



HAL
open science

Friction, Facts and Fiction: Hybridity in Jean Potocki's 'Oriental' Travelogues

Marius Warholm Haugen

► **To cite this version:**

Marius Warholm Haugen. Friction, Facts and Fiction: Hybridity in Jean Potocki's 'Oriental' Travelogues. Annjo Klungervik Greenall & Domhnall Mitchell éd. Cultural Mélange in Aesthetic Practices, Fagbokforlaget, 2015. halshs-01706608

HAL Id: halshs-01706608

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01706608>

Submitted on 12 Feb 2018

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Friction, Facts and Fiction: Hybridity in Jean Potocki's 'Oriental' Travelogues

Marius Warholm Haugen
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

The travel memoirs of the Polish, francophone author Jean Potocki (1761-1815) are remarkable documents that put into literary form the circumstances of intercultural encounters in the late eighteenth century. They are remarkable both in their awareness of the issues attached to such encounters, and because of their composite nature, generically and linguistically. Can the term *hybridity* bring something new to our understanding of these texts?

There is certainly something about hybridity that is immediately appealing to many literary critics. Postcolonial criticism, especially, has made extensive use of the term, seeing in it a 'metaphor in the idea of cross-fertilisation between [the] constitutive elements' of a postcolonial culture.¹ In the almost proverbially globalized world of the postcolonial era, where intercultural encounters, and conflicts, are repeatedly subject to ideological as well as critical debates, hybridity is often evoked to account for and to analyse their creative potential.

However, could a term closely linked to this specific school of literary and cultural criticism be pertinent for analyses of texts from an early modern setting? For Gesa Stedman, author of a recent publication on cultural exchange in seventeenth-century France and England, the answer appears to be no. Categories such as 'third space' and hybridity seem 'too closely tied to the particular needs of the historical moment in which this field was first opened up – the later decades of the twentieth century' and 'are not effective enough for the analysis of early modern development'.² When used to study cultural exchange, such categories would not be sufficiently exact to account for the historical specificities of this period, according to Stedman.

I would argue that hybridity could indeed be a fruitful tool, if not for a broader cultural analysis, then at least in analyses of individual works from the early modern period. This is because it has the advantage of being applicable to several aspects of a text, on a generic and linguistic level as well as a cultural. Hybridity allows a critic to approach a text from different angles, while at the same time keeping to a common, thematic perspective. It could, in fact, prove quite appropriate to speak of hybridity in the context of the eighteenth century, where

writers were to increasingly concern themselves with otherness, through a rising interest in non-European cultures, languages and literatures. And it seems even more appropriate when we take into account that a large amount of texts from this period appear as generically composite entities. In this respect, travel literature has some especially interesting qualities, as we shall soon see.

Moreover, the term hybridity has a history that stretches far beyond the horizon of postcolonial studies, thus evoking semantic layers that may be in themselves fruitful for a hermeneutical analysis. Initially a biological term referring to a *bastard*, often a breed of a wild boar and a pig, it has been used throughout history to describe different forms of composite objects, outcomes resulting of meetings between two (or indeed several) entities. These entities could be biological, linguistic, literary and cultural. From the seventeenth century on, it was used particularly as a linguistic term, applied to words composed from different languages, especially Greek and Latin.³

Could an analysis that departs from such a context even give something back to our understanding of the term itself? When applying the term on to a cultural sphere, using it metaphorically as it were, we need to ask what distinguishes hybridity from other metaphors for meetings applicable on cultural objects, such as the *mélange*, the mosaic or the puzzle. Whereas *mélange*, for example, gives certain connotations of seamlessness and even organic blends, there is a significant element of friction contained in the notion of hybridity. And where both mosaic and puzzle refer to a harmonious whole comprised of different parts, hybridity is associated with monstrosity, as in the case of the Greek *Chimera*. In the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot even describes linguistic hybrids as *monstres*.⁴ Hybridity seems thus to refer to something that is disturbing, or at very least highly confusing, to the viewer or to the reader. I would therefore claim that the great benefit of applying hybridity as an analytical tool – regardless of the historical frame of the text in question – is that it allows us to highlight the frictional and disturbing aspects of, and between, elements that make a composite text.

This, however, remains to be tested, and we shall do so by turning to two travelogues of the Polish count Jean Potocki, originally written in French. It was with his journey to Turkey and Egypt in 1784, at the age of 23, that Potocki the traveller for the first time coincided with Potocki the author. The memoirs from his journey, taking the form of a series of letters addressed to his mother, were published in Warsaw in 1788, revealing the unmistakable talent of a minute observer and a brilliant stylist.⁵ He returned to the African

continent in 1791, with a travel to Morocco that would give him the opportunity to further assert himself as a writer, not only of factual prose, but also of fiction.

What characterizes these two memoirs is precisely their composite nature. In neither of them the author keeps to observations and descriptions of the countries he is visiting, but also gives historical accounts, adds fictional tales and quotes long passages from other authors. In the case of the *Voyage dans l'Empire de Maroc*, Potocki cites entire pages of a report written by a local chronicler, describing the reign of the current emperor, Moulay Yazid: 'What I'm going to write is the report that this man has given to me, and I shall accompany it only with a few commentaries'.⁶ The report is incorporated in Potocki's text without markers, and he also keeps the first person form of the original narrator. As for Potocki's own commentaries, they are embedded in the report also without markers, with the effect that the reader must stay alert to be able to distinguish the two voices, the 'je' of the author of the report and the 'je' of Potocki.

Even more voices are to be added to the choir, for when the report has been exhausted, the Polish author turns to other, unnamed sources:

The European consuls residing in Tanger came together to Tetuan to present themselves before the Emperor, who received them very badly. The report does not say anything else about it, but having made enquiries elsewhere, I shall give the full report of His Majesty's dialogue:

The Emperor. Which one of you is the English consul?

The Qaid. Here he is.

The Emperor. I'm friend of the English. Which one is the consul of the Ragusians?

The Qaid. There isn't one, & there has never been one.

The Emperor. That doesn't matter, I'm friend of the Ragusians. Where is the consul of Spain?

The Qaid. Here he is.

The Emperor. You shall leave my States, and so shall your merchants. I give them six months to settle accounts.

The Qaid. And the other consuls?

The Emperor. Let them go dine with the Spaniard. (p. 148)

The approach is quite astonishing, almost theatrical, as the author distributes lines in direct speech to the two 'main characters'. Some pages earlier, Potocki has used a similar technique when presenting a dialogue between the late emperor Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah (1720-1790) and one of his subjects, creating what appears almost as the script to an historical reenactment (p. 135). In other words, in his attempt to understand the history and the political life of Morocco, and in order to transmit his knowledge to the reader, the future novelist employs techniques belonging to the domain of the *belles-lettres*. The text appears, for a modern reader at the very least, as a fictionizing of factual events.

Thus the text seems to blur the border between fact and fiction, in a way that would become a constant in Potocki's writing, in later travelogues as well as in his plays and prose fiction.⁷ The protagonist of his novel *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, for instance, is deeply troubled when he reads a fictional account identical to his own story, revealing to him his own fictional nature.⁸ And in the travelogue from Potocki's journey to China in 1805, factual *personae* would appear in fictionalized form, as veritably novelistic characters.⁹ In this way, hybridity may also be applied as a metaphor for the mix of discourses belonging to different sides of the fact-fiction border; the friction of the matter, or even the monstrosity of it, is the result of the unease appearing when fiction invades reality.

The composite nature of the text is also striking in the *Voyage en Turquie et en Égypte*, published a few years before the Moroccan journey. In this case, Potocki adds to his own text two tales that he claims to have heard in Constantinople from a local storyteller:

A professional storyteller gives the most recent adventure, embellishing it with all the charm of Oriental eloquence; here is one that I heard yesterday in a café in a faubourg of Shkodër, and which I immediately put in writing; it may give you an idea of their way of expressing themselves.¹⁰

It is difficult to determine whether the storyteller in question spoke French or whether the tales were translated either by an interpreter or by Potocki himself. According to Daniel Beauvois, the count did possess a certain degree of understanding of both Turkish and Persian.¹¹ It is most likely, therefore, that Potocki translated the tales – as he also claims himself a few pages further on (p. 25) – although perhaps through the help of an interpreter.¹² In any case, what is important in this context is that the tales are embedded into the running text of the published version, adding to the impression that there is something fundamentally hybrid about the text, when it comes to form and genre.

There is of course also an intercultural element at play here. Potocki's text creates a meeting between two genres belonging to different cultural spheres, the Oriental tale and the Western travelogue. Furthermore, the tales that the author shares with his readers are more than just a curiosity for him, for they are at the core of his project of understanding the culture he is visiting. In Constantinople, the Polish adventurer takes care to criticize other European travellers who show no interest in the Turkish parts of the city, being content with visiting its Greek monuments (p. 19).¹³ He makes claim to a very different approach:

Nourished by the study of the history and the literature of the Orientals, my curiosity has made me follow a different path. For more than a month now, I spend the entire days running about

the streets of this capital, without any other goal than to take satisfaction in the joy of being here. (ibid.)¹⁴

Knowledge of Oriental history and literature stimulates the traveller's curiosity, and naturally enhances the capacity of understanding the culture. Potocki is acting as an ethnologist *ante litteram* in considering storytelling and other forms of amusement as a privileged source of cultural understanding: 'I spent two full letters talking to you about the amusements of the Turkish, because I deemed that a people is thus better portrayed than in any other circumstance of its private life' (p. 37).¹⁵ If Potocki's travelogue appears as a hybrid text, both generically and culturally, it is partly because driven by a project of understanding the Other, as well as by a desire to share this understanding with the reader.

The sort of hybridity we find in Potocki's memoirs is quite a common characteristic of the genre of travel memoirs. Travels have often given birth to a form of writing that operate with mixed generic traits, blending observations and descriptions of customs and events with dialogues and reflexions, and quite frequently combining factual prose with fiction.¹⁶ If we take a quick detour to look at one of the great travel writers of the twentieth century, Bruce Chatwin, we may observe some interesting similarities with Potocki's text. In his breakthrough book, *In Patagonia*, from 1977, the British author systematically mixes the account of his own journey with stories and legends, both of people that he encounters and of historical figures that have been shaped by the land. Similar to Potocki, Chatwin creates fictitious dialogues between historical persons, fictionalizing historical events in order to make them become real in the mind of the reader.¹⁷

Chatwin's book is not a randomly chosen example, for it is symptomatic of the difficulties in determining the genre of a certain kind of travel writing, difficulties stemming from the disparate literary discourses contained in these texts. When *In Patagonia* was released in 1977, the critics had a hard time classifying it, and would turn to such labels as 'mosaic', 'puzzle' and 'collage'.¹⁸ I would like to suggest that precisely *hybrid* might be a better term, in the sense that it entails the blending of parts that don't initially belong together, and for that reason might be perceived as frictional, or even troubling.

One of the elements to cause trouble is the question of generic determination that we see both in Chatwin and Potocki. If we are to believe Arne Melberg, determining the genre of this kind of travel writing is something that keeps troubling critics and other readers (p. 52). Even more troubling might be the uncertainty created between factual and fictional elements in texts that aspire to say something about the real world. In fact, it is perhaps less the generic

blend than the blending of different voices, hard to discern, and the vague frontiers between fiction and reality, that trouble us when reading the travelogues of Potocki as well as of Chatwin.

If travel literature tends to be of a composite nature, and to play with blurry boundaries between factual prose and fiction, it is also, by its very nature, regularly confronted with questions regarding language and translation. A traveler is necessarily forced to deal with differences of language or dialect, something that often resurfaces in the text.¹⁹

In Potocki's case, the linguistic element becomes particularly visible when we consider the Turkish tales embedded in the travelogue, which he claims to have translated himself into French. From a certain theoretical point of view, translation may in itself be seen as a sort of hybridity. The French poet and theorist Emmanuel Hocquard, for example, suggests a definition of translation as a 'half-way between two languages', something that is neither here nor there, neither this nor that.²⁰ If we look at one of the few passages where Potocki mentions his own practice of translating, we see that he reveals a certain awareness of this aspect of translation:

I have chosen to call this kind of composition 'story' [récit], because it seems to correspond with the word Hykaïet, by which the Oriental men of letters name it. I have likewise sought to render with exactitude their figures and expressions; and if I have changed something, I have done so by reducing their richness rather than adding to it.²¹

The passage is revelatory of the author's intuition that something goes missing in the passage from one language to the other, in this case the 'richness' of the Oriental manner. Aiming for 'exactitude' in his translation, Potocki seems nonetheless to sense the friction of the matter.

Potocki then moves to imitation when, inspired by his translations, he takes a shot at the genre himself. Four pastiches of 'Oriental tales' authored by the Polish count are included in the *Voyage en Turquie et en Égypte*, again in the running text, adding yet another aspect to its hybridity. In this case, the author's confidence in his own capacities, and in the possibilities of a seamless intercultural transference, is striking:

I don't know how you'll find the apologues of the Orientals; for my part, I relish in their style, and have made an attempt at it myself: the things I've read for more than two years now have made me so rich in Oriental thoughts, that I've only had to group some of them and put them within a frame. I'm quite confident of having been successful in conserving the Oriental physiognomy of my characters, but I'm not equally confident that this physiognomy would succeed in the West.²² (pp. 26-27)

As we see, there are several concerns involved in this imitation: both the success of rendering

authentically the nature of the characters, and the success these characters would have in pleasing Western readers. Whereas the latter is chiefly a literary concern, the former is also ethnological and epistemological. Have I succeeded in capturing the essence of the Other? Potocki seems to be asking – and responding affirmatively.

So we see how his project of understanding has shifted in strategy: the author is not only trying to translate the literature of the Orientals, but also somehow to put himself in their place, by way of imitation. If we were convinced by Potocki's self-confidence, we would perhaps be inclined to conclude that this has less to do with hybridity than with a sort of *total immersion*, a perfect adoption of the style and manner of the Other that completely obscures the original identity of the Self. But this would mean ignoring the linguistic aspect of the matter: Potocki's French text, however successful it might be in capturing the 'Oriental manner', remains a translation, with all the difference this entails.

Moving from the level of language to the practice of travel itself, we may observe some interesting parallels. Writing Oriental tales was not the only attempt at immersion made by Potocki during his journey. Preparing to go to Egypt, the adventurer chose to put on a disguise:

I'm preparing at the moment for the journey, which I have to make in five or six days. At this point you wouldn't have recognized me. I'm carrying a large turban in the Drusean style; I have shaved my head and am wearing Egyptian clothes, which are a bit different from the Turkish ones. (p. 45)²³

Dressing up as the locals is a quite common move in travel literature, and is usually described in theoretical approaches to the genre as a strategy of *going native*.²⁴ According to Arne Melberg, this is not just a practical move, but also a 'theatrical and symbolic act', an attempt to see the Other at his own premises (p. 62).²⁵ In Potocki's case, *going native* is both theatrical and literary, the disguise and the imitations of Oriental tales being different attempts at obtaining cultural immersion.

The success of the disguise seems first to be attested by the author's affirmation that it would fool even his own mother, who, as mentioned, is presented as the addressee of the letters that form the basis for the text. Again, however, Potocki experiences a noticeable degree of friction, this time in the meeting with an Egyptian mob:

Despite of the care we had taken to keep hidden behind some sort of canopy, our Drusean turbans and foreign appearance drew the attention of some young Mamelukes who, from a neighbouring roof, started throwing green oranges and stones at us [...]. (p. 50)²⁶

Far from allowing Potocki to immerse seamlessly into the culture of the Other, his disguise appears precisely as theatrical, and is, as such, drawing attention to itself. Like his translations, like all translations perhaps, Potocki's disguise is a sort of 'half-way', between languages, customs and cultures. He might be trying to *go native*. He might even be well enough disguised to have passed unrecognized by his own mother. The result, however, is once again a hybrid, this time in the sense of an intercultural encounter revealing the friction of unsurpassable otherness.

When applied to this context, hybridity seems therefore to be linked to an epistemological concern that was central to the late Enlightenment era: the conflict between, on the one hand, the aspiration towards certain knowledge, and, on the other, the experience of the futility of this quest. The friction stemming from Potocki's attempt to understand the Other may have been revelatory of the limits of knowledge, quite disturbing for someone who lived by the maxim of 'Il faut d'abord savoir'²⁷, you first and foremost have to know.

If the overall tone of Potocki's travelogues remains rather optimistic with regard to the possibilities of knowledge, he emblematically concludes his Moroccan travel with a fictional tale that undermines the epistemological optimism of the factual prose. In this 'Oriental tale', entitled *Le Voyage de Hafez*, the eponymous protagonist sets out on a journey in order to seek the truth of the world and of the Other, in a way similar to the young Polish count himself. His travel companion, a wise dervish, concludes the story by exposing the futile nature of the quest.²⁸

The conflict of optimism and scepticism is thus translated into a hybrid form, with a fictional travelogue that appears as a *mise en abyme* of the factual one, and which brings to the surface the frictions and the epistemological doubts that remained more implicit in the latter. As a matter of fact, the source of friction is double here, for it not only appears in the conflict between scientific optimism and scepticism, but also arises from the uncertain and blurry territory that separates fiction from reality. Although in this case not embedded in the running text, but added as an appendix, the fictional tale nonetheless invades the factual prose and threatens to overthrow its *raison d'être*: the search for the truth of the Other.

We have seen how hybridity operates on multiple levels in Potocki's travelogues: generic, linguistic, cultural and literary. As an analytical tool, the term allows us to bring forward the frictional and disturbing elements of the text, and to discuss certain distinctive issues of this kind of travel literature, noticeably the problem of approaching and understanding otherness. The hybrid travelogue appears as the arch stone of an

epistemological project aimed at understanding otherness; at the same time, hybridity reveals the limits to this very project.

Finally, *Le Voyage de Hafez*, the ‘mirror-travelogue’ that concludes Potocki’s Moroccan journey, presents the notion that travel may in fact turn the traveller himself into a hybrid, by alienating him from his point of origin: ‘My friends, you see the misfortune of travel: You get to know people according to your heart, and then you have to leave them. And while you tear these new bonds, you go to find the old ones loosened by absence and disuse’ (p. 196).²⁹ In other words, travel has its own disturbing features, the feeling of exile it creates, a sense of loss that comes from an alienating of the Self, as well as from the unsurpassable distance to the Other. What it also creates, perhaps from this very sense of loss, is the text.

Bibliography

- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- Daniel Beauvois, ‘Introduction. Jean Potocki, voyageur’, in Jean Potocki, *Voyages en Turquie et en Égypte, en Hollande, au Maroc*, (Paris: Fayard, 1980).
- Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (London: Vintage Books, 2005).
- Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000).
- Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. ed. by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1751-1772), <<http://portail.atilf.fr/encyclopedie/>>, [22 April 2013].
- Marius Warholm Haugen, *Jean Potocki: esthétique et philosophie de l’errance* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).
- Emmanuel Hocquard, *Ma haie*. Vol. 2 (Paris: P.O.L., 2001).
- Arne Melberg, *Resa och skriva : en guide till den moderna reselitteraturen* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2006).
- Jean Potocki, *Écrits politiques*. ed. by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki - Œuvres III* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).
- , *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse (version de 1810)*. ed. by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki - Œuvres IV:1* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).
- , *Mémoire sur l’ambassade en Chine*. ed. by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki - Œuvres II* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).
- , *Voyage dans l’Empire de Maroc, suivi du Voyage de Hafez*. ed. by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki - Œuvres I* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).
- , *Voyage en Turquie et en Égypte* ed. by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki - Œuvres I* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).
- François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, ‘Présentation’, in Jean Potocki, *Voyage dans l’Empire de Maroc, suivi du Voyage de Hafez*, ed. by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki - Œuvres I* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).
- François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki – biographie*, (Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2004).
- Gesa Stedman, *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).
- Dominique Triaire, ‘De la ‘difficulté de s’entendre’ ou l’apparition de l’imbécile’, in *Wiek Oświecenia*, 28 (2012), pp. 72-83.

Notes

¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 184.

² Gesa Stedman, *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), p. 11.

³ This is the use of the term that appears in Diderot and d'Alemberts *Encyclopédie*. See the entry *hibrides* in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, (1751-1772), <<http://portail.atilf.fr/encyclopedie/>>, [22 April 2013].

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ As François Rosset and Dominique Triaire point out in their introduction to Potocki's travelogue, we cannot now for sure whether the letters that form the text really were sent, or even written, to his mother prior to their publication. Anne Thérèse Potocka is nonetheless presented as the addressee of the letters, and the published travelogue is dedicated to her. See François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, 'Présentation', in Jean Potocki, *Voyage dans l'Empire de Maroc, suivi du Voyage de Hafez*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), p. 7.

⁶ Jean Potocki, *Voyage dans l'Empire de Maroc, suivi du Voyage de Hafez*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), p. 146. '[...] je pense qu'on sera bien-aise de trouver ici les principales anecdotes des commencements de son règne, telle[s] que je les ai entendu raconter cent fois, & telles que me les a écrites un homme du pays, que je ne veux pas nommer, & dont le secours m'a surtout été nécessaire pour les réduire en un espèce d'ordre chronologique. Ce que je vais écrire sera donc le mémoire que cet homme m'a donné, & que j'accompagnerai seulement de quelques commentaires'. The translations of Potocki's texts are mine. I have kept the original orthography in all the French quotations. Future references are to this edition, and are, when possible, given parenthetically with page numbers in-text.

⁷ Potocki's *Œuvres* have been published in five volumes (volume IV consists of two books) at Peeters, Leuven, 2004-2006, edited by François Rosset and Dominique Triaire.

⁸ Jean Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse (version de 1810)*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), p. 134.

⁹ Jean Potocki, *Mémoire sur l'ambassade en Chine*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004). Dominique Triaire has analysed this aspect of Potocki's travelogue in his article 'De la 'difficulté de s'entendre' ou l'apparition de l'imbécile', in *Wiek Oświecenia*, 28 (2012), pp. 72-83.

¹⁰ Jean Potocki, *Voyage en Turquie et en Égypte*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), p. 23. As for this edition also, future references are given parenthetically with page numbers in-text whenever possible. 'Un conteur de profession rapporte l'aventure la plus nouvelle, en l'ornant de tous les agréments de l'élocution orientale ; en voici une que j'entendis raconter hier dans un Café du fauxbourg de scutari, & que j'ai mise aussi-tôt par écrit ; elle pourra vous donner une idée de leur manière de s'énoncer'.

¹¹ Daniel Beauvois, 'Introduction. Jean Potocki, voyageur', in Jean Potocki, *Voyages en Turquie et en Égypte, en Hollande, au Maroc*, (Paris: Fayard, 1980), pp. 14-15.

¹² It was in Constantinople that he acquired the services of Ibrahim, a Turkish servant that would remain with him until Potocki died in 1815. See François Rosset and Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki – biographie*, (Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2004), p. 98. It is possible that Ibrahim served as an interpreter.

¹³ '[...] les plus observateurs ont épuisé leur curiosité à visiter les monuments de la Grece, & n'envisagent les Turcs que comme les destructeurs des objets de leur culte. Ils arrivent pleins de cette idée, se logent dans le quartier des Franks, & daignent à peine traverser une fois le port pour aller voir la Mosquée de Sainte-Sophie, & revenir chez eux'.

¹⁴ 'Nourrie par l'étude de l'histoire & de la littérature des orientaux, ma curiosité m'a fait suivre une autre marche. Depuis près d'un mois, je passe les journées entières à parcourir les rues de cette Capitale, sans autre but que de me rassasier du plaisir d'y être'.

¹⁵ 'J'ai employé deux lettres entières à vous parler des amusements des Turcs, parce que j'ai cru qu'un peuple s'y peignoit mieux, que dans toutes les autres circonstances de sa vie privée'. Inversely, knowledge of customs and culture is a prerequisite for properly understanding the foreign literature. In Morocco, Potocki notices how his direct observations allow him to better understand certain passages of his beloved *Mille et une nuits*. See *Voyage dans l'Empire de Maroc, suivi du Voyage de Hafez*, p. 111.

¹⁶ This is one of the central arguments of Arne Melberg's excellent book on travel writing: *Resa och skriva : en guide till den moderna reselitteraturen*, (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2006).

¹⁷ Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia*, (London: Vintage Books, 2005). See for instance p. 23.

¹⁸ Melberg, p. 11.

¹⁹ Often, the very absence of linguistic commentary reveals a strategy of obscuring the fact of translation, in order to, in the terms of Michael Cronin, 'create the illusion of linguistic transparency'. Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), p. 3.

²⁰ Emmanuel Hocquard, *Ma haie*, (Paris: P.O.L., 2001), p. 526.

²¹ *Voyage en Turquie et en Égypte*, p. 25. 'J'ai donné le nom de récit à ce genre de composition, parce qu'il m'a paru répondre à celui de Hykaïet, que lui donnent les Lettrés de l'Orient. J'ai cherché de même à rendre avec exactitude leurs figures et leurs expressions ; & si j'y ai changé quelque chose, c'est en ôtant à leur richesse plutôt qu'en y ajoutant'.

²² 'Je ne sais trop comment vous trouverez les apologues des Orientaux ; pour moi je raffole de leur maniere, & je m'y suis essayé : les lectures que j'ai faites depuis près de deux ans, m'ont rendu si riche en pensées orientales, que je n'ai eu que la peine d'en grouper quelques-unes & de leur donner

des cadres. Je suis bien sûr d'avoir réussi à conserver à mes figures leur physionomie orientale, mais je ne suis pas également sûr que cette physionomie réussisse en Occident'.

²³ 'Je me prépare actuellement à ce voyage, que je dois faire dans cinq ou six jours. Déjà vous ne me reconnoîtriez plus. Je porte un grand turban à la Druse ; j'ai la tête rasée, & des habits à l'Egyptienne, qui sont un peu différents de ceux de la Turquie'.

²⁴ Melberg, p. 73.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 62.

²⁶ '[...] malgré le soin que nous avons de nous tenir cachés derrières des especes d'auvents, nos turbans à la Druse & notre air étranger nous avoient attiré l'attention de quelques jeunes Mamelucs, qui, d'un toit voisin, nous lançoient des oranges vertes & des pierres [...]']

²⁷ Jean Potocki, *Écrits politiques*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), p. 351. On the conflict between epistemological optimism and scepticism in the works of Potocki, see chapter 2.2 of my book *Jean Potocki: esthétique et philosophie de l'errance*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).

²⁸ Hafez's quest for knowledge makes the dervish characterize him as 'insensé', insane. *Voyage dans l'Empire de Maroc, suivi du Voyage de Hafez*, p. 196.

²⁹ 'Mes amis vous voyez le malheur des voyages: L'on y connoît des hommes selon son cœur, & il faut les quitter : Et tandis que vous rompez ces nouveaux liens, vous allez retrouver les anciens relâchés par l'absence & par l'inhabitude'.