

CADENCES

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# Ritual Design for the Ballet Stage

Revisiting the Turkish Ceremony in  
*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670)

Hanna Walsdorf (Ed.)

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Revisiting the Turkish Ceremony in  
*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670)

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

In the spring of 2014, just two months into my new Emmy Noether Research Project *Ritual Design for the Ballet Stage: Constructions of Popular Culture in European Theatrical Dance, 1650–1760*, based at Leipzig University, our multidisciplinary team was invited to present the project outline and ourselves at the Theatre Studies departmental research colloquium. The Turkish ceremony from *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) was the first and most obvious case study to illustrate the project and its subprojects within musicology, dance history, and costume studies. The iconic burlesque scene authored mainly by Molière and Lully seemed to be the perfect example to capture the essence of the project in a lively group presentation. Yet unexpectedly, questions and discrepancies quickly arose from the available source material and scholarly literature. We were not satisfied with the outcome of the presentation, and so we decided to elaborate and explore our case study more deeply. After continued research we organized an interdisciplinary day conference, which was held in Erfurt, Germany, on 28 September 2015. The discussions motivated us to research and develop the papers further. Along the way, it became clear that even in a field as thoroughly investigated as the collaboration between Molière and Lully, there were still many new sources to discover and new connections to be established. This handbook of essays specifically on ritual design in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* presents our new findings.

Halfway through the editing stages, we realized how seminal the research of Mary Hossain was to our conclusions, and that she may be interested to know of our work, more than twenty years after her own. Her generous response can be read here:

Many years ago, working in the library of Queen's University, Belfast, I came across Labat's edition of the *Mémoires* of the Chevalier d'Arvieux and found it a fascinating source of information on many aspects of the relations between the court of Louis XIV and the Ottoman Empire. It was also extremely entertaining, but obviously con-



tained modifications and anecdotes fabricated in the eighteenth century by Labat. Eventually a copy of d'Arvieux's original manuscript was located in the Lebaudy collection of the Bibliothèque municipale de Versailles, and it was no longer necessary to use instinct and detective work to disentangle Labat's text from d'Arvieux's original. After comparing the two and revisiting the question of authenticity in an article [1997], I retired from the university, leaving the task of transcribing and using the Lebaudy manuscript to others. I am therefore delighted to find that, twenty-one years after my article, the authors of this volume have made such excellent use of the Lebaudy manuscript in their thorough study of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* [...]. The atmosphere at court, the blunders and misunderstandings, the efforts of d'Arvieux to avert disaster, all are brought vividly to light. I am so pleased that the Lebaudy manuscript has proved useful in establishing the full extent of d'Arvieux's involvement in the visit of the Turkish ambassador and of his contribution to *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. [Mary Hossain, 10 October 2018]

Indeed, the findings presented in this book owe a lot to d'Arvieux's original account, but also to the work of a largely forgotten contemporary English master of farce: Edward Ravenscroft. The authors of the essays assembled here are members of the *Ritual Design* research team (Petra Dotlačilová, Gerrit Berenike Heiter, Torben Schleiner, Kathrin Stocker, and myself) and specifically invited scholars from various disciplines (Judith I. Haug, Jan Rupp, and Jennifer Thorp). They all willingly embraced the opportunity to challenge established research narratives held dear for decades. Without their dedication and commitment, this book would have been far less exciting.

For their amicable support, precious advice and encouragement during the preparation of this volume, our thanks go to Pauline Beaucé, Patrick Blanc, Keith Cavers, Edward Corp, Anne Daye, Irène Feste, Stephen H. Fleck, Laurent Guillo, Rebecca Harris-Warrick, Hubert Hazebroucq, Rebecca Herrissone, Peter Holman, Alan Howard, Andreas Isler, Nathalie Lecomte, Raphaëlle Legrand, Bertrand Porot, John S. Powell, Goran Proot, Lois Rosow, Graham Sadler, Maria Schildt, and Bryan White. For their invaluable benevolence and helpfulness, the authors of this volume are much obliged to the many librarians and archivists near and far who assisted with getting access to and/or obtaining copies of the source material examined here.

As the editor of this volume, I am most grateful to Ruth Tatlow for her careful English language editing and unfailing friendship. My thanks go also to Elizabeth Robinson for her skillful translation of chapter 9 (the only one primarily written in German). Furthermore, I wish to thank Karin Timme and Oliver Renner of *Frank & Timme* for their endless patience and competent assistance. Finally, this book could not have come into existence without the generous funding of the German Research Foundation (DFG). The Emmy Noether grant enabled me to send team members and to travel myself across Europe to obtain new and relevant source material, and to publish the fruits of our project in this beautiful volume. Vielen herzlichen Dank.

Hanna Walsdorf, January 2019

### Summary: *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670)

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* concerns **Monsieur Jourdain**, a very wealthy cloth merchant completely taken by the idea of **nobility**. Instead of realizing his desire of ascending to the status of nobleman in the only realistic manner available to a **bourgeois**, that is, by buying an official *charge* and waiting to be given a minor title, he dreams of leaping directly into its upper ranks, as the title makes clear: “gentilhomme” designated a purely hereditary nobleman, the King being the “premier gentilhomme” of the land. M. Jourdain wishes to accomplish this realistically impossible social leap by the equally fanciful means of imitating noble manners, clearly intending to convert himself thus into an elegant and cultivated *honnête homme*. He pursues his dream by taking lessons in music, dance, fencing, and philosophy, by ordering expensive dress and associating with a count, **Dorante**. His outsize mania is evident to all around him, but he will brook no objection, whether from his tart-tongued wife or his **servant Nicole’s** helpless **laughter** at the extravagance of his new clothes.

His “teachers” (for he rejects their learning, believing that he has already mastered the particular arts and sciences that they represent) regard him as a hopelessly inept pupil but do not fail to charge him handsomely for their services. Likewise Dorante, who borrows enormous sums from the deeply flattered Jourdain, claims to be advancing his name at court and with a beautiful widow, the marquise **Dorimène**, of whom Jourdain is enamored. Jourdain orders music, a banquet, a diamond, and even the concluding ballet to court her on a princely scale. In reality, Dorante is himself courting Dorimène with the means borrowed from Jourdain. The work makes clear that Dorante has neither the means nor the inclination to repay the “loans,” being instead quite content to feed Jourdain’s dream and, through it, his own plans. When Jourdain’s dream is fulfilled as he believes himself elevated to the (purely imaginary) status of *mamamouchi*, the work’s gradual passage from social satire anchored in depiction of recognizable contemporary society to the triumph of an exhilaratingly festive fantasy is completed.



The *Cérémonie turque*, a quarter-hour-long affair of pompous march music, pseudo-Turkish exotic chant and dance, and generally exhilarating nonsense, mystifies Jourdain even further. Emerging from the ceremony fully believing in his newly exalted title, he finds all around him people ready to play along with his belief, which now furthers their interests. This circumstance allows the desired marriages (Cléonte with Lucile, Covielle with Nicole, and Dorante with Dorimène) to be quickly concluded. All take seats onstage to enjoy the forty-minute-long Ballet des Nations, which recapitulates and elevates artistically the previous themes of love and incomprehension, cultural differences, social pretension, and discord. All previous disharmony is resolved in the elevated, indeed quasi-divine, pleasures of courtly art [...].

Stephen H. Fleck, "Le Bourgeois gentilhomme," in *The Molière Encyclopedia*, ed. James E. Gaines (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 59–60; 62.



## ⌘ INTRODUCTION ⌘



## 1 From Mishap to Mockery: Why and How *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* was (really) born

In summer 1669 there was great anticipation in France about the forthcoming visit of the Ottoman envoy Süleyman Ağa Müteferrika, following receipt of a letter from Sultan Mehmed IV to King Louis XIV dated June 1669. Historians have hailed this as the “first Ottoman diplomatic mission to France in half a century.”<sup>1</sup> The weekly *Gazette* by Renaudot, the central medium for disseminating news of any kind, kept its readers informed about Süleyman’s itinerary and appointments; and so did the *gazettes en vers et en prose* by Mayolas and Robinet,<sup>2</sup> albeit in a more sophisticated form as it was addressed either to the king or to *Madame*.<sup>3</sup> The chronology of events began with the debarkation of Süleyman Ağa and his entourage in Toulon on 4 August 1669, and their stopovers in Marseille, Aix en Provence, Lyon, Orléans, Fontainebleau and Issy were closely observed. Hearsay and rumors flourished, and even Carlo Vigarani, *intendant des Menus Plaisirs du Roi*, remarked on the Ottoman visit in three of his letters to Laura Martinozzi, the duchess of his home town Modena. In a letter dated 13 September 1669, he reported that soon after his “ritorno di Chambord S.M<sup>a</sup>. riceuera al castel di Vincenna l’vdienna del Ambasciator Turco, il quale è già in Aix di Provenza.”<sup>4</sup> No other source mentions the Château de

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1 Cf. Phil McCluskey, “An Ottoman envoy in Paris: Süleyman Ağa’s mission to the court of Louis XIV, 1669,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* XLVIII (2016): 337. McCluskey states that a French translation of the letter survives in the Archive des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance Politique Turquie 9, 327: Mehmed IV to Louis XIV (June 1669).

2 David Chataignier assembled the texts for the *Molière 21* website, see “Autour du Bourgeois gentilhomme,” Université Paris 4-Sorbonne, accessed 28 August 2018, [http://moliere.paris-sorbonne.fr/base.php?Autour\\_du\\_Bourgeois\\_gentilhomme](http://moliere.paris-sorbonne.fr/base.php?Autour_du_Bourgeois_gentilhomme).

3 Henrietta of England (1644–1670), wife of Philippe I, Duke of Orléans (1661–1670).

4 I-MOs Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori Francia 129. See the Appendix for a transcript of the other two letters.



Vincennes in this context; if there had been an official plan, it was obviously changed in favor of Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

Before meeting the king, Süleyman Ağa was given two official audiences by foreign minister Hugues de Lionne in Issy in November. Their meetings were aimed to clarify Süleyman's diplomatic status, in order to decide whether he ought to be received as an ambassador, or if he should be treated rather as the sultan's deputy, or even as a simple courier. The French diplomats in charge—whose skills as interpreters and cultural empathy were poor, if not downright non-existent—could not provide a satisfactory answer to their question in time, ignoring, somewhat snobbishly, the well-informed advice of Laurent d'Arvieux.

The royal audience at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 5 December 1669 thus became the culmination of a “comedy of errors replete with hidden identities and miscommunications and was to be fodder for Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670).”<sup>5</sup> Soon after Süleyman Ağa's departure from Paris in July 1670, Louis XIV commissioned a *pièce de théâtre* in response to the recent Ottoman encounter, of which several—not always consistent—accounts survive. Drawing from little-known archival sources, such as the *manuscript* account of the chevalier d'Arvieux and original letters by Carlo Vigarani<sup>6</sup>, this chapter will reveal new aspects of the meeting that demand a reassessment of the accepted narrative. Alongside a re-evaluation of newly discovered sources and recent scholarship, this chapter will review and reconsider the events at the Ottoman visit to France, the royal audience in Saint-Germain, and d'Arvieux's influence on these events as well as on the iconic *cérémonie turque* in the *comédie-ballet* composed by Molière, Lully, Beauchamp, and Gisse. Primary questions include: Where did the scenic and ritual inspiration really come from? What was the real motivation behind and the purpose of the piece? And above all, how much “Turkishness” does the *cérémonie turque* really include?

.....  
5 Garritt van Dyk, “The Embassy of Soliman Ağa to Louis XIV: Diplomacy, Dress, and Diamonds,” *emaj Special Issue: Cosmopolitan Moments: Instances of Exchange in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2017): 1–19.

6 Jérôme de La Gorce has made a comprehensive study of these documents in his work on the Vigarani brothers in France; however, the original Italian quotes are presented here for the first time. Cf. Jérôme de La Gorce, *Carlo Vigarani intendant des Plaisirs de Louis XIV* (Versailles: Perrin, 2005); Walter Baricchi and Jérôme de La Gorce, eds., *Gaspere & Carlo Vigarani: Dalla corte degli Este a quella di Luigi XIV* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2009).

## QUESTIONING THE NARRATIVE

Recent studies in early modern history show that diplomacy was not the exclusive right of Europeans. Nonetheless a eurocentric perspective of diplomacy has dominated historical research for decades, as Sven Externbrink and Florian Kühnel have shown in critical surveys published in 2007 and 2015 respectively.<sup>7</sup> Kühnel argues that new methodological and geographical approaches cast doubt over this perception:

By turning to actor-centric approaches, many of the ideas that have hitherto been taken for granted are put into perspective. This includes not following the interpretations of the early modern contemporaries uncritically, but instead historicizing them on their part.<sup>8</sup>

In order to understand the reasons that the series of diplomatic mishaps occurred in France in 1669/70, it is thus indispensable to consider Ottoman customs. As Kühnel explained in another article, there were permanent Western European embassies in Constantinople, but this diplomatic status was not reciprocated. Instead, the sultan sent *ad hoc* emissaries for specific occasions only. A Western European diplomat was the symbolical substitute for his monarch when appointed ‘ambassador’, whereas lower ranks, such as an *envoyé*, resident, or agent, could negotiate and discuss economic or factual issues on behalf of the king, but they would not expect to be treated as the king’s substitute.<sup>9</sup> Ottoman diplomats, on the other hand, were authorized representatives

.....

7 Sven Externbrink, “Internationale Politik in der Frühen Neuzeit. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung zu Diplomatie und Staatensystem,” in *Geschichte der Politik. Alte und neue Wege*, eds. Hans-Christof Kraus and Thomas Nicklas. Historische Zeitschrift, Beiheft 44 (München: Oldenbourg, 2007), 15–39. Florian Kühnel, “Westeuropa und das Osmanische Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ansätze und Perspektiven aktueller Forschungen,” *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 42 (2015): 276.

8 Ibid.: “Durch die Hinwendung zu akteurszentrierten Ansätzen relativieren sich viele der bisher als selbstverständlich angesehenen Vorstellungen. Dazu gehört, dass man den Deutungen der frühneuzeitlichen Zeitgenossen nicht mehr unkritisch folgt, sondern sie stattdessen selbst historisiert.”

9 Cf. Florian Kühnel, “‘No Ambassador Ever Having the Like.’ Die Übertretung der diplomatischen Rituale und die Stellung der Gesandten am osmanischen Hof,” in *Interkulturelle Ritualpraxis in der Vormoderne: Diplomatische Interaktion an den östlichen Grenzen*

of the sultan, and not his deputies, as Rycaut states: “in the name between an Embassadour, Resident, Agent, or any petty Messenger sent or residing upon a publick Affair; the name *Elchi*, serves them to express all.”<sup>10</sup> The Ottomans therefore did not perceive Western European ambassadors as symbolically representing their monarch.<sup>11</sup>

In her recent study on *Mediterranean Encounters* (2018), Fariba Zarinebaf has summarized the mission of the French ambassadors to Constantinople, whose appointments were controlled from 1659 onwards by minister of finances Jean-Baptiste Colbert. They should “improve relations with the Porte, promote French commerce in the Levant and enable it to compete there with other European nations, protect the Catholics in the Levant, and renew existing *ahdnames*”<sup>12</sup> [= official agreements, *capitulations*]. Denis de la Haye-Vantelet, who was appointed in 1665 (following his father, Jean de la Haye), did not manage to renew the French-Ottoman *ahdname*, in spite of having good relations with the grand vizier, and was recalled to Paris. The sultan reacted by sending Süleyman Ağa Müteferrika to France “to demand an explanation for the recalling of the Ambassador [Denis] de la Haye from the Porte.”<sup>13</sup>

Understanding the Ottoman visit to France in 1669 as the peg on which Molière hung his *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, historians have drawn almost exclusively on contemporary French sources. As such, scholars have frequently cited

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*der Fürstengesellschaft*, eds. Claudia Garnier and Christine Vogel. *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung, Beiheft 52* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2016), 107–8. See also Bülent Arı, “Early Ottoman Diplomacy: Ad Hoc Period,” in *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?* Ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 36–65; Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. New approaches to European history 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) [6th edition 2007].

10 Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire [...], In Three Books* (London: John Starkey & Henry Brome, 1668), 89. See Abraham de Wicquefort, *L’Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, 2 vols. (La Haye: Veneur, 1682), for a contemporary survey of diplomatic protocol.

11 Cf. Kühnel, “No Ambassador Ever Having the Like,” 109–10. For the mediality of cross-cultural diplomatic ceremonies, see Christine Vogel, “Der Marquis, das Sofa und der Großwesir. Zu Funktion und Medialität interkultureller diplomatischer Zeremonien in der Frühen Neuzeit,” in *Die Audienz. Ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Peters Burschel and Christine Vogel (Köln: Böhlau, 2014), 231.

12 Fariba Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters: Trade and Pluralism in Early Modern Galata* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 131.

13 *Ibid.* – For the respective archival records, see “Ambassade de Denis de La Haye-Vantelet (1665–1670),” F-Pan AE/B/I/376–AE/B/I/385.

the comments published in the *Gazette* and the accounts of eyewitness Nicolas de Saintot<sup>14</sup> (a *maître des cérémonies*) and of the hearsay reports of Olivier III Lefèvre d’Ormesson (1616–1686).<sup>15</sup> Several letters studied by Phil McCluskey<sup>16</sup> in the Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères (AAE) shed new light on the contemporary French view of the matter. These documents help to understand the French perception of the Ottoman visit, but they do little to elucidate the Ottoman point of view. In their analyses of the incident, Grenet (2015), McCluskey (2016), and Van Dyk (2017) are sensitive to both French and Ottoman viewpoints<sup>17</sup> and have consequently broadened the established perspective considerably.

The discovery of the famous paragraph concerning the *Bourgeois gentil-homme* in volume IV of the *Mémoires du chevalier d’Arvieux* (edited by Jean-Baptiste Labat in 1735<sup>18</sup>) was made by Adrien Berbrugger in 1868.<sup>19</sup> It has been cited repeatedly ever since.<sup>20</sup> Labat’s edition, dedicated to Louis François,

- .....
- 14 “Relation de ce qui s’est passé à la réception de Soliman Aga Mustapharaca envoyé par sultan Mahomet Han empereur des Turcs en 1669,” in *Mémoires de Nicolas de Saintot*, vol. II, F-Pnm MS français 14118, 79r–96v. Transcript by Alice Camus (2015): [https://chateaubersailles-recherche.fr/IMG/pdf/memoires\\_de\\_saintot\\_t.\\_ii.pdf](https://chateaubersailles-recherche.fr/IMG/pdf/memoires_de_saintot_t._ii.pdf). – A slightly different version of the account is presented in “Cérémonies du règne de Louis XIV, recueil formé, au moins en partie, d’après le Journal de Mr de Saintot,” F-Pnm MS français 16633, 119[r]–28[r]. See the appendix for a transcription of the latter version.
- 15 *Mémoires d’André Lefèvre d’Ormesson et d’Olivier Lefèvre d’Ormesson*, F-R MS Leber 5767 (2), no. 3: “autre Journal ou Registre des événements remarquables, intrigues de cour et nouvelles du jour, depuis la fin du procès de Fouquet jusqu’en 1671,” 352r. Edited in *Journal d’Olivier Lefèvre d’Ormesson et extraits des mémoires d’André Lefèvre d’Ormesson. Tome deuxième, 1661–1672*, ed. Adolphe Chéruel (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1861), 577–78. Chéruel’s text edition is accurate, except for the erroneous correction of the Ottoman Turkish word ‘tülbent’ (here ‘tulban’) into ‘turban.’ This error is also found in Labat’s edition of d’Arvieux (see below).
- 16 McCluskey, “An Ottoman envoy in Paris.”
- 17 Cf. Mathieu Grenet, “Muslim Missions to Early Modern France, c.1610–c.1780: Notes for a Social History of Cross-Cultural Diplomacy,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015): 223–44. McCluskey, “An Ottoman envoy in Paris.” Van Dyk, “The Embassy of Soliman Aga to Louis XIV.”
- 18 *Mémoires du chevalier d’Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du Roy à la Porte [...]*, 6 vols., ed. Jean-Baptiste Labat (Paris: Charles-Jean-Baptiste Delespine, 1735).
- 19 Adrien Berbrugger, “Un collaborateur inconnu de Molière,” *Revue africaine: Journal des travaux de la Société Historique Algérienne* 12 (1868): 421–25.
- 20 Albert Vandal, “Molière et le cérémonial turc à la cour de Louis XIV,” *Revue d’Art dramatique* (1886): 65–80; Adile Ayda, “Molière et l’envoyé de la Sublime Porte,” *Cahiers de*

Prince of Conti, has become the authority for any study of the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, and is still referred to among Molière (and Lully) scholars when evaluating the influence of Laurent d'Arvieux on the creation of the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, and specifically of the *cérémonie turque*.<sup>21</sup> Even most recent scholarship, including the new Molière biography by Georges Forestier (2018),<sup>22</sup> still relies heavily on the much-quoted posthumous edition by Jean-Baptiste Labat. Yet Labat's edition does not reproduce d'Arvieux's account precisely. As he noted on the title pages of the six volumes, the *Mémoires* were "recueillies de ses Mémoires originaux, & mis en ordre avec des réflexions."

### The *Manuscript* Account of Laurent d'Arvieux (1635–1702)

Soon after the Labat edition was published, a review appeared in the *Journal des Sçavans* (1735) complaining that Père Labat had done what he always did when he edited travel reports. He took the essence of the original, and added, without qualification, his own reflections and interpretations:

Le Père Labat, suivant sa méthode ordinaire, quand il donne des Relations des Voyageurs, n'a tiré que le fond de sa Relation des Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux. Quelques personnes auroient souhaité que ce que le Père Labat a cru devoir ajouter, fut distingué de ce qui est rapporté dans l'original.<sup>23</sup>

The 1735 review does not reveal the whereabouts of the original account and so, with the Labat edition as the only available source, it has long been "difficult

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*l'Association internationale des études françaises* 9 (1957): 103–16; Mary Hossain, "Le chevalier d'Arvieux and 'Le Bourgeois gentilhomme,'" *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 12 (1990): 76–88; Miriam K. Whaples, "Early Exoticism Revisited," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 11–14; passim. – *The Molière 21* website categorizes the quote awkwardly as "Anecdote tardive," see Chataignier, "Autour du Bourgeois gentilhomme," op. cit.

21 Further sources particularly relevant to Molière studies will be discussed below.

22 Georges Forestier, *Molière*. Biographies Gallimard (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), 431–32.

23 Review "Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux [...]," *Le Journal des Sçavans* (March 1735): 146–53; 148. Also quoted, among further contemporary critique aimed at Labat, by Mary Hossain, "The Authenticity of the Mémoires of the chevalier d'Arvieux," *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies* 7/8 (1993): 71–101; 72.

to establish with certainty what alterations were made by the editor,” so long as the original manuscript was lost.<sup>24</sup> In 1997, though, Mary Hossain rediscovered a scribe’s copy, dating from the late seventeenth century” that addresses the family and descendants of d’Arvieux (1635–1702).<sup>25</sup> The two volumes are entitled *Mémoires de Laurens d’Arvieux Chevalier de l’Ordre Royal de Nostre Dame du Mont Carmel & de Saint Lazare de Jerusalem*<sup>26</sup> and were donated to the Bibliothèque municipale de Versailles in 1962 by Jean and Henriette Lebaudy (fig. 1.1). The provenance of the volumes is somewhat nebulous: First mentioned in Anatole Claudin’s *Archives du Bibliophile* (Paris 1898) as being on sale for 110 francs,<sup>27</sup> they resurfaced in Karl W. Hiersemann’s *Bücher-Katalog 432* (Leipzig 1914).<sup>28</sup> Both Claudin’s catalogue entry<sup>29</sup> and the type-written note<sup>30</sup> glued on the flyleaf of the first volume of the manuscript state that the latter differs from the Labat edition. But it took a further eighty years before the manuscript caught the attention of scholars. Mary Hossain was the first to examine the manuscript in detail. According to her 1997 analysis, Labat has indeed “considerably abbreviated the manuscript,” and has corrupted the text in many ways:

24 Mary Hossain, “The Lebaudy Manuscript of the ‘Mémoires’ of the Chevalier d’Arvieux: The Question of Authenticity Revisited.” *Revue d’histoire maghrébine* 85/86 (1997): 103.

25 Hossain, “The Lebaudy Manuscript,” 103–4.

26 *Mémoires de Laurens d’Arvieux Chevalier de l’Ordre Royal de Nostre Dame du Mont Carmel & de Saint Lazare de Jerusalem. Tome Second, Contenant les Journaux de ses Voyages, de ses Negociations, de toutes les choses qu’il a faites & qui se sont passées à son égard depuis l’année 1666, jusques à la fin de l’an 1677*, 2 vols. F-V, Collection Jean & Henriette Lebaudy. The manuscript is undated, but catalogued as seventeenth century. – I am most grateful to Gerrit Berenike Heiter for obtaining a scan of the manuscript for me when I was unable to go to Versailles in person.

27 Anatole Claudin, *Archives du bibliophile: Livres rares et curieux* 38, no. 337 (1898): 427–28, No. 86068: “Arvieux (Mémoires de Laurens d’).”

28 Non vidi; reference taken from Hossain, “The Lebaudy Manuscript,” 103 n. 3.

29 Claudin, *Archives du bibliophile*, 428: “Les Mémoires du chevalier d’Arvieux ont été publiés après sa mort, en 1735, par le P. Labat, mais le texte n’est pas conforme au manuscrit. Le P. Labat en a fait une réduction à sa manière, avec des changements considérables et de nombreuses suppressions.”

30 “Diese Memoiren sind ganz besonders wichtig für Geschichte der Beziehungen Frankreichs zum Orient. Sie wurden nach seinem Tode 1735 von P. Labat veröffentlicht, aber der Text stimmt nicht mit meinem Manuskripte überein. Labat machte willkürlich Streichungen und Aenderungen, sodass obige Handschrift ganz besonderen Wert hat, da sie unverkürzt ist.”

[...] a detailed comparison of the manuscript with Labat's edition is difficult in the sense that Labat does not copy word for word and then omit a paragraph or insert a *réflexion* or an anecdote. He makes constant minor stylistic modifications, omitting or inserting linking phrases, changing tenses and vocabulary, often to no great purpose. [...] He, or his printer, also sometimes mistranscribe phrases [...]. Proper names, very clearly written by the scribe, are often mangled by Labat [...]. Transliteration of Arabic is nearly always better in the manuscript, where one also finds phrases written in a clear Arabic script.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, Hossain states that Labat adds explanations, anecdotes, and “unlikely touches” to the text. He tends to “dramatize incidents” and to “reinforce criticism of adherents of other religions and sects.” He modifies the original text by “adding *réflexions* to what was already there,” and occasionally, he is “guilty of inventing stories and introducing false scholarship, even though he reproduces the circumstances accurately and omits very little.”<sup>32</sup>

The discovery of the manuscript copy has so far escaped the attention of Molière scholars even though Hossain published her observations more than twenty years ago. Her results also apply to the text passages relevant to the study of events that instigated the creation of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. Therefore, to put the record straight we must study d'Arvieux's true account, as preserved in the scribe's copy.

.....  
31 Ibid., 107–8.

32 Ibid., 108–11, 115.

## Lost in Translation? Süleyman Ağa and the French Dignitaries

Laurent d'Arvieux's extensive account of the Ottoman visit to France in 1669 shows clearly that Süleyman's diplomatic status—and later, that of the *Bourgeois*'—was indeed the crux of the matter. D'Arvieux had travelled the Levant for years and was fluent in the Turkish language. Without revealing the date or source for his information, d'Arvieux explains Süleyman Ağa's position at the Ottoman court: he had apparently first been a *Bonstandji* and now held the rank of a *Müteferrika*. Although Labat made several modifications to these few lines, they do not distort the original sense of the words:



Figure 1.1: Title page of the *Mémoires de Laurens d'Arvieux*, vol. 2, F-V MS Lebaudy.



**F-V MS Lebaudy, vol. II, 181–82.**

Soliman Aga a esté Bostangy. Il sortit de cet employ et fut fait Muteferaca. Ces Muteferacas sont des certains Officiers, qu'on ne sçauroit comparer à pas un de ceux qui servent chez le Roy ; et dont l'employ est de suivre le G.S. [= Grand Seigneur] partout ; de marcher dans les cérémonies à costé des chaoux, et d'aller faire des commissions comme en font à peu près les gentilhommes ordinaires de la maison du Roy. Ce mot de Muteferaca, signifie distingué [...].

**Labat edition (1735), vol. IV, 125.**

Soliman Aga avoit été Bostangi, c'est-à-dire, Jardinier du Serrail. Il étoit passé à l'emploi de Mutaferaca. On ne peut pas guère mieux comparer cet emploi qu'à celui des Gentilhommes ordinaire de la Maison du Roi.

Les Mutaferacas marchent dans les cérémonies à côté des Chaoux. Ils ont vingt-cinq aspres, qui sont quinze sols par jour de notre monnoye. Le mot Muteferaca signifie un homme distingué.

From the French perspective, a 'distinguished man' in the rank of a *gentilhomme ordinaire* was not equivalent to an 'ambassador'. On the basis of Mehmed IV's letter to Louis XIV, dated June 1669, the French were expecting an Ottoman ambassador to arrive. And this is where the misunderstanding began, because it ignored the fact that the Ottoman diplomatic principles were wholly unlike the French diplomatic ranking system. The letter from Louis de Matharel, *Secrétaire Général de la Marine du Levant* to a relative<sup>33</sup>, sent on 30 June 1669 from the ship transporting Süleyman Ağa to Toulon, could potentially have clarified matters. Unfortunately, though, the information that it contained has not been transmitted widely. Matharel's words suggest that Süleyman Ağa Müteferrika was "a member of the elite mounted personal escort of the sultan," accompanying him everywhere and receiving orders "only from the sultan who often used [them] for special missions."<sup>34</sup> McCluskey argues that Süleyman Ağa may have held senior positions at the Topkapi Palace: as the "*vezir karakulagi*, the *Bostancı-Haseki* who delivered correspondence between

.....  
33 [Louis de] Matharel to Matharel (probably his cousin Jean de Matharel, *Ecuyer de la Grande Ecurie du Roi*), 30 June 1669. According to McCluskey (2016, 343–44), the letter is held in the AAE CP (Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Correspondance Politique), Turquie 1669, Supplement 7. Garrit van Dyk (2017, 14) quotes from the same letter, but references it as being preserved in Supplement 6 (non vidi). – It is possible that d'Arvieux, who, like Jean de Matharel, held the rank of *écuyer* (see footnote 51), learned about the letter's contents from its addressee.

34 McCluskey, "An Ottoman envoy in Paris," 344.

sultan and grand vizier,” and, because he is described as bearded, as the “*Bostancıbaşı* (the commander of *bostancı* corps), a particularly close aide of the sultan.”<sup>35</sup>

Yet for the French, Süleyman’s rank remained unclear while he and his suite were *en route*, and so they “accorded him municipal ceremonial receptions as he proceeded towards Paris”<sup>36</sup>—just to be on the safe side. The task of the French diplomats and interpreters, who were to meet Süleyman Ağa in a preliminary audience at the estate of foreign minister Hugues de Lionne in Suresnes on 4 November 1669, was to identify his official diplomatic status. Without this information, it was impossible for them to decide in what way the audience with the king should be arranged. This preliminary audience “was in line with Ottoman ceremonial, where the French ambassador would be received by the grand vizier on arrival in [Constantinople], rather than by the sultan.”<sup>37</sup> Much to d’Arvieux’s displeasure, de Lionne asked him how audiences were usually choreographed at the Sublime Porte—“comme il vouloit les imiter,” and intending to “paroître en figure de Grand Vezir.”<sup>38</sup> D’Arvieux had told de Lionne everything he knew about the Ottoman reception ceremony, including the presentation of “cahvé” (coffee), sorbet, and perfume.<sup>39</sup> De Lionne was convinced that a reproduction of Ottoman dress and protocol was appropriate: see the analysis—on the basis of the Labat edition—by Daren Hodson (2010)<sup>40</sup> and Garritt Van Dyk (2017).<sup>41</sup> In fact, the idea seems to have been insinuated to de Lionne by Chaumont de Guitry, *grand maître de la*

35 Ibid. – By contrast, Eugène Despois and Paul Menard assumed that Süleyman Ağa was “un très-petit personnage,” i.e. a person of very low rank. See Eugène Despois and Paul Menard, “Notice,” in idem, eds., *Œuvres de Molière. Nouvelle édition*, vol. 8 (Paris: Hachette, 1883), 9. This error is reproduced by Herbert Schneider, “Introduction,” in *Jean-Baptiste Lully/Molière: Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, comédie-ballet*, ed. Herbert Schneider. Jean-Baptiste Lully: Œuvres complètes, Série II, vol. 4 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2006), XLI.

36 McCluskey, “An Ottoman envoy in Paris,” 345.

37 Ibid., 346.

38 MS Lebaudy, *Mémoires de Laurens d’Arvieux*, vol. II, 185.

39 McCluskey, “An Ottoman Envoy in Paris,” 346.

40 Daren Hodson, “A Would-Be Turk: Louis XIV in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*,” *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 32, no. 1 (2010): 93.

41 Van Dyk, “The Embassy of Soliman Ağa.” Van Dyk’s analysis is based on the Labat edition.

*Garderobe*<sup>42</sup>, who fancied the opportunity of providing Turkish dresses and décor (see below). Whether or not he was annoyed, Laurent d'Arvieux, "employé chez la Madame la Maréchale de la Motte et auprès des Enfants de France,"<sup>43</sup> at the time, had to continue assisting de Lionne and his staff. The king himself requested that d'Arvieux should be present during the first audience in Suresnes, obviously expecting that his interpreters François Pétis de la Croix<sup>44</sup> (Turkish) and Pierre Dippy<sup>45</sup> (Arabic) would need assistance, i.e. someone with spoken language skills. "Unsurprisingly," Mathieu Grenet has suggested, "this decision stirred a fierce competition between d'Arvieux and Pétis de la Croix, which may have added to the tension that surrounded the 1669 embassy."<sup>46</sup> However, since de la Croix and Dippy were the only accredited French interpreters in the first preliminary audience, d'Arvieux could in fact do nothing but watch the inevitable happen. The two royal interpreters disgraced themselves during this first audience on 4 November 1669:

.....

42 Guy de Chaumont de Guitry, *grand maître de la garderobe* since 1663, cf. Nicolas Besongne, *L'État de la France, nouvellement corrigé et mis en meilleur ordre* (Paris: E. Loyson, 1663), vol. 1, 72. F-Pn LC 25-14 (A). Online edition by Caroline zum Kolk, "La maison de Louis XIV (1663)," Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, 2008, accessed 28 August 2018, <http://chateauversailles-recherche.fr/curia/documents/roi1663.pdf>.

43 F-V MS Lebaudy, vol. II, 261. – Louise de Prie de La Mothe-Houdancourt (1624–1709), *Gouvernante des enfants royaux*, served as royal governess to Louis XIV's children from 1661 to 1672.

44 For biographical information, see Paul Sebag, "Sur deux orientalistes français du XVIIIe siècle: F. Pétis de la Croix et le Sieur de la Croix," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 25 (1978): 89–117.

45 Pierre Dippy (or Dipy), a Maronite from Aleppo, was appointed professor of Arabic and Syrian at the Collège Royal in 1667, a position for which d'Arvieux had also applied. Cf. Hussein I. El-Mudarris and Olivier Salmon, *Le Consulat de France à Alep au XVIIe siècle: Journal de Louis Gédéyn, Vie de François Picquet, Mémoires de Laurent d'Arvieux* (Aleppo: Ray Publishing and Science, 2009), 36. Mary Hossain, "The Employment and Training of Interpreters in Arabic and Turkish under Louis XIV: France," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 14 (1992): 236–38.

46 Grenet, "Muslim Missions to Early Modern France," 241. See also Hossain, "Le chevalier d'Arvieux and 'Le Bourgeois gentilhomme,'" 81–82.

## F-V MS Lebaudy, vol. II, 189.

Mr. Dippy interprète de la langue arabe là present, ne sçavoit pas parler turc. Je n'estois point en qualité pour parler, attendu les interpretes qui devoient faire leur charge dans cette occasion. Ce fut M<sup>r</sup>. de la Croix qui se mesla de rapporter ce que M<sup>r</sup>. de Lionne venoit de dire ; mais par malheur pour luy il n'avoit point appris ce qu'il sçavoit de turc qu'en France à force de lire et d'estudier. Il n'estoit pas accoutumé à parler. Cette habitude luy manqua tellement, qu'il ne fit que bredouiller. L'envoyé turc l'écoula sans pouvoir rien comprendre à tout ce qu'il luy disoit. La deffiance pour la Fontaine<sup>47</sup>, et l'impossibilité à celuy-cy de s'énoncer en turc [...] furent cause que l'audience finit plustôt qu'elle n'aueroit deu.

## Labat edition, vol. IV, 136–37.

M. de Lionne qui se défit de la Fontaine ne voulut pas qu'il lui servît d'interprète. Le Sieur Dippy interprète pour la langue arabe étoit présent, & ne sçavoit pas la langue turque. Je n'avois pas ordre de faire la fonction de M. de la Croix: il fallut donc qu'il fit sa charge ; mais comme il n'avoit pas appris la langue turque qu'en France, à force de lire & d'étudier, il étoit devenu habile pour faire une traduction, mais il n'avoit pas l'usage de s'expliquer ; de sorte qu'il ne fit que bredouiller de telle sorte, que l'envoyé ne put rien comprendre dans ce qu'il lui dit ; ce qui fut cause que l'audience finit bien plutôt qu'elle n'aueroit dû faire.

The meeting was cut short due to the inability of the royal interpreters to communicate with Süleyman Ağa, who returned to his accommodation in Issy empty-handed. The disgrace was amplified by the fact that de la Croix was unable to accurately translate Kara Mustafa Pasha's letter<sup>48</sup> to de Lionne, which had been personally entrusted to Süleyman. The letter was addressed, as translated by d'Arvieux, to the "premier Ministre de l'Empereur de France qui est le modèle des Princes Chrestiens et le Protecteur des Grands, M<sup>r</sup>. de Lionne son cher Conseiller, et nostre bon amy, que Dieu vueille inspirer et diriger."<sup>49</sup> It was d'Arvieux who had to stand in for de la Croix, and to provide a written translation to present to the king. What interested Louis XIV and de Lionne the most was whether the letter from the *kaymakam* contained any informa-

47 Georges Fontana, "the second dragoman of the French embassy in [Constantinople] who had accompanied Süleyman from Larissa," cf. McCluskey, "An Ottoman Envoy in Paris," 345.

48 Deputy to the Grand Vezir, Köprülüzade Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1635–1676).

49 F-V MS Lebaudy, *Mémoires de Laurens d'Arvieux*, vol. II, 192. The full translation of the letter ends on p. 193.

tion concerning Süleyman's diplomatic status, but they were to be disappointed. While preparations for a second preliminary audience began, d'Arvieux was officially entrusted to meet Süleyman Ağa informally in Issy, and to accumulate first-hand information about his intentions.

D'Arvieux tells that while Süleyman Ağa and his entourage waited for the next meeting with de Lionne, members of the public from Paris and the surrounding area flocked to see the exotic visitors from the Levant. Some of them, according to the d'Arvieux manuscript, acted in ways that were anything but civil. They plagued the members of the Ottoman mission, laughed at their everyday actions, apeed them, and insulted them. In the edition of Jean-Baptiste Labat (1735), however, the passages describing the misbehavior of the French people are omitted, as can be seen from the comparison of the two versions:

**F-V MS Lebaudy, vol. II, 194–95**

**Labat edition (1735), vol. IV, 144–45**

Il y [= à Issy] estoit journallement visité par une quantité de gens des deux sexes de toute sorte de qualité, que la curiosité de voir ces gens y attiroit de Paris et de tous les lieux circonvoisins.

Il recevoit les visites de quantité de gens des deux sexes, que la curiosité y attiroit de Paris & des environs.

On le suivoit à la promenade ; on le voyoit manger, prier Dieu, et faire tous les autres exercices ordinaires. Les manières des Turcs leur paroissoient si étranges que les moins honnestes gens ayant de la peine à supporter tout ce qui n'estoit pas purement françois ou Parisien, faisoient des grimaces, des postures, et d'autres actions qui desobligeoient extrêmement cet envoyé.

On le suivoit à la promenade, on le voyoit manger, prier Dieu ; & il faut avoüer que les Parisiens ont tort de se plaindre quand on les appelle Badauts ; en vérité je n'ai jamais tant vû d'actes de Badauderie que je leur en voyois [145] faire.

Il faisoit apprester les viandes à la turque. Le goût de l'envoyé ne s'accommodoit pas avecque la délicatesse de nos dames. Nos blondins qui les imitoient par complaisance, ne se faisoient pas une affaire de cracher hautement devant eux lors qu'ils voyoient servir les plats, et faisoient encore des éclats de rire pour s'en

La table de l'Envoyé étoit servie très-délicatement & très-abondamment ; mais il avoit son Cuisinier Turc qui lui accomodoit toûjours quelques plats à la mode, & il étoit rare qu'il touchât à ceux que les Cuisiniers François avoient assaisonnés, parce qu'il craignoit qu'il n'y eût du lard.

## F-V MS Lebaudy, vol. II, 194–95

## Labat edition (1735), vol. IV, 144–45

[195] mocquer, tandis qu'ils prioient Dieu, les traittoient de cocquins, d'infâmes, et de tout ce qu'il [sic] pouvoient inventer d'injurieux, croyant qu'ils ne les entendoient pas. Et cela se faisoit même dans le temps que ces Turcs offroient civilement leurs plats tout entiers aux dames avant que les servir sur leur table, ce qui fit un cruel supplice pour les honnestes gens qui se trouvoient dans ces assemblées.

Quelques-uns des gens de l'envoyé se firent expliquer les paroles qu'ils oyoient répéter si souvent, et s'en offensèrent si fort qu'ils se seroient portez à leur rendre la pareille, si je ne les en avois empechez. Ils le dirent pourtant à Soliman Aga qui s'en plaignit à moy, mais je ne voulus pas porter sa plainte plus loin en attendant ce qui en arriveroit.

La foule estoit grande et incomode. On voyoit des gens de qualité (à qui on veut que tout soit permis) marcher sur leurs hardes [ ? ] avecque leurs souliers crottez se mocquant de ces Turcs (quelque chose qu'on peut leur représenter) parce que leurs visages et leurs habits, aussi-bien que leurs meubles leur estoient extraordinaires. Le Roy y avoit mis de ses suisses, M<sup>r</sup>. de la Gebertie y donnoit bonne ordre. M<sup>r</sup>. la Fontaine remonstroit aux gens depuis le matin jusqu'au soir. Je ne faisois autre chose aussi, et il auroit falu désobliger tout le monde. C'estoit enfin une importunité et une indiscretion insupportable.

La foule des curieux devint à la fin si grande, qu'on fut obligé de mettre des Suisses pour empêcher le désordre.