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**What a “Delight”: *Turquerie* in Interior Design and Decorative Arts in 18th
Century France**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Chapter I: Diplomatic Relationships & Acculturation of the Ottoman Empire and France: The Groundwork for <i>Turquerie</i>	8
Chapter II: “A Dream of Carefree Happiness”: <i>Turquerie</i> in the French Interior Design and Decorative Arts.....	24
Chapter III: An Arena of Sexual Intrigue: The French <i>Boudoir</i> and the Ottoman Harem at the Palace of Versailles	39
Conclusion.....	57
Bibliography.....	60

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INTRODUCTION

The room was dominated by upholstered chairs adorned with gold fringes hanging off the seat as well as from the bottom of the chairs. The chairs themselves were gilded, with flower motifs carved on the legs. To emphasize the Oriental feeling, gold fabric was draped onto them. Panels decorated the walls of the room. One panel portrayed arabesque florals on the background with a gold framed medallion at the center. The medallion depicted a Pasha or a Sultan on a blue marble background. It was held by two sensual naiads, between whom was a beautiful vase with blooming flowers. Sitting on the medallion was a turbaned boy swinging garlands with each of his hands. The other panel had similar imagery, this time naiads having intertwined tails and the turbaned figure playing the guitar.

The description above illustrates the Count of Artois' second *Cabinet Turc*, which he had commissioned in 1781, at the Palace of Versailles. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Europe started to live in constant fear of the Ottomans. While they saw the Ottomans as a threat, they were also quite curious of this military power: what were the Ottomans like, and how did they live? After the unsuccessful Siege of Vienna in 1683, however, the Ottomans were no longer seen as a looming military threat. Instead, French interest moved away from the Turkish military and toward their style. *Turquerie* was created as a cultural and artistic movement that reflected the adaptation of Turkish aesthetics into European styles. Moreover, *turquerie* penetrated many areas of French life, including classical music, theatre, fashion, and most importantly, interior design and decorative arts. As the Ottoman Empire was not seen as a political danger anymore in the 18th century, the focus of the Europeans shifted to depictions of the amorous Turk and his lifestyle.

Before the Siege of Vienna, the Ottomans would handle all diplomatic relations from Istanbul. However, they later started sending well-equipped ambassadors to European states, and France was one of the key states that the Ottoman Empire tried to keep good diplomatic relations with. The ambassadors who were sent to France in the second half of the 18th century, especially Mehmed Çelebi Efendi and his son Mehmed Said Efendi, introduced the magnificence of the Ottoman Empire to the French public. The size of their emissary, as well as the manner in which they behaved, helped create the image of the Turk in the minds of the French, which further made cultural borrowing possible. The French royal family and aristocracy were so fascinated by the attitude and the dress of the Ottoman ambassadors that they created plays around them. Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (The Bourgeois Gentleman) is one of the best examples that depicts the incorporation of the Turkish style into the French.

While *turquerie* carved itself a space in many different areas, it fueled an appetite for creating Turkish rooms. The existence of *turquerie* within interior spaces signaled a transition of Turkish style from public to private space. Creating a Turkish room shows a much deeper commitment to the aesthetic than a mere fleeting trend. The French were specialized in furniture making and creating rooms, with intricate examples perhaps best found at the Palace of Versailles. The inclusion of *turquerie* in Versailles signaled two key changes. Firstly, it validated French interest in Turkish form at the highest aristocratic level. Second, it allowed for a development of the art form to reach new heights. Great expenses were made to create every little detail in these rooms, from wall paneling to upholstering the chairs and selecting the finest porcelain vase. The Count of Artois and Marie Antoinette were the first and foremost patrons of these Turkish style rooms.

The Turkish style was associated with comfort, sensuality, and luxury, and it was the perfect avenue for the French aristocracy to divert from Ancien Régime aesthetics without compromising the need to display extreme wealth. That is why the amalgam of the Turkish style with the French was able to create the perfect arena of comfort, luxury, sumptuousness, and opulence. However, the French monarchy of this period was committed to excess expenditures and unnecessary portrayal of wealth. While the French public was suffering, the extravagant way that the King and the Queen as well the aristocracy were living heightened the opposition and aggression against the regime. The fatal overthrow of the Ancien Régime brought a new dimension to the French *turquerie*. During Napoleon Bonaparte's reign, the notion of *turquerie* was abandoned, as it was deeply connected to the Ancien Régime. Napoleon opposed everything that the Ancien Régime had supported, and the incorporation of foreign tastes that were the prime symbols of romance and idleness were bound to vanish. Instead, the French military success and the glory of France had to be put forth. Furniture made according to the French taste was reinforced. Under Napoleon's reign, 18th century *turquerie* slowly vanished leaving in its place the Western dominant attitude of 19th century Orientalism.

While there is a vast literature on 19th century Orientalism, far too little attention has been given to 18th century *turquerie*. In this thesis, I will shed light on how the French attitude toward the Ottomans changed from fascination to degradation, by focusing on interior design and decorative arts. In my first chapter, I will form the framework of *turquerie* by assessing the diplomatic relations of France and the Ottoman Empire and how cultural borrowing made the incorporation of the Turkish style into the French possible. In my second chapter, I will assess how French *turquerie* was reflected in the interior spaces and decorative arts, especially at the Palace of Versailles, focusing on the *Cabinet Turc* of the Count of Artois. Finally, in my last

chapter, I will discuss the French *boudoir*, especially Marie Antoinette's, and the Turkish harem to draw parallels between feminine spaces and sexuality. Furthermore, I will present how feminizing and over-sexualizing the "other" paved the way for *turquerie* to disappear from the French literature as a whole. By unraveling the 18th century reality of *turquerie* through interior spaces, I will reveal the truth about what was once a "delight" for the French royal family and aristocracy.

CHAPTER I

Diplomatic Relationships & Acculturation of the Ottoman Empire and France:

The Groundwork for *Turquerie*

*“In all the towns and fortresses where I passed, a troop of soldiers was sent ahead of me. When I arrived in town, they drove me, with great pomp, to my home, where the country's great people, as well as the consuls, came to congratulate me on my happy arrival and brought me fruit and jam.”*¹

The Treaty of Karlowitz² in 1699 paved the way for the Ottoman Empire to send ambassadors more frequently to Europe. Having lost a long war to European powers, as well as a good amount of territory as a result of the Treaty, the Ottomans increased the roles of their ambassadors, aiming not only to improve their diplomatic relations, but also to understand Europe better. Ambassadors were no longer limited to delivering letters of credence; they had to be good diplomats before anything else and be well-prepared to represent the power of the Ottoman sultan. The Treaty of Karlowitz was based on the principle of *uti possidetis*, claiming power over a territory acquired by war. The Ottoman Empire did not want to lose even more territory in the future. Thus, the decision was made to keep good relations with the European states through good diplomatic relations and cultural exchange. While the diplomats were exchanging culture through gifts given by both sides, the introduction of new foods and manners

¹ “Dans toutes les villes et fortresses où je passais on envoyait une troupe de soldats une lieue au-devant de moi. Lorsque j’étais arrivé à la ville, ils me conduisaient, en pompe à mon logis, où les grands du pays, de même que les consuls, venaient me féliciter sur mon heureuse arrivée et me portaient des fruits et des confitures.” [My translation] Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi Efendi, the Ottoman ambassador in 1721, describes how the French welcomed him when he first arrived in France. Mehmet Efendi, *Le Paradis des infidèles, un ambassadeur ottoman en France sous la Régence* (Paris: François Maspero, 1981), 85.

² The Treaty of Karlowitz was signed between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, ending the hostilities that had lasted for sixteen years. With this agreement, the Ottoman Empire lost significant amounts of power in east-central Europe. The loss of territory turned the Ottoman Empire into a target in the eyes of European states, as it started to earn the reputation of a declining power.

strengthened the relations between states. Even though the Ottoman Empire was losing its territories in Europe, the sultan was still powerful, and the image of his power was conveyed through these diplomatic exchanges. Though its expansion had stalled, the Ottoman Empire could keep the *Türkengefahr*³ (the Turkish threat) alive, perhaps not through military power but through cultural power.

The Ottoman Empire maintained good diplomatic relations, especially with France. While Ottoman-French relations started to take a better form in the 18th century, their good relations were predicated on the Ottoman-French Alliance in 1525. The period between 1494 and 1559 was marked by the Great Wars of Italy between France and the Holy Roman Empire. In 1519, the French king, François I, and the Holy Roman emperor, Charles V began a series of bitter wars against each other that lasted decades. In the background was the Ottoman Empire, which since its conquest of Constantinople in 1453, was greatly feared by the European powers. The Sultan's plan was to take advantage of the war and to offer aid to those states threatened by the expansionist policy of Emperor Charles.

In 1525, the French army was defeated terribly at Pavia, Northern Italy, by the army of Charles V, and François I was captured. Louise of Savoy, François I's mother, wrote a letter to the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, pioneering the alliance between the two empires. Suleiman the Magnificent wrote a letter back to Louise of Savoy in the following way:

Everything you have said has come to the knowledge of our throne ruling the world. I have been informed of everything in detail. Sultans also fight and if necessary, get imprisoned. Don't be overwhelmed by your heart. Under these circumstances, our great

³ The notion of *Türkengefahr* (the Turkish threat) started with the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans in the 14th century and was aggravated with the capture of Constantinople, later Istanbul, by Mehmed the Conqueror in 1453, ending the Byzantine Empire. The threat of further Ottoman expansion, and the propaganda of the Catholic Church, formed a one-sided negative connotation of the Turks. Pope Pius II had even created a publication called the "Turks' Calendar" (*Türken-Kalender*) to alert the states to prepare for a possible Ottoman campaign.

ancestors—God bless their souls—have never stayed away from getting rid of the enemies and conquering lands. In their light, we will always follow their way and conquer lands and steep castles. All day and night, our horses are saddled, and our swords are on our waists. Great God bless us. Whatever God wills will occur. Know that any circumstance and news will be learned from the messenger you sent us.⁴

Evident from the letter, the Ottoman Sultan was willing to help the French king. As Louise of Savoy became the forerunner of this alliance, she reached out to the Sultan as a “mother.”

Instead of a political counterpart, a more sentimental aspect came with it as well, foreshadowing a possible cultural exchange. François I carried through on his mother’s plan and made the highly unusual decision to ally with the Ottoman Empire in its struggle against Charles V. The establishment of an Ottoman-French alliance against the Holy Roman Empire made the signing of a Commerce Treaty between the two empires possible in 1535, and the first permanent Embassy of France opened in Istanbul. With this treaty, France acquired many commercial privileges known as capitulations, and the Ottoman Empire hoped to gain a strong alliance against Austria.

More than a century later, in 1666, during the Ottoman-Austrian conflict, the Ottoman Empire sent Suleiman Aga as an ambassador to France. The French king Louis XIV or the Sun King welcomed Suleiman Aga and his delegations with an outfit covered in diamonds and put on

⁴ “...Her ne ki demiş iseniz, benüm pâye-i serîr âlem-masîrime arz olup tamam malûmum oldu. İmdî, padişahlar sınımak ve habs olunmak ‘aceb değildir, gonlünüzü hoş tutup azürde-hâtır olmayasız. Öyle olsa bizim âbâ-yi kiram ve ecdâd-i ‘izâmımız nevverallâhu merâki-dehim dâimâ def-i düşmân ve feth-i memâlik için seferden hâli olmayup biz dahi anların tarîkine sâlik olup herzamanda memleketler ve sa’b ve hasîn kaleler feth eyleyüp gece gündüz atımız eğlerlenmiş ve kılıcımız kuşanılmıştır. Hak subhâne ve ta’âlâ hayırlar müesser eyleyüp meşîyyet ve irâdeti neye müteallik olmuş ise vucûde gele. Bakî ahvâl ve ahbâr ne ise mezkûr ademinizden istintak olunup malumunuz ola; şöyle bilesiz.” [My translation] This letter was translated into modern Turkish from Ottoman Turkish by Halil İnalcık in *Osmanlı ve Avrupa Osmanlı Devleti’nin Avrupa Tarihindeki Yeri* (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017), 200. This letter is also included in Ernest Charrière, *Négotiations de la France dans le Levant* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1748), 113.

a grandiose show (Figure 1). Conversely, Suleiman Aga wore only a red caftan of *camelot*,⁵ acted as if he were of higher status than the King and appeared indifferent toward his magnificent welcome. In light of this incident, Molière wrote his *comédie-ballet The Bourgeois Gentleman (Le Bourgeois gentilhomme)* in 1670, which was first performed in Château de Chambord.⁶ The royal court was invited to see the play in part to mock the rude Turk. However, for the French to make sense of the play, the rude Turk was turned into the character of Monsieur Jourdain, who was a bourgeois social climber. Monsieur Jourdain comes from a humble background, but his whole aim is to get accepted as an aristocrat. In order to achieve his goal, he takes fencing, dancing, music and philosophy classes, turning himself into a fool in front of his teachers. In Act II, Scene IV, in his dialogue with his philosophy teacher, Monsieur Jourdain learns that he speaks in prose: “By my faith! For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing anything about it, and I am much obliged to you for having taught me that.”⁷ With all his new knowledge, he tries to mock his wife, Madame Jourdain to show his superiority and prove his “class”:

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: Assuredly. You both talk like beasts, and I'm ashamed of your ignorance. For example, do you know what are you speaking just now?

MADAME JOURDAIN: Yes, I know that what I'm saying is well said and that you ought to be considering living in another way.⁸

⁵ *Camelot*, or *camlet*, is an expensive fabric with Asian origins, originally made from camel's hair and silk, and later made from silk and mohair.

⁶ Haydn Williams, *18. Yüzyılda Avrupa Modası: Turquerie*, trans. Nurettin Elhüseyni (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2015), 32.

⁷ “Par ma foi! Il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose sans que j'en susse rien, et je vous suis le plus obligé du monde de m'avoir appris cela.” [My translation] Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* [1670], Reprint (Barcelona: Gallimard, 2013), 74.

⁸ Monsieur Jourdain: “Assurément. Vous parlez toutes les deux comme des bêtes, et j'ai honte de votre ignorance. Par exemple savez-vous, vous, ce que c'est que vous dites à cette heure?”

As Madame Jourdain is not able to give the right answer as “prose,” Monsieur Jourdain makes fun of her, calling her “ignorant.” However, he is the one who makes a mockery of himself with his parvenu behavior.

By creating Monsieur Jourdain as his main character, a symbol for Suleiman Aga, Molière made fun of the Ottoman emissary’s actions and even his dress, as he acted superior to the king. Although Monsieur Jourdain was a classic French social type, Molière added Turkish elements to his play, revealing that this was a satire of the encounter of Suleiman Aga and Louis XIV. Since Monsieur Jourdain wanted to be seen as an aristocrat, he wanted to marry his daughter to an aristocrat so she could be a marchioness. His daughter, however, wanted to marry the middle-class Cléonte, whom Monsieur Jourdain did not find appropriate. Therefore, Cléonte and his friend fooled Monsieur Jourdain by introducing Cléonte as the son of the Grand Turk. To make the lie more believable, they even spoke “Turkish” among themselves and granted Monsieur Jourdain a made-up title of *Mamamouchi* with a pseudo-Turkish style ceremony, during which they dressed him up in a turban and gave him a sword.⁹

Even though the Turkish style was used to create a satire, it reveals how the French were subtly affected by the Turkish culture. They did not know much about it—hence the pseudo-Turkish style in the play—but they were fascinated by the exoticism. Molière combined the typical French social type with a Turkish style, creating an amalgam of cultures, which he called *turquerie*.¹⁰ Even though Louis XIV was infuriated by the attitude of Suleiman Aga, through

Madame Jourdain: “Oui, je sais que ce que je dis est fort bien dit, et que vous devriez songer à vivre d’autre sort.” [My translation] Molière, *Le Bourgeois*, 95.

⁹ Julia Anne Landweber, “Turkish Delight: The Eighteenth-Century Market in Turqueries and the Commercialization of Identity in France,” in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 202-211 (Greeley: University Press of Colorado, 2004), 202.

¹⁰ Molière was the one who coined the term *turquerie*. Although *The Bourgeois Gentleman* was affected by *turquerie*, i.e. Turkish style, it was not the first time he used the word. In his play *The*

Molière's play, it was insinuated that embracing the style "à la turque" made it possible to "transform both one's social and national identity."¹¹ As the play was welcomed quite joyfully, and as it emphasized enjoyment through exoticism, it paved the way for *turquerie* to have even more pronounced effects.

While Suleiman Aga allegedly disrespected the king through his actions, his conspicuous arrival in France brought other effects as well. Most notably, Suleiman Aga brought coffee culture to France, especially to Paris. Although coffee beans were first brought to Marseille in 1644 by the French envoy Jean de La Haye and later by famous traveler Jean de Thévenot, the French at first did not pay attention to the drink. Only with the visit of Suleiman Aga did coffee become a drink that was à la mode.¹² Even though the coffee beans were brought from Africa, since it came from the Turks, the drink came to be known as a Turkish beverage. The fascination of the French can be seen through the following quote from the seventeenth century, which depicts Suleiman Aga's introduction of the coffee ritual, especially to French women: "The young and handsome slaves, dressed in rich Turkish costume, presented the ladies small damask napkins trimmed with gold fringes and served coffee in porcelain cups made in Japan."¹³ As can

Miser (L'Avare), which was performed on 1688, two years before *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, the word *Turquerie* was used with quite a negative connotation. The word is used as "cruel" and "hard-hearted" to describe the greedy main character Harpagon by his valet La Flèche: "...He is a Turk on that point, of a *Turquerie* (Turkishness) to drive anyone to despair, and we might starve in his presence and never a peg would he stir. In short, he loves money better than reputation, honor, and virtue, and the mere sight of anyone making demands upon his purse sends him into convulsions; it is like striking him in a vital place, it is piercing him to the heart, it is like tearing out his very bowels!" Molière, *L'Avare* [1669], Ebook.

<http://www.toutmoliere.net/IMG/pdf/avare.pdf>.

¹¹ Landweber, "Turkish Delight," 203.

¹² Williams, 18. *Yüzyıl*, 35.

¹³ "Jeunes et beaux esclaves, habillés d'un riche costume turc, présentaient aux dames de petites serviettes damassées garnies de franges d'or et servaient le café dans des tasses de porcelaine fabriquées au Japon." [My translation] Jean Leclant, "Le café et les cafés à Paris (1644-1693)," *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, no. 1 (1951): 4.

be understood from the exotic décor with the napkins and the way the coffee is served in porcelain cups, the Turkish man was seen as “a man of wit.”¹⁴

After the Treaty of Karlowitz, the quality of the ambassadors increased, as they had to be both good diplomats and a proper reflection of the Sultan’s power. In 1721, Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi Efendi was sent to Paris as an ambassador. The aristocracy that was furious at Suleiman Aga’s actions was fascinated by Mehmet Çelebi Efendi. After meeting him, the Duchess of Orléans, Elisabeth Charlotte, put her fascination into words in a letter to Madame Palatine: “Seeing the politeness of the ambassador of the Porte who is here, I believe the politeness has left the French Court to go to Turkey.”¹⁵ For a French person to recognize a foreigner as having French manners was quite a compliment. Not only the aristocracy but the whole of France was quite excited for the arrival of the Ottoman ambassador. Mehmed Efendi writes his observations on the excitement of the French in the following manner: “There was always such a large crowd of men and women on my way that it seemed that in the town I was arriving at there were only people in the places I passed...Being pressed by the crowd, the people would start crying out and I even saw women passing out in front of me.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Jean Leclant, “Le café,” 4. Leclant uses the term, “homme d’esprit.” The French word “esprit” can also be translated as spirit, as one can have a good spirit as well. However, in this context, the use of wit meaning “the keen perception and cleverly apt expression of those connections between ideas that awaken amusement and pleasure” is directly linked to the activity of coffee drinking. As coffee drinking was seen as an activity giving pleasure, “homme d’esprit” is translated as “man of wit.”

¹⁵ “Je crois la politesse a quité la Cour de France pour aller en Turquie, à voir la politesse de l’ambassadeur de la Porte qui est ici.” [My translation] The Duchess of Orléans is quoted in Williams, *18. Yüzyıl*, 43. The Porte is used to describe the central government of the Ottoman Empire and it is the French translation of the Ottoman Turkish word باب عالی, Bâb-ı Âli (High Gate).

¹⁶ “Il y a avait toujours sur mon chemin une si grande foule d’hommes et femmes qu’il semblait que dans la ville où j’arrivais il n’y avait de monde que par les endroits où je passais . . . Il y avait toujours quelques personnes qui, presque etouffées par les presse, se mettaient à faire de

As the cultures of the two empires differed highly from each other, it can be said that while the French wanted to observe the mannerisms of Turks, the Turks were highly disturbed by the amount of intrusion. In Ottoman culture, there was a distinction between public and private living spaces in the home. One's privacy (*mahrem*) was quite important, especially for the Sultan.¹⁷ If they were not invited, no one could come to his private space. However, in the French culture, there was the custom of disclosing living areas, even that of the King's. The only time the living area was opened in the Ottoman culture was when they were eating, even in that case, women and men ate separately. Moreover, the father of the household was given the choice to eat alone with an occasional participation of his son if he was old enough to join him. On the other hand, in the French culture everyone ate together. The French enjoyed watching each other eat, which the Ottomans found quite strange. During Mehmed Çelebi Efendi's visit, everyone wanted to see him and his companions eat, and however embarrassed they felt, they could not refuse. Mehmed Çelebi Efendi reveals his disturbance with these words:

They wanted, in particular, to watch us eat. We received messages that the daughter of so-and-so or the wife of so-and-so requested permission to watch us eat. We could not always refuse. Since [our eating times] coincided with their fast, they would not eat but surround the dining table and watch us. Since we were not accustomed to such behavior, this distressed us very much. We endured with patience out of our consideration for them. Yet the French were accustomed to watching people eat; for example, it was their custom to permit some to watch their King eat. What was stranger was the fact that these people would go to watch the King rise and get dressed in the morning. The fact that they made similar requests of us made us very uneasy.¹⁸

hauts cris et je voyais même venir devant moi des femmes évanouies.” [My translation] Mehmet Efendi, *Le Paradis*, 85.

¹⁷ In this context, the Turkish word *mahrem* is used to describe private. The word comes from Arabic *hrm*, which means forbidden, sacred, belonging to the private space or harem. Evident from the word used to describe the private spaces, respecting one's privacy was quite crucial. It was not something that differed according to preference, but it was a cultural way of behaving.

¹⁸ Mehmet Efendi, *Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi'nin Fransa Sefaratnamesi*, ed. Şevket Rado (İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 26-27.

Mehmed Çelebi Efendi was aware that their cultures were quite different from each other—not only in manners but also in clothing. For example, in the Ottoman Empire women wore pants, but in France only men wore pants. Mehmed Çelebi Efendi emphasizes all the differences by saying, “The Franks do not resemble the Turks like the night does not resemble the day.”¹⁹ While Mehmed Çelebi Efendi emphasizes that they are quite different, both sides were quite curious to learn about each other’s culture. Marquis de Bonnac, who was the French Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in the reign of Louis XV, declared that Mehmet Çelebi Efendi was the first of the Turks who dared to give the Porte an idea of the greatness and the power of their kings. Moreover, he said that he found it highly surprising for Mehmet Efendi to speak of the beauties of France in the way he wrote in his writings to the Sultan, as the Turks, in general, are so full of themselves.²⁰ Especially with Mehmed Çelebi Efendi’s visit, the fascination and respect toward Turkish culture increased. It was not only the way he dressed or the richness of his culture that was evident from the gifts that he brought for the king, but the way he behaved as well that caused the cultural borrowing between the two cultures to flourish.

After Mehmed Çelebi Efendi’s visit in 1721, his son Mehmed Said Efendi also went to Paris as an ambassador in 1742. Mehmed Said Efendi was even more conspicuous than his father, as he could speak French fluently. With his comfort in the French language and using French mannerisms, he became quite popular in French high society. Moreover, Louis XV welcomed Mehmed Said Efendi into the Galerie de Glaces at Versailles, which was quite a privilege. Mehmed Said Efendi even appeared in that year’s issue of *Mercure de France*.²¹

¹⁹ Mehmed Çelebi Efendi is quoted in Paul Gentizon, *Mustapha Kemal ou l’Orient en marche* (Paris: Bossard, 1929), 128.

²⁰ Mehmet Efendi, *Le Paradis*, 236.

²¹ *Mercure de France* was a 17th century publication, which published the activities of luminaries in Paris and the French provinces as well as abroad. It was also a literary publication providing

French artists wanted to capture his portrait, the most renowned of which was Jacques André Joseph Aved's *Mehmed Said Efendi, Ambassador of the Sublime Porte* (Figure 2). What is interesting about this portrait is that Aved portrays the ambassador in the clothing in which he was greeted by the king, a sable-lined caftan and his emerald-colored turban. Just like his father, Mehmet Said Efendi was a man of wit and a learned man. This becomes evident from the documents that are portrayed in his portrait—his credentials, displayed in the Ottoman language, and a book by the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius. He was depicted with a background of Paris, specifically one of the gates of Paris, the Porte Saint-Antoine, through which he entered the city. Mehmed Said Efendi's portrait was created in a courtly manner, and the organization of the books on the table and around the table reveal themselves as part of the Baroque painting style. While depicting Turkish style in the portrait, Aved likens the ambassador to a European diplomat. The portrait's size also becomes an important detail. Although Mehmed Said Efendi was just an ambassador, a relatively large canvas, 239 x 162 cm, was chosen for his portrait. This is an important indication of the respect that the ambassador gained during his time in France. Although he carries the elements of the East, especially with his turban, he is immersed in a Western environment, which is evident from the wooden writing desk: the painting evokes the sense that, regardless where the ambassador is, he is quite confident. Aved's portrayal of Mehmed Said Efendi in such a way becomes indispensable evidence of the French fascination with the Ottomans. As Mehmed Said Efendi was sent to represent the Ottoman Empire, Aved's portrait, as well as how the French, especially aristocrats, treated him, provides the Ottoman Empire with a positive image.

good literature to its readers. The explanation of *Mercure de France* is derived from its official website. "Historique," *Mercure de France*, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.mercuredefrance.fr/Historique>.

Both the visits of Mehmed Çelebi and Mehmed Said Efendi of 1721 and 1742 helped the Ottoman Empire become an empire closer to Europe.²² Mehmed Çelebi Efendi describes the difference between the Turkish men and French men with the following words, “turn a Turk upside down and feet up in the air, you will have a Franc.”²³ However different they were, the French were fascinated by and interested in the Turkish culture, and their mutual respect made their cultural borrowing possible. In fact, although Mehmed Çelebi Efendi and Mehmed Said Efendi played a huge role in introducing the Turkish culture to France, there was a high curiosity toward the life in the Ottoman Empire since the time of François I, in the early sixteenth century. François I specifically wanted to learn the secrets of the Ottoman military superiority. However, since the ambassadors were not familiar with the Turkish language, they used local Greeks and Armenians as translators. Their translations were not quite accurate, however, since they could be sometimes biased due to their own political affiliations. Therefore, special language schools designed to teach young Frenchmen Ottoman Turkish and other Eastern languages were planned. These schools were modeled after the *giovani della lingua* in Venice and founded under the name *jeunes de langues*.²⁴ Next to their interest in furthering their diplomatic relations, the Ottoman-French commerce was quite active as well. During the 17th and 18th centuries, as revealed by *Chambre de Commerce* in Marseille, commerce with the Levant constituted the majority of the commerce in France.²⁵

²² Williams, *18. Yüzyıl*, 46.

²³ “Mettez un Turc la tête en bas et les pieds en l’air, vous aurez un Franc.” [My translation] Mehmed Celebi quoted in, Gentizon, *Mustapha Kemal*, 128.

²⁴ Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı ve Avrupa: Osmanlı Devleti’nin Avrupa Tarihindeki Yeri* (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017), 190-192.

²⁵ İnalcık, *Osmanlı ve Avrupa*, 192.

Gift exchange was one of the most important denominators of cultural exchange. Gifts were the main source of contact between courts. In gift exchange, royal courts of the 18th century functioned the same way as archaic societies. According to Mauss' theory, gift exchanges constitute three obligations: give, receive, and repay. In giving the gift, a social bond is created, obligating the receiver to reciprocate. If the receiver fails to do so, then this results in a loss of honor. The gifts' importance cannot be measured with their utilitarian values because inherently, gifts are the reflection of the society.²⁶ Although the gifts are given to the individuals during the embassy visits, the main reason behind this gift exchange relates to a collective consciousness rather than an individual one. Therefore, each gift is picked out carefully, as it will have the quality of encompassing the empire as a whole. According to Appadurai, even though the human approach to things is determined by the view that things do not have a meaning other than human transactions, attributions, and motivations, this is not the accurate way to understand the historical circulation of things. Instead, what one should pay attention to is the *things* themselves, as they reveal their meaning with their forms, trajectories and uses. Only this method, Appadurai argues, will "illuminate their human and social context."²⁷

Therefore, it becomes highly important to pay attention to the gift exchange during the embassy visits of 1721 and 1742. As seen in Table 1, Mehmed Çelebi Efendi gives Louis XIV

²⁶ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, trans. Ian Gunnison (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967), 11. An important quote to note from the same page: "To refuse to give, or fail to invite is—like refusing to accept the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse. Again, one gives because one is forced to do so, because the recipient has a sort of proprietary right over everything which belongs to the donor. This right is expressed and conceived as a sort of spiritual bond." While Mauss' work focuses on comparing the gift exchange practices of the societies in Polynesia, Melanesia and north-West America, the nature of gift, as a constant exchange in between communities, stays the same.

²⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.

two pieces of silk cloth from Greece and India, and eight pieces of very fine muslin. Among the other precious items, these cloths might be regarded as simple exotic fabrics. However, there was a deeper meaning behind offering these to the French King.

Gifts of Mehmed Çelebi Efendi to Louis XIV	Gifts of Louis XIV to Mehmed Çelebi Efendi
Two Arab horses harnessed with ermine fur	A damaskin gun of gold
One arc with a quiver and sixty arrows	Two pairs of gold pistols
A saber encrusted with precious stones	One diamond studded belt for saber
Two pieces of silk cloth from Greece and India	Two pieces of velvet with gold flowers
Eight pieces of very fine muslin	Four carpets of la Savonnerie
An ermine fur coat	Two large mirrors by Cresson
Six bottles of Mecca balm	A bookcase furnished with glass and a chest

Gifts of Mehmed Said Efendi to Louis XV	Gifts of Louis XV to Mehmed Said Efendi
An armor enriched with pearls	Silver chandeliers by Ballin
One velvet saddle enriched with diamonds	A round table for twelve persons
Head stall with gold enameled diamonds	A hand-wash basin and a pitcher by Germain
Six sabers in silver with damask	Two great mirrors
One small velvet embroidered cushion	One great organ
Head stall with gold enameled diamonds	Furniture with inlaid work
Two pistols with fur covers	Carpets of la Savonnerie

Table 1. Gift Exchanges of 1721 and 1742²⁸

Although Greece was within the Ottoman borders, India was not. Muslin was a royal fabric in India. Therefore, the Ottoman sultan aimed to insinuate his vast power and wealth, as he was

²⁸ The list of gift exchange is taken from Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 142-144. According to Göçek (60), “The nature of the gift reflected the idealized values of presenting and receiving societies. The value of the gift was determined by the status and prestige considerations of the two societies as well as the gift’s political expediency and purpose . . . These objects [the ones the Ottomans brought] carried marks of luxury and richness; they were studded with precious stones . . . [The French offered] cultural products such as chests of drawers (*commodes*), dressing cases (*nécessaires*) and desks (*bureaus*) hitherto not used by the Ottomans.”

able “to extend the borders of his textile empire far beyond his actual territory.”²⁹ In a similar gesture, with Mehmed Said Efendi’s gifts, velvet played an important role in dressing the saddles, especially the saddles of the horses belonging to the royals. When viewing both Louis XIV and Louis XV’s gifts, it can be seen that military gear, such as guns and pistols, were given rather than fabrics, as the French kings wanted to show that they were very progressive in warfare. Moreover, furniture and carpets were also provided in the gift packages. The French, especially French kings, paid close attention to their furniture. They believed that they had a more refined taste than other European states. By giving the Ottoman ambassador a highly decorated piece of furniture, the king aimed to prove the French superiority in furniture. All of the gifts were carefully chosen to prove each side’s superiority to the other in some way; however, they also played an important role in acculturation.

Starting from the 16th century, the diplomatic relations of the Ottoman and French empires carried a deeper meaning than just cultural exchange. In Said’s words, “the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another different and competing *alter ego*.”³⁰ With the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Europe and the Ottoman Empire, became each other’s “alter ego.” In forming the European identity, especially France’s, the Ottoman Empire’s political and imperial identity plays an important role. Moreover, as culture is a vital constituent of an empire’s identity, cultural borrowing becomes crucial in the creation of this alter ego. France’s alter ego, the Ottoman Empire, comes into being with *turquerie*.

²⁹ Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “The Empire of Fabrics: The Range of Fabrics in the Gift Traffic of the Ottomans,” in *Inventories of Textiles*, 143-165, ed. Thomas Ertl and Barbara Karls (Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2017), 161.

³⁰ Edward Said is quoted in Nebahat Avcıoğlu, *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1728-1876* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 10.

Figures for Chapter I



Figure 1. Louis XIV welcomes Suleiman Aga in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on December 5th, 1669 in front of the Magnificent Audience.



Figure 2. Jacques André Joseph Aved, *Mehmed Said Efendi, Ambassador of the Sublime*, 1742, oil on canvas, 239 x 162 cm., New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

CHAPTER II

“A Dream of Carefree Happiness”³¹: *Turquerie* in the French Interior Design and Decorative

Arts

*“There is no other place in the world where buildings are distributed and interiors decorated with as much elegance, richness, and commodité as they are in our palaces and grand Paris hotels, as well as in the chateaux and pleasure-pavilions on the outskirt.”*³²

The term *turquerie* officially appeared in the Dictionary of the French Academy (*Dictionnaire de L’Académie Française*) in their eighth edition in 1935. Before the word *turquerie*, the word *turc* or *turque* (Turk), was employed, often associated with common expressions and proverbs. As a noun, the dictionary describes the word as “name of nation used in some colloquial or proverbial expressions,” such as *à la turque*, “in the manner of the Turks, to be dressed, to have hair in the manner of the Turks.”³³ Although this edition was published in the twentieth century, it becomes an interesting marker of how the French related the Turks to a distinctive style and a set of manners. *Turquerie* is described in the same article as “an artistic or literary composition in which the picturesque details are borrowed from Turkish customs or from

³¹ “Traum vom schmerzlosen Glück.” This term is coined by Pape in her PhD dissertation to describe the notion of *Turquerie* as seen from the eyes of the Europeans. Mimicking of the Turkish Orient opened the doors to this dream-like world.” Maria Elisabeth Pape, “Die Turquerie in der Bildenden Kunst des 18. Jahrhunderts,” (PhD diss., University of Köln, 1987), 319.

³² “Il n'est aucun endroit dans le monde où les édifices soient distribués et décorés intérieurement avec tant d'élégance, de richesse et de commodité qu'ils le sont dans nos palais et nos grands hôtels de Paris, aussi que dans les châteaux et les maisons de plaisance des environs.” [My translation] The quote belongs to the publisher of Briseaux, Charles Jombert, as he emphasized the exceptionality of the French taste of the eighteenth-century. According to Jombert, this was a new type of art (*un art nouveau*) which was unknown to the Ancients (*Anciens*) and Foreigners (*Étrangères*). More on the eighteenth-century aesthetics will be discussed later in the chapter. Charles Étienne Briseaux, *Architecture moderne, ou l'art de bien bâtir pour toutes sortes de personnes* (Paris: Jombert, 1764), 91-92.

³³ *Dictionnaire de L’Académie Française*, 8th ed. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1935), 697. “Nom de nation employé dans quelques expressions familières ou proverbiales,” “À la façon des Turcs. Être habillé à la turque.”

Oriental décor. It is also attached to Objects [*sic*], *bibelots* of the Orient.”³⁴ The French were being influenced by the style of the Turks; however, they did not refer to this as “borrowing.” In 1911, Auguste Boppe, a French diplomat with a strong interest in Turkey, founded the modern field of *turquerie*.³⁵ As can be seen from his book *The Painters of the Bosphorus in the 18th Century* (*Les Peintres du Bosphore au XVIIIe Siècle*), he was able to compare the artists who had been in Istanbul and had painted Turkish subjects in the eighteenth century. These artists included Jean-Baptiste Vanmour and others who had not been in Istanbul but were still painting Turkish subjects, such as Antoine de Favray. Through this examination of eighteenth-century artists who were interested in Turkish culture, either with direct contact or indirect contact through their travels to the Levant, he observed that the French borrowed the style and the manners of the Turks and altered them according to their own tastes. The French were incredibly proud of their superior taste and aesthetics, and interior design emerged as the prime area in which they could reflect this.

In the Ancien Régime, taste (*goût or goust*) was a highly discussed concept. According to French philosophers, taste was a sentiment that allowed one to distinguish the beauty of an object. Although there were many debates around the theory of beauty, the French had claimed the authority as taste makers in domestic planning and adornment. Enlightenment philosophers such as Diderot had gone even further and defended the idea of what beauty meant, and that

³⁴ “Composition artistique ou littéraire dont les sujets ou les détails pittoresques sont empruntés aux mœurs turques ou au décor oriental. Il se dit aussi d’Objets, de bibelots d’Orient.” [My translation] Here, *bibelots* refer to small figurines. Ibid.

³⁵ In 1911, the Republic of Turkey was not yet established, and the Ottoman Empire was still intact. However, for the sake of defining the region Boppe was interested in, I chose to use the word Turkey.

defining it should be left to professional critics and not “the worldly amateurs.”³⁶ In his essay “Beau,” Diderot concludes his treatise on beauty in the following manner: “Beauty is not always the work of an intelligent cause: movement often establishes, either in a being considered solitary, or between several beings compared to each other, a prodigious multitude of surprising relationships.”³⁷ Diderot’s ideas regarding beauty reflect French aesthetic thought of the eighteenth century. The belief that beauty comes from “surprising relationships” becomes a justification for the use of other styles—Turkish style in this case—in conjunction with one’s own. As French style was centered around luxury, when they came across an even more flamboyant style than theirs, they were able to create even more opulent interior spaces by merging the details of the Ottoman style with their own.

In the eighteenth century, the dominant French style was Rococo, characterized by decorative motifs with flowy curves. The use of five major orders of Classical architecture as the authoritative model for aesthetic taste were either discontinued or were left to hang in mid-air.³⁸ The idea behind Rococo was to create a sense of playfulness with design. Floral designs took over the major orders of Classical architecture, and rooms were designed to encourage

³⁶ Jennifer Tsien and Jacques Morizot, “18th Century French Aesthetics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019).

³⁷ “Le beau n’est pas toujours l’ouvrage d’une cause intelligente: le mouvement établit souvent, soit dans un être considéré solitairement, soit entre plusieurs êtres comparés entr’eux, une multitude prodigieuse de rapports surprenans.”[My translation] One can note here that the usage of ‘être’ in the above quote lends itself to multiple interpretations. It might be plausible to interpret ‘being’ as an object containing in itself a contrast that produces an aesthetic experience (e.g. a flower) which presents a tension between its multiple colors. However, one may extend the meaning of ‘being’ to more complex entities. An interior or even the very experience of identity appear as plausible candidates for what Diderot deems the beautiful. Denis Diderot, “Beau,” in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol I, ed. Diderot and d’Alembert (Paris: Briasson), 181.

³⁸ The five major orders of Classical architecture are Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan and Composite.

sociability. Instead of cluttering the space with formal furniture, comfort was made the priority with the introduction of furniture such as the sofa (*divan*). High decoration was at the center of this style: by incorporating the Turkish style, especially with gilding and the use of the crescent motif, the French *turquerie* became a “province of Rococo.”³⁹

Textiles

In the eighteenth century, textiles played a crucial role in interior decoration. The French Wars of Religion had caused a tremendous strain on the French economy.⁴⁰ In response, workshops that made carpets *velouté façon de Turquie* (velvety with a thick knotted pile) were founded in Louvre to rekindle the economy.⁴¹ Later in the seventeenth century, these workshops were moved to a soap factory, hence the name Savonnerie. At Savonnerie, mainly carpets were produced; however, covers for chairs and benches, reproductions of oil paintings, and door curtains were also produced. Savonnerie mostly wove products for the royal family, but any products the King did not use went to *Garde-Meuble* to be kept as gifts for foreign ambassadors or for use in the palace when needed. One such example of gifts was for the Ottoman sultan, Mahmud I. In 1742, when Mehmed Said Efendi came as an ambassador, he was given Savonnerie carpets to present to his sultan. The aim of Louis XV was to show the Ottomans the French mastery in carpets, as the gifted carpets were woven with gold threads. It was also sent as a signal to the Turks that the French no longer needed Turkish carpets. The mid-eighteenth

³⁹ Here, Stein quotes Auguste Boppe’s characterization of French *turquerie*. Perrin Stein, “Exoticism as metaphor: Turquerie in eighteenth-century French Art,” (PhD diss., New York University, 1997), 32.

⁴⁰ The French Wars of Religion were a period of wars between Catholics and Huguenots that started in 1562 and ended in 1598 with the Edict of Nantes.

⁴¹ John Whitehead, *French Interiors of the 18th Century* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2009): 199.

century onwards also saw a change in the subjects that were depicted in the carpets. Subjects changed from war victories to more informal and exotic subjects, thus transforming into more decorative pieces rather than displays of triumph for the palace.

This change in the subject of tapestries is also reflected in how the Turks were depicted on them. With the Ottoman ambassador Yirmisekiz Mehmed Efendi's visit in 1721, Charles Parrocel's paintings of the event were turned into two tapestries—one depicting the arrival of Mehmed Efendi to the Tuileries (Figure 3) and the other depicting his exit from the Tuileries (Figure 4). The depiction of the scenes might be considered as a medium to memorialize the event; however, both the way the figures were depicted and the size of the tapestry reveals more than just a visual account. At the entrance of the Tuileries, the allegorical sculptures of *Fame* and *Mercury* welcome the ambassador. As these sculptures were made during the reign of Louis XIV, they played an important role in representing “peace and war as dual aspects of fame,” and in France's case, military triumphs brought peace and prosperity.⁴² Although symbolically this tapestry is part of a portrayal of French supremacy, by depicting subjects that are not directly related to military triumphs, Parrocel paved the way for depicting scenes that reflected broader cultural themes rather than solely military ones. The French aristocratic audience, especially those close to Louis XV, started to lean toward the depiction of more romantic scenes of the “other.” Depicting military triumphs was already practiced; however, using interior spaces as an arena to master design while using elements from the “other,” was something that they were not accustomed to. By depicting the “other” while remaining true to their own style, they would be able to achieve cultural supremacy.

⁴² Stein, “Exoticism,” 101.

One other important point about these tapestries is their size. While the tapestry depicting the arrival of the ambassador (Figure 3) is 7.1 x 4.2 meters, the tapestry portraying the exit of the ambassador (Figure 4) is 5.85 x 4.2 meters. The tapestries are framed, making them look like paintings, and their large size allows every detail to be visible. In Figure 3, the ambassador is in the foreground, on his horse and with his ambassadorial entourage. The horses are ornamented with vibrant velour fabrics, gold tassels, and the Ottoman crescent motif. On the left side, French soldiers are seen with the French aristocracy, both men and women, behind them. Their faces reflect fascination with the Ottoman ambassador's glorious entrance, as they seemingly cannot take their eyes from the ambassador. Since these tapestries were originally commissioned as paintings by the King and were made for the Palace, and given that interior spaces became an arena to prove one's cultural supremacy, they clearly highlight the French captivation with the Ottomans.

Furniture

In his 1872 book, *Tableau de Paris*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier details the laborious effort which goes into furnishing interior spaces:

When a house has been built, nothing has yet been done; one has not reached a fraction of the expense. Then come the carpenter (*menuisier*), the upholsterer, the painter, the gilder, the sculptor, the cabinetmaker (*ébéniste*), and so on; then the mirrors must be hung and the bells installed throughout. The interior takes three times longer than the construction of the hotel; the antechambers, hidden stair closets, and conveniences are endless.⁴³

⁴³ “Quand une maison est bâtie, rien n'est fait encore; on n'est pas au quart de la dépense; arrivent le menuisier, le tapissier, le peintre, le doreur, le sculpteur, l'ébéniste, etc. Il faut ensuite des glaces et poser des sonnettes par-tout; le dedans occupe trois fois plus de tems que la construction de l'hôtel; les antichambres, les escaliers dérobes, les dégagements, les commodités, tout cela est à l'infini.” [My translation] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Le Tableau de Paris*, Volume I (Amsterdam, 1782-83), 283.

As can be seen from Mercier's account, the quality and placement of furniture was paramount. One can acquire decorative objects, but what gives the objects their meaning is why they are acquired and how they are used. How is a piece of furniture constructed? How are the chairs upholstered? And most important of all, how should the spatial arrangement of the rooms be laid out? One of the pioneers of creating Turkish rooms was Louis XVI's brother, the Count of Artois. The Count created two rooms at Versailles in his apartment in the South Wing of Versailles and one for his Parisian residence at Palais du Temple. With the help of *Bâtiments du Roi* (lit. King's Buildings) in 1775-76, one of the rooms in his apartment wing was redecorated according to the Turkish style.⁴⁴ In order to create a sense of prosperity, frequent gilding was used alongside with heavy furnishing and drapery. The walls of the room were covered with silk (*éttoffe de perse superfine*) and the dominant wood furniture mimicked the look of draped fabric with hand braided carvings. At the corner of the room, as the wall was covered with mirrors, a sofa (*divan*) was situated, which was called "sultan." The sofa had rich scalloping with pearl-shaped decorations. The fabric of the piece was held with silver plated crescents. Jules-Hugues Rousseau and Jean-Siméon Rousseau de la Rottière were responsible for the woodwork, and Louis-Joseph Dutems was responsible for the wall paintings as well as the gilding work.

The second Turkish room of the Count of Artois was converted from a library. The walls were once again covered with gray, white and yellow fabric, but this time the fabric was folded

⁴⁴ *Bâtiments du Roi* was a division that worked for the King to do the construction and maintenance of the King's residences and their gardens and parks. This division was also responsible for the other buildings that were tied to the King, such as *Manufacture des Gobelins* (Gobelins Manufactory) and *Manufacture de la Savonnerie* (Savonnerie Manufactory). From the seventeenth century onwards, *Bâtiments du Roi*'s extended team of workers, architects and directors was in charge of more than the maintenance of the buildings, i.e. the control of the manufacture of the tapestries and porcelain. As evident in the detailed attention paid to everything concerning the way the façades of the buildings were as well as their interiors, the King wanted everything to be monitored.

and held together with twenty-three gold crescents. The fabric used on the walls was also used to upholster two sultans, two armchairs and four chairs. The panels of the doors were decorated with Turkish style grotesques (Figure 5)—a portly baby wearing a turban holding a garland, and Turkish girls resembling nymphs holding a medallion with a blue marbling. The door was decorated with flowers, and these Turkish style figures were situated at the center. The emergence of these scenes and figures was made possible through famous literary pieces, such as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, as well as operas and plays, such as *Achmet and Almazine*, as at first, literary works were the primary sources to explore the Ottoman culture. There is no evidence that these masters working on the Turkish rooms had been to the lands of the Ottoman Empire; instead, they most likely formulated the ideas for their rooms from the costumes at these performances as well as the scenes created in novels.

“An expression of a heightened joie de vivre and sociability”⁴⁵ was made possible through the arrangement of the furniture and especially through the use of the sofa and cushions. The emphasis on comfort in the Turkish home at this time is evident through the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

This is the sofa, and is laid with a richer sort of carpet, and all round it a sort of couch raised half a foot, covered with rich silk, according to the fancy or magnificence of the owner. Mine is of scarlet cloth with a gold fringe. Round about this are placed, standing against the wall, two rows of cushions, the first very large and the next little ones, and here the Turks display.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ “Ausdruck einer gesteigerten gesellschaftlichen Lebensfreude und Repräsentationsentfaltung.” [My translation] Pape, “Die Turquerie,” 307.

⁴⁶ Mary Wortley Montagu, *Turkish Embassy Letters: 1689-1762*, ed. Malcolm Jack (London: William Pickering, 1993), 85. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was the wife of the British ambassador to the Sublime Porte. As she spent a lot of time in the Ottoman Empire, especially in Istanbul, she was able to compare herself with the Turkish women and report on their lifestyles. This letter to her friend Anne Thistlethwaite, the Countess of Chesterfield, especially reveals the intimate feeling of the Turkish homes with the use of soft sophas and cushions.

As can be seen from the spatial arrangement of the Count of Artois' rooms as well as the emphasis on fabrics, a similarity with the Turkish homes is quite evident. The shapes of the furniture were in the French style, though the use of gilding and upholstery reflects Turkish influence. For example, the sofa in Turkish homes did not have legs, but in the French style, the shape of the sofa changed with an addition of legs and with more structure. Henry Havard, in his *Dictionnaire de L'Ameublement et de La Décoration: Depuis le XIIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, describes the *fauteuil* (armchair) as a staple of French salons:

As in the best days of the reigns of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI, the armchair, in fact, continues to occupy an imposing place in our salons, and if it has received some new ways, if we have reinforced its elastic inserts, which give its seat and back more flexibility, it has, on the other hand, generally kept its old shapes.⁴⁷

The French were quite invested in a tradition of using their established shapes in furniture, however, they felt confident enough to alter the surface design of their furniture according to new fashions and living styles.

Porcelain

The way the Turkish style entered French porcelain was through imagery. Paintings of Turks or Turkish inspired scenes were depicted on vases. One of the most prominent subjects of these paintings were figures with turbans unloading chests from the ships on the harbors (Figure 6). This was an important reflection of the trade with the Levant. In December 1773, Sèvres Manufactory had an exhibition at Versailles, and the porcelains depicting Turkish figures were

⁴⁷ “Comme au plus beau temps des règnes de Louis XIV, de Louis XV et de Louis XVI, le fauteuil, en effet, continue à tenir dans nos salons une place imposante, et s’il a reçu quelques façons nouvelles, si l’on a renforcé ses garnitures d’élastiques, qui donnent à son siège et à son dossier plus de souplesse, il a, par contre, généralement conservé ses formes anciennes.” [My translation] Henry Havard, *Dictionnaire de L'Ameublement et de La Décoration: Depuis le XIIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Quantin, 1887), 739.

quite popular. To illustrate, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette bought a vase depicting a Turkish couple, similar to that in Figure 7, from the exhibition. The vase in Figure 7 was influenced by Jean Baptiste Le Prince's engraving. The Vincennes Manufactory was known for its pure white soft paste, and in 1759, the factory was moved to Sèvres and turned into state property. Other than its distinct paste, Vincennes was known for its expertise in gilding. At first, gilding was not used to make decorative motifs. However, after some time, it was discovered that gilding was a useful technique, especially in rendering flowers. The Ottomans were fond of flowers, and the constant incorporation of flowers on the vases that depicted Turkish figures became a mark of French interest in Turkish style.

Because the French thought of themselves as taste makers, they tried to dominate their interior spaces with their own styles. However, they could not prevent the penetration of other influences through political and cultural encounters. For French *turquerie*, the motivation was to “borrow” the lifestyle of the Turks, effectively mixing it with the local aesthetic. One effect was creolizing the threatening “otherness” of Turkish culture. Such a process generated an amalgam that reaffirmed French superiority while at the same time integrated and disarmed foreign culture. Although exclusive politicization of the interior space plays an important role, the aristocratic appreciation of the Turkish style's beauty, detail, comfort, sensuality, and luxury cannot be disregarded. This genuine fascination with Turkish style becomes evident in the rooms of the Palace. While the Count of Artois' creation exemplifies such a phenomenon, it is perhaps observed more explicitly in Marie Antoinette's vision. Her *Boudoir Turc* (Turkish Room) presents the viewer with a space that embodies this syncretism not only in its visual element, but rather in the function of the room itself. Specifically, the *boudoir*, as a purported space of nudity and debauchery, directly echoes the function of the Ottoman harem. This double relation, then,

of function and representation, points one to a whole different dimension of Franco-Ottoman aesthetics.

Figures for Chapter II



Figure 3. Charles Parrocel, Gobelins Manufactory, *Hanging of the Turkish Ambassador's Entry to the Tuileries*, 1721, textile, 7,1 x 4,2 m., Paris, The Mobilier National.



Figure 4. Charles Parrocel, Gobelins Manufactory, *Hanging of the Turkish Ambassador's Exit from the Tuileries*, 1721, textile, 5,85 x 4,2 m., Paris, The Mobilier National.



Figure 5. The Door Detail of Count of Artois' Second Turkish Room at Versailles, 1781



Figure 6. Vase, Sèvres Manufactory, 1765, soft paste porcelain



Figure 7. *Vase Bachelier à feuilles d'accanthe*, Sèvres Manufactory, 1775-80, soft paste porcelain

CHAPTER III

An Arena of Sexual Intrigue: Parallels Between the French *Boudoir* and the Ottoman Harem at the Palace of Versailles

*“Milady Barrymore nonchalantly lying on an ottomane, beautiful as the day, arrayed in déshabillé, inspired desire in me and could see it well; her arms passing around my neck bent me on top of her, and I was soon drunk with pleasure.”*⁴⁸

The word *boudoir* comes from the French word *bouder*, which means to sulk. As the boudoir was created as a private space, it was a space to sulk in and be left alone with one's thoughts. According to the French Larousse, *boudoir* is a “small, elegant salon, which was for the exclusive use of women and dates back to the Régence (Regency).”⁴⁹ Unlike the other rooms of the Palace of Versailles, no directions were given on how a *boudoir* should be decorated. This becomes evident from the eighteenth-century architect Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières' words: “This delightful retreat must arouse none but the sweetest emotions; it must confer serenity upon

⁴⁸ This quote is taken from Julia Anne Landweber, “Turkish Delight: The Eighteenth-Century Market in Turqueries and Commercialization of Identity in France,” in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, ed. Barry Rothaus (Colorado: Colorado University Press, 2004), 202-211. The original quote is taken from Armand Louis de Gontaut, “Mémoires du duc de Lauzun,” in *Les Français vus par eux-mêmes: Le XVIII^e siècle, Anthologie des mémoralistes du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Bouquins Robert Laffont, 1996), 257. In this quote, the Duke of Lauzun, later the Duke of Brion, describes his memories at Palais Royal in 1775. What becomes interesting about this quote is that, in Landweber's words, “The experience of the duc de Lauzun confirms that well-deployed *turquerie* could heighten the excitement of a sexual encounter.” Landweber, “Turkish Delight,” 208. Especially the use of a Turkish piece of furniture when talking about a sexual encounter, in such an explicit way, provides an important insight for the *boudoirs* that will be discussed later in the chapter.

⁴⁹ “Petit salon élégant, qui était à l'usage exclusif des femmes (remonte à l'époque Régence,” “Boudoir,” Larousse, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/boudoir/10435>. The Régence was the period in French history from 1715-1723.

the soul and delight upon all senses.”⁵⁰ As the *boudoir* is a feminine space, there is no systematic way to decorate it. The only important thing is that it must please one’s senses. Le Camus uses the words “sweetest serenity and delight” to describe the feelings that the *boudoir* should evoke. The creation of bodily comfort through the use of comfortable furniture was the key method to arouse the feelings of pleasure and happiness.

The use of Turkish style made it possible to achieve the comfort level that was desired. Some of the furniture that was used in these rooms was *sopha* (a *canapé* with arms and wings), *ottomane* (ottoman), *lit de repos à la turque* (Turkish style resting bed), *canapé à la turque* (Turkish style couch) and *veilleuse à la turque* (Turkish style settee). All these furniture styles are cushioned to provide the owner with the most comfort. While some seats had a canopy attached, others did not, and they took their names according to the shape of their backs. Although the style of these furniture pieces was not fully taken from the Ottomans, the idea of creating relaxed seating arrangements that allowed for the proximity of bodies was borrowed from them. For example, the Ottoman divan was a low padded furniture piece that would lean against the wall and would cover the three sides of the wall, having a U shape. Originally, the divan did not have any legs. The French, while taking inspiration from the Ottoman style, separated the furniture, added ornamented legs, and created a free-standing seat. However, the aspect of softness that would allow one to relax was left intact. Important to note, when creating rooms that are in Turkish style, not only these furniture styles were used but also Turkish style upholstery was emphasized, mostly either damask cloth or Turkish-stitch pattern.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *The Genius of Architecture; or, The Analogy of That Art with Our Sensations* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 115.

⁵¹ Landweber, “Turkish Delight,” 207. Landweber explains the damask cloth in the following way: “Damask or damascene cloth, is a richly patterned fabric usually made from silk, wool,

Before getting its final shape, Turkish style furniture pieces went through some changes according to the needs of the French and the seating arrangements required at the Palace. During the reign of Louis XIV, formality and hierarchy was quite important, and seating arrangements were made according to rank. Sitting on a *fauteuil* (armchair) was only allowed for the royals; high-ranking courtiers were given *tabourets* (stools) at most.⁵² However, toward the end of his reign, a more relaxed style became popular, as royals had started to socialize outside of the court as well. Around the 1720s, under the reign of Louis XV, a different kind of *canapé* started to become popular, which was called *causeuse*. These were couches with two seats next to each other, which permitted intimate conversations. As couches that allowed more than one person to sit went through changes, *fauteuils* went through changes, too. Although these chairs had a prominent place in French furniture making, even before the Ottoman influence, their merging with the Turkish style afforded them a different feel. By changing the construction, it was aimed to make the sitter more at ease. The new *fauteuils*, called *bergères*, were low chairs with fully upholstered skeletons. Carrying the comfort of the bergère even further, *bergère à la turque* was introduced. This furniture combined a traditional daybed (*duchesse*) with a *bergère*. Although this type of furniture did not exist in the Ottoman culture, the reason why it was linked to Turkish style was because of its invitation for comfort. For the French, Turkish style was not only limited to motifs or the use of certain fabrics, but it was also about the certain sociability and comfort that revolved around the interior spaces.

linen or cotton. The name refers to the Syrian city of Damascus, for many centuries part of the Ottoman Empire, and to Damascus steel, which was known for its wavy patterns of inlay or etching.” Landweber, “Turkish Delight,” 211. These sofas were commissioned specifically for Turkish rooms with imported fabric to achieve the desired Turkish style.

⁵² Madeleine Dobie, *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 91.

The eighteenth-century proved to be an important time for differentiating between the private and the public spheres. Especially at Versailles, this played quite a crucial role. Before this time, guests would be welcomed in bedrooms, not allowing any distinction between what is private and what is public. However, as guests started to be entertained in the living room or the salon, the rooms in the house could be more specialized according to their uses.⁵³ This new demarcation between the uses of the rooms also allowed the *boudoir* to have its own purpose of being a private feminine space for comfort.

Although the *boudoir* was a space reserved for ease, the furniture associated with it was highly sexualized. One of the most vivid examples of the period was Claude Prosper Jolyot de Cr  billon’s erotic novella *Le Sopha: Conte Moral* (1742). In this novel, the main character Amanze  , who is a Hindu at the court of the Muslim sultan Schah-Baham, explains to the sultan his past life and how he was punished to be a soph   due to his soul’s wrongdoings. One of the principal deities of Hinduism, Brahma, had given him this punishment. Amanze   explains the conditions for his reincarnation: “[Brahma] added that my soul could not start a new [human] career until two people would mutually yield their virginit  s on me.”⁵⁴ Through his writing, Cr  billon turns the soph   into an intimate furniture piece, which evokes love and desire. While Amanze   encounters seven couples during his time as a soph  , only the last couple, Z   nis and Ph  l  as, fulfill the condition for his soul to start a new career as a human. Although *Le Sopha*

⁵³ Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*, 95. Dobie writes, “The tendency toward more strictly demarcated rooms loosely mirrored the progressive demarcation of public life and domestic intimacy in society as a whole: as J  rgen Habermas writes, in eighteenth-century Europe, the boundary between public and private, social and domestic was being redrawn in such a way that it ran ‘right through the home.’”

⁵⁴ “[Brahma] ajouta que mon   me ne commencerait une nouvelle carri  re, que quand deux personnes se donneraient mutuellement, et sur moi, leurs pr  mices.” [My translation] Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Cr  billon, *Le Sopha: Conte Moral* [1742] (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 41.

was considered a scandal at the time and caused Crébillon to get exiled (due to his satirical depictions of influential Parisians), it provides an insight into how the French people at the time perceived comfort and how the proximity of the bodies can evoke certain feelings. Especially with the further privatization of bedrooms, the way that people used these ever-evolving comfortable seats became even more intriguing than it used to be. In a way, all was left to imagination, and creating stories around them, like Crébillon did, became a way to peek into these private spaces. What the French were trying to achieve was to “unveil” the truth in these private spaces. However, the dichotomy of public and private allowed this discovering to be a process rather than being one sole truth. Just like Heidegger’s philosophical model *aletheia*, the revealing of truth is not limited to a moment but a constant revealing and unrevealing.⁵⁵

In the later 18th century, during the reign of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette was one of the most important figures who paid high attention to creating her *boudoir*. Marie’s *boudoir* at Le Château de Fontainebleau was designed specially with Turkish elements, hence the name it was given, *Le Boudoir Turc* (The Turkish *Boudoir*) (Figure 8). It is situated with a view of *Le Jardin de la Reine* (The Garden of the Queen) and was created for her in the 1780s. The main reason that the room was identified with Turkish style was the decoration on its walls. Here there were arabesque trophies with Ottoman crescent motifs as well as figurines with turbans (Figure 9). This arabesque decoration, with gold being the primary color, was associated with the Ottoman style. Although designed quite handsomely, with colors and figures being in harmony, the motifs used to mimic the Turkish style were very limited. As seen in the Count’s room as well as Marie’s, mostly crescent and figures with turbans are used. However, in the Ottoman palaces, there were so many other motifs unique to the Turkish style, such as tulips, and three spots

⁵⁵ Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*, 85.

(*çintemani*). The use of such limited and recurring motifs in the Turkish rooms reflects a very myopic view of the French at the time.

Marie Antoinette had created for herself a beautiful room for relaxation, depicting her fascination with the Turkish style. However, her negative impression among the public eye gave rise to pornographic comics as well as *libelles*, which are political satire pamphlets that slander a political figure. Although I cannot say whether these pornographic scenes depicted take place in her *Boudoir Turc*, they are definitely set in *boudoirs* with Turkish-influenced furniture. Figure 13 portrays a pornographic comic of Marie Antoinette having a same-sex relation with Duchess Pequigny. Although the edge of the seat is cut off, what they seem to be lying on is a *lit de repos à la turque*. The subtext of the comic translates as, “With your kisses, excite my desires, I am, my darling, at the height of pleasure.”⁵⁶ In the public eye, Marie Antoinette was seen as a nymphomaniac with an unquenchable sexual appetite. The reasons why the public felt able to criticize her in such a manner was because she was a foreigner, and it took her a long time to produce a male heir to the throne. The public perceived this as the King not being able to fulfill her desires, leading her to seek pleasure in the arms of the others. According to these comics as well as the *libelles*, she found pleasure not only in men but also in women. What is more, she was also portrayed in multiple orgies. One of the most striking examples of these *libelles* is François-Marie Mayeur’s *L’Autrichienne en goguettes, ou l’orgie royale* (Austrian woman/bitch on a spree, or the royal orgy).⁵⁷ In Scene II, an orgy between the Count of Artois, and Marie Antoinette and Duchess Polignac is depicted:

⁵⁶ “Par les baisers excite mes désirs, je suis, ma bonne, au comble des mes désirs.” [My translation]

⁵⁷ What becomes interesting about this title is how the author made a play on words. In French, the female version for Austrian is *Autrichienne*, but the word *chienne* also means female dog. That is why *Autrichienne* can be translated both as Austrian woman and Austrian bitch.

THE QUEEN: (to Madame de Polignac, who steps aside to let the Queen go) Come,
come in my good friend.

THE COUNT OF ARTOIS (slightly pushing the Queen from the back and pinching her
buttocks): Come in too. (Whispering to the Queen's ears) What a bottom! So firm
and elastic!

THE QUEEN (whispering): If my heart was as hard, wouldn't we be good together?

THE COUNT OF ARTOIS: Be quiet, crazy, or else I will give my brother another son
tonight.

THE QUEEN: Oh no! Let's have some flowers of pleasure, but no more fruits.

THE COUNT OF ARTOIS: All right. I will be careful, if I can.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC: Where is the King?

THE QUEEN: What do you worry about? Soon he will be here to annoy us.”⁵⁸

Marie Antoinette was constantly portrayed with the Count of Artois, even to the level that
people started rumors that the Count was the father of her children. As a consequence, her
presence in pornographic satires heightened after 1789. The French people felt the urge to attack

⁵⁸ La Reine, à Madame de Polignac qui se range pour la laisser passer: “Entre, entre donc, ma
bonne.”,
Le Cte. d’Artois, poussant légèrement la reine parderriere, en lui prenant les fesses: “Ah! Quel
cu! Qu’il est ferme et élastique!”,
La Reine, bas au Comte d’Artois: “Si j’avais le cœur aussi dur, nous ne serions pas si bien
ensemble?”,
Le Cte. d’Artois: “Taisez-vous, folle, ou je donne encore ce soir un nouveau fils à mon frère.”
La Reine: Oh! Non. “Cueillons les fleurs du Plaisir, mais n’y melons plus de fruits.”
Le Cte. d’Artois: “Soit. Je serai prudent, si je puis.”,
La Reine: “Asseyons-nous.”,
Mad de Polignac: “Où donc est le Roi?”,
La Reine: “De quoi vous inquiétez-vous, Il viendra assez-tôt pour nous ennuyer.” [My
translation] François-Marie Mayeur, *L’Autrichienne en goguettes, ou, L’orgie royale: opéra
proverb* (France, 1789), 4-5.

her even more after the Revolution, targeting her material desires, such as her lavish Turkish room, and they connected it to her sexual desires. Overall, they saw her as the culprit of the demise of France. Her outsider perspective informed an attitude of open consumption that easily incorporated Turkish motifs. As such, the French public could easily attack her not only for her consumption *qua* consumption, but rather for her expensive foreign tastes, which fit well into an alleged anti-French narrative. The French public's ignorance with regard to the space occupied by the nobility informed an attitude that targeted Marie's figure. Particularly, they were concerned with diminishing her role as representative of France as a whole.

Although the walls were protected during the French Revolution of 1789, the room lost its furniture. In 1805, when Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself the emperor of France, the Palace came under the control of him and his court. Neoclassical style characterized Napoleonic France.⁵⁹ Compared to the reign of Louis XIV, romantic scenes were no longer portrayed on porcelain vases. Instead, military victories, especially that of Napoleonic Wars were depicted to promote the glory of France. Napoleon used his imperial symbols, such as the bee and the letter "N," with the antique ornaments. The interior spaces were no longer the portrayal of wealth but the military power of France.

Concomitantly, Empress Joséphine, the wife of Napoleon, decided to install a little bedroom in Marie Antoinette's *Boudoir Turc*. She chose quite sumptuous furniture, but she stayed true to the overall Turkish style of the room.⁶⁰ Now overseen by Joséphine, the richness

⁵⁹ Neoclassical Style was the revival of classical antiquity in Europe. Harmony, simplicity and proportion were the most important elements of this style. In Rococo style, there was always a display of wealth and the heavy use of gold justified this. As this style was associated with the aristocracy, Rococo came to be considered as gauche. With its simple and elegant lines, Neoclassical style was the dominant style during the French Empire period (1804-1815).

⁶⁰ "Le boudoir turc," Le Château de Fontainebleau, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.chateaudefontainebleau.fr/devenez-mecene-au-chateau-de-fontainebleau/projets->

was created with golden bronze, which was a popular decoration element that became popular in the First French Empire (1804-1815). The furniture in the room was decorated with golden bronze flowers and leaves. The use of rich fabrics also proved to be crucial in the recreation of Marie Antoinette's Turkish style. The fabric used for the *bergères* as well as the *lit de repos à la turque* was upholstered with cream-colored velour containing gold threads with pink rim and gold brocade (Figure 10). The cushions on the *lit de repos* are upholstered with the same fabric and the same rim as the *bergères* and the *lit de repos* itself. The cushions are further ornamented with gold tassels (Figure 11). The gold drapery covering the daybed becomes an important element of the room. Observed closely, two different types of fabrics are used to create the drapery. The fabric at the bottom is plain gold taffeta, while the fabric on top is of gold silk brocade. The two fabrics are attached to each other with a gold crescent, once again referring to the Ottoman style. When the room is looked at as a whole, the dominance of the gold is balanced with soft-colored fabrics chosen for the furniture. As it becomes evident from the size of the room, as well as the importance given to comfort with the chosen furniture, that the room became the perfect sanctuary for first Marie Antoinette and then Joséphine.

After the French Revolution, Napoleon's Egypt campaign and Battle of the Pyramids in 1798 changed the regard toward *turquerie* and the fascination around it. Since his childhood, Napoléon was fascinated with the Middle East, and he proposed the idea of conquering Egypt, an important Ottoman territory since 1517, to his foreign minister. He had built the *Armée d'Orient* to enter Syria to protect French trade in the Mediterranean, block the Red Sea, the route of the British going to India and East Indian Islands, and conduct scientific experiments. In the Battle

realises/le-boudoir-turc/. In 2012, *Le Boudoir Turc* was restored. The walls were cleaned and the furniture in the room was re-upholstered in line with their original states.

of the Pyramids, he was able to gain victory against the Mamluk-Ottoman army and was able to capture Cairo.⁶¹ At the Battle of Nile, however, the French army was defeated terribly by the British army, and Napoleon's dreams of conquering the Middle East came to an end. Although the French could not gain a prominent victory at the end of the Egyptian campaign, this was presented as a victory in France. After their easy victories, they were able to prove the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, and French interest in incorporating the elements of the Turkish style into theirs began to decline.

What remained, however, was a great interest in Ottoman harem scenes. The Ottoman harem was the place reserved solely for women. It was the living space of the Sultana, the concubines, and the eunuchs. Eunuchs living in the harem were responsible for the safety of the women. Other than the eunuchs, no men were allowed in the harem. The secrecy of the harem, just like the *boudoir*, made it even more intriguing. The harem was the enclosed space that protected women from the contamination of men. However, the women entering the harem were presented to the Sultan. The harem culture of the Orient fascinated the French all the more since they had nothing like this.

In Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (Persian Letters), he portrays the submissiveness of women in the harem. In Letter III, Zachi, one of Usbek's wives, writes the traveling Usbek a letter recalling their happiness and sexual desires: "I avow it, Usbek, a passion stronger even than ambition filled me with a desire to please you. Gradually I saw myself become your heart's mistress; you chose me, left me, returned your love to me, and I knew now to keep your love: my triumph was the despair of my rivals."⁶² As it becomes evident from the account of Montesquieu,

⁶¹ Williams, 18. *Yüzyıl*, 195-196.

⁶² "Je te l'avoue, Usbek: une passion encore plus vive que l'ambition me fit souhaiter de te plaire. Je me vis insensiblement devenir la maîtresse de ton cœur; tu me pris; tu me quittas; tu

the women at the harems were passive and their sole aim was to please their master. As the French could not know what was going on between the four walls of the harem, they sexualized it.⁶³ Later in the 19th century, painters such as Jean-Léon Gerôme and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres proved how the fascination with the Turkish style turned into a degradation of the Orient. After France had gained victories with the Napoleonic Wars, they did not even regard the states in the Middle East as separate entities but rather all of it as “the Orient.” As a result, the fascination with *turquerie* slowly vanished.

In sexualizing both the *boudoir* and the harem, the French tried to gain power by over-sexualizing and feminizing the “other.” *Turquerie* was highly associated with the reign of Louis XVI’s reign, especially with the Count and Marie Antoinette. The incorporation of such lavish style was clearly associated with the aristocracy and their values for conspicuous portrayal of wealth. A shift from portraying romantic scenes on decorative arts to portraying military victories had become the common characteristic of Napoleon’s reign. After the French Revolution, Napoleon wanted the whole of France to take pride in its military glory and power, naturally a product of his court, and get as far away as possible from the Ancien Régime and its values. In Napoleon’s mind, his style was masculine, with its emphasis on liberty and public order (his motto being *liberté, ordre public*), and he aimed to make France a powerful state with strong military powers. He abhorred the weakness of the Ancien Régime and the fabricated

revins à moi, et je sus te retenir: le triomphe fut pour moi, et le désespoir pour mes rivales.” [My translation] Montesquieu, *Lettres Persanes* [1721] (Paris: Pocket Classiques, 1998), 28.

⁶³ According to Madeleine Dobie, “The image of oriental woman evokes the classical figure of truth as a naked but veiled goddess: if the veil is removed, the truth should appear.” Madeleine Dobie, “Embodying Oriental Women: Representation and Voyeurism in Montesquieu, Montagu and Ingres,” *Cincinnati Romance Review* (September 2014): 59. By trying to unravel what is going on in the harem, the French thought that they would also be able to gain political superiority as well.

dream-like world the aristocracy had created. Napoleon wanted to stay away from their highly decorated culture and their fascination with the Turkish style. While glorifying France, and its victories, the Napoleonic era shifted to a preoccupation with the harem, a highly feminine space, to dissociate with the Turkish style. By over-sexualizing and feminizing the harem, Napoleon was not only casting out the “other” but was also fighting an inner power struggle against the Ancien Régime. Othering the Turkish culture was a way of Napoleon’s justification of his hegemony in France.

Figures for Chapter III



Figure 8. Marie Antoinette's *Boudoir Turc* at Le Château de Fontainebleu



Figure 9. Wall detail from Marie Antoinette's *Le Boudoir Turc*



Figure 30. Bergère from Marie Antoinette's *Le Boudoir Turc*



Figure 11. Fabric and decoration detail of the cushion



Figure 12. Drapery and wall detail from Marie Antoinette's *Le Boudoir Turc*



Figure 43. A lesbian pornographic depiction of Marie Antoinette and Duchess Pequigny

The subtext translates to, "With your kisses, excite my desires, I am, my darling, at the height of pleasure."

CONCLUSION

When I initially chose my topic, I was only concerned with connecting the French incorporation of Turkish style to its contemporary political environment. In my initial argument, I thought that by including Turkish style in French living spaces and making it “their own,” the French were coping with their inner fear of the Ottomans. Moreover, by opening the door of the interior spaces, especially that of the *boudoirs*, we could reveal a deeper ego of the French informed by a constant struggle for hegemony. At first, this argument seemed plausible, since after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Europeans were in constant fear of the Ottomans. The Ottoman military threat was undeniable at that time. While the Ottomans had military power, the French had taste, and according to them, they were the ones who could define what is “beautiful.” I assumed that interior spaces were the prime arenas in which they could reflect their superiority in aesthetics. The French were already creating their interior spaces with locally produced furniture and fabrics according to the King’s taste, as he was the prime taste maker in the Ancien Régime. I also assumed that as the geopolitical balance shifted toward the Ottoman Empire, the French reacted by appropriating Turkish motifs in an effort to further reestablish their aesthetic dominance. By using Turkish elements and mixing them with their own style, their deliberate syncretism in terms of interior design allow them to retain at least one avenue of dominance globally.

However, my focus on unraveling such a political agenda diverted my attention from the core change: the Turkish inspiration in French style. The French were fascinated by the lavish and rich aesthetic of the Ottomans, which was built around comfort, sensuality, and an extreme portrayal of wealth. By adapting the Turkish style into theirs, they too attempted to reach the *douceur de vivre* (sweetness of life). The Ancien Régime was already based on an ostentatious

display of wealth, perhaps best exemplified by the Palace of Versailles. The never-ending corridors, with heavenly frescoes on the ceilings, tall windows with imposing mirrors facing them, crystal chandeliers creating a revelry of light, and the dominance of gold, were already prominent features of the Palace. The addition of an even more flamboyant style was a dream come true. The peak of French *turquerie* was seen at the time of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette's reign, especially with the commission of Turkish rooms by Marie and the Count of Artois. Therefore, *turquerie* and all types of extreme luxuries were associated with the royal entourage.

This story ends with the Revolution. In the French public's eyes, even though they had not directly criticized the Turkish style, anything connected to excessive expenditures was viewed as corrupt. That is why, with the Revolution, the dimension of fascination changed. The style of the Ancien Régime was associated in later years with idleness and femininity. The new ruling class, together with Napoleon, favored a masculine style that would be focused on military successes. After the Revolution, Turkish style was only limited to paintings of over-sexualized harem scenes. In interior design and decorative arts, *turquerie* slowly vanished and became part of the "other."

Turquerie is an important step for understanding the relationship between the West and the East, and the paths leading to 19th century Orientalism. However, what should be remembered is that their relationship was never and will never be fixed. Whether it be tremendous fascination with Turkish style or a full disregard of it, it was a decision by the West of how and when the "other" was going to be represented. When it comes to telling a story, there are always three sides: your side, the other's side, and the actual truth. As the Turkish style in the

eyes of the French is only a representation, it will only rest as their own truth. *Turquerie*, as I hope to have shown, reflects the distortion that occurs when the “other” is monopolized.

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