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Title

Many Eyes, One City

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Foreign Travelogues and Guidebooks on Istanbul's Historic Peninsula and Pera/Beyoğlu,

1717–1914

Student Name

Batuhan CAN

Student Number

301089

Supervisor Name

Sergio PACE

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Istanbul was represented in foreign travel accounts between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on how travelers described the city through specific urban locations rather than through individual narrative journeys. By shifting the analytical focus from traveler-centered storytelling to place-based interpretation, the study reconstructs Istanbul as a layered urban text seen through repeated encounters with key sites such as Hagia Sophia, the Bosphorus, the bazaars, Pera/Beyoğlu, imperial palaces, and everyday streets. These locations functioned as narrative anchors through which travelers articulated ideas of empire, modernity, religion, gender, and cultural difference.

Drawing on a comparative reading of travelogues by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Elizabeth Craven, Julia Pardoe, Charles White, Edmondo de Amicis, Kang Youwei, Le Corbusier, and others, alongside canonical guidebooks such as Murray (1854, 1871) and Baedeker (1914), the thesis argues that Istanbul emerged in European and global imagination not as a static Oriental spectacle but as a dynamic urban environment negotiated through movement, observation, and translation. Travelers did not merely describe monuments; they constructed interpretive frameworks through which the city was classified, aestheticized, and politically evaluated. The contrast between the historic peninsula and the Europeanized district of Pera/Beyoğlu became especially central to narratives of cultural duality and modernization.

The study integrates travel writing with theoretical perspectives drawn from urban history, Orientalism, gender studies, and spatial theory. It situates foreign descriptions alongside Ottoman voices and archival materials in order to balance external gazes with internal perspectives. Special attention is given to how gender shaped access to spaces such as the harem and hammam, how guidebooks standardized the tourist gaze, and how late Ottoman reforms transformed the way Istanbul was mapped and experienced.

The thesis demonstrates that travel literature functioned as a powerful medium through which Istanbul was continuously reimagined. The city appears not simply as an object of observation but as a site of negotiation between East and West, tradition and reform, fantasy and lived reality. By organizing these narratives around urban locations, this research reveals how foreign travelers collectively produced a spatial archive of Istanbul that influenced Western perceptions of the Ottoman capital for more than two centuries.

Introduction

Istanbul has long occupied a singular place in the imagination of foreign observers. Situated at the intersection of Europe and Asia, it functioned not only as the political capital of the Ottoman Empire but also as a symbolic frontier between civilizations. For travelers arriving from Western Europe, Russia, and later from East Asia, the city represented both familiarity and estrangement: a metropolis layered with Byzantine remains, Islamic monuments, commercial vitality, and increasingly visible processes of urban modernization. This thesis examines foreign representations of Istanbul between 1717 and 1914, beginning with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's residence in Constantinople in 1717–1718 and extending to the publication of Baedeker's guidebook in 1914. Across these almost two centuries, Istanbul became one of the most intensely described cities in international travel literature. Foreign visitors did not merely record impressions; they actively constructed interpretive frameworks through which the city was understood, categorized, and circulated to distant audiences. Their texts collectively formed a substantial archive that shaped how Istanbul was imagined beyond its geographical boundaries.

The period between 1717 and 1914 provides a particularly productive framework for examining the changing relationship between urban space and foreign perception. It begins with a period in which accounts such as Montagu's emerged from diplomatic, aristocratic, and relatively individualized forms of travel and extends through the dramatic expansion of nineteenth-century mobility, steamship transportation, European diplomatic and commercial presence, Ottoman reform, and the development of organized tourism. By the early twentieth century, foreign visitors encountered not only a city transformed by political and urban change but also an Istanbul that had already been extensively represented through earlier travel narratives, engravings, photography, and guidebooks. The chronological boundaries of the study are therefore determined both by the primary corpus and by a transformation in the conditions under which Istanbul was encountered: from the relatively individualized travel narratives of the eighteenth century to the increasingly standardized tourist gaze represented by early twentieth-century guidebook culture.

Rather than organizing this corpus primarily around individual travelers, the thesis reorganizes travel narratives around locations. Istanbul is approached as a spatial text, and travelers are treated as multiple commentators encountering and interpreting recurring elements of the same urban environment. This approach responds to an important problem within travel writing itself: the city described by the traveler cannot automatically be equated with the historical city encountered. As Luca Orlandi has observed, "there is not always a true correspondence between the perceptions of the city represented by Western travelers and the 'real' city that was in front of their eyes; many details were omitted, exaggerated, or selectively emphasized according to the expectations, prejudices, and narrative demands of readers abroad" [1]. The discrepancy between place and representation is therefore not treated as an obstacle to the use of travel narratives, but as one of the principal subjects of investigation.

1 Luca Orlandi, Traveler's Descriptions of Vernacular Architecture in Istanbul, Turkey (15th–19th Century) (Istanbul: Istanbul Technical University, 2018), 21.

By centering analysis on urban locations repeatedly described across the period — Hagia Sophia, the Bosphorus, the bazaars, Pera/Beyoğlu, imperial spaces, and everyday streets — the thesis examines how particular places functioned as narrative nodes through which foreign observers interpreted Ottoman society, religion, gender relations, cultural difference, and modernization. Their recurrence makes comparison possible. Hagia Sophia, for example, remains a recognizable architectural point of reference while its meaning changes according to the religious, political, aesthetic, and historical position of the observer. Similarly, Pera can be interpreted as a European enclave, a space of cultural hybridity, a symbol of Westernization, or evidence of urban modernization. The relative continuity of place therefore provides a point against which transformations in perception can be measured.

Chronology operates within, rather than separately from, this spatial organization. The thesis does not treat 1717–1914 simply as a linear succession of travelers or historical events. Instead, travelers are arranged chronologically within recurring locations in order to identify what changes, what persists, and what meanings accumulate around particular urban spaces. The eighteenth century establishes several representational conventions that continue into later travel literature, while the nineteenth century introduces major transformations in transportation, political relations, urban reform, visual culture, and tourism. By the early twentieth century, visitors increasingly encounter a city already mediated by a substantial archive of representations. Chronological comparison therefore makes it possible to distinguish, as far as the sources allow, transformations in Istanbul itself from transformations in the frameworks through which foreign observers interpreted it.

The thesis has been constructed through a layered analytical process based on a corpus of travel narratives and guidebooks spanning different periods, languages, and cultural contexts, including British, French, Russian, Italian, German, and non-European perspectives. These sources were selected not because each traveler is assumed to be individually representative, but because their accounts repeatedly engage with locations central to the comparative structure of the study. The corpus consequently allows the same spaces to be examined through different historical and cultural positions. Travel narratives and guidebooks are particularly valuable for this purpose because they occupy an unstable position between documentation and interpretation: they record physical environments and social encounters while simultaneously organizing those observations through narrative, aesthetic judgment, cultural assumptions, and instructions for future visitors.

Ottoman sources — including material relating to urban reform, architecture, and internal representations of the city — are incorporated as counterpoints rather than as straightforward corrective truths. Their purpose is not to establish an uncomplicated opposition between an inaccurate foreign gaze and an authentic Ottoman perspective, but to expose differences between external interpretation and internal intention. This distinction becomes particularly important in discussions of nineteenth-century modernization. A foreign observer might interpret a widened street, reconstructed district, or European-style building as evidence of imitation or the disappearance of an “authentic” Istanbul, whereas Ottoman administrative discourse could frame the same transformation through sanitation, circulation, fire prevention, governance, or imperial prestige. Placing these perspectives alongside one another allows the city to emerge as an active historical environment rather than merely an object of foreign representation.

Travel writing therefore occupies a paradoxical position between documentation and imagination. Travelers frequently claimed the authority of eyewitness experience, yet what they saw was filtered through inherited expectations, literary conventions, visual representations, religious assumptions, and political contexts. The Ottoman capital was particularly susceptible to Orientalist representation, understood here in relation to Said's analysis of the Orient as a Western system of knowledge and representation[2]. At the same time, Istanbul complicates a simple East–West binary. It was not a distant or static "Orient," but a functioning imperial capital engaged in sustained diplomatic, economic, political, and cultural exchange with Europe. Travelers walked its streets, rented apartments, interacted with inhabitants, participated in social life, and in some cases remained for extended periods. Their accounts consequently oscillate between exoticization and familiarity, admiration and critique, attraction and anxiety.

These tensions attached themselves particularly strongly to specific urban spaces. Hagia Sophia was repeatedly interpreted through the relationship between Christian past and Islamic present, becoming a site onto which travelers projected narratives of conquest, loss, continuity, and architectural achievement. The Bosphorus generated a different vocabulary, frequently appearing as sublime panorama, imperial geography, social landscape, and eventually prescribed tourist excursion. The bazaars compressed commercial exchange, sensory experience, and social density into a space that could be celebrated as material abundance or represented through stereotypes of Oriental commerce. Pera/Beyoğlu emerged as a particularly unstable territory in which embassies, theaters, cafés, hotels, and European-style architecture complicated the distinction between East and West. Through these locations, cultural difference was mapped onto physical geography.

Gender further structured access to the city and therefore affected what could enter the travel archive. Female travelers such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Julia Pardoe entered domestic interiors, hammams, and female social environments unavailable or less accessible to many male observers. Montagu famously characterized the Turkish bath as "the women's coffee-house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented, etc."[3]. Such observations complicate a travel archive otherwise dominated by public monuments and exterior spectacle. Gender therefore matters not simply because women and men necessarily "saw differently," but because different forms of access could produce different bodies of spatial and social knowledge.

The nineteenth century introduced an additional transformation through the increasing authority of the guidebook. Publications such as Murray's Handbook for Travellers (1854, 1871) and, eventually, Baedeker's Konstantinopel (1914) did more than provide practical information. By prescribing routes, identifying essential monuments, recommending districts for accommodation, and establishing hierarchies of significance, guidebooks increasingly standardized the foreign visitor's experience of Istanbul. The relationship between representation and experience consequently became circular: earlier travelers helped establish which locations defined Istanbul, while guidebooks transformed these accumulated conventions into instructions for subsequent visitors. The development from Montagu's eighteenth-century letters to Baedeker's 1914 guidebook therefore marks not simply a chronological progression but a significant transformation in the production of travel knowledge — from individual narrative authority toward an increasingly institutionalized tourist gaze.

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2 Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

3 Mary Wortley Montagu, Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W—y M——e: Written, during Her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c. in Different Parts of Europe, vol. 3 (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1763), 59.

Methodological Reflection

The location-based and chronological structure of this thesis has proven essential in revealing patterns that would remain invisible in a purely author-centered approach. By reorganizing the archive spatially, the study has been able to trace how specific sites accumulate meaning across time, functioning as stable anchors within a constantly shifting narrative landscape.

Chronology, in turn, has allowed these spatial patterns to be read dynamically rather than statically. The same locations are not described in the same way across periods; instead, their meanings evolve in response to political change, technological development, and shifting cultural frameworks. The combination of spatial and temporal analysis thus provides a more nuanced understanding of how urban representation operates.

At the same time, this methodology also reveals its own limitations. By focusing on recurring locations, it necessarily privileges spaces that were visible and accessible to foreign observers, potentially leaving aside areas of the city that remained outside their experience. This limitation, however, also reinforces one of the central arguments of the thesis: that what is repeatedly described is not necessarily what is most representative, but what is most legible within a given cultural framework.

Scope and Hypothesis of the Study

The scope of this thesis is deliberately defined both temporally and spatially. Temporally, the study covers the period 1717–1914. The starting point corresponds to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's residence in Constantinople in 1717–1718, which provides the earliest major travel account examined systematically in the study. The endpoint is Baedeker's 1914 guidebook, while Le Corbusier's 1911 journey represents one of the latest individual travel narratives examined in detail. These dates are determined by the primary corpus rather than by an attempt to provide a comprehensive history of all foreign travel to Istanbul. Nevertheless, they encompass a historically significant transformation from eighteenth-century diplomatic and elite travel through nineteenth-century expansion in mobility and travel publishing to the increasingly organized tourist culture of the early twentieth century.

Spatially, the thesis concentrates on recurring locations rather than attempting a comprehensive topographical history of Istanbul. This selectivity is methodological. The historical peninsula, Hagia Sophia, Pera/Beyoğlu, the bazaars, the Bosphorus, and other repeatedly described spaces provide relatively continuous points of comparison across a period in which both the city and the conditions of foreign observation changed substantially. The objective is therefore not to reconstruct every district of Istanbul between 1717 and 1914, but to examine how particular locations accumulated, preserved, and transformed meanings within foreign travel literature.

The central hypothesis of the thesis is that representations of Istanbul were produced through the interaction between spatial continuity and historically changing frameworks of perception. Recurring locations provided foreign observers with recognizable points of reference, but the meanings attached to them were neither fixed nor universal. They changed according to political conditions, cultural background, religious memory, gendered access, aesthetic conventions, technological developments, and inherited traditions of representation. At the same time, earlier descriptions created expectations that influenced later encounters. Istanbul can therefore be understood as both a changing physical city and a cumulative representational archive in which successive travelers inherited, repeated, challenged, and reformulated existing ways of seeing.

Research Questions and Argument

Within the chronological boundaries of 1717–1914, this thesis examines how foreign representations of Istanbul developed through the interaction between urban space, historical transformation, and changing expectations of the traveler. Rather than treating travel guides and narratives simply as descriptive records, it approaches them as active forms of spatial and cultural interpretation. The ways in which travelers described the historical peninsula (Stamboul), Pera/Beyoğlu, Hagia Sophia, the bazaars, the Bosphorus, and other recurring locations were shaped not only by what they encountered but also by political circumstances, cultural assumptions, aesthetic conventions, gendered forms of access, and inherited expectations concerning the Ottoman Empire. These representations were therefore neither stable nor neutral: the same location could signify religious and imperial difference, picturesque exoticism, cosmopolitanism, modernization, decline, or cultural hybridity depending upon the historical moment and position of the observer.

The thesis argues that these changing representations both reflected and actively contributed to international perceptions of Istanbul. Orientalism, exoticism, and cultural othering provided powerful frameworks through which the city was interpreted, but they did not produce a single or unchanging image. Direct encounter frequently complicated inherited expectations, while modernization made the conception of Istanbul as a timeless "Eastern" city increasingly difficult to sustain. Some travelers responded by emphasizing familiarity and urban transformation, whereas others relocated authenticity into older neighborhoods, monuments, and social practices that appeared to be disappearing. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, guidebooks further transformed the relationship between expectation and experience by selecting particular monuments and districts, prescribing itineraries, and establishing hierarchies of what visitors were expected to see. They therefore functioned not merely as tools of spatial orientation but as instruments of experiential framing, directing foreign visitors toward particular versions of Istanbul while marginalizing others.

A comparative, location-based reading makes these transformations particularly visible because it allows the same urban spaces to be followed across different periods and observers rather than treating each traveler as an isolated narrative. The continuity of place provides a point against which changes in perception can be measured: Hagia Sophia remains physically present while its religious and historical meanings shift; Pera becomes a recurring site through which travelers negotiate Europeanization and cultural hybridity; the bazaars alternate between representations of commercial vitality, exotic spectacle, and supposed timelessness; and the Bosphorus is repeatedly reinterpreted as landscape, imperial geography, tourist panorama, and spatial composition. Reading these accounts alongside Ottoman counter-sources further distinguishes foreign perception from the internal intentions behind processes such as urban reform and modernization. Through this comparison, the thesis investigates not only how foreigners represented Istanbul between 1717 and 1914, but how the changing relationship between place, observer, and historical context produced different versions of the city over time.

State of the Art

The study of foreign travel writing on Istanbul belongs to a broad scholarly field situated at the intersection of urban history, architectural history, literary studies, cultural studies, and studies of Orientalism. Travel accounts have long been used as sources for reconstructing Ottoman cities, but scholarship has progressively moved beyond treating them as straightforward repositories of factual information. Earlier approaches demonstrated their documentary value for the reconstruction of urban environments, architecture, social practices, and everyday life, while subsequent studies increasingly emphasized that travelers did not simply record the places they encountered: they interpreted them through culturally and historically specific frameworks. The scholarship relevant to Istanbul has consequently developed along several interconnected lines, ranging from the use of travel narratives as evidence for urban and architectural history to analyses of Orientalism and representation, gendered travel, individual travelers and national traditions, and, more recently, the relationship between visual perception and the changing city. The present thesis emerges from the intersection of these approaches but argues that their insights can be brought together more systematically by making recurring urban locations, rather than individual travelers, the principal units of comparison.

One important strand of scholarship has established the value of travel narratives for studying the physical and historical development of Ottoman cities. Madran's Seyahatnamelerde Anadolu Kenti, for example, approaches travel literature as a source through which the characteristics of Anatolian urban environments can be reconstructed, demonstrating the relevance of travelers' descriptions for architectural and urban history.[1] More geographically specific studies have subsequently applied similar approaches to particular cities and periods. Yılmaz and Yetgin's examination of Eskişehir through travelers accounts from the final decades of the Ottoman Empire demonstrates how such narratives can be used comparatively to recover urban and social conditions that may be fragmented across other historical sources.[2] Within scholarship specifically concerned with Istanbul, architectural studies have similarly drawn attention to the value of foreign observation. Orlandi's Traveler's Descriptions of Vernacular Architecture in Istanbul, Turkey (15th–19th Century) focuses particularly on descriptions of the city's vernacular built environment[3], while Morkoç's City and Itself in Three Accounts of Istanbul: Lorich's Panorama (1559), Le Corbusier's Travelogue (1911) and Pamuk's Memoir (2005) compares representations produced in different historical periods and media.[4] Together, such studies established an important methodological premise for the present thesis: descriptions produced by outsiders can preserve evidence not only of monumental architecture but also of changing streets, neighborhoods, domestic architecture, and spatial experience. At the same time, their work raises the question of how the same urban environment acquires different meanings when viewed from different historical positions.

1 Emre Madran, "Seyahatnamelerde Anadolu Kenti," in IX. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Ankara, 21–25 Eylül 1981: Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler, vol. 3, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989

2 Yılmaz, A., and D. Yetgin. "Seyyahların Anlatımı ile Osmanlı'nın Son 30 Yılındaki Eskişehir (1892–1922)." Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi 13, no. 2 (2018): 159–182.

3 Orlandi, Traveler's Descriptions of Vernacular Architecture.

4 Morkoç, S. City and Itself in Three Accounts of Istanbul: Lorich's Panorama (1559), Le Corbusier's Travelogue (1911) and Pamuk's Memoir (2005). Istanbul: Middle East Technical University, 2007

A second and highly influential body of scholarship has shifted attention from what travelers saw to the cultural frameworks through which they saw it. Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) fundamentally transformed the interpretation of Western representations of the Middle East by arguing that the "Orient" was not simply a geographical reality described by European observers but a category produced through systems of knowledge, cultural authority, and power.[5] Travel writing consequently came to be understood not as transparent testimony but as one of the genres through which cultural difference was constructed. Within architectural history, Sibel Bozdoğan's "Journey to the East: Ways of Looking at the Orient and the Question of Representation" (1988) brought this problem directly into discussions of architectural observation and the visual interpretation of the East.[6] Her emphasis on "ways of looking" is particularly relevant to Istanbul, where architecture and urban form were repeatedly filtered through pre-existing aesthetic and cultural expectations. Mary Louise Pratt later broadened the theoretical understanding of travel writing through Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, conceptualizing travel encounters as "contact zones" in which cultures meet under unequal historical conditions.[7] These approaches collectively transformed the scholarly status of the travel account: the traveler became not simply a witness but an active producer of meaning, and the description of a city became inseparable from the cultural position of the observer. The present study adopts this critical understanding of travel writing while examining how such culturally conditioned forms of looking attached themselves to particular locations within Istanbul.

Scholarship concerned specifically with British representations of the Ottoman Empire has further demonstrated that these images were historically variable rather than manifestations of a single, unchanging Orientalist discourse. Filiz Turhan's The Other Empire: British Romantic Writings about the Ottoman Empire (2004) situates British representations of the Ottomans within the political and literary context of Romanticism, showing the importance of historical circumstances in shaping perceptions of the empire.[8] G. Şahin's İngiliz Seyahatnamelerinde Osmanlı Toplumu ve Türk İmajı (2007) similarly examines the construction of Ottoman society and the Turkish image within British travel narratives.[9] Such studies are important because they move the discussion from Orientalism as a general theoretical category toward the historically specific production of images of Ottoman society. They demonstrate that representations depended upon nationality, political relations, literary conventions, and the historical moment in which the traveler wrote. This insight is central to the present thesis, but it also creates the need for another level of comparison: if representations vary between observers and periods, the repeated descriptions of the same places provide a particularly productive means of tracing that variation.

A further major development in the scholarship has been the reassessment of women's travel writing. Rather than treating female travelers as supplementary figures within a predominantly male tradition, scholars have demonstrated that gender fundamentally affected access, narrative authority, and the spaces available for observation. Sara Mills's Discourses of Difference (1991) established an influential framework for examining the relationship between women's travel writing, colonial discourse, and the gendered position of the narrator.[10] Billie Melman's Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918 (1992) developed this question specifically in relation to British

5 Said, Orientalism.

6 Sibel Bozdoğan, "Journey to the East: Ways of Looking at the Orient and the Question of Representation," Journal of Architectural Education 41, no. 4, 1988.

7 Pratt, Mary Louise. Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2008.

8 Turhan, Filiz. The Other Empire: British Romantic Writings about the Ottoman Empire. New York: Routledge, 2004.

9 Şahin, G. İngiliz Seyahatnamelerinde Osmanlı Toplumu ve Türk İmajı. Istanbul: Gökkubbe, 2007.

10 Mills, Sara. Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism. London: Routledge, 1991.

women traveling in the Middle East, [11]while Reina Lewis's Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem (2004) complicated the assumption that female travelers simply escaped Orientalist representation.[12] Lewis instead demonstrated that women could challenge established stereotypes through direct access to female and domestic spaces while simultaneously remaining participants in broader Western structures of representation.

Studies of individual female travelers have made these theoretical arguments more historically specific. Demir's study of Ottoman women in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters examines how Montagu's access to female environments produced representations unavailable to male observers,[13] while Kader Konuk's work on Montagu and "ethnomasquerade" complicates the relationship between cultural identification, performance, and observation.[14] Düğer's study of Ottoman women in the imagination of Western female travelers broadens this discussion across multiple observers.[15] Scholarship on Lady Elizabeth Craven provides another example: Karabulut analyzes Craven's observations within the context of her 1786 journey,[16] while Palma interprets her movement from London to Constantinople through questions of travel and emancipation.[17] These studies demonstrate that gender changes not simply the tone of the narrative but its spatial field: hammams, harems, domestic interiors, clothing, hospitality, and women's sociability become visible within an archive otherwise dominated by monuments and public space. The present thesis builds upon this scholarship by treating gendered access as part of a larger spatial problem. Rather than isolating women travelers as a separate biographical category, it asks what happens when their descriptions of particular spaces are read alongside those of male travelers who could not enter, or experienced differently, those same environments.

Scholarship has also expanded beyond the dominant Western European archive, an important development for questioning whether all foreign perceptions of Istanbul can adequately be explained through a single East–West model. Research on Russian travelers provides material for examining Istanbul through Orthodox religious memory, Russo-Ottoman political rivalry, and nineteenth-century geopolitical concerns. The corpus used in this thesis includes the accounts of Vsevolozhskii, Vladimir Davidov, Zakharov, and Aleksandr Milyukov, whose journeys [18] offer perspectives that overlap with but do not simply reproduce those of British, French, or Italian travelers. The Chinese reformer Kang Youwei introduces an even more substantial displacement of the conventional Western gaze.[19] Selda Altan's study of Chinese perceptions of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century situates such observations within Chinese debates about nationalism and reform,[20] while

11 Melman, Billie. Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

12 Lewis, Reina. Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004.

13 Demir, A. "Lady Montagu'nun Mektuplarında Osmanlı Kadını." Kadın/Woman 2000 4, no. 2 (2003): 129–43.

14 Konuk, Kader. "Osmanlı ve Avrupa Arasındaki Karşılıklı Etkileşimde Etnomaskeleme: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu'nun Rolünü Yeniden Canlandırmak." Cogito, no. 55, 2008.

15 Düğer, Selma. "Batılı Kadın Seyyahlar İmgeleminde Osmanlı Kadını." Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi 29 (2015): 71–90.

16 Karabulut, A. "İngiliz Seyyah Lady Elizabeth Craven'in Gözünden 1786 Tarihinde Kırım." Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi 4, no. 2 (2017): 431–48.

17 Palma, H. "Elizabeth Craven: From London to Constantinople, from Escape to Emancipation." Imaginaires (2017)

18 Ünal, Fatih, Mesut Karakulak, and Murat Özkan. İstanbul Seyahatnamesi: 19. Yüzyılda Rus Seyyahlarla Osmanlı Topraklarına Yolculuk. Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2022.

19 Fidan, Giray. "The Turk Travelogue: Kang Youwei's Journey to the Ottoman Empire." Bilig (2016): 227–43.

20 Altan, Selda. "Osmanlı'ya Doğudan Bakmak: 20. Yüzyıl Dönümünde Çin'de Osmanlı Algısı ve Milliyetçilik." In Türkiye'de Çin'i Düşünmek, edited by Selçuk Esenbel, İsenbike Togan, and Altay Atlı, 90–115. Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013.

Fidan's analysis of Kang Youwei's Ottoman journey makes this alternative travel perspective available for comparative study. These studies are significant because they demonstrate that the "foreign gaze" cannot automatically be equated with a homogeneous Western gaze. Russian and Chinese observers approached Istanbul with their own religious, political, and comparative frameworks, making nationality and geopolitical position important variables alongside gender and chronology.

Another body of work has examined the relationship between travel, visuality, architecture, and the construction of Istanbul as image. Bozdoğan's analysis of ways of looking at the Orient and Morkoç's comparison between Lorich, Le Corbusier, and Pamuk both demonstrate that representations of Istanbul emerge through visual as well as textual conventions. Orlandi's concentration on vernacular architecture similarly moves beyond the exclusive study of monumental sites and draws attention to the built environment encountered by travelers. Le Corbusier has been especially productive for this scholarship because his Voyage d'Orient stands at the intersection of travel narrative, drawing, architectural observation, and modernist thought. These studies make clear that the representation of Istanbul cannot be understood exclusively through literary content: the position of the observer, the distinction between panorama and street-level experience, and the selection of monumental or vernacular architecture all determine the city that becomes visible in the resulting account.

Taken together, the existing scholarship has therefore established several points that form the intellectual foundation of this thesis. Travel narratives can provide valuable evidence for urban and architectural history, but they cannot be treated as neutral documentation; representations of Ottoman space are shaped by Orientalist and other culturally specific frameworks; nationality and political context influence how the Ottoman Empire is interpreted; gender determines access to different dimensions of urban and domestic life; and visual and architectural conventions affect which parts of Istanbul become meaningful to foreign observers. The field has consequently moved from treating travel accounts primarily as descriptive sources toward understanding them as situated forms of cultural production. The bibliography used in this study reflects this development, bringing together urban and architectural scholarship, studies of representation, gender and travel writing, and research on individual observers.

What remains less systematically developed across these different strands of scholarship is a sustained comparison in which the urban location itself remains the organizing constant while travelers, historical periods, national perspectives, and interpretive frameworks change around it. Studies centered on individual authors illuminate the intellectual and biographical conditions of particular journeys; gender studies reveal forms of access unavailable to other observers; architectural studies recover particular dimensions of the built environment; and Orientalist criticism explains the ideological structures through which cultural difference was produced. Yet these approaches can leave the scholarship divided according to traveler, nationality, gender, theoretical category, or individual period. The recurring physical sites of Istanbul offer a means of bringing these approaches into direct conversation. Hagia Sophia, the bazaars, Pera/Beyoğlu, and the Bosphorus appear across accounts written decades or even centuries apart. Because the location remains relatively continuous while the observer and historical context change, these sites provide a comparative framework for distinguishing changes in the city from changes in perception.

The contribution of the present thesis lies in constructing this comparative spatial and chronological synthesis. It does not claim that Hagia Sophia, Pera, the bazaars, or the Bosphorus have been neglected by previous scholarship; on the contrary, their repeated appearance in both primary and secondary literature demonstrates their importance. Nor does it claim that Orientalism, gender, modernization, or national difference have not previously been studied. Instead, the thesis brings these established scholarly discussions together by reorganizing the archive around recurring locations and then arranging the travelers within each location chronologically. In this structure, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Craven[21], Julia Pardoe[22], Charles White, Russian travelers such as Davidov and Milyukov, Edmondo de Amicis[23], Mark Twain[24], Pierre Loti[25], Kang Youwei, Le Corbusier, Murray, and Baedeker are not treated as isolated narrative worlds. Their descriptions become comparative evidence through which the changing meaning of the same city can be traced from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century. The location-based structure therefore makes chronology analytical rather than merely sequential: it asks not only what a traveler said about Istanbul, but what had changed—or remained remarkably persistent—by the time another observer described the same place decades later.

The thesis further develops this approach by placing foreign perception, where possible, against Ottoman perspectives on urban transformation. This is particularly important in discussions of modernization. A European traveler might interpret a new boulevard as the destruction of picturesque authenticity or as evidence of Westernization, while Ottoman administrative discourse could understand street widening, sanitation, transportation, and reconstruction through the practical requirements of governance and imperial modernization. The purpose of these counter-sources is therefore not to establish a simple opposition between a false foreign account and a true Ottoman one, but to reveal the difference between external representation and internal intention. In this way, the study builds upon the scholarship that has already demonstrated the constructed nature of travel writing while returning attention to the historical city against which those constructions were produced.

The location-based matrix below visualizes the comparative structure of the thesis. Rather than organizing the primary material around individual travelers, it maps recurring urban locations against the chronological range of the selected accounts. This makes it possible to identify both continuity and change: while locations provide relatively stable points of reference, the travelers, historical contexts, and interpretive frameworks surrounding them change over time. The matrix also demonstrates the unevenness of the archive, since not every traveler describes the same places or with the same degree of attention. It should therefore be read not as an attempt to impose uniformity on the sources, but as a methodological tool for identifying points of intersection through which different perceptions of Istanbul can be compared across the period 1717–1914.

21 Craven, Elizabeth L. A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople. London: H. Chamberlaine, 1789.

22 Pardoe, Julia. The City of the Sultan; and Domestic Manners of the Turks, in 1836. London: Henry Colburn, 1837.

23 De Amicis, Edmondo. Constantinople. Translated by Caroline Tilton. New York: G. P. Punam's Sons, 1878.

24 Twain, Mark. The Innocents Abroad; or, The New Pilgrims' Progress. Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1869.

25 Loti, Pierre. Constantinople en 1890. Translated by David Ball. Istanbul: Ünlem, 2002.

Location Matrix

- = abscent
+ = substential description
○ = brief mention

Traveler	Hagia Sophia	Pera/Beyoğlu	Bazaars	Bosphorus	Domestic Interiors	Hammam	Palaces	Streets/ Vernacular	Military/ Fortifications
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu	+	○	○	+	+	+	○	○	-
Lady Elizabeth Craven	+	○	○	+	-	-	+	○	-
Julia Pardoe	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	+	-
Charles White	+	+	+	+	+	○	+	+	○
Vladimir Davidov	+	+	+	+	○	-	+	+	+
Vsevolozhsky	+	○	○	○	-	-	○	○	+
Murray Guidebook	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	○	○
Edmondo de Amicis	+	+	+	+	○	-	○	+	-
Pierre Loti	+	○	-	+	-	-	-	+	-
Kang Youwei	+	+	○	+	○	○	+	+	+
Baedeker Guide	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	○	○
Le Corbusier	+	+	○	+	-	-	○	+	-

Prologue

For foreign travelers approaching Istanbul between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, the city frequently existed first as a vision before it became a territory to be entered and navigated. Before Hagia Sophia could be entered, before the bazaars could be crossed, before Pera could be experienced as a social and urban environment, Istanbul appeared from the water as a distant composition of domes, minarets, palaces, hills, and shoreline. Arrival by sea therefore offers an appropriate point of departure for this study. Across nearly two centuries, travelers repeatedly confronted a recognizably similar panorama, yet they did not necessarily see the same city. What emerged before them was filtered through different historical moments, religious and political assumptions, aesthetic conventions, cultural backgrounds, and increasingly through representations of Istanbul encountered before the journey itself. The relative continuity of the physical panorama makes these changes in perception particularly visible: while the skyline remains a recurring point of reference, the meanings attached to it shift considerably over time.

The maritime approach is consequently more than a recurring literary scene. In condensed form, it introduces one of the central problems explored throughout this thesis: the relationship between place, observer, and historical context. Istanbul was not simply recorded by foreign travelers as an external reality. It was interpreted, compared, aestheticized, judged, and eventually organized for consumption through travel literature and guidebooks. The same domes and minarets could appear as elements of sublime beauty to one observer, signs of religious displacement to another, obligatory components of a tourist panorama to a guidebook writer, or evidence of the exceptional geographical position of a global capital to a later traveler. Arrival therefore provides an unusually clear example of how spatial continuity can coexist with representational change. It also anticipates the location-based method of the chapters that follow: rather than treating each traveler as an isolated narrative, the study returns to recurring places and asks what changes when different observers encounter them at different historical moments.

One of the earliest perspectives considered here is that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu[1], whose experience of Constantinople in the early eighteenth century was subsequently published in her letters. Montagu lingers on color, light, and atmosphere rather than turning the first sight of the city immediately into a judgment about civilization or political power. She describes Constantinople simply as one of the most extraordinary visual experiences available to the traveler: "The prospect of Constantinople… is one of the most beautiful sights in the world" [2]. The significance of Montagu's statement lies partly in its relative absence of polemic. Beauty is not yet dependent upon an elaborate opposition between Ottoman and European urban order. The city is encountered primarily as landscape. Her language creates a vocabulary of sensory pleasure and intimacy in which the skyline functions as an object of delight rather than as a battlefield of political or religious symbols. This does not mean that cultural difference disappears from her wider account, but at the moment of arrival visual experience precedes ideological interpretation.

1 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) was an English aristocrat, writer, and poet who lived in Constantinople in 1717–1718 while accompanying her husband, Edward Wortley Montagu, British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Her Turkish Embassy Letters, published posthumously in 1763, are particularly significant for their observations of Ottoman social and female domestic life, including spaces such as the hammam that were largely inaccessible to male European travelers.

2 Montagu, Letters, 111.

Several decades later, Lady Elizabeth Craven[3] preserves this sense of astonishment while developing it into a more explicitly pictorial description. As her ship entered the Bosphorus, she writes: "The varied view, which the borders of this famed Strait compose — rocks, verdure, ancient castles… modern kiosks, minarets… a graceful confusion and variety make this living picture the most poignant scene I have ever beheld" [4]. Craven's account demonstrates both continuity and development in the language of arrival. Like Montagu, she experiences Istanbul through visual pleasure. Yet her description is more carefully organized around the vocabulary of representation. The landscape becomes a "living picture," and geography is transformed into composition. Rocks, vegetation, architecture, and minarets are perceived simultaneously, producing what she calls a "graceful confusion." This phrase is particularly revealing of the late eighteenth-century encounter. The city appears overwhelming yet harmonious, excessive yet ordered. What might have contradicted European expectations of urban coherence is aestheticized rather than condemned. Craven does not attempt to resolve the apparent disorder; she converts it into picturesque variety. The observer remains outside the city, positioned before it as a spectator of monumental theatre. This panoramic mode of perception was not confined to travel writing but was equally reinforced through visual representations of Constantinople. Melling's early nineteenth-century view similarly constructs the city through the relationship between water, monumental architecture, and distant observation (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Antoine-Ignace Melling, Vue de Constantinople (Prise de la tour de Léandre), 1819.[5]

3 Lady Elizabeth Craven (1750–1828) was an English aristocrat, playwright, and travel writer who traveled extensively through Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman territories during the 1780s. Her observations of Constantinople formed part of A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople (1789), written as a series of letters describing a journey undertaken in 1786.

4 Craven, A Journey through the Crimea, 198.

5 Antoine-Ignace Melling, Vue de Constantinople (Prise de la tour de Léandre), 1819, engraving, Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

The continuity between Montagu and Craven is therefore the persistence of visual admiration, but the form of that admiration already begins to change. Montagu emphasizes sensory pleasure; Craven increasingly transforms the city into an image. By the nineteenth century, this distinction becomes more pronounced as the already familiar panorama acquires stronger ideological meanings. Vladimir Davidov, approaching Istanbul from the Marmara coast, records the density of the harbor and the dominance of Islamic architecture, Davidov describes the Golden Horn as crowded with ships belonging to different nations, while the monumental mosques, domes, and minarets rise above the city and define its panorama.[6] The visual elements themselves have not fundamentally changed from those emphasized by earlier travelers: water, movement, skyline, and monumental architecture. Yet their interpretation has. For Davidov, the dominance of the mosques is not merely picturesque. It carries historical and religious significance. His admiration is nevertheless complicated by ideological hostility. Davidov contrasts Hagia Sophia's Christian past with its contemporary use as a mosque, describing Muslim worship in explicitly derogatory religious terms and presenting the building's transformation as a form of Christian displacement.[7] Here the maritime panorama becomes theological confrontation. Architecture is read as religious displacement, and the skyline activates historical memory. The same minarets that contribute to Craven's "living picture" become, for Davidov, signs of cultural and religious succession. The panoramic gaze became increasingly systematized in nineteenth-century visual culture. Barker's extensive panorama, constructed from a sequence of connected views, transforms Constantinople into a continuous visual field that can seemingly be comprehended from a single elevated position (fig. 2,3).





Fig. 2. Henry Aston Barker, Panorama of Constantinople, 1, 1813.[8]

Fig. 3. Henry Aston Barker, Panorama of Constantinople, 2, 1813.[9]

6 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.
7 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.
8 Henry Aston Barker, Panorama of Constantinople, 1813, aquatint and etching, British Museum, London.
9 Henry Aston Barker, Panorama of Constantinople, 1813, aquatint and etching, British Museum, London.

This marks an important discontinuity in foreign perception. The aesthetic vocabulary established in the eighteenth century does not disappear, but it becomes increasingly entangled with political and confessional judgment. Davidov can admire the visual power of Istanbul while simultaneously rejecting what he believes the skyline represents. Awe and hostility are therefore not mutually exclusive; they coexist within the same encounter. The comparison also demonstrates why chronology matters to a spatial reading of travel literature. The physical elements remain sufficiently recognizable to permit comparison, while the changing historical position of the observer alters their meaning. The skyline itself does not explain Davidov's theological response any more than it explains Craven's picturesque admiration. Meaning emerges through the encounter between location and observer.

During the nineteenth century, another transformation begins to affect this encounter: travelers increasingly approach Istanbul through representations that precede direct experience. Earlier travel accounts, engravings, illustrations, and eventually guidebooks circulated recognizable images of the city before the traveler arrived. The maritime panorama could therefore function not only as discovery but as confirmation. Visitors increasingly encountered a city they had, in some sense, already seen. Murray's[10] handbook of 1854 makes this mediation particularly visible by instructing visitors about how Istanbul should be approached and observed. The traveler is encouraged to approach the city at dawn, when the effects of light intensify the theatricality of the skyline [11]. Awe, which appears spontaneous in the earlier letters of Montagu and Craven, becomes increasingly choreographed. The object of observation remains broadly the same — the city emerging from the water — but the relationship between observer and city has changed. Earlier travelers narrate astonishment as personal discovery; the guidebook anticipates astonishment and teaches the traveler how to produce it. The visitor learns not only what is worth seeing but when and under which conditions it should be seen.

The arrival panorama consequently becomes part of an emerging tourist ritual. Repetition creates authority: because earlier travelers had already established the skyline as the privileged first image of Istanbul, later guidebooks could formalize that convention for subsequent visitors. Aleksandr Milyukov's mid-nineteenth-century account demonstrates, however, that institutionalization does not eliminate the emotional force of the panorama. Comparing Istanbul with major European cities such as London and Venice, Milyukov argues that neither produces the same visual impression. He is particularly struck by the relationship between architecture and water, describing the waterfront palaces as appearing almost to float on the sea.[12] Milyukov returns to the visual enchantment found in Montagu and Craven, but his framework of comparison has changed. Istanbul is no longer simply beautiful in itself. London and Venice provide metropolitan standards against which it can be measured, yet Istanbul exceeds them. The metaphor of "floating" architecture dissolves the solidity of buildings and transforms the city into a dreamscape suspended between water and sky. Despite changing political contexts and increasingly standardized modes of travel, the maritime view continues to resist complete rationalization. Istanbul remains capable of producing an impression of impossibility.

10 John Murray III (1808–1892) was a British publisher associated with the expansion of the influential Handbooks for Travellers series founded by his father, John Murray II. The editions of Murray's handbook used in this thesis, particularly those of 1854 and 1871, are treated not as individual travel narratives but as examples of the increasing standardization of tourist knowledge, prescribing routes, monuments, and ways of navigating Constantinople.

11 John Murray, A Handbook for Travellers in Turkey: Describing Constantinople, European Turkey, Asia Minor, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, 3rd ed., London: John Murray, 1854

12 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

Yet Milyukov[13] also records the instability of this first impression. The harmony Milyukov perceives from the sea does not survive intact once he enters the city. At street level, he becomes increasingly attentive to Istanbul's visual and urban contradictions, particularly the juxtaposition of monumental mosques with ruined or deteriorating structures[14]. The opposition between panorama and immersion is crucial. From the water, distance produces coherence: domes, minarets, palaces, vegetation, and shoreline merge into a unified composition. At street level, that unity fragments into irregularity, proximity, deterioration, noise, and contradiction. The difference is therefore not simply between beauty and ugliness but between two modes of seeing. Panoramic distance allows Istanbul to become an image; immersion forces the traveler to confront it as an environment. The skyline promises unity, while entry reveals complexity. This distinction anticipates a pattern that will recur throughout the thesis, as the apparently coherent city repeatedly becomes more difficult to classify when experienced through its individual monuments, neighborhoods, markets, landscapes, and social spaces.

Visual reproduction reinforced this division between the imagined and material city. Engravings circulating in European publications repeatedly presented Istanbul through its recognizable silhouette of water, domes, minarets, and hills, helping to standardize the visual identity of the Ottoman capital (fig. 4.) Travelers could therefore arrive already familiar with the image they expected to encounter. Arrival increasingly became an act of comparison between the represented city and the material city. This process did not eliminate surprise; rather, it transformed its conditions. Astonishment could result from seeing an anticipated image apparently become real, while discrepancies between expectation and experience became correspondingly more significant. Istanbul was increasingly judged against its own representation.



Fig. 4. Abdullah Frères, Vue de Stamboul prise de la Tour de Galata, ca. 1890.[15]

13 Aleksandr Petrovich Milyukov (1816–1897) was a Russian writer, literary critic, and traveler whose nineteenth-century journey included Constantinople. His account is particularly significant for the contrast between his admiration for Istanbul when viewed panoramically — especially its maritime setting, skyline, and palaces — and his more critical response to the city at street level. This tension between distant aesthetic admiration and close urban observation makes Milyukov an important comparative voice within the Russian travel-writing corpus examined in this thesis.

14 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

15 Abdullah Frères, Vue de Stamboul prise de la Tour de Galata, ca. 1890, albumen print, Abdul Hamid II Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the discourse of comparison had expanded beyond a straightforward European framework. Kang Youwei[16] introduces a significantly different geographical and political perspective. Rather than measuring Istanbul only against familiar European models, he places it within a global hierarchy of capitals: "Even Rome cannot be compared… Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin cannot compete… there is no place as beautiful and unique as Istanbul" [17]. Kang's admiration creates a striking continuity with accounts written more than a century earlier. The maritime panorama still produces astonishment, and Istanbul continues to derive much of its visual authority from the encounter between architecture, water, and topography. What changes is the framework through which that beauty is interpreted. Kang's statement removes Istanbul from a simple binary opposition between Ottoman East and European West. Rome, Paris, London, Vienna, and Berlin become points within a larger comparative geography. Istanbul is evaluated as a world capital rather than merely as Europe's spectacular Oriental counterpart.

Geography itself therefore becomes argument. The meeting of seas and continents gives Istanbul an exceptional position that cannot easily be reproduced elsewhere. Whereas Davidov[18] reads the skyline through religious history and Murray transforms it into tourist itinerary, Kang interprets the panorama as evidence of global singularity. His account demonstrates that admiration for Istanbul was not confined to a Western tradition of Oriental representation and introduces another principle that will remain important throughout this study: the category of the "foreign traveler" cannot be treated as culturally homogeneous. Nationality, religion, political context, gender, professional interests, duration of stay, and inherited traditions of representation all affect what a traveler is capable of seeing in the same location.

Taken chronologically, these accounts reveal both remarkable persistence and substantial transformation. Montagu's early eighteenth-century description foregrounds sensory beauty. Craven retains that admiration but converts the landscape into a picturesque "living picture." With Davidov, the monumental skyline becomes inseparable from religious and historical judgment. Murray subsequently transforms a long-established convention of arrival into a prescribed tourist experience. Milyukov preserves the sublime admiration of earlier travelers while simultaneously exposing the contradiction between panoramic unity and the fragmented city encountered at street level. Finally, Kang places Istanbul within a global comparative framework in which geography becomes the basis of metropolitan distinction. The physical elements organizing the first impression remain surprisingly constant: water, hills, palaces, domes, minarets, and moving ships.

Chronology, however, does not produce a simple succession in which one way of seeing replaces another. Older forms of perception survive within later accounts. The language of beauty established by Montagu and Craven remains recognizable in Milyukov and Kang. Religious and political interpretations coexist with aesthetic admiration. Guidebooks standardize perception without eliminating personal response. New meanings accumulate around recurring places rather than completely erasing previous ones. Istanbul thus emerges from the travel archive as a palimpsest not only in its physical fabric but also in its representation.

16 Kang Youwei (1858–1927) was a Chinese scholar, political reformer, and intellectual whose travels brought him into contact with the Ottoman Empire during the early twentieth century. His observations are especially significant because they introduce a non-European comparative perspective, evaluating Istanbul in relation to other world capitals and Ottoman modernization within broader debates concerning reform, empire, and political strength.

17 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.

18 Vladimir Petrovich Davidov was a nineteenth-century Russian traveler whose account of Constantinople forms part of the Russian travel-writing corpus examined in this study. His descriptions are particularly relevant for their combination of aesthetic admiration with Orthodox religious memory and Russian political perceptions of the Ottoman capital.

The maritime approach offers a particularly clear introduction to this process because it holds the physical city momentarily at a distance. Across two centuries, travelers repeatedly enact approximately the same choreography: the ship approaches, the skyline emerges, and the observer experiences a moment of visual intensity. Yet the meaning of that moment changes according to historical context and cultural position. Arrival therefore provides, in miniature, the analytical structure pursued throughout this thesis. Place supplies continuity; chronology reveals change; comparison exposes the interpretive frameworks through which that change becomes meaningful.

Once the traveler leaves the water, however, the apparent unity of the panorama begins to dissolve. The city seen from afar becomes a collection of individual spaces, each carrying its own histories, expectations, forms of access, and accumulated representations. Hagia Sophia can become a site of religious memory or architectural admiration; Pera a space of cosmopolitanism, imitation, or modernization; the bazaars an environment of commerce, sensory abundance, or exotic fantasy; the Bosphorus a landscape, imperial artery, or tourist panorama. The same process already visible at arrival — the interaction between relatively persistent places and historically changing forms of perception — therefore continues at closer range throughout the city.

The panorama with which the foreign traveler first encounters Istanbul should consequently not be understood as a definitive image of the city. It is an opening proposition that the experience of Istanbul repeatedly complicates. Distance creates apparent coherence; proximity produces contradiction. The city that seems visually comprehensible from the sea becomes increasingly difficult to stabilize as the traveler moves through it. It is within this tension between the city imagined, the city seen, and the city experienced that the chapters that follow are situated.

Section I: Topography

Hagia Sophia:
Monument Between Civilizations

If the maritime skyline establishes Istanbul as spectacle, Hagia Sophia anchors that spectacle in historical gravity. Few monuments recur so persistently in foreign travel narratives, and few carry such a dense accumulation of meanings. Travelers rarely approach the building as neutral architecture. They encounter it already surrounded by inherited narratives of empire, conquest, religious succession, aesthetic achievement, and cultural possession. Hagia Sophia therefore becomes more than a monument to be visited. It functions as an interpretive site through which travelers attempt to understand Istanbul itself.

Across the period examined here, the physical monument remains essentially the same point of reference, but the language through which it is understood changes considerably. In late eighteenth-century accounts, admiration for scale and architectural achievement frequently coexists with judgments derived from European Christian and aesthetic expectations. During the nineteenth century, interpretations become increasingly diverse: some travelers continue to frame Hagia Sophia through religious conflict, while others emphasize atmosphere, historical layering, or the coexistence of Byzantine and Ottoman elements. Guidebooks subsequently systematize these interpretations by transforming the monument into an object of historical instruction. By the beginning of the twentieth century, observers such as Kang Youwei and Le Corbusier[1] increasingly detach Hagia Sophia from a narrowly European Christian–Muslim opposition, placing it instead within global or architectural frameworks.

The development is therefore not a simple progression from prejudice to neutrality. Earlier interpretations continue to survive alongside newer ones. Religious memory, aesthetic admiration, historical curiosity, and spatial analysis accumulate rather than replace one another. Hagia Sophia becomes, in this sense, a historical palimpsest not only because of the building's physical transformations but also because of the successive interpretive layers imposed upon it by travelers.

Lady Elizabeth Craven's late eighteenth-century account provides an early example of this tension between admiration and judgment. Upon entering the building, she writes: "I have been to see the Mosque of St. Sophia… the dome is extremely large and well worth seeing, but some of the finest pillars are set topsy-turvy… in their holy temples neither statues nor costly ornaments are to be seen"[2].

Craven's description is structured by contradiction. The monument commands respect through its scale, but this admiration is immediately qualified by criticism. The dome is "well worth seeing," yet architectural elements appear improperly arranged and the absence of statues or figurative ornament becomes notable. Her response therefore reveals the standards against which the building is being evaluated. Hagia Sophia is encountered as an Ottoman mosque, but its interior is interpreted through European expectations regarding sacred architecture.

1 Le Corbusier (1887–1965), born Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, was a Swiss-French architect who visited Constantinople in 1911 during the journey later documented in Voyage d'Orient. His account and sketches are particularly relevant because his architectural training directed attention toward spatial composition, vernacular architecture, urban form, and the relationship between the city and landscape, producing a mode of observation distinct from conventional literary and tourist narratives.

2 Craven, A Journey through the Crimea, 217

The importance of Craven's account lies precisely in this instability. She cannot dismiss the monument because its scale and architectural force resist dismissal. At the same time, she cannot separate her appreciation from categories formed elsewhere. Architectural admiration and cultural comparison therefore operate simultaneously. Hagia Sophia already emerges as a monument capable of destabilizing the observer's expectations: the traveler attempts to classify it, yet the building exceeds the categories brought to it.

Several decades later, Julia Pardoe[3] offers a noticeably different mode of observation. Rather than emphasizing religious deficiency or architectural irregularity, she focuses on atmosphere, light, and the sensory experience of the interior. Pardoe's description of Hagia Sophia focuses less on doctrinal conflict than on the sensory and atmospheric qualities of the interior. She emphasizes its subdued light and the apparent weightlessness of the dome, which seems almost suspended above the space [4]. The difference between Craven and Pardoe is significant. Both travelers are impressed by the building, and both respond strongly to its scale and spatial character. Yet the terms of their admiration shift. Craven repeatedly measures what she sees against expectations derived from European ecclesiastical aesthetics. Pardoe, by contrast, concentrates on what the building does to the observer. Light, darkness, suspension, and spatial perception become central. The monument is therefore less explicitly judged and more fully experienced. Pardoe's "solemn twilight" transforms Hagia Sophia into a sensory environment. The dome appears to lose physical weight and "float like a cloud." Where Craven draws attention to objects that appear absent or misplaced, Pardoe focuses on spatial effects that cannot easily be reduced to a checklist of architectural elements. This emphasis on atmosphere also finds a parallel in contemporary visual representations of Hagia Sophia. Thomas Allom's 1838 interior view similarly constructs the monument through scale, filtered light, and the relationship between the vast architectural volume and the comparatively small human figures occupying it (fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Thomas Allom, The Mosque of Santa Sophia, 1838.[5]

3 Julia Pardoe (1804–1862) was an English writer, historian, and travel writer who visited Constantinople with her father in 1835. Her The City of the Sultan; and Domestic Manners of the Turks (1837) is particularly valuable for its extensive descriptions of Ottoman social and domestic life and for the access it provided to aspects of the city often absent from male-authored travel narratives.

4 Pardoe, The City of the Sultan.

5 Thomas Allom, The Mosque of Santa Sophia, 1838, engraving, in Robert Walsh, Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor.

This change does not mean that cultural or religious interpretation disappears. Rather, the balance of observation changes. The building can now be represented as an atmospheric whole rather than primarily as evidence within a civilizational comparison. Pardoe's account introduces a strand of interpretation that will become increasingly important in later descriptions: Hagia Sophia as an experience of space. Only shortly afterward, however, Vladimir Davidov demonstrates that the religious and political meanings of the monument remained extremely powerful. Shaped by Russian Orthodox memory, Davidov approaches Hagia Sophia with a very different historical consciousness. After examining Hagia Sophia's galleries and mosaics, Davidov expresses a distinctly nostalgic hope that the building's Christian visual heritage might one day be fully revealed again, imagining the mosaics restored to their former visibility and prominence [6].

The contrast with Pardoe is striking. Pardoe's attention settles on the atmospheric present of the building: what light, scale, and spatial suspension produce at the moment of observation. Davidov instead interprets the monument through a temporal structure of loss and imagined restoration. The building before him is inseparable from the Christian monument he believes lies beneath its Ottoman transformation. His sentence is therefore not merely descriptive. It is prospective. "Perhaps one day" projects a possible future onto the monument, transforming observation into historical desire. Hagia Sophia becomes a suspended wound in which Byzantine-Christian continuity has been interrupted but remains imaginatively recoverable.

Davidov's interpretation reveals how strongly political and confessional identity could determine architectural perception. What Pardoe sees as atmospheric space, Davidov encounters as historical succession. The mosaics are not simply artistic remains; they become evidence of an earlier religious order whose possible reappearance carries symbolic significance. Yet Davidov's ideological position does not prevent aesthetic admiration. He records the scale of the dome, the effect of filtered light, and the structural daring of the architecture. His hostility and fascination coexist. This dual response is important because it demonstrates that religious resentment does not eliminate architectural appreciation. On the contrary, the monument's visual power complicates ideological certainty.

In this respect, Davidov also continues a pattern visible in Craven. Both travelers approach Hagia Sophia with evaluative frameworks shaped by their cultural backgrounds, and both nevertheless encounter a building whose architectural force exceeds those frameworks. What changes between them is the historical intensity of the interpretation. Craven compares aesthetic systems; Davidov converts architecture into a question of religious memory, historical rupture, and possible recovery. By the middle of the nineteenth century, guidebooks begin to transform these highly personal modes of interpretation into a more standardized body of knowledge. Murray's handbook devotes substantial attention to Hagia Sophia's architectural and historical chronology, instructing travelers how its successive layers should be understood [7].

This represents an important change in the history of the foreign gaze. Craven, Pardoe, and Davidov construct meaning through individual encounter, even when their observations are informed by inherited assumptions. Murray increasingly organizes the encounter before it takes place. Hagia Sophia becomes not only a monument to experience but a monument to study. The guidebook translates architectural awe into historical sequence. Byzantine origins, structural features, and Ottoman adaptation become components of an established explanatory narrative. The visitor is taught which aspects of the monument matter and how these elements relate to one another.

6 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

7 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Turkey, 69-71.

This does not erase the earlier traditions of interpretation. Religious history remains important, as does architectural admiration. What changes is the authority through which these meanings are presented. The individual traveler no longer needs to construct the historical significance of Hagia Sophia independently. Guidebook culture provides a ready-made interpretive framework. The monument consequently becomes an educational apparatus. To visit Hagia Sophia is increasingly to rehearse a chronology. Travelers are encouraged to see visible features as evidence of historical succession. In this sense, the guidebook institutionalizes precisely the layered character that earlier observers had approached more subjectively. The increasing attention paid to Hagia Sophia's historical layers was paralleled by contemporary visual documentation. Fossati's representations following the mid-nineteenth-century restoration recorded the monument as a space in which Byzantine architectural structures and Ottoman interventions remained simultaneously visible (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Gaspare Fossati, Centre de la galerie, 1852, lithographed by Louis Haghe.[8]

By the late nineteenth century, Edmondo de Amicis develops this idea of historical layering in a more reconciliatory direction. Rather than treating Hagia Sophia exclusively as a symbol of religious displacement, his description draws attention to the coexistence of its Byzantine architectural inheritance and its subsequent transformation into an Ottoman mosque. The monument can therefore be read in his account not simply through rupture, but through the visible accumulation of different historical and religious layers [9]. The difference between de Amicis and Davidov is particularly revealing. Davidov views Byzantine and Ottoman histories as interruption: one religious order has displaced another. De Amicis instead interprets the same coexistence as accumulation. The monument is no longer primarily a battlefield between incompatible historical identities. It becomes a palimpsest. His formulation, "added without erasing," changes the meaning of transformation. Ottoman intervention does not entirely destroy Byzantine history; neither does Byzantine survival invalidate the Ottoman present. Both remain legible within the same structure. Historical succession becomes sedimentation rather than replacement.

This interpretation also differs from Murray's guidebook treatment. Murray organizes architectural layers into historical knowledge; de Amicis converts that same layering into an aesthetic and conceptual quality of the monument itself. The value of Hagia Sophia lies precisely in its capacity to

8 Gaspare Fossati, Centre de la galerie, 1852, lithograph by Louis Haghe, in Aya Sofia, Constantinople, as Recently Restored by Order of H.M. the Sultan Abdul Medjid (London: P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., 1852), Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

9 De Amicis, Constantinople.

contain different historical moments simultaneously. The progression from Davidov to de Amicis therefore marks one of the most significant discontinuities in nineteenth-century representations of the building. The same material evidence—Byzantine elements within an Ottoman mosque—can support radically different historical narratives. For Davidov, coexistence signifies interrupted Christian continuity. For de Amicis, it becomes evidence of cultural layering.

At the same time, the two accounts share something fundamental: neither can experience Hagia Sophia solely in the present. The monument continually forces the observer backward into history. Whether interpreted as loss or accumulation, its architectural form makes historical succession unavoidable. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the interpretive framework expands considerably beyond these European debates. Kang Youwei places Hagia Sophia within a global architectural hierarchy,: "There is not a single building that surpasses it… Sophia is in the first place in the globe" [10].

Kang's statement introduces a substantial shift in scale. Earlier European travelers repeatedly situate Hagia Sophia within histories of Christianity, Islam, Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, or European aesthetic comparison. Kang instead positions the building within a global architectural canon. The monument is no longer significant primarily because it marks the succession of Christian and Muslim empires. Its architectural achievement becomes capable of transcending those categories. "First place in the globe" transforms Hagia from contested possession into universal accomplishment.

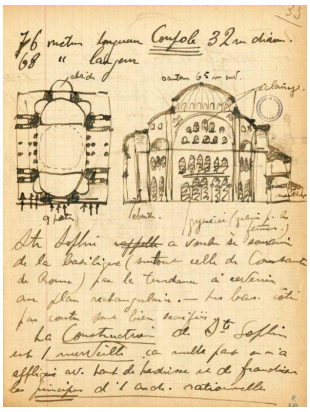
This does not necessarily eliminate historical or political judgment from Kang's wider view of Istanbul. But within this statement, architectural value is detached from the question of rightful cultural ownership. The building can be admired independently of whether it is categorized as Byzantine, Ottoman, Christian, or Islamic. Kang therefore introduces a perspective that destabilizes the Eurocentric structure of many earlier accounts. Hagia Sophia is not simply compared with European monuments or interpreted through Europe's relationship with the Ottoman Empire. It becomes part of a global hierarchy in which Istanbul itself can occupy the center rather than the periphery.

The continuity with earlier travelers nevertheless remains striking. Craven, Pardoe, Davidov, de Amicis, and Kang all confront the building's exceptional scale and spatial power. Despite radically different ideological frameworks, the monument repeatedly compels admiration. What changes is the language used to explain that admiration. For Craven, architectural greatness coexists with perceived aesthetic deficiencies. For Pardoe, greatness becomes atmosphere. For Davidov, it is inseparable from religious memory. Murray transforms it into historical knowledge. De Amicis interprets it as layered continuity. Kang elevates it to universal architectural achievement.

Le Corbusier's early twentieth-century encounter marks yet another significant transformation. He describes the interior as "vast, melancholic, suspended… a chandelier of concentric circles floating beneath the dome" [11]. His language retains something of Pardoe's earlier atmospheric sensitivity. Both observers emphasize suspension and the apparent weightlessness of the dome. Pardoe's dome "floats like a cloud"; Le Corbusier's description similarly concentrates on the relationship between vastness, suspension, geometry, and light. Yet the intellectual framework has changed considerably. Le Corbusier increasingly reads Hagia Sophia as a spatial and architectural problem. The chandelier becomes a series of concentric circles; the dome becomes an abstract structural and visual system. Religious vocabulary retreats, while form, proportion, geometry, and spatial experience move to the foreground. (fig. 7, 8)

10 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.

11 Le Corbusier, Le Voyage d'Orient, 79.



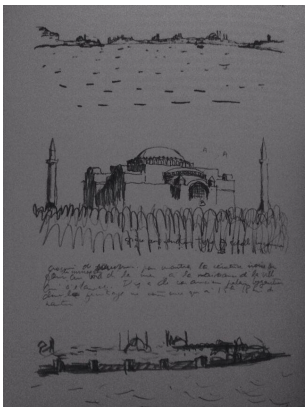


Fig. 7. Gaspare Fossati, Centre de la galerie, 1852, lithographed by Louis Haghe.[12]

Fig. 8. Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret), Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, 1911.[13]

This represents a major discontinuity with Davidov. For the Russian traveler, Hagia Sophia's importance lies in the historical and religious identities embedded in the building. For Le Corbusier, the same monument can function as an architectural lesson. Historical conflict is no longer the necessary center of interpretation. At the same time, Le Corbusier does not represent a complete rupture with the nineteenth century. His attention to atmosphere recalls Pardoe, while his fascination with structural achievement continues the admiration expressed even by ideologically hostile travelers such as Davidov. Modernist interpretation therefore emerges from earlier modes of observation while reorganizing their priorities.

The monument is increasingly abstracted from civilizational ownership and examined through spatial composition. Hagia Sophia becomes an architectural experiment whose relevance extends beyond the historical circumstances of its construction and transformation. Visual culture reinforces and complicates all these interpretations. Engravings and, later, photographs circulating outside Istanbul establish Hagia Sophia as an icon before many travelers encounter it directly. The transition from engraving to photography did not eliminate this process of visual mediation. Late nineteenth-century photographs by Abdullah Frères continued to privilege recognizable interior views of the monument, translating Hagia Sophia into a reproducible photographic image that could circulate independently of direct experience (fig. 9, 10). Repeated representations standardize particular viewpoints and familiar architectural features. The visitor increasingly arrives with a pre-existing visual memory of the monument. This development parallels the role of guidebooks. Both printed images and written instructions mediate the encounter in advance. The experience of Hagia Sophia is therefore increasingly shaped by a tension between expectation and direct observation. Travelers do not necessarily "discover" the monument; they compare the physical structure with an image and a narrative already circulating beyond Istanbul.

12 Gaspare Fossati, Centre de la galerie, 1852, lithograph by Louis Haghe, in Aya Sofia, Constantinople, as Recently Restored by Order of H.M. the Sultan Abdul Medjid (London: P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., 1852), Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

13 Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret), Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, 1911, drawing, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris.





Fig. 9. Abdullah Frères, Interior View of the Ayasofya Camii (Mosque), ca. 1880–1893.[14]

Fig. 10. Abdullah Frères, Vue des colonnes de la Galerie (Sainte Sophie), ca. 1880–1893.[15]

Yet this standardization never produces a single interpretation. The same monument remains capable of generating remarkably different readings because its architectural and historical complexity allows observers to select different elements as meaningful. Religious identity, light, mosaics, scale, geometry, historical transformation, and cultural ownership can each become the center of a different narrative. A chronological comparison therefore reveals that Hagia Sophia's importance lies not simply in the persistence of foreign interest but in the changing forms that this interest assumes.

In the late eighteenth century, Craven encounters a structure whose scale generates admiration even as its Ottoman religious environment challenges European aesthetic expectations. By the 1830s, Pardoe shifts attention toward atmosphere and sensory experience, demonstrating that the monument can be appreciated without making religious conflict the dominant interpretive frame. Davidov, almost contemporaneously, shows that this shift was neither universal nor linear: Orthodox historical memory could intensify the building's meaning as a symbol of loss and interrupted continuity.

Murray subsequently converts the monument into an institutionally organized historical object, providing tourists with a chronology through which its layers should be read. De Amicis transforms those same layers into a language of coexistence, presenting Byzantine and Ottoman histories not simply as antagonistic but as accumulated within the same architectural body. Kang then moves the building into a global architectural hierarchy, while Le Corbusier increasingly interprets it through the abstract vocabulary of spatial composition.

The chronology therefore demonstrates both continuity and discontinuity. The continuity is architectural awe. Almost every observer, regardless of cultural origin or ideological position, acknowledges the extraordinary spatial and visual force of Hagia Sophia. Even Davidov's religious resentment cannot suppress admiration for the building itself. The discontinuity lies in the explanation of that force. Over time, Hagia Sophia moves through several overlapping interpretive frameworks: from European aesthetic judgment to atmospheric experience; from religious loss to historical layering; from guidebook chronology to global architectural comparison; and finally toward modernist spatial abstraction.

14 Abdullah Frères, Interior View of the Ayasofya Camii (Mosque), ca. 1880–1893, albumen print, Abdul-Hamid II Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

15 Abdullah Frères, Vue des colonnes de la Galerie (Sainte Sophie), ca. 1880–1893.

These frameworks do not replace one another in a simple sequence. Pardoe's atmospheric description appears almost alongside Davidov's confessional interpretation. Historical layering coexists with continuing political and religious memory. Modern architectural abstraction does not entirely eliminate the monument's symbolic history. Instead, interpretations accumulate. This accumulation mirrors the very quality that travelers repeatedly identify within the architecture itself. Byzantine and Ottoman layers coexist physically, while aesthetic, religious, historical, and modernist readings coexist textually. Hagia Sophia thus becomes a palimpsest twice over: a material palimpsest of architectural transformation and a narrative palimpsest of foreign interpretation.

The location-based method makes this development particularly visible. If each traveler were examined separately, Craven's aesthetic judgment, Davidov's religious longing, de Amicis's concept of layering, Kang's global comparison, and Le Corbusier's spatial analysis might appear as isolated observations. Reading them chronologically around a single site instead reveals a developing discourse. The building remains constant enough to permit comparison, while the changing observers expose shifts in cultural assumptions and intellectual frameworks. Hagia Sophia therefore functions as a historical control point within the travel archive: because travelers repeatedly encounter the same monument, differences between their descriptions become evidence of changes in perception.

It also demonstrates that architecture itself participates in producing these interpretations. The monument does not simply receive meanings passively. Its scale forces admiration; its visible historical layers invite questions of succession; its light and dome generate atmospheric responses; its structural organization permits modernist abstraction. Different travelers emphasize different aspects, but the material building constrains and stimulates the range of possible readings.

Hagia Sophia consequently occupies a distinctive position within the foreign imagination of Istanbul. It condenses questions that elsewhere are dispersed across the city: East and West, Christianity and Islam, conquest and continuity, destruction and preservation, historical memory and modern architectural form. Each traveler uses the monument to negotiate these oppositions differently. Across more than a century, the discourse therefore changes from an effort to evaluate Hagia Sophia according to inherited cultural standards toward an increasingly plural understanding of the monument as historically layered, globally significant, and architecturally autonomous. Yet no later interpretation completely erases the earlier ones. Religious memory remains present beneath aesthetic admiration; historical succession remains visible beneath modern spatial abstraction.

Hagia Sophia is therefore not simply seen. It is continuously rewritten. Each observer produces a new interpretation while confronting the traces of meanings already attached to the monument. Its importance in travel literature derives precisely from this capacity to sustain contradictory readings without being reduced to any one of them.

The next chapter moves from this concentrated architectural and historical symbol to a very different urban condition. In Pera/Beyoğlu, foreign travelers encounter not the accumulated weight of imperial history embodied in a single monument, but the visible transformation of the nineteenth-century city itself. Here questions of East and West are no longer primarily inscribed in religious architecture; they are encountered through streets, embassies, hotels, clothing, commerce, and everyday social life. If Hagia Sophia forces travelers to negotiate historical succession, Pera/Beyoğlu forces them to confront cultural hybridity and modernity in the present.

Pera/Beyoğlu:

The European Quarter and the Geography of Modernity

If Hagia Sophia embodies historical depth and civilizational layering, Pera/Beyoğlu represents a different urban condition: rupture, proximity, and visible transformation. For foreign travelers, the district is often unsettling precisely because it appears familiar. Located across the Golden Horn from the historic peninsula, Pera functions as a Europeanized enclave within the Ottoman capital, populated by embassies, hotels, theaters, cafés, merchants, diplomats, and foreign communities. It is repeatedly interpreted as a threshold territory — neither entirely Eastern nor fully Western — and therefore becomes one of the most revealing spaces through which travelers attempt to understand Istanbul's encounter with modern Europe. (fig. 11)



Fig. 11. Guillaume Berggren, Vue de Péra et Galata, ca. 1890–1910.[1]

Unlike Hagia Sophia, whose physical continuity allows successive generations to reinterpret the same monument, Pera is itself a changing urban environment. Its streets, institutions, social composition, and architectural appearance increasingly reflect nineteenth-century diplomatic expansion, international commerce, and new forms of urban consumption. The district therefore does not merely receive changing interpretations; it visibly changes alongside them.

Read chronologically, foreign accounts of Pera reveal a significant development. Early nineteenth-century observers often describe the district in terms of ambiguity and imperfect Europeanization. As the century advances, this ambiguity becomes increasingly associated with cosmopolitanism, tourism, and modernization. By the late nineteenth century, Pera can be interpreted both as evidence of progress and as a threat to an imagined Ottoman authenticity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, observers such as Kang Youwei and Le Corbusier approach the district through still broader questions of reform, cultural translation, and architectural synthesis.

1 Guillaume Berggren, Vue de Péra et Galata, ca. 1890–1910, photographic print, no. 183, LOT 13549-4, no. 6, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsca-03848.

The continuity across these accounts is hybridity. Pera repeatedly appears as a place in which categories overlap. What changes is the value attached to that hybridity. For some travelers it signifies cultural confusion or imitation; for others it becomes cosmopolitan vitality, modernization, or creative synthesis.

Julia Pardoe's account provides one of the earlier nineteenth-century articulations of this instability. She appreciates Pera's accessibility and sociability while remaining aware of its ambiguous position within Istanbul. She writes: "In Pera one might imagine oneself in a European capital, were it not for the constant reminder that Asia lies just beyond the water"[2]. Pardoe's description is built around oscillation. Pera appears familiar enough to generate the illusion of Europe, but geography continually interrupts that illusion. Asia remains physically visible across the water. European urban forms therefore never become entirely detached from the Ottoman and transcontinental context surrounding them.

The significance of this description lies in its refusal of a stable category. Pera cannot simply be called European, because its position within Istanbul continuously exposes the limits of that designation. Yet it cannot be assimilated into the conventional image of the Ottoman city either. It becomes a liminal space in which proximity destabilizes difference. Compared with her descriptions of domestic interiors and other Ottoman social spaces, Pardoe's Pera is notably less intimate. It is a district encountered through public sociability and spatial contrast. Her observation does not condemn hybridity; rather, it records the psychological instability produced by it. Familiarity is constantly interrupted by awareness of elsewhere.

Only a few years later, Vladimir Davidov articulates the same East–West ambiguity in a considerably more critical language. Observing Pera and Galata, Davidov identifies the area as the predominantly European or "Frankish" part of Constantinople. Yet rather than regarding it as simply European, he draws attention to its distinctive mixture of Eastern and Western elements, presenting the district as a hybrid urban environment that does not fully conform to conventional European tastes or expectations [3]. The continuity between Pardoe and Davidov is clear. Both recognize Pera as the European or Europeanized district of Istanbul, and both immediately qualify that classification. Yet the difference in tone is substantial. For Pardoe, the coexistence of Europe and Asia produces fascination and psychological oscillation. For Davidov, mixture becomes aesthetic and civilizational discomfort. His phrase "foreign to European taste" is particularly revealing. Pera may contain European institutions and social practices, but it fails to reproduce Europe according to the standards he expects. The district is European, yet not European enough. Hybridity is therefore interpreted not as synthesis but as incomplete imitation.

Davidov's discomfort exposes how strongly nineteenth-century observers often depended upon rigid categories of East and West. Pera becomes unsettling precisely because those categories break down. The traveler expects cultural difference to correspond to geography, yet the district offers mixture instead. Embassies, European clothing, commercial institutions, Ottoman political authority, and local social forms coexist in the same urban space. For Davidov, this mixture is not merely visual. Russian travelers frequently interpret Pera geopolitically. The concentration of foreign embassies, commercial activity, and European influence can be read as evidence of the empire's increasing dependence upon external powers. What appears socially dynamic can therefore also signify political vulnerability. This geopolitical interpretation introduces an important dimension that is less pronoun-

2 Pardoe, City of the Sultan, 32

3 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

ced in Pardoe. In her account, Pera's hybridity is primarily experiential. In Russian observations, the same hybridity can become evidence within a larger argument about imperial power.

By the mid-1840s, Charles White[4] produces yet another interpretation. His extended residence in Constantinople distinguishes him from many short-term visitors and allows him to focus more closely on the everyday social complexity of the district. He describes Pera's streets as "a moving exhibition of nations, languages, and costumes, where diplomats and adventurers mingle without hierarchy" [5]. White's Pera remains hybrid, but the meaning of hybridity shifts again. Where Davidov experiences mixture as a failure of cultural coherence, White presents it as cosmopolitan density. The district becomes less a distorted copy of Europe than a social environment generated by international circulation. His phrase "moving exhibition" transforms the street into social theater. Languages, national identities, professions, and costumes are constantly displayed and rearranged. The traveler encounters not one dominant culture but a rotating field of identities. Pera therefore appears less as a conventional neighborhood than as a stage upon which the international dimensions of the Ottoman capital become visible.

The contrast with Davidov is important. Both observe essentially the same cosmopolitan condition. Davidov interprets mixture as a problem of taste and civilizational instability; White emphasizes its social energy. The difference demonstrates that hybridity itself does not determine interpretation. The observer's position, expectations, and duration of stay shape whether mixture appears as contamination or as urban vitality. White's longer residence also weakens the sharp division between foreign observer and observed city. The district is not merely a spectacle encountered briefly. It becomes a functioning social environment. This sustained engagement allows cosmopolitanism to appear less exceptional and more ordinary.

The emergence of guidebook culture during the following decade changes the meaning of Pera once again. Murray's handbook instructs foreign travelers to lodge in Pera because of its comfort, cleanliness, and perceived safety [6]. This recommendation institutionalizes a distinction that earlier travelers had described more subjectively. Pera becomes the foreign visitor's base, while the historic peninsula becomes a territory of excursion. The Europeanized district is no longer simply observed as culturally ambiguous; it becomes incorporated into the practical organization of tourism.

The shift is important. Pardoe and Davidov describe Pera's difference. Murray operationalizes it. Foreign bodies are directed toward the district because it provides familiar forms of accommodation and urban comfort. From this protected environment, travelers can cross into other parts of Istanbul as visitors. Tourism therefore produces a hierarchy of space: Pera becomes the comfortable and legible zone from which the more visibly Ottoman city is explored. In this process, hybridity becomes useful. The very mixture that disturbed Davidov now makes Pera functional as a tourist enclave. Its partial Europeanization allows the foreign traveler to inhabit Istanbul without becoming fully immersed in its unfamiliar urban rhythms.

The guidebook thus changes Pera's role from object of interpretation into infrastructure of observation. The district does not merely symbolize East–West interaction; it conditions how travelers physically encounter the rest of the city. By the later nineteenth century, the increasing density of

4 Charles White (1807–1878) was a British writer whose extended residence in Constantinople formed the basis of Three Years in Constantinople; or, Domestic Manners of the Turks (1845). His prolonged experience of the city distinguishes his account from those of shorter-term visitors and provides detailed observations of everyday social practices and urban life.

5 White, Three Years in Constantinople, 5.

6 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Turkey, 23-24.

travel and international circulation intensifies the theatrical and cosmopolitan qualities already visible in White's account. Mark Twain[7] portrays Pera as a chaotic carnival: "A Babel of tongues and costumes… one might believe the nations of the earth have agreed to meet in this street" [8]. The representation of Pera as an urban theatre was reinforced by contemporary photography. Images of the Grande Rue de Péra foreground precisely the characteristics emphasized by White and Twain: dense pedestrian movement, commercial display, European-style façades, and the coexistence of different forms of dress and social identity within the same public space (fig. 12)



Fig. 12. Grande Rue de Péra. Vue prise de la Fontaine de Galata Sérai, 1912.[9]



Fig. 13. Grande Rue de Péra, Constantinople, 1912.[10]

7 Mark Twain (1835–1910), the pen name of American writer and humorist Samuel Langhorne Clemens, visited Constantinople in 1867 as part of the Mediterranean and Holy Land journey later recounted in The Innocents Abroad (1869). His account is particularly significant for its satirical treatment of both Istanbul and the conventions of nineteenth-century tourism: while frequently employing contemporary stereotypes and exaggerated descriptions of the city, Twain also mocks foreign travelers' expectations of the "Orient" and exposes the extent to which tourists often arrived prepared to see what earlier travel literature had already taught them to expect.

8 Twain, The Innocents Abroad, 348.

9 Grande Rue de Péra. Vue prise de la Fontaine de Galata Sérail, 1912, postcard, no. 424, Beyoğlu Collection, SALT Research, Istanbul.

10 Grande Rue de Péra, Constantinople, 1912, postcard, Tahsin İspiroğlu Collection, SALT Research, Istanbul.

Twain's description strongly recalls White's "moving exhibition," but satire replaces White's relative social realism. The district becomes exaggerated spectacle. The biblical metaphor of Babel suggests linguistic confusion and almost comic excess. Yet Twain's humor also confirms that cosmopolitanism had become one of Pera's defining characteristics in foreign representation. By this point, mixture is no longer exceptional enough merely to be noted; it can be turned into a recognizable urban performance. Pera appears as a microcosm of global circulation. The continuity from White to Twain lies in the perception of the street as theater. Both emphasize languages, costumes, and social variety. The difference lies in the narrative mode. White's long residence encourages observation of social complexity; Twain intensifies that same complexity into humorous spectacle.

This distinction again demonstrates how narrative genre shapes urban representation. The same cosmopolitan environment can support sociological observation or satire. By 1878, Edmondo de Amicis interprets Pera through an even more explicit discourse of modernization. Walking along its illuminated boulevards, he contrasts them with the "mournful little streets" of older neighborhoods and writes: "Here Europe has opened a window in the East" [11]. The metaphor of the window captures the late nineteenth-century transformation of the district with unusual clarity. Pera is no longer simply a mixed European quarter. It becomes an instrument through which modernity enters the Ottoman capital. The image contains a strongly hierarchical assumption. Europe appears as the source of illumination, openness, and modernization, while the East implicitly becomes the space receiving these qualities. The language therefore reflects a familiar nineteenth-century model of progress. Yet de Amicis' response is not simply celebratory. His admiration for the bright, Europeanized district is accompanied by melancholy. Modernization threatens the narrow streets, shadows, wooden architecture, and irregularity that he associates with an older Ottoman urban character. Progress therefore produces loss.

This ambivalence marks an important development from earlier accounts. Davidov doubts the success of European imitation. De Amicis increasingly accepts the reality of modernization but worries about its consequences. The question is no longer merely whether Pera is truly European. It becomes what Europeanization might do to Istanbul. Modernization was visible not only in Pera's architecture and illuminated streets but also in the infrastructures that increasingly connected it to the wider city. Late nineteenth-century representations of the Galata Bridge make this transformation particularly visible: circulation, commerce, modern infrastructure, and the older urban silhouette are brought together within a single view (fig. 14)



Fig. 14. Photoglob Co., Constantinople: Pont de Kara-Keui, ca. 1890–1900.[12]

11 de Amicis, Constantinople, 14.

12 Photoglob Co., Constantinople: Pont de Kara-Keui, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 6037, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsc-06061.

The district consequently embodies both promise and erosion. Its boulevards, lighting, and public life indicate urban change, but the same qualities threaten to make the city resemble the European capitals from which travelers have come. Modernization risks eliminating precisely the difference that made Istanbul attractive as a destination. Pera therefore becomes a site through which foreign travelers negotiate their own contradictory expectations. They may demand cleanliness, infrastructure, safety, and modern transportation while simultaneously mourning the disappearance of the urban forms they identify as authentic. The nineteenth-century development of Pera thus exposes a paradox of foreign observation: travelers frequently criticize Istanbul for not meeting European urban standards, yet they also regret the city's transformation when those standards begin to be adopted.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, this tension between modernization and cultural identity expands beyond the European perspective. Kang Youwei situates Pera and Istanbul's visible Europeanization within a wider global debate about reform. Observing clothing and urban appearance, he writes: "From the Sultan to the ordinary people, all wear European clothes… apart from the fez they have no difference with Europe" [13]. Kang's account introduces an important shift. Earlier European observers often ask whether Pera successfully resembles Europe. Kang is less invested in Europe as an unquestioned cultural standard. His concern is instead the relationship between visible imitation and meaningful modernization. Clothing becomes political evidence. The adoption of European dress signifies reform, but it also raises the question of whether transformation has occurred only at the level of appearance. Westernization is visible, yet its depth remains uncertain.

Pera therefore becomes a case study in cultural translation. The district demonstrates how non-European societies adopt external forms while attempting to integrate them into local institutions and identities. This differs significantly from Davidov's nineteenth-century criticism. Davidov judges hybridity according to European taste: the mixture appears unsuccessful because it fails to reproduce Europe convincingly. Kang's perspective is more analytical. The issue is not simply whether Istanbul resembles Europe, but whether resemblance constitutes genuine progress. The same urban evidence consequently supports a different political question. Hybridity becomes neither contamination nor merely cosmopolitan excitement. It becomes evidence of the difficulties faced by societies negotiating modernization under global pressure.

Le Corbusier offers yet another interpretation in the early twentieth century. Sketching the stone buildings climbing Pera's hillsides, he reads the district as a form of vernacular adaptation rather than as failed imitation. He identifies architectural rhythm and geometry within the hybrid urban fabric, suggesting that mixture itself can generate a new aesthetic language (Le Corbusier 1966, 88). The difference between Le Corbusier and earlier observers is especially significant. Davidov sees hybrid form as aesthetically foreign to European taste. De Amicis sees Europeanization as both progress and cultural loss. Kang questions the depth of visible Westernization. Le Corbusier, by contrast, can value hybridity as a productive architectural condition. For him, the district does not need to become purely European or preserve an untouched Ottoman identity. Its interest lies precisely in adaptation. The irregular relationship between hillside, masonry, street, and imported architectural forms becomes evidence of urban creativity. This interpretation anticipates a modernist appreciation of vernacular synthesis. Pera's value no longer depends upon how faithfully it reproduces Europe. Difference itself becomes architecturally productive. (fig. 17)

13 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.



Fig. 15. Grande Rue de Péra, Constantinople–Beyoğlu, Galatasaray, 1911.[14]

The chronological development is therefore striking. In the 1830s, Pardoe encounters Pera as a psychologically unstable border between Europe and Asia. Davidov interprets the same cultural mixture as aesthetically uncomfortable and geopolitically significant. White then emphasizes its everyday cosmopolitan vitality. Murray turns the district into practical infrastructure for foreign tourism. Twain transforms cosmopolitanism into theatrical excess. De Amicis reads Europeanization as modernization but simultaneously mourns the cultural loss it threatens to produce. Kang evaluates visible Westernization through a broader politics of reform, while Le Corbusier eventually sees hybrid architecture as a source of creative synthesis.

Throughout these transformations, Pera remains associated with cultural mixture. The district's basic symbolic function is remarkably persistent: it repeatedly unsettles the idea that Istanbul can be divided neatly into an Eastern historic city and a Western modern world.

What changes is the ideological value assigned to this instability.

For Pardoe, hybridity produces liminality.

For Davidov, it produces discomfort.

For White, cosmopolitanism.

For Murray, practical familiarity.

For Twain, spectacle.

For de Amicis, modernization and loss.

For Kang, the problem of reform and imitation.

For Le Corbusier, architectural synthesis.

14 Grande Rue de Péra, Constantinople–Beyoğlu, Galatasaray, April 4, 1911, postcard, Tahsin İspiroğlu Collection, SALT Research, Istanbul.

Chronology therefore reveals that the district's mixed identity becomes progressively less possible to treat as accidental. What early travelers experience as contradiction increasingly becomes recognized as a structural feature of Istanbul's modern urban condition. Visual culture reinforces this evolving representation. Engravings of Pera depict cafés, theaters, embassy buildings, hotels, street life, and gas-lit boulevards. These images circulate alongside more conventional panoramas of domes, minarets, and the historic peninsula. The result is a double visual identity for Istanbul.

One image presents the city as monumental, Islamic, picturesque, and historically layered. The other presents it as cosmopolitan, commercial, Europeanized, and modern. Foreign travelers encounter both images before and during their journeys, and Pera becomes the principal location through which this apparent duality is negotiated. Yet the chronological evidence suggests that the two images cannot remain completely separate. Pera demonstrates that East and West are not geographically sealed categories. European institutions operate under Ottoman sovereignty; Ottoman inhabitants participate in Westernized forms of public culture; international communities inhabit an urban district shaped by both imported and local practices.

The very attempt to describe Pera as a European enclave therefore exposes the limitations of binary classification. The district is not simply a piece of Europe transplanted into Istanbul. Nor is it an Ottoman environment merely decorated with foreign forms. It is produced through contact, adaptation, commerce, diplomacy, migration, and changing modes of urban life. This is why Pera acquires such symbolic weight across generations of travel writing. It becomes a testing ground where travelers articulate competing theories of modernization. Some interpret cultural mixture as contamination. Others view it as cosmopolitan vitality. Some understand Westernization as progress; others identify it with superficial imitation or loss. By the early twentieth century, hybridity itself can become a source of architectural innovation.

The location-based and chronological method makes this development particularly visible. If each traveler's account were examined separately, these responses might appear primarily as differences of personality, nationality, or literary style. Reading them around the same district instead reveals a larger historical transformation. Pera remains sufficiently recognizable as a recurring spatial reference, but its meaning changes as Istanbul's relationship with Europe changes. The district therefore becomes both subject and evidence of modernization. Unlike Hagia Sophia, where a relatively stable monument receives new interpretations, Pera's physical and social reality evolves alongside the discourse surrounding it.

This distinction is crucial. Hagia Sophia demonstrates how interpretation changes around a persistent historical object. Pera demonstrates how interpretation and urban transformation can develop together. The district is therefore not merely a symbol imposed upon an otherwise stable city. Foreign embassies, commercial institutions, hotels, lighting, entertainment venues, changing clothing, and new architectural forms materially reshape the environment travelers describe. Their writings register these changes, even when they interpret them through very different ideological frameworks.

Pera also destabilizes Orientalist expectations in a particularly direct way. Travelers arriving in search of pure cultural difference encounter familiar institutions, European languages, clothing, architecture, and social practices. Yet familiarity itself becomes strange because it appears within the geography of the Ottoman capital. The district therefore produces a reversal of the conventional travel

encounter. Other parts of Istanbul may surprise the visitor through difference. Pera surprises through resemblance. But resemblance is never complete. This incompleteness is precisely what generates many of the anxieties visible in the travel accounts. The district is repeatedly described as neither one thing nor another because the categories themselves prove inadequate to the urban reality.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the historical development traced across these narratives suggests that hybridity is no longer best understood as a temporary stage between East and West. It has become one of the defining conditions of modern Istanbul. Pera/Beyoğlu thus functions as a conceptual frontier rather than a simple geographical boundary. Through it, foreign travelers debate identity, progress, imitation, authenticity, cosmopolitanism, and cultural permeability. Its significance lies not in choosing between Europe and the Ottoman city, but in demonstrating that the two have become increasingly interwoven. The district is neither a perfect mirror of Europe nor a surviving relic of an untouched East. It is a geography of negotiation.

The following chapter moves from this open and theatrical landscape of boulevards, embassies, cafés, and cosmopolitan visibility to a very different form of urban experience. In the bazaars, the foreign traveler can no longer maintain the same observational distance. Commercial density, bodily proximity, bargaining, movement, and sensory overload draw the observer directly into the city. If Pera makes cultural mixture visible as urban spectacle, the bazaars make encounter unavoidable as physical participation.

The Bazaars: Commerce, Density, and the Social Microcosm

If the skyline allows distance and Pera stages theatrical modernity, the bazaars force proximity. Here the traveler cannot remain a detached spectator: the body is absorbed into circulation, exchange, sound, color, negotiation, and crowd movement. In foreign travel narratives, the markets appear as spaces where architecture, commerce, and social interaction collapse into a single sensory field, functioning as a microcosm of Ottoman society in which travelers attempt to decode cultural difference through direct physical participation. Unlike monuments that can be contemplated from a distance, the bazaar requires the visitor to move through narrow passages, respond to merchants, negotiate prices, and confront unfamiliar forms of social and commercial behavior. Observation therefore becomes contact. Read chronologically, descriptions of the bazaars reveal a remarkable continuity in the physical characteristics that attract foreign attention — density, abundance, movement, sensory intensity, and disorientation — but substantial changes in the meanings assigned to them. What one traveler interprets as aesthetic richness, another experiences as loss of control; what appears as commercial vitality can become deception, timelessness, or cultural sophistication. The bazaar is therefore particularly useful for tracing how the interpretive frameworks of travelers change even when the spatial environment they describe appears relatively constant.

Julia Pardoe's account provides one of the earliest nineteenth-century examples of the bazaar as an aesthetic and social environment. She transforms the market into a visual composition: "Every stall is a picture… silks, spices, and jewels compose a gallery of moving color" [1]. (fig. 16) Her description is significant because it resists the assumption that density necessarily produces chaos. The market is crowded and visually saturated, yet Pardoe interprets this abundance through the language of art: the stall becomes a picture and the bazaar a gallery. Commerce is aestheticized, and Ottoman material culture becomes evidence of refinement rather than disorder. Pardoe also extends her attention beyond objects to the social life surrounding them. She notes the presence of women purchasing textiles and jewelry, observing that the bazaar permits forms of public participation rarely acknowledged in many Western accounts [2]. The market therefore appears as a shared social environment rather than an exclusively masculine commercial domain. This is important because it complicates European assumptions concerning Ottoman women's mobility: women appear here not as hidden figures confined to domestic interiors but as participants in everyday exchange. Pardoe's bazaar consequently combines aesthetic richness with sociability. Its density does not erase social order; rather, it reveals a different form of it.

1 Pardoe, City of the Sultan, 32
2 Pardoe, City of the Sultan, 32



Fig. 16. William Henry Bartlett, Great Avenue in the Tchartchi, 1838.[3]

Writing in approximately the same period, Vladimir Davidov encounters many of the same spatial conditions but interprets them in almost opposite terms. As Davidov moves through the crowded market, his attention shifts from visual observation to the physical experience of navigating the city. He emphasizes the density of the crowd and his efforts to avoid bodily contact with those around him, revealing a sense of discomfort produced by the bazaar's intense proximity [4]. The contrast with Pardoe is revealing. Both travelers encounter crowding, bodily proximity, and sensory intensity, but where Pardoe transforms these conditions into visual and social richness, Davidov experiences them as a collapse of personal distance. The phrase "avoid touching" reveals more than simple physical discomfort: it exposes the instability of the foreign observer's position. The traveler who could contemplate Istanbul from the sea as a coherent panorama can no longer remain outside the scene. Contemporary representations of the bazaar similarly emphasize the difficulty of separating architecture from human activity. Bartlett's market scene fills the interior with merchants, customers, goods, and movement, presenting the bazaar not as an empty architectural monument but as a space whose meaning emerges through occupation and exchange (fig. 17).

3 William Henry Bartlett, Great Avenue in the Tchartchi, 1838, in Julia Pardoe, The Beauties of the Bosphorus; Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs (London: George Virtue, 1838), Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation Library.

4 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

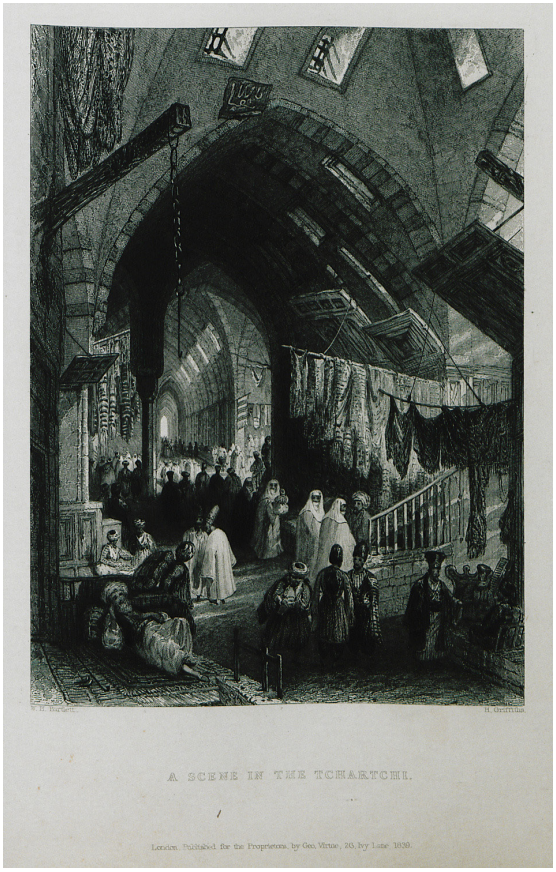


Fig. 17. William Henry Bartlett, A Scene in the Tchartchi, 1838.[5]

In the bazaar, the crowd absorbs the visitor into circulation, and the foreign body becomes one body among many. Davidov's reaction therefore demonstrates how the bazaar undermines the illusion of mastery associated with panoramic observation. Russian travelers also frequently interpret the markets geopolitically, regarding the convergence of goods from Asia, Europe, and Africa as evidence of Ottoman commercial and imperial networks. Yet admiration can coexist with suspicion: wealth becomes decadence and abundance becomes excess. As elsewhere in Russian accounts of Istanbul, the same urban phenomenon can therefore signify both vitality and decline. The difference between Pardoe and Davidov is consequently not produced by radically different physical environments, but by the interpretive positions they bring to them. For Pardoe, proximity generates curiosity and aesthetic pleasure; for Davidov, it produces anxiety and loss of control.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, guidebook culture begins to intervene directly in this uncertain encounter. Murray does not merely describe the bazaar but instructs visitors how to move, bargain, and behave within it, advising them not to display impatience or superiority [6]. This represents an important shift from personal experience toward institutionalized tourism. Pardoe and Davidov describe what happens when travelers enter the market; Murray attempts to determine how the encounter should unfold before it takes place. The guidebook converts uncertainty into behavioral instruction and transforms unfamiliar commercial practices into something that can be learned and

5 William Henry Bartlett, A Scene in the Tchartchi, 1838, in Julia Pardoe, The Beauties of the Bosphorus; Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs (London: George Virtue, 1838), Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation Library.

6 Murray, A Handbook for Travelers in Turkey, 55.

managed. In this sense, tourism becomes a form of pedagogy. The contrast with Davidov is especially revealing: the bodily density that Davidov experiences as destabilizing is translated by Murray into a predictable element of the tourist experience. The bazaar remains culturally unfamiliar, but unfamiliarity itself is increasingly organized. This process does not eliminate participation — visitors must still bargain, gesture, walk, and interact — but it provides a script through which participation can be controlled. The bazaar is consequently incorporated into an emerging tourist itinerary, and what had previously represented an unpredictable confrontation with urban life becomes a recognized experience that can be prepared for in advance.

Mark Twain's account of 1869 develops another dimension of this increasingly familiar bazaar narrative by transforming commercial interaction into satire. He exaggerates bargaining into theatrical deception: "A merchant would sell his soul before he sells his goods at the first price" [7]. Twain's humor reflects a familiar Western anxiety about Eastern commerce, particularly the assumption that fixed prices signify transparency while negotiation implies dishonesty. Bargaining is therefore interpreted not simply as an economic practice but as cultural performance. Yet the satire also reveals the participatory character of the market. The merchant and traveler become actors within the same scene, and the visitor who bargains is no longer external to the culture being described. Compared with Murray, the difference lies primarily in narrative mode. Murray attempts to make negotiation manageable by explaining its conventions; Twain transforms those same conventions into entertainment. Compared with Davidov, participation is no longer primarily threatening but comic. The underlying feature of the bazaar — the impossibility of remaining entirely detached — nevertheless remains unchanged. Whether the response is anxiety, instruction, or humor, the traveler is repeatedly forced into interaction.

By the late nineteenth century, Edmondo de Amicis adds a temporal dimension to this discourse. Rather than concentrating primarily on bodily proximity or bargaining, he describes the bazaar as "A city within the city… unchanged since the centuries of caravans" [8]. His language situates the market outside the modern time of the surrounding city. The covered passages, filtered light, commercial practices, and dense circulation are interpreted as remnants of an older world, turning the bazaar into a kind of museum of commerce. This represents a significant change from Pardoe's earlier description. Pardoe's market is alive because of contemporary social participation and visual movement; de Amicis increasingly values the same environment because it appears to preserve the past. The apparent continuity of the bazaar therefore acquires a new meaning in the context of Istanbul's modernization.

As Pera becomes more visibly Europeanized and other parts of the city undergo infrastructural transformation, the market can be imagined as a surviving fragment of an earlier Ottoman order. Yet the claim that it is "unchanged since the centuries of caravans" also reveals the construction of Oriental timelessness. The more visibly Istanbul changes, the more useful the bazaar becomes as evidence of a supposedly unchanging East. Continuity is therefore not simply observed; it is narratively produced. Late nineteenth-century photography reinforced the perception of the bazaar as an enduring urban entity. Abdullah Frères' elevated view situates the Grand Bazaar within the dense fabric of the historic peninsula, revealing that the market was not an isolated monument but part of a much larger commercial and architectural network (fig. 18).

7 Twain, The Innocents Abroad, 359.
8 De Amicis, Constantinople, 82.



Fig. 18. Abdullah Frères, Exterior View of the Grand Bazaar, ca. 1880–1893.[9]

Visual culture reinforced this interpretation throughout the nineteenth century. Engravings depicting crowded passages, suspended textiles, overflowing stalls, and compressed bodies circulated widely in Europe, helping establish a recognizable iconography of the Eastern market. (fig. 19) Travelers could consequently enter the bazaar already prepared to encounter abundance, color, density, and exotic material culture. The market became partly prewritten before the visitor experienced it. This development parallels the mediation already visible in descriptions of Istanbul's skyline, Hagia Sophia, and Pera: representations increasingly shaped the expectations through which physical spaces were encountered. Yet the bazaar also resisted this process more forcefully than many other locations because it could not be consumed entirely through vision. An engraving could reproduce abundance but not bargaining; a guidebook could explain appropriate behavior but could not eliminate the uncertainty of interaction. Merchants spoke to travelers, crowds forced physical movement, prices required negotiation, and sensory conditions disrupted the detached gaze. The bazaar therefore remained capable of exceeding the image constructed around it.



Fig. 19. Guillaume Berggren, Bazar de Stamboul. Maison Sadullah & Cie, ca. 1870–1910.[10]

9 Abdullah Frères, Exterior View of the Grand Bazaar, ca. 1880–1893, albumen print, no. 669, LOT 11912, no. 24, Abdul-Hamid II Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

10 Guillaume Berggren, Bazar de Stamboul. Maison Sadullah & Cie, ca. 1870–1910, photographic print, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsca-03853.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Kang Youwei introduces a perspective that complicates the dominant European framework still further. Rather than approaching Ottoman material and food culture through suspicion, exoticism, or nostalgia, he offers an explicitly comparative judgment in its favor: "Turks use many spices… Europeans cannot reach them… their food is better than the others" [11]. Kang's account changes the hierarchy of comparison. European travelers frequently measure Ottoman practices against European norms and interpret difference as deficiency, excess, or picturesque otherness; Kang instead compares Ottoman food culture favorably with Europe. Difference becomes evidence of sophistication rather than inferiority. His perspective therefore represents an important discontinuity with both Twain's caricature of commercial culture and de Amicis' tendency to place the bazaar within an imagined historical past. Kang approaches Ottoman cultural practices as contemporary achievements that can be evaluated within a global comparative framework. The bazaar becomes a site of gastronomic and cultural excellence rather than merely a relic or spectacle. (fig. 20) His account demonstrates that interpretations often identified as characteristic of the "foreign gaze" were not universal but depended upon the cultural position from which Istanbul was observed. A Chinese reformist traveler did not necessarily reproduce the same hierarchy between modern Europe and an allegedly backward East.



Fig. 20. Yeni Cami Mosque and Eminönü Bazaar, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[12]

Read together and chronologically, these accounts demonstrate that the bazaar remains materially recognizable while its interpretation changes substantially. Pardoe sees density as aesthetic richness and social participation; Davidov experiences the same proximity as destabilizing and potentially threatening; Murray converts uncertainty into tourist pedagogy; Twain turns negotiation into theatrical satire; de Amicis interprets the market as a surviving fragment of an older commercial world; and Kang reverses established European hierarchies by recognizing Ottoman cultural sophistication. These are not simply differences of personality. They reveal changing forms of travel, different cultural positions, and shifting historical frameworks. The same crowd can signify vitality or discomfort; the same abundance can indicate refinement or excess; bargaining can appear as economic custom or deception; continuity can become cultural resilience or stagnation; and difference from Europe can be interpreted either as inferiority or as superiority. The bazaar thus acts as a stable spatial reference against which the instability of foreign interpretation becomes visible.

11 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.

12 Yeni Cami Mosque and Eminönü Bazaar, Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 6035, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The location-based and chronological method also reveals why the bazaar occupies a distinctive position within the wider geography of travel writing. Hagia Sophia concentrates questions of historical and religious succession within a monument, while Pera makes cultural hybridity visible through public urban life. The bazaar, by contrast, forces the traveler into direct participation with the environment being described. This has consequences for the production of knowledge itself. From the sea, Istanbul can be composed into a unified picture; in the market, that unity fragments into encounters. Panoramic vision produces abstraction, whereas the bazaar produces embodiment. The traveler who first encounters Istanbul as skyline must now understand it through movement, touch, exchange, and social uncertainty. The market consequently exposes the limits of panoramic knowledge: the city cannot be understood from distance alone but must also be navigated at body level.

The bazaar functions as a microcosm not because it offers a complete representation of Ottoman society, but because it compresses multiple dimensions of urban life into one environment. Commerce, gender, imperial networks, architecture, social behavior, and material culture become simultaneously visible. Foreign travelers use this compressed space to construct broader arguments about Ottoman society — vitality versus stagnation, sophistication versus excess, authenticity versus deception — but their contradictory conclusions demonstrate that the market never possesses a single stable meaning. Pardoe's relatively intimate social observation produces a different bazaar from Davidov's anxious encounter with density; Murray's instructional voice produces a different bazaar from Twain's satire; de Amicis' nostalgia creates a different temporal interpretation from Kang's comparative cultural judgment. The location remains the analytical constant, while chronology and the position of the observer reveal how its meanings change.

Crucially, the market also exposes the limitations of a purely Orientalist binary. Although European travelers frequently interpret it through expectations of exotic abundance, disorder, deception, or timelessness, lived experience repeatedly complicates these categories. Women participate publicly, goods circulate through international networks, commercial practices require mutual negotiation, and material culture can be recognized as sophisticated rather than primitive. The bazaar therefore refuses to function merely as a static image of the East. It remains an environment whose meaning is produced through movement and interaction. Continuity lies in the repeated experience of density, abundance, and participation; discontinuity lies in what successive travelers believe those experiences reveal about Ottoman society.

The following chapter returns to openness. After the compression of the market, the Bosphorus reintroduces distance, panoramic vision, and movement across a wider landscape. Yet this return to visual openness does not restore the simplicity of the initial arrival panorama. Along the Bosphorus, landscape becomes intertwined with leisure, domestic life, military power, imperial geography, and modernization. If the bazaar forces travelers into the city at body level, the Bosphorus allows them to step back again — but now with a more complicated understanding of what the panorama contains.

The Bosphorus:
Landscape, Empire, and the Panoramic Gaze

If the bazaars compress the city into bodily proximity, the Bosphorus releases it into distance. For foreign travelers, the strait represents the spatial opposite of urban density: openness, air, movement, and panoramic vision. Yet this apparent escape from the city is never neutral. The Bosphorus appears throughout travel literature as a corridor where landscape, settlement, leisure, and imperial power become inseparable. Villages, palaces, gardens, fortresses, wooded hills, and stretches of water unfold sequentially before the moving observer, producing a geography that travelers interpret as both natural wonder and political statement. Unlike the initial maritime arrival, in which Istanbul emerges as a single distant silhouette, movement along the Bosphorus produces a continuously changing panorama. The traveler does not confront one image but a succession of views, and this movement allows the strait to accumulate different meanings over time. Read chronologically, descriptions reveal substantial continuity in the admiration generated by the landscape, but the reasons for that admiration change. In the eighteenth century, the Bosphorus is represented primarily as an inhabited and cultivated landscape; during the nineteenth century it increasingly becomes picturesque spectacle, geopolitical territory, social theater, and eventually an institutionalized tourist itinerary. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Kang Youwei and Le Corbusier reinterpret the same geography through global and modern architectural frameworks. The Bosphorus remains physically recognizable throughout these accounts, but the discourse moves from landscape and domesticity toward spectacle, imperial strategy, tourism, global geography, and spatial abstraction.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu provides the earliest perspective considered here and establishes an important theme that remains visible, though often less prominently, in later descriptions: the Bosphorus as an inhabited landscape rather than untouched nature. Observing the waterfront residences and settlements along its shores, she writes: "The banks are adorned with a chain of villages… each descending into the water with gardens full of fruit and flowers" [1]. Montagu's emphasis is significant because she does not separate natural beauty from human occupation. Villages, gardens, water, and vegetation form a continuous environment in which cultivation enhances rather than interrupts the landscape. The gardens "descending into the water" effectively dissolve the boundary between architecture and terrain, presenting Ottoman elite and domestic life as embedded within geography. The Bosphorus therefore appears not as an empty frontier between continents but as a lived social environment shaped by habitation and leisure. This perspective differs from many later nineteenth-century descriptions in which the strait becomes increasingly monumentalized or aestheticized. Montagu observes beauty, but her beauty is inhabited: the presence of houses, gardens, villages, and everyday life does not disturb the landscape's coherence. Her account consequently establishes an early model in which the Bosphorus is valuable precisely because nature and human settlement appear integrated.

Several decades later, Julia Pardoe retains this admiration for the Bosphorus but changes its visual structure. Describing a boat excursion, she writes: "A succession of pictures so varied and so beautiful, that the eye grows weary with delight before the imagination is satisfied" [2]. The difference from Montagu is subtle but important. Montagu's description concentrates on the relationship between settlement and landscape; Pardoe increasingly turns the experience of movement itself into an aest-

1 Montagu, Letters, 119.
2 Pardoe, City of the Sultan, 148.

hetic principle. The Bosphorus becomes a "succession of pictures," with each curve of the shore revealing a new composition. The traveler is therefore neither entirely stationary nor fully immersed in the landscape but occupies a mobile observational position from which scenery continuously reorganizes itself. Pardoe's metaphor of exhaustion through beauty is particularly revealing: the strait overwhelms not through the bodily density of the bazaar but through visual abundance. The eye cannot exhaust what the landscape offers. In this respect, Pardoe's Bosphorus resembles her aestheticization of the bazaars, yet the spatial experience is reversed. In the market, visual abundance surrounds and absorbs the traveler; on the Bosphorus, abundance unfolds at a distance. Her account thus transforms geography into a moving gallery. The continuity with Montagu lies in the absence of a sharp opposition between human presence and natural beauty, but Pardoe places greater emphasis on the position of the observer and the picturesque sequence produced by travel itself. The Bosphorus is increasingly not merely a place but a way of seeing. (fig. 21)



Fig. 21. William Henry Bartlett, The Summer Palace at Beglier-Bey, 1838.[3]

Vladimir Davidov, writing in approximately the same period, introduces a substantially different interpretation by making the political and military dimensions of the landscape explicit. Davidov's attention also turns to the strategic dimension of the Bosphorus. Looking toward the fortresses on the opposing shores, he interprets them not simply as picturesque elements of the landscape but as reminders of Ottoman control over the strait and of the military history surrounding the conquest of Constantinople [4]. The same panoramic visibility celebrated by Pardoe now acquires strategic meaning. Hills, shorelines, and fortifications are not simply picturesque elements but components of a defended imperial geography. Davidov's Russian perspective is particularly important here, since the Bosphorus possessed obvious geopolitical significance within nineteenth-century Russo-Ottoman relations. The strait could therefore never be entirely detached from questions of military access, imperial rivalry, and control over movement between seas.

3 William Henry Bartlett, The Summer Palace at Beglier-Bey, 1838, in Julia Pardoe, The Beauties of the Bosphorus; Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs (London: George Virtue, 1838), Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation Library.

4 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

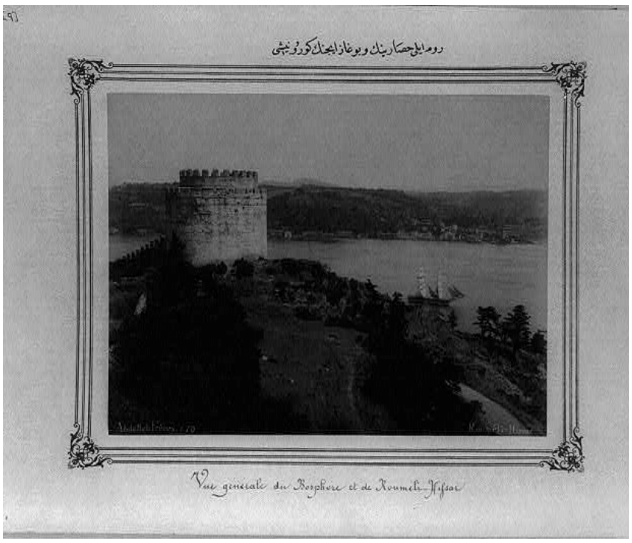


Fig. 22. Abdullah Frères, View of the Bosporus and the Rumeli Hisarı (Fortress), ca. 1880–1893.[5]

The contrast with Pardoe demonstrates again how the same landscape can generate different discourses almost simultaneously. Pardoe's mobile gaze organizes the shoreline into pictures; Davidov's gaze organizes it into strategic relationships. Yet Davidov's account does not reduce the Bosphorus solely to geopolitics. (fig. 22) Davidov's description of excursions to Göksu introduces a more explicitly social dimension to his perception of the Bosphorus. He observes groups gathering and resting in the landscape and draws attention to the fountains and other features that he associates with Ottoman aesthetic taste. At the same time, the nearby fortresses remain visible within this scene of leisure, bringing together recreation, landscape, and reminders of the Bosphorus's military history [6]. Leisure and military history occupy the same field of vision. The landscape of Göksu provided a contrasting social register within the same geography. Late nineteenth-century photographs of Küçüksu place architecture, vegetation, and the Bosphorus within the landscape historically associated with the Sweet Waters of Asia, a major setting for excursion and leisure (fig. 23)

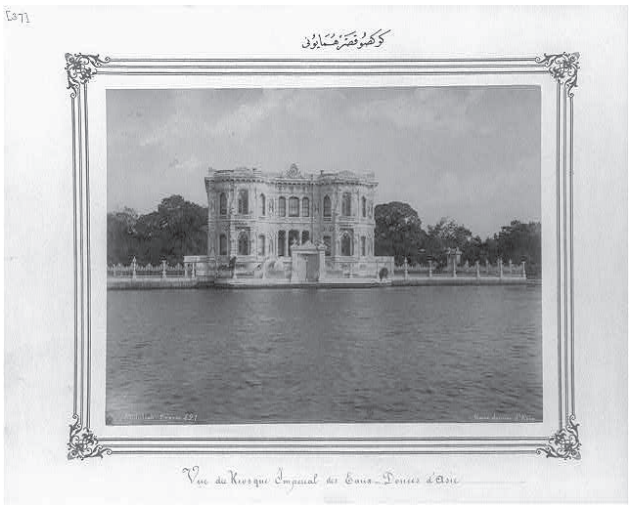


Fig. 23. Abdullah Frères, The Imperial Palace of Göksu [Küçüksu Kasrı], ca. 1880–1893.[7]

5 Abdullah Frères, View of the Bosporus and the Rumeli Hisarı (Fortress), ca. 1880–1893, albumen print, no. 9 (no. 670), Abdul-Hamid II Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

6 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

7 Abdullah Frères, The Imperial Palace of Göksu [Küçüksu Kasrı], ca. 1880–1893, albumen print, no. 37 (no. 421), Abdul-Hamid II Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

People relax on the grass beneath a landscape marked by fortifications associated with conquest and imperial control. The Bosphorus thus becomes a civic stage where everyday pleasure, social visibility, architectural taste, and political memory coexist. Compared with Montagu, who also notices the social occupation of the shoreline, Davidov places that social life within a much more explicitly imperial landscape. The inhabited Bosphorus persists, but the political meaning of its geography has intensified.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, guidebook culture begins to formalize these accumulated ways of seeing. Murray instructs travelers to undertake a full Bosphorus excursion and presents the journey as essential to understanding Constantinople's geographical position between continents [8]. The transformation resembles the process already visible in the chapters on Pera and the bazaars: an experience described personally by earlier travelers becomes standardized as part of tourist practice. Montagu observes the waterfront as inhabited landscape; Pardoe narrates the pleasure of a succession of views; Davidov identifies military and social meanings; Murray organizes the entire journey as an educational itinerary. The Bosphorus is no longer simply something the visitor may discover but something the visitor is expected to see. Tourism transforms geography into knowledge. The excursion teaches the traveler how Istanbul's location relates to Europe and Asia, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean world, and the historical importance of the Ottoman capital. In this sense, the guidebook institutionalizes the dual character already visible in earlier accounts: the Bosphorus is simultaneously beautiful and meaningful. Scenic appreciation becomes inseparable from geographical instruction. The tourist learns that the landscape should be admired not only for its appearance but because it explains the city's historical and imperial position.

Aleksandr Milyukov develops the nineteenth-century aesthetic discourse still further by elevating the Bosphorus into a comparative sublime. Comparing the strait with celebrated European landscapes, particularly the Rhine, he considers the Bosphorus visually superior and presents the journey along it as an apparently inexhaustible succession of picturesque views. His attention repeatedly moves between the waterfront architecture, settlements, gardens, and wooded shores, transforming the Bosphorus into a landscape whose visual richness, in his view, exceeds familiar European points of comparison [9]. His imagery recalls the language used in descriptions of Istanbul's maritime arrival, particularly the recurring impression that architecture appears to float upon water. Yet along the Bosphorus this visual effect extends beyond the urban skyline into an entire inhabited geography. Solidity dissolves into illusion: palaces appear detached from gravity, and the strait becomes a dream-space in which architecture, water, and vegetation merge. Compared with Montagu, the difference is particularly revealing. Both observers admire waterfront habitation, but Montagu emphasizes cultivation and domestic integration, whereas Milyukov monumentalizes the same relationship into sublime spectacle. His comparison with European cities also changes the scale of judgment. The Bosphorus is no longer simply beautiful; it becomes exceptional precisely because familiar European urban landscapes cannot reproduce its combination of terrain, water, and architecture. This admiration, however, does not eliminate the ideological ambivalence found elsewhere in Russian accounts. As with Davidov, aesthetic fascination can coexist with political suspicion. The Russian traveler may recognize the military significance of the strait while simultaneously surrendering to its beauty. The Bosphorus therefore demonstrates particularly clearly that geopolitical rivalry and aesthetic admiration are not contradictory modes of observation. They can operate simultaneously, turning landscape into both spectacle and strategic diagram.

8 Murray, Handbook for Travellers, 112.

9 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

As the nineteenth century progresses, the increasing familiarity of this imagery also creates conditions for nostalgia. Visual culture plays an important role in this process. Engravings circulating in Europe repeatedly depict the Bosphorus through gentle curves of water framed by wooded hills, palaces, villages, gardens, and occasional fortifications. Such representations contribute to a canonical image of harmonious landscape before many visitors experience the strait directly. Like the skyline and the bazaar, the Bosphorus becomes partly prewritten: travelers arrive prepared to encounter an idyll and frequently organize their descriptions around the visual conventions already established by travel literature and prints. (fig. 24) Yet modernization begins to complicate this expectation. In later nineteenth-century accounts, anxiety appears over European-style embankments, new infrastructure, and industrial installations that threaten the pastoral identity attributed to the shores. The significance of this anxiety lies in the contradiction it exposes. Earlier travelers frequently interpret modernization elsewhere in Istanbul as necessary progress, particularly when criticizing streets, sanitation, or infrastructure; along the Bosphorus, however, the intrusion of modern urban forms can be experienced as loss. The strait becomes a battleground between preservation and progress. The picturesque landscape is valued partly because it appears to stand outside the transformations occurring elsewhere in the city, and modernization becomes threatening precisely when it makes the Bosphorus resemble other modern urban environments. As in de Amicis' representation of the bazaars, the perception of continuity becomes stronger when the surrounding city is understood to be changing.



Fig. 24. Bosphorus, View from Kuleli, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[10]

10 Bosphorus, View from Kuleli, Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 16522, LOT 13428, no. 021, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsc-06079.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Kang Youwei shifts the interpretive scale once again. He writes: "Where two seas join and dominate two continents… no other capital in the world holds such a place" [11]. His perspective preserves the long tradition of admiration for Istanbul's geography but reframes its significance within a global theory of capitals. Montagu sees an inhabited and cultivated shoreline; Pardoe experiences an unfolding sequence of beautiful images; Davidov recognizes military control; Murray teaches the traveler to understand continental geography; Kang turns geography itself into an argument for Istanbul's world-historical importance. The city's exceptional position derives not simply from architecture or imperial history but from terrain. The convergence of seas and continents gives Istanbul an advantage that Paris, London, Vienna, or other capitals cannot reproduce.

Kang's account is especially significant because it loosens the conventional European opposition between East and West. From his perspective, the Bosphorus is not merely Europe's boundary with an Oriental world. It is a global intersection. Europe and Asia become components of a larger geographical system rather than opposing civilizational categories. In this respect, Kang's Bosphorus is simultaneously continuous with and different from nineteenth-century European descriptions. The beauty remains, as does the recognition of strategic geography, but the hierarchy through which that geography is interpreted has changed. The strait becomes evidence not of Istanbul's marginal position between worlds but of its centrality within them.

Le Corbusier's early twentieth-century encounter produces the final major interpretive shift in this chronological sequence. Sketching the waterfront villages and forms along the shore, he reduces them to rhythmic architectural relationships, transforming scenery into spatial analysis [12]. His response does not eliminate the aesthetic experience emphasized by earlier travelers, but it reorganizes it through a modern architectural vocabulary. Where Pardoe sees a succession of pictures, Le Corbusier sees sequences of form. Where Milyukov describes palaces floating upon the water, Le Corbusier examines the relationships between built mass, shoreline, topography, and open space. The landscape becomes geometry. This distinction is crucial because it demonstrates how an established picturesque object can be reinterpreted through a twentieth-century discourse of spatial composition. The Bosphorus is no longer valuable primarily because it appears exotic or incomparable with Europe; it can provide architectural knowledge. Yet this interpretation also preserves something of the earlier tradition. Pardoe's moving observer and Le Corbusier's spatial analysis both depend upon sequence: the landscape is understood through movement rather than through a single fixed viewpoint. The discourse changes from picturesque representation to architectural abstraction, but the underlying spatial experience of the Bosphorus continues to structure perception.

Taken chronologically, these accounts therefore reveal a development considerably more complex than the repetition of a conventional picturesque view. Montagu's eighteenth-century Bosphorus is an inhabited landscape in which gardens, villages, water, and domestic life appear integrated. Pardoe transforms that environment into a moving sequence of visual compositions, establishing the excursion as a form of panoramic spectatorship. Davidov demonstrates that the same views can simultaneously be read as strategic and social geography, with fortresses, leisure, and imperial memory occupying the same landscape. Murray subsequently institutionalizes the excursion, transforming the Bosphorus into a prescribed geographical lesson for tourists. Milyukov intensifies its aesthetic exceptionalism through the language of the sublime and comparison with European cities. Late nineteenth-century anxiety about modernization then introduces nostalgia, making the apparently

11 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.

12 Le Corbusier, Le Voyage d'Orient, 142.

timeless shoreline valuable precisely because it appears threatened by change. Kang expands the scale from European comparison to global geography, while Le Corbusier ultimately translates the picturesque landscape into a modern discourse of spatial and architectural composition. These interpretations are not simply successive replacements. The cultivated landscape identified by Montagu survives within later descriptions; Pardoe's picturesque movement continues in tourist excursions; Davidov's geopolitical awareness reappears in global arguments about the strategic position of Istanbul; and the visual sequences admired throughout the nineteenth century provide material for Le Corbusier's modernist abstraction.

The continuity across the period is therefore the extraordinary authority attributed to geography. Unlike Pera, whose significance depends heavily upon social and architectural transformation, or the bazaars, whose meaning emerges through embodied interaction, the Bosphorus repeatedly appears to travelers as something more permanent than the city constructed around it. Political regimes, buildings, fashions, and infrastructures may change, but the strait continues to organize Istanbul spatially. Yet the apparent permanence of geography should not be confused with permanence of meaning. For Montagu, terrain provides a setting for cultivated domestic life; for Pardoe, it produces aesthetic sequence; for Davidov, it embodies imperial strategy; for Murray, it becomes tourist knowledge; for Milyukov, sublime exception; for Kang, global centrality; and for Le Corbusier, spatial structure. The waterway remains constant while the intellectual frameworks imposed upon it change. This makes the Bosphorus particularly valuable to the location-based and chronological method: the stability of the site allows shifts in perception to become more visible.

At the same time, the Bosphorus destabilizes the rigid East–West binary through which many travelers attempt to understand Istanbul. The strait is frequently described as the line separating Europe and Asia, yet the experience of moving along it suggests precisely the opposite. The two shores appear simultaneously within a continuous visual field. (fig. 25) Villages, palaces, gardens, fortresses, and hills repeat across the water rather than dividing neatly into opposing civilizational landscapes. Geography therefore both creates and undermines the concept of a boundary. The Bosphorus separates continents cartographically while joining them experientially.



Fig. 25. Bosphorus, Rumeli and Anadolu Hisarı, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[13]

13 Bosphorus, Rumeli and Anadali-Hissar [Anadolu Hisarı], Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 16523, LOT 13428, no. 022, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsc-06080.

This tension helps explain why the strait acquires such symbolic power in travel writing: it gives physical form to Istanbul's supposedly liminal identity while simultaneously revealing the inadequacy of treating liminality as simple division. The traveler moves through water and, at the same time, through conceptual categories that the landscape continually destabilizes. The Bosphorus thus functions as more than scenery. Across two centuries of travel writing, it becomes an inhabited landscape, a picturesque sequence, a military corridor, a social stage, a tourist itinerary, a threatened idyll, a global geographical argument, and finally a lesson in spatial composition. Its meanings accumulate without completely erasing one another. As in Hagia Sophia, continuity of place makes discontinuity of interpretation visible; but unlike Hagia Sophia, whose meanings are concentrated within a single architectural object, the Bosphorus produces interpretation through movement across an extended landscape. The traveler never sees the whole strait at once. Meaning emerges sequentially, as one view gives way to another. In this sense, the Bosphorus is perhaps the clearest spatial expression of the method used throughout these chapters: a relatively continuous geography reveals historical change through the changing ways in which successive observers describe it.

By centering the Bosphorus and arranging these accounts chronologically, the landscape emerges as a frontier where geography mediates cultural imagination rather than simply reflecting it. The persistence of admiration is striking, but admiration alone does not explain the travel narratives. What changes is what travelers believe the beauty of the Bosphorus signifies: cultivated Ottoman life, picturesque abundance, imperial control, metropolitan exceptionalism, geopolitical centrality, threatened authenticity, or architectural intelligence. The landscape becomes an argument because each observer uses the same geography to articulate a different understanding of Istanbul. The strait does not merely divide Europe and Asia; it connects different modes of seeing the city across time.

The following chapter returns from this apparently enduring geography to the changing built environment. If the Bosphorus allows travelers to imagine a degree of continuity within Istanbul's landscape, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernization makes continuity increasingly difficult to sustain within the city itself. Urban reform, new infrastructure, changing architecture, transportation, and Europeanized forms of public life force travelers to confront a capital whose material transformation challenges the romantic and Oriental frameworks through which it had long been represented.

Section II: Ideology

Modernization and Urban Transformation: Between Progress, Imitation, and Loss

By the mid-nineteenth century, foreign travelers increasingly encountered an Istanbul whose material transformation complicated the image of a timeless, labyrinthine, and essentially medieval city established in earlier travel writing. Streets widened, bridges connected previously separated districts, embankments altered the waterfront, transportation improved, and European institutions and architectural forms became increasingly visible within the Ottoman capital. These transformations did more than change the physical city: they destabilized the conceptual categories through which foreign observers had learned to interpret Istanbul. A city valued for irregularity, picturesque difference, wooden architecture, narrow streets, and apparent distance from European modernity was gradually acquiring precisely the characteristics by which nineteenth-century travelers measured urban progress. Modernization consequently generated a fundamental contradiction in foreign representation. Travelers frequently criticized Istanbul for failing to conform to European standards of infrastructure, cleanliness, accessibility, and urban organization, yet they could also mourn the disappearance of the irregular and unfamiliar city when those standards were adopted. Read chronologically, their accounts reveal not a uniform response to reform but a developing discourse around what modernization meant. Charles White initially emphasizes connectivity and circulation; Russian observers such as Aleksandr Milyukov interpret Europeanization as potentially superficial imitation; guidebooks increasingly evaluate reform according to functionality and order; Edmondo de Amicis transforms modernization into an emotional conflict between improvement and loss; Kang Youwei reframes it as a political question concerning the survival of non-Western empires; and Le Corbusier ultimately reads the coexistence of old and new not simply as contradiction but as layered urban form. The continuity across these accounts is the recognition that Istanbul is changing. What changes is whether that transformation signifies progress, imitation, destruction, adaptation, or productive coexistence.

Charles White's observations in the 1840s provide an early indication of this shift toward understanding Istanbul through circulation and infrastructure. The construction of bridges across the Golden Horn becomes particularly significant because it physically alters the relationship between districts that travelers had previously experienced as culturally and socially distinct. White observes that the bridge allows "a circulation of life that unites quarters once separated by habit and custom" [1]. His choice of "circulation" is important: modernization is not represented simply through the appearance of new architecture but through changed patterns of movement. The bridge brings populations into greater proximity, increases visibility between districts, and transforms the spatial organization of everyday life. In this sense, infrastructure becomes social as well as physical. The importance of the bridge lies not merely in spanning water but in weakening boundaries that had structured the older city. White's relatively positive interpretation differs from the nostalgia that becomes more pronounced later in the century. At this stage, connection can still appear as expansion rather than erosion.

The bridge creates new relationships within the city and suggests that modernization can emerge through the transformation of urban movement rather than simply through the importation of European architectural forms. Yet White's account also anticipates a question that becomes increasingly important in later descriptions: if modernization connects previously distinct parts of Istanbul, what happens to the differences that made those districts recognizable in the first place? The infrastructure that produces greater urban integration simultaneously begins to undermine the spatial

1 White, Three Years in Constantinople, 14.

separations through which travelers had categorized the Ottoman capital. The transformation described by White became increasingly visible as the Golden Horn developed into a major axis of urban circulation. Later representations of the Galata Bridge emphasize pedestrians, vehicles, and movement between the historic peninsula and Galata, making infrastructure itself part of the visual identity of the modernizing city (fig. 26, 27).



Fig. 26. Kara-Keui (Galata) Bridge, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[2]



Fig. 27. Views of the Galata Bridge and its connection between Stamboul, Galata, and Pera, ca. 1890–1900.[3]

2 Kara-Keui (Galata) Bridge, Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 6037, LOT 13428, no. 003, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsc-06061.

3 Kara-Keui (Galata) Bridge, Constantinople, Turkey, print no. 6037, and Kara-Keui (Galata) and View of Pera, Constantinople, Turkey, print no. 6039, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom prints, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reproduction nos. LC-DIG-ppmsc-06061 and LC-DIG-ppmsc-06062.

Russian observers make this problem of cultural transformation considerably more explicit. Aleksandr Milyukov approaches Istanbul's changing urban character with ambivalence. While recognizing increasingly Europeanized elements, he emphasizes the persistence of older architectural forms, presenting modernization as a process of coexistence rather than complete transformation [4]. The metaphor of disguise converts architecture into costume. Unlike White, who emphasizes what new infrastructure allows the city to do, Milyukov focuses on the relationship between external form and cultural identity. Europeanization becomes something worn by Istanbul rather than something organically generated from within it. His formulation depends upon the assumption that beneath visible modernization there exists an authentic and relatively stable "soul" of the city capable of resisting transformation. Modernization is therefore interpreted as imitation rather than evolution.

This perspective parallels the discomfort Russian travelers express toward Pera, where European forms similarly appear to produce an unstable East–West mixture. Yet here the problem expands beyond one district and becomes a question about the city as a whole: can an Ottoman capital adopt European urban forms without ceasing to be itself? Milyukov's answer remains skeptical. The significance of this response lies in the contradiction it exposes within foreign expectations. European observers could identify European planning and architecture with progress while simultaneously dismissing their appearance in Istanbul as imitation. The city is effectively placed in an impossible position: failure to modernize confirms backwardness, while modernization risks being interpreted as cultural disguise. What White reads through circulation, Milyukov therefore reads through authenticity. The increasingly Europeanized appearance of Pera made the material consequences of reform particularly visible. The Grande Rue de Péra combined European-style façades, commercial activity, and modern urban circulation, embodying the transformations that travelers alternately interpreted as imitation or functional progress (fig. 28).



Fig. 28. Constantinople. Grande Rue de Péra. Galatasaray. 1910.[5]

4 Ünal, Karakulak, and Özkan, İstanbul Seyahatnamesi.

5 "Constantinople. Grande Rue de Péra. Galatasaray," ca. 1910, photochrom postcard, SALT Research, Cities, Society and Economy Archive, Beyoğlu Collection, Document No: AHISTBEYO084, saltresearch.org.

By the middle and later nineteenth century, guidebook culture offers a considerably more confident interpretation of reform. Murray praises improvements in transportation, infrastructure, and public order, treating them as evidence that Istanbul is becoming more accessible and manageable to the foreign visitor [6]. The contrast with Milyukov is revealing. Where Milyukov asks whether Europeanization corresponds to the city's authentic identity, Murray is primarily concerned with whether modernization functions. Roads, transport, public order, and improved circulation are evaluated pragmatically. The guidebook therefore translates reform into measurable convenience and, in doing so, increasingly interprets the city through European standards of urban legibility. This development also changes the position of the traveler. The irregular city encountered by earlier visitors required navigation through uncertainty; the modernizing city can increasingly be mapped, connected, categorized, and explained. Tourism consequently aligns itself with reform. Better transportation expands the itinerary, improved infrastructure reduces unpredictability, and urban organization makes Istanbul easier to consume as a sequence of destinations. The difference between White and Murray nevertheless remains important. White observes the social consequences of new connectivity, whereas Murray incorporates infrastructure into a standardized system of tourist knowledge. By this stage, modernization does not merely alter Istanbul; it also alters the mechanisms through which foreigners encounter it

.

Edmondo de Amicis's account of 1878 reveals the contradiction produced when this material progress becomes sufficiently extensive to threaten the picturesque city travelers had learned to value. Walking through neighborhoods reconstructed after fires, he writes: "Magnificent avenues replace the ruins… but one cannot walk without feeling that something intimate has been erased"[7]. His response is neither a rejection of modernization nor an uncomplicated celebration of it. The new avenues are explicitly "magnificent," acknowledging the achievements of reconstruction, yet improvement generates emotional displacement. Something has been "erased." This language marks an important shift from Milyukov's anxiety about imitation. Milyukov questions whether European forms belong to Istanbul; de Amicis accepts that transformation is occurring but mourns what it destroys.

The problem is no longer simply authenticity versus imitation but progress versus memory. Irregularity, narrowness, and older urban forms acquire aesthetic value precisely at the moment when they begin to disappear. Order threatens poetry. This ambivalence also exposes a deeper contradiction within the nineteenth-century foreign gaze. Travelers repeatedly criticize Ottoman streets for disorder, poor circulation, or inadequate infrastructure, yet once reform produces wider avenues and more regular urban space, the older city becomes an object of nostalgia. The desire for modernization therefore conflicts with the desire for difference. Istanbul is expected to improve without becoming ordinary, to modernize without losing the visual characteristics through which foreign travelers recognize it as Istanbul. The nostalgia described by de Amicis depended upon the continued visibility of urban environments that appeared resistant to regularization. Late nineteenth-century representations of older districts such as Eyüp preserve precisely the narrow and irregular street fabric that acquired increasing picturesque value as other parts of Istanbul were reconstructed and reorganized (fig. 29, 30).

6 . John Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Constantinople, the Bosphorus, Dardanelles, Brousa, and Plain of Troy, with General Hints for Travellers in Turkey (London: John Murray, 1871), 24-26.

7 De Amicis, Constantinople, 156.

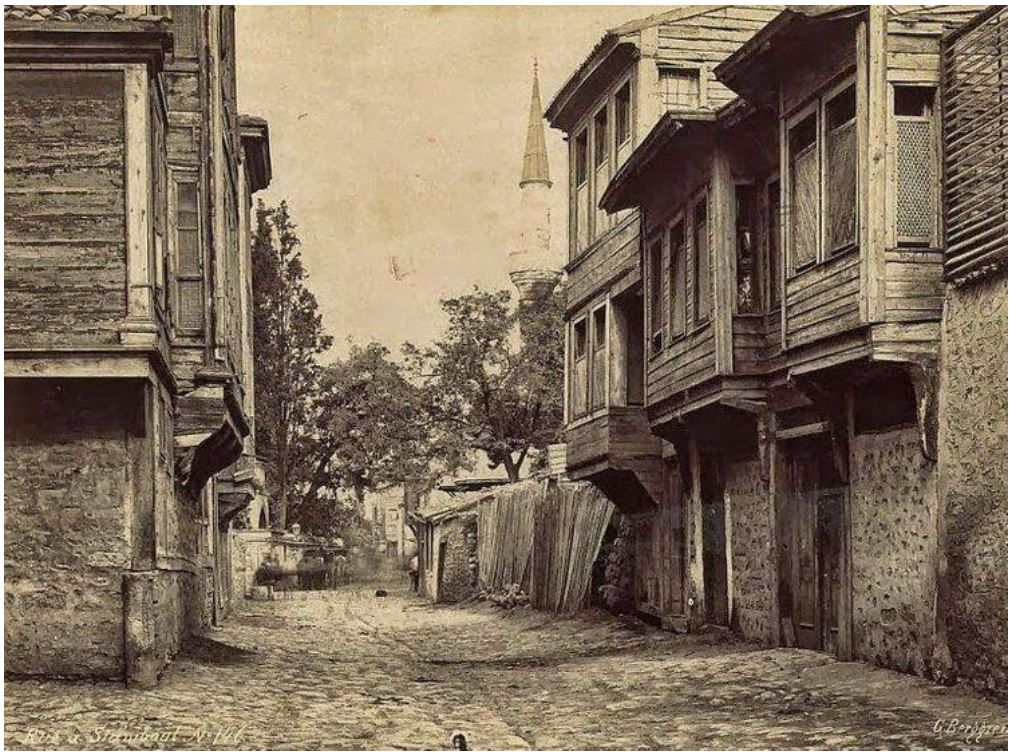


Fig. 29. Guillaume Berggren, Une rue à Stamboul (Eyüp), ca. 1880–1900.[8]

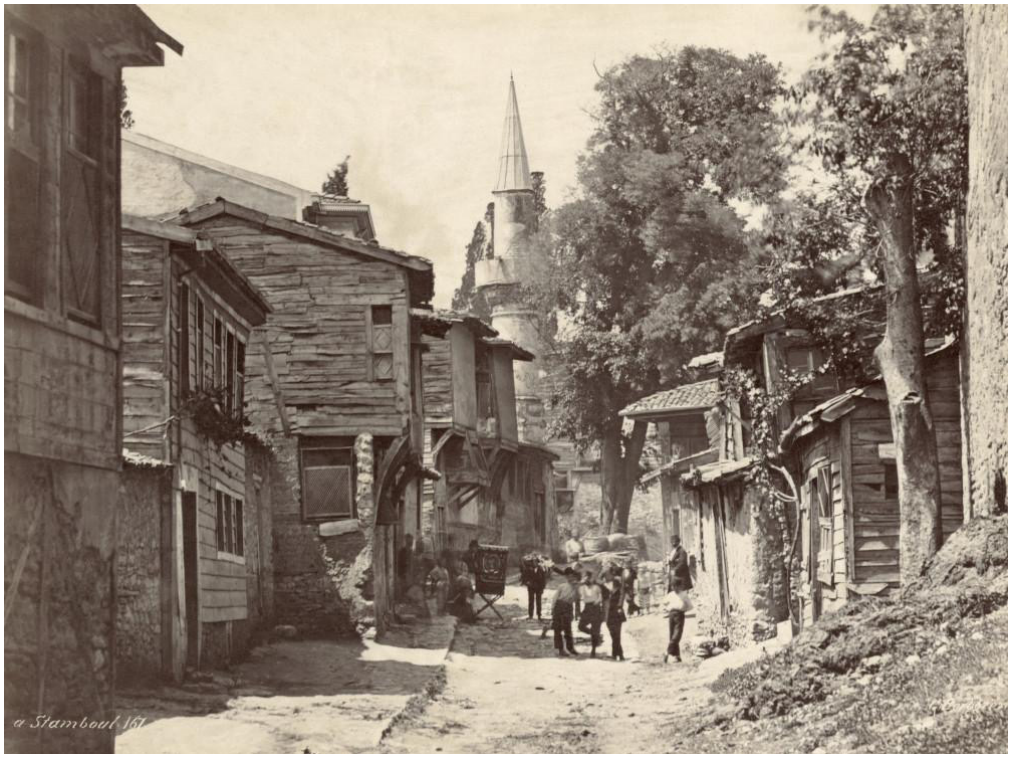


Fig. 30. Une rue à Stamboul (Kasım Çavuş Camii, Eyüp), ca. 1880–1890.[9]

8 Guillaume Berggren, Une rue à Stamboul, ca. 1880–1900, albumen print, no. 160, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, via Alvin Portal Academic Archive, record no. 277.

9 Guillaume Berggren, Une rue à Stamboul (Kasım Çavuş Camii, Eyüp), ca. 1880–1890, albumen print, no. 161, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, via Alvin Portal Academic Archive, record no. 278.

This tension is intensified by the development of tourism and visual culture during the later nineteenth century. As new infrastructure makes the city increasingly accessible, guidebooks and maps organize it into prescribed routes, monuments, districts, and excursions. By the early twentieth century, Baedeker[10] presents Istanbul as an ordered sequence of attractions that can be navigated through standardized information[11]. The contrast with earlier travel is significant. The city that had often been represented as labyrinthine and resistant to comprehension becomes increasingly legible (fig. 31). Tourism replaces a degree of exploration with itinerary, and modernization of infrastructure is accompanied by standardization of perception. The foreign visitor increasingly knows where to stay, which monuments to visit, how to travel between them, and how much time should be allocated to each experience. For some travelers, this legibility represents improvement; for others, it threatens precisely the unpredictability through which Istanbul had acquired romantic appeal. Modernization and tourism thus participate in the same process: both reduce uncertainty. Yet the city never becomes entirely standardized. Wooden houses, narrow streets, traditional neighborhoods, monumental complexes, and older rhythms of everyday life persist alongside boulevards, bridges, hotels, embassies, and new transportation systems. The contrast that de Amicis experiences emotionally therefore becomes a structural condition of the late Ottoman city.



Fig. 31. Karl Baedeker, plan of Constantinople, from Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien, Archipel, Cypern, 1914.[12]

Kang Youwei's early twentieth-century perspective moves the debate beyond the European opposition between progress and picturesque loss. Observing Westernized clothing, institutions, and visible forms of reform, he writes: "The change is visible everywhere… yet imitation without understanding cannot bring strength" [13]. His criticism resembles Milyukov's suspicion of superficial Europeanization, but the ideological basis is substantially different. Milyukov's language of "disguise" assumes a conflict between European appearance and an authentic Ottoman identity; Kang approaches imitation as a problem of political effectiveness.

10 Karl Baedeker (1801–1859) was the German publisher who founded the Baedeker travel-guide tradition, which became one of the most influential systems of standardized European tourist information during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The 1914 Constantinople guide used in this thesis was produced by the Baedeker publishing house after Karl Baedeker's death, and should therefore be treated as an institutional guidebook rather than as Karl Baedeker's personal observation of Istanbul.

11 Karl Baedeker, Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien, Archipel, Cypern: Handbuch für Reisende (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1914), 122-124.

12 Karl Baedeker, plan of Constantinople, in Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien, Archipel, Cypern: Handbuch für Reisende (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1914).

13 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.

As a Chinese reformist observing another non-Western empire confronting European power, he is interested in whether borrowed forms can produce genuine institutional strength. His perspective is therefore comparative and strategic rather than nostalgic. The central question is not whether Istanbul should remain visually Ottoman, but whether modernization has been internalized sufficiently to transform the state and society. Clothing and architecture become visible symptoms of a much deeper political problem. The adoption of European forms can demonstrate willingness to reform, but appearance alone does not guarantee structural transformation. Istanbul consequently becomes a case study in the dilemmas faced by non-Western empires under conditions of global European dominance. Kang's account is particularly important because it destabilizes the assumption that modernization must be understood as a simple movement from an Eastern past toward a European future. Instead, the Ottoman experience becomes comparable with other societies negotiating the relationship between imported models, institutional reform, and cultural autonomy.

Le Corbusier encounters a city in which this process of transformation has already produced visible layers. He observes: "Modern streets cut through ancient fabric, yet the old forms persist stubbornly" [14]. His description represents another significant shift in the discourse. Where de Amicis experiences the juxtaposition of old and new primarily as emotional loss, Le Corbusier interprets it spatially. The modern street and the ancient fabric exist simultaneously. Modernization has not successfully erased the older city, nor has tradition prevented modern intervention. Instead, different temporal systems occupy the same urban environment. Istanbul becomes an archive of simultaneous eras. This interpretation parallels Le Corbusier's response to the Bosphorus and Hagia Sophia, where inherited forms are increasingly examined through spatial rather than exclusively civilizational categories. The distinction from Milyukov is especially important. Milyukov imagines an authentic city concealed beneath a European "disguise," implying that one layer is real and the other superficial. Le Corbusier does not require such a hierarchy. The old and new can coexist materially, and their tension itself becomes architecturally significant. Modernization is therefore neither purely additive nor entirely subtractive: it cuts, overlays, reorganizes, and exposes. The city does not simply replace itself. It accumulates. (fig. 32-33)

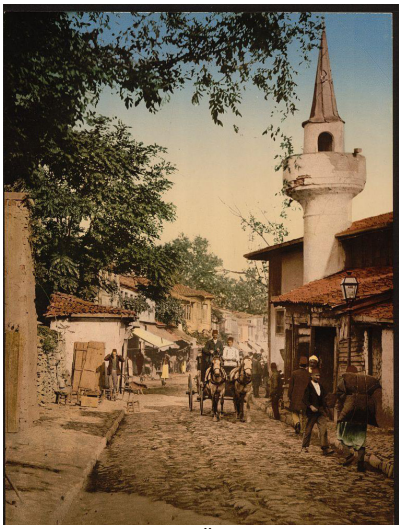


Fig. 32. Street in Scutari [Üsküdar], Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900..[15]



Fig. 33. Constantinople. Fontaine et rue à Scutari (Üsküdar), ca. 1890–1900.[16]

14 Le Corbusier, Le Voyage d'Orient, 165.

15 Street in Scutari [Üsküdar], Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, Photoglob Zürich (P.Z.), Photochrom Print Collection.

16 Photoglob Zürich (P.Z.), Constantinople. Fontaine et rue à Scutari, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 18478, Qatar National Library, Heritage Collection, HC.HP.2017.0176.

Foreign travel narratives, however, provide only one perspective on this transformation. Ottoman municipal discourse complicates the recurring interpretation of modernization as European intrusion or imitation. Municipal reforms framed street widening, sanitation projects, infrastructure, and reconstruction as forms of rational urban governance necessary for public health, circulation, security, and imperial prestige. This internal perspective is important because it exposes the gap between external perception and institutional intention. A traveler such as Milyukov could interpret European-style architecture as cultural disguise, while Ottoman administrators could understand the same transformations as practical responses to fire, congestion, sanitation, transportation, and the demands of governing a modern imperial capital. Likewise, the "magnificent avenues" that de Amicis experiences through a language of aesthetic loss were not produced primarily to satisfy a European visual ideal; they emerged from specific administrative and urban concerns. Placing these perspectives alongside one another therefore prevents foreign travel writing from becoming the unquestioned account of modernization. Travelers interpret the city according to expectations of authenticity, difference, civilization, or picturesque value, whereas municipal actors confront it as an environment requiring governance. The discrepancy reveals that modernization is itself a contested category: what appears externally as Westernization may internally be understood as reform.

Read chronologically, the accounts consequently reveal a substantial transformation in the discourse surrounding Istanbul's changing urban fabric. White's 1840s observations emphasize the possibilities created by new circulation and physical connection. Milyukov interprets increasingly European forms through suspicion, opposing visible modernization to an imagined authentic urban "soul." Murray's guidebook perspective shifts attention from authenticity toward functionality, measuring reform through transportation, public order, and accessibility. By the 1870s, de Amicis recognizes the achievements of modernization while simultaneously constructing the disappearing irregular city as an object of nostalgia. Kang subsequently transforms the issue from a European aesthetic judgment into a global political problem: the crucial distinction is no longer between East and West, but between superficial imitation and meaningful reform. Finally, Le Corbusier reads the resulting city as a material coexistence of temporal layers. These positions cannot be reduced to a simple movement from negative to positive interpretations of modernization. Rather, each introduces a different criterion through which change is evaluated: connectivity for White, authenticity for Milyukov, functionality for Murray, memory for de Amicis, political effectiveness for Kang, and spatial coexistence for Le Corbusier.

The chronology also reveals an important paradox. As Istanbul becomes materially more modern, foreign travel writing can become more nostalgic. Modernization does not necessarily make travelers more receptive to the city; it can instead intensify their desire to preserve an imagined earlier Istanbul. The wooden house, narrow street, irregular neighborhood, and unpredictable urban rhythm acquire greater symbolic importance precisely when bridges, avenues, embankments, and Europeanized districts begin to transform the conditions in which they exist. The "timeless East" is therefore not simply an inherited stereotype applied to an unchanging city. It can also be produced retrospectively by modernization itself. The faster the city changes, the more insistently some observers search for spaces that appear not to have changed. The bazaars become "unchanged since the centuries of caravans"; the Bosphorus becomes a threatened pastoral idyll; older neighborhoods become intimate worlds endangered by reconstruction. Nostalgia thus becomes one of the mechanisms through which Orientalist timelessness survives despite visible evidence of historical transformation.

At the same time, the persistence of older structures prevents modernization from producing a straightforward narrative of Westernization. Bridges alter circulation and boulevards cut through established neighborhoods, but monuments continue to anchor historical memory; Europeanized districts coexist with older residential patterns; new transportation networks operate alongside inherited spatial structures. Istanbul refuses complete transformation just as it refuses complete stasis. This coexistence is crucial to understanding why different travelers reach such contradictory conclusions. A visitor searching for progress can find bridges, infrastructure, public order, and European institutions; one searching for an older Orient can still find narrow streets, bazaars, wooden houses, and monumental religious architecture. The same city therefore sustains apparently opposing narratives because modernization proceeds unevenly across space. The location-based method makes this particularly visible: Pera absorbs reform differently from the historic peninsula, bridges transform movement without erasing the districts they connect, and the Bosphorus can remain visually pastoral even while infrastructure elsewhere changes the metropolitan system. Modernization is therefore not a singular event imposed uniformly upon Istanbul but a continuous and spatially uneven negotiation.

This unevenness also destabilizes the Orientalist fantasy of an East existing outside historical time. The nineteenth-century city is visibly contemporary: it responds to fire, population movement, international commerce, technological change, administrative reform, transportation, and the expansion of tourism. Foreign travelers can mourn this transformation or dismiss it as imitation, but they cannot entirely deny it. The very emergence of nostalgia demonstrates that the supposedly timeless city is changing. In this respect, modernization alters not only Istanbul but also the structure of foreign observation. The traveler increasingly evaluates infrastructure, governance, circulation, reconstruction, and planning rather than merely monuments, customs, and picturesque scenes. Istanbul becomes a case study in urban transformation as well as a theater of cultural difference.

The larger discourse that emerges from these accounts is therefore not a simple conflict between tradition and modernity. It is a debate over who has the authority to define successful change. For White, change becomes meaningful when it connects urban life; for Milyukov, it remains suspect when external form appears disconnected from cultural identity; for Murray, its value lies in order and practical accessibility; for de Amicis, material improvement can still constitute aesthetic and emotional destruction; for Kang, reform must produce genuine political capacity rather than surface resemblance; and for Le Corbusier, the significance of modernization lies partly in the spatial relationship it creates between inherited and contemporary forms. Ottoman administrative perspectives introduce yet another criterion, emphasizing governance, health, circulation, and imperial prestige rather than the preservation of the picturesque city desired by foreign observers. Modernization thus becomes not one process with one meaning, but a contested discourse produced through different expectations of what a city should preserve, abandon, or become.

Seen through this chronological and comparative framework, Istanbul's transformation does not destroy the contradictions identified in the earlier spatial chapters;intensifies them. The panorama remains beautiful while infrastructure changes the city beneath it. Hagia Sophia continues to anchor historical memory while new urban systems develop around it. Pera makes Europeanization visible, the bazaars appear to preserve older commercial rhythms, and the Bosphorus seems to offer geographical continuity even as modernization alters its shores. The modern city accumulates rather than resolves oppositions. Progress and nostalgia, imitation and adaptation, continuity and rupture become simultaneous conditions of urban experience. Modernization does not make Istanbul more easily classifiable as either Eastern or Western. It demonstrates the inadequacy of the classification itself.

The next chapter shifts from the transformation of urban space to the question of who was able to enter, observe, and describe that space. Gender profoundly shaped the geography available to travelers and therefore the knowledge they produced. Female travelers could gain access to domestic interiors, baths, and forms of women's sociability that remained largely inaccessible to male observers, while modernization gradually altered patterns of mobility and public visibility. The differences between male and female accounts consequently reveal that foreign representations of Istanbul were shaped not only by chronology, nationality, or ideology, but also by the embodied conditions under which the city could be experienced.

Gendered Geographies:

Access, Visibility, and the Production of Knowledge

Gender has become a central analytical category in the study of travel writing because it fundamentally shaped how travelers experienced and represented the societies they visited. Travel narratives are not neutral records of observation but texts produced through socially conditioned encounters in which access to people and places determined what could be seen, interpreted, and ultimately recorded. As Sara Mills argues, travel writing is always situated: the identity of the traveler, including gender, influences the authority, perspective, and limitations of the narrative [1]. Women's travel accounts should therefore not simply be regarded as alternative versions of male narratives but as distinct forms of knowledge production capable of revealing dimensions of societies often inaccessible to male observers. In the Ottoman Empire this distinction was particularly significant because urban space itself was organized through gendered social practices. Although women actively participated in economic and social life, conventions governing interaction between unrelated men and women created different patterns of movement and access. Elite households, women's quarters, and hammams generally remained inaccessible to foreign male visitors, whereas female travelers could enter such spaces through accepted social customs, diplomatic introductions, or female networks. As Billie Melman observes, women travelers to the Ottoman Empire consequently occupied an unusual intermediary position: they remained outsiders, but could witness dimensions of everyday domestic and female life unavailable to most European men [2]. Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone" provides a useful framework for understanding this asymmetry, defining such zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" [3]. Gender determined the conditions under which such contact could occur: who could enter a space, with whom conversation could take place, and which forms of everyday life became visible. The consequence was not simply that male and female travelers described different details, but that they produced different maps of the same city. Istanbul emerges through their accounts as a collection of overlapping geographies, each structured by permission, exclusion, social position, and embodied experience.

This difference, however, should not be transformed into a simple opposition in which male travelers produce Orientalist fantasy while women provide objective truth. Reina Lewis has demonstrated that female travelers themselves negotiated between direct observation and inherited Orientalist expectations. Although access to harems, baths, and domestic environments allowed them to challenge established European assumptions, they continued to write for Western audiences already familiar with particular images of the Ottoman world [4]. Edward Said's discussion of Orientalism further complicates the question by emphasizing that representations of the East emerged not simply from individual prejudice but through broader structures of knowledge and cultural authority [5]. Female travelers therefore occupied an ambiguous position: their experiences could destabilize established representations without necessarily escaping the discursive systems through which those representations

1 Mills, Discources in Difference, 3-9.
2 Melman, Women's Orients, 7-12.
3 Pratt, Imperial eyes, 7.
4 Lewis, Rethinking Orientalism, 5-8.
5 Said, Orientalism, 2-3.

acquired meaning. The central question of this chapter is consequently not whether women described Istanbul "better" or more accurately than men, but what kinds of knowledge became possible through gendered access. The distinction between public monuments and private interiors, ceremonial spaces and everyday life, observation and participation reveals that the city could never be fully known from a single social position. Gender becomes analytical precisely because it exposes the limitations of the supposedly universal traveler's gaze.



Fig. 34. Carlo Francesco Rusca, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), Writer and Traveller, 1739.[6]

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (fig. 34) stands at the beginning of this alternative geography in the early eighteenth century. Her letters repeatedly emphasize that her position as a woman grants access to environments unavailable to European men. Describing her entrance into an Ottoman bath, she writes: "I am the first foreign woman that ever had the curiosity to visit these baths" [7]. The statement is methodological as much as personal: Montagu establishes her authority by identifying the limits of previous observation. Her importance derives not merely from seeing something unusual but from seeing something that the dominant male travel tradition could not directly verify. The hammam consequently becomes a site of ethnographic confrontation between inherited representation and embodied experience. Montagu describes "two hundred women… perfectly at ease… laughing, talking, and enjoying liberty" [8], and elsewhere emphasizes that they were "naked, but without the least wanton smile or immodest gesture" [9]. These observations directly challenge the eroticized assumptions through which female Ottoman spaces circulated in European imagination. Nudity does not produce sexual availability; enclosure does not necessarily produce visible oppression. Instead, Montagu presents the bath as a structured environment of sociability in which women converse and interact beyond the presence of men. Her famous assertion that "These women are the only free people in the empire" [10] reverses the expected hierarchy even more dramatically. The space imagined externally as evidence of confinement becomes, from within, a space through which she interprets forms of female autonomy. Whether or not this claim accurately captures the complexity of Ottoman women's social position is less important here than the epistemological reversal it produces: Montagu demonstrates that changing the observer's access can radically change the meaning assigned to the same institution.

6 Carlo Francesco Rusca, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), Writer and Traveller, 1739, oil on canvas, Government Art Collection, United Kingdom.

7 Montagu, Letters, 57.

8 Montagu, Letters, 58.

9 Montagu, Letters, 58.

10 Montagu, Letters, 210.

Several decades later, Lady Elizabeth Craven continues this tradition of female access but does not simply reproduce Montagu's position. Her writing combines admiration for the physical city with curiosity toward social customs and private environments. Craven marvels at "the cleanliness of the streets of this town, the admirable setting of the city of Constantinople, the majesty of Hagia Sophia's huge dome, [and] the spectacular beauty" of the urban and maritime environment, while also describing Turkish feminine dress and private spaces such as baths and harems that she could visit because she was a woman [11]. Her account therefore connects the monumental and domestic geographies that male travel writing often separates. Hagia Sophia, the streets, clothing, baths, and harems all become components of the same field of observation. Craven's interest in the harem is particularly revealing because it demonstrates that female access did not automatically eliminate the attraction of those spaces as exotic objects. Scholarship on Craven notes that her interest in Constantinople combined curiosity toward the harem with broader judgments concerning Ottoman commercial and industrial development and the political situation of Greece[12] [13]. Compared with Montagu, therefore, Craven occupies a more ambiguous position. Montagu explicitly uses firsthand experience to contradict European assumptions about female confinement and eroticism; Craven benefits from similar access but integrates those observations into a wider narrative that can still reproduce European political and cultural judgments. The difference between them is analytically important because it prevents female travel writing from being treated as a single corrective discourse. Gender creates opportunities for knowledge, but it does not predetermine the conclusions drawn from that knowledge.

By the 1830s, Julia Pardoe develops the domestic geography opened by Montagu and Craven into a more sustained critique of the limits of conventional travel observation. Visiting Ottoman households, she writes: "Within these walls exists a world entirely unknown to the traveler who walks only the streets" [14]. The distinction between "within these walls" and the traveler who "walks only the streets" is fundamental. Pardoe effectively divides travel knowledge into two spatial systems: the publicly visible city and the privately accessible city. The first is dominated by streets, monuments, markets, bridges, and panoramas; the second contains households, interpersonal relationships, hospitality, aesthetic environments, and forms of female sociability that cannot be reconstructed from external observation. Compared with Montagu, Pardoe's argument is less dependent upon the exceptional novelty of being a foreign woman inside a restricted space.

A century after Montagu, female access has become capable of sustaining a broader social interpretation of Istanbul. Pardoe repeatedly emphasizes women conversing, managing households, participating in consumption, and creating domestic environments, thereby complicating narratives that reduce Ottoman women to passive inhabitants of the harem. Her observations of women in bazaars similarly connect private and public geographies: female mobility does not end at the threshold of the household but extends into markets and other structured spaces of social participation. The difference from much male travel writing is therefore not simply that Pardoe sees women while men do not. She observes networks and relationships that reorganize the meaning of the city itself. Istanbul becomes less exclusively monumental and more domestic, social, and relational. (fig. 35)

11 Palma, Elizabeth Craven.
12 Karabulut, İngiliz Seyyah Lady Elizabeth Craven'ın Gözünden.
13 Turhan, The Other Empire.
14 Pardoe, City of the Sultan, 22



Fig. 35. William Henry Bartlett, A Turkish Apartment in the Fanar, 1838.[15]

The chronological comparison between Montagu, Craven, and Pardoe also demonstrates that the female gaze itself changes. Montagu's early eighteenth-century authority is constructed through exceptional access: she emphasizes that she can enter a space effectively closed to the male European gaze and uses that privilege to challenge what Europeans believe they know. Craven retains the advantages of gendered access but combines them more openly with judgments concerning politics, cultural difference, and exotic curiosity. Pardoe, by contrast, increasingly transforms private access into a broader social method. The domestic interior is not simply interesting because it is hidden; it matters because it reveals an entire dimension of urban life omitted by accounts centered on streets and monuments. There is therefore continuity in what gender permits these women to see, but discontinuity in how they convert access into authority. Montagu uses access polemically against European fantasy, Craven integrates it into a wider comparative travel narrative, and Pardoe develops it into a more systematic observation of social life. These differences reinforce Mills's argument that gender shapes travel writing without mechanically determining its politics. Women do not constitute a single interpretive category; rather, gender modifies the conditions under which their different interpretations become possible.

Male exclusion from these spaces produces a parallel but fundamentally different discourse. Unable to enter harems and many domestic environments, male travelers frequently rely upon hearsay, earlier texts, visual culture, and imagination. The harem consequently becomes an especially revealing example of the relationship between absence and representation. Instead of functioning as an observed place, it often becomes a symbolic space onto which fantasies concerning sexuality, despotism, luxury, secrecy, and female oppression can be projected. Mark Twain's later nineteenth-century irony exposes this epistemological weakness when he mocks the tendency of Western men to invent what they cannot see [16]. His acknowledgment is important because it makes explicit a limitation already demonstrated by Montagu more than a century earlier: exclusion does not necessarily silence the observer. It can instead produce an excess of discourse. The less direct knowledge available, the greater the opportunity for inherited imagery to substitute for experience. Montagu's description of the hammam and Pardoe's accounts of Ottoman households therefore matter not simply because they provide additional information but because they reveal the conditions under which male accounts had been produced. Female testimony exposes the distinction between observation and speculation.

15 William Henry Bartlett, A Turkish Apartment in the Fanar, 1838, in Julia Pardoe, The Beauties of the Bosphorus; Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs (London: George Virtue, 1838), facing 125.

16 Twain, The Innocents Abroad.

The comparison with Twain also demonstrates that chronology does not produce a straightforward disappearance of Orientalist fantasy. By the later nineteenth century, a male traveler can recognize and satirize the unreliability of Western harem narratives, yet the harem remains culturally powerful precisely because it is inaccessible. Knowledge of the problem does not immediately dissolve the representation. This is where Said and Lewis become especially useful: Orientalist discourse survives not because every traveler naively believes the same stereotype, but because certain images continue to structure what Western audiences expect to read about the East. Female travelers may correct those images through experience, and male travelers may mock their absurdity, while the underlying representational system nevertheless remains recognizable. The gendered archive is therefore characterized by contradiction rather than simple correction. Direct observation contests fantasy, but fantasy remains culturally productive.

Gender also changes the experience of public space. (fig. 36) Female travelers did not move through Istanbul under the same conditions as male visitors. They were often accompanied and entered markets, gardens, ceremonies, households, and social gatherings through networks of introduction and hospitality. Their narratives consequently tend to record relational encounters alongside visual observation. Conversation, reception, clothing, domestic arrangement, and interpersonal behavior become important forms of evidence. Male independence of movement allowed different forms of access — particularly to military, administrative, political, and certain public spaces — but it also excluded them from dimensions of the city that could not be entered through anonymous observation. The distinction therefore cannot be reduced to freedom versus restriction. Both male and female mobility were structured, though differently. Each produced forms of knowledge while simultaneously generating blind spots. The result is what might be described as parallel cartographies: the monumental, ceremonial, commercial, domestic, and intimate city overlap geographically but are not equally accessible to every observer.



Fig. 36.

Ottoman evidence further complicates the foreign tendency to interpret gendered space

17 William Henry Bartlett, Musicians at the Asian Sweet Waters, 1838, in Julia Pardoe, The Beauties of the Bosphorus; Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and Its Environs (London: George Virtue, 1838).

through a simple opposition between public male freedom and private female confinement. Women's participation in markets, festivals, neighborhood networks, baths, visits, and other forms of sociability demonstrates that mobility was structured rather than absent. Travel narratives capture fragments of this system, but those fragments are filtered through the expectations of individual observers. Montagu interprets the bath as evidence of liberty; Pardoe emphasizes domestic and social agency; Craven combines admiration with broader cultural judgment. None of these perspectives alone provides a complete account of Ottoman women's lives. Their significance instead lies in showing how much remains invisible when the city is approached exclusively through its public monumental geography. The gendered method therefore does not replace one authoritative map with another. It reconstructs Istanbul as a city whose social spaces intersect without becoming equally visible to all observers.

Modernization gradually complicates this geography further. European influence introduces or expands spaces of mixed sociability, including theaters, promenades, cafés, and other forms of public entertainment, while changing urban circulation increases visibility across districts. Female travelers consequently encounter women within a broader range of public environments even as domestic interiors and gender-specific institutions remain significant. Modernization therefore does not simply erase gendered boundaries.

As in the preceding chapter, old and new spatial practices coexist. The expanding city creates additional forms of public presence without eliminating the social structures that organize access to private life. This continuity is important because it prevents modernization from being narrated as a simple transition from Ottoman segregation to European openness. Instead, gendered geography adapts to changing urban conditions. The city becomes more publicly interconnected while remaining socially differentiated.

Seen chronologically, the development is therefore less a progression from ignorance to knowledge than a changing negotiation between access and representation. Montagu's eighteenth-century intervention is radical because she enters spaces around which European men had already constructed powerful fantasies and uses direct experience to reverse some of their assumptions. Craven demonstrates that female access does not necessarily eliminate broader structures of European judgment. Pardoe develops private observation into a more extensive social geography, explicitly contrasting the knowledge available within households with that produced by the traveler who remains on the street.

Twain, from the position of a male traveler later in the nineteenth century, exposes through satire the imaginative excess generated by male exclusion. Modernization subsequently expands the visible public geography of women without eliminating the distinction between public and private access. The continuity across the period is therefore the importance of gender in determining what can be witnessed; the discontinuity lies in how travelers transform that access or exclusion into narrative authority. (fig. 37)



Fig. 37. Jean-Léon Gérôme, The Harem in the Kiosk, ca. 1870–1875.[18]

This chronological comparison also complicates the assumption that the principal difference between male and female travel writing lies in sympathy. The more fundamental difference is epistemological. Gender shapes the evidence available to the observer. A traveler excluded from an interior can interpret its meaning only indirectly; a traveler admitted into it acquires different evidence but remains capable of filtering that evidence through existing cultural assumptions. Montagu can challenge European eroticization because she witnesses the hammam directly, but her interpretation of freedom is still her own comparative judgment. Craven can enter harems while continuing to participate in wider European narratives concerning Ottoman society. Pardoe can reconstruct domestic sociability while writing for an audience fascinated by the very spaces she attempts to demystify. Access therefore increases knowledge without producing neutrality (fig. 37).



Fig. 38. Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, A Female Turkish Bath or Hammam, 1785.[19]

18 Jean-Léon Gérôme, The Harem in the Kiosk, ca. 1870–75, oil on canvas, 76 × 112 cm, private collection.

19 Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, A Female Turkish Bath or Hammam, 1785, oil on canvas, 84.5 × 130 cm, private collection, Web Gallery of Art, accessed August 24, 2026.

This is also where the chapter contributes something beyond the existing scholarship on gender and travel writing. Mills, Melman, Lewis, and Pratt establish that gender conditions authority, access, representation, and intercultural encounter. The Istanbul material examined here demonstrates how those conditions become spatially visible across time. Gender does not operate only at the level of authorial identity; it produces a geography. The hammam, harem, household, bazaar, garden, street, monument, and ceremonial space generate different possibilities of observation depending upon who enters them and under what conditions. The distinction between male and female narratives is therefore not simply textual. It is embedded in the architecture and social organization of the city itself. Reading these accounts through recurring locations reveals that different travelers do not merely interpret the same Istanbul differently; in important respects, they are given access to different Istanbuls.

The location-based method consequently reveals Istanbul not as a singular urban entity but as a stratified experience. Interiors and exteriors form parallel and intersecting cartographies, and the traveler inhabits a system of gendered permissions that determines what the city can reveal. This also changes how the travel archive itself should be read. Monumental descriptions cannot automatically stand for the whole city simply because they are abundant, nor can firsthand female accounts of domestic life be treated as transparent truth merely because they correct male speculation. Each narrative records a situated encounter. The archive is therefore uneven because access itself was uneven.

Gender ultimately exposes a broader problem at the heart of travel writing: the relationship between visibility and authority. Travelers frequently write most confidently about the cultures they claim to observe, yet the case of the harem demonstrates that narrative authority can exist even where direct observation does not. Conversely, spaces entered by female travelers reveal how much urban and social experience disappears when historical knowledge privileges only publicly visible environments. Female accounts restore dimensions of everyday life to a city often reduced in foreign representation to monuments, imperial spectacles, and picturesque streets, while at the same time reminding us that no traveler stands outside the representational structures of their own society.

The chapter therefore does not establish a binary in which male travelers misrepresent Istanbul and female travelers reveal its truth. Rather, it demonstrates that gender produces different conditions of knowledge. Montagu, Craven, Pardoe, and Twain occupy different historical moments and different positions within the travel encounter, and their differences reveal how access, exclusion, expectation, and representation interact. What one traveler interprets as confinement, another may encounter as sociability; what one imagines from outside, another describes from within. Neither perspective alone is sufficient. Istanbul emerges from their contradictions.

The gender comparison table on the right side, brings these differences into sharper focus. Read together, the accounts suggest that gender did not simply produce two opposing ways of seeing Istanbul, nor can female travelers be assumed to have escaped the cultural assumptions that shaped foreign travel writing. Rather, gender affected the conditions under which the city could be observed: access to particular spaces, forms of social interaction, bodily proximity, and the kinds of knowledge available to the traveler. While male accounts more frequently constructed authority through public space, monuments, political observation, and visual distance, female travelers such as Montagu and Pardoe could draw upon forms of access to domestic interiors, hammams, and female sociability that complicated representations produced from outside these spaces. The table therefore summarizes not an absolute distinction between a “male” and “female” gaze, but a recurring difference in access, narrative position, and the resulting representation of urban and social space.

What emerges from this comparison is therefore less a fixed gender binary than a difference in the spatial conditions of observation. Gender shaped where travelers could go, whom they could encounter, and consequently what aspects of Istanbul became visible in their narratives. This distinction reinforces the broader argument of the thesis that representations of the city were produced not by place alone, but through the interaction between urban space and the particular position of the observe

The following chapter turns directly to the representational system within which many of these contradictions acquire meaning. Orientalism provides a framework for examining how fantasy, cultural authority, political power, and inherited expectations shaped foreign descriptions of Istanbul across the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Yet, as the gendered accounts already demonstrate, Orientalist representation was neither uniform nor uncontested: direct encounter could reproduce established stereotypes, modify them, or expose their limitations. The question is therefore not simply whether travelers were Orientalist, but how Orientalist modes of seeing changed when confronted with different locations, different forms of access, and different historical circumstances.

Gender Comparison Table

Spatial Category	Male Traveler's Access	Female Traveler's Access	Narrative Outcome	Example Travelers
Imperial Mosques	Full access to public monumental space	Restricted / symbolic presence.	Focus on architecture and grandeur.	Davıdov, Murray, Le Corbusier
Mammams	Mostly excluded, speculative descriptions.	Direct participation and observation.	Ethnographic correction or fantasy.	Montagu, Pardoe
Domestic Interiors	Rare access, mediated by servants.	Regular invitation and immertion.	Social realism and intimacy.	Montagu, Pardoe, Walker
Harem	Imagined space, eroticized speculation.	Lived social space, normalized.	Collaps of Orientalist fantasy.	Montagu
Streets and Markets	Free movement, panaromic observation.	Accompanied or mediated movement.	Relational social perception.	Pardoe, Walker
Coffeehouses / Male Social Spaces	Full participation.	Exclusion.	Reinforcement of gender divide.	White, Davıdov
Religious Rituals	Observed from exterior.	Rare eccess, interpreted symbolically.	Mystification of Islam.	Loti, Twain
Private Gardens / Bosphorus Houses	Elite invitations.	Social hospitality.	Hybrid cultural space.	Craven, Pardoe

Orientalism, Expectation, and the Limits of the Foreign Gaze

Foreign travel writing on Istanbul cannot be separated from the intellectual history of Orientalism because travelers did not arrive as empty observers encountering the city for the first time. They carried with them visual conventions, religious histories, literary expectations, political assumptions, and inherited distinctions between East and West through which Istanbul had already been imagined before it was physically experienced. Positioned between Europe and Asia and associated simultaneously with Byzantium, Christianity, Islam, Ottoman imperial power, and European geopolitical anxiety, Istanbul occupied an unusually unstable place within this representational system. It was geographically close enough to Europe to be repeatedly visited and compared, yet culturally coded as sufficiently different to function as an Oriental "other." Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism provides the theoretical framework for understanding this process: the Orient was not merely discovered and described but constructed as a field of knowledge through which Western societies organized cultural difference and, in doing so, reinforced structures of authority and power [1].

Yet the travel accounts examined throughout this thesis suggest that Orientalism should not be treated as a fixed interpretive formula mechanically reproduced by every foreign observer. Read chronologically, they reveal a continuous negotiation between expectation and encounter. Craven aestheticizes Istanbul as an almost mythical landscape while simultaneously recording evidence of functioning urban life; White's prolonged residence weakens the distinction between exotic spectacle and everyday normality; Twain turns the Western desire for exoticism itself into an object of satire; de Amicis repeatedly attempts to preserve an essential "Easternness" even as modernization destabilizes it; Loti responds to that transformation by constructing an increasingly nostalgic and melancholic Orient; Kang Youwei demonstrates the importance of a non-European comparative gaze; and Le Corbusier finally exposes, almost explicitly, the discrepancy between an Istanbul inherited through representation and the material city actually encountered. The continuity across these accounts is therefore not a single Orientalist image but the persistence of interpretive frameworks preceding observation. What changes is how strongly successive travelers allow empirical experience to confirm, modify, resist, or reorganize those frameworks. (fig. 39)

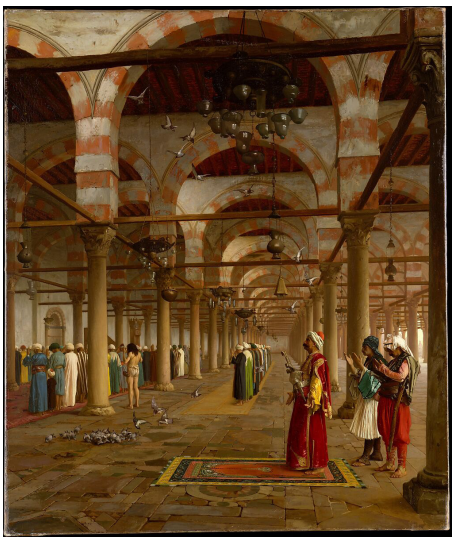


Fig. 39. Jean-Léon Gérôme, Prayer in the Mosque, by 1874.[2]

1 Said, Orientalism.

2 Jean-Léon Gérôme, Prayer in the Mosque, by 1874, oil on canvas, 88.9 × 74.9 cm, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 87.15.130.

Lady Elizabeth Craven's late eighteenth-century account demonstrates this tension at an early stage. Her description of Istanbul as "an earthly Paradise" [3] transforms geographical experience into an already recognizable imaginative category. Paradise is not a neutral description: it removes the city from ordinary historical time and associates it with abundance, beauty, sensual pleasure, and idealized distance from European everyday life. In this respect, Craven participates in a mode of representation that aestheticizes Istanbul before attempting to explain it as a functioning society. The city becomes image. Yet her letters never remain entirely within this fantasy. She also comments on cleanliness, urban order, civic life, architecture, and social customs, observations that complicate the idea of Istanbul as an entirely timeless or irrational Oriental space. This contradiction is important because it demonstrates that Orientalism does not necessarily require the traveler to ignore reality. Rather, it can determine which aspects of reality are emphasized and what meanings are assigned to them. Craven can simultaneously admire Istanbul as an "earthly Paradise" and observe practical aspects of its urban organization because aesthetic fantasy and empirical description are not mutually exclusive. Her account therefore establishes a tension that remains visible throughout the following century: Istanbul is repeatedly transformed into a symbolic landscape, yet the material city continually provides evidence that resists complete abstraction. The difference between Craven and later travelers lies partly in the historical conditions of this resistance. In the late eighteenth century, the imagined Orient can still be sustained relatively comfortably alongside observations of urban life; as nineteenth-century reform becomes increasingly visible, maintaining the fiction of a timeless city becomes more difficult.

Charles White's writing in the 1840s represents an important movement away from this form of spectacular distance. His prolonged residence in Constantinople allows him to emphasize the routine structures of Ottoman social life, insisting that apparently unfamiliar practices are governed by recognizable forms of logic, custom, and everyday organization [4]. The distinction from Craven is significant. Where Craven can convert the city into "Paradise" through the intensity of the travel encounter, White's extended familiarity makes the extraordinary increasingly ordinary. His Istanbul is not primarily a dreamscape but a functioning metropolis. This does not mean that White entirely escapes the assumptions of his historical context, but his duration of residence alters the relationship between observer and observed. Repetition weakens spectacle. Customs that might appear inexplicable or exotic to a short-term visitor become socially legible when witnessed as part of everyday life. White therefore demonstrates one of the principal mechanisms through which Orientalist representation can fracture: prolonged observation introduces routine where the travel narrative expects difference. This distinction also supports the argument developed in the preceding chapter on gender. Just as access to domestic spaces gives Montagu or Pardoe forms of evidence unavailable to male outsiders, duration of residence gives White forms of familiarity unavailable to the visitor moving rapidly through prescribed sights. In both cases, the conditions of observation determine the kinds of representation that can be produced. Orientalism consequently becomes not only a question of ideology but also one of distance, access, and time.

By the later 1860s, Mark Twain introduces a substantially different response by making the Western production of exoticism itself visible. He mocks travelers who arrive expecting an extravagant Oriental world and become disappointed when ordinary life fails to satisfy the fantasy they have brought with them [5]. His satire marks an important development because the discrepancy between representation and reality becomes part of the travel narrative itself. Unlike White, who destabilizes exoticism primarily through familiarity, Twain attacks the mechanism through humor. The "Orient"

3 Craven, A Journey through the Crimea, 198.

4 White, Three Years in Constantinople, 38.

5 Twain, Innocents Abroad, 356.

becomes a performance sustained not simply by what Istanbul offers but by what foreign audiences demand from the traveler. Writers are expected to provide mystery, strange customs, picturesque disorder, and cultural difference because these conventions make travel literature recognizable and commercially attractive. Twain therefore exposes Orientalism as a relationship between writer, reader, and destination. The traveler does not merely misinterpret Istanbul individually; the narrative is produced within a literary economy in which exotic difference possesses value. Yet Twain's position remains deliberately contradictory. His awareness of Orientalist exaggeration does not prevent him from employing stereotypes elsewhere, particularly when representing bazaars, merchants, crowds, and unfamiliar commercial practices. His satire therefore demonstrates that recognition of the representational system does not automatically place a traveler outside it. This makes Twain particularly useful for the argument of the chapter: Orientalism can be criticized and reproduced within the same narrative.

Edmondo de Amicis's account of 1878 demonstrates even more clearly how nineteenth-century modernization destabilizes inherited categories without necessarily destroying them. He writes: "Here everything is Eastern in its strictest sense" [6]. The categorical nature of the statement is striking. "Easternness" becomes an essential identity capable of organizing architecture, clothing, streets, people, and social behavior into a single interpretive category. Yet the Istanbul de Amicis actually describes throughout his narrative repeatedly refuses such coherence. He encounters modern infrastructure, Europeanized districts, reconstruction, changing streets, new avenues, and forms of urban reform that make it increasingly difficult to imagine the city as an untouched survival of an earlier Orient. The contradiction between his declaration and his observations is therefore analytically more valuable than either one in isolation. De Amicis attempts to stabilize Istanbul through the category of the East at precisely the historical moment when the city is becoming increasingly resistant to that stabilization. His response to reconstruction demonstrates the emotional consequence of this contradiction. As discussed in the preceding chapter, "Magnificent avenues replace the ruins… but one cannot walk without feeling that something intimate has been erased" [7]. The modern avenue is acknowledged as magnificent, yet modernization produces loss because it threatens the difference through which Istanbul has acquired aesthetic value. Compared with Craven, the shift is substantial. Craven can mythologize an existing landscape as Paradise; de Amicis increasingly needs to protect the imagined Orient against visible historical transformation. Orientalism therefore begins to acquire a nostalgic dimension. The traveler is no longer simply discovering difference but mourning its perceived disappearance.

Pierre Loti[8] intensifies this nostalgic response by deliberately seeking the spaces that allow Istanbul to remain melancholic, mysterious, and resistant to modernity. His image of "The darkness of mournful little streets" [9] transforms urban irregularity and decay into aesthetic experience. Darkness is not merely a physical condition; it becomes evidence of emotional and civilizational depth. Loti's Istanbul is valuable precisely because it appears endangered. Narrow streets, older neighborhoods, shadows, silence, and apparent decay are assembled into an elegiac landscape in which beauty and disappearance become inseparable. The difference from de Amicis lies in degree and intention. De

6 De Amicis, Constantinople, 46.

7 De Amicis, Constantinople, 156.

8 Pierre Loti (1850–1923) was the literary pseudonym of Julien Viaud, a French naval officer and writer whose experiences in Constantinople became central to his literary construction of the Ottoman world. His semi-autobiographical Aziyadé (1879), drawing on his stay in Constantinople in 1876, contributed to a highly romanticized and melancholic representation of Istanbul that associated authenticity with traditional neighborhoods, intimacy, and a supposedly disappearing Ottoman way of life.

9 Loti, Constantinople en 1890, 74.

Amicis experiences nostalgia as a contradiction generated by modernization: he recognizes improvement while regretting what it erases. Loti increasingly turns the threatened older city into the object of his desire. Modernity is not simply an ambiguous process but an intrusion upon the Istanbul he wishes to preserve imaginatively. Orientalism consequently adapts to historical change by converting the supposedly timeless East into a vanishing East. The contradiction is important. If modernization makes it impossible to claim convincingly that Istanbul exists outside history, the Orientalist narrative can preserve difference by representing the city as the final remnant of a world about to disappear. Decline itself becomes picturesque. The city is aestheticized not despite its supposed decay but through it, satisfying a European fascination with the Ottoman Empire as simultaneously beautiful and doomed.

The movement from Craven through White, Twain, de Amicis, and Loti therefore reveals that Orientalism changes alongside the city it attempts to represent. Craven's late eighteenth-century Istanbul can still be transformed relatively easily into mythical landscape; White's prolonged residence introduces everyday normality into that picture; Twain exposes the literary expectation underlying exotic representation; de Amicis confronts the incompatibility between an essential East and a visibly modernizing metropolis; and Loti resolves that incompatibility aesthetically by making disappearance itself the source of authenticity. What remains consistent is the desire to convert urban experience into a broader statement about cultural difference. What changes is the strategy through which difference is maintained. When timelessness becomes difficult to sustain, nostalgia can replace it. This chronological development is crucial because it prevents Orientalism from being treated as an unchanging nineteenth-century vocabulary. Its resilience lies precisely in its capacity to absorb contradiction.

Guidebooks institutionalize this process in another form. Murray and later Baedeker organize Istanbul into a manageable hierarchy of attractions, determining which monuments, districts, routes, and experiences deserve the traveler's attention. This process does not invent Orientalist representation, but it standardizes the gaze through which the city is encountered. Hagia Sophia becomes obligatory because it embodies religious and imperial history; the bazaars become obligatory because they provide commercial and sensory difference; the Bosphorus becomes obligatory because it displays geographical exceptionalism; Pera becomes the familiar Europeanized base from which the more "Oriental" city can be explored. Everyday neighborhoods and forms of social life that do not fit this hierarchy can disappear from the itinerary. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, therefore, travelers increasingly arrive not only with literary expectations but with practical instructions governing where to look. Baedeker's 1914 presentation of Istanbul as an organized sequence of attractions makes this transformation particularly visible [10]. The city becomes consumable through classification. The distinction from earlier travel narratives is significant: Craven or White construct their own narrative hierarchies after or during experience, whereas the modern tourist increasingly receives a hierarchy in advance. Orientalist perception is consequently embedded not merely in prose but in the infrastructure of tourism itself.

Kang Youwei introduces an important disruption into this predominantly European chronology because his position as a Chinese observer demonstrates that foreignness does not automatically produce the same Orientalist gaze. He approaches Istanbul through his own comparative framework, measuring the Ottoman capital against other imperial and global cities while simultaneously evaluating the political effectiveness of Ottoman government and reform. His exclamation, "Such a beautiful place is in the hand of Turks!" [11], combines admiration with political judgment. The geography is

10 Baedeker, Konstantinopel, 122-124.

11 Fidan, "The Turk Travelogue," 227-243.

magnificent, yet the people governing it become subject to critical evaluation. His response therefore demonstrates that ideological framing is not uniquely European: all travel writing organizes perception through categories brought by the observer. Yet Kang's categories are not identical to those described by Said. He does not need to construct Istanbul as Europe's civilizational opposite in order to interpret it. His comparisons emerge instead from concerns about empire, reform, political strength, and the position of non-Western states within a changing global order. This distinction is particularly important when compared with Loti. Loti values Istanbul partly because it appears to preserve a disappearing alternative to European modernity; Kang evaluates whether the Ottoman Empire can modernize effectively enough to survive within modern geopolitical conditions. One romanticizes threatened difference; the other asks whether difference can coexist with strength. The same city therefore generates radically different narratives depending upon the geopolitical position from which it is observed. Late nineteenth-century visual representations of Eyüp similarly emphasized cypress-lined cemeteries, tombs, older urban fabric, and secluded landscapes, contributing to the melancholic visual vocabulary through which districts associated with an older Istanbul could be imagined as resistant to modernity (fig. 40)

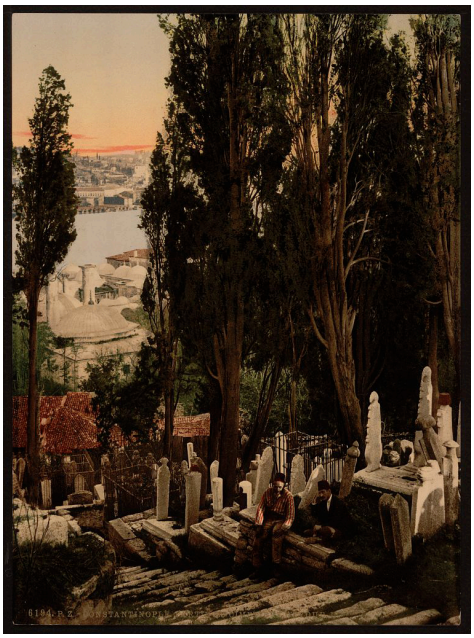


Fig. 40. A Part of the Eyoub (Eyüp) Cemetery, II, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[12]

Le Corbusier provides perhaps the clearest early twentieth-century example of inherited representation colliding directly with material experience. He arrives with an Istanbul partly constructed through French visual culture and acknowledges his disappointment: "It is not as white as I imagined" [13]. The simplicity of the statement makes it especially revealing. Before seeing the city, he already possesses a color for it. The imagined whiteness does not originate in empirical observation but in paintings, representations, and cultural expectations that have produced an Istanbul in advance. Reality therefore appears initially as failure: the city does not correspond to its image. Yet this discrepancy becomes productive. Rather than forcing the material city entirely back into the inherited fantasy, Le Corbusier increasingly turns toward direct observation, sketching architecture, streets, waterfront settlements, forms, masses, and spatial relationships. His Istanbul becomes a field of architectural investigation. W

12 A Part of the Eyoub (Eyüp) Cemetery, II, Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 6194, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

13 Le Corbusier, Le Voyage d'Orient, 102

Compared with Loti, the difference is substantial. Loti seeks locations capable of preserving the imagined Orient against modernization; Le Corbusier allows the collapse of expectation to generate another way of seeing. His sketches seek authenticity beyond stereotype, even though his own search for "authentic" form remains shaped by modernist assumptions. The Orientalist image is therefore not simply abandoned but translated into a different interpretive framework. Once again, empirical encounter modifies rather than entirely eliminates prior ideology. Le Corbusier's drawings demonstrate this movement away from a generalized Oriental image toward the close observation of particular architectural forms. His study of an Istanbul wooden house reduces the city to construction, proportion, façade, and spatial relationship, converting the encounter into architectural inquiry rather than picturesque confirmation (fig. 41).

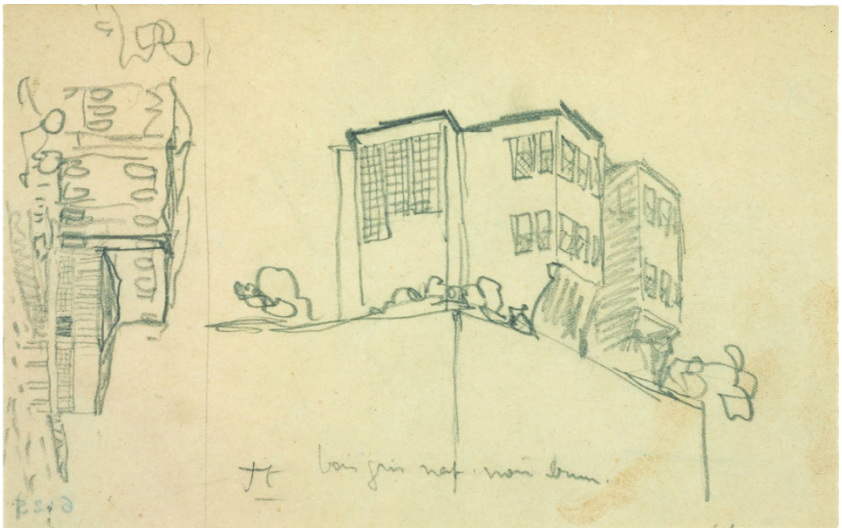


Fig. 41. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), Istanbul, Wooden House, on the Bosphorus, 1911.[14]

Ottoman perspectives make the limitations of the foreign gaze even more visible. Municipal reformers and Ottoman intellectuals were aware that European observers frequently represented the empire through narratives of stagnation, disorder, and decline. Urban modernization, sanitation, street widening, infrastructure, and institutional reform therefore operated not only as practical policies but within a wider international environment in which the Ottoman state's capacity to modernize was constantly being judged. Ottoman narratives of reform emphasized evolution, governance, imperial prestige, and adaptation rather than the inevitable disappearance imagined by writers such as Loti. Placed alongside foreign travel accounts, these internal perspectives expose a fundamental conflict over historical time. Orientalist nostalgia can make an older street valuable because it appears untouched by modernity, while municipal authorities may view the same environment through the practical problems of circulation, fire, sanitation, or public health. What appears to the traveler as the destruction of authenticity can appear internally as necessary urban governance. Istanbul is therefore not a passive object waiting to be interpreted by foreign observers. Its inhabitants and institutions actively transform the environment in ways that contradict the temporal narratives imposed upon it.

The location-based structure developed throughout this thesis makes the spatial operation of Orientalism particularly visible. Orientalist discourse does not attach itself equally to every part of Istanbul. Certain locations become symbolic nodes through which broader claims about the East are produced. Hagia Sophia is burdened with narratives of conquest, Christian loss, Islamic possession,

14 Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), Istanbul, Wooden House, on the Bosphorus, 1911, pencil on paper, 11.3 × 18 cm, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris, FLC 6125.

and civilizational succession; the bazaars become spaces of abundance, bargaining, sensuality, deception, or supposed timelessness; the harem becomes powerful precisely because male exclusion allows imagination to substitute for observation; the Bosphorus becomes a sublime boundary between continents; and Pera complicates the system because its Europeanized institutions make a stable opposition between East and West difficult to maintain.

The harem became one of the most persistent visual sites through which European artists transformed restricted access into representation. Such paintings should not be read as documentary evidence of Ottoman domestic life, but as evidence of how the inaccessible interior could acquire visual authority within Orientalist culture (fig 42).



Fig. 42. Benjamin-Constant (Jean-Joseph-Benjamin Constant), Scene in a Harem (Un Envoi de Serbie), 1876.[15]

Travelers therefore approach particular locations already scripted. The act of visiting can become a ritual of confirmation in which the traveler discovers what the literary tradition has taught him or her to expect. Yet the same locations can also disrupt the script. Montagu enters the hammam and finds sociability rather than erotic spectacle; White's prolonged experience reveals routine where the short-term visitor expects exotic difference; de Amicis discovers modern streets within the supposedly timeless East; Kang finds cultural practices capable of surpassing European standards; and Le Corbusier finds that Istanbul is literally not the color representation has assigned to it.

The chronological and spatial evidence therefore suggests that Orientalism should be understood here not as a total illusion imposed successfully upon a passive city but as a contested process of interpretation. Istanbul repeatedly generates cognitive dissonance because different temporalities, social practices, architectural forms, and political realities coexist within the same urban environment. Modern infrastructure appears beside narrow streets; European institutions operate within an Ottoman imperial capital; domestic warmth and routine coexist with foreign narratives of despotism; monumental religious architecture functions within everyday urban life; and spaces imagined as timeless participate in contemporary commercial and social networks. The city continually exceeds the categories imposed upon it. Yet this does not automatically destroy Orientalist representation. On the contrary, Orientalism survives partly because it can reorganize contradiction. Modernization can be dismissed as superficial imitation; persistence can be interpreted as stagnation; decay can become

15 Benjamin-Constant (Jean-Joseph-Benjamin Constant), Scene in a Harem (Un Envoi de Serbie), 1876, oil on canvas, 31.1 × 39.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 2017.202.3.

picturesque authenticity; cultural mixture can become evidence of confusion; and disappearing urban forms can be transformed into objects of nostalgia. The discourse is durable precisely because contradictory evidence can be absorbed into new aesthetic and political narratives.

This adaptability also explains the differences between the travelers examined here. Craven transforms Istanbul into Paradise but permits practical observation to complicate the image. White's long residence reduces the distance upon which exoticism depends. Twain exposes the audience's demand for Oriental performance while remaining capable of reproducing its stereotypes. De Amicis attempts to preserve a categorical East while documenting the reforms that destabilize it. Loti responds to modernization by relocating authenticity into melancholy and disappearance. Kang demonstrates that a foreign observer outside the European Orientalist tradition can produce an equally ideological but differently structured comparative gaze. Le Corbusier begins with an inherited visual fantasy and gradually converts disappointment into architectural investigation. These differences show that nationality, chronology, duration of stay, professional interest, gender, and political context all influence the relationship between expectation and encounter. There is therefore no single "foreign gaze." There are overlapping systems of representation whose similarities reveal inherited discourses and whose differences expose their historical limits.

The central argument of this chapter is consequently that Istanbul is neither merely the passive object of Orientalist representation nor a material reality capable of automatically correcting foreign fantasy. The relationship is more unstable. Travelers bring categories to the city, but the city supplies encounters that can confirm, complicate, or contradict them. Some observers respond by modifying their assumptions; others reinterpret contradiction so that the underlying framework survives. The historical value of travel writing lies precisely in these moments of tension. When the city corresponds perfectly to expectation, the narrative may tell us more about inherited discourse than about Istanbul. Where expectation breaks down, however, the mechanisms of representation become visible. Craven's practical observations beneath the language of Paradise, White's emphasis on routine, Twain's satire, de Amicis's conflict between "Easternness" and modernization, Kang's alternative geopolitical hierarchy, and Le Corbusier's disappointed whiteness all expose fractures between the imagined and material city.

These fractures are particularly important because they demonstrate that historical reality does not appear in travel writing simply when Orientalism disappears. Rather, it becomes most visible at moments when representation encounters resistance. The modern avenue that disrupts the picturesque quarter, the ordinary household that contradicts fantasies of the harem, the functioning commercial network hidden beneath descriptions of exotic bazaars, or the architectural reality that refuses the expected visual image all force travelers to negotiate between what they thought Istanbul should be and what they actually encountered. Orientalism therefore functions throughout the travel archive as a changing field of expectation rather than a single stable stereotype. Its history can be traced through the strategies travelers use to resolve—or fail to resolve—the contradictions produced by the city.

By reading these accounts chronologically and through recurring locations, the thesis therefore reveals a broader transformation in foreign perception. The eighteenth-century traveler can still encounter Istanbul primarily as extraordinary spectacle; nineteenth-century residence, expanding tourism, reform, and increasing circulation make the city progressively more difficult to isolate from contemporary history; late nineteenth-century nostalgia attempts to recover difference by transfor-

ming the older city into a disappearing world; and early twentieth-century observers increasingly encounter Istanbul through global comparison, standardized tourism, and new professional forms of observation. Orientalism does not vanish during this process. It changes its vocabulary. The timeless East becomes the vanishing East; exotic difference becomes tourist attraction; the inaccessible city becomes mapped itinerary; and romantic spectacle increasingly coexists with urban and architectural analysis.

The following chapter examines this final transformation more directly through guidebooks, tourism, and modern travel culture. If the earlier traveler could construct authority through the narrative of discovery, the expansion of Murray, Baedeker, standardized itineraries, improved transportation, and increasingly organized tourist infrastructure alters the conditions of travel itself. Istanbul is progressively encountered through routes, classifications, schedules, and attractions established before arrival. The traveler moves from explorer toward consumer, and the foreign gaze becomes increasingly standardized. The question is no longer only how Istanbul is represented, but how modern tourism determines in advance what parts of the city are considered worth seeing.

From Traveler to Tourist:

Guidebooks, Standardized Vision, and the Choreography of Istanbul

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, foreign encounters with Istanbul underwent a structural transformation that affected not only how travelers moved through the city but also how they understood what was worth seeing. The independent traveler — improvising, wandering, comparing, and constructing narrative authority through personal discovery — was increasingly joined and eventually challenged by the organized tourist whose movements were anticipated by guidebooks, hotels, transportation networks, and prescribed itineraries. Guidebooks did not simply make an unfamiliar city easier to navigate; they reorganized perception by establishing hierarchies between essential and secondary sites, determining appropriate sequences of movement, recommending districts in which foreigners should stay, and even suggesting how limited time should be distributed. Istanbul consequently became something that could be methodically "completed" rather than unpredictably explored. Read chronologically, the development is particularly revealing. Charles White's 1840s emphasis on prolonged observation represents an older ideal in which knowledge depends upon duration and familiarity. Murray's mid-nineteenth-century handbooks begin to transform that open encounter into an ordered itinerary, while Mark Twain in 1869 already satirizes travelers whose expectations precede observation. Murray's later editions demonstrate the increasing institutional authority of the guidebook, and by Baedeker's 1914 edition Istanbul has become extensively classified, ranked, and spatially organized for an international tourist public. Le Corbusier's deliberate departure from recommended routes consequently acquires particular significance: by the early twentieth century, wandering can itself become a conscious resistance to standardized vision. The central transformation traced in this chapter is therefore not simply from travel to tourism, but from individually constructed authority toward institutionally mediated perception. Yet this transformation is never complete. Printed authority attempts to choreograph the city, while Istanbul repeatedly generates experiences that exceed the itinerary.

Charles White's writing in the 1840s provides an important starting point because his extended residence in Constantinople precedes the full standardization of the tourist gaze and allows him to articulate a fundamentally different relationship between duration and knowledge. He warns that "The stranger who passes rapidly through the city sees little beyond its exterior shell" [1]. The distinction between the "stranger" and the knowledgeable observer is produced through time. For White, seeing more places does not necessarily produce greater understanding; speed can actually prevent knowledge by reducing the city to visible surfaces. His metaphor of the "exterior shell" suggests that Istanbul possesses social structures, domestic routines, habits, and relationships that cannot be understood through rapid visual consumption. This position corresponds with White's broader tendency to emphasize Ottoman social life as governed by recognizable forms of logic and routine rather than as continuous exotic spectacle. It also anticipates the critique of standardized tourism that becomes increasingly relevant later in the century. White's authority derives from residence and repetition: he observes the same society over time and therefore claims access to meanings unavailable to the temporary visitor. The contrast with the later guidebook tourist is consequently epistemological rather than merely practical. White assumes that knowledge becomes deeper as travel slows down; organized

1 White, Three Years in Constantinople, 2.

tourism increasingly assumes that knowledge becomes more efficient when movement is accelerated and correctly structured. The tension between depth and coverage becomes one of the central problems of modern tourism.

Murray's 1854 handbook marks a decisive stage in the transition because it converts the city from an open field of possible encounters into a sequence that can be prescribed in advance. The instruction that "The traveler will do well to begin his survey of Constantinople with a visit to St. Sophia" [2] appears innocuous, yet its implications are substantial. The guidebook determines not merely what deserves attention but where understanding should begin. Hagia Sophia, which earlier travelers encountered through different religious, aesthetic, and historical expectations, becomes the authorized first point within an organized "survey" of the capital. The term itself is significant: to survey is to impose order upon space, converting complexity into something that can be systematically apprehended. The guidebook therefore institutionalizes a hierarchy already developing within travel literature. Certain sites acquire canonical status because generations of travelers have described them, and their repeated description then becomes justification for subsequent travelers to visit them. Murray makes this circular process explicit by transforming cultural importance into itinerary. His instruction that "The traveler pressed for time may confine himself to the principal mosques" [3] introduces another crucial principle: temporal efficiency. Istanbul is no longer simply a city through which one moves; it becomes a collection of attractions that can be reduced according to the visitor's available time. The "principal" monuments stand in for the whole, while ordinary neighborhoods, domestic spaces, minor streets, and everyday social practices can disappear from the tourist's field of vision. Compared with White, the difference is striking. White argues that rapid passage reveals only an exterior shell; Murray constructs a system precisely designed to make rapid passage informative. Where White associates knowledge with duration, Murray associates it increasingly with selection (fig. 43).

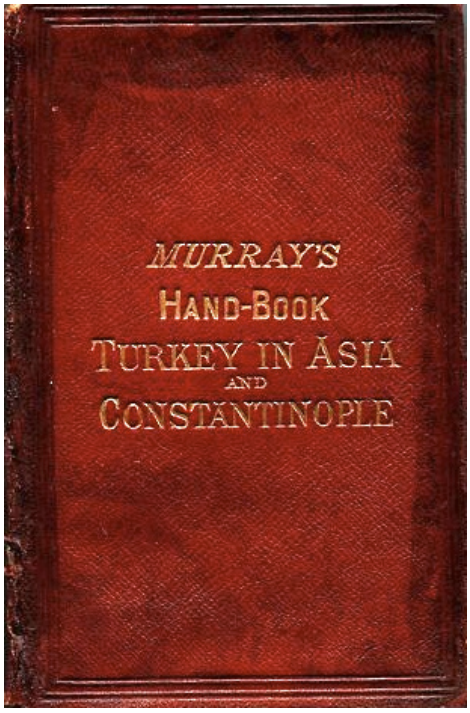


Fig. 43. John Murray, A Handbook for Travellers in Turkey, 3rd ed., 1854.[4]

2 Murray, Handbook for Travellers, 69.

3 Murray, Handbook for Travellers, 68.

4 John Murray, A Handbook for Travellers in Turkey: Describing Constantinople, European Turkey, Asia Minor, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, 3rd ed., rev. and greatly augmented (London: John Murray, 1854).

The authority of the guidebook also transforms the meanings of individual places already examined in the preceding chapters. Hagia Sophia shifts from potentially personal revelation to mandatory checkpoint; the bazaars become expected sites of commercial and sensory difference; Pera functions increasingly as the familiar Europeanized base from which the visitor enters and exits the more unfamiliar parts of the city; and the Bosphorus becomes a prescribed scenic excursion. Murray's statement that "No stranger should omit the excursion up the Bosphorus, which affords the finest panorama of the capital" [5] demonstrates how completely recommendation can become obligation. The phrase "no stranger should omit" establishes a normative model of correct travel: there is now a proper way to experience Istanbul, and failure to see particular locations produces an incomplete visit. This differs fundamentally from Pardoe's earlier description of the Bosphorus as "a succession of pictures" encountered through movement. Pardoe constructs meaning retrospectively from her experience; Murray increasingly provides meaning prospectively, telling the traveler what the experience will signify before it occurs. The Bosphorus is already "the finest panorama" before the tourist boards the boat. The guidebook therefore reduces interpretive uncertainty. It does not simply direct the traveler toward a view but teaches the traveler how that view should be valued. In this sense, tourism institutionalizes many of the representational conventions discussed in the previous chapter on Orientalism. The traveler arrives not only knowing what should be seen but increasingly knowing what should be felt.

Mark Twain's 1869 account is especially valuable because he recognizes and satirizes this emerging circularity between expectation and experience. Observing fellow travelers, he writes: "They saw what they expected to see, and they were satisfied" [6]. His irony exposes a fundamental transformation in the production of travel knowledge. If the traveler already possesses an image of the destination and interprets experience primarily as confirmation, observation becomes secondary to expectation. Travel ceases to function as discovery and becomes ritual verification of an inherited narrative. Twain's criticism therefore connects the development of tourism directly with the Orientalist mechanisms discussed in the preceding chapter: guidebooks, earlier travel narratives, paintings, engravings, and popular culture create an Istanbul before the traveler arrives, and the journey provides the opportunity to confirm that Istanbul physically. Yet Twain's position remains characteristically contradictory. He mocks tourists for seeing only what they expect, while his own writing repeatedly transforms merchants, bazaars, crowds, and social encounters into recognizable comic types. He is therefore both critic and participant in the standardization of foreign perception. This contradiction makes his account more analytically useful, not less. Twain demonstrates that awareness of the tourist script does not automatically free the traveler from it. The modern travel writer can ridicule conventional tourism while still relying upon conventions to make Istanbul legible and entertaining to readers.

The relationship between Murray and Twain also reveals that standardization should not be understood as the simple elimination of individual interpretation. Rather, guidebook culture creates a framework within which personal responses increasingly take place. Murray prescribes monuments and excursions; Twain responds ironically to travelers who follow inherited expectations; both nevertheless participate in a common geography of significance. Hagia Sophia, the Bosphorus, the bazaars, and the European quarters repeatedly remain central. The difference lies in narrative authority. Murray's voice presents itself as impersonal, practical, and reliable, while Twain emphasizes subjectivity and satire. Yet the apparently neutral voice may exert greater disciplinary power precisely because it conceals interpretation beneath factual instruction. A sentence telling the tourist which monument to see first or which district is most convenient appears practical rather than ideological, even though it

5 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Constantinople, 108.

6 Twain, Innocents Abroad, 358.

fundamentally structures the geography through which Istanbul will be known. The guidebook's authority therefore differs from that of the individual travel writer. The writer persuades through narrative; the guidebook organizes through classification. Murray's cartographic apparatus made this process of classification spatially explicit, translating Constantinople into a legible field of routes, districts, monuments, and points of orientation through which the foreign visitor could navigate the city (fig. 44).



Fig. 44. John Murray, Handbook Map of Constantinople, 1875.[7]

By the later nineteenth century, the expansion of tourist infrastructure strengthens this institutionalized gaze. Improved transportation, bridges, steamship routes, hotels, embankments, and increasingly predictable forms of urban movement make the itineraries described in guidebooks materially possible. Tourism and modernization therefore develop in conjunction. The transformation discussed in Chapter VI does not merely change Istanbul's physical appearance; it changes how quickly and efficiently foreigners can consume the city. Locations that once required negotiation, local assistance, or significant time become connected within an increasingly organized network. The modern tourist can move from a hotel in Pera to monuments on the historic peninsula, undertake an excursion along the Bosphorus, visit the bazaars, and return to familiar accommodation according to a planned schedule. Spatial difference remains desirable, but the conditions under which difference is experienced become increasingly controlled. This produces a paradox similar to those already identified throughout the thesis: tourists seek unfamiliarity while depending upon infrastructures designed to protect them from its practical consequences.

The city is expected to remain culturally distinctive while becoming logistically predictable. The standardization of the tourist itinerary depended upon corresponding transformations in the material city. Bridges, steamship connections, improved transportation, and increasingly predictable routes enabled visitors to move rapidly between districts and attractions that guidebooks had organized into a coherent tourist geography (fig. 45).

7 John Murray, Handbook Map of Constantinople, 1875, map, 39 × 44 cm, Stephen S. Clark Library Map Collection, University of Michigan Library.



Fig. 45. View from the Bridge, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[8]

Baedeker's 1914 guidebook represents the culmination of this process of classification. Its statement that "The most convenient quarters for visitors are found in Pera, where the principal hotels are situated" [9] appears primarily practical, yet it has substantial spatial consequences. By directing foreign visitors toward Pera, the guidebook reinforces the district's function as a Europeanized enclave and establishes a particular relationship between tourist and city. The foreigner sleeps, eats, and organizes the journey from a zone of relative familiarity, while other districts become destinations to be entered temporarily and then left. Pera therefore becomes not simply another attraction but the logistical center from which the tourist gaze is projected. The structure recalls Murray's earlier recommendation of Pera for foreign visitors, but by 1914 this spatial arrangement has become increasingly embedded within a developed hotel and tourist economy. The distinction between familiar base and unfamiliar spectacle consequently becomes institutional rather than merely perceptual. Compared with White's Istanbul, encountered through extended residence and gradual familiarity, Baedeker's Istanbul can be divided into functional zones and traversed efficiently. The city becomes legible because it has been cataloged (fig. 46).



Fig. 46. Kara-Keui (Galata) and View of Pera, Constantinople, ca. 1890–1900.[10]

8 View from the Bridge, Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, color photochrom print, no. 6192, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

9 Baedeker, Konstantinopel, 121.

10 Kara-Keui (Galata) and View of Pera, Constantinople, Turkey, ca. 1890–1900, photochrom print, Photochrom Print Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

This process also produces a hierarchy of visibility. Guidebooks necessarily select because no visitor can see everything, but selection creates cultural consequences. Monumental architecture becomes disproportionately representative of Istanbul because monuments are stable, locatable, historically explainable, and easily incorporated into itineraries. Hagia Sophia, the major mosques, the bazaars, palaces, and the Bosphorus therefore acquire greater authority as symbols of the city, while ordinary residential streets, neighborhood routines, domestic environments, and ephemeral social practices become less visible. The tourist city begins to resemble a museum whose principal objects have been curated in advance. This does not mean that guidebooks invent the significance of Hagia Sophia or the Bosphorus; generations of travelers had already recognized them as exceptional. What changes is the degree to which this hierarchy becomes standardized and reproducible. Thousands of visitors can now perform approximately the same sequence of looking. The individual itinerary becomes collective choreography.

The Ottoman response complicates any interpretation of this transformation as a purely foreign imposition. As international tourism expands, the empire itself increasingly participates in the economy and representation of travel. Hotels expand, transportation improves, embankments and public environments are reorganized, and urban infrastructure adapts to the movement of foreign visitors as well as residents. The city therefore begins, to some extent, to perform the image through which it is internationally consumed. This does not imply that Ottoman modernization was undertaken simply for tourists; as the preceding chapter demonstrated, reforms responded to concerns including circulation, sanitation, fire, governance, commerce, and imperial prestige. Yet tourism becomes one participant within this changing urban system. The relationship between observer and observed consequently becomes reciprocal. Foreign guidebooks organize visitors' expectations, while local institutions and commercial actors recognize and respond to those expectations. Tourism is therefore better understood as a negotiated economy than as a one-directional gaze imposed upon a passive city.

By the early twentieth century, Le Corbusier's response to this standardized environment becomes significant precisely because he consciously attempts to move outside it. He writes: "I left the routes indicated to me and entered streets where no one had directed me" [11]. The statement transforms wandering into methodological resistance. Earlier travelers often wandered because routes were less completely organized; Le Corbusier wanders because routes now exist to be rejected. This is a fundamental historical difference. The possibility of the "off-route" experience depends upon the existence of an established route. His departure from prescribed itineraries therefore does not return him innocently to an earlier age of exploration but produces a modern counter-touristic position. He seeks architecture, vernacular forms, streets, and spatial relationships that official itineraries overlook, reclaiming personal inquiry from standardized vision. Compared with White, however, his method remains different. White's depth derives from duration of residence; Le Corbusier's derives from purposeful deviation and professional observation. Both resist superficial tourism, but one does so through time and the other through space. Their similarity lies in rejecting the assumption that canonical sights exhaust the meaning of Istanbul.

This comparison between White and Le Corbusier reveals one of the most important chronological developments of the chapter. In the 1840s, White can criticize the hurried stranger because rapid travel fails to penetrate the city's "exterior shell." By the early twentieth century, Le Corbusier

11 Le Corbusier, Le Voyage d'Orient, 172.

confronts not merely speed but a highly organized system that determines where the stranger should go. The problem has therefore shifted from insufficient duration to predetermined attention. Modern tourism does not only accelerate travel; it filters the city. To resist it, the traveler must actively seek what has been excluded. The independent observer has not disappeared, but independence itself has acquired a different meaning.

Yet even the most carefully organized itinerary cannot completely determine experience. Twain captures this resistance when he remarks: "The city refuses to behave as described" [12]. Whether approached as humor or broader metaphor, the formulation expresses a problem that runs throughout the travel archive. Guidebooks can determine routes, rank monuments, recommend hotels, describe appropriate behavior, and establish expectations, but they cannot fully control the material encounter. Sounds, smells, weather, crowds, commercial interactions, unexpected social encounters, closures, movement, and the contradictions of urban space continually interrupt the script. The bazaar is especially resistant because it requires interaction; the Bosphorus changes according to movement and atmosphere; Pera destabilizes the distinction between familiar Europe and unfamiliar East; and even canonical monuments produce responses that diverge from their printed descriptions. The guidebook can choreograph movement without completely choreographing perception.

Read chronologically, the transformation from White through Murray, Twain, Baedeker, and Le Corbusier therefore reveals not the disappearance of travel writing but a change in the conditions under which travel narratives acquire authority. White privileges prolonged residence and regards speed as the enemy of knowledge. Murray increasingly transforms knowledge into selection, sequence, and efficient instruction. Twain recognizes the danger of expectation becoming self-confirming and exposes the tourist performance through satire, even while participating in it. Baedeker extends classification to the point that Istanbul becomes a highly organized tourist geography centered upon convenient accommodation, ranked attractions, and predictable movement. Le Corbusier responds by turning departure from the prescribed route into an intentional method of observation. The central difference between these figures lies in what they understand authentic knowledge of the city to require: duration for White, correct selection for Murray, skepticism toward expectation for Twain, systematic organization for Baedeker, and autonomous spatial investigation for Le Corbusier.

The location-based framework used throughout this thesis makes the effects of this transformation particularly visible because the same places examined in earlier chapters become the building blocks of the tourist itinerary. Hagia Sophia moves from contested religious and historical monument to obligatory attraction; the bazaars become consumable sites of sensory "Easternness"; Pera becomes both symbol of modernization and practical tourist base; the Bosphorus becomes a packaged panorama; and the spatial contradictions of Istanbul are compressed into a sequence that can be experienced within limited time. Guidebook tourism therefore does not simply add another layer of representation to the city. It reorganizes the relationships between the locations around which foreign perceptions have already accumulated. Places previously connected through the traveler's narrative are now connected institutionally through routes.

Modern tourism can consequently be understood as the culmination of a longer transformation traced across the preceding chapters. The eighteenth-century traveler frequently establishes authority by emphasizing the exceptional nature of personal experience. During the nineteenth century, expanding travel literature creates increasingly recognizable conventions for describing

12 Twain, Innocents Abroad, 361.

Istanbul. Guidebooks then extract these conventions from individual narratives and convert them into standardized knowledge. What one traveler once discovered becomes what the next traveler is told not to miss. Repetition produces canon, and canon produces itinerary. The city is progressively mapped, ranked, timed, and consumed.

Yet the transformation is not simply a story of decline from authentic travel to superficial tourism. Earlier travelers were themselves shaped by literary conventions, political assumptions, religious histories, and inherited images, while guidebooks could provide visitors with historical and practical knowledge that made more extensive exploration possible. The important distinction is therefore not between a supposedly free pre-tourist gaze and a completely controlled modern tourist gaze. Rather, the degree and visibility of mediation change. Earlier travelers carry narratives and expectations; later tourists increasingly carry explicit instructions. Printed authority makes the pre-structuring of perception more systematic.

The guidebook thus occupies an ambiguous position. It democratizes travel by making Istanbul more navigable to people without extensive local knowledge, but it also narrows attention by determining what counts as significant. It enables movement while regulating it. It provides information while producing hierarchy. It makes the city accessible while potentially reducing complexity. Most importantly, it transforms the foreign visitor's relationship with uncertainty. The unexpected had been one of the principal sources of narrative authority in earlier travel writing; organized tourism attempts to reduce that uncertainty through information, infrastructure, and schedule.

Istanbul nevertheless retains the capacity to exceed this system. The contradiction between printed expectation and material encounter ensures that travel never becomes entirely reproducible. The city may be mapped, but it cannot be fully predicted; it may be cataloged, but not exhausted. This resistance explains why personal travel narratives continue even after guidebooks have standardized basic knowledge. If the guidebook could entirely contain Istanbul, there would be little need to narrate the encounter again. Instead, each traveler discovers discrepancies between the prescribed city and the experienced one.

The development of modern tourism therefore does not eliminate the central tension identified throughout this thesis; it gives that tension a new institutional form. From the first maritime panorama onward, foreign observers repeatedly approach Istanbul through expectations constructed elsewhere. Guidebooks make those expectations explicit and portable. They tell the visitor what to see, where to stay, which route to follow, and which sites can be omitted when time is short. Yet the material city continues to produce contradiction. The tourist performs the itinerary, but Istanbul interrupts the performance.

Modern tourism can therefore be understood as a form of spatial choreography rather than complete spatial control. Certain locations are magnified, others marginalized; certain sequences become canonical, while alternative geographies disappear from view. Istanbul increasingly becomes a museum of itself, but it remains a functioning metropolis that cannot be reduced entirely to its exhibits. The traveler becomes more closely aligned with the consumer, and urban experience becomes increasingly packaged, repeatable, and transferable. At the same time, figures such as Twain and Le Corbusier demonstrate that awareness of this standardization generates its own forms of resistance.

The history traced from White to Baedeker and Le Corbusier is therefore ultimately a history of changing authority. Authority moves from the experienced resident and individual narrator toward the handbook, the itinerary, the hotel network, and the institutions of tourism, while individual travelers respond by accepting, mocking, or deliberately escaping those structures. What remains unchanged is the inability of any single framework to exhaust the city. The guidebook produces expectation; Istanbul produces surprise. The tension between the two preserves the possibility of discovery even within standardized travel.

Seen together with the preceding chapters, this final transformation completes the movement from distant spectacle to increasingly mediated urban experience. Istanbul first appears to the foreign traveler as panorama, then as monument, district, market, landscape, modernizing metropolis, gendered social environment, Orientalist construction, and finally organized tourist destination. Each stage changes the conditions of seeing without completely replacing what came before. By the early twentieth century, the city carries all of these representational layers simultaneously. The tourist may follow Baedeker, stay in Pera, visit Hagia Sophia, bargain in the bazaars, travel along the Bosphorus, and search for the "Oriental" city described by earlier writers, effectively reenacting generations of foreign perception within a single itinerary. Modern tourism therefore does not erase the history of travel writing. It institutionalizes it.

Conclusion

Istanbul as Archive: Travel, Memory, and the Construction of a City

This thesis set out to examine how foreign travelers between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed Istanbul through writing, and how these constructions were shaped not only by chronology but by location, access, and ideology. By reorganizing travel accounts around urban sites rather than individual biographies, the study reveals Istanbul as a layered textual archive — a city repeatedly written into existence through encounters with specific places: Hagia Sophia, the Bosphorus, the bazaars, Pera/Beyoğlu, domestic interiors, and reforming boulevards. These locations function as narrative anchors through which travelers negotiate difference, familiarity, admiration, anxiety, and power.

The cumulative effect of two centuries of travel writing is not a single image of Istanbul but a palimpsest of perceptions. Each generation of observers overlays the city with new meanings while inheriting fragments of earlier descriptions. The Istanbul of Lady Montagu is not erased by Baedeker; it survives as echo beneath standardized tourism. The romantic melancholy of Pierre Loti coexists with the analytical gaze of Le Corbusier. The city becomes archive not because it is fixed but because it is continuously rewritten.

Travel literature emerges as historical evidence not only of the city but of the observers themselves. The travelers' descriptions reveal European and global anxieties about empire, modernization, gender, and cultural identity. Istanbul becomes mirror in which foreign societies examine their own transformations. When de Amicis mourns the disappearance of wooden neighborhoods, he articulates a broader nineteenth-century fear of industrial rationalization. When Kang Youwei criticizes imitation without understanding, he projects Chinese reform debates onto Ottoman terrain. Travel writing is therefore dialogic. It is as much autobiography as geography.

The location-based methodology employed in this thesis demonstrates that urban meaning is spatially distributed. Certain sites accumulate disproportionate symbolic weight. Hagia Sophia becomes arena where religion, empire, and aesthetics collide. The bazaars represent economic vitality and exotic spectacle. Pera/Beyoğlu embodies cultural hybridity and European presence. These spaces recur because they concentrate ideological tension. Travelers return to them repeatedly, attempting to stabilize interpretation of a city that resists simplification.

Gendered access further complicates this archive. Female travelers reveal interior worlds invisible to male observers, producing parallel geographies. The hammam, the household, and the harem disrupt Orientalist fantasy by replacing speculation with lived description. Their accounts remind us that travel writing is structured by permission. What is seen determines what can be said.

Orientalism operates throughout the archive but never entirely dominates it. Travelers arrive with expectations shaped by art, literature, and politics, yet empirical encounter repeatedly fractures these expectations. The city is too complex to remain pure symbol. Moments of surprise puncture fantasy. Twain's irony, White's domestic realism, and Le Corbusier's disappointment all expose the instability of inherited narratives. Istanbul becomes site where Orientalism is produced and undone simultaneously.

The rise of tourism marks a decisive shift. Guidebooks standardize the gaze, transforming exploration into itinerary. Yet even under this regime the city maintains agency. Travelers continue to record encounters that escape instruction. Istanbul resists reduction to checklist. Its unpredictability sustains travel writing as genre.

This thesis contributes to urban history by demonstrating that foreign travel accounts form a spatial archive capable of reconstructing historical perception of the city. Rather than treating travel writing as anecdotal literature, the study positions it as methodological tool. When read comparatively and locationally, these texts reveal how urban identity is negotiated across cultures and centuries.

Istanbul emerges not as static Oriental backdrop but as dynamic participant in global modernity. The city influences those who attempt to describe it. It shapes narrative as much as narrative shapes it. Travel writing becomes collaborative act between observer and place.

Future research may extend this approach by integrating Ottoman archival voices more deeply, examining how local writers responded to foreign representation, and tracing how twentieth-century nationalism reconfigured the travel archive. Comparative studies with other imperial capitals — Cairo, Vienna, Paris — could further illuminate how cities function as sites of cross-cultural projection.

In the end, the persistence of Istanbul in foreign imagination testifies to its capacity to exceed representation. Travelers repeatedly claim inadequacy of description. One observer writes that no account can equal the experience of arrival [1]. This confession of insufficiency is itself the final truth of the archive. The city survives every attempt to capture it.

Return to the Introduction: What Has Changed

Returning to the starting point of this thesis, it becomes clear that the initial framing of Istanbul as a city constructed through foreign observation has been both confirmed and significantly deepened. At the outset, the study proposed that travel writing did not merely document the city but actively shaped its representation. Through the course of the analysis, this proposition has evolved into a more precise understanding: that these representations are not randomly produced, but structured through recurring spatial frameworks and reinforced through chronological continuity.

In the Introduction, Istanbul was presented as a symbolic frontier and a site of layered meanings. What has emerged through the thesis is a clearer articulation of how these meanings are produced, stabilized, and transformed. The city no longer appears only as a meeting point between East and West, but as a dynamic system of locations that organize perception itself. The shift from a general understanding of representation to a location-based analytical model marks the central conceptual development of the study.

1 Jan Potocki, Voyages, ed. Jean-Marie Gerbault (Paris: Éditions Phébus, 1980), 34.

What Has Been Demonstrated

One of the key findings of this thesis is that travel writing operates through repetition as much as through difference. While each traveler approaches Istanbul from a distinct cultural and historical position, their accounts consistently return to a limited set of urban sites. These sites—Hagia Sophia, the Bosphorus, the bazaars, and Pera/Beyoğlu—function not simply as physical locations, but as interpretive frameworks that guide observation. This reveals that the perception of the city is structured spatially before it is articulated narratively.

A second important insight concerns the relationship between experience and expectation. Travelers arrive with preconceived images shaped by earlier texts, artistic representations, and political discourse. However, these expectations are frequently disrupted by direct encounter. The resulting tension between anticipation and experience produces the layered and often contradictory nature of travel writing.Istanbul emerges not as a passive object of description, but as an active force that reshapes the narratives imposed upon it.

The thesis has also demonstrated the significance of access in shaping representation. Gender, profession, and duration of stay determine what can be seen and therefore what can be written. Female travelers, long-term residents, and professional observers each produce different versions of the city, not because the city itself changes, but because their points of entry differ. This reinforces the idea that travel writing is not a transparent record of reality, but a situated and partial form of knowledge.

Final Reflection

Ultimately, what has been learned through this study is not only how Istanbul was represented, but how representation itself functions in the context of urban experience. Travel writing emerges as a process of negotiation between observer and environment, shaped by memory, expectation, and encounter. The city is not simply described; it is co-produced through this interaction.

The return to the Introduction thus reveals a shift from a question of what Istanbul is to a deeper understanding of how Istanbul becomes what it is in writing. The thesis demonstrates that the city's identity in travel literature is not fixed, but continuously constructed through the interplay of space, time, and perception.

In this sense, Istanbul resists closure. Just as travelers repeatedly acknowledged the inadequacy of their descriptions, this study also recognizes the impossibility of fully capturing the city within a single framework. What it offers instead is a method — a way of reading — through which the archive can be approached, compared, and reinterpreted.

The city remains open, unfinished, and continuously rewritten.

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