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I am not like Other travellers; Istanbul holds the Tur-key to my heart

A comparative thesis on Orientalism and the 'Other' in Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters* and modern travel blogs

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Abstract: Orientalism and ‘Othering’ are the products of the travel accounts from the sixteenth and seventeenth century. These concepts describe the divide between East and West, which is still an issue to this day. The publication of *Orientalism* by Edward Said brought light to these issues.. The genre of travel writing has extended to the digital world through travel blogs, which have not been widely studied. By comparing an analysis of travel blogs from the past ten years to that of *The Turkish Embassy Letters* by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, it has been determined to what extent the concepts are still present in the modern age and what change they have undergone, if any. The analysis shows that ‘Othering’ is still widely present in travel literature, in both the description of locals and their culture, and the ‘Othering’ of fellow travellers.

Key words: Orientalism, ‘Othering’, travel literature, travel blogs, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

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1. Introduction

Some shopkeepers rearranging their show window asked for advice, "...Do you think we'll frighten tourists away if we put a rug in the window? They are tired of being hassled in the rug shops." We warily advised them to display a rug, or they might miss customers who were looking for rugs. It seemed quite a genuine question, and not an ingeniously tricky way to sell us a rug. In fact, they didn't try and sell anything. Just trying to understand the way tourists' minds work, and that not everyone comes to Istanbul to buy a rug. I'd certainly buy ten if I could afford to.¹

This statement was found on one of the travel blogs that were analysed, and it accurately captures the current state of travel blogging. Locals are suspected of being nice to tourist for the sole purpose of selling goods, and bloggers are distancing themselves from other tourists. In recent years, bombarded by economic recession, unemployment, political confusion, loss of moral values, consumption, deterioration of the environment, decline in the quality of life in large cities, noise and pollution, readers have turned to travel writing for diversion.² This raises the question to what extent the reader is influenced by what they read about another culture. In particular, this is due to the fact that the English-speaking part of the world's view of the Eastern world was formed by Western travel accounts from the seventeenth century, and it has barely been changed since.³ Said's *Orientalism* was the first work to point this out, which has resulted in plenty of research into the topic and therefore an increased awareness of the issues associated with orientalism.⁴ Because the ideas about the Eastern world not have not been re-analysed for centuries, it is necessary to study the differences in the way cultures are described in modern texts compared to those of the seventeenth century. Analysing both texts can provide an insight into how orientalist ideas have managed to prevail. The type of literature most suitable for this cause is travel literature, because it is inherent to the genre to compare foreign cultures with one's own, and it has been influential in the past.

Travel blogging rose to popularity in the twenty-first century. People do not usually seek out travel blogs to read a well-written piece of literature. However, its contents describe

¹ Lim, Sue. "Last Blog of the Winter: Istanbul for Fun!" Travelblog.org. March 23, 2019.

² Jiménez, Santiago Henríquez. "The Benefits of Travel: Exploring the Notion of Genre and Academic Assimilation of Travel Literature." *CEA Critic* 64, no. 1 (2001): 87

³ Said, Edward W. "Orientalism Reconsidered." *Cultural Critique*, no. 1 (1985): 94

human experiences while travelling, and the blogs can provide a great insight into the tourist mindset. This is also the case for travel literature of the seventeenth century, of which it could be said that it was already a form of travel blogging, which were published as written travel accounts. Whilst most of these were written by men, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* stand out as being one of the few written by a woman, and they are known for portraying Turkey in a more accurate way than her contemporaries. However, this does not mean that the works are free from Orientalism and 'Othering'.

In order to study Orientalism in both types of travel accounts, the theoretical framework will provide a definition and a history of Orientalism, and how it is still present in the Western view on Eastern cultures. Following that, there will be an analysis of *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, and the literary devices used to create an image of Turkey. The studied letters were chosen based on the location the letters were written in, only the ones that were written in Turkey are included. The next chapter will focus on analysing travel blogs. To be able to accurately compare the modern travel blogs to the letters, the following criteria were used: the blog needs to be written about visiting Turkey, by a woman, the length needed to exceed a thousand words, the blog could not be older than ten years, and it needed to be written in a diary style. These selection criteria resulted in a database of sixteen blogs. Finally, both of these selected materials will be compared, to find out how orientalism and 'Othering' are present in both works, and to what extent it has evolved over the centuries.

2. Orientalism and The Other in literature

Before discussing how orientalism and Othering are present in *The Turkish Embassy Letters* and the travel blogs, it is important to establish a definition of both concepts and how they are represented in travel literature. The term 'orientalism' was coined by Edward Said in 1977, and started the questioning of the foundations of Western representation of Eastern cultures, and the 'Orient' as the ultimate Other in popular culture and literature.⁵ Said explains how Orientalism represents and promotes Western superiority through dualism. In other terms, 'the self' and 'the Other' are used to justify patterns of domination over the East. In literature, this means that 'the Other' is portrayed as a lower being, because they are inherently different, whilst being dismissive of the commonalities between 'the self' and 'the

⁵ Burney, Shehla. "Chapter One: Orientalism: The Making of the Other." *Counterpoints* 417 (2012): 24

Other'.⁶ Said also argues that many aspects in literature are constantly reinterpreted and re-examined, whilst this does not apply to hostile or exaggerated depictions of the Orient, which seem to be stuck in a more permanent position,⁷ which has resulted in four prevalent, widely believed dogmas. The first is the idea that the systematic difference between the East and the West is rational, and based on the fact that the West is rational and developed, whilst the Orient are undeveloped and inferior. The second dogma is that texts representing ancient Oriental civilisation are preferable to modern Oriental realities, the third is the idea that the Orient is incapable of defining itself, therefore the generalised and systemic Western point of view is seen as 'objective'. The fourth dogma is that the Orient is something to be feared or to be controlled.⁸ These dogma's are a result of the image that was created of the Orient in early travel literature. Early travel literature described travels through recently gained territories, and gave detailed descriptions of the cultures and noted the social differences with the Western world. These travel accounts formed a leading role in establishing the terms of the relationship between European and colonial cultures.⁹ The dualism that was created as a result of the divide between the East and the West persists to this day, and Muhammad Samiei argues that formulating a new account of identity and recognising global plurality is necessary to avoid a dark future in which dualism causes hate, conflict and war. There have been many improvements since the publication of *Orientalism*, among which are the increased presence of Muslim scholars, and the globalisation and communication revolutions of the 21st century, which provide more opportunities for mutual understanding.¹⁰

However, this does not mean that orientalism does not exist anymore, in fact, many academics agree that it exists under multiple different names nowadays. Dabashi argues that orientalism has had its historic function, and that there is a need for a new mode of thinking.¹¹ *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* by Dabashi has been one of the most important written works after the publication of *Orientalism*. The book describes how the world can no longer be divided into East and West, and that these are imaginary

⁶ Samiei, Mohammad. "Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World." *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 7 (2010): 1146

⁷ Said, Edward W. "Orientalism Reconsidered.", 94

⁸ Samiei, Mohammad. "Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World.", 1147

⁹ Lowe, Lisa. "Travel Narratives and Orientalism: Montagu and Montesquieu." In *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, 35

¹⁰ Samiei, Mohammad. "Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World.", 1150

¹¹ Dabashi, Hamid. "Introduction: Knowledge and Power in a Time of Terror." In *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in a Time of Terror*. (Routledge, 2015) 1-12.

categories. Dabashi also argues that there is a need for a new discourse on the relationship between the ideas of the human subject and human communities.¹² Not all new names for orientalism represent a positive change, Neo-Orientalism is the term that describes the new negative view of the East, in light of recent events surrounding terrorism, resulting in a confirmation of the dogma that the Orient is to be feared or to be controlled. Re-Orientalism is the phenomenon that the Orient have been starting to describe themselves the same way that a Westerner would, mostly in literature. Orientalism continues to play an important role in politics, and the divide between East and West still influences media and is in turn also influenced by media. In academia, orientalism still stimulates many new projects, as scholars use it to analyse works from different historical periods, and how the concept is challenged or constituted in them. One of the latest discussions has been to determine how other cultures can be best represented in literary works, and whether cultures are actually as distinct and separate as they are often described.¹³ The solution seems to be to grant both sides of the duality a place when presenting issues, possibly even more, to prevent either side from framing the other.¹⁴

To answer the research question, it is important to take the history of Orientalism and the 'Other' into consideration. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was part of the generation of writers that originated the issue, whilst the travel blogs were written after the publication of *Orientalism*. Both texts should thus be looked at through the lens of their respective time periods. The extent of the 'Othering' will be analysed by using Said's theory, taking into account the respective time periods that the works were written in.

3. Analysis of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters*

Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters* consists of 46 letters, all of which were written during her travels through Europe, Asia and Africa. The most well-known, and arguably most important, letters from this collection are the ones that were written about Montagu's year-long visit to Turkey. She travelled alongside her husband, as he went to Turkey to do business. During this year, Montagu describes her encounters with the foreign culture and

¹² Almarcegui, Patricia. "Orientalism and Post-Orientalism. Ten Years without Edward Said." *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* 20-21 (2014): 141

¹³ Teo, Hsu-Ming. "Orientalism: An Overview." *Australian Humanities Review* 54 (2013): 17

¹⁴ Schmidt, Silke. "(Re-)Mediating Orientalism." In *(Re-)Framing the Arab/Muslim: Mediating Orientalism in Contemporary Arab American Life Writing*, 386

people. Whilst some might argue that the letters were not meant to be sent to their addressees, but rather to form an epistolary, it cannot be denied that the experiences described by Montagu are authentic, and often not before described by other travel accounts. She uses several techniques and textual devices to describe her experiences during her travels, and in doing so challenges the beliefs that the Western world held about the Orient at that time, but also contributes to the 'Othering' of the Oriental.

Whilst Lady Mary Wortley Montagu challenges popular beliefs about Turkish culture that were curated by previous travel accounts, she also often mentions cultural phenomenon that strike her as odd or curious, or things that she expects her readers to find curious, to be the subject of her letters. A statement that Montagu often uses either at the beginning or at the end of her letters is "I wish my studies may give me an occasion of entertaining your curiosity, which will be my utmost advantage hoped from it"¹⁵. In addition, Montagu emphasizes multiple times that she feels obligated to return to England with interesting stories and curiosities; "You would rather hear something of what I see here; and a letter out of Turkey that has nothing extraordinary in it would be as great a disappointment as my visitors will receive at London if I return thither without any rarities to show them."¹⁶ This search for curiosities in Turkish culture forms a contrast against Montagu's challenging of existing ideas. When looking at this feature of the letters, it appears to be a product of its time. It fits into the original form of Orientalism, which sought to divide the West and the East as though they were drastically different. By depicting normal scenes of Turkish society as curious, it creates the idea that there is something strange or absurd in the way that their society functions, when compared to English society, thus creating an Other.

In her travel accounts, Montagu uses three main types of literary devices, namely imagery, hyperbole and allegory. Imagery is the device she uses to describe the places that she visits in lengthy passages. In the 18th century, it was not possible to send pictures, so it is no surprise that Montagu's letters often feature textual descriptions of the palaces and cities she travels through. In the 28th letter, there is a description of the carriage that Montagu travels in:

They are made a good deal in the manner of the Dutch coaches, having wooden lattices painted and gilded, the inside being painted with baskets and nosegays of

¹⁵Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Teresa Heffernan, Daniel O'Quinn (Broadview Editions, 2013), 124

¹⁶ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 127

flowers, intermixed commonly with little poetical mottos. They are covered all over with scarlet cloth, lined with silk, and very often richly embroidered and fringed.¹⁷

In both this and other descriptions Montagu makes sure to use examples of objects that are also used in England to create an accurate image. For instance, in the example above, she references Dutch coaches. In another letter, Montagu uses nearly an entire page to describe the way she is extravagantly dressed:

The first piece of my dress is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes, and conceal the legs more modestly than your petticoats. They are of a thin rose coloured damask, brocaded with silver flowers....The hair hangs at its full length behind, divided into tresses braided with pearl or ribbon, which is always in great quantity.¹⁸

With the level of detail she uses, it is not difficult to create a vivid image in one's mind of what it must have looked like, making it almost as effective as including a picture with the letter. This increases her believability, and also makes it easier for the reader to imagine the Orient as an exotic, extraordinary creature. Keitzman argues that Montagu's letters do not present Turkish people as Others, and rather describes them in a more fluid way.¹⁹ However, Montagu often uses hyperbole when describing Turkish people and their culture, for example when she writes: "I believe there is no other race of mankind, who have so modest an opinion of their own capacity."²⁰, "These were the most beautiful girls I ever saw"²¹ and "he sent me a candle almost as big as myself for a present when I was at my lodging."²² The hyperbole emphasizes the good qualities of the Turkish people, and in that way also highlights how different they are. In that way, the Turkish people are still 'Othered'. One of the most striking examples of this occurs when Montagu visits the Turkish bathhouse, when she describes the Turkish women who are also visiting the bathhouse:

¹⁷ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 101

¹⁸ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 113-114

¹⁹ Kietzman, Mary Jo. "Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters and Cultural Dislocation." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38, no. 3 (1998): 538

²⁰ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 107

²¹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 157

²² Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 142

There were many amongst them as exactly proportioned as ever any goddess was drawn by the pencil of Guido or Titian, and most of their skins shiningly white, only adorned by their beautiful hair divided into many tresses hanging on their shoulders, braided either with pearl or ribbon, perfectly representing the figures of the Graces.²³

Montagu compares the women to goddesses, which can also be read as describing them as something out of this world, or the ultimate other. Keitzman notes that Montagu almost describes the scene like a painter, to retain a position of power, by mimicking the masculine gesture of voyeuristic penetration through language by describing the naked women that she sees.²⁴ This likens Montagu to the colonisers, who saw the Orient as something that needed to be controlled, as those men were in a position of power.

In addition to comparing the women to goddesses, Montagu also often uses allegories to describe places, for example: “this place, which perfectly answers the description of the Elysian fields.”²⁵, where she makes a reference to the biblical Elysian fields, which was there described as a paradise on earth. The allegories are representative of the time period that Montagu lived in. Before Orientalism, there was already a divide between the West and the East through Christianity and Islam. The rise of another religion was seen as a theological and political threat.²⁶ In addition, Protestants were sometimes likened to Muslims as they both deviated from the ‘true’ faith. As Montagu was also Protestant, she is confirming that notion by writing about the two religions getting along and understanding each other.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was by no means the first person to write about visiting Turkey, and she made it clear that she had the superior accounts. Earlier accounts were often written by, in her words, “merchants who mind little but their own affairs, or travellers who make too short a stay to be able to report anything exactly of their own knowledge.”²⁷ Whilst this might have been true, it was also common convention at the time for travel authors to promise to provide a truer version than previous accounts did.²⁸ In her letters, Montagu

²³ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 102

²⁴ Kietzman, Mary Jo. “Montagu’s Turkish Embassy Letters and Cultural Dislocation.”, 539

²⁵ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 146

²⁶ Ansari, K. Humayun. “The Muslim World in British Historical Imaginations: ‘Re-Thinking “Orientalism?”” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2011): 74

²⁷ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 104

²⁸ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 164n3

repeats being more knowledgeable than other authors multiple times, sometimes even referencing specific authors, which she does in letter 38: “Your whole letter is full of mistakes from one end to the other. I see you have taken your ideas of Turkey from that worthy author Dumont.”²⁹ As it was common convention to use such statements, by themselves they do not contribute to the believability of the accounts. However, what makes Montagu’s work unique is that she, as a woman, was allowed to enter spaces that earlier male travellers were not allowed to visit, but still chose to describe as though they had seen them.³⁰ Montagu emphasizes this by writing “You will perhaps be surprised at an account so different from what you have been entertained with by the common voyage-writers, who are very fond of speaking of what they don’t know.”³¹ and “I am sure I have now entertained you with an account of such a sight as you never saw in your life, and what no book of travels could inform you of. ‘Tis no less than death for a man to be found in one of these places”³², the latter written after visiting a haram, which is a place that allowed no male visitors, but had been falsely described in their travel accounts. Therefore, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu offers a unique insight into Turkish culture, when compared to male travel authors. In addition to disproving other authors by describing female-only spaces, Montagu also challenges existing beliefs regarding Asian culture by mentioning how certain cultural elements are different than earlier travel accounts made them out to be. One example of this can be found in letter 27;

I was at last forced to open my skirt and show them my stays, which satisfied them very well, for I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine that it was not in my power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband.³³

By describing this experience, Montagu disproves earlier travel accounts written by men, which focused on the enslavement of Turkish women, which had resulted in the notion becoming a popular belief.³⁴ Montagu explicitly states that English women are more controlled by their husbands than Turkish women are, and she repeats this in the 30th letter:

’Tis very easy to see, they have more liberty than we have, no woman of what rank

²⁹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 148

³⁰ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 103n3

³¹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 129

³² Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 103

³³ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 103

³⁴ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 103

soever being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes, and another that hides the whole dress of her head, and hangs half way down her back... You may guess how effectually this disguises them, that there is no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street.³⁵

The fact that Montagu writes this in her letter signals that she also held the believe that the women were oppressed by their husbands. Highlighting this difference to English women also Others them, and in a way creates a feeling of jealousy, as the English women now realised that they had less freedom than the Oriental people.

There are more instances in which Lady Mary Wortley Montagu compares her experiences in Turkey to similar ones in England, and either mentions them to be not so different, or that the Turkish customs are on better end. Examples of this can be found, among others, in letters 27 and 30, in which Montagu writes respectively: “these voitures are nothing at all like ours, but much more convenient for the country”³⁶ and “I can assure you with great truth, that the Court of England cannot show so many beauties as are under our protection here.”³⁷ What can be seen in these examples, and in her other letters, is that the self and the Other are not put in polarising positions.³⁸ Montagu emphasizes this with phrases such as “the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe.”³⁹

As described by Said’s fourth dogma, another popular belief was that the Orient were people to be feared. At the time of Montagu’s visit, the Turks were at war, despite which Montagu decided to visit the court. Montagu describes how she did not encounter the aggression she had been told about during her conversations with Turkish people, except for when she visited the court of the sultan. On this topic she notes “One would imagine this defect in their government should make tragedies very frequent, yet they are extremely rare, which is enough to prove the people not naturally cruel. Neither do I think in many other particulars they deserve the barbarous character we give them.”⁴⁰ and “This is literal known truth, however extravagant it seems, and such is the natural corruption of a military

³⁵ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 115

³⁶ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 101

³⁷ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 114

³⁸ Kietzman, Mary Jo. “Montagu’s Turkish Embassy Letters and Cultural Dislocation.”, 545

³⁹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 116

⁴⁰ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 173

government, their religion not allowing of this barbarity any more than ours does.”⁴¹ By stating this, Montagu explains that the negative notion can possibly be traced back to the state of the Turkish government, but that the Turks are not inherently evil, and not as barbaric as they have been described to be. However, these examples do not negate the Othering that happens in other passages in the letters. By writing about Turkey in a way that almost makes it sound like a place that does not exist, Montagu adds to the Othering that had previously been done to create the image of the Orient, albeit in a more respectful and appreciative manner.

4. Analysis of the travel blogs

When looking at travel blogs, there are two main types, namely blogs that function as personal diaries and advisory blogs. Advisory blogs consist of just travel tips, whilst the diaries describe the whole journey. Both types of blogs are written to entertain and inform their readers. This results in the blogs having at least a small influence on the way people think about the region that they are travelling through⁴². Therefore, studying travel blogs can provide insight into the trends seen in the tourist industry, and the way countries are viewed by travellers. Previous research on travel blogs points out that they all contain a similar structure of linguistic techniques.⁴³ These techniques are comparisons to places they visited previously, the inclusion of stories and history of the places, relating places to their personal life stories, confirming previously conceived knowledge about the places, using descriptions to create imagery for the audience, and using emotional words to signify their reactions to the things they are seeing. This list was created by studying travel blogs from the same website where the travel blogs discussed in this chapter were found, it is therefore not surprising that the linguistic techniques can also be found in the selected blogs. Whilst the list is correct in their observations, it seems to be missing an important element, namely the fact that bloggers tend to discuss inconveniences, and also often voice complaints when telling their audience about their day. This phenomenon is also called anti-travel, which is when travel bloggers focus on their prejudices and only describe services and whether they were up to their

⁴¹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 104

⁴² Henry, Jacob. “The Geopolitics of Travel Blogging.” *Geopolitics* 26(1) (2019): 2

⁴³ Bosangit, C., Dulnuan, J., & Mena, M. “Using travel blogs to examine the postconsumption behavior of tourists.” *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 18(3) (2012): 212

standards.⁴⁴ Discussing services and the extent to which they lived up to expectations is an important element of travel literature, because this is the part of the blog that likely holds the deciding factor for the audience on shaping their view of a country. Every travel blog about visiting Turkey from the selection contains complaints, such as the following example:

The buffet breakfast was very busy. The crew had the line of people entering between the buffet and the tables. You were then placed at a seat at a table for six. Then you had to go back to the entrance to go through the line to get your food. After getting your food you had to maneuver your way pass the line of people who are heading to their seat. Not very efficient.⁴⁵

It is clear that the blogger did not have a good time at the buffet breakfast, and if she had mentioned the name of the restaurant it would likely encourage readers to avoid the place. It would therefore be helpful to add using emotion words to describe experiences as necessary addition to the list of linguistic techniques, as anti-travel seems to be a frequent occurrence in the blogs. It is different from the technique of using emotion words to describe the things the bloggers are seeing, because that is often done in relation to walking around the city and describing it.

Whilst travel blogs and blogs in general are often likened to personal diaries, this does not stop the blogger from wanting to entertain their audience. The blog entries often read as though someone is telling you their experiences on holiday in person. In order to make their stories interesting, bloggers use many different literary devices. The first literary device is imagery, which are often not as elaborate as in *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, as the possibility of including pictures makes the descriptions near redundant. However, despite the inclusion of photographs, descriptions such as these can still be found:

We decided to go on a visit the Famous Grand Bazaar first of all, but progress along the street was very slow, so much to see. Curved glass fronted shops with dark polished wood interiors and exquisite cakes displayed in the windows with gallery-like simplicity. Each cake a work of art. Other brightly lit stores with intriguing displays of

⁴⁴ Mewshaw, Michael. "Travel, Travel Writing, and the Literature of Travel." *South Central Review* 22, no. 2 (2005): 5

⁴⁵ Mongosa, Malinda. "Mykonos, Greece to Kadasi, Turkey to Patmos, Greece." *Travelblog.org*. July 21, 2017.

teas, sweets and spices. We were at first easily lured in with tempting slivers of sweets and delicate glasses to sample pomegranate tea.⁴⁶

The extensive use of adjectives makes the scenery sound more lively and attractive, and therefore makes it easier for the reader to imagine themselves in that situation. However, the description sounds like one from a book, almost like a fairy tale, as though the place is not real.

The next literary device often found in travel blogs is humour. Humour is subjective, but it can be seen that the author has tried to make their blog more entertaining to read by making fun of something they experienced, often having to do with an inconvenience. However, there is a fine line between making fun of a situation and making fun of Turkish culture. Two examples of humour used to describe inconveniences are “Suppose shoes would not only mess up the hill but your basic Chuck Taylor All Stars would be very slippery and cause damage to general health and well-being. Slippery slope”⁴⁷, where Rosten writes about having to climb a hill barefooted, whilst preferring to wear shoes, and to make light of the situation she writes in a humorous way by using word play. It can also be seen as a lack of respect to the tourist site she is visiting. Instead of understanding that wearing shoes would damage the hill, she makes fun of the people telling her to take her shoes off. Humour is also used in the inconvenience of having to wait to be able to buy a ticket: “The door was unlocked, but no one was there except a guard dog, who didn’t perceive us as a threat, but even he was unable to sell tickets”.⁴⁸ In this case, it is clear that Rosten did not mind having to wait, and this is a lighthearted way to brighten the mood of the story. This shows that humour can both be used to make a text more attractive to read, but they can sometimes also be read as implied negative statements.

Similar literary devices that are also used to create humorous passages are irony and word play. Irony is not always used intentionally, and can also be the result of an unobservant author. For example: “we can’t help but stare things at awe and wonder how such craftsmanship still exists in the modern, let’s-dispose-the-shit-out-of-everything world...I left *the Dervish Gate* in the coach so we buy a new copy because I really, really want to finish this book.”⁴⁹ This is ironic, because in the paragraph that comes after the passage about condoning

⁴⁶ Lim, Sue. “Last Blog of the Winter: Istanbul for Fun!” Travelblog.org. March 23, 2019.

⁴⁷ Rosten, Laura. “Istanbul’s wonders and a bit on Pamukkale.” Travelblog.org. September 4, 2018.

⁴⁸ Rosten, Laura. “Istanbul’s wonders and a bit on Pamukkale.” Travelblog.org. September 4, 2018.

⁴⁹ Rosten, Laura. “Istanbul’s wonders and a bit on Pamukkale.” Travelblog.org. September 4, 2018.

how everything is disposable in the modern world, the author writes about losing a book and just replacing it with a new one right away, making her previous statement sound hypocritical. Irony is also used intentionally, when it is clearly used to entertain: “I swear these folks were obviously present at the feeding of the 5,000 with Jesus and have been making up for lost time ever since!”⁵⁰. This statement is ironic, because the people probably were not actually present at the feeding of the 5000, and as the reader likely understands the reference, the situation becomes more familiar to them. Word play is used less frequently, but also often sounds ironic in its usage, which is clear in statements such as these: “I thank you! You've been a Turkish Delight!”⁵¹, where the author uses a play on words that has probably been made many times before, and it can be assumed that she is aware of this, using it deliberately to entertain. The effect that

The final literary devices are often used in descriptions of what the author is seeing, and they are metaphors and similes. Using these makes the text sound more poetic, and therefore making it more pleasant to read. An example of a metaphor is “Pink jelly-fish swoosh about in the sea. Hardly noticeable but once the pink cotton candy swimming underneath the surface catches your attention you begin to notice that they come aplenty.”⁵², and this is an example of a simile that was found in the selected blogs: “For an hour and a half we rose and dropped like two children on a see-saw.”⁵³.

Othering might not be as obvious in travel blogs as in the earlier travel accounts, but it occurs per definition, as travel narratives by nature must differentiate between the home and the foreign culture.⁵⁴ Bloggers narrate their experiences from the point of view from their own reference point, which is the culture of their home country, and it is assumed that the audience has a similar point of reference. From that point of view, travel bloggers tell stories about the things that struck them as odd and new experiences, highlighting the things that are out of the ordinary, which results in the Othering.⁵⁵ This way of describing cultures in comparison to one's own is what Said calls the Western Gaze, which means that the European visitor views the Orient from their own European perspective, instead of viewing it as its own entity, resulting in systematic objectification of the Orient.⁵⁶ Another reason why Othering

⁵⁰ Woman, Traveling. “A (Turkish) Delight to the Senses – September, 2015.” Travelblog.org. October 30, 2015.

⁵¹ Let Loose, Lottie. “Fit for a King.” Travelblog.org. April 26, 2018.

⁵² Rosten, Laura. “Istanbul's wonders and a bit on Pamukkale.” Travelblog.org. September 4, 2018.

⁵³ Knowles, Renae., Knowles, Dwayne. “Cappadocia.” Travelblog.org. June 5, 2016.

⁵⁴ Henry, Jacob. “The Geopolitics of Travel Blogging.” *Geopolitics* 26(1) (2019): 2

⁵⁵ Bosangit, C., Dulnuan, J., & Mena, M. “Using travel blogs to examine the postconsumption behavior of tourists.”, 212

⁵⁶ Burney, Shehla. *Chapter One: Orientalism: The Making of the Other*, 26

occurs in travel literature is to emphasize the fact that the blogger has experienced something new during their travels, and to provide entertaining content for the audience.⁵⁷ Travel bloggers have been found to use three main linguistic techniques to observe differences; namely the use of descriptive words for emphasis, the use of emotional words that are synonymous with words that express shock or surprise, and comparisons between the home and the locals' cultures.

In the blogs about travelling to Turkey there were not as many comparisons to the home culture as in *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, but this example compares Turkey to the blogger's home country of Finland:

Loads of Turkish people seem to be working near enough around the clock seven days a week. We are not used to such dedication, as back home we slackers only do about 37,5 hrs a week as stated in the law. Obviously doesn't apply to all trades. Us Finns would be senseless after a week if we'd have to work here.⁵⁸

This passage Others the Turkish in the sense that it is implied that they have more stamina to work harder than the Fins. This can be seen as a polarising statement, as it is implied that the Turkish laws and work ethic are very different than in Finland, where the Fins are slackers the Turkish are said to be overachievers, which are opposites of each other. Another blogger, named Sonja, writes: "My flight companion told me we were heading to the 'Chelsea' of the region."⁵⁹ This statement is less polarising, as it compares a city in Turkey to one in England, suggesting that it might be bad, but at least it is of the same standard as a city in England. In this case, it was not the author who came up with this comparison, she mentions that a friend, who had visited the area before, told her this when she expressed where she was travelling to. This demonstrates how statements about travel experiences can influence people, because the rest of the blog the author continues to be surprised about her stay, as her expectations were lowered severely due to comments made by her friends before she left.

Whilst there was no abundance of comparisons between cultures, all travel bloggers have at some point commented on their experiences with locals. Many similarities can be found in these observations, as they all tend to follow the same pattern. When looking at the

⁵⁷ Bosangit, C., Dulnuan, J., & Mena, M. "Using travel blogs to examine the postconsumption behavior of tourists.", 215

⁵⁸ Rosten, Laura. "Istanbul's wonders and a bit on Pamukkale." *Travelblog.org*. September 4, 2018.

⁵⁹ Sonja. "Turkey." *Travelblog.org*. July 30, 2015.

different statements, it becomes obvious that the bloggers tend to be suspicious of the locals, as they often mention being afraid of being harassed, being persuaded into buying something or getting scammed, and in general being afraid of the locals not being as friendly as they seem. The following example is representative of what is written in multiple blogs about visiting the shops:

Once inside the shop and tasting the tempting slivers of sweets (it would be rude to refuse) we felt rather like insects caught in the spiders web, and the heady sugar rush could have led us to buy kilos of candy, as the earnest shopkeeper whispered his latest knock down price , only for us and only if we bought now. Protesting that we had no intention of making purchases that day, we would extricate ourselves from one emporium of sticky sweetness only to fall into the clutches of the next shopkeeper. We perfected the art of appearing to be deep in conversation whilst peering sideways to see if we really wanted to enter into negotiations for anything.⁶⁰

In this paragraph, Lim describes the feeling of entering a shop aimed at tourists. The words she uses make the passage sound claustrophobic, but also slightly exaggerated. However, Mongosa confirms the aggression of the shop owners by writing:

We were warned ahead of time that Turkish merchants are very aggressive in trying to get you to buy something. They will walk right up to you and try to get you to buy what they have in their hand or get you to come to their stores. I must say it was daunting.⁶¹

In this statement she also describes hearing about the shop owners beforehand, which possibly led to her being more afraid than necessary. In addition, she is now adding to this conversation by writing about her own experience. Rosten seems to have been harassed in public transport, and now seeks to warn her readers:

There's one thing I wasn't prepared to with regard to public transport. Avoid crowds! There is a possibility of grinding and groping. This type of sexual

⁶⁰ Lim, Sue. "Last Blog of the Winter: Istanbul for Fun!" *Travelblog.org*. March 23, 2019.

⁶¹ Mongosa, Malinda. "Mykonos, Greece to Kadasi, Turkey to Patmos, Greece." *Travelblog.org*. July 21, 2017.

harassment doesn't just happen to foreign ladies, I've been told. So stand next to walls or cover yourself with bags etc. or just wait until the next train, or the train after that... Trams operate frequently enough.⁶²

Phrases such as 'I was told' and 'we were warned ahead of time' suggest that stories about negative experiences in Turkey are frequently told, resulting in the traveller having a more suspicious attitude toward locals, Lim writes: "Friendly Turks helped us to work out what to do (or maybe they were just impatient with the time it was taking for us to work it out!)"⁶³ which implies that the Turkish seem friendly, but are actually not happy with the tourists being there. These examples paint a clear picture about the tourist experience when visiting Turkey, and simultaneously show the impact the tourist industry has had on the country. Many blogs describe the markets that seem to be set up just to get tourists to buy things, resulting in the harassment on the streets by shop owners. Stories like this contribute heavily to both the Othering of the country and the influencing of the reader. Merchants like this do clearly exist, but most likely not in the areas where tourists do not tend to visit. At the same time, hearing those stories it is not difficult to assume that the whole of Turkey operates like that. When it comes to statements like that of Rosten, hearing before deciding whether to travel to a country that sexual harassment is the order of the day on Turkish public transport, could be a major reason for women who are travelling solo to choose not to visit. At the same time, this suspicion of locals resembles Said's fourth dogma, which states that the Orient should be feared.

Food has become an important part of the tourist industry in the last twenty years. Culinary products have become part of the consumer identity, and often play an important part in influencing motivations for travelling to particular destinations.⁶⁴ This has resulted in the othering of food in touristic experiences.⁶⁵ The othering occurs when describing foreign food with negative adjectives, such as 'scary', 'gross', and 'weird', due to the food being too unfamiliar and thus not deemed attractive. Interesting about the travel blogs about Turkey is that they seem to revolve around food. The stories often feature the following structure; the author describes waking up and eating breakfast, then the author describes one or two visits to

⁶² Rosten, Laura. "Istanbul's wonders and a bit on Pamukkale." *Travelblog.org*. September 4, 2018.

⁶³ Lim, Sue. "Last Blog of the Winter: Istanbul for Fun!" *Travelblog.org*. March 23, 2019.

⁶⁴ Gyimóthy, S., & Mykletun, R. J. "Scary food: Commodifying culinary heritage as meal adventures in tourism." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 15, no. 3 (2009): 260

⁶⁵ Mkono, M.. "The Othering of Food in Touristic Eatertainment: A Netnography." *Tourist Studies*, 11(3) (2011): Abstract

main attractions and mentions that their visit was shortened by their wish to eat lunch. Finally, the author describes other places they visit, and quickly move on to describing the dinner experience, often paired with a large quantity of alcohol. There seems to be an anxiety around not being able to find ‘proper’ food, resulting in many bloggers feeling the need to cut their visits short to find a place to eat. Despite the travellers’ anxiety about finding places to eat, they are adventurous and seem interested in engaging in local culinary experiences. However, if the food is not up to the European standard, the blogger will mention it. The bloggers also often act surprised when the food is of good quality. As they are constantly comparing the food to that of their home country, the bloggers are Othering through food.

Travel bloggers also use Othering to emphasize the unique situations that they are engaging with, but what they often fail to realise is that they are tourists themselves. The blogs contain countless remarks about other tourists, such as in the following statement:

The place was very busy with tour groups. It was difficult to get any good pictures without someone getting in your shot or someone taking way too long to get their photo shot. So I decided to leave my group and get a head of them. The guides allowed a large space between groups so I was able to see the rest of the ruins alone without people walking around. The best part was I had the whole amphitheater to myself for about 5 minutes.⁶⁶

Mongosa writes about being frustrated at the fact that there are a lot of tour groups at the tourist site that she is visiting, despite being a member of a tour group herself. Another blogger describes being frustrated at having to see larger women in bikini’s:

The place is overrun with Russians and some of the sights were not to be believed. A couple of women were strutting around in tiny bikinis and if they were under 250lbs each, I would be shocked – I still shudder at the mental image...LOL. Not a pretty sight, I assure you.⁶⁷

It was not necessary to make this remark, its sole purpose was to make fun of other tourists. An instance where a tourist puts emphasis on being superior to other tourists is when Grimson writes about her visit to a restaurant: “That night the 3 of us went out to a very touristy

⁶⁶ Mongosa, Malinda. “Mykonos, Greece to Kadasi, Turkey to Patmos, Greece.” Travelblog.org. July 21, 2017.

⁶⁷ Woman, Traveling. “A (Turkish) Delight to the Senses – September, 2015.” Travelblog.org. October 30, 2015.

restaurant to see bellydancing. It was ok I suppose, tourists loved it of course.”⁶⁸ Statements like these give the impression that it is frowned upon to enjoy things that are specifically catered to tourists. When looking at these and other statements about other tourists in the blogs, it can be stated that travel bloggers have also started to Other their fellow travellers. They do not want to be associated with being a tourist, and they want to come across as a someone who is more knowledgeable about the country, and not part of the problems that come with mass tourism. This is the result of a need for unique experiences, to be able to tell stories about things not many people know about yet. This is also clearly demonstrated when the bloggers constantly describe their annoyances with enormous queues for tourist attractions, despite wanting to visit the site themselves.

5. Evolution of Orientalism and ‘Othering’

Having analysed both *The Turkish Embassy Letters* and the travel blogs, it has become clear that travel writing has not changed its form over the years. Both texts are written by travellers who wish to entertain, inform and present the story of a unique experience to their audience. Both Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the travel bloggers seem to have the same audience. Montagu addresses her letters to friends and relatives, whilst publishing the letters as a whole in England, which makes them her audience as well. Travel bloggers update their blogs whilst they are on their trip to update friends and family, which means at the same time that they are publishing the blogs to a website that can be visited by anyone who wishes to read it. The texts are written in a personal style, which means that authors include their opinions and emotions, tell personal stories that can sometimes get a little bit too personal, and they sometimes refer to things that they know their audience can relate to. This makes the audience, including the people who do not know the author on a personal level, feel more at ease with the author, whilst reading about their experiences with a foreign culture. As these principles of travel writing have remained the same over the centuries, it creates an opportunity to look at the evolution of Orientalism and ‘Othering’ that has taken place during that time. The Turkish Embassy Letters were written during a time when the duality between the East and the West did not exist yet. However, works published during this period are what the dogma’s that Said listed are based on. The travel blogs show that this duality persists to

⁶⁸ Grimson, Natalie. “Tukey 2014.” Travelblog.org. October 6, 2014.

this day. Both Montagu and multiple travel bloggers have written about a visit to a Turkish bath house, which will be compared to illustrate this evolution of Orientalism and ‘Othering’.

The Turkish Embassy Letters show how Turkey is portrayed as ‘the Other’ by referring to elements of Turkish culture as curious or extraordinary. This is no exception for the visit to the bath house, as Montagu starts the letter with “I write to Your Ladyship with some content of mind, hoping at least that you will find the charm of novelty in my letters, and no longer reproach me that I tell you nothing extraordinary.”⁶⁹ On the next page, Montagu provides the addressee of the letter with an elaborate description of the bath house:

The next room is a very large one, paved with marble, and all round it raised two sofas of marble, one above another. There were four fountains of cold water in this room, falling first into marble basins, and then running on the floor in little channels made for that purpose, which carried the streams into the next room, something less than this, with the same sort of marble sofas, but so hot with steams of sulphur proceeding from the baths joining to it, 'twas impossible to stay there with one's clothes on. The two other domes were the hot baths, one of which had cocks of cold water turning into it, to temper it to what degree of warmth the bathers have a mind to.⁷⁰

Using imagery to create a fantastical description of an experience is also something that is often used by Montagu. It is symbolic for the time it was written in, as it was the age of exploration, and many travel accounts featured stories about regions in which the author encountered things they had never seen before. The result is that the account of the visited place starts to resemble a fairy tale, which makes it more difficult to imagine a culture being similar to one’s own. Thus, fantastical imagery increases the feeling of ‘Otherness’ of a culture when reading about it. As opposed to describing a whole different world to create an ‘Other’, Montagu also compares Turkish culture to European culture:

I was in my travelling habit, which is a riding dress, and certainly appeared very extraordinary to them, yet there was not one of them that showed the least surprise or impertinent curiosity, but received me with all the obliging civility possible. I know no

⁶⁹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 100

⁷⁰ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 101

European court where the ladies would have behaved themselves in so polite a manner to such a stranger.⁷¹

In this comparison, it is the Turkish culture that is seen as more accepting toward a stranger than European culture. Montagu is expecting a negative experience, because that is what she is used to in Europe. She goes out of her way to make this comparison, and by doing so emphasizes the unexpected hospitality and politeness of the Turkish. However, this would not be necessary if it was well-known that they were like this. Therefore, it is Montagu's way of telling the addressee of the letter that the Turkish are not as impolite as they have previously read in other travel accounts. In addition, with this statement Turkey is seen as a separate entity from Europe, despite its geographical location. The next paragraph, as discussed in chapter three, describes how Montagu discovers the fact that English women are more oppressed by their husbands than Muslim women are:

The lady that seemed the most considerable amongst them entreated me to sit by her, and would fain have undressed me for the bath. I excused myself with some difficulty, they being all so earnest in persuading me. I was at last forced to open my skirt and show them my stays, which satisfied them very well, for I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine that it was not in my own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband.⁷²

With this exchange, Montagu shows her belief that she and the other women share similar concerns and struggles, although they come from very different cultural backgrounds.⁷³ What this implies in terms of 'Othering' is that the difference in culture does not exclude relatability, and that Montagu is capable of viewing the 'Other' women as somewhat similar to herself on some level. Taking the experience at the bath house as a whole, Montagu's 'Othering' can be described as creating an unrealistic image of Turkey, and whilst she appreciates the culture, she makes it clear that it is very different from her own.

When it comes to the travel bloggers, they also 'Other' by comparing Turkish elements to their own cultures: "We found even this strangely similar to Finnish sauna routine. Hot, wash, out & a refreshing beverage. Same old, same old. Just the structure is

⁷¹ Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 102

⁷² Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 103

⁷³ Kietzman, Mary Jo. "Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters and Cultural Dislocation.", 540

different and the tools differ.”⁷⁴ By noting that the similarities are strange, it suggests that the author did not expect the spa to be the same standard as in her home country. Other bloggers, not unlike Montagu, offer elaborate descriptions of the experience:

First, enter a chamber with beds. All clothes off except pants. Wrap yourself into a square textile. Then into the actual bath. You start running hot water and sit next to a pipe. You take a bowl, and you ladle hot water over yourself. Taps are usually at the sides. There is also a sauna, you can go and sit there. If you want a scrub and a massage, there is a circular area and in the middle masseuse ladies will rub you. They'll call you and you work it from there. With an oven mitten – after you have burnt your skin with the almost boiling water – you scrub off dead skin. Then you shampoo (we brought own products) And you're off to drink your lemonade/soda water.⁷⁵

Giving a detailed description could be useful for potential travellers reading the blog. However, the experience does not sound very pleasant, due to some of the wording, such as ‘after you have burnt your skin with the almost boiling water’ and ‘oven mitten’. It seems like the author has had better experiences in other spa's. This paragraph can also be seen as a form of anti-travel, as it describes a service that was not up to standard. The ‘Othering’ occurs by making it clear that most English people would not enjoy the spa, despite it being an important part of Turkish culture. What could also be read in other travel blogs, is that some bloggers are hesitant before partaking in an experience, because other people have told them about something negative that happened to them during it. This can also be read in this blog post:

I felt pretty relaxed afterwards walking back to the hotel. I was getting excited for Binns to go so we could compare our intimate violation stories but when I got back to the hotel he informed me that he did not want to be scrubbed naked by a Turkish man and was going to forego his ritual. I tried to convince him to go but stories of my hamam only solidified his decision. Oh well.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Rosten, Laura. “Istanbul's wonders and a bit on Pamukkale.” Travelblog.org. September 4, 2018.

⁷⁵ Rosten, Laura. “Istanbul's wonders and a bit on Pamukkale.” Travelblog.org. September 4, 2018.

⁷⁶ Binns, Cheryl. “Istanbul, Turkey.” Travelblog.org. April 6, 2015.

The blogger describes the experience as ‘intimate violation’, but also expresses feeling ‘pretty relaxed afterwards’. Despite the positive outcome, the blogger’s boyfriend does not want to go to the spa anymore, after hearing that he will be ‘scrubbed naked by a Turkish man’. This demonstrates how negative stories cause hesitations in travellers, and how it creates an air of suspicion around parts of the foreign culture.

The evolution of ‘Othering’ and Orientalism through the two collections of texts shows that Montagu portrayed Turkey as the ‘Other’ by putting the culture in a hyperbolic positive light, creating an unrealistic image. What the blogs prove is that neo-orientalism has changed the Western view on the East to be significantly more negative, and has likely played a role in the increased suspicion of locals. In addition, something that lacks from the example of the bath house is the ‘Othering’ of fellow travellers. This is concerning, when taking Samiei’s statement into consideration, in which he says that it is necessary for humans to connect, and understand each other’s cultures, to prevent a dark future in which the duality will only increase, and lead to more dangerous situations. Samiei sees modern technologies as a tool with which humans could be able to achieve this.⁷⁷ In this case, it would be a great opportunity to use the medium of travel blogs, as they allow anyone to post their side of the story, but this would require a more open attitude from the bloggers.

6. Conclusion

Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that the way orientalism and ‘Othering’ are present in travel literature has not changed a considerable amount, when comparing modern travel blogs and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *The Turkish Embassy Letters*. The main difference is that Montagu tends to focus on the positive, where the travel blogs lean towards writing about negative experiences. Whilst Montagu described the truth that was lacking from other travel accounts, she still created a false image of Turkey by describing it in terms of curiosity and hyperbole, therefore emphasizing the differences between English and Turkish culture. Similarly, the modern travel blogs create false imagery by only describing the parts of Turkey that are aimed at tourists, and they create an ‘Other’ through writing about negative experiences and food. The ‘Othering’ has even been extended to other tourists. Both texts portray a need to tell an original story, and a want to entertain the

⁷⁷ Samiei, Mohammad. “Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World.”, 1156

reader. Both Montagu and the travel bloggers distance themselves from other travellers to ensure it is known to the reader that they are reading the most exclusive content. It therefore becomes apparent that the genre of travel literature depends on 'Othering', as the writer seeks out the experiences that are most unlike those in their own culture.

This conclusion seems disappointing half a century after the release of *Orientalism*, but it might be a sign that people today are not aware of the implications of their words. In their eyes, they are writing a blog about their holiday, without negative intentions. It shows how 'Othering' is a way of processing what is being seen, and it makes sense then that it is easiest to remember the extraordinary. To understand a culture, it would therefore be more helpful to read locals' stories, and to understand the differences on a deeper level one could read descriptions of their own culture, written by someone from the culture that they would like to know more about. Seeing a culture from both perspectives provides a more nuanced image, and makes it easier to understand one another, resulting in a lesser need to 'Other'.

Keeping in mind the impact that colonialist travel accounts have had a significant on the Othering of the East, and still do to this day, it becomes clear that it is important to study the impact of travel blogs on its readers. In addition, future research should focus on providing a form of travel literature that can present the reader with multiple points of view, and whether that results in a more understanding reader. Eventually, travel literature could be an essential tool in decreasing the duality of the East and the West.

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