Ottoman Literature as Mediterranean Literature: Travel, Imperialism, and Comparison in *Hac Yolunda* by Cenab Şahabeddin

Abstract

The Mediterranean did not receive enough attention in the scholarship of Ottoman literature, which has often been studied either as the precursor of modern Turkish literature or as a part of Islamic Middle Eastern literatures. Likewise, Ottoman literature did not receive significant attention in Mediterranean studies, which has foregrounded interactions between Europe and the Maghreb. This article calls for both examining representations of the Mediterranean in Ottoman texts and envisioning Ottoman literature as Mediterranean literature. As a case study, I analyse a late Ottoman travelogue, *Hac Yolunda* (*On the Hajj Route*; 1909) by Cenab Şahabeddin (1870–1934), a pioneering figure in Ottoman literature due to his innovative prose style. I argue that the Mediterranean as a heuristic device can orient critics of Ottoman literature toward comparative and theoretical approaches that engage with fundamental debates in postcolonial studies and world literature.

Keywords

Mediterranean literature, Ottoman literature, world literature, Cenab Şahabeddin, *Hac Yolunda*, Orientalism, travel writings

Edwige Tamalet Talbayev charters the future direction for Mediterranean studies in her recent monograph on literatures of the Maghreb. She notes that '[o]ther Mediterranean connections must be made outside the European Union-Maghreb axis' and considers Turkey '[o]ne such connective space' (2017: 35). Building upon this remark, I consider Ottoman literature another milieu that will forge new Mediterranean connections. While the

Mediterranean has already received significant attention among historians of the Ottoman Empire, it did not receive the same attention in the scholarship of Ottoman literature that has often been studied either as the precursor of modern Turkish literatures or as a part of Islamic Middle Eastern literatures. Considering the potential of the Mediterranean as 'a site for rhetorical invention, disciplinary renewal, and theoretical innovation' (Yashin 2014: 365), this article calls for both examining representations of the Mediterranean in Ottoman texts and envisioning Ottoman literature as Mediterranean literature. It ultimately argues that the Mediterranean as a heuristic device can orient critics of Ottoman literature toward more comparative and theoretical approaches.

According to Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, the field of Ottoman literature has been 'particularist' since it has emphasized the peculiarity and even incomparability of Ottoman literature (2005: 25). One way to overcome this particularism is to study literary traditions such as Arabic, Armenian, Greek, and Judeo-Spanish and whose works widely circulated throughout the empire (Strauss 2003). While acknowledging the need for such comparative works, this article takes another approach and studies representations of the Mediterranean in one text, *Hac Yolunda* (*On the Hajj Route*; 1909) by Cenab Şahabeddin (1870–1934). Drawing upon Talbayev's designation of the Mediterranean as 'a speech act [more] than a secure reality' (2017: 12) to endow Ottoman studies with a more interdisciplinary character, my article reassesses *On the Hajj Route* within a Mediterranean context to engage with key debates in postcolonial studies and world literature.

My article extends the work of Nagihan Haliloğlu, who has recently made a similar reassessment for another Ottoman text. She analysed 'the Ottoman chronotope, and its attendant teleology of an Ottoman Mediterranean' (2017: 101) in one of the most important works of the early modern Ottoman period that comprehensively describes islands and port cities in the Mediterranean, *The Book of Travels* (*Seyahatname*) by Evliya Çelebi (d. 1685?).

Haliloğlu demonstrates that many places throughout the Mediterranean in Evliya Çelebi's travelogue are associated and intertwined with a genealogy of civilisations such as Greeks, Romans, and Venetians that ends with Ottomans—an intertwinement that she calls the 'Ottoman chronotope.' This narrative technique serves to project the Mediterranean fundamentally as an Ottoman domain.

Unlike Haliloğlu, I focus on a late Ottoman text and analyse a multifocal vision of the Mediterranean that is filtered through *On the Hajj Route* by Cenab Şahabeddin. After providing contextual background on the text and its author, the first section proposes that critics can reassess *On the Hajj Route* within a Mediterranean framework. The next two sections flesh out new interdisciplinary dialogues that this reassessment will generate. The second section explores intersections between the fields of Ottoman literature and postcolonial studies. First, it describes the impact of the Orientalist discourse on the current perceptions of the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire. It then sheds light upon the power dynamics that characterise the complex cultural landscape of the late Ottoman Empire. The third section explores intersections between the fields of Ottoman literature and world literature.[1] I propose that critics can draw upon the recent world literature scholarship to envision *Ottoman literature as Mediterranean literature*. The final section will emphasise the need to use the concept 'Mediterranean' with caution due to the imbrication between imperialism and the Mediterranean throughout history.

On the Hajj Route **as a Mediterranean Work**

The relative lack of attention to late Ottoman literatures in Mediterranean studies stems from the typical scholarly view among some historians who argue that political splits caused by the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century put an end to the Mediterranean cosmopolitanism. The region was hence separated into 'European' (Southern Europe) and

'non-European' (North Africa and the Middle East) parts. While the nineteenth century witnessed a rise in nationalist ideologies, these ideologies did not necessarily halt cultural exchanges. Furthermore, the Mediterranean has frequently been an object of analysis for historians or art historians, especially because Fernand Braudel's work that is considered the foundational text of the Mediterranean studies made a significant impact on the history discipline. Yet almost no work to date has considered categorising late Ottoman literatures as a part of Mediterranean literatures.

At the same time, numerous Ottoman authors, including Cenab Şahabeddin, have travelled throughout the Mediterranean and their works extensively feature the Mediterranean. Cenab Şahabeddin (1870–1933) was born in Manastır and then moved to Istanbul to receive his medical education. After having graduated from medical school, he went to Paris to specialize in dermatology. Cenab Şahabeddin became acquainted with Western literature there and started to publish his first works. Afterward, he practiced medicine in different parts of the empire such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Jeddah. *On the Hajj Route*, his most popular travelogue, narrates his travels from Istanbul to Jeddah where he had to work as a medical inspector. The travelogue was initially serialized as letters in the *Servet-i Fünun* newspaper in 1896 and then published for the first time in a book form in 1909.[2] This travelogue first describes Cenab Şahabeddin's departure from Istanbul. He extensively writes about his sea travel from Istanbul to Alexandria and describes Cairo and Alexandria in detail.[3]

Although *On the Hajj Route* is a 'non-fictional' travelogue, my article analyses this work to generate new directions for Ottoman literature due to several reasons. First, many late Ottoman writers, including Cenab Şahabeddin, believed that novels and travel writings serve similar purposes. For example, Ahmet Midhat Efendi (1844–1912) considered travel literature a cornerstone for the advancement of modern knowledge (Herzog & Motika 2000: 139-140), just as he believed that novels cultivate good moral values and inform his audience about the

latest scientific advancements (Parla 1993: 50). Some literary critics have even considered travel writings the first examples of an emergent novel genre (Adams 1983: 283). Furthermore, Hikmet Dizdaroğlu considers *On the Hajj Route* 'the first [Ottoman Turkish] travelogue that has a literary quality' (1953: 19). Dizdaroğlu's remark testifies that many histories of Ottoman literature have studied *On the Hajj Route* as a pioneering work due to its innovative prose style that has also characterised the *Servet-i Fünun* literary movement. This movement, which can be literally translated as 'Wealth of Arts and Sciences,' emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and its works often appeared in the newspaper that gave the movement its name, *Servet-i Fünun*. It abandoned the more explicitly social and pedagogical agenda of earlier writers such as Namık Kemal (1840–1888) in favour of what its writers considered a more developed aesthetic sensibility (Kolcu 2005: 149). By suggesting new axes of comparison, my study of *On the Hajj Route* as a Mediterranean work will provide new perspectives on the *Servet-i Fünun* as well. Finally, the Mediterranean is the setting in many works of the late Ottoman Empire, such as *Temaşa-yı Dünya* (1871–1872) by Evangelinos Misailidis (1820–1889) and *Turfanda mı Turfa mı* (1892) by Mizancı Murat (1853–1914?).[4] A close reading of *On the Hajj Route* can inspire creative interpretations of these works and provide new insights on the key themes that have shaped late Ottoman studies such as modernity and Westernisation.

This article examines in particular two roles of the Mediterranean in *On the Hajj Route* to explore intersections first between Ottoman literature and postcolonial studies and then between Ottoman literature and world literature. The Mediterranean sometimes serves an imperialist discourse that one finds in earlier travelogues such as *The Book of Travels* by Evliya Çelebi and *The Book of Maritime Affairs* (*Kitab-ı Bahriyye*; the first version finished in 1521 and the second version in 1526) by Piri Reis (d. 1553). At other times, it becomes the

stage in which the narrator experiences the displacements—fears, perplexities, and nausea—of a fast modernisation that undermines the ambitions of this imperialist discourse.

Mediterranean as a Bridge between Ottoman Literature and Postcolonial Studies

Ottoman studies has remained sceptical toward postcolonial perspectives. It has often emphasised that the postcolonial scholarship cannot capture the complexity of the cultural landscape of the late Ottoman Empire that, unlike South Asia, was not colonised. For example, Jale Parla notes that the term hybridity can explain cultural dynamics for colonial contexts that maintain strong cultural boundaries but not for the Ottoman Empire where these boundaries remained relatively fluid (2011: 17). Although no Western power colonised the Ottoman Empire, the empire had to confront in its final years with global economic, cultural, and political hierarchies that were generated by Western imperialism. This confrontation becomes conspicuous especially in many late Ottoman texts that feature the Mediterranean such as *On the Hajj Route*. Therefore, an analysis of *On the Hajj Route* can both draw upon postcolonial studies and provide a nuanced critique of it.

The Orientalist discourse has disassociated the Ottoman Empire from the Mediterranean culturally and politically. Alexis Wick demonstrated that the modern scholarship does not pay enough attention to representations of the Mediterranean in Ottoman works, because the Mediterranean has stood for freedom, progress, and civilisation over which only Europe could lay a claim in many Orientalist works (2016). Similarly, Bedri Gencer argued that the nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship has generated two conceptualizations of Islam—'Arab Islam as the civilization' (*medeniyet olarak Arap İslamı*) that was associated with arts, culture, and science and 'Turkish Islam as the religion' (*din olarak Türk İslamı*) that was associated with a harsh, legalistic interpretation of Islam (2008: 10). A particular consequence of this conceptualization was the identification of the Arab

Islam—in particular Andalusia and Muslim Sicily—with Mediterranean civilisations as well as the refusal to make a similar association between Ottomans and the Mediterranean world (288-290). Then analysing representations of the Mediterranean in Ottoman texts can contribute to postcolonial studies by exposing and eventually undermining conceptual associations of the Orientalist discourse that still shapes the humanities scholarship.

The Mediterranean has featured extensively in Ottoman texts, as it has evoked throughout centuries a sense of cosmopolitanism and imperial grandeur for the Ottoman elite. For example, the sixteenth-century work *Kitab-ı Bahriyye* by Piri Reis constantly uses the terms *Bahr-ı Abyad* or *Akdeniz* to refer to the Mediterranean and includes many chapters and maps about different parts of the sea, such as Cyprus, Antalya, Egypt, and Marmaris (1988).[5] Illustrations in Piri Reis's work inform the reader about diverse ports, castles, flora, and fauna of the Mediterranean. These extensive descriptions suggest a sense of control and authority over a Mediterranean that looks like an Ottoman lake. This preoccupation with the Mediterranean also characterises late Ottoman works such as *Turfanda mı Turfa mı* by Mizancı Murat. There is ample reason behind the engagement of late Ottoman intellectuals with the Mediterranean. First, many of these intellectuals have written extensively on Rome and Greece and sometimes even considered the Ottoman Empire the successor of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, authors such as Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932), Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan (1852–1937), and Jurjī Zaydān (1861–1914) wrote about Andalusia (Muslim Spain) to argue that the Islamic civilization is open-minded and cosmopolitan.[6]

Yet the nineteenth century also witnessed competing claims among different empires over the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean becomes the stage that displays the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into global capitalist networks. The transportation technology, in particular steamships, generated radical transformations in the Middle Eastern economy. It took just over a week to travel from Istanbul to Marseilles by steamships (Isabella & Zanou

2016: 98-99). Cenab Şahabeddin also witnesses the incorporation of the Mediterranean into these networks as he observes the construction of the Suez Canal and another canal that connects Cairo with Alexandria

These socioeconomic changes throughout the world also had a strong impact on the literary field. As a medium, serialized novels that became prevalent in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century fit into an era of global capitalism. Elizabeth Holt points out that serialized novels, like global capitalism, operate through and benefit from speculation, since readers of a series speculate about future episodes just as investors speculate about future investments (Holt 2017). Indeed, the *Servet-i Fünun* newspaper includes an article on the stock exchange that must have had avid followers among readers of the newspaper (*Borsa* 1313 AH: 136). Like these readers, some *Servet-i Fünun* authors come from a growing class of technocrats and entrepreneurs who produced serialized novels and journals not only to make literature accessible to a larger audience but also to make profits.[7]

Cenab Şahabeddin's remarks on various places in the world such as Java and Japan (221) should encourage critics to contextualise *On the Hajj Route* within the global financial networks into which the Ottoman Empire was being more enmeshed in the late nineteenth century.[8] An issue from the *Servet-i Fünun* newspaper, in which the thirteenth letter of *On the Hajj Route* was also published, features an illustration, in which a woman who stands by the window does not look outside at the mountains but instead seems to devote her entire attention to a book (*Bir Levha: Mütalaa* 1313 AH: 281). Although this illustration may give the impression that reading is an insulating activity, many authors have considered reading an endeavour that introduces readers, especially those with limited means to travel, to diverse regions of the world.

Cenab Şahabeddin's use of the terms such as 'Far East' (*aksa-yı şark*) and 'yellow race' (*ırk-ı asfar*) suggests his engagement with an Orientalist discourse that has divided the

world into immutable races and geographic regions (221). Readers frequently come across the term 'Mediterranean' (*Bahr-ı Sefid*) in *On the Hajj Route*. When writing about a ship that was lost in Malta, Cenab Şahabeddin describes various cities such as Marseilles, Algiers, İzmir, Istanbul, and Beirut as ports of the Mediterranean (57; *Bahr-ı Sefid limanları*). As he also realises, the Mediterranean has become a connective space due to various factors such as the shifting economic dynamics of port cities. His use of the term 'Red Sea' testifies to an engagement with the Orientalist discourse as well. Alexis Wick notes that '[s]tarting at a certain point in the mid-nineteenth century, the term *Bahr-ı Süveyş* suddenly disappears from the Ottoman record in favor of the now familiar *Bahr-ı Ahmer* (the *red* sea)' (2016: 6). Corroborating this view, Cenab Şahabeddin frequently uses the term *Bahr-ı Ahmer* rather than *Bahr-ı Süveyş* to refer to the Red Sea.[9] Here, *On the Hajj Route* contributes to the circulation of geography terms, such as Red Sea and Mediterranean, whose production cannot be thought apart from Orientalism and the imperialist vision it propagates.

Furthermore, the use of French as a language of communication among passengers in *On the Hajj Route* reveals the burgeoning influence of France in economic and cultural power hierarchies. *On the Hajj Route* makes numerous references to Napoleon. Cenab Şahabeddin remarks that he does not understand why many soldiers in Napoleon's army wanted a burial near Pompeii's Pillar (84) and later notes that, according to Napoleon, visitors of pyramids feel as if pyramids were looking back at them (112). During his visit of the pyramids, two Arabs who want to become tour guides say to him, 'Napoleon... Forty centuries,' to get some attention and to promote Egypt for tourists (158). All these examples demonstrate that Napoleon and his army, despite their brief stay in Egypt, could have had a significant impact on how people like Cenab Şahabeddin have perceived Egypt and the Mediterranean.

Yet, critics should not consider Cenab Şahabeddin a hapless victim of Orientalism and Western imperialism. At one point, Cenab Şahabeddin claims to know even more about the Mediterranean than European travellers who have described it in their writings. Cenab Şahabeddin notes that many Europeans (*Frenkler*) thought that they came across a carnival as they passed through the Karaköy Bridge in Istanbul. However, these Europeans would have become much more surprised had they travelled to Alexandria, which is more 'carnivalesque' than Karaköy (73). By exposing the lack in the knowledge of Europeans about the 'Orient,' Cenab Şahabeddin demonstrates that he is more knowledgeable than his Western counterparts about Alexandria and ultimately the Mediterranean. Furthermore, *On the Hajj Route* sometimes undermines the tendency of the Orientalist discourse to reinforce strict geographical borders. Like many classical Turkish poets, Cenab Şahabeddin uses creative imagery when he writes about the environment. For instance, he describes the sky as a 'sea of mercury' (169; *derya-yı simab*). Likewise, Cenab Şahabeddin undermines the distinction between the solid and the liquid once he notes that Alexandria stands between two 'seas'—the sea of water (*derya-yı ab*) and the sea of sand (65; *derya-yı rik*). These poetic descriptions displace entrenched assumptions about geography.

According to Fatih Altuğ, many late Ottoman writers such as Ahmet Midhat and Mizancı Murat appropriated, or in Altuğ's words 'translated,' the Orientalist discourse of the nineteenth-century Western imperialism for forging their future vision of the empire (2014: 70). This translation resulted in an extensive use of terms such as civilization (*medeniyet*) and savage (*vahşi*) in their works. In a similar vein, Cenab Şahabeddin 'translates' the Orientalist discourse for his work, another reason why critics cannot view Cenab Şahabeddin solely as a victim of Western imperialism. This 'translation' becomes conspicuous especially when the field of Ottoman literature does not simply map out the cultural and linguistic diversity of the

empire but also charters the complex and unequal power dynamics that shape the Ottoman cultural landscape (Altuğ 2014: 68).

Christopher Herzog and Raoul Motika have already paid attention to cultural power dynamics in their work on 'Orientalism alla turca' (2000) in Ottoman travel writings. Herzog and Motika note that works such as *Habeş Seyahatnamesi* (*The Book of Travels on Ethiopia*; 1322 AH) by Sadık ül-Müeyyed Azımzade and *Sudan Seyahatnamesi* (*The Book of Travels on Sudan*; 1326 AH) by Mehemmed Mihri express a sense of superiority vis-à-vis the rest of the Islamic world. They thus argue that these travelogues constitute examples of what they call 'Orientalism alla turca.' Herzog and Motika flesh out a similarity between travelogues from Western European writers who generate particular stereotypes over non-Western cultures that these writers deem less civilized and Ottoman writers who generate similar stereotypes over the rest of the Islamic world that they also deem less civilized. Yet, unlike most of the travelogues that Herzog and Motika analyse, *On the Hajj Route* extensively features the Mediterranean which has been for centuries 'at the centre of the Ottoman empire-building project financially, geopolitically and even from a point of view of self-image and legitimacy' (Haliloğlu 2007: 95). Therefore, especially in late Ottoman texts that feature the Mediterranean, the Orientalist discourse becomes deeply imbricated with a traditional Ottoman imperialist discourse that one observes in early modern texts such as Evliya Çelebi's *The Book of Travels*.

I analyse Cenab Şahabeddin's mobility throughout the empire and the Mediterranean to demonstrate this imbrication. Infrastructural developments during the late Ottoman Empire—ranging from Ali Mubarak's topographical textual map of Cairo (Powell 2012: 9), the increased circulation of geography textbooks (Özkan 2012), and the burgeoning popularity of photography (Sheehi 2016)—all testified to a state centralization project which strived for more control and stability. *On the Hajj Route* provides an extensive panorama of

the empire that became more connected via centralization projects. Cenab Şahabeddin repeatedly uses the term *cevelan* (wandering) and rarely seems circumscribed by another subject of surveillance such as the extensive spying networks that many people complained about in the late Ottoman period. Readers rarely get the impression that Cenab Şahabeddin is intruding into someone else's private space, as no space seems closed off to him. Indeed, they sometimes feel as if they were travelling alongside with Cenab Şahabeddin and have 'unmediated' accesses to his observations.

Throughout his travel, Cenab Şahabeddin reminds readers of the privileged status of the *ʿiyān*, direct observation, in the Islamic tradition. He quotes the famous Arabic proverb, 'There is no informant like the eye' (64; *Laisa al-khabar k'al-ʿiyān*).[10] At the end of Letter Six, he notes that he records down his observations in front of a room by the sea. (85). At another instance, he informs that he needs to say 'goodbye [to the reader] for the next two hours' before he starts the next letter (45). At the same time, Cenab Şahabeddin records things that he deems 'worthy' in his travelogue, underlining the selectivity of his gaze. *On the Hajj Route* frequently uses the expressions *temaşa* (contemplative observation) and *şayan* (worthy). Before Cenab Şahabeddin leaves Cairo, he notes that the city has many places that are 'worth contemplating' (*şayan-ı temaşa*) and 'worth attention' (173; *şayan-ı dikkat*).

This strong emphasis on direct observation as a means for acquiring knowledge also stems from the style of *Servet-i Fünun* whose writers such as Cenab Şahabeddin and Tevfik Fikret (1867–1915) have emphasised the strong association between poetry and other art forms such as painting. Many *Servet-i Fünun* authors published poems under certain photos, illustrations, and tableaus that provided inspiration for these poems (Kolcu 2005: 249). *On the Hajj Route* provides extensive visual descriptions of the Mediterranean to such an extent that,

as some critics such as Hüseyin Tuncer have already noted (1992: 64), Cenab Şahabeddin does not merely write about places that he visits; he "paints" them.

I propose that both classical Arabic and Turkish poetry function as a crucial lens or map through which Cenab Şahabeddin makes sense of the Mediterranean and 'paints' it. Abdelfattah Kilito notes that the relationship between direct observation (*ʿiyān*) and textual transmission (*ḥadīth*) is not clear-cut because travellers like Cenab Şahabeddin have preconceived notions that were formed and shaped through a textual repertoire, or *ḥadīth*, about their objects of observation (Kilito 1983: 22). Like many members of the Ottoman literati, Cenab Şahabeddin was familiar with several literary traditions, including Turkish, French, Persian, and Arabic. Yet his interest especially in Persian and Arabic does not signify a desire to revert to an ossified tradition. Cenab Şahabeddin pored over old Arabic, Persian, and Turkish dictionaries to create new expressions and combine Arabic and Persian phrases in unprecedented ways. After all, Cenab Şahabeddin used expressions such as *saat-i semen-fam* (watch that has the colour of jasmine), which received strong criticism from other writers who considered these expressions nonsensical.

Yet, more than simply providing words that enrich his vocabulary, poetic heritage becomes the panorama and even the map through which Cenab Şahabeddin makes sense of Alexandria and even the Mediterranean.[11] *On the Hajj Route* makes numerous references to classical Arabic poetry; however, rather than quoting specific verses, Cenab Şahabeddin makes generalizing statements such as 'in the words of classical poets' or 'as Arab poets say.' Arabic poetry functions as an object of gaze when he notes at one point that the entire view of Cairo 'is like an Arabic poem' (133). Just as 'Europeans in general arrived in the Orient after seeing plans and copies—in pictures, exhibitions, museums, and books—for which they were seeking the original' (Mitchell 1989: 234), Cenab Şahabeddin has extensively read on Alexandria. For emphasising this situation, he writes 'I was not going there the way

Christopher Columbus did to America' (64) and then mentions authors such as Gerard de Nerval (1808–1855), Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ (d. 663) who wrote on Alexandria (67) as he embarks on the city. Cenab Şahabeddin, like many European travellers who describe the 'Orient,' tends to fit what he observes into his expectations that his cultural formation has shaped.

Despite his deep erudition in the classical Arabic heritage, Cenab Şahabeddin reminds us that he knows neither Egypt nor its language well enough to communicate with its denizens (83). Nowhere throughout the work does he speak to Egyptians other than his tour guide and street vendors. His guide has to speak to him in 'an Arabic that he can understand' (158) and Cenab Şahabeddin refuses vendors who want to sell him goods with simple colloquial expressions such as 'not expensive' (*mu ghali*). He faces his vulnerability as he realizes that his knowledge of Arabic cannot help him to navigate Cairo or Alexandria without a guide.

Although he suffers from such instances of miscommunication, the Mediterranean feels familiar for Cenab Şahabeddin partly because he situates the Ottoman Empire within a Mediterranean genealogy. For example, he describes Alexandria as 'an old city that went in succession from Greeks to Romans, from Romans to Arabs, and finally to the just Ottoman rule' (51). Examining the intricate relation between the Mediterranean and what she calls the Ottoman chronotope in Evliya Çelebi's travelogue, Nagihan Haliloğlu makes the following remark: '[T]hese "ancient civilisations" [Greeks and Romans] that Western Europeans claimed as their heritage presented a more immediate model to the Ottomans than many historians may care to admit. Although Evliya never makes explicit references, it is clear that an imperial project in the Mediterranean, by nature, will hark back to its Greeks and Roman predecessors' (2017: 97). *On the Hajj Route* then shares a vision of the Mediterranean that one finds also in Evliya Çelebi's travelogue. Cenab Şahabeddin's remark on Alexandria appropriates the Orientalist view on the Mediterranean that has considered Greeks and

Romans a crucial part of its heritage and yet undermines this view by also considering the Ottoman rule a continuation of Greeks and Romans rather than an antithesis of them. Here, Cenab Şahabeddin speaks of Arabs and Greeks as civilisations that preceded the Ottoman civilisation but not as people who have been living under the Ottoman rule.

Despite this deep entanglement between the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire, Cenab Şahabeddin does not use what Michael Herzfeld called 'Mediterraneanist stereotypes' (1984) about Mediterranean people such as lazy, gambler, and non-punctual when he describes Turks. Yet, Cenab Şahabeddin agrees with a French traveller who argues that Greeks embody these stereotypes (29-37). Considering modern Greeks barbaric and uncivilized, this French traveller disagrees with his compatriot who admires Greeks for their scientific and cultural contributions to the humanity. By declaring that he considers Greek art a kitsch combination of Gothic, Arab, and other styles, the Frenchman considers himself an authoritative critic who can pass judgments on Greek arts. He even goes so far to argue that modern Greek sculpture does not exist (34). Cenab Şahabeddin fully agrees with the Frenchman who argues that Greeks are lazy, never read books, and only seek mistresses. These descriptions on Greeks resonate with many Orientalist descriptions. However, while *On the Hajj Route* suggests that Greeks suffer from deep stagnation, its readers rarely, if ever, get a similar impression on Ottoman Turks. After all, readers do not have an 'unmediated access' to this conversation between the two Frenchmen, since Cenab Şahabeddin translates and even 'domesticates' it into Ottoman Turkish for a Turkish-reading audience.

Mediterranean as a Bridge between Ottoman Literature and World Literature

Emphasising the methodological innovations that the Mediterranean can generate, Julie Scott notes, 'If "the Mediterranean" has any meaning, argued Llobera, it must lie in the significance of the comparisons it is able to generate' (2005: 223). Literary critics have often

remained attuned to this particular significance. For example, by reading 'French and francophone poetry today as Mediterranean literature' (2017: 86), yasser elhariry explores themes such as illogic, enigma, and emergence in the works of various poets such as Salah Stéité and Emmnanuel Hocquard. In a similar vein, this section reads Ottoman literature today as Mediterranean literature to map out cross-cultural synergies among diverse literary traditions.

I find Claudia Esposito's work on literatures of the modern Maghreb helpful for envisioning Ottoman literature as Mediterranean literature. Analysing Maghrebi works from a diverse range of writers such Mahi Binebine and Albert Memmi, Esposito notes that their works feature what she calls a 'cultural and literary Mediterranean' (Esposito 2014: xiii), a milieu that undermines strict political, cultural, and economic hierarchies of the modern imperialism. She contrasts this Mediterranean 'with its invention in the disciplines of history and the social sciences' (xiii) that has served to substantiate these hierarchies. Although late Ottoman authors did not openly advocate a vision of the Mediterranean that undermines oppressive hierarchies, their texts feature the literary and cultural Mediterranean that Esposito observes in modern works of the Maghreb.

Alexandria embodies in *On the Hajj Route* what Esposito calls the literary and cultural Mediterranean that deconstructs strict boundaries and hierarchies. The textual and cultural repertoire that has shaped Cenab Şahabeddin cannot adequately prepare him for the observations that he makes in liminal spaces of the Mediterranean such as ships and port cities like Alexandria. Many scenes in *On the Hajj Route* demonstrate that *ʿiyān* no longer has the authority and privilege that it has enjoyed for centuries in the Islamic tradition. For example, Cenab Şahabeddin feels threatened by the gaze of two European women when he visits the pyramids, as he fears that their gaze may crush him (153). These moments take Cenab

Şahabeddin outside his comfort zone and undermine 'the association between the acquisition of wisdom and the experience of travel' (Euben 2006: 15) of the travel literature, *riḥla*.

Cenab Şahabeddin feels caught off guard once he comes across an Alexandria that was undergoing a fast modernisation. The significant migration that Alexandria received in the nineteenth century from diverse parts of the Mediterranean such as Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Greece, and Malta increased the city's population from six thousand in 1798 to 231,000 in 1882 when the British occupied Egypt (Clancy-Smith 2011: 3).[12] Cenab Şahabeddin makes the following observation about the city: 'This place is neither Western nor Eastern, neither fully European nor fully African' (73). At certain moments, it seems as if the city were assaulting Cenab Şahabeddin's senses when he notes that people 'boil' under the sunlight and one can see in Alexandria 'all kinds of colours on a single person' (90).

This fast modernisation that Alexandria goes through renders the Mediterranean an uncanny space. The word choice that Cenab Şahabeddin uses when writing about Alexandria emphasises a sense of artificiality and even displacement. As he embarks on the city, many people who want to serve the incoming tourists rush to the ship and praise their restaurants and hotels. Cenab Şahabeddin notes that their lips 'chew' (*çiğneyerek*) different languages such as Turkish, Italian, and Arabic (70). His other descriptions of the Mediterranean such as 'caverns that were gnawed by coastal waters' (*sahilde suların kemirdiği oyuklar*) and 'imprints of Mediterranean waves' teeth' (*emvac-ı Bahr-ı Sefidin asar-ı esnanı*) further contribute to this sense of uncanniness (43). While he is watching the show of an Egyptian belly dancer, Cenab Şahabeddin feels a strong disgust as he notes that oil lamps 'vomit light' (98; *ziya kusuyor*) and the dancer 'has blue lips' (100). This description resonates with many other fin-de-siècle writings that become deeply preoccupied with social and sexual degeneracy (Denisoff 2007: 31-52).

I read seasickness that many passengers suffer in *On the Hajj Route* as another major symptom of displacements that result from a fast modernisation (55-56). The detailed description on seasickness in *On the Hajj Route* suggests that its audience does not know much about the disease. Cenab Şahabeddin remarks that the French describe what the passengers feel on the ship as 'a transitory illness that they call "the sickness of the sea"' (55). He then describes its various symptoms such as pale face and deep fatigue and notes that some people recommend fresh air to cure it. Unlike *Kitab-ı Bahriyye* that never mentions the physical toil that Piri Reis may have suffered, *On the Hajj Route* exposes the hardships of sea travel.

Seasickness is a key theme in other travelogues that substantially engage with the Mediterranean. For example, Tarek El-Ariss provides a new interpretation on *An Imam in Paris* (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz*), a travel writing that was written in Arabic in 1834 by Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873). The Egyptian khedive Mehmet Ali sent al-Ṭahṭāwī to Paris so that al-Ṭahṭāwī could record down his observations in *An Imam in Paris* on various aspects of French culture and civilisation during his stay in France. El-Ariss notes that especially al-Ṭahṭāwī's fear and seasickness while on the ship counters with the prevalent assumption of the *riḥla* (travel) literature that has considered travel a desirable experience which allows the traveller to acquire more knowledge (2013: 32). Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) also writes about the seasickness (1990: 34; *le mal de mer*) of his fellow passengers in *Lettres d'Orient* (*Letters from the Orient*; 1849–1851).[13] Authors such as al-Ṭahṭāwī, Flaubert, and Cenab Şahabeddin find a common ground in the Mediterranean as the milieu of a displacing modernisation.

The Mediterranean offers a framework that encourages critics to compare *On the Hajj Route* with other works such as *An Imam in Paris* or *Letters from the Orient*. As Sharon Kinoshita argues, nationalistic frameworks would situate works such as *On the Hajj Route* in

relation to earlier texts from the same linguistic tradition. In contrast, Mediterranean literature 'brings into view the patchwork of principalities, city-states, and empires—often multilingual, multi-ethnic, or multi-confessional,' thereby serving as a 'project of reterritorialization' (Kinoshita 2014: 314). Hillary Kilpatrick has already suggested that the Mediterranean can be an exciting direction for the field of Ottoman literature when she called for categorising Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Turkish literatures as part of 'Eastern Mediterranean literatures' (2000: 83-94). She notes that such a categorisation would demonstrate that what scholars consider characteristics of Arabic or Islamic literatures are often defining features of Greek and Hebrew literatures as well.[14]

Critics can thus envision *Ottoman literature as Mediterranean literature* not because all Ottoman texts feature the Mediterranean but because the term 'Mediterranean literature' can function as a heuristic device for new perspectives on Ottoman texts.[15] To do so, they can draw upon the recent scholarship on topics such as 'American literature as world literature' (Di Leo 2017), 'Chinese literature as world literature' (Ning 2017), and 'German literature as world literature' (Beebee 2016). All these works use the term 'world literature' as a heuristic device to encourage specialists to pay more attention to cultural interactions and exchanges that shape their objects of study. World literature has received criticism since it sometimes ignores cultural contexts and discourages the study of source languages (Apter 2013). Mediterranean studies can draw upon the transcultural emphasis of the world literature scholarship without sacrificing philological nuance and rigorous contextualization that situates Ottoman texts within the multicultural Mediterranean milieu.

Conclusion

To reassess late Ottoman literatures within a Mediterranean framework, one needs to map out cultural interactions among many literary traditions that constitute the Ottoman

cultural landscape, such as Arabic, Greek, French, and Turkish. However, even a close reading of a single text, as I have shown in this article, can consider the Mediterranean a 'heuristic device' that provides new perspectives in Ottoman studies. This article has encouraged more reading practices that will reassess Ottoman literatures within a Mediterranean framework by analysing representations of the Mediterranean in Ottoman writings and examining tropes and themes that have been extensively theorised in Mediterranean studies, such as islands, travel, displacement, and exile, as crucial components of Ottoman literatures. The Mediterranean does not have to serve as an umbrella term that encapsulates several literary traditions such as Arabic and Turkish; it can also deconstruct our fundamental assumptions about these traditions.

My work draws upon the scholarship that has viewed the Mediterranean as a connective space that undermines Euro-centric biases shaping the humanities and reveals cross-cultural synergies between what people have considered two distinct worlds, East and West (Dobie 2014). However, much of the cultural and scholarly discourse has projected the Mediterranean as the birthplace of a superior Western civilization. Any attempt to reassess Ottoman literatures vis-à-vis a Mediterranean framework also needs to examine the potential shortcomings of the Mediterranean as a conceptual category, its deep imbrication with Orientalism in particular. Shaden Tageldin observes in the works of Salāma Mūsā (1887–1958) a 'whitening that to this day tilts Egyptian self-understanding toward a "Mediterranean" understood as European' (2011: 236). Similarly, the Mediterranean can be appropriated to 'whitewash' the Ottoman cultural landscape and de-emphasize the engagement of Ottoman intellectuals with diverse Islamicate traditions that do not receive enough attention in Mediterranean studies, such as Persian and Urdu. At the same time, Claudio Fogu argues that many 'Mediterranean authors' claim the Mediterranean identity, since 'Mediterraneanism may share with Orientalism the original sin of othering, but it has also been appropriated by

the other it supposedly created' (2018: 183). Critics of Ottoman literature too can claim the Mediterranean as long as they openly acknowledge and strive to overcome its potential setbacks. Mediterranean literature, like world literature, opens up new axes of comparison in which Ottoman literature plays a key role.

Notes

This work received support from Marie-Skłodowska Curie Actions (Grant No 795465) under the Horizon 2020 Framework of the European Commission. It was initially presented at the "Mediterranean Mobilities and Borders" workshop at the Orient-Institut Istanbul, Turkey. I would like to thank all participants for their helpful feedback on the paper. I am also grateful for the constructive feedback that I received from two JMS reviewers on an earlier draft of this article.

[1] I would like to thank Mehmet Kalpaklı for providing me with this particular insight.

[2] For secondary sources on Cenab Şahabeddin, see Dizdaroğlu 1953; Enginün 1989; Kolcu 2005: 142-170; and Tuncer 1992: 60-76. Cenab Şahabeddin wrote other travelogues too. *The Horizons of Iraq* (*Afak-ı Irak*), which consists of thirteen chapters that were serialized in *Tasvir-i Efkar* between 1914 and 1916, includes his observations about the modern-day Iraq and Syria. *Avrupa Mektupları* (*Letters from Europe*; 1335 AH) includes his observations during his trip in Europe, Austria and Germany in particular.

[3] Cenab Şahabeddin does not write extensively about the hajj experience although the title, *On the Hajj Route*, may suggest otherwise. At the same time, he meets two other Turkish men, Remzi Bey and Hüseyin Bey, who are going to Mecca for hajj (8). Securing the hajj route has remained a strong incentive for the Ottoman Empire to control the Mediterranean.

[4] *Temaşa-yı Dünya*, which was written in *Karamanlı* (Turkish written in Greek script), is on Alexandros Favini who travels to many places such as Rome, London, Paris, Greece, Tunisia, and Istanbul. *Turfanda mı Turfa mı* narrates the traumatic displacements of Mansur Bey after France conquers Algeria.

[5] Both *Akdeniz* and *Bahr-ı Abyad* literally mean the 'White Sea.' *Akdeniz* also means Mediterranean in modern Turkish.

[6] For some examples, see *Tarık or the Conquest of Andalusia* (*Tarık yahut Endülüs Fethi*; 1879) by Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan, *The Conquest of Andalusia or Tarıq the son of Ziyad* (*Fatḥ al-Andalus, aw Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād*; 1903) by *Jurjī Zaydān*, and 'The New al-Andalus' ('*Al-Andalus al-jadīda*'; 1912) by *Aḥmad Shawqī*.

[7] *On the Hajj Route* was serialized in the *Servet-i Fünun* newspaper that also serialized some of the most canonized works in late Ottoman Turkish literature such as *Blue and Black* (*Mai ve Siyah*; 1897) by Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil (1866–1945). In fact, many episodes of these works were serialized at the same time. *Mai ve Siyah* especially exposes the stark impact of a global and capitalist economy on the literary field.

[8] All translations unless otherwise indicated are mine.

[9] Although Cenab Şahabeddin often uses the term *Bahr-ı Ahmer* to refer to the Red Sea, he once uses the old term for the Red Sea, *Şab Denizi* (230) and later indicates that the sea should have been called the Rainbow Sea (*Bahr-ı Kuzah*) because it can get so colourful (223). As I also show later in the article, these statements undermine the rigidity of geographical concepts.

[10] Şemseddin Sami (1850–1904) defines *ʿiyān* in his famous Ottoman Turkish dictionary *Kamus-i Türki* as 'what is apparent, seen with the naked eye' and uses the word in two sentences: 'There is no way of attaining knowledge like *ʿiyān*' and 'This is *ʿiyān* like the sun' (1317–1318 AH: 957).

[11] I would like to thank Megan C. MacDonald for providing me with this particular insight.

[12] Although Alexandria has undergone a significant economic transformation, Cenab Şahabeddin notes that those who benefit from this transformation are Europeans rather than long-term residents of Cairo, many of whom had to beg money from the visitors (89).

[13] Like Cenab Şahabeddin, Flaubert considers Alexandria more European than Cairo in this work (1990: 61).

[14] In fact, an article in the *Servet-i Fünun* by M. Sadık (likely Mahmud Sadık) can encourage critics to move beyond the categories that they use. M. Sadık notes that all literatures, whether they be Eastern, Western, ancient, or modern, share common characteristics as they are the products of a common humanity. Therefore, the article argues that Ottoman literature did not emerge solely under the influences of Arabic, Persian, and French literatures, because Indian, Greek, and even Babylonian literatures influenced Ottoman poetry (1314 AH: 39). If M. Sadık did not confine himself to 'Islamic' or 'Middle Eastern' as the framework under which Ottoman literatures should be analysed, contemporary critics do not have to confine themselves to these categorisations either.

[15] Since Ottoman authors did not use the term 'Mediterranean' as a category to designate their writings, some critics can consider the Mediterranean an 'etic concept' that does not derive from the source culture that is being studied. Alexander Beecroft notes that critics should not privilege emic terms, concepts that critics derive from the source culture that they study, over etic terms, since comparatists need to rely on etic concepts to make arguments on diverse literary traditions that they study (2015: 30). As an etic concept, the Mediterranean can encourage the field of Ottoman literature to overcome its particularism.

References:

Adams, P. G. 1983. *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

Altuğ, F. 2014. 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Edebiyatında İmparatorluk, Medeniyet, Yerlilik, Yaban(cı)lık ve Din. In *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı Istanbulu'nda Edebi Kültür* (eds.) F. Altuğ & M. F. Uslu, Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları 65-114.

Andrews, W. & Kalpaklı, M. 2005. *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-modern Ottoman Culture and Society*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Apter, E. 2013. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York: Verso.

Beebee, T. O. 2014. *German Literature as World Literature*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Beecroft, A. 2015. *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.

Bir Levha: Mütalaa. 1313 AH. *Servet-i Fünun* **14 (356)**: 281

Borsa. 1313 AH. *Servet-i Fünun: Tevcihat ve Havadis Kısmı* **14 (356)**: 136

Cenab Şahabeddin. 1325 AH. *Hac Yolunda*. İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Ahmet İhsan.

Clancy-Smith, J. A. 2011. *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800-1900*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Denisoff, D. 2007. Decadence and aestheticism. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (ed.) G. Marshall, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 31-52.

Di Leo, J. R, ed. 2017. *American Literature as World Literature*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Dizdaroğlu, H. 1953. *Cenap Şahabettin: Hayatı, Sanatı, Eserleri*. Istanbul: Varlık Yayınevi.

Dobie, M. 2014. For and Against the Mediterranean: Francophone Perspectives. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* **34 (2)**: 389-404.

El-Ariss, T. 2013. *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Elhariry, Y. 2017. In ¾, A Trembling Question: Mediterranean Literature? *Contemporary French Civilization* **42 (1)**: 75-96. https:// doi/10.3828/cfc.2017.5.

Enginün, İ. 1989. *Cenap Şahabettin*. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı.

Esposito, C. 2014. *The Narrative Mediterranean: Beyond France and the Maghreb*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Euben, R. L. 2006. *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Flaubert, G. 1990. *Lettres d'Orient*. Bordeaux: L'horizon chimérique.

Fogu, C. 2018. We Have Made the Mediterranean; Now We Must Make Mediterraneans. In *Critically Mediterranean: Temporalities, Aesthetics, and Deployments of a Sea in Crisis* (eds.) y. elhariry & E. T. Talbayev, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan 181-197.

Gencer, B. 2008. *İslam'da Modernleşme 1839-1939*. Ankara: Lotus.

Haliloğlu, N. 2017. Ottoman Chronotrope for the Mediterranean in Evliya Çelebi's Seventeenth-century Travelogue *Seyahatname*. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* **26 (1)**: 93-107.

Herzfeld, M. 1984. The horns of the Mediterraneanist dilemma. *American Ethnologist* **11 (3)**: 439-454.

Herzog, C & Motika, R. 2000. Orientalism Alla Turca: Late 19th/ Early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim 'Outback.' *Die Welt des Islams* **40 (2)**: 139-195.

Holt, E. 2017. *Fictitious Capital: Silk, Cotton, and the Rise of the Arabic Novel*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Isabella, M. & Zanou, K. 2016. *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Kilito, A. 1983. *Les séances: récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhânî et Harîrî*. Paris: Sindbad.

Kilpatrick, H. 2000. Eastern Mediterranean Literatures: Perspectives for Comparative Study. In *Understanding Near Eastern Literatures* (eds.) V. Klemm & B. Gruendler, Wiesbaden: Reichert 83-94.

Kinoshita, S. 2009. Mediterranean Literature. In *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (eds.) P. Horden & S. Kinoshita, Sussex: Wiley Blackwell 314-329.

Kolcu, A. İ. 2005. *Servet-i Fünun Edebiyatı*. Ankara: Salkımsöğüt.

M. Sadık. *Musahabe-i edebiyye*. 1314 AH. *Servet-i Fünun* **15 (367)**: 38-43.

Mitchell, T. 1989. The World as Exhibition. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* **31 (2)**: 17-36. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015802.

Ning, W. Chinese Literature as World Literature. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. **43 (3)**: 380-392.

Özkan, B. 2012. *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: The Making of a National Homeland in Turkey*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Parla, J. 1993. *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*. Istanbul: İletişim.

———. 2011. *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım*. Istanbul: İletişim.

Piri Reis. 1988. *Kitab-ı bahriyye*. Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Turkish Republic.

Powell, E. M. T. 2012. *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Scott, J. 2005. Imagining the Mediterranean. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* **15 (2)**: 219-243.

Sheehi, S. 2016. *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860 –1910*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Strauss, J. 2003. Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)? *Middle Eastern Literatures* **6 (1)**: 39-76. https://doi.org/10.1080/14752620306881.

Şemseddin Sami. 1317. *Kamus-ı Türki*. Dersaadet [Istanbul]: İkdam Matbaası.

Talbayev, E. T. 2017. *The Transcontinental Maghreb: Francophone Literature across the Mediterranean*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Tageldin, S. 2011. *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tuncer, H. 1992. *Servet-i Fünun Edebiyatı*. İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi.

Wick, A. 2016. *The Red Sea: In Search of Lost Space*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Yashin, V. N. 2014. 'Beginning with the Mediterranean: An Introduction.' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* **34 (2)**: 364-367. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-2773899.