Article

Bio-Medical Discourse and Oriental Metanarratives on Pandemics in the Islamicate World from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries

Suhail Ahmad [1,*], Robert E. Bjork [2], Mohammed Almahfali [3], Abdel-Fattah M. Adel [1] and Mashhoor Abdu Al-Moghales [1]

1   Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Letters, University of Bisha, Bisha 61922, Saudi Arabia; aadeal@ub.edu.sa (A.-F.M.A.); mamohammad@ub.edu.sa (M.A.A.-M.)
2   Department of English Language and Literature, Arizona State University Tempe, Tempe, AZ 85287-1401, USA; robert.bjork@asu.edu
3   Department of Global Political Studies, Malmö University, 211 19 Malmö, Sweden; almahfale@hotmail.com
*   Correspondence: suhailahmed@ub.edu.sa

Abstract: This paper examines the writings of European travelers, chaplains, and resident doctors on pandemics in the Mediterranean regions from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Using French comparative literary theory, the article highlights how Muslim communities in Egypt, Turkey, Aleppo, and Mecca were stereotyped based on their belief in predestination, their failure to avoid contamination, and their lack of social distancing during plague outbreaks. This paper argues that travelers were influenced by Renaissance humanism, *Ars Apodemia*, religious discourses, and texts, such as plague tracts, model town concepts, the book of orders, and tales, and that they essentialized Mediterranean Islamicate societies by depicting contamination motifs supposedly shaped by the absence of contagion theory in prophetic medicines. Regarding plague science, this paper concludes that Christian and Muslim intellectuals had similar approaches until the Black Death and that Arabs were eclectic since the Abbasid period. This paper further maintains that the travelers' approaches fostered chauvinism and the cultural hegemony of the West over the Orient since the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, driven by eschatology, conversion, and power structure narratives.

Keywords: renaissance humanists; epidemics; travelers' eclectic tradition; predestination and contamination; motifs; scapegoats; enlightenment intellectuals; metanarratives

1. Introduction

Since antiquity, blaming others and provoking violence have been prominent in reactions to pandemics, especially when "diseases were mysterious, without tested cures" (Cohn 2018, p. 89). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic was no exception to this trend as it raised its ugly head globally. In India, it surfaced as well. In New Delhi, in March 2020, members of a religious congregation of *Tablighi Jamaat* (the Muslim community's religious reformation group) were projected as the super spreader of coronavirus in TV media coverage (Kumar 2023, p. 539) and the sole culprits (Hashmi et al. 2023, p. 420). The Islamophobic discourses looked for "scapegoats" (Slater and Masih 2020) among Muslims and sought to create the image of Muslims as "Other" (Amanullah et al. 2023). This stigmatization is reminiscent of the pandemic-hate nexus against minority communities during past outbreaks, such as that against the Jews during the Black Death (1346–1353), and during the COVID-19 outbreak, the Muslim community in India suffered stigmatization to some extent. Such stereotypes stem from representations of Muslim communities' lifestyle during plague time, mostly by European travelers from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

2. Materials and Methods

The critical ideas of the French School of Comparative Literature inform this paper. The French Comparative Literature critics, with their empirical and positivistic approach to *Influence*, or "*rapport de fait*—some kind of demonstratable contact—among literary works" (Loriggio 2004, p. 50), seek to locate the influences both inside and outside the exemplified texts. Joseph T. Shaw observes that:

> Influence to be meaningful, must be manifested in an intrinsic form, upon or within the literary works themselves. It may be shown in style, images, characters, themes, mannerisms, and it may also be shown in content, thought, ideas, the general *Weltanschauung* prescribed by particular works. (Shaw 1961, p. 66)

Some of the popular techniques that the authors often adopt are the 'imitations', 'stylization', and 'borrowings' of both materials or methods such as aphorisms, images, figures of speech, motifs, and plot elements, 'sources' such as the plots for a particular work, and 'parallels' explicitly referring to a definite source (pp. 63–64). The French Schools' leading practitioners, such as Carré and Guyard, encourage us to "concentrate on questions of reception, intermediaries, foreign travel, and attitudes toward a given country in the literature of another country during a certain period" (Remak 1961, p. 4).

Through this methodology, we seek to identify four different types of influences upon travelers: social, ideological, literary, and verbal influences. First, we investigate the influences of internal political dynamics upon the members of the *Republic of Letters* of Renaissance and Enlightenment intellectuals who identified the Ottomans with a whole body of negativity because they were following, in their views, a false Prophet. Second, we focus on the "analyzable formation" of themes and motifs in the exemplified texts, which "*affiliates* itself with other works, with audience, with institutions, with the Orient itself" (Said 2014, p. 20). We examine the new texts in light of the old texts and explore the similarities, dissimilarities, and parallelism in approaches among the travelers on the theme of plagues raging in Islamic societies. For this purpose, we examine seven early representative European travelogues before the plague at Marseilles in 1720–22 and another batch of seven travelogues after that plague and record their impressions. These texts are Busbecq's *The Turkish Letters* (1555?), Sir Anthony Sherley's *The Three Brothers: Or, The Travels and Adventures of Sir Anthony, Sir Robert & Sir Thomas Sherley, in Persia, Russia, Turkey, Spain, Etc.* (1599), William Biddulph's *The Travels of Certaine Englishmen* (1609), George Sandys' *A Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom.* (1610), Henry Blount's (1636) *A Voyages Into The Levant* (1636), Dr Covel's *Dairy* (1670–1679), Jean de Thévenot's *The travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant* (1687), Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's (1741) *A Voyage into the Levant* (1741), Russell Alexander's *The Natural History of Aleppo* (1756), Thomas Shaw's *Travels, Or Observations* (1757), Benjamín Moseley's *A treatise on tropical diseases* (Moseley 1787), Edward Daniel Clarke's *Travels In Various Countries Of Europe Asia And Africa—Pt.2* (Clarke 1816), Johann Ludwig Burckhardt's *Travels in Arabia* (Burckhardt 1829), and Richard Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (1857).

This paper provides the context for the development of prejudices against Muslim societies during pandemic outbreaks. That is why the texts mentioned above have been selected for analysis from the extensive collection of *Ars Apodemica* to Mediterranean societies. Our study focuses on observations of the plague, not customs, culture, or the discovery of plants, which are central areas in many other texts.

This paper's discourse is divided into four segments. First, we reflect on the binary relationship that existed between travelers and Renaissance men of letters. We argue that the influences were reciprocal in nature. On the one hand, travel guidelines based on hygienic, political, and ideological considerations influenced travelers. On the other hand, the so-called travelers' firsthand observations gave rise to a new body of knowledge among the scholarly community. Second, we identify the mix of Classical and Hellenistic traditions in Arabic treatises and translations of plague, followed by their devaluation through metanarratives. Our main focus is on the formation of themes such as predesti-

nation and contamination among European travelers and their elaboration through a few noteworthy motifs that undermined the eclectic tradition in the Islamic literature. Third, we demonstrate that Enlightenment intellectuals capitalized on the differences in worldviews between Muslims and Christians regarding flight during plague outbreaks stemming from travelogues following a political event before the Marseilles Plague. This culminated in pinpointing the place of the plague's origins in Islamicate societies.[1] Fourth, we distinguish the primary sources of conflict between Muslims and Christians.

3. Discussions

During the Renaissance, travel writing was essential to European cultural development. For them, it was a "step toward attaining the ranks of a learned society" (Varlik 2015, p. 75). The traveler–writers and their res publica literaria (discourse or the scholarly community back home in the form of European armchair scholars, ethnographers, poets, and historians) participated in "discursive rhetoric" (Sell 2006, p. 25) dependent upon jointly shared values and consensus. With their positivist approach, travelers and resident doctors, typically occupying superior positions such as physicians and diplomats, "contributed to satisfy the curiosity" of the members of the Republic of Letters in Western Europe (Brentjes 1999, p. 451).

The travel writers' reports reflected the standard guidelines set by the *Ars Apodemia* (the art of traveling or travel advice literature). The *Ars Apodemia* was developed by early travel methodologists, including Theodor Zwinger (1533–1588), Hieronymus Turler (c.1520–c.1602), Pyrckmair (dates unknown), and Hugo Blotius (1534–1608). Set within the Humanistic tradition, this method aimed to eliminate the oral tradition and methods of recollecting stories from memories. Instead, it focused on written composition. As required "to fix their experiences in their diary, where they could be checked" (Stagl 1995, p. 79), the traveler–writers codified and classified vast empirical knowledge (gained through their so-called firsthand observation of the ways of the life of man, manners, customs, places, climate, and political systems in the traveled countries) in the form of notes in diaries, collections of excerpts from rare works, copies of inscriptions, and drawings in their sketch-books under "*loci communes*" (conventional heads or rubrics). The humanists developed these observational schemas and put the loosely stringed empirical knowledge on paper. However, this new form of knowledge contained many layers of biases and prejudices. It gave rise to new institutions of knowledge and themes. It was part of a larger schema: "European narratives, medical literature, and public imagination concurred" (Jones 2022b, p. 216). Their meagre "fund of half-truths" (Schwoebel 1967, p. 177) went beyond their level of compassion or hostility, which tried "to stimulate the imagination of the stay-at-homes" (p. 178). The "literary republic was policed by the wary guardians of the consensus" (Sell 2006, p. 31). Thus, travel literature was instrumental in the growth of Eurocentrism and the notion of civilization mediating through *Otherness*. It "stabilized and extended West European prejudices towards Muslim societies, both negative and positive" (Brentjes 1999, p. 450). To their readers, the stories appeared authoritative. They also shaped their ideas. Consequently, all sorts of stories were fabricated about Turks and Muslims for being barbarous enemies of the Christian faith. In Edward Said's view, Orientalist work "is severed from the library and caught in the aesthetic project" (Said 2014, p. 168). Humanism's starting points are that: "there were no sciences or arts in the Ottoman realm" (Brentjes 2020), and the "Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West" (Said, p. 41), and they crystallized into the chauvinism and cultural hegemony of the West over the Orient.

For example, plague science has always been a part of history. However, during the late medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment periods, it was characterized by the bipartite vision of the early modern Mediterranean world resulting from the "inheritance struggle" between Islam and Christendom. Reaching back to the classical past, the Renaissance Humanists used crusading rhetoric, which gave rise to a "communal mode of thought which had great internal coherence, and which represented the doctrinal unity of

Christendom in its political opposition to Islamic society" (Daniel 1962, p. 271). This struggle was primarily nourished and strengthened by the narratives developed by Renaissance Humanists focusing on a particular set of themes rooted in "Oriental fantasies" (Said 2014, p. 20) born during the Crusades and transmitted to "Renaissance *humanists* via medieval texts, papal pronouncements, and popular preachers" (Bisaha 2004, p. 143). The travelers' deliberations on the plague in Mediterranean regions manifest these themes.

The myth of the oriental plague originated from the preconceived notion that Christians living in Ottoman principalities had been more immune from epidemics than the Ottomans because they knew the art of self-preservation. It resulted in lop-sided propositions. Although "contagion theory" (i.e., the source of the plague could be the transmission of an infection from person to person through many mediums: water, food, and contact) among Muslim writers and physicians during and after the Black Death ran parallel with the "*miasma theory*" (i.e., that disease was caused by bad air), Muslims were explicitly singled out in later periods as deniers of the natural causes of disease.

This research paper aims to address a number of gaps in the representation of the medieval Mediterranean Muslim world in modern research on pandemics. First, recent studies have focused on patterns of representation in European travel writing in the Far East, exploring topics such as truth and authenticity, self-exploration, and the exploration of the other (Sandrock 2020). These studies, however, do not cover the exclusive evolution of pandemic discourses. Second, in the aftermath of COVID-19, recent research does not account for the historicity beyond regurgitating the narratives constructed in the 19th century that blamed the pilgrims for Cholera pandemics in India (Xun and Gilman 2021). Third, researchers need to pay more attention to the patterns of representation in the theme of bio-medical discourses in pandemics. Even if some researchers have explored this theme, very few (Al-Moghales et al. 2023) have seriously assessed the European travelers' observations. Instead, travelers are often complimented for being firsthand observers of the people, manners, customs, everyday occurrences, and politics. Several studies have replicated these results (Wunder 2003, p. 93; Bisaha 2004, p. 180). Some images of Muslims emanating from crusade chronicles persist as well (Gülter 2019, pp. 4, 31).

This article will ask a few key questions to address these knowledge gaps. Are the travelers' observations unbiased and unaffected by social and ideological factors? Do these traveler's accounts uphold or suppress the eclectic traditions of Arabic discourse on plague? How should we read one travelogue in the context of previous travelogues? Are these travelers' observations on epidemics in the Mediterranean regions written in all sincerity or are they an extension of the imperial mapping of the East in which the metalinguistic features reflect someone else's dream to control the narratives? Lastly, if the answer to the last question is yes, then what methods did they adopt to map the Orient?

4. Plague Tracks, Christian Theologians, and Metanarratives

Accounts in travel writing were not formed in a vacuum. Instead, they were filtered through "the narrator's own historical, cultural, and ideological background" (Ebert 2003, p. 118). They had their roots in Renaissance Humanism. "The discourses of the plague handed down to us from the sixteenth century reveal a fascinating story of the complex interplay between religion, politics, and medicine" (Healy 1993, p. 19). Physicians, clergy, and the state existed in a triangular relationship where the plague tract writers and state had the upper hand. Three strong currents had been working in Renaissance and post-Renaissance England concerning social distancing, flight, and preventive measures. First, to avoid infection, the flight and abandonment of towns was the most effective method for wealthy and influential people, including Magistrates, clergy, physicians, and Jesuits, during regular outbreaks of epidemics. Second, Christian theologians heavily relied on Biblical forecasts and signs. Queen Elizabeth's *Plague Orders* of 1579 proclaiming household quarantine as suggested by plague tract writers came into sharp conflict with Christian theology, which viewed the plague through the providential lens. Thomas Dekker, Henoch Clapham, and George Wither opposed the idea of social isolation and advocated charity and neighbor-

liness even at the peak of the epidemic. Clapham believed that the quarantine measure, backed by atheists, only "divides the community" (quoted in Hammill 2010, p. 91). Third, discourses on preventative and remedial cures during plague time commonly originated from prerogative powers of the crowns: *Book of Orders* by James 1 (1603) on the prevention and treatment of plague and *Book of Orders* (April 1630) of Charles I. These *Books of Orders* in the 1630s thrived under the all-pervading influence of Sir Theodore de Mayerne and Henry Montagu, who medicalized the space with their model-town concepts (for details about the key ideas of the Book of Orders, see Paul Slack 1980).

European travelers during the plague were surrounded by different discussions, such as the Bills of Mortality, plague control mechanisms, providentialism, and eschatology. Their journey was inspired by the motif of "pilgrim suffering as Christ" (Brentjes 1999, p. 442). In their journey, internal dynamics collided with religious discourses in Muslim societies, helping them build up narratives. One of the fundamental discourses raging among historians and academicians is the question of flight/denial during the pandemic among Muslims. The key question revolves around the responses to pandemics regarding articles of faith between Muslims and Christians. In the European travel literature, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the observations of the fatalistic behavior of Muslims "stemmed either from intra-Christian debates or Orientalist bias" (J. K. Stearns 2011, p. 6). Generally, Muslim scholars "denied the phenomenon of contagion, and Christian scholars tended to invoke it favorably" (p. 9). Muslims considered it a mercy sent by God to be welcomed wholeheartedly, ignoring the preventive measures, whereas Christians, by contrast, considered it a punishment. As a result, it encouraged them to identify the sins/devils to be rooted out (Slack 1988, p. 438; Mikhail 2008, p. 250). Such metaphysical discourse created the impression that the omnipotent God had been party to the misery of human beings and that all discussions vis-à-vis natural causes and their preventions were discouraged in Islamic worldviews.

Eclectic Tradition in Arabic Translations and Treatises, and Their Misrepresentations

There is a substantial body of scholarship on medieval Muslim scholarship's divergent and convergent points of view on plague in different periods, from translations of Hippocratic authors in the Abbasid period (750–1258) to the High Middle Ages (1000 to 1300) until the late Middle Ages (1300 to 1500). Even theoretical discussions on the handling of the Black Death remained unified.

As translations from Greeks and Persians into Arabic proliferated during the Abbasid period, the medieval Islamic medical tradition reflected Classical and Hellenistic medicine represented by Galen and Hippocrates. Discourses and commentaries on epidemics in the translations in the eighth/ninth centuries give a vivid picture of the perception of the epidemic in the Islamic world. In the process of assimilation, it adopted theoretical principles and literary models exemplified through case studies. The writers viewed the plagues through the Galenic humoral framework and theoretical parallelism.

Galen's linear *Commentary* on the Hippocratic *Epidemics* proved extremely popular in the medieval Arabic world. This rich engagement with the classical past was made famous by Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d.873), who brought the Arabic version of *Gal. in Hipp. Epid* in a question-and-answer format in the form of a list (Pormann 2008, p. 259). It had an abiding influence on the Arabic writers. AbūBakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyāal-Rāzī (d. 925) quotes this work under the title 'Questions on the Epidemics' (2008, p. 260) and puts great emphasis on case notes, which are found in his *Book of Experiences* (*Kitāb al-Taǧārib*). Ibn al-Nafīs, in his translation of Hippocrates, considers him a master [imām] and explains well the miasmatic theory of the plague of Hippocrates in a concise manner (2008, p. 270; Millán 1999).

By the High Middle Ages (1000 to 1300), the concept of contagion had evolved among the Christians and Muslim scholars as they "shared a common medical heritage" (Stearns 2011, p. 11). The cosmopolitan worldviews continued until the late Middle Ages (1300 to 1500). Anti-Semitism during the Black Death notwithstanding, there was a unified view

between Muslims and Christians when it came to understanding the plague. Although they held contrary interpretations, their moral universe was the same regarding divine interventionism and medical knowledge. Both religions either negated or reaffirmed their faith in the miasma theory. As a result, socio-psychological reactions were almost identical in the two cultures. Among the Muslims, Michael Walter Dols observes that "These epidemics provoked medical and religio-legal explanations and prescriptions, which have strongly influenced the attitudes and behaviour of the Muslim community toward the disease" (Dols 1974a, p. 371). Ironically, the interpretations of the periodic plagues among the Muslims supplemented the teachings from "relevant material drawn from the Old and New Testaments, the Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet's companions and followers, the classical and medieval physicians, and native custom" (M. W. Dols 1977, p. 32). Moreover, "plague tracts were composed with the purpose of collecting and interpreting hadiths, utterances of the Prophet" (Parmann and Savage-Smith 2007, p. 58).[2] Medieval physicians, while writing plague tracts (health advice literature within the Christian European tradition), considered supernatural power a primary cause and natural orders a secondary cause. Christian plague tract writers, however, marginalized divine causes and largely attributed the generation of the plague to the "altered air."[3] Both Muslims and Christians shared common medical knowledge.

The focus of plague tract writers, since the days of the Black Death, on "'regimina sanitatis'(health regimens) and 'consilia' (case studies on causes of and treatments for a disease)" (Jones 2022b, p. 23) or, to be more specific, on maintaining 'six non-naturals' [food and drink, sleep and wakefulness, exercise and rest, passions and emotions, air and excretion, and keeping a clean home environment] (Jones 2022c, p. 224) closely resembles the prophetic medicine (*al-Tib al-Nabawi*). During the Black Death, for the first time, the plague was "conceived as an independent illness" (Ullmann 1978, p. 95). Ibn al-Khatib (1313–1374 CE) rejected the theory of a miasma or divine direction. He provided imperial evidence of the better results of social distancing in his treatise *Muqni'at as-sa'il 'an marad al-hail* (1359–1362) and made the idea of contagions (*al-adwa*) explicit as opposed to miasmal theory (Byrne 2004, p. 144). On the other hand, Ibn Khātima (1324–1369 CE) embraced the miasma theory (p. 155). In his book *Tibb-e-Nabawi* [*The Prophetic Medicine*], Ibn Qay'em El-Jozeyah (1292/691–1350/751) discussed illness, contagious diseases, the plague, and the prophetic instructions that include ways to prevent them (El-Jozeyah 2003): the administration of hope to the sick (p. 144), prevention of contagious disease and enforcement of quarantine (pp. 178–86), and prohibition to mingle with the sick (p. 185).

However, things began to change with the intellectual currents informing the Renaissance and post-Renaissance periods. The rich corpus of literature among Arabs notwithstanding, the travelogues primarily focused on the Muslim mindset impervious to hygiene. Instead of syncretism, the focus shifted towards the lionization and the demonization of Western and Islamic perspectives, respectively. The critical theme of the justification/denial of fleeing from the plague-stricken area ignited by Sa'id Ibn Lubb (d.1381) during the Black Death, who interpreted it in the prophetic tradition, culminates in Gottfried Leibniz who is credited with having brought it into the realm of philosophy (Hopley 2010, p. 50).

5. Travelogues, Predestination, and the Plague of Marseilles

The history of the contact of the West with the Orient is long and arduous. Travelers, English Consuls, and resident doctors allied in belief in the Bible acted as "national agents" (G. MacLean 2001, p. 87). The travel writers reflect on one aspect of Christian belief in their search for "scapegoats, certainly, a condemnation of the infected" (Slack 1988, p. 438). Regarding knowledge formation, Edward Said is worth quoting in the backdrop of European pilgrim travel writing:

> In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries, of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these. (177)

The portrayal of concepts of "predestination," flight at the time of the plague, and nonhygienic conditions among Muslims relied heavily on derivative authorities. Michael Walter Dols deduced and foregrounded three principles of Islamic prophetic teachings of medicine that stood in opposition to Christianity's perspective: (1) divine interventionism favoring Muslims only through mercy and martyrdom, (2) abstinence from plague-stricken land, and (3) the nonexistent nature of *contagions* of plague in the Islamic paradigm since the disease descended directly from God (Dols 1974a, p. 377). Resident doctors and travelers among Muslim societies moved within these narrow confinements of fatalistic views. They ignored the opposing points of view that existed side-by-side in medieval[4] Islamic plague tracts.

Ironically, Martin Luther (1483–1546), the German priest and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation, amidst a deadly epidemic, in his essay *Whether One May Flee From A Deadly Plague* (1527), laid down the four cardinal sins that might invite the wrath of God during plague time: (1) mixing with the infected place and people freely, (2) disdaining medicine, (3) fleeing from the affected area, and (4) avoiding the sick neighbor. While caricaturing Muslim societies, the plots of the travel writers and resident doctors are primarily structured on these four anticipated lines. Discourse on predestination and contamination follows a definite pattern among them about the Levant, which is represented through several motifs reflecting the danger the Muslim societies had been posing to the civilized societies. The motifs of predestination represent the theoretical dimension, whereas the motifs of contamination show the impending threat of its practical application. Dominant motifs for predestination issue from the domain of theology: 'Destiny Written on their Forehead' and 'Sin'. Contamination motifs prominently include anecdotes [reflected in situations, events, and reactions], infected clothes, the devil on the highway, and dirty inns. Some of the leading travelers were responsible for developing these motifs (Luther 1999).

Concerning the cause and effect of the plague among the Turkish people, *The Turkish Letters* (1581) of Flemish diplomat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592) is imbued with both predestination and contamination motifs:

> The Turks . . . are persuaded that the time and manner of each man's death is inscribed by God upon his forehead; if, therefore, he is destined to die, it is useless for him to try to avert fate; if he is not so destined, he is foolish to be afraid. And so they handle the garments and linen in which plague-stricken persons have died, even though they are still wet with the contagion of their sweat; nay, they even wipe their faces with them. (Busbecq 1927, p. 189)

Busbecq strengthens his argument with the "devil on the highway" motif by telling an anecdote of a head man who died from infection in Adrianople:

> . . .. the rest of the Hungarians fell upon the dead man's belongings. One took his shoes, another his jerkin, another, for fear anything should be wasted, seized his shirt, another his linen. . . .. My physician rushed among them, begging them in Heaven's name not to touch the clothing, since the infection would involve certain death; but his words fell on deaf ears. (p. 68)

Khans [resting place], sarai[inn], and inns have occupied a special place in European readers' imagination via travelers' accounts. The French geographer and author André Thevet's (1516–1590) proto-Orientalist text "Cosmographie de Levant" (1554) foreshadowed the Renaissance obsession of sarai and khans. He described four "sareils" during his journey to Constantinople (Abbeele 1992, p. 30). William Biddulph dealt with it ambivalently. On his way to Jerusalem, he often lamented the deep sense of insecurity and inconvenience a traveler faced while passing a night at khans. Except for a few khans, he did not have good feelings about such khans. About one such khan, 'Toman', he writes:

> Here we purposed to have slept all night, but having no other Beds but the hard ground, with Jacobs Pillow (an excellent hard stone) under our heads, unaccustomed to such Dawne Beds, we could not sleep, but spent the time in

honest mirth until it was past midnight, . . . and we proceeded in our journey towards Jerusalem. (Purchas 1905, p. 280)

The French traveler Jean de Thévenot (1633–1667) was instrumental in promoting both dirty inns motifs and sin motifs. In his travelogue, *The travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant* (1687), he refashioned the theme of inconvenience while maintaining an element of 'honest mirth.' He had made deliberations on the inconveniences (e.g., excessive heat) a traveler typically faced in Egypt. In principle, by these inconveniences, he shaped the direction of mapping of the Orient. He gives a humorous account of his place of accommodation in the following words:

Besides these inconveniences, there is that of little Flies, or Musketto's [mosquitos] . . .. there are always swarms of them buzzing about People, and continually pricking of them so that they make themselves fat and plumb with man's blood. There is no other remedy against these giants, but to have a very fine Cloth all round your bed, which shuts very close; and for that, some always get in, when you go to lie down. (Archibald 1687, p. 260)

With time, the theme of inconvenience developed into the 'dirty inn motif', making its presence felt in several travelogues. The English clergyman and traveler Edward Daniel Clarke (1769–1822), in his travelogue, *Travels In Various Countries Of Europe Asia And Africa—Pt.2* (1816), re-invoked this motif at the beginning of the 19th century while maintaining the condemnatory spirit through comic banter. He ridicules the resting places known as *khans and caravanserais* in Turkey and considers them breeding grounds for the plague. He observed:

There is not a dog-kennel in England where a traveller might not lodge more commodiously than in one of these *Khans*; and the *caravanserais* are yet worse than the *Khans*. A dirty square room, the floor covered with dust, and full of holes for rats, without even a vestige of furniture, is all he finds as the place of his repose. (p. 258)

Victorian explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton's (1821–1890) account of the "George Inn" (1857) bears the stamp of Edward Daniel Clarke. Only the locale changes: from Turkey to Egypt. The landscape is the same as a potential source of plague (Burton 1893):

The ragged walls of our rooms were clammy with dirt, the smoky rafters foul with cobwebs, and the floor. . . was black with hosts of ants and flies. Pigeons nestled on the shelf, cooing amatory ditties the live-long day, and cats, like tigers, crawled through a hole in the door. . .. Now a curious goat, then an inquisitive jackass, would walk stealthily into the room, remark that it was tenanted, and retreat with dignified demeanor, and the mosquitoes sang 1o Paeans. . .. (1893, p. 173)

Together with the dirty inns motifs, Jean de Thévenot developed the sin motif among Muslims regarding the use of medicine. He advanced the argument that Muslims avoided medicine during pandemics. While visiting Egypt, he came up with the idea that Moors considered it a sin to use a physician who admitted none other than God Almighty (p. 262).

In all these instances, found in the texts of Busbecq, Biddulph, and Jean de Thévenot, the influences are mostly literary in nature. The theme of inconvenience exemplified in multiple texts foreshadowed the line of thought for the succeeding generation of writers who picked up this important thread of observation and developed this theme vehemently from one period to another to strengthen the Orient's contamination motifs, stereotype it, and advocate the cultural hegemony of the West over the East. It underwent a transformation, culminating in dirty inns motifs. As a result, the trope of the dirty inns led to the construction of a new body of knowledge, whereas the theme of abstinence from medicine among Muslims (its impact will be discussed in the later section) during the plague time suggested the orthodox positions and regressive aspects of Muslim societies.

5.1. Archetypal Travelers of Elizabethan and Post-Elizabethan Era

The intersections of knowledge production in the works of Sir Anthony Sherley (1565–1635), William Biddulph, George Sandys (1578–1644), and Henry Blount (1602–1682) are grounded in the material culture of their respective periods. They tried to look at Mediterranean countries less from an existentialist or medical perspective and more from an episcopal standpoint and recycled the data available in abundance to their advantage. They used the theoretical concept of predestination among Muslims pitted against providentialism.

The English traveler Sir Anthony Sherley pinpoints the origin of the plague by reporting a case of a caravan of Persian pilgrims in Aleppo in 1599 who arrived from Mecca and were forced not to enter the city as, wherever it had passed, the plague had been wreaking havoc in those places (Purchas 1905, p. 386). It is interesting to know that an identical account is found in Idrīs Bidlīsī's return journey from his pilgrimage in 1512, who, setting an example himself, maintained the same line of action (J. K. Stearns 2017, pp. 170–71; Arıcı 2021, pp. 127–28).

Protestant English clergyman William Biddulph, one of the earliest chaplains appointed by the Levant Company to Aleppo, was the first to write about the Ottoman Empire. He "recorded an overland journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem made in 1600 during which he found himself travelling in places little changed from biblical times" (G. MacLean 2004a, p. 417). His aim in writing *The Travels* (1609) was "to refute and ridicule Islam, Catholicism and Judaism, to correct the errors of others and prove what he already doubtless believed before he set out" (G. MacLean 2004b, p. 113). He documented both from "hearsay and personal experience" the common themes used to vilify Eastern nations such as Turks, Arabs, and Jews (p. 113). He, in 1600, blames the Turkes, Moores, Arabians, and other Mahometans in Aleppo for not avoiding the company of the man infected with plague as they believe that "every man's fortune is written in his for-head" as opposed to Christians (Purchas 1905, p. 279). Ironically, almost during the identical period, the Portuguese traveler Pedro Teixeira attributed the plague's origin in Aleppo to the climate or to the "foreign merchants—Venetians, French and English" (Teixeira 1902, p. 113).[5] Likewise, the English traveler George Sandys, in 1610, blamed the manifold increase of the plague on "the superstition of the Mohametans" in Constantinople (Purchas 1905, p. 120).

English traveler Henry Blount is highly praised in modern scholarship for his rationalist inquiry into the Islamic world (G. MacLean 2001, p. 88). Apparently, he breaks away from the common tendency of travelers to perpetuate stereotypes, which blinds their perspectives (Baktir 2010, p. 880). However, he is contradictory in his approach to pandemics. In his *A Voyage Into the Levant* (1636), he cites two examples of his thoughtful reflections on predestination among the Turks: how a Frenchman had died from the plague, but people were indifferent. After the disposal of his body, they slept on his blanket. When the author warned them not to do so, they pointed upon their foreheads, saying that it was written there at their birth when they would die. Another example regarding the response is identical when the author warned a fellow soldier giving a helping hand to a sick soldier to get onto the couch even though his open breast was full of "plague tokens" (pp. 85–86). These two tales beg special attention. The first tale prominently includes two layers of history within it: first, the prevalent story about the introduction of plague in Milan in 1629 by Pietro Locato, who is known to have purchased infected clothing from soldiers and whose bed was later burned after his death (Cohn 2018, p. 152);[6] second, there was a non-observation of a rule as commanded in the *Book of Orders* in England in 1603, which asked for the burning of the clothes, bedding, and other items worn and occupied by the plague-infected person. Dutch officials became famous for special reasons during the Florence plague of 1630–31. Before the special court enforced plague regulations (the Public Health Ministry Sanità), one of the primary concerns was the disposition of deceased people's best suits of clothes. Earlier practice was that they were handed over to the gravediggers by the rules of the gravedigger's guild affiliate: now "Dutchy claimed possession" (Watts 1997, p. 18). Likewise, employees working at Lazeretti stole the clothes

of the sick and the dead and food from the kitchen (Henderson 2019, p. 19). The similarities are shocking. In his tale of the people's indifferent attitude after the Frenchman's death, the author–narrator Henry Blount puts the words into the mouth of the character and transports the topography of the incident. The second tale is a parodied account of an *untori* tale. The competing narrative of the "manufactured plague" by devil worshipper infectors (*untori*) or plague anointers was in the public domain in Jesuit accounts (Martin 1996, pp. 110–11). Such anointers, by "making pacts with demons in exchange for plague unguents", spread the disease using unguent while keeping an antidote for their safety during the Milanese plague (1630) (Eamon 1999, p. 479). Borromeo's library *Biblioteca Ambrosian* in Renaissance Italy contains his Latin memoir of the plague of 1630: "Besides reporting popular reactions to the contagion, the memoir chronicles the central drama of Alessandro Manzoni's version of the epidemic in *I Promessi sposi*: the popular belief that *untori*, or plague anointers, were responsible for spreading the disease" (Eamon 1999, pp. 478–79). They were executed and the Infamous Column was erected as a public warning for future *untori*. The Milanese affair led to the fabrication of all sorts of fanciful tales, such as "the devil himself arriving in Milan by coach and spreading the plague with the help of his worshippers" (Delogu 2022, p. 301). It is surprising how much the second tale of Henry Blount resembles this narrative.

These writers arranged the plots of their own stories using existing tales from both Islamicate societies and Western Europe, often exaggerating the contamination motifs.

5.2. Between the Polarity of Localists and Contagionists: A Paradigm Shift

The Great Plague of London (1665–1666) and the Ottoman Balkan campaign (1683) provided fresh ammunition for scholars in the sense that discourse shifted onward to the place of origin of the plague. During the Great Plague of London, there were two conflicting views prevalent among the medical community: the Localists, who believed that the outbreak of the plague was due to local causes, including both political and providential, and the Contagionists, who believed that the plague was imported from some other infected places. These two views received significant attention during the plague outbreak at Marseilles. In both interpretations, the Turkish way of life was mainly at the receiving end.

After the Plague of London, with a few exceptions, writers perpetuated earlier European writers' myths in various contexts, looked for signs, and vehemently associated them with supernaturalism. The Great Plague of London had rendered man's wit helpless. Even astrologers, philosophers, and doctors tried to locate solutions "in God; more particularly, the wrathful God of the Old Testament" (Reilly 2015, p. 20). Puritans recognized "the hand of divine Providence in sending pestilence as a judgment for the sins of mankind" (Payne 1900, p. 106). With references to the two shooting stars he himself observed during the Great Fire of London (1666) and the London Plague time, Defoe, in his *A Journal Of The Plague Year* (1722), interpreted them "as the forerunners and warnings of God's judgments" (Defoe 1896, p. 24). Reflecting his filial faith in Christianity and Supernaturalism, he highlights, through the parable of a man almost running naked at his wits-end, the total resignation of the people in front of "O! the great, and the dreadful God!" (p. 25). Then he points out the recklessness of the people, mainly the "well", by showing their negligence by not maintaining social distance from the sick people (p. 191). He remarks further:

> . . . with a kind of a predestinarianism they would say, if it pleased God to strike them it was all one whether they went abroad or stayed at home, they could not escape it, and therefore they went boldly about, even into infected houses and infected company, visited sick people, and, in short, lay in the beds with their wives, or relations when they were infected; and what was the consequence but the same that is the consequence in Turkey. . . they. . .died by hundreds and thousands. (p. 193)

This otherwise genuine recollection of a five-year-old boy matches intriguingly with the idea and phraseology of the English diplomat and historian Paul Rycaut (1628–1700), who in *The present state of the Ottoman Empire* (Rycaut 1668) observed:

> . . . Mahomet's precepts being not to abandon the City-house where Infection rages, because God has numbered their days and predestined their fate. . . they as familiarly attend the Beds and frequent the company of Pestilential Persons. . . And though they evidently see that Christians, who fly into better Airs, and from infected habituations, survive the fury of the years Pestilence, when the whole Cities of them perish and are depopulated with the Disease. . .. (p. 116)

There are some exceptions as well. Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656–1708) gives a balanced account of the interfaith harmony of the followers of Abrahamic religions in Iberia (Georgia) co-existing with communal harmony. The hagiographic account of healing is exemplary. When a rich person becomes sick, the Mohemtans have recourse to the Georgian Saints, the Georgians to the Armenians, and sometimes the Armenians to the Mohametan Prophets: but they all band together to create help for the patient (1741, p. 159). Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) is known for his Diary (1660–1665). His entries in the Chapter titled *The Plague* start with describing the plague from 7 June 1665 onwards. It contains his painful observation of "Lord have mercy upon us" written upon the doors of houses of Drury Lane and the discussion of the havoc generated by the *Bills of Mortality* on a daily basis (L. Parker 1932, pp. 107–10). The American Moravian Missionary John Antes, in *Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Egyptians, the Overflowing of the Nile and its Effects* (1800), tried to develop a holistic view of the plague's origin to disprove "fallacious arguments" (Al-Moghales et al. 2022, p. 3). All these writers tried to look at the fabric of society during the plague.

The relationship between landscapes and diseases began to shift in the 18th century due to geopolitical factors. This change was evident before and after the Marseilles plague outbreak (May 25 1720–August 1722). In the 18th century, border transit routes were considered the potential cause. Porous borders connecting Eastern Europe to the Mediterranean regions "exchanged knowledge and practices about epidemics" (Diener and Condrau 2023, p. S466). The perception changed. The fear of the spread of contagions through Mediterranean routes left an indelible mark on the European imagination, fueling fears and spurring efforts to prevent future outbreaks. Often, the starting point of significant epidemics was traceable to the Levant. If Venice had the reputation of developing a solid bulwark against the Levantine epidemics, the port city of Livorno, closely interconnected with the Mediterranean world, was looked at with suspicion about spreading the *contagion* during the great plague of Marseilles (Delogu 2022, pp. 299–300). The English physician Richard Mead (1673–1754), whom the people of Great Britain looked steadfastly during the plague "as one from whom they may expect Deliverance", (Browne 1720, p. 6) located the hotbed of plague chronologically in Eastern and Southern parts of the world. Furthermore, he attributed the spread of epidemics of 1665 to cotton imported from Turkey (Mead 1720, pp. 4–5, 9, 10). His worldview can be contrasted with English physician Thomas Sydenham (1624–1689) (popularly known as 'The English Hippocrates'), who, during the Great Plague of London, "attached little importance to contagion" (Payne 1900, p. 114). Montesquieu (1689–1755), in *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), expanded the bad metaphor further. Regarding plague, he observed that Egypt is its principal seat, and whence it spreads over the whole globe (p. 254). The idea that Ottoman lands are the breeding ground for plague fits well in the larger plague narrative of the nineteenth century, as there "was a certain anxiety to distance Europe from its past plagues" (Varlik 2017, p. 85).

Summarizing the view of physicians such as Richard Bradley about its foreign origin and elaborating the idea of Richard Mead about its Ottoman source "with fatalistic mismanagement of outbreaks" commonly found "in English travel-writing", Lori Jones proves that the Great Plague of London in 1665 became a "historical relic for English tract-writers" as they started "firmly historicizing" their plague epidemics and "making the disease definitively foreign". (Jones 2022a, p. 83). However, little attempt is made to question the

ingenuity of the travelers' narratives who were making stories consistently before the Great Plague of London. She moves little beyond the critique of the *Bills of Mortality* in the plague broadsheet by John Graunt and the 'historicising' tendencies of George Thomson, Richard Bradley, and Richard Mead.

Motifs from the travel literature started influencing writers in philosophy and polemics against the backdrop of the siege of Vienna in the 1680s. The Ottomans' arrival at the gates of Vienna with lightning speed "shocks Leibniz". He feels horrified to see "an army of serfs march into his guest salon" (Almond 2006, pp. 468–69). It was the best and worst times for Christianity: "many of the Enlightenment intellectuals—Montesquieu, Turgot, Voltaire—who were more often than not hostile to the Jesuit cause" (Launay 2018, p. 65). The Jesuits, during the Renaissance, vis-à-vis the Muslim world, skillfully balanced the raging antagonism through dialogue, tolerance, and engagement. They planned to train missionaries for the Muslim world by teaching them the Arabic language as Ignatius did (Colombo and Shore 2023, p. 10). In contrast, some Enlightenment philosophers and thinkers overshadowed Renaissance Humanism's spirit of dialogue and tolerance. They were even ready to compromise with the doctrinal unity of Christendom.

German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), inspired by French travel writers such as Nicolas de Nicolay, Thevet, Busbecq, Belon, and Postel, from a Hegelian perspective, sharply drew the boundary line between Christianity and Islam. He considered Turks, otherwise known by the moniker Mohammedan, as threats to the whole race of humanity and equated them with barbarism and paganism. Their idiocy, in his view, "sprang from a perceived Turkish/Muslim inability to grasp all the dimensions of temporality fully". In one of his famous paragraphs quoted by Ian Almond (2006), he accuses Muslims of lacking the ability to reflect upon "The History of Antiquity" (p. 470). He equates *Fatum Mahumetanum* (fatalism associated with Mohammed) with "Lazy Reason" and "Lazy Sophism" [a decision to do nothing], reflected in the attitude of Turks who do not shun places wrecked by plague. This is rather a method of obviating (Leibniz 1985, p. 153). As a Christian apologist, he is bizarre to the extreme. For the betterment of Christianity, Leibniz suggests "to break all the sacred bonds of Christianity" to deliver "Europe from the plague of Mohammedanism [*la peste de mahometisme*]" (see Almond 2006, p. 463).

On the heel of Leibniz, before the plague of Marseille, Montesquieu and the French Enlightenment writer Voltaire (1694–1778) advanced these arguments further. They viewed the Ottomans (essentially the followers of Islam) as the mighty *Other*. Turks now were perceived as profound oxymorons in their enlightened views: ferocious and charitable, tolerant and non-permissive of dueling, and tyrannous and legitimate. Montesquieu "posited an unbridgeable gap between Eastern and Western societies" (Çirakman 2001, pp. 56–57). Of the three forms of government, including the Monarchy and Republic, which he observed during his time, Montesquieu, relying on travelers' accounts, identified the Ottoman Turkish form of government as Despotic, citing climatic and religious reasons. Voltaire's view of the Ottoman Empire, as Deringil (2007) argued, was influenced by all of the prejudices of the Enlightenment (p. 713).[7]

The Sin motif introduced by Jean de Thévenot and other motifs found fertile ground in the post-Marseilles Plague period. The idea of the non-prescription of medicine out of religious considerations is found in Thomas Shaw, who refers to the vacillation of a physician to prescribe medication, quoting him: "the lives of us all are in the hands of God, and when IT IS WRITTEN, we must die" (Shaw 1757, p. 199). Regarding the cure and treatment of plague in Aleppo, the physician Russell Alexander observed the Mohammedans, holding the epidemic to be a penal curse inflicted by the Almighty God on a sinful people, have lost faith in the efficacy of medicine in that disease, and those who practice physics are either Christians or Jews unarmed with the doctrine of predestination like Muslims (Russell 1756, p. 241).

Synchronic studies parading the same ideas and phrases related to predestination and contamination motifs continued flourishing in succeeding generations of travelers. In his medical tracts, Benjamin Moseley (1742–1819) reiterates the identical views involving pre-

destination and contamination motifs: "In Constantinople, the plague, and filth and neglect, the effects of Mahometism and predestination, generally go together" (1787, p. 215). Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1784–1817) discussed the plague affecting Muslims, highlighting the consequence of communal gathering during plague time, indifference to quarantine measures, imprudence, and corruption at the government level (1829, pp. 313–14, 318–26). Montesquieu parroted similar ideas with an identical thought process (Montesquieu 2001, pp. 254–55). The leitmotif about predestination and flight in Dr Covel's *Diary* runs on a parallel line about Turks from Adrianople:

> The best sort of people fled to other places, as the Turkes likewise themselves did from Adrianople to their houses here, for that same is a story that they are not afraid of the plague, because their fortunes are wrote in their forehead' for all fled, but such as were poor, or had offices about Court, and could not get away. (Covel 1893, p. 244)

In this instance, attributing the decision to fatalism does not hold much ground, as the author restates and reiterates the dilemma faced by the Jesuits and not the Turks exclusively during plague times. The Jesuits, except for Ignatius Loyola, justified fleeing during epidemics. Magistrates, clergy, Jesuits, and medical practitioners fled severe epidemic outbreaks, including the epidemics in Valencia in August 1557, Lisbon in 1569, and Calabria in 1576, leaving behind the poor to fend for themselves (see Martin 1996, pp. 116–24).

6. Primary Sources of Conflict between Muslims and Christians

The English experience in the Ottoman Empire was not just a confrontation between English Protestantism and Ottoman Islam. This hostility is rooted in the clash of hegemonic ideologies between Muslims and Christians. The English were awed at Ottoman military power. They were tolerated, occasionally welcomed, and sometimes tempted to stay (Aune 2005, p. 126). This sense of insecurity was guided by two considerations: (1) the martial danger of the Ottomans capturing English subjects and (2) the culture of the prisoner's conversion to Islam (Kugler 2012, p. 22). The threat of the Ottomans can be gauged from the letter (1461) that Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405–64), popularly known as Pius II, wrote to Sultan Mehmed II (reigned 1451–81) following the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In this letter, he offered him a "papal blessing as legitimate ruler over all the Christian lands he possessed", provided Mehmed II converted to Christianity (Bisaha 2002, p. 183). This profound sense of insecurity and acculturation deeply entrenched among Christians led the Christians to consider Ottomans from the perspective of providentialism. Therefore, they represented the Ottomans just as interstices. Pius II considered the Prophet Mohammad to be a false prophet. William Biddulph described the Prophet Mohammad as a "Machiavelian" (Purchas 1905, p. 264). Richard Knowles demonstrated the Ottomans as a "prince of darkness" and "Mohomed" as a "false" Prophet borne in an unhappy hour to the great destruction of humankind in *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* in 1603. Western travelers, with missionary zeal, looked at the Ottoman lands as an area of darkness:

> In the European psyche, it was, therefore, less an area to be explored in the expectation of new knowledge emerging. It was more an old place whose meanings had been fixed for all time and merely required to be correlated with the biblical text. (Nash 2009, p. xii)

Through contamination motifs, European travelers identified the Ottomans as a hotbed of plague. The plague's new geography and history "fostered the beginnings of the Oriental plague myths" (Jones 2022b, p. 217). Muslims were considered enemies of reason during the Enlightenment period. Cirakam summarizes the comparison of images between Europeans and the Despotic Turkish society through the Orientalist paradigm:

> Thus, in the eighteenth century, the image of the Turks is positioned between the image of Europe representing an enlightened civilization on one side and the idea of ancient and noble civilizations over which the Ottomans govern. In comparison to Europeans, Turks are represented as despotic, slavish, effeminate, ignorant,

proud, and corrupt, whereas when compared to the oppressed minorities of the empire, they are imagined to be stupid, fanatical, intolerant, oppressive, and hateful. (Çirakman 2002, p. 109)

7. Conclusions

The research questions driving this study can be briefly answered within two prominent frameworks. First, with a few exceptions, the travelers' observations of plague in the Mediterranean regions were, in principle, an extension of the imperial mapping of the East. The travelers embraced the *weltanschauung* of the Humanists, religious discourses, and plague tract writers. In their mission to organize knowledge, the Humanists implicitly encouraged the travelers to look for the devil outside Western European societies as they bound them to chart and confine their experiences in loci communes. They typically drew inspiration from both within and without social and ideological factors across different periods, contexts, literary traditions, and previous narratives. They borrowed the themes from European societies and replaced the locale from West to East. Their parallel discussion mainly focused on predestination and contamination motifs. For example, Dr Covel's *Diary* highlights the mayhem found among Jesuits and not in Adrianople. The selected texts and the specific examples echoed each other in their ideology, image, verbs, and phrases. In stylistics, there is hardly any deviance from the previous travelers. The central argument started from a homogeneous key phrase, "written in their forehead", which is found in almost every text and elaborated through predestination and contamination motifs. Typical venues for disease transmission included inconvenient inns, highways, communal gatherings, and importing and sharing clothes and beds of the deceased. In addition, the regressive ideas among Muslims were reflected in abstinence from medicine during plague time. As a result, discursive rhetoric between the Renaissance men of letters and the travelers promoted the production of new forms of knowledge othering the Muslims and identifying the Mediterranean regions as hotbeds of plague. In contrast, Martin Luther, Samuel Pepys, Pedro Teixeira, John Antes, and Ignatius Loyola were exempted from these prevalent tendencies about the flight and stereotyping of Muslims during epidemics.

Second, these accounts undermine and suppress the traditions of Arabic discourse on plague in at least three ways. First, while replacing the crusading rhetoric, the Renaissance Humanists' spirit of dialogue and tolerance tended to valorize the hegemony of the West and Christianity in the power structure and metaphysics. It sought to undermine the Muslim/Turkish hegemony in Eastern Europe. This spirit is not what it used to be in Hunayn Ibn Ishaq, Ibn al-Khatib, Ibn Khātima, Ibn Qay'em El-Jozeyah, or Martin Luther. Second, plague tract writers slowly started influencing the governments of the day, which led to the medicalization of space, much to the chagrin of Christian theologists. Conversely, the travelers looked for vagabonds and stiff-necked recalcitrants in Muslim societies even though shreds of evidence were collected from almost all parts of Europe for reckless behaviors during plague times. Last, the *Apodemic* literature writers' deliberations on predestination and narratives on the plague were not detached from the historical consciousness informing these writers. The prophet of Islam among the *Respublica Literarum* (Republic of Letters) was equated with Machiavellianism and represented as the anti-Christ. Ironically, the moral sphere between the two faiths while handling the plague until the Black Death was the same, as reflected in their common responses to the epidemic. Travel writers tried to make Muslims the authors of sins. Furthermore, Enlightenment intellectuals stereotyped the Ottomans as the enemies of reason.

We hope this paper will help break the pandemic-hate nexus in the future.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.-F.M.A.; Methodology, M.A.; Formal analysis, R.E.B.; Investigation, S.A.; Data curation, S.A. and M.A.; Writing—original draft, S.A.; Writing—review & editing, R.E.B.; Visualization, M.A.A.-M.; Project administration, A.-F.M.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Notes

1 In view of Hodgson, the Islamicate society was not only the direct heir, but, to a significant degree, the positive continuator of the earlier societies in the lands from the Nile to Oxus. By the geography and in line with human and material resources, it was ultimately the heir to the civilized traditions of the ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Persians, and their various neighbors (Hodgson 1974, p. 103). For an elaborated distinction between the terms Islamic and Islamicate, see (pp. 56–60).

2 For differing religious worldviews about the plague and the communal responses during the Black Death time, see (M. W. Dols 1974b).

3 In the aftermath of the Black Death, the corpus of plague tracts had been very rich in France and England. Lori Jones (2022c) examined around 250 such plague tracts.

4 The term "Middle Ages" has recently been increasingly rejected in relevance to the Islamic/Islamicate world. Thomas Bauer considers the term the medieval period as a misnomer because the Eurocentric worldview associates it with religious fanaticism, prohibits the discussion of the secular literature, and practices exoticizing and othering (For details see Mauder 2020).

5 The translator William F. Sinclair quickly remarks in Footnote 1 on the same page that this opinion of Frankish merchants importing the disease is "superfluous".

6 Thomas Lodge quoted identical evidence from Alexander Benedetti of Venice (Creighton 1891, p. 488).

7 To understand the critical idea of Despotism of Montesquieu and for contrasting worldviews between Montesquieu' and Voltaire, see chapter 8 (Launay 2018), titled 'The Specter of Despotism: Montesquieu and Voltaire', pp. 127–45.

References

Abbeele, G. V. 1992. Duplicity and Singularity in André Thevet's Cosmographie de Levant. *L'Esprit Créateur* 32: 25–35.

Al-Moghales, Mashhoor Abdu, Abdel-Fattah M. Adel, Suhail Ahmad, and Monir A Choudhury. 2023. Muslim precarity: Plagues of the mind and corona orientalism. *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10: 2281755.

Al-Moghales, Mashhoor Abdu, Abdel-Fattah M. Adel, Suhail Ahmad, Monir A Choudhury, and Abdul R. JanMohamed. 2022. Narratives of Plague in Arab Societies Through the Lens of Select Western Travelers. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 14: 1–11. [CrossRef]

Almond, I. 2006. Leibniz, Historicism, and the "Plague of Islam". *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39: 463–83. [CrossRef]

Amanullah, Arshad, Arif Hussain Nadaf, and Taberez Ahmed Neyazi. 2023. Constructing the Muslim "other": A critical discourse analysis of Indian news coverage of the tablighi jamaat congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journalism*, 1–9. [CrossRef]

Archibald, J. D. 1687. *Travels of Manfieur de Thevenot into the Levant in 3 parts. 1- Turkey, 2- Persia, 3- The East Indies*. London: H.Clarke.

Arıcı, M. 2021. Silent Sources of the History of Epidemics in the Islamic World: Literature on Ṭāʿūn/Plague Treatises. *Nazariyat* 7: 99–158. [CrossRef]

Aune, M. G. 2005. Early Modern European Travel Writing after Orientalism. *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5: 120–38. [CrossRef]

Baktir, H. 2010. Transforming The Meaning of Barbarism: Turks in Henry Blount's a Voyages into the Levant 1634. *Turkish Studies International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic* 4: 879–89. [CrossRef]

Bisaha, N. 2002. Pope Pius II's Letter to Sultan Mehmed II: A Reexamination. *Crusades* 1: 183–200. [CrossRef]

Bisaha, N. 2004. *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Blount, S. H. 1636. *A Voyage into the Levant*. London: Printed by I. L[egat] for Andrew Crooke.

Brentjes, S. 1999. The Interests of the Republic of Letters in the Middle East, 1550–1700. *Science in Context* 12: 435–68. [CrossRef]

Brentjes, S. 2020. *Travellers from Europe in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, 16th–17th Centuries: Seeking, Transforming, Discarding Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Browne, J. 1720. *A Practical Treatise of the Plague*. Seattle: J. Wilcox.

Burckhardt, J. L. 1829. *Travels in Arabia, Comprehending an Account of Those Territories in Hedjaz Which the Mohammedans Regard as Sacred*. London, HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET: Authority of The Association For Promoting The Discovery of the Interior of Africa. London: Routledge.

Burton, S. R. 1893. *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-madinah And Meccah Vol. 1*. London: Tylston And Edwards.

Busbecq, O. G. 1927. *The Turkish letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*. Translated by E. S. Forster. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Byrne, J. P. 2004. *The Black Death*. London: Greenwood Press.

Clarke, E. D. 1816. *Travels in Various Countries of Europe Asia and Africa—Pt. 2*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies.

Cohn, S. K. 2018. *Epidemics: Hate and Compassion from the Plague of Athens to AIDS*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Colombo, Emanuele, and Paul Shore. 2023. *Jesuits and Islam in Europe*. Leiden: Brill.

Covel, D. 1893. DR. COVEL'S DIARY (1670–1679). In *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*. Edited by J. T. Bent. London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, pp. 101–288.

Creighton, C. 1891. *A History of Epidemics in Britain*. Vol. I (from A.D. 664 to the Extinction of Plague). Cambridge: Cambridge Press.

Çirakman, A. 2001. From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33: 49–68. [CrossRef]

Çirakman, A. 2002. *From the «Terror of the World» to the «Sick Man of Europe»: European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth (Studies in Modern European History)*. New York: Peter Lang Inc.

Daniel, N. 1962. *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Defoe, D. 1896. *Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year*. Edited by G. R. Carpenter. New York and London: Longmans, Green, and Co.

Delogu, G. 2022. Conflicting Narratives: Health (Dis)information in Eighteenth-Century Italy. *Past & Present* 257 Suppl. S16: 294–317.

Deringil, S. 2007. The Turks and 'Europe': The Argument from History. *Middle Eastern Studies* 43: 709–23. [CrossRef]

Diener, Leander, and Flurin Condrau. 2023. The European Perspective on Pandemics. *Isis: A Journal of the History of Science Society* 114: S464–S97. [CrossRef]

Dols, M. W. 1974a. Plague in Early Islamic History. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94: 371–83. [CrossRef]

Dols, M. W. 1974b. The Comparative Communal Responses to the Black Death in Muslim and Christian Societies. *Viator* 5: 269–88. [CrossRef]

Dols, M. W. 1977. *The Black Death in the Middle East*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eamon, W. 1999. [Review]Plagues, Healers, and Patients in Early Modern Europe. *Renaissance Quarterly* 52: 474–86. [CrossRef]

Ebert, R. 2003. Re-Creating Constantinople: The Imperial Gaze of Seventeenth-Century Hapsburg Travel Writers upon the City at the Bosphorus. *Pacific Coast Philology* 38: 116–31.

El-Jozeyah, I. A.-Q. 2003. *The Prophetic Medicine*. Translated by Abdel-Qader. Al-Mansoura: Dar Al-Ghadd Al-Gadeed, vol. 1.

Gülter, I. Ş. 2019. *The Ottoman Turks in English Heroic Plays*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Hammill, G. 2010. Miracles and Plagues: Plague Discourse as Political Thought. *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10: 85–104. [CrossRef]

Hashmi, Shehmeen, Mohsin Hassan Khan, and Mohammedwesam Amer. 2023. Islamophobic Discourses in India During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case of Tablighi Jamaat. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 52: 419–39. [CrossRef]

Healy, M. 1993. Discourses of the Plague in Early Modern London. In *Epidemic Disease in London*. Edited by J. Champion. London: Centre for Metropolitan History, pp. 19–34.

Henderson, J. 2019. *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Hodgson, M. G. 1974. *The Venture of Islam, Volume 1: The Classical Age of Islam (Vol. 1)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hopley, R. 2010. CONTAGION IN ISLAMIC LANDS: Responses from Medieval Andalusia and North Africa. *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10: 45–64. [CrossRef]

Jones, L. 2022a. "The Last Time that We Can Say the Plague Raged": Historicizing Epidemics. *Centaurus* 64: 73–86. [CrossRef]

Jones, L. 2022b. *Patterns of Plague: Changing Ideas about Plague in England and France, 1348–1750*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press—MQUP.

Jones, L. 2022c. Bubo Men? Repurposing Medieval Anatomic Illustrations for Plague Therapy in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. In *Death and Disease in the Medieval and Early Modern World*. Edited by N. V. Lori Jones. Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, York: York Medieval Press, pp. 221–46.

Kugler, E. 2012. *Sway of the Ottoman Empire on English Identity in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Leiden: BRILL.

Kumar, A. 2023. "Virus Jihad": The (Mis)Representation of Muslims during COVID-19 Outbreak in Indian Media. *Howard Journal of Communications* 34: 538–58. [CrossRef]

Launay, R. 2018. Eight The Specter of Despotism: Montesquieu and Voltaire. In *Savages, Romans, and Despots: Thinking about Others from Montaigne to Herder*. Edited by R. Launay. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 127–45.

Leibniz, G. W. 1985. *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*. Translated by E. M. Huggard. Illinois: Open Court Publishing.

Loriggio, F. 2004. Disciplinary Memory as Cultural History: Comparative Literature, Globalization, and the Categories of Criticism. *Comparative Literature Studies* 41: 49–79. [CrossRef]

Luther, M. 1999. Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague. In *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings II*. Edited by H. C. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, vol. 43, pp. 119–38.

MacLean, G. 2001. Ottomanism before Orientalism? Bishop King Praises Henry Blount, Passenger in the Levant. In *Travel Knowledge: European "Discoveries" in the Early Modern Period*. Edited by I. G. Singh. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 85–96.

MacLean, G. 2004a. Strolling in Syria with William Biddulph. *Criticism* 46: 415–39. [CrossRef]

MacLean, G. 2004b. *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580–1720*. New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Martin, A. L. 1996. *Plague? Jesuit Accounts of Epidemic Disease in the 16th Century*. Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers.

Mauder, C. 2020. [Book Review]Thomas Bauer, Warum es kein islamisches Mittelalter gab: Das Erbe der Antike und der Orient. *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 28: 465–70.

Mead, R. 1720. *A Short Discourse Concerning Pestilential Contagion, and the Methods to Be Used to Prevent It*. London: Printed for Sam. Buckley . . . and Ralph Smith.

Mikhail, A. 2008. The Nature of Plague in Late Eighteenth-Century Egypt. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82: 249–75. [CrossRef]

Millán, C. A. 1999. Graeco-Roman case histories and their influence on Medieval Islamic clinical accounts. *Social History of Medicine* 12: 19–43. [CrossRef]

Montesquieu. 2001. *The Spirit of Laws*. Translated by T. Nugent. Kitchener: Batoche Books.

Moseley, B. 1787. *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases; and on the Climate of the West-Indies London*. London: T. Cadell.

Nash, G. 2009. Introduction. In *Travellers to the Middle East from Burckhardt to Thesiger: An Anthology*. Edited by G. Nash. London: Anthem Press, pp. xi–xx.

Parker, L. W. 1932. *Samuel Pepys' Diary*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

Parmann, Peter E., and Emilie Savage-Smith. 2007. *Medieval Islamic Medicine*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Payne, J. F. 1900. Chapter VI. Sydenham and the Plague. In *Masters of Medicine: Thomas Sydenham*. Edited by J. F. Payne. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., pp. 104–14.

Pormann, P. E. 2008. Case notes and clinicians: Galen's commentary on the hippocratic Epidemics in the Arabic tradition. *Journal Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 18: 247–84. [CrossRef]

Purchas, S. 1905. *Hakluytus Posthumus: Or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others*. London: James MacLehose and Sons.

Reilly, P. 2015. *Bills of Mortality: Disease and Destiny in Plague Literature from Early Modern to Postmodern Times*. New York: Peter Lang.

Remak, H. H. 1961. Comparative literature: Its Definitions and Function. In *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*. Edited by H. F. Newton and P. Stallknecht. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, pp. 3–37.

Russell, A. 1756. *The Natural History of Aleppo, and Parts Adjacent. Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in Its Neighbourhood; Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases; Particularly of the Plague*. London: A. Millar.

Rycaut, P. 1668. *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*. London: Printed for John Starkey and Henry Brome.

Said, E. W. 2014. *Orientalism*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Sandrock, K. 2020. Discourses of Travel Writing. In *Handbook of British Travel Writing*. Edited by B. Schaff. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 31–54.

Schwoebel, R. 1967. *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Sell, J. P. 2006. *Rhetoric and Wonder in English Travel Writing, 1560–1613*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Shaw, J. T. 1961. Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies. In *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*. Edited by H. F. Newton and P. Stallknecht. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, pp. 58–71.

Shaw, T. 1757. *Travels, or Observations Relating to Several Parts of Barbary and the Levant*. London: A.Miller.

Slack, P. 1980. Books of Orders: The Making of English Social Policy, 1577–1631. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30: 1–22. [CrossRef]

Slack, P. 1988. Responses to Plague in Early Modern Europe: The Implications of Public Health. *Social Research* 55: 433–53. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Slater, Joanna, and Niha Masih. 2020. As the world looks for coronavirus scapegoats, Muslims are blamed in India. *The Washington Post*. Available online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/as-world-looks-for-coronavirus-scapegoats-india-pins-blame-on-muslims/2020/04/22/3cb43430-7f3f-11ea-84c2-0792d8591911_story.html (accessed on 14 June 2024).

Stagl, J. 1995. *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550–1800*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Stearns, J. K. 2011. *Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Premodern Islamic and Christian Thought in the Western Mediterranean*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Stearns, J. K. 2017. Public Health, the State, and Religious Scholarship Sovereignty in Idrīs al-Bidlīsī's Arguments for Fleeing the Plague. In *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept*. Edited by S. G. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite. Columbia: Columbia University Press, pp. 163–85.

Teixeira, P. 1902. *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira: With His "Kings of Harmuz" and Extracts from His "Kings of Persia"*. Translated by W. F. Sinclair. London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society.

Tournefort, J. P. 1741. *A Voyage into the Levant-Perfomed by the Command of the Late French King (Vol. III)*. London: D. Midwinter. Available online: https://archive.org/details/bim_eighteenth-century_a-voyage-into-the-levant_tournefort-joseph-pitto_1741_3/page/n209/mode/2up?q=+Saints (accessed on 21 December 2023).

Ullmann, M. 1978. *Islamic Medicine*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Varlik, N. 2015. *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World the Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Varlik, N. 2017. "Oriental Plague" or Epidemiological Orientalism? Revisiting the Plague Episteme of the Early Modern Mediterranean. In *Plague and Contagion in the Islamic Mediterranean*. Edited by N. Varlik. Kalamazoo and Bradford: Arc Humanities Press, pp. 57–87.

Watts, S. 1997. *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power, and Imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wunder, A. 2003. Western Travelers, Eastern Antiquities, and the Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe. *The Journal of Early Modern History* 7: 89–119. [CrossRef]

Xun, Zhou, and Sander Gilman. 2021. Placing the Blame: What If "They" REALLY Are Responsible? *Journal of Medical Humanities* 42: 17–49. [CrossRef]