princesse de Géorgie*. This tale reflects upon the starcrossed Nourgehan by recounting the misadventures of the titular prince who was fated to suffer for the first thirty years of his life. The didactic content of the story, according to the vizier who serves as narrator, is to show the emperor Hafikin that even princes can befall misfortunes written in the stars and, thus, Nourgehan deserves clemency. Given the dichotomous nature of the narration – pitting Canzade against the viziers – the didactic purpose of the tales is more explicitly articulated than in Galland's translation of the *Mille et une nuits*.

The *Sultane de Perse* was widely appreciated and became a reference point for future translations and invented Oriental tales – as will be shown with both Caylus and Cardonne. As a work that asserts itself as distinctly Turkish, the *Sultane de Perse* provides a first test case for the reception of Turkish tales in France. Pétis explicitly asserts that this translation is representative of a Turkish style of storytelling, and he peppers the text throughout with transliterated phrases, words conserved in the original Ottoman, and explanatory footnotes. Rather than announcing the intention to accommodate French tastes, Pétis warns that some shock value may come from the clear representation of Turkish style. An examination of Pétis's representation of Turkish literature and its reception in the periodical press shows that the *Sultane de Perse* offers not a translation of the Oriental tale, but rather a reconstruction of Turkish literature. Pétis accomplishes this reconstruction through addition and supplementation from the poetic genre.

The *Mercure galant* states that Pétis had completed a manuscript translation of the *Sultane de Perse* roughly twenty-five years before its publication.<sup>6</sup> At that time, Pétis would have just returned to France after serving ten years in the Levant, where he studied Arabic, Persian and Turkish from the age of seventeen, first in Aleppo starting in 1670 and then, in Istanbul from 1676-80. In the catalogue of the manuscript holdings of the Royal Library, Pétis counts four different editions of the tales upon which his translation is based, the *Forty Viziers*, or *Kırk vizir*, also known by its Arabic name, *Forty days and nights*, or *Arba 'in sūbh wa masā'*. Pétis catalogued those manuscripts numbered 1371, 1372, and 1445 and 1446. He describes *Kırk vizir* in two places as "a Roman"<sup>7</sup> adding that it

<sup>6</sup> *Mercure Galant*, January 1707, 267.

<sup>7</sup> François Pétis de la Croix and Pierre Dipy, "Catalogue Des Manuscrits Turcs et Persans de La Bibliothèque Du Roi" (Paris, n.d.), NAF 5405, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 85, 124.

"contains eighty stories or Tales" (un Roman, [qui] contient quatre vingt histoires ou Contes).<sup>8</sup> This one sentence shows the difficulty that the publication of the *Sultane de Perse* would have presented. Without being able to define clearly the genre to which this collection belongs, how would it be presented to the public? The eighty stories, alternating between those told by the Sultana and the Viziers, work together as a whole, to determine the sentence that will eventually befall the star-crossed prince. This narrative unity would explain Pétis's cause of the word "Roman."

When first translating this work, Pétis could not have anticipated that he would ever see it in print. The *Mercure* writes that Pétis wrote it while still young, "to continue his Turkish language exercises" (Pour continuer ses exercices en langue Turque).<sup>9</sup> It is likely that the success of Galland's *Mille et une nuits* drove Pétis to consider publication. In the intervening years between his manuscript translation and the print publication, he would have had to make several choices on the presentation of the material that his scholarly practice would not have required.

## Two Readers

In fact, Pétis explains the decisions he makes regarding translation with respect to his imagined readers. His preface addresses separately men and women. In one paragraph, he cautions, "[t]he reader would be wrong to take exception to the customs that may seem to him foreign to the country in which the tales are set. He should consider that it is a Turk who relates in his style to another Turk Stories of Princes and Kings of different nations" (Le lecteur aurait tort de se révolter contre des coutumes qui lui paraissent peut-être étrangères au pays où est la scène de ces contes. Qu'il songe que c'est un Turc qui débite à sa manière à un autre Turc des histoires de princes et de rois de différentes nations).<sup>10</sup> Pétis thus conceives of his general, male reader as having a thorough enough knowledge of some of the settings of the tales — Khwarezm, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kashmir, and Syria, among others — as to remark upon incongruous details in the manners of the characters. This reader, whose erudition and detailed knowledge of travel accounts would, one imagines, overlap with the reader of the *Journal des Savants*, where such accounts are reviewed and summarized in digest form.

There is another class of readers, however: women. Pétis tries to accommodate their honor by excusing the Turkish author for the portrayal of women: "Nor should our French dames find it disagreeable that Chéc Zadé wrote tales that inveigh so strongly against the fair sex; he's a Turkish author. The character of his nation excuses him" (Nos dames françaises ne doivent pas non plus trouver mauvais que Chéc Zadé ait écrit des contes qui chargent si fort le beau sexe ; c'est un auteur turc. Le caractère de sa nation l'excuse).<sup>11</sup> Pétis anticipates that French women will react to the portrayals of women as if the accusations of malice are leveled at women in general. He excuses the misogyny of the stories, however, as an inherent trait of Turkish style. Moreover, he insists that the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>9</sup> *Mercure Galant*, January 1707, 267.

<sup>10</sup> Pétis de La Croix, *Sultane de Perse*, 74.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

characterization of women applies solely to "Muslim women" (les Musulmanes), who "are only concerned with finding the means to procure themselves pleasure" (ne s'occupent qu'à chercher les moyens de se procurer du plaisir).<sup>12</sup>

Given that Pétis uses his preface to try to mitigate the discomfort caused his readers by ethnographic inaccuracies and the negative portrayal of women in the *Sultane de Perse*, it is surprising that his translation has actually adapted the original manuscript to highlight precisely these aspects. On the first count, Pétis adds in geographical specifications where there are none in the original, and he changes some identifying signs. For example, the Brachmane Padmanaba is designated only as a Maghrebi in the original.

A more substantive change is the way in which Pétis reframes the collection around the figure of the Muslim woman. With the change in title from the *Forty Viziers* to the *Story of the Sultana of Persia and the Viziers*, Pétis places the Muslim woman in a titular role, predisposing the reader to focus on the woman of the story as the central figure. Both the *Mercure* and the *Journal* forefront the portrayal of the Muslim woman in their summaries of the work. The *Mercure* relates the stories' conception by Chéc Zadé, the preceptor of Murad II, to the premise that his young charge showed too great a weakness for women. The author devised the tales, then, "in order to cast suspicion on women and to make him know that they were dangerous" (pour luy rendre les femmes suspectes, & luy faire connoistre qu'elles estoient dangereuses).<sup>13</sup> Highlighting the subtitle, proffered by Pétis, of the *Malice des Femmes*, the *Journal* underscores the tales' negative portrayal of "Muslim women" (les Mahométones).<sup>14</sup> The *Journal* declares that the stories shed light on "bad upbringing they are given, and the indolence and captivity in which they live" which exposes them "more than other women to the weaknesses of their temperament" (la mauvaise éducation qu'on leur donne, et [...] l'oisiveté et la captivité où elles vivent, sont plus exposées que les autres, aux faiblesses du tempérament).<sup>15</sup> The role taken up by the Sultana and *Mahométones* more generally in Pétis's translation serves then to draw a clear distinction between subject and Pétis's woman reader.

## Reconstructing Turkish Style

The *Journal des Savants*, in its summary of the *Sultane de Perse* acknowledges the difficulties that rendering the Turkish style of the tales would have caused Pétis:

Care has been taken to accommodate this Translation to French tastes, to the extent possible. Several terms from the original Language have nevertheless been retained, without neglecting to offer an explanation through the footnotes.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Mercure Galant*, January 1707, 261.

<sup>14</sup> "Histoire de La Sultane de Perse et Des Visirs," *Journal Des Savants*, May 13, 1707, 309.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

On a eu soin d'accommoder cette Traduction au goût François, le plus qu'il a été possible. On y a conservé néanmoins plusieurs termes de la Langue originale, que l'on ne manque pas d'expliquer par des Apostilles.<sup>16</sup>

The *Journal* notes two different translation techniques used by Pétis: accommodation and conservation. In the first case, Pétis notes already in his catalogue for the Royal Library, the potential for the stories to offend readers' bienséance. He observes that *Kirk vizir* is "of great use among the Turks, because of the variety of tales that fill its pages, among which however there are some very dirty ones" (d'un tres grand usage parmi les Turcs, a cause des divers contes, dont il est remply, parmi lesquels [insert: cependant] il y en a de fort salles).<sup>17</sup> Pétis's tone is purely descriptive here, stressing the variety of the tales as a factor in its popularity with a Turkish public, and appending to that a note on the scabrous nature of some of the tales. His insertion of the "cependant" before mentioning the latter adds to his statement on the tales' appeal a caveat for the French reader. As the *Journal* surmises, then, Pétis confronted the challenge of rendering the stories more modest.

If we are to take the *Journal's* write-up at its word, those passages where Pétis did not fully respect the moral and aesthetic sensitivities of his French readership reflect passages where an accommodating translation was not possible. Yet, out of these moments of untranslatability, the reader acquires knowledge: conserved, transliterated lexical items are accompanied by explanatory footnotes.

The *Journal* adds another type of untranslatability to Pétis's text. The summary's author pronounces:

Some ways of speaking familiar to the Orientals and to which we would have difficulty growing accustomed have even been put there word for word. Such are, for example, these tender and loving expressions: *Angle of my liver, light of my eyes, matter of my life...*

On y a même rendu à la lettre certaines manieres de parler familiares aux Orientaux, & auxquelles nous aurions peine à nous accôûtumer. Telles sont, par exemple, ces expressions tendres & amoureuses; *Angle de mon foye, lumiere de mes yeux, matiere de ma vie...*<sup>18</sup>

These word-for-word translations offer insight into the amorous expressions of the Turks. In addition to the odd, discomfiting turns of phrase that Pétis provides in these translations, the *Journal* also contrasts the familiarity of such language to the Turks with the difficulty they present to a French reader. Highlighting that this language concerns love, the *Journal* draws a bright line around Turkish love, rendering it incommensurate with French love.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>17</sup> Pétis de la Croix and Dipy, "Catalogue Des Manuscrits Turcs," 86.

<sup>18</sup> "Histoire de La Sultane de Perse," *Journal des Savants*, 313.

The one problem with the *Journal's* analysis of this language is that none of the phrases cited are to be found in the original Ottoman manuscript. For example, where Pétis writes "*Angle de mon foie, lumiere de mes yeux, matiere de ma vie*"<sup>19</sup> in the *Histoire d'un Tailleur et de sa Femme* there is no dialogue. However, the *Journal* is not wrong that these expressions are common Turkish motifs. Only, they belong to the poetic register, which explains their absence from the folktales of the forty viziers.

Similarly, in the midst of the *Histoire du Prince de Carizme*, Pétis inserts a Persian poem that is not found in the original.<sup>20</sup> Although Pétis's poetic diction is absent from the original manuscript, the *Journal* is correct to recognize motifs that would have been common to the Ottoman courtly love poem, the *gazal*. This shows that French intellectual circles had sufficient familiarity with Ottoman courtly poetry to identify common expressions. This familiarity was greater than what one might surmise based on the lack of publication of poems and the proliferation of Oriental tales.

The inclusion of these poetic images and the Persian verse reveal a translator who is concerned with conveying a specific style, albeit one that belongs to an entirely different genre than what he is translating. The basic assumption here is that Pétis was attempting to amplify the exoticism of his text to render it more appealing to the public. It seems likely, however, that Pétis was seeking to "represent" Ottoman literature in a more complete way than what his source text, very spare for details and rhetoric, would have allowed for.

## Hiding Jesus

One glaring omission in Pétis's translation was, as Raymonde Robert points out, the lack of an explanatory note for the name "Aysa" in the *Histoire d'un Tailleur et de sa Femme*.<sup>21</sup> The "prophet Aysa," actually Jesus, plays an important role in the story. He performs the miracle by which the young hero's wife is resurrected. However, Pétis maintains only the transliteration of "Issa" as "Aysa," rather than signaling to his reader that this refers to Jesus.

The implication that Jesus figured into Muslim belief as a prophet was a terrain that may have trouble the French reader of the time. Indeed, the only acknowledgement of a shared religious past that the *Journal des savants* will allow for is the critical observation that Muslims distorted Biblical history:

The fifteenth tale of this collection contains an Anecdote from the History of the Israelites that cannot be found anywhere in the Bible and is apparently the invention of the Muslims, accustomed to distorting the Holy Scriptures with a thousand ridiculous fables, something they have in common with Rabbis.

Le 15e Conte de ce Recueil contient une Anecdote de l'Histoire des Israélites, qui ne se trouve point dans la Bible, et qui est apparemment de l'invention des

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<sup>19</sup> Pétis de La Croix, *Sultane de Perse*, 113.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-86.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 11113.

Mahometans, accoutumés à défigurer l'Écriture sainte par mille fables ridicules, ce qu'ils ont de commun avec les Rabbins.<sup>22</sup>

Rather than framing the retelling of a Biblical tale in a Turkish story as a sign of proximity of Islam and Christianity, the *Journal* casts the work of adaptation as bringing the Muslims closer to the Jews. Pétis's choice to leave "Jesus's" Turkish (by way of Arabic) name untranslated then, is a gesture of *bienséance*. Whereas the tales are read as a faithful representation of Islam, where Muslim rituals and celebrations are described, the Christian substrata within Islam meets a sharp denial. The subject of religion creates a dividing line between manuscript and translation that cannot be crossed.

Despite the enthusiasm provoked by the *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse*, Pétis never published the remaining three volumes that were promised by the *Mercure*. Instead, he went on to write the *Mille et un jours*, based upon another story cycle *Al-Faraj ba'd al-Shidda* (*Relief after Hardship*). Alain René Le Sage assisted in this endeavor, and it is possible that the Oriental tale could not keep up his interest.

### Caylus's Boring Stories

The influence of Pétis's *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Vizirs* can be seen in its enduring place in the list of "original" Oriental tale collections. Caylus mentions it (as the *Quarante vizirs*) in the dedicatory letter to his own anthology *Contes orientaux* published in 1743. The publisher follows up with a preface that claims "Mr. Petit [sic] and Mr. Gallant [sic] had no knowledge of the Manuscripts from which this Work is drawn" (M Petit & M. Gallant n'ont eu aucune connoissance des Manuscrits dont cet Ouvrage est tiré).<sup>23</sup> Unlike the *Sultane de Perse*, though, Caylus's collection did not garner wide acclaim in the press. With the proliferation of other, fabricated cycles of Oriental tales, including the pastiches of *Les Bijoux indiscrets* and *Le Sopha*, the publication of yet another series of tales was hardly noteworthy. Rather, Caylus gained widespread recognition for his more scholarly studies of his collection of Egyptian artifacts.

Caylus's *Contes orientaux* are of interest, however, because of the pretense that they are adaptations of newly acquired manuscripts expedited from Istanbul, accompanied by the translation attempts of the *Jeunes de Langue* training in the seat of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, unlike other authors of Oriental tales, Caylus had traveled to Istanbul in 1716 and was kept abreast by François Sévin of his progress in finding worthy manuscripts and inscriptions from antiquity in the Ottoman Empire. Sévin, despite his own skepticism — he wrote to Caylus in 1729, that "Noone, certainly, has thought to look for books in such a barbarous country" (Personne, certainement, ne s'est avisé de chercher des livres dans un pays aussi barbare)<sup>24</sup> — went to great lengths to identify Oriental tales that would interest Caylus, gathering together a collection of 30 manuscripts:

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<sup>22</sup> "Histoire de La Sultane de Perse," *Journal des savants*, 312.

<sup>23</sup> Caylus, *Contes Orientaux*, 1:e'.

<sup>24</sup> François Sévin, *Lettres Sur Constantinople*, ed. Bourlet de Vauxcelles (Paris: Oubré ; Buisson, 1802), //catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006799328, 20.



I have bought excellent pieces in this genre; *romans* have not been left out; you recommended them to me, and you know well that those things that are to your taste would not fail to infinitely please me. I have thus worked my hardest to satisfy you, and what I have gathered barely amounts to at least thirty volumes[.]

J'ai acheté d'excellens morceaux en ce genre ; les romans n'ont pas été oubliés ; vous me les avez recommandés, et vous jugez bien que les choses qui sont de votre goût ne sauroient manquer de me plaire infiniment. J'ai donc travaillé de mon mieux pour vous satisfaire, et ce que j'ai rassemblé ne va guère à moins de trente volumes[.]<sup>25</sup>

Caylus had traveled to Istanbul and Izmir with the Marquis de Bonnac in 1716. By the time Sévin was writing to him in 1729, he had clearly already developed an interest in the Oriental tale. Given Sévin's letter, it is possible to assume he was on the lookout by that time for original manuscripts to adapt and publish. It is paradoxical that Caylus had declared in his travel memoir, "The Turks are ignorant in all things[.]" (Les turcs sont ignorans en tout).<sup>26</sup> The *Contes orientaux* show both the result of Caylus's interest in finding original sources as well as a healthy dose of his earlier dismissive attitude towards Turkish knowledge. What he assembles, in the end, is a jumble of pure fabrications and adaptations that suggest a talent more anxious to avoid boring his reader than to present a faithful selection of translations.

### A Deceitful Pact

This ambivalence emerges from his invented frame narrative. First, the reader is led to question the authenticity of the narrator. Second, Caylus casts doubt upon the entertainment value of the stories. The pretext of the frame narrative is that the sultan Hudgiage has been in a foul mood and an unjust ruler due to insomnia. Hudgiage demands that his chief of prisons, Fitéad, find someone who can tell him stories to help him sleep at night or face death. To save her father, Fitéad's nine-year-old daughter Moradbak seeks the help of one prisoner, the wise Aboumélek who had been unjustly imprisoned in an underground dungeon by Hudgiage. The reader learns, then, that the stories to be told by Moradbak to the Sultan are not her own. Moradbak channels the narrative voice of an older, wiser man.

With this narrative pact between Moradbak and Aboumélek, Caylus both subverts and combines different conventions of the genre of the Oriental tale. On the one hand, Caylus reclaims for the male writer the authorship of a genre perceived as a woman's distraction. On the other hand, he takes two different figures of the narrator in other story cycles — the dutiful daughter and the wise counselor — and combines their actions into one narrative gesture. The effect of this, however, is that the frame narrative loses its coherence. On the one hand, the one-to-one relationship between the storyteller,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Anne Claude Philippe Caylus, "Voyage de Constantinople" (Paris, n.d.), NAF 4996, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 32.

Moradbak, and her listener, the sultan Hudgiage, is ever renewed under penalty of death (here, the threat bears down upon Moradbak's father). On the other hand, however, the threat that Hudgiage, the despot, represents for his prisoner Aboumélek remains underground throughout most of the frame narrative. If Aboumélek, the source of the stories Moradbak narrates to the sultan, is hidden, what are the reader and his proxy, Hudgiage, to make of the tales? Given that the Moradbak-Hudgiage duo is embedded within the secret rapport between Moradbak and Aboumélek, the reader and Hudgiage are distanced from the tales recited by Moradbak. Their telling is no longer the product of an immediate threat.

The Aboumélek-Moradbak-Hudgiage triangle, however, does reflect upon the work's composition, and is captured by the two prefaces for the collection: Caylus's own dedicatory letter, and a word from the publisher to the reader. In his dedication, Caylus addresses an unnamed "Madame" to explain the rationale behind his anthology:

*The Thousand and One Nights, the Thousand and One Days, the forty Viziers, Abdala Fils d'Hanif, and so many other, which are filled with charming images, are so present in your mind, that I have often heard you ask for Works in this genre that were unknown to you. I count a great deal on the novelty of this one: I could even without offending modesty praise it all the more, having had no other part in this Collection than that of having assembled it.*

[L]es *Mille & une Nuit, les Mille & un Jour, les quarante Vizirs, Abdala Fils d'Hanif, & tant d'autres qui sont remplis d'images charmantes, vous sont si présents, que je vous ai souvent entendu desirer des Ouvrages en ce genre qui vous fussent inconnus. Je compte beaucoup sur la nouveauté de celui-ci : je pourrois même sans blesser la modestie en faire un plus grand éloge, n'ayant point d'autre part à ce Recueil que celle de l'avoir rassemblé.*<sup>27</sup>

The modesty of the storyteller is a repeated motif in the *Contes*, and its first iteration is here in the first pages of the book. This modesty derives in part from a respect for the source of the tales — translations for Caylus, and Aboumélek for Moradbak — but it is, at least for Caylus, a false modesty. His hand in the *Contes orientaux* is much more present than either he or the publisher would have the reader believe.

The gratuitous nature of Moradbak's retelling echoes, as well, the manner in which the publisher asserts the collection has been assembled. The publisher lauds the efforts of the minister Maurepas (without naming him) to sponsor the *Jeunes de Langue* in Istanbul, and their scholarship in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. Yet, if it is through their language learning that these manuscripts have ended up in the Royal Library, the path to their conservation was rather haphazard. The students and aspiring dragomans were under orders, in fact, to “translate into French Arabic, Turkish or Persian works indifferently and by choice, and to send [to Maurepas] their translation with a copy of the Text” (*traduire en François les ouvrages Arabes, Turcs ou Persans indifferemment, & à leur*

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:c'-d'.

choix, & de lui envoyer leur traduction avec une copie du Texte).<sup>28</sup> Thus, what Caylus brought together under his anthology was a hodgepodge of tales drawn from various sources with no other intent but as training exercises for a corps of diplomatic interpreters. In the same way, there is very little to thematically tie the separate components of the *Contes orientaux* together, except their exoticism and the format of embedded stories.

Unlike Pétis's stories, Caylus's *Contes* are more concerned with novelty and the pretense of authenticity than with the representation of either Turks or Turkish literature. Caylus begins with a translation of an Ottoman retelling of the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, transitions to an invented polyandry story, and follows this with a series of tales unified in their narration by the love triangle of a sultan, his favorite, and a harem guard. The assembly of these different elements that take the reader to Ephesus, Arabia, Kashmir, Erzerum, and Basra, reveal an overt self-consciousness in Caylus's writing. The alternatives requested by Hudgiage, that the stories should be able to either "put me to sleep or to amuse me when I cannot sleep," (de m'endormir ou de m'amuser quand je ne puis dormir)<sup>29</sup> appear constantly present in the *Contes* and reveal Caylus's own anxiety about the soporific potential of his source material.

Caylus's sense that his tales may be boring animates his adaptation. The potential for putting Hudgiage asleep brings to mind Abdelfattah Kilito's question of the *Thousand and one Nights*: "What if the *Nights* actually is boring, and we are the ones who are victims of a pandemic blindness that compels us to overestimate the value of the *Nights*?"<sup>30</sup> Kilito refers here to the fact that the *Nights* do not conform to classical interpretations of what was important to read in the Arabic literary canon. It is only through the French translation that the *Nights* came to be appreciated. The choice to publish these *Contes orientaux*, in fact, is also a choice to suppress a courtly literature in favor of a preferred, French form. This reveals one process by which the French imagine Turkish literature.

By imagining Turkish literature, Caylus has to make it recognizable as such, which means conforming to French expectations of the Oriental tale. In the story of Naour, King of Kashmir, his favorite, Fatmé, prepares to relate a story that seeks to draw out the attention of the King's guard. Fatmé anticipates the potential of the story to fail. In this case, she says,

When it is less interesting, one has a fruit, one asks for a Sherbet, or a few cups of Wine of Shiraz; it makes he who tells it more lively and compensates he who listen for the moments of boredom.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:f.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:3.

<sup>30</sup> Abdelfattah Kilito, *Arabs and the Art of Storytelling: A Strange Familiarity*, trans. Mbarek Sryfi and Eric Sellin, First Edition, Middle East Literature in Translation Series (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 123.

"Lorsqu'elle est moins interessante, on prend un fruit, on demande du Cherbet, ou quelque coupes de Vin de Chiras; il augmente la vivacité de celui qui raconte, & dédommage celui qui écoute des instans d'ennui[.]"<sup>31</sup>

Beneath Fatmé's declaration, moments before she begins to narrate the "Histoire de Naerdan & de Guzulbec," is the voice of Caylus's own ambivalence towards his Oriental tales. Anticipating Naour's boredom with her story, Fatmé recommends three Oriental motifs both as compensation for a dull story and as a means to render the narration more appealing.

With this sly preamble, Caylus is both offering a broad commentary on the fashion of the Oriental tale, while also revealing his own technique: multiplying the setting and motifs of the Oriental scene. Yet, Caylus also claims that Fatmé is speaking from a "feigned modesty" (*feinte modestie*) that only earns her "the praise that she had expected" (*les éloges qu'elle en attendait*).<sup>32</sup> Fatmé's feigned modesty belies the modesty of Caylus's own preface, in which he praises his stories while dishonestly distancing himself from their authorship. This play with the role of the narrator and the expectations of the author, reveals a paradox of the Oriental tale. If everything is an exotic embellishment, how does one judge the authenticity of a story?

### **The Element of Surprise**

As Caylus writes in his preface, there is no plot or outline in the Oriental tale, and their purpose is to surprise the reader. This is a contrast that Caylus draws between the Oriental tale and French novels and stories in his Preface:

These ordinarily have a Plot, an Outline, and a Purpose that develop in an orderly fashion, but our habit of reading them makes us too easily predict their conclusion; whereas Oriental Stories often have only one purpose, of which the effect is to incite surprise at the sight of the slightest Incidents bringing about the greatest Revolutions.

Celles-ci ont ordinairement une Intrigue, un Plan, & un Object qui se développe avec ordre, mais l'habitude où nous sommes de les lire nous fait trop aisément prévoir leur dénouement; au lieu que les Histoires Orientales n'ont souvent qu'un seul objet, dont l'effet est d'exciter la surprise en voyant que les plus petits Incidens amènent les plus grandes Révolutions.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to a plot-driven genre, then, Caylus's Oriental tale is dependent upon the proper disposition of the reader. The narration cannot occur without a reader's acquiescence. Fatmé's story begins only once her feigned modesty wins the good will of her two listeners:

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<sup>31</sup> Caylus, *Contes Orientaux*, 1:228.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:228-29.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:b'.

The lively gaiety and grace with which she had accompanied this statement had disposed their spirits with the strongest of illusions. Fatmé having nothing more that kept her from speaking thus began.

La gayeté vive & la grace dont elle avoit accompagné cette proposition, avoit disposé leurs esprits par ses plus fortes illusions. Fatmé n'ayant plus rien qui l'empêchât de parler, prit ainsi la parole.<sup>34</sup>

Caylus advances *bienséance* as a precondition for the narration of the Oriental tale. There is nothing structural to keep or hold the reader's attention, so they have to be in the right mood to be receptive of the tale.

Further still, Caylus defines an Oriental aesthetic that determines his method for adapting the Oriental tale. Homing in on the effect of surprise, he draws this out of the different tales, even supplementing existing tales with the narrative device he describes as "the slightest Incidents bringing about the greatest Revolutions." In his adaptation of the story of the *Sept Dormants*, or *Seven Sleepers*, Caylus makes many important cuts, reducing repetitive dialogue, but also adding passages for dramatic effect.

Drawn from a Christian legend, the story of the *Seven Sleepers* was later integrated into the Quran's *Sūra al-Kahf* (*Sūrah* of the Cave) as a parable known as "the companions of the cave (*ashāb al-kahf*). Counted among the original Meccan revelations, this *Sūra* is of central importance to both quranic commentary and spiritual practice.<sup>35</sup> Within *Sūrat al-Kahf* (of the cave) the parable relates the story of a number of pious youths (six to seven) and a dog who take refuge in a cave and are put to sleep only to wake three hundred years later. The Christian story dates to the time of the emperor Decius, and the youths are Christians persecuted for their refusal to worship Roman gods. Nancy Roberts remarks that the large number of Muslim adaptations of the *Seven Sleepers* juxtapose "Muslim and Christian referents" and attempt to "take stories which arose initially within a Christian context, and adapt them in such a way that they would lend greater meaning to the Qur'anic accounts."<sup>36</sup> The resulting syncretic flavor of such a retelling is clearly represented within the Ottoman text from which Caylus's tale is adapted. Yet, as I will show, Caylus eliminates exactly these aspects – while adding other events – in order to advance his own understanding of the features of the "Oriental tale."

For example, when the impious emperor Dakianos, who demanded to be treated as a god, finally finds his former slaves asleep with their eyes open in a cavern, Caylus prepares a denouement that stretches on for more than a dozen pages. Where in the original manuscript, translated by an aide to Ferriol, Brüe, Dakianos builds a wall around the cavern and finally dies of old age, Caylus introduces a dramatic sequence of events. In the manuscript translated directly from the Ottoman Turkish, Dakianos meets his end with little fanfare and no drama:

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:229.

<sup>35</sup> For analysis of its significance, see Nancy N. Roberts, "A Parable of Blessing: The Significance and Message of the Qu'anic Account of 'the Companions of the Cave,'" *The Muslim World* 83, no. 3-4 (October 1, 1993): 295-317, doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.1993.tb03581.x.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

Some time passed this way, after which Dakianos, this famous Dakianos so formidable at arms, so glorious by the complete victories he pulled off over his Enemies died, the world was delivered from a so barbarous and so coarse Tyrant[.]

Quelque tems se passa ainsi, après lequel Dakianos ce fameux Dakianos si redoutable par ses armes, si glorieux par les victoires complectes qu'il avoit remporté sur ses Ennemis mourut, le monde fut delivré d'un Tiran si barbare, et si rude[.]<sup>37</sup>

Caylus's tyrant, however, first happens upon the cave where the sleeping dog Catnier quarrels with Dakianos over matters of faith and retribution. A furious Dakianos demands that his army collect firewood in order to suffocate the cavern's occupants with smoke. However, a wind blows the fire in the direction of Dakianos's army, pursuing them to his palace, which is then destroyed by the fire. Swearing vengeance, Dakianos establishes an iron throne on the cinders of his palace, and marshalls his troops together with the aim of perpetrating a sacrifice of “five or six hundred thousand men” (cinq ou six cens mille hommes).<sup>38</sup> First, however, he leads them on a final visit to the cavern. There, Catnier warns that God will punish him, concluding, “you are reaching your last breath” (tu touches à ton dernier instant).<sup>39</sup> In response, Dakianos lets loose an arrow at the talking dog, but the arrow falls at his feet, and a giant snake emerges: “a Snake of more than six twenty feet long, and whose flaming and terrible gaze made him tremble, came out from the Cavern” (il sortit de la Caverne un Serpent qui avoit plus de six vingt pieds de longueur, & dont le regard terrible & enflamé le fit trembler)<sup>40</sup> The serpent pursues Dakianos to his iron throne, where he perishes:

It took him by the middle of his body, and made him cross the City to make all his Subjects witnesses to his fears and to his punishment, it took him to his throne of iron that he had prepared for his cruel vengeance. It was there that devouring him bit by bit, and by the extremities, Dakianos through his suffering gave a frightful example of the punishment that his ingratitude and impiety had earned.

il le prit par le milieu du corps, & lui fit traverser la Ville pour rendre tous ses Sujets témoins de ses craintes & de sa punition, il le porta sur le trône de fer qu'il avoit préparé pour sa cruelle vengeance. Ce fut là que le dévorant peu à peu, & par les extrêmitéz, Dakianos donna par ses souffrances un exemple terrible de la punition que méritoient son ingratitude & son impieté.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> J. Bruë, “L’histoire ds Sept Dormans sous l’empire de Decius, traduite du turc en françois par le Sr J. Bruë, Jeune de Langues, [Constantinople], 1734, Avec Le Texte Turc, Intitulé *Dastan-I Ashab-I Kahf*” (Paris, 1734), Supplément turc 905, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 101-02.

<sup>38</sup> Caylus, *Contes Orientaux*, 1:83.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:84.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

Here, in Caylus's graphic portrayal of Dakianos's end, the reader witnesses evil acts turn against the king with exaggerated force. Each incident builds to a crescendo, until a true revolution – Dakianos's literal removal from his throne – takes place.

The snake, in addition to emerging from the cavern, originated somewhere to enter into Caylus's imagination as identifiably Oriental. The episode recalls an anecdote from Sévin's expedition in Istanbul, captured in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Incriptions et des Belles-Lettres*. As described in the previous chapter, Sévin had been tasked with finding Latin and Greek manuscripts rumored to be held in the Topkapi Palace Library. One version of events held that the remnants of the Byzantine emperors' library had been burned down at the order of Murad IV, in a pious rage and out of hatred for Christians.<sup>42</sup> Another held that efforts to attain the subterranean library were abandoned after an workplace accident:

There are some who, nevertheless, who claim that Mehmet II had placed the books and ornaments of the Greek church in a subterranean place in the palace: they add that a few workers, tasked with repairing the walls, having knocked a dresser into it, saw emerge a snake whose bite brought instant death to two of these workers. As this story has all the qualities of a fable, M. Abbé Sévin charged different people to tell him at the end of their research, that these rumors were baseless.

Il y a néanmoins des gens qui prétendent que Mahomet II avoit déposé et les livres et les ornemens de l'église patriarcale dans un endroit souterrain du palais : ils ajoutent que quelques ouvriers, chargés d'en réparer les murs, ayant enfoncé une armoire, il en étoit sorti un serpent, dont la piqûre avoit fait expirer dans le moment même deux de ces ouvriers. Comme ce récit a tout l'air d'une fable, M. l'abbé Sevin employa différentes personnes, dont les recherches aboutirent à lui apprendre que ces bruits étoient sans fondement.<sup>43</sup>

The rumored loss of the Byzantine library, then, neatly parallels in two different tellings, Dakianos's end: first by fire, next by snakebite. The noted resemblance of the latter version of events to "a fable" could have inspired Caylus to adapt the story for his own purposes. Moreover, the subterranean library rich with Byzantine manuscripts offers a parallel to the story of the *Seven Sleepers*. Its source in Christian legend, it is later integrated into the Quran. The text from which the French translator has drawn is an Ottoman reworking of the original legend that maintains traces of its Christian origins. Caylus, however, buries these in his adaptations, both by omission and under the added element of surprise – the fire and the snake. Like the snake in the library, his tale is an invented fable that obscures the lineage of the original story.

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<sup>42</sup> Sévin, *Lettres Sur Constantinople*, 24-25.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

## Losing Faith

In this section, I show a feature of Caylus's tales that echoes Pétis's translation of the *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse*: the suppression of evidence of a shared tradition in Christianity and Islam. Whereas in the original version of the *Sept dormants*, Dakianos dies peacefully but faces punishment in the afterlife, Caylus chooses a display of extreme and public violence to provide a fitting end to Dakianos. He anticipates both the lack of drama and the lack of satisfaction of his French, female reader.

Although Caylus was not one to confine to superstition the imagery of damnation,<sup>44</sup> the appropriation of a Hell borne from Islamic belief likely represented a textual crossing too far for the author. In fact, the adaptation of Caylus seeks to keep the religious language in this version of the *Seven Sleepers* spare and generalizable. The original source of the translation adapted by Caylus offers a syncretic cohabitation of Christianity and Islam. In the original Ottoman manuscript, after Dakianos's fall, the inhabitants of Ephesus are brought to "the righteous path" (Tariq hudayine davet)<sup>45</sup> by Jesus Christ while the sleepers remain asleep. Bruë retains the translation, "the True faith" maintaining the ambiguity that places the Christian savior and the Islamic faith along a continuum. It is this presence of Christianity that Caylus strictly eliminates from his adaptation. Upon waking 240 years later, one of the seven sleepers, Jemlikha, searches for food in Ephesus, where he happens upon a banner claiming, "there is no God but the true God, and his spirit Jesus" (il n'y a point d'autre Dieu, que le vray Dieu, et son Esprit Jesus).<sup>46</sup> This is a literal translation from the Ottoman manuscript. However, Caylus, removes Jesus entirely from this wording. When Jemlikha asks a passerby what is written on the banner, the latter answers, in the original, "Praise God, his pure name and also that of Saint Jesus, peace be upon him" (Haqq ta'ala hazretinin ism-i paki ve hem hazret Issa alayhi as-salam),<sup>47</sup> and in the translation "they were the pure names of God and Jesus Christ" (c'étoient les noms purs de Dieu et de Jesus Christ).<sup>48</sup> Caylus, however, retains only the name of God: "they represented the pure names of God" (ils représentoient les noms purs de Dieu).<sup>49</sup> By retaining the plural "names" but eliminating that of Jesus, Caylus gestures towards religion, but imparting an exotic flavor, alluding to mysterious names that go undefined in his text. He suggests a polytheistic, classical setting of myth and hides the Christian origins of this tale, coopted by a Muslim, Turkish writer.

As Jemlikha tours the new city of Ephesus, he finds more evidence that the impious regime of Dakianos has changed. The original describes this new construction thus: "They had made churches where monks chanted the Gospels, and where innocent boys assembled and read" (kiliseler de yapılmış rāhibler incil tilāvet ederler ve māsūm

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<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of Caylus's opposition to the anticlericalism of the *Encyclopédistes*, see Didier Masseur, "Caylus, Diderot et Les Philosophes," in *Le Comte de Caylus: Les Arts et Les Lettres : Actes Du Colloque International Université d'Anvers (UFSIA) et Voltaire Foundation Oxford, 26-27 Mai 2000*, ed. Nicholas Cronk and Kris Peeters (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 45-57.

<sup>45</sup> Bruë, "Histoire des Sept Dormants," 63.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>49</sup> Caylus, *Contes Orientaux*, 1:90.



oğlanacaklar cema‘a etmişler okurdular).<sup>50</sup> The language becomes more vague after Brüe’s first translation: “He saw many buildings he had never seen and what is more, several Churches and several Schools to instruct youths” (Il vit plusieurs edifices qu’il n’avoit jamais vu et ce qui etoit de plus plusieurs Eglises et plusieurs Ecoles pour instruire la Jeunesse).<sup>51</sup> The omission of the specific words, Gospels (incil) and Monks (rāhibler), already diminishes the connection between the Christianity of the text. Caylus, however, opts for an entirely different lexicon: “The Houses, the Temples, the Palaces appeared new to him” (les Maisons, les Temples, les Serrails lui parurent sous une forme nouvelle).<sup>52</sup> Thus, from a pious depiction of specific Christian practices, Caylus transforms the text into an urban, Oriental landscape, complete with the word “Serrail,” derived from the Turkish “Saray.” The effect of the non-specified temples and the Oriental palaces is to reproduce a setting that is instantly recognizable as belonging to an Oriental tale.

Further, in the original manuscript, there are two sovereigns of Ephesus: one Muslim (müslümān) and one gentile (kāffir), who ruled together under a treaty (ittifāq).<sup>53</sup> Brüe initially describes these kings as “Turk” (Turc) and Christian “Chretien.”<sup>54</sup> However, these terms are struck through and corrected with the words, respectively “truebeliever” “vraicroiant” and “Infidel” (Infidele).<sup>55</sup> While these edits eliminate a specific division between Muslim and Christian, they serve to create ambiguity – allowing for the true believer to be Muslim, as in the text, but also Christian. Avoiding the question altogether, Caylus has only one king governing Ephesus.<sup>56</sup> An Ottoman rendering of a Christian legend shows how a popular portrayal of Jesus coexisted with images of Islamic sovereignty. Caylus’s adaptation, however, refuses this coexistence, burying its roots in history. He layers over several strata of legend, a new fable of his own invention. His recreation of the Orient in plot and vocabulary thus obscures the continuities between Ottoman and Christian. The *Seven Sleepers* evokes a complex past: its numerous tellings and retellings carry forward common references to characters, such as the emperor Decius and the dog, and to specific places – Ephesus – and generic ones – the cave. Holding meaning for both Christians and Muslims, the legend of the *Seven Sleepers* also unearths the way in which these spaces – Ephesus and the cave – were occupied both successively by different empires – Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman, but also concurrently by both faiths. The rich architecture and description of the city in the Ottoman version of this tale bears witness to this coexistence. Rather than referring to the story’s complex past, however, Caylus recreates a setting that refers only to the recent past mentioned in the *Avertissement* to his *Contes*. Rather than referring the reader back to a shared history, Caylus evokes the only history that is important to his stories: other French translations of other Oriental tales.

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<sup>50</sup> Bruë, “Histoire des Sept Dormans,” 70.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>52</sup> Caylus, *Contes Orientaux*, 1:91.

<sup>53</sup> Bruë, “Histoire des Sept Dormans,” 73.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-22.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Caylus, *Contes Orientaux*, 1:93.

## Strict Laws and Universal Passions

This section analyzes the progression of the Oriental tale, by examining the collection entitled *Mélanges de Littérature orientale* published by the former dragoman Cardonne in 1770. I demonstrate here the effective elimination of a “Turkish style” from Cardonne’s translations, in favor of a generalizable, universalist genre that nears the parable. If, according to his publisher, Caylus's collection of Oriental tales assembled a number of unpublished translations whose only connection was their service as pedagogical exercises for the *Jeunes de Langue*, the anthology compiled by Cardonne, a former *Jeune de Langue* himself, proposed a more systematic collection. Bowing to his predecessors from more than sixty years ago, D'Herbelot, Galland, and Pétis de la Croix, Cardonne refuses to include any excerpt that may have appeared in their writings. Originality, then, provides a basis for the inclusion in his *Mélanges de Littérature orientale*, which Cardonne characterizes as systematic: "The strict law that I have imposed upon myself, to offer nothing but what is new, and the success that their books have had, did not allow me to repeat what they had said." (la loi sévère que je me suis imposée, de ne rien donner que de neuf, & le succès qu'ont eu leurs Livres, ne me permettoient pas de répéter ce qu'ils avoient dit).<sup>57</sup> The "strict law" that Cardonne mentions offers the semblance of a system for compiling the text, but it actually increases the arbitrariness of his selection. The principle of non-repetition is not based upon any criteria intrinsic to the texts themselves, but rather to the precedence of other translations. Cardonne's allusion to his predecessors' success further calls into question the purely ethnographic and philosophical objectives he lays out in his Preface.

From the outset, Cardonne's selection of texts undermines his project to reveal the manners and customs of the Orientals, which he describes as follows:

Convinced that only the Orientals could make their manners and customs known, I have tried to be a faithful Translator overall, though I may have lived many years in the country of which I speak, I decided to take nothing of my own nor of any Book, that was not oriental.

Persuadé que les Orientaux seuls pouvoient faire connoître leurs mœurs & leurs usages, j'ai tâché d'être par-tout fidele Traducteur, quoique j'aie vécu bien des années dans le pays dont je parle, je n'ai rien voulu tirer de moi, ni d'aucun Livre, qui ne fut oriental.<sup>58</sup> (Preface, NP vi)

Caylus provided an example of false modesty as a storytelling technique. Here, Cardonne is being exceedingly modest, proposing that the knowledge gathered from his experience in Istanbul and Cairo would only interfere with his role as a faithful translator. Thus, the only useful knowledge garnered from his experience abroad is of the different languages in which his source texts were composed. His statement of restraint, however, already distorts his subject. Importantly, the singular "country" in which he lived -- one can

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<sup>57</sup> Cardonne, *Mélanges de Littérature Orientale*, 1:vii.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:vi.

assume the Ottoman Empire -- does not necessarily correspond to the Orientals whose portrayal he hopes to faithfully convey. His anthology, to give one example, incorporates texts from a number of different eras and dynasties external to Ottoman territories. By creating from this collage of texts a single country, "the Orient," for which the contemporaneous Ottoman Empire stands in, Cardonne already recontextualizes the different manuscript components within a nonexistent territorial and temporal continuity. This imagined country can only exist at the expense of the history and language of the Ottoman territory that Cardonne had made home. He resolves this impasse, thus, by disavowing his own lived experience as pertinent to the portrayal of the Oriental subject. Given that Cardonne "takes nothing of his own" from the experience he would have accumulated in Cairo and Istanbul, the possibility to differentiate Egypt from Anatolia, Arab from Turk, Copt from Muslim are lost to the reader. It is on the basis of Cardonne's denial of his own knowledge that the amalgam at the heart of Cardonne's project – the "Oriental mix" – is given life.

With the removal of both the excerpts and the composition of the texts from their origin — both manuscript and territorial — Cardonne resituates them geographically within the confines of the Royal Library and historically in a line of succession from d'Herbelot to Galland and Pétis. Given these fundamental distortions at the inception of Cardonne's project, it is unsurprising that the pure and faithful reproduction of the texts suffers from major modifications.

Some modifications are made by addition. In a note on the poet Nabi's letter to his son, for example, Cardonne adds in the phrase, "antre de la Discorde" to characterize a slanderer: "His mouth, like the cavern of contention, vomits disruptions" (sa bouche, semblable à l'antre de la Discorde, vomit les brouilleries).<sup>59</sup> Cardonne explains with a footnote: "I added these words that are not in the text, the Turks having no knowledge of the Fable." (J'ai ajouté ces mots qui ne sont pas dans le texte; les Turcs n'ayant aucune connoissance de la Fable.).<sup>60</sup> The effect desired by Cardonne is entirely aesthetic, and provides an allusion, perhaps to Ovid, from a tradition foreign to his texts. The addition of the metaphor is thus entirely superfluous. It signals, however, that Cardonne senses a lack in the Ottoman text that must be compensated for with a classical allusion.

Whereas in the example above Cardonne seeks to add to the aesthetic effect of Nabi's advice, he also diminishes or renders invisible the aesthetics of the original Ottoman versification. In a passage drawn from a work of advice literature (nasihat-name) by a poet named Shamsi Efendi, Cardonne offers the translation:

Shamsi (a), this deceptive world is sown with tempting trails, upon which are found gambling, laughter, and pleasures; avoid them, in order to walk with confidence down the path of virtue: this is the only one that leads to the sovereign good.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:234.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:234n(a).

Chemsi (a), ce monde trompeur est parsemé de routes séduisantes, sur lesquelles se trouvent les jeux, les ris, & les plaisirs; évite-les, pour marcher avec confiance dans le chemin de la vertu: c'est le seul qui conduit au souverain bien.<sup>61</sup>

The introduction of the author Shamsi's name leads to a footnote that explains a feature of the Ottoman poetic form *gazel*:

Shamsi, Poet, Author of these verses. He is addressing himself. The Turks have a type of poetry named *Gazel*, in which the Poet is always forced to name himself in the final couplet.

Chemsi, Poète, Auteur de ces Vers. Il s'adresse la parole à lui-même. Les Turcs ont une espèce de poésie nommée *Gazel*, dans laquelle le Poète est toujours forcé de se nommer dans le dernier dystique.<sup>62</sup>

Although Cardonne explicitly uses the word "Vers" to describe the translated work, he is actually referring to an invisible couplet. One can assume the words are all there, but the translation has not been set into verse. Thus, an important aspect of the Ottomans' style is formally described but not shown.

In another passage, Cardonne instructs his reader on the hallmarks of Ottoman style, drawing upon longstanding beliefs about storytelling in the Orient. As a footnote to a vignette he entitles simply "Allégorie," Cardonne writes, "This allegory and the one that follows can give an idea of Oriental Philosophy, which presents almost no moral truth except under the guise of signs." (Cette allégorie & la suivante peuvent donner une idée de la Philosophie Orientale, qui ne présente presque aucune vérité morale, que sous l'emblème des figures).<sup>63</sup> This footnote offers insight into Cardonne's authorial role in bringing together and labeling different selections of text in Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Arabic. To the difference of Caylus, finding ways to access moral truth is more important to Cardonne than the authentic recreation of an Oriental style.

## Universal Style

Cardonne's voice throughout the *Mélanges* reshapes the original texts into an entirely different project. It is not revealing Oriental manners and customs, but rather assembling different arguments for their literature to fit within a universalist tradition. In addition to the inevitable mediation of translation, his titles, footnotes, and authorial interventions overwhelm the texts. Cardonne affixes explicit titles that point more toward the genre of the fable than the mix of poetry, tales, and advice literature represented in his anthology. Some examples are "Singular sketch of the generosity of a Man who had bought a Slave" (Trait singulier de générosité d'un Homme qui avoit acheté une Esclave), "Allegory about Friendship" (Allégorie sur l'Amitié), "A Philosopher's ingenious way of consoling a Prince on the death of his son" (Manière ingénieuse d'un Philosophe pour

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:247-48.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:247n(a)

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:68n(a).

consoler un Prince sur la mort de son fils), and “Singular sketch of generosity” (Trait singulier de libéralité). The focus on the symbolic import of the content and the forefronting of personal attributes in such titles represents a significant break with the titles of previous translations of Oriental tales, which served to designate the narrator, foreshadow plot, or situate the principal characters. Cardonne thus heavily emphasizes the pedagogical dimension of his anthology.

Beyond the orientation of the titles, he instructs his reader on how to understand the different short passages of Oriental literature. As an introduction to his “Trait singulier de libéralité,” Cardonne addresses the reader:

The peoples of the Orient more spirited than other inhabitants of the earth take virtues and vices to the extreme: their opinion on fatalism often prevents them from heeding caution; we will see this in the following story.

Les peuples de l'Orient plus vifs que les autres habitans de la terre portent les vertus & les vices à l'extrême: leur opinion sur le fatalisme, les empêchent souvent d'écouter la prudence; on le verra par l'histoire suivante.<sup>64</sup>

As shown by the example Cardonne provides of the “fatalism” of the “peoples of the Orient,” the manners and customs illustrated reinforce frequent stereotypes of Muslims. This stereotype carries greater weight, because Cardonne blends all nations of the Orient together into the homogenizing formulation: “peoples of the Orient.” Forefronting the moral of the story, Cardonne reverses the method he has announced in his preface: instead of the reader inferring the manners and customs of the Orient from the texts, he is provided with an explicit articulation of them, followed by an illustrative vignette. In addition to reversing his own announced method, Cardonne also diminishes the effect of the story itself. The reader is spared engagement with the story itself, because the lesson has already been revealed.

These examples already provide enough evidence that Cardonne, despite his protests to the contrary, seeks to impart a message through his own interventions, bypassing the translated texts. The texts only serve to build a case for the universality of Oriental thought, which Cardonne advances early in his preface to explain the success of the Oriental tale in Europe:

All Nations and all Peoples deserve the Philosopher's attention; and the less the Orientals resemble us, the more one must examine them, to convince oneself that man's infinitely diverse manners never change his essence, and that all the passions that are expressed in so many ways always have the same purpose. The pelisse, the turban, and all the clothing of an Asian, present him to our eyes as very different than what we are; but for that we do not believe that the Being who made us, had made him different from us[.]

[T]outes les Nations, tous les Peuples méritent l'attention du Philosophe; & moins les Orientaux nous ressemblent, plus il faut les examiner, pour se convaincre, que

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:140.

les mœurs infiniment variées, ne changent jamais le fond de l'homme, & que toutes les passions qui s'expriment de tant de manières ont toujours la même but. La pelisse, le turban, & tous les habillemens d'un Asiatique, l'offrent à nos yeux très-différent de ce que nous sommes ; mais nous ne pensons pas pour cela, que l'Etre qui nous a formé, l'ait fait différent de nous[.]<sup>65</sup>

This reasoning provides the justification for the abstract titles of many of the selections. The variety offered to the European public by the Oriental style — in both storytelling and dress — only obscures the common motivating principles shared between both cultures. What Cardonne's translation can accomplish, then, is to draw out the similarities of passion and virtue.

One way in which Cardonne advances this objective is through regular allusions, in footnotes, to classical literature. For example, in the margin of a vignette that sees one poet insulting another, Cardonne comments in a footnote, "The story of the Poet resembles one from Hesiod" (L'histoire du Poëte ressemble à une d'Hésiode).<sup>66</sup> Where commonalities can be pointed out between the Latin corpus and the Islamic text, the reader obtains proof that a single motivating factor is at play in both cultures. This Classical frame of reference, however, also brings to the fore irreducible divisions. Writing on the advice treatise of Nabi Effendi "Kheyrahad," Cardonne draws a comparison to the philosophy of Cato the Elder. "Would one not say that these words are the translation of the two following verses by Cato the Censor," (Ne diroit-on pas que ces paroles sont la traduction des deux vers suivans de Cato le Censeur)<sup>67</sup> he begins, citing the verses in Latin. He concedes however:

To be sure, Nabi-Efendi, the author of this small treatise on ethics, had never read them, & did not know a word of Latin. The Savants, among the Turks, do not apply themselves but to the study of Arabic and Persian; & have a sovereign disdain for Latin, Greek, & all the other Languages in use among Christians. He among them who would devote himself to it, would almost be seen as an infidel. Great Minds think alike.

Certainement Nabi-Efendi, Auteur de ce petit Traité de Morale, ne les avoit jamais lus, & ne savoit pas un mot de Latin. Les Savans, parmi les Turcs, ne s'attachent qu'à l'étude de l'Arabe & du Persan; & ont un souverain mépris pour le Latin, le Grec, & toutes les autres Langues en usage parmi les Chrétiens. Celui qui parmi eux s'y adonneroit, seroit presque regardé comme un infidele. Les Beaux-Esprits se rencontrent.<sup>68</sup>

Cato serves as a reference for Cardonne both to the possibility of integrating Turkish poetry within a European inheritance and to its unbridgeable difference. The similarities between Cato's words and Nabi's suggest that beyond cultural and linguistic distinctions,

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:ii-iii.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:120n(a).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:192.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:192-93.

the Turks do think like the Latin philosophers. This only reinforces Cardonne's central premise that, at heart, all men are created with the same passions and love for virtue. The fact that Nabi would not have read Cato further confirms the preexistence of a universal human nature -- a matter to which both "Beaux-Esprits" had access. However, the linguistic limitations that prevent Nabi from accessing Cato's text become the salient marker of the fundamental difference between Nabi and his European contemporaries: religion. Cardonne holds that using "Christian languages" such as Latin would render the Turkish speaker's connection to Islam suspect. Thus, the two literatures would be completely reconcilable were it not for divisions of faith.

### Discussion

The three collections discussed above reveal, each in their own way, the role of the French imagination in shaping the perception of Turkish literature. Pétis and Caylus built significantly upon their source material in order to accommodate beliefs about Turkish literature. In turn, their compositions emphasized the difference between Turkish storytelling and French taste. In place of modest French compositions, they offer false modesty, surprise, and the supernatural. While stylistic differences are one way of tracing boundaries, Pétis and Caylus do so as well by omission. The cohabitation of Christian and Muslim beliefs, inscribed within their source materials, are left unmentioned, unexplained, or willfully obscured.

By 1770, when Cardonne publishes his *Mélanges*, the Oriental tale is expected to join a set of universal values. Yet this can only be accomplished through the overwhelming efforts of the Cardonne to remove all elements of style from his translation, offering instead over-determined allegories. Moreover, Cardonne reveals that the universal values that Oriental writings are intended to transmit are measured by their proximity to Classical Latin culture. By the same gesture, Cardonne claims the irreconcilability of the Turkish author and the Latin language.

The Oriental tales in these collections strike like the snake in the Byzantine library. They aspire to divert the French reader under the guise of fable and maintain guard over the walls between a shared Christian and Islamicate cultural past. Although Pétis advanced the language of the Ottoman poetics by incorporating material external to his source texts, the trajectory of the Oriental tale in translation is to strip it of its context and to rebuild. From manuscript to print, the tales collected and published in French are given a new, European genealogy. The publication of new texts can only be justified in relation to the holdings of the Royal Library, and the work done before by D'Herbelot, Galland, and Pétis. Though they may have crossed the sea, the sources of the Oriental tales become bricks in the wall separating French readers and Turkish literature.

## CHAPTER V:

### Conclusion: A More Natural Division

In this dissertation, I set out to show how the notion of Turkish literature was debated and defined in the French Republic of Letters during the eighteenth century. In the first chapter, “Worthy of Crossing the Sea,” I brought to light the journalist Jean de Laroque’s letters, published in the *Mercur de France* advocating for the recognition and appreciation of Turkish literature. In the second chapter, “People before Print,” I analyzed two opposing accounts of Turkish literature, one centered on the establishment of the Ottoman printing press, and the other on elite formation at the Ottoman court. The last chapter, “The Snake in the Library,” studied how a “Turkish style” was developed through the translation and adaptation of Ottoman, Arabic, and Persian manuscripts from the Royal Library. Before further discussing the findings of these three analytical chapters, I would like to weave the different threads of this study together with the following episode taken from the correspondence of Charles de Peyssonnel.

#### Loves of Sadiki Efendi

Upon his return from negotiations in Sofia in the summer of 1738, Peyssonnel was busily engaged in embassy work, filling in for three staff members who had since departed. He finally found the opportunity to pick up his correspondence with Caumont and was eager to report upon an encounter with an Ottoman poet. While he was walking with an interpreter for the Ottoman court, Peyssonnel was accosted by a young bureaucrat serving as secretary for the court’s *Mektupçi*, who had the responsibility for the court’s correspondence. The man introduced himself as Sadiki Effendi and requested that Peyssonnel recite for him “some French verse” (quelques vers françois) in order to “appreciate the rhyme and rhythm” (gouter la rime et la cadance).<sup>1</sup> Peyssonnel does not acknowledge whether or not he provided a sampling of French poetry. He observes only that, recognizing that Sadiki must be a poet, he asked out of “politeness as is appropriate” (la politesse comm’il convient)<sup>2</sup> for a sampling of his work. Sadiki’s response seems to have either perplexed or amused Peyssonnel:

He asked me if I wanted ones about the love of women or the love of men. He hadn’t found a more natural division, to give a little order to the collection of his poems that he divided in two volumes; that we will entitle loves of Sadiki Effendi if we ever print them.

Il me demanda, si j’en voulois sur l’amour des femmes, ou sur l’amour d[es] garçons ; il n’avoit pas trouvé de division plus naturelle, pour mettre un certain ordre dans le

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<sup>1</sup> “Lettres Autographes...” 114v.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



recueil de ses poesies qu'il a divisé en deux tomes ; que nous intitulerons, amours de Sadiki Effendi, si jamais nous les faisons imprimer.<sup>3</sup>

Noticing Peyssonnel hesitate, the poet remarked, "I see that you are undecided on the choice of the two tastes I am proposing; here are some pieces that relate neither to one nor the other." (je vois dit-il que vous balances sur le choix des deux gouts que je vous propose ; voicy quelques morceaux, qui n'ont rapport, ni a l'un ni a l'autre.)<sup>4</sup>

This encounter between Peyssonnel and Sadiki Effendi offers rare insight into the encounter of the French man of letters with Ottoman poetry. Peyssonnel's letters offer a singular opportunity to ascertain one Frenchman's reception of Ottoman poetry. It is ironic, then, that Peyssonnel's account to Caumont renders his own reaction entirely in the words of Sadiki Efendi. Not only does Peyssonnel not say whether or not he answered Sadiki's request to recite his poetry, but he also does not voice his own preference from Sadiki's supposed "two volumes" of poems. Rather, Peyssonnel relates Sadiki's interpretation of his own reaction: "I see that you are undecided". By registering only the poet's reaction, he leaves his taste unspoken both to the Ottoman poet and to Caumont.

Andrews and Kalpakli in *Age of the Beloveds*, their study of the Ottoman love poem, remark that in "high-culture literature [...] the beloved is most often male — a young male — and constitutes an ideal of male beauty."<sup>5</sup> When a poem is addressed to a female beloved, however, they note that there is very little difference in the description. By these standards, the brief glimpse we get of Sadiki the poet reveals him to be highly conventional. Why does Peyssonnel then respond by distancing himself from his own feelings about his encounter with Sadiki? French reactions to tales of same-sex love in Ottoman and Arabic sources ranged from violent moral condemnation to a matter-of-fact appraisal.<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps a reaction of modesty on Peyssonnel's part. Or, as shown in the previous chapter, this language of love does not correspond to what was expected of "Turkish style."

Sadiki's reaction to Peyssonnel's indecision is to have "a few epigrams interpreted." (Il me fit interpreter allors quelques epigrammes[.])<sup>7</sup> These treat exclusively the subject of religion. For example, Sadiki recites:

Matters of religion are beyond our enlightenment; we will cease to argue when the veil that was spread over our eyes at our birth will be lifted; one says that it is torn upon our death; but maybe it is more desirable to argue and live.

Les matieres de religion, sont au dessus de nos lumieres ; nous cesserons de disputer quand le voile que fut repandu sur nos yeux lors de notre naissance sera

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 114v-115r.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 115r.

<sup>5</sup> Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 54.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Sieur de Lacroix, "Le Serrail Des Empereurs Turcs Ou Othomans" (Paris, n.d.), Français 6123, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 110-15, and Pétis de la Croix and Dipy, "Catalogue Des Manuscrits Turcs," 107.

<sup>7</sup> "Lettres Autographes..." 115r.

levé ; on dit qu'il se déchire a notre mort ; mais peut etre vaut il encor mieux disputer et vivre.<sup>8</sup>

This aphorism touching religion draws upon the Sufi metaphor of lived reality as a veil that prevents the revelation of a single truth. Both highly mystical in its use of this image and ecumenical in its profound deism, Sadiki's words draw Peyssonnel in where the subject of love poetry failed. Peyssonnel recognizes echoes of Epicureanism in Sadiki's thoughts and remarks upon the commonalities among the "spiritual minded" Ottoman and his European counterpart. They are, he tells Caumont, in "Constantinople, as in Paris and London, corrupt and libertine." (ceux qui ont de l'esprit, sont a Constantinople comm'a Paris et a Londres, corrompus et libertins.)<sup>9</sup>

Although his poetry distances him from Peyssonnel, the poet Sadiki is able to fit within Peyssonnel's frame of reference through the analogy between the Ottoman libertine and the "corrupt" French *philosophe*. This is the only possible recourse after Peyssonnel's hesitation before Sadiki's chosen genre, the love poem. His choice to transmit only the aphorisms of Sadiki and not the poetry foreshadows the popularity of the anthologies of maxims and short philosophical tales that one finds Cardonne's 1770 *Mélanges orientaux*. Returning to Cardonne, one can see in it the precursor to Silvestre de Sacy's *Chrestomathie Arabe* criticized by Said for its fragmentation of the literature of the Orient and dismissal of its aesthetic qualities.<sup>10</sup> Peyssonnel's reaction to Sadiki – his denial of the aesthetics of desire – also anticipates the progressive abstraction of the Ottoman imagination in French print to the point of erasure. Peyssonnel's suggestion, then, that Caumont would one day see a printed collection of Sadiki Effendi's poetry reads as either ironic or resigned to its futility, if not entirely dismissive.

Peyssonnel's encounter with Sadiki Efendi shows both the connectedness of the definition of Turkish literature that I have explored in this study, as well as its limitations. Peyssonnel establishes a community of letters with Sadiki through "*la politesse comm'il convient*." This encounter reveals the intensity of interactions between French and Ottoman elites. Peyssonnel, as I described in the chapter "People before Print," uses these encounters to advocate a common ground, a universal literature, shared by French and Ottoman. Yet, he draws boundaries at the threshold of print and creates a division between poetry and philosophy. Turkish literature is integrated into the Republic of Letters through a connectedness and sociability. It is excluded, however, when it does not correspond to French expectations of the style and content of translation and print.

These divisions are exacerbated as the Republic of Letters progressively conceives of politeness as "self-police" and emancipates its sociability from the institutions of the court. I will return to this dynamic at the end of this conclusion.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 115r-v.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 115v.

<sup>10</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 128-29.

## The Case for Turkish Literature

What I have brought to light in focusing on non-canonical texts is a perspective on literary culture from individuals who had first-hand contacts with Ottoman elites and engaged in the reading and circulation of texts. Through their own status as minor literary figures, they can also push back against our current assumptions about what constituted literary value in the eighteenth century. It is possible to trace the emergence from the ground up of the cultural prejudices and ethical stances that would become common currency among the philosophers of the Enlightenment.

The first chapter followed the case made for Turkish literature by Jean de Laroque, the co-editor of the *Mercure de France* from 1724 to 1742 and a native of Marseilles. Laroque drew upon his own personal relationships within the circles of Parisian erudition as a model for explaining Turkish literature. He laid out over four letters in the *Mercure*, from 1732 to 1738, different models for Turkish literature that reflected, in turn, the *Académie des inscriptions et des belles lettres*, polite court society, and the textual genre of the Fable. These definitions all offered by the same person reveal the richness of the notion of literature and its entanglement with the social dynamics of elites. Literature, for Laroque, was foremost articulated within the institutions governing its creation. These included the academies, but also the commerce of scholars, and the hierarchies of knowledge production at the Court. But literature could also be found, where we would expect them, in texts. These texts ranged from the inscription on a seal to the voluminous bibliographical work of Katip Çelebi. There were no generic constraints, but, following in the tradition of Huet, Laroque ascribes to the Turks a long tradition of fabulist writing. It is, in fact, at the moment that literature refers to specific storytelling genres that its definition is the most constraining.

Turkish literature also expressed Laroque's own ambitions. First, Laroque sought for Marseilles the status of a center of knowledge production and a hub of the Republic of Letters in the foundation of an academy. He would later adopt the terms of his advocacy for Marseilles in the arguments he advanced to assert a tradition of cultivating letters and sciences among the Turks. This was a natural step to make, given his recognition of the connectedness of Istanbul and Marseilles through maritime trade.

Further, with the criteria of politeness, Laroque drew portraits of different men of letters whose merit earned the approbation of the court. He vaunted his own "commerce" with Pétis de la Croix and Antoine Galland, as well as his correspondence with Desroches. Laroque's praise of this latter's own poetic prowess and breadth of knowledge reflected the qualities of Katip Çelebi and al-Farabi. This was later reflected in the measure of admiration with which he greeted the visit of Said Mehmed Efendi in 1742. Finally, his ultimate words of approval for a given text – that "it deserves to cross the sea" (*cela mérite de passer la mer*) – reflect his view of the Mediterranean as a shared cultural space. The vocabulary with which he chooses to define Turkish literature, thus, reiterates and reinforces continuities between what is praiseworthy among the French Republic of Letters and the reputations of Turkish men of letters.

Nevertheless, these continuities draw upon an account of Turkish literary history that is based on France's academic model. The French court, in fact, supplants the

Ottoman Empire in Laroque's account. While he establishes a pattern of exchange that has its basis in his own family investment in commerce, his demonstration of the shared cultural space of the Republic of Letters is actually based on wishful thinking. Turkish literature is both represented and occluded in his definition.

Another narrative that both seeks to integrate the Ottomans into the Republic of Letters while holding them at a distance holds – as I show in the chapter “People before Print” – that the advent of print at the Ottoman court in 1727 relied upon the transfer of technology from Paris to Istanbul. This narrative relies upon the characterization of Ibrahim Müteferrika and Said Mehmed Efendi, the founders of the printing press, as respectively a false convert to Islam and a French sympathizer.

The chapter “People before Print” broke down two accounts of the printing press – both of which have had longstanding currency in the portrayal of the Ottoman Empire as having had to overcome a cultural lag. The first is that print only became possible at the Porte because the two founders were not truly Ottoman, but rather cultural intermediaries. The second account held that literature only became possible in the Empire with the establishment of the printing press. I showed, in turn, that: Ibrahim Müteferrika and Said Mehmed Efendi were, in fact, bearers of the cultural and elite identities required by the Ottoman court; and print was actually ancillary to the definition of literature within the Republic of Letters.

The correspondence of Charles de Peyssonnel showed that, well after the establishment of the printing press, members of the Republic of Letters still sought to define Turkish literature through an understanding of Turkish men of letters. This consisted in the detailed accounts in Peyssonnel's correspondence of the education of Ottoman elites and the illustration of their ambitions. Through his pursuit of answers about elite formation, Peyssonnel found commonalities between Ottoman men of letters and their French counterparts. Yet, these were by necessity reflective exclusively of the administrators with whom he interacted personally. Further, the commonalities could only extend up to the boundaries of religion.

The chapter “The Snake in the Library” moves away from the personal definitions of literature rooted in the active cultivation of letters and manners and focuses, instead, on the genre of the Oriental tale. I selected this genre because it remains the focal point of scholarship about Orientalism in the eighteenth century. It is important, then, to assess the extent to which it was representative of ideas about Turkish literature for the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters. The translations of Oriental tales, the *Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Vizirs*, the *Contes orientaux* of Caylus, and the *Mélanges orientaux* of Cardonne, each drew its legitimacy from being translations of manuscripts held in the *Bibliothèque du Roi*. Following the *Mille et une nuits* and the different translations of Pétis, the successive works of translation were required to justify their existence not in terms of literary merit, but in terms of originality. Thus, they defined themselves in terms of a succession of French translations, forming collections of texts that took on a life removed from their original context.

By surveying the different translations published at different moments of the eighteenth century, I have shown how the language of the Ottoman texts becomes less desirable. In 1707, Pétis supplements his translations with a register borrowed from

Ottoman courtly poetry. This has the effect of “shocking” the reader, according to the review offered in the *Journal des Savants*. It also, however, reveals an interest in the representation of Ottoman language in translations. Some decades later, at the peak of the production of pastiches of Oriental tales, Caylus follows a different strategy. Rather than portraying the poetic language of the Ottomans, Caylus opts to generate the exotic trappings of the Oriental tale, which the French reader has come to expect. Although his collection claims to be adapted from translations of manuscripts in the Royal Library, Caylus looks skeptically at the persuasive power of the Oriental tale. He therefore invents his own plotlines to draw the reader’s interest.

Finally, Cardonne assembles a collection of translated texts with the ambition of showing the universality of Turkish literature. This results, however, in a dilution of the cultural context of the original tales, as Persian and Turkish texts are assembled together indiscriminately, and each individual component is presented for its moral or philosophical contribution. In the process of rendering his material universal in scope, Cardonne eliminates traces of Turkish style in his translation. It follows that the product of the increasing demand for a print literature that corresponds to a universalist and philosophical *belle-lettriste* tradition comes, ironically, at the expense of a substantive integration of the Turk in Europe.

### Final Thoughts

I have shown that the Turkish literature debates of the eighteenth century split along two axes of interpretation of the notion of literature. At a time when the prevailing codes of conduct among the Republic of Letters extolled the virtues of politeness, through the 1730s, Ottomans were integrated into the Republic of Letters. In part through myth-making and in part through interpersonal contacts, French men of letters found connections with Ottoman elites who conformed to their beliefs about literature. There existed, however, men of letters who believed that Islam was an impediment to literature. This opinion gained a voice after the establishment of the printing press in 1727. Print culture highlighted fissures between Ottoman and French literature, especially since the Ottoman texts favored for translation were not representative of prestige forms of Ottoman literature. Thus, Ottoman literary production disappeared within the gap between the exaggerated portraiture of the Ottoman man of letters and print-oriented universalism.

The predominance of the latter over the former corresponds to a shift that favored the emergence of a class of *belle-lettriste* philosophers from within the classical, court-centered Republic of Letters. The new universalism represented by these writers advocated for the spread of an ethics and philosophy of sociability centered on the model of France. This had the ramifications of a differential treatment of countries. Daniel Gordon’s view of French *politesse* neatly overlaps with this portrayal of the Enlightenment universalism leading to the frontier between civilized and uncivilized nations. He projects forward onto the modern-day notion of “development:”

the Enlightenment sustained the ideals of la *politesse mondaine* but integrated them into a geocultural framework that resembled, and perhaps constituted the origins of, the modern theory of 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' nations. In seventeenth-century literature, politeness was taken to be the distinctive trait of the gentleman and his circle. In the eighteenth century, politeness appeared as the organizing principle of an imaginary network of relations in which 'reason' was to be applied to the satisfaction of human 'interests.' The supposed superiority of one country, such as France, came from its having already evolved into what all countries must become in order to achieve happiness.<sup>11</sup>

The question of defining Turkish literature becomes one of expressing it in French terms. Consequently, elitism makes way for universalism. This universalism is best understood according to Talal Asad's formulation, as the disavowal of one's (non-European) historical experience in favor of a set of shared human interests.<sup>12</sup> Universalism thus comes at the expense of the actual international vocation of the Republic of Letters, its capacity to facilitate exchanges among cultures. This explains the taste for the Oriental pastiche and the obsolescence of interpersonal exchanges. It is this focus of Orientalism, on the French adoption of a style and genre that represent the Turk out of context that remains the salient feature of scholarship on eighteenth-century Orientalism today. It suggests, as well, how eighteenth-century discourses around print and publishable narratives influenced the portrayal of the modern Middle East as underdeveloped.

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<sup>11</sup> Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, 76.

<sup>12</sup> Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 169-70.

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