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Translating Istanbul: Divergent Voices in Travel Writing

ABSTRACT

Intersemiotic research on urban discourse provides a dynamic perspective for interdisciplinary analysis, particularly within the context of Translation Studies. Drawing on Roland Barthes's claim that the city is a "discourse" and Kevin Lynch's notion that the image of the city is dynamic and influenced by the observer's standpoint, in this study I examine three representations of Istanbul. *Constantinople* by Francis Marion Crawford, *Letters from Constantinople* by Georgina Adelaide Müller, and *Constantinople: Old and New* by H. G. Dwight are all treated here as examples of what Sündüz Öztürk Kasar terms *traduction en filigrane* (watermark translation). I also draw on Theo Hermans's concept of "the translator's voice" and adopt Bento's categorization of tourist, traveler, and migrant travel writers to demonstrate how three distinct voices shape evolving interpretations of Istanbul through their authors' unique experiences and backgrounds. Four recurring themes are identified across the travelogues: Galata as a site of cultural and social exchange, everyday life in Istanbul, the city's mosques, and its cemeteries. Each translator leaves concrete "watermark" traces in their attempts to convey culturally embedded concepts to their audience; however, the extent and form of these traces vary depending on the translators' level of cultural familiarity. This is particularly evident in Müller's narrative, where the traces of *traduction en filigrane* are noticeably fewer; as a tourist translator with limited knowledge of the city and its traditions, she has fewer cultural elements to process and integrate into her text, which results in a more surface-level representation of Istanbul.

Keywords: translating cities, Istanbul, city as discourse, *traduction en filigrane*, the translator's voice.



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INTRODUCTION: CITY AS DISCOURSE

Known earlier as Byzantium and Constantinople, this major East-West hub has attracted travelers from around the world, many of whom have documented their impressions in travel writing. However, the interpretation of urban spaces is a subjective process, shaped by individual perspectives; “we are not simply observers” of a city “but we are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants” (Lynch 2). According to Barthes, the city is a form of “discourse,” or rather “a language” in which “the city speaks to its inhabitants” (92); this perspective has had implications within the field of Translation Studies.¹ Similarly, Greimas describes cities as both transmitters and texts to be deciphered, acting as global utterances that speak to their audience (48). Since “signifieds are transient, signifiers remain” (Barthes 94), the meanings ascribed to urban spaces are dynamic by nature and susceptible to change over time. In this regard, like a text, a city offers endless interpretive possibilities. Sherry Simon’s concept of the “translational city” (*Cities* 15) is consistent with this view, but it is distinguished by framing the city as a site of ongoing translation, where diverse cultures, languages, and histories intersect and influence one another.

Just as urban spaces invite multiple readings shaped by their inhabitants’ perspectives, travel writing is open to interpretation. In travelogues, a city like Istanbul, “which becomes a melting pot of cultural contrasts” (Çelikel 124), is not merely a physical space, but also a symbolic “other,” reimagined through the traveler’s cultural lens. As Ghose asserts, the “other” in travel writing is a textual construction shaped by the writer rather than a direct reflection of reality (2). Thus, travel writing does not document objective observations; instead, it conveys the traveler’s personal interpretation of the city. Thompson reinforces this idea by suggesting that all travel involves an encounter between self and “other,” and travel writing becomes a record of this encounter, shaped by cultural dynamics (10).

A useful framework for understanding different levels of engagement is Bento’s classification of travel writers as tourists, travelers, and migrants. Bento asserts that travel writing inevitably reflects the traveler’s purpose and approach (134). While tourist writers mainly consume experiences designed for visitors who will have limited, transactional interchanges with the locals, traveler writers seek a deeper experience, exploring the city with curiosity, and engaging with the local community. Different still, migrant writers live among the “other” for longer periods and approach their travels with a blend of familiarity and distance (134–35). Each of the

¹ In relation to Istanbul, it has inspired the work of such scholars as Şule Demirkol Ertürk (e.g., *The City and Its Translators*; “Images of Istanbul in Translation”), Saliha Paker, Sema Üstün Külünk, and Safiye Merve Akbaş Korkmaz.

three Istanbul travelogues selected for this study exemplifies one of Bento's traveler types; what is also highlighted, however, is the need to expand this classification to better understand travelers' diverse engagements with the "other." By exploring the relationship between travel writing and translation, I aim to highlight how travelers from diverse backgrounds translate the same aspects of Istanbul.

TRAVEL WRITING AS TRANSLATION

When we consider travelers as "moving between languages, we can view the traveler as a translator" (Cronin, "Between Languages" 294). Both navigate between cultures and perspectives, acting as "cultural nomads" who broaden our understanding by providing insights from different contexts (Cronin, *Across the Lines* 150). These notions are echoed in Bassnett's observation that both "produce versions of a kind of journey"; travel writing is thus a unique form of translation that conveys the complexity of experiencing and interpreting the "other" (70). Simon also emphasizes the unique nature of travel writing by classifying it as one of three forms of implicit translation, alongside self-translation and pseudo-translation (*Translating Montreal* 159). The act of translating foreign cultures is often embedded within this form of writing, rather than being explicitly presented as translation.

A related concept, crucial to the present study, is what Sündüz Öztürk Kasar terms *traduction en filigrane* (watermark translation) ("Traduction de la ville" 267). It refers to a narrative that subtly integrates the linguistic, cultural, historical, and social elements of a foreign context through the author's mental translation process. As a result, elements such as place names, cultural practices, historical figures, daily rituals, social norms, culinary traditions, and architectural landmarks are woven into the narrative like a watermark, reflecting the foreign culture and creating an impression that the text is a translation, even though it is presented as an original work. According to Öztürk Kasar ("Çeviri Göstergebilimi" 4), *traduction en filigrane* serves as the opposite of Gideon Toury's "pseudotranslation" (40), highlighting the contrasting ways in which original and translated texts are presented. Öztürk Kasar categorized *traduction en filigrane*² into two types ("Traduction de la ville"; "Traduire la ville"), importing and exporting, and then proposed a typology for this concept ("Typologie"; "Migration").

² The concept has been applied to the works of writers such as Alexandre Dumas (Tuna); Halide Edib (Öztürk Kasar and Gülmüş Sırkıntı); Julia Pardoe (Öztürk Kasar and Çelik); Joan Kim Erkan (Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt and Sönmez Dinçkan); and Roberta Rich (Çelik).

Şule Demirkol Ertürk, considering Orhan Pamuk as the “translator” of Istanbul, asserts that as authors select different parts of the city on which to focus in their work, they each create a different “translation” and “image” of that city (201). My analysis aligns with Demirkol Ertürk’s approach, particularly in conceptualizing city writing as a form of translation, where authors assume the role of “translators” who create distinct representations of the city by focusing on different parts. While this approach highlights how translators’ selective focus on specific aspects of a city shapes its interpretation, the current study extends this view by suggesting that even when different travelers focus on the same part of the city, their unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives may result in varied “translations.”

From this perspective, I analyze how Istanbul is interpreted in *Constantinople* (1895) by Francis Marion Crawford, *Letters from Constantinople* (1897) by Georgina Adelaide Müller, and *Constantinople: Old and New* (1915) by H. G. Dwight. I consider these narratives as *traduction en filigrane* of Istanbul’s discourse into English, and the authors are henceforth designated as “translators” of Istanbul. As Bassnett argues, such “forms of rewriting” (75) cannot be separated from the perspectives and interpretations of their translators. This makes Hermans’s concept of the “translator’s voice”—i.e. their discursive presence within the translated text—particularly relevant in understanding how Crawford, Müller, and Dwight construct their interpretations of Istanbul.

Hermans emphasizes that the translator’s voice is most discernible in three scenarios: when the source text is deeply embedded in its original cultural context, when the text is characterized by wordplay or commentary, and when the source text’s context and form present significant challenges to translation (“Translator’s Voice” 27–28). The first scenario is particularly relevant when a travelogue is approached through the lens of *traduction en filigrane*. As negotiation and subjective positioning are always inherent to the process of translation, the role of the translator in shaping the message is always traceable and “we can, in fact, discern translators’ value judgements in all translating” (Hermans, “Positioning Translators” 293). Travelogues reflect similar value judgments, since travel writers act as translators, interpreting and representing the city for the reader.

Building on this framework, I examine how each translator interprets these shared aspects of Istanbul, with a particular focus on the voice that emerges in each narrative. For this purpose, the three travelogues have been comprehensively analyzed to identify common themes. Although their relationships with Istanbul are quite different and they come from different backgrounds, Crawford, Müller, and Dwight focus on many

similar aspects of Istanbul. Adopting a descriptive and comparative approach, I analyze how the translators' voices shape these shared themes and how this, in turn, influences *traduction en filigrane*.

TRAVEL WRITERS AS TRANSLATORS: BACKGROUNDS AND MOTIVATIONS

To understand how Crawford, Müller, and Dwight interpret Istanbul in their travelogues, it is essential to consider their personal backgrounds, motivations, and the circumstances of their visits. Georgina Adelaide Grenfell Max Müller, born in England in 1835, travelled to the Ottoman Empire's capital with her husband Friedrich in May 1893 (Berberoğlu). Their trip was motivated by a desire to see their son Wilhelm, who was working as a secretary at the British embassy, as well as by their interest in the city frequently described in his letters (Müller v). The travelogue includes sixteen of those—twelve by Georgina and four by her husband—written during three months. Fueled by positive expectations, Müller's experience aligns with Bento's proposed profile of a tourist translator. Rather than engaging with the city's social life and traditions, Müller's narrative focuses on major attractions: detailed accounts are given of iconic sites such as the Chinili Kiosk (24), the Dolmabahçe Palace (34), and the Beylerbeyi Palace (35). She dedicates two letters almost entirely to the Yıldız Palace and makes extensive references to prominent mosques, including St. Sophia (72–76), Ahmediyeh (78), and Suleymaniyyeh (79).

Another of the authors in question, Harrison Griswold Dwight, was born in Istanbul in 1875. After a local preparatory school, Robert College, he attended Amherst College in Massachusetts, graduating in 1898. For the next eighteen years, Dwight traveled extensively across the Near East and Europe. Inspired by William Dean Howells's *Venetian Life*, he resolved to write his own travelogue (vii). To approach the city with this new purpose in mind, he returned to Istanbul and published *Constantinople Life* in 1914.

Born and raised in the city, Dwight may exemplify the role of a migrant translator and, in some aspects, extend its boundaries. Reflecting his familiarity with Istanbul, Dwight also reveals an awareness of his own status as a foreigner. His efforts in the preface to teach his readers the proper pronunciation of specific Turkish sounds highlight a conversance with the language, further underscoring his position as a migrant translator (x–xi). Also notable is his close observation of coffee houses: he describes in detail their history, the times at which they are most vibrant, and the traditional games played there (28). However, he occasionally distances

himself from the local community, as reflected in the use of we/them distinctions to underscore his position as an informed outsider.

The third of the authors, Francis Marion Crawford, was born in 1854 in Bagna di Lucca, Italy, to American parents. After an education in London, Berlin, and Rome, he returned to the US in the early 1880s to study Sanskrit at Harvard. He mastered around twenty languages, including Turkish (Aladağ 62). Having completed his studies, he traveled extensively across Europe, India, and the Middle East, arriving in Istanbul in 1884 at the invitation of General Lew Wallace, the American minister to Constantinople (Elliot 183). There, he became actively involved in the social and diplomatic circles, interacting with figures such as the British Ambassador Lord Dufferin and the German Ambassador Joseph Maria von Radowitz (184). His time in the city was also personally significant, as he married Elizabeth Christophers Berdan. In his travelogue, Crawford goes beyond superficial descriptions, focusing on specific local practices and spaces, such as the introduction and cultural importance of the fez (15), the tradition of bargaining (35), the functions of the Ottoman postal system (53), and the dynamics of the horse bazaar (56). He explains coffeehouses and the manners observed in these spaces (17, 18, 41). Crawford even visits Turkish cemeteries (68) and attends plays in Kadıköy, the only theater in the city, to experience local performances alongside Istanbul's residents (74). All these observations may be interpreted as illustrations of his role as a traveler translator. Rather than simply consuming experiences, he engages deeply with local life and experiences the "other" first-hand.

Notably, among these three travelogues, only Müller's has been the subject of an analysis within the field of Translation Studies. In it, Avcı Solmaz explores power relations in the Turkish translations of *Letters from Constantinople*, employing the lens of Wang's "rootless/textless back translation," as well as Chittiphalangsri's concepts of the "inside-outside paradox" and "virtuality/virtualization" (819).

SHARED THEMES, DIVERGENT VOICES: INTERPRETING ISTANBUL

In my thorough textual analysis of the three travelogues, I have identified four shared recurring themes. Below, I analyze in detail how Müller, Dwight, and Crawford describe Galata as a site of cultural and social exchange, the everyday culture of Istanbul, the city's mosques, and its cemeteries.

Markedly different perspectives are offered on Galata, "a semi-independent colony of Istanbul where Orientalized Europeans" lived

(Simon, *Cities* 154). Müller, devoting a whole letter to this neighborhood, describes her first experience on its bridge by stating that it “exceeds all that we had imagined!” (11). Her excitement—the superficial astonishment of a tourist—is also obvious when she describes Galata as “the tower of Babel,” where one can “see all the nationalities of the world” (11).

Dwight also mentions the diverse demographics: “the population of Galata is now more Greek, even more Turkish and Hebrew, than European” (156), but not without the historical context: he explains that “Galata existed as a flourishing Genoese city for nearly two hundred years. The coming of the Turks in 1453 put an end to the conditions which had made her independence possible” (156). However, Dwight’s portrayal is less flattering; he describes it as the “humble, despised, dirty, abandoned Galata, with its outlying suburbs” (182). Occupying what might be described as a migrant translator position, he distances himself from both the local and the tourist perspectives, noting that among the Turks “[i]t is not the fashion to speak well of Pera and Galata” and that even “a Perote born pretends not to love his Grande Rue” (148). Tourists, in contrast, merely “watch the Sultan drive to mosque and giggle at the whirling dervishes” (148). Rejecting both views, Dwight asserts: “I belong to none of these categories,” and finds Pera and Galata “a highly superior place of habitation” (148). Positioning himself as an outsider with a deeper connection to the city, he emphasizes a linguistic distinction that Western readers might overlook: “The word Pera the Turks have never adopted. They call the place Bey O’lou—the Son of the Bey” (147). Retaining the local term while offering a translation, he subtly mediates between Ottoman and European notions of the city, and leaves traces of *traduction en filigrane* in his narrative.

Crawford also devotes a chapter to Galata, highlighting its heterogeneous cultural character. He observes that “Pera and Galata are chiefly inhabited by Christians and Jews, many of them being Europeans, and the aspect of the streets is consequently far less Oriental and less interesting” (71). This suggests that, as a traveler, he is particularly interested in what he perceives as oriental and culturally distant. He emphasizes his access to spaces concealed from outsiders’ view, engaging with local customs firsthand. He describes “a quiet spot unknown to most Europeans, where one may sit for hours in undisturbed enjoyment of coffee and cigarettes” (12). His engagement with Istanbul’s everyday life is further exemplified in his depiction of a simple yet culturally significant ritual: drinking coffee. He notes: “Take your seat in the corner nearest the bridge and nearest to Galata, order your cup of coffee ‘shekerli,’ with sugar, or ‘sade’ without—light your cigarette, and begin your observations” (12). He allows his readers to encounter the original expressions, *şekerli* and *sade*, in their natural context while making them accessible.

In portraying Istanbul's everyday culture—clothing, food, beverages, or street life—the voices of the translators also diverge significantly. These differences reflect varying degrees of familiarity with the city's culture, as well as distinct forms of interpretation. Müller's portrayal of this aspect is influenced by her short stay and limited engagement with the locals: a tourist translator, she remains largely on the surface of the portrayed culture. Instead of exploring the city's traditional food culture, she writes mostly about formal dinners to which she was invited. For instance, recounting a dinner hosted by the Sultan, she highlights that “for the special benefit of the Sultan's English guests, Potage Windsor and Ananas à la Victoria” were served, adding that “no dinner where Turks are present could be served without Pilau” (91). Although the word is given in Turkish, no elaboration on this traditional dish follows. Elsewhere, Müller simply notes that “fish and pilau, and chicken were among the dishes” served at the dinner (190), without providing any further details of the cuisine.

A similar superficiality characterizes Müller's portrayal of clothing culture. For instance, she writes that “Turkish, Persian, Greek, and Circassian women vie with each other in the brilliant colours of their misshapen gowns, the so-called ferejehs. Most of them wear yashmaks, or veils” (13). Her description is not intended to convey the cultural, religious, or social significance of these garments in detail; rather, it reflects a tourist's limited understanding based on superficial impressions.

Dwight's approach to cultural aspects is more engaged than Müller's, yet still maintains a certain distance. His discussion of *kahve* exemplifies his role as an informed outsider, blending linguistic awareness with cultural observation. He explains that “[k]ahveh, whence café and coffee, is a slight modification of an Arabic word—literally meaning that which takes away the appetite” (23–24). Although the meaning of this word is debated among scholars, Dwight presents this detail as part of the cultural knowledge acquired through his experience in the city, an engagement with daily life and local discourse. He moves between languages when introducing a traditional Turkish confectionery: “[r]ahat locoum, more familiar to you, perhaps, as Turkish Delight” (26), or baked goods: “sweet simits, which are rings of hard pastry” and “round flaps of hot unleavened bread, called pideh” (266). In both cases, he maintains the original names, *simit* and *pide*, but supplements them with explanatory descriptions. He mediates between languages and cultural references so that his audience can engage with Istanbul's local identity.

When it comes to clothing, however, Dwight simply mentions traditional garments such as the *fez*, *şalvar*, and *yaşmak* without elaboration. Having spent years immersed in the culture, he may have regarded these items as commonplace, assuming that his readers would either recognize them or infer

their significance. He describes “veiled women in their loose street costume” (268), men wearing “fezzes and turbans in the streets” (268), and servants dressed in “fez and shalvars” (273) without providing further explanation.

Compared to Müller’s and Dwight’s, Crawford’s narrative shows a much stronger engagement with the everyday culture of Istanbul. As a traveler who observed local culture closely, Crawford does not merely list what he sees, but often explains and subtly translates it for his readers. Such traces of *traduction en filigrane* are particularly evident in his descriptions of street food vendors, where he integrates Turkish culinary terms while making them accessible. For instance, he notes: “There is the man who sells bread and ‘pide’ and ‘peksemit’—unleavened bread and biscuits” (47). He keeps the original names, while briefly explaining their meaning. *Pide*, flatbread made from leavened dough and often topped with ingredients like eggs, minced meat, or cheese, is a staple of Turkish cuisine; *peksimet* refers to twice-baked, dry, and long-lasting bread. Crawford’s engagement with food translation becomes even more detailed when he describes Turkish kebab: “There is the cook who sells kebaby—little morsels of lamb or mutton broiled on wooden skewers, and pilaf, kept hot in a big, closed tin, or stuffed spring squashes and other vegetables” (47). Here, he does more than name the dish; he explains its preparation method and accompaniments, helping his audience visualize how it is cooked and served. Instead of over-explaining or exoticizing these items, he retains the Turkish term and adds brief, clear explanations in English.

Among other details which he provides about Istanbul’s vibrant street culture, Crawford draws attention to ice cream vendors, noting how their voice “rises loudly above other sounds—dondurma kaimak—frozen cream!” (36). He not only captures their characteristic call to attract customers, but also provides its English translation. In terms of Istanbul’s clothing culture, he provides social and historical context, as when describing Ottoman women’s traditional clothes: “the yashmak or the ferajeh—the clumsily cut overgarment which covers all women in the street from the throat to the inevitable patent leather shoes” (17). As can be seen here, culture-specific terms are paired with short, clarifying descriptions. What stands out in Crawford’s approach is his awareness of how these garments have changed over time. He notes: “But the yashmak is not what it was ten years ago and has almost ceased to hide the face at all,” adding: “Strict as the Sultan’s ordinance is, there is not the slightest pretence of obeying it, and in the great majority of cases a thin white veil barely covers the forehead and is but loosely drawn together under the chin” (17). Through this detailed observation, he captures not only the physical characteristics of the *yashmak*, but also its changing role—another clear example of mediating the foreign without distorting its meaning.

Unsurprisingly, the interest of those unfamiliar with the culture and religion is captivated by the places of worship: all three authors dedicate several pages to descriptions of mosques. Müller's perspective aligns with that of a tourist translator, prioritizing aesthetic fascination and romanticizing external beauty; idealizing expressions like "snow-white minarets" or "glittering cupolas" (5) abound. She highlights their contrast with the dark cypress trees and the bright blue sky without focusing on the buildings' historical or architectural significance (5, 11). Müller also asserts that mosques in Constantinople are either repurposed Christian churches, like "Aya Sophia Jamisi," or direct imitations of the Grand Mosque (72). This statement may reflect the surface-level engagement characteristic of a tourist who primarily seeks familiar points of reference. Müller's use of "Aya Sophia Jamisi" can also be seen as a trace of *traduction en filigrane*, because she blends the building's Byzantine and Ottoman identities through a hybrid transliteration. Similarly, in depicting the Sultan's ceremonial entrance to the mosque, she translates the final phrase of the *ezan* (Islamic call to prayer) into English, adopting an archaic register, with expressions like "thou" in "Remember there is One greater than thou."

Dwight's perspective as a migrant translator is more critical and sophisticated than Müller's. Instead of simply expressing his admiration, he mentions the minarets, domes, and tiles—a crucial element of architectural design. He even offers technical observations, as with the Sultan Ahmed Mosque: "[The architect] put his best tiles there, where they can only be seen at close range. And his best is very good. I have counted twenty-nine varieties of tiles there. . . ." (53). Comparing the Yeni Mosque with the Sultan Ahmed Mosque, he is critical but constructive, noting that the proportions of the former "are also much better and the frescoing is not so bad as that of Sultan Ahmed" (54). Unlike Müller, Dwight directly challenges the notion that Ottoman mosques are mere imitations of Hagia Sophia; he notes that "[t]he easy current dictum that they are merely more or less successful imitations of St. Sophia takes no account of the evolution" (40–41). Instead, he links the central dome's development to earlier mosques in Konya, Bursa, and Edirne. His reference to Sinan's refinement of Byzantine influences into a distinctly Ottoman aesthetic highlights an insider's perspective, shaped by a deeper familiarity with the city's architectural history. Furthermore, his reflections on lesser-known mosques such as "Atik Ali Pasha and . . . Sultan Baiezid," as well as overlooked artistic techniques, such as "frescoing or stencilling of domes" (42), indicate a sensitivity to local artistic traditions often dismissed by foreign travelers. Dwight also praises Turkish calligraphy and architectural inscriptions in mosques, noting that "this art became a means of decoration which we can only envy the Turks" (47). Once again, this highlights an us/them

distinction, and shows his migrant translator stance—deeply familiar with the culture yet still positioned as an outsider.

As for the traces of *traduction en filigrane*, Dwight consistently uses the word “mosque” in his descriptions; however, when referring to specific Ottoman structures, he preserves the local terminology and adopts “jami,” e.g., in “Yeni Jami” and “Sultan Ahmed Jami.” Another telltale aspect is his approach to translating religious and architectural elements. For example, some Turkish terms are retained, but with explanations: *mihrab* is described as “the central object of this open space . . . a niche pointing toward Mecca” and *minber* as “a sort of pulpit,” i.e. the elevated platform from which the imam delivers sermons (39).

Crawford provides another distinct voice as a traveler translator, focusing on the city’s inherent contrast. Like Müller, he mentions the picturesque aspects, noting that “from the Bosphorus one sees little except the architectural outlines of the mosques, interspersed here and there with a little green, or shadowed by the tall plumes of dark cypresses” (41). However, he does not romanticize these places, and he underscores the contrasts between “the brilliant animation of the streets” and “the solemn quiet of the mosques and tombs” (54). Like Müller, Crawford refers to Ottoman mosques as imitations of Hagia Sophia. However, her tone is more appreciative: she highlights the fact that the Ottomans chose to adopt the church as a model, rather than attempt to erase its influence (4). The names of religious places in Crawford’s *traduction en filigrane* reflect his varying translation strategies. While “St. Sophia” (2, 4, 20, 41) aligns with the established Western usage, “Kahriye Mosque” (38) blends an Ottoman place name with an English descriptor, and “Yeni Jami” (53) preserves its original form. Crawford’s firsthand engagement with local religious life further distinguishes him from a tourist translator. Following his discussion of Yeni Jami, he mentions that “it is indeed impossible to spend much time among Mussulmans without acquiring the certainty that they are profoundly in earnest in religious matters” (54). This statement highlights his effort to observe and understand religious devotion as an integral part of everyday life.

Another illustration of how each traveler shapes their social and religious significance through their distinct voice are the varied depictions of Istanbul’s cemeteries. All three travelogues depict Turkish burial traditions, preserving religious terms such as “turban-crowned tombstones” and “türbeh,” explained further within the texts. Müller portrays Turkish cemeteries as disorderly and neglected, emphasizing their irregular arrangements. Observing the “turban-crowned tombstones, standing at any and every angle from the perpendicular, many even fallen down,” she concludes that they collectively give “that general impression

of neglect conveyed by all Turkish cemeteries” (72). Müller’s description reflects an aesthetic judgment shaped by Western notions of order. In terms of Turkish burial traditions, she simply records what she sees without contextualizing the underlying practices or beliefs. Apart from an occasional use of the term “türbeh,” Müller’s observations of cemeteries and tombstones lack further instances of *traduction en filigrane*.

Dwight, on the other hand, integrates cemeteries into the urban and cultural fabric of Istanbul, offering an interpretation that, yet again, reflects his deep familiarity with the city and its culture (8, 141, 219, 334, 483). On Ottoman tombstone inscriptions, he notes “a request for a prayer or a Fatiha—the opening invocation of the Koran—and some such verse as ‘He is the Everlasting, Every soul shall taste death’ or ‘We are God’s and we return to God’” (220–21). While *fatiha* serves as both a prayer and a spiritual invocation for the deceased, other expressions to which Dwight refers are also common epigraphic phrases: “Her canlı ölümü tadacaktır” (“Every soul shall taste death”) and “Allah’tan geldik, Allah’a döneceğiz” (“We are God’s and we return to God”). The phrase “He is the Everlasting” likely corresponds to “O, bâki olandır,” which appears on many Ottoman gravestones to show the eternal nature of God as contrasted with human mortality. Dwight does not mark these expressions with translations or explanatory notes. Instead, he integrates them fluently into his prose. Without reducing cemeteries to burial sites, Dwight shows them as interwoven into the city’s rhythms: even “the principal avenue of Stamboul” is bordered by tombs (8).

As for Crawford, he moves beyond surface-level observation, but still maintains an outsider’s perspective. His engagement with local cultural expressions is seen in his rendering of gravestone inscriptions, for instance: “the dedication to God, ‘the ever abiding One’—and below that, in Turkish, the words: I have come to the garden of this world but have found no kindness” (43). The poetic line that follows, originally “Bu cihân bâğına geldim, bir mürüvvet görmedim”—an epitaph expressing disappointment—was widely used in Ottoman tombstone inscriptions. Crawford does not overtly frame this as an act of translation; instead, he embeds the translated phrases naturally into his narrative to make these cultural and religious expressions accessible. His depiction of Turkish cemeteries as “infinitely more picturesque than the Christian churchyard” (67) suggests a romanticized approach that prioritizes aesthetic qualities over cultural depth. However, unlike Müller, whose engagement remains purely superficial, Crawford demonstrates an awareness of local beliefs, referring to “one of the most deep-rooted of popular Turkish superstitions” and observing that the “fatalistic Mussulman . . . would tremble like a child if obliged to pass through a cemetery at night” (66). Positioned as a traveler

translator, engaged in cultural and social dynamics, he moves beyond visual observation, acquiring knowledge of these superstitions through firsthand interactions.

CONCLUSION

To varying degrees, all three travelogues examined in this study function as examples of *traduction en filigrane*, which mediates between languages and cultures. This process is particularly evident in their encounters with the “other” (Thompson 10) and this encounter leaves traces on the text. While making the unfamiliar accessible, they reshape the representation of the city through their distinct translators’ voices.

This study further highlights how different types of travelers/translators leave distinct imprints on their texts. The mental process of translation is deeply influenced by the translator’s background and familiarity with the culture of the city. As a result, the *traduction en filigrane* takes on different forms and intensities in their narratives. This is particularly evident in Müller’s: as a tourist translator with limited cultural familiarity, she engages in such practices to a noticeably smaller extent than Dwight and Crawford. Lacking deep knowledge of the city and its traditions, she has fewer cultural elements to process and integrate into her narrative. Consequently, traces of *traduction en filigrane* in her text remain minimal, primarily limited to place names, personal names, and occasional references to food and clothing. Even when Müller retains Turkish terms, she rarely provides detailed explanations, leaving many cultural elements unexplored. This contrasts with the more engaged approaches of Dwight and Crawford, who incorporate cultural and historical context alongside linguistic retention.

The comparative analysis of Crawford’s, Müller’s, and Dwight’s voices has highlighted how their roles as tourist, traveler, and migrant translators shape their interpretations of Istanbul. Müller, who spent only three months there visiting her son, embodies the perspective of a short-term tourist, characterized by a predominantly surface-level engagement. Galata elicits mere astonishment at its diversity rather than deeper analysis; Müller’s descriptions of mosques focus on their external beauty rather than their architectural or religious significance, while cemeteries are seen as sites of disorder and strangeness. These observations evidently prioritize admiration over deeper cultural understanding. Dwight, born in Istanbul yet never fully belonging to the city, occupies the position of a migrant translator: his narrative reflects both deep familiarity and a sense of detachment. He demonstrates an insider’s awareness of how

Turks perceive Galata; his engagement with lesser-known mosques and overlooked architectural techniques, along with an emphasis on the historical and religious importance of cemeteries, highlight his extensive knowledge of the city. However, his persistent use of us/them distinctions reinforces his position as an informed outsider. Lastly, Crawford, an Italy-born American polyglot, offers the perspective of a traveler translator. His portrayal of Istanbul focuses largely on less popular sites, emphasizing his distinction from ordinary tourists. He finds Galata less oriental and less interesting due to its diversity yet sets himself apart by seeking out lesser-known spaces. Additionally, he demonstrates an awareness of local traditions and superstitions, reinforcing his engagement with the locals and the city's cultural landscape.

As Simon asserts, “cities are stories” and “each city will tell different stories according to the languages in which these stories are told” (“The Translational City” 24). The identities of the translators who interpret the city in their own language play a crucial role. The unique voices of the translators affect the representations, and the resulting subjective portrayals may reflect not just the city, but also the translators themselves.

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