The Ottoman Empire had a direct and lasting influence on European culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This influence is clearly observed through the literature written and published during this time. The masses of readers were reading such works as Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, the translation of One-Thousand-and-One Arabian Nights, the poetic works of Byron, and the collection of fables gathered by the Grimm brothers.

Jonathan Swift wrote a politically charged piece of literature, and thus the viewings of Ottoman influence within it are all the more significant due to their acceptance as commonplace. His choice of characters is a doctor heading towards the Levant, which was the major Ottoman port for European traders. In this way Swift showed the public both the fascinating and frightening world of the non-Europeans.

Another piece of literature which found popularity in Europe was the directly imported tales associated with Sheherazade and her One-Thousand-and-One Arabian Nights. These tales offer a rich world built upon the splendor of the exclusive Ottoman sultan’s palace and his famous harem. The tales also offer a view into the world of the common people of the empire through Sheherazade’s tales.

An astounding similarity between Sheherazade’s tales and the Grimm brothers’ tales continues this trend of Ottoman influence. With references to the Ottoman empire occasionally glaring from the “fairy tales” of the Holy Roman Empire, the influence of the middle east infiltrated all levels of Germanic society.

Just as Jonathan Swift wrote of a traveler to the Levant, Lord Byron traveled there and returned with many poetic writings of the sights and peoples he saw in this foreign empire. When compared to his later poetic works, Byron’s Eastern Tales seem pale and uninspired but they do show the great influence which was felt by Europeans.

The Ottoman trade could have merely allowed for oriental goods to infiltrate European society except for the evidence in favor of a greater, more popular impact. The popularity of Byron’s Eastern Tales and the oral tradition transposed by the Grimm brothers reveal on opposite sides of the continent the strength of Ottoman influence. The ease with which both the Grimm brothers and Jonathan Swift accept imagery and vocabulary of these foreign lands shows the length in which this influence had been infused with other aspects of life.