THE TURKISH EMBASSY LETTERS

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

edited by Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn

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this project from the outset and we offer her our special thanks. And finally, the anonymous readers of our initial proposal provided astute and insightful commentary.

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Extracts from *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Appendix B1 and Appendix B2) used with permission of Oxford University Press.

Introduction

Despite being strongly discouraged by her friends and relatives who feared for her safety, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu set out from London with her husband in August 1716 on a diplomatic mission that took them through Europe to Turkey. Hoping to stay for a minimum of five years, Lady Mary was the first English woman to write about her travels in Ottoman lands. Her observations serve as one of the most important records of intercultural exchange between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Traveling in cramped horse-drawn carriages with her infant son and a featherbed, she witnessed "the skulls and carcasses of unburied men" that littered a recent battlefield, traversed treacherous snow covered roads, and spent nights in both squalid hovels and luxurious houses. She was feted as she traveled through Europe, and at the age of twenty-seven and recently married, she was quite pleased to discover such things as Vienna's preference for older women, where "a woman till five and thirty is only looked upon as a raw girl," and was surprised to find the expectation that wives should have an official lover as well as a husband and amused to find herself a topic of gossip for *not* "commencing an amour." She traveled down the Danube in a vessel rowed by twelve men that "had all the conveniences of a palace"; commented on the strangeness of Catholicism with its "popish miracles," talking crucifixes, and saints' relics; attended operas and plays; criticized the plundering of German and Rascian soldiers who had been recruited by the Hapsburg Emperor, and decried the exploitation of local people by Ottoman military commanders in Serbia. Offering an ethnography of aristocratic Europeans, she wrote about lavish dinners "with fifty dishes of meat" and "exquisite" wine lists; discussed women's fashion and headdresses; watched, with the Holy Roman Empress, elite Viennese ladies engaged in a competitive shooting match; and was provided lodging at the king's palace in Hanover. Arriving in a "new world" in 1717 during an era when the geopolitical contours of the globe were being radically reorganized, she studied Ottoman language and poetry, gave birth to her daughter, had her son inoculated against smallpox, and befriended Muslim women on her visits to harems and Turkish baths.

Lady Mary arrived in Turkey mid-way through the reign of Sultan Ahmet III (1703-30) when Turkey was at war and she left just as the Ottoman Empire was entering the peaceful and culturally vibrant Tulip Era (1718-30). The tulip itself serves as an apt symbol for the exchange of goods and ideas between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Tulips, which originated in central Asia, had long been culti-

vated by Ottoman sultans and were an integral part of the culture, inspiring poets and appearing on textiles, walls of buildings, and ceramics. In the sixteenth century tulips were introduced into Europe and were cultivated in Holland, where they sparked a tulip mania. Speculation on rare varieties of these "exotic" imports saw their prices soar, creating one of the earliest speculative bubbles, which finally burst in 1637. Tulips from Persia and the very different Dutch varieties were then re-imported during Ahmet's reign and became known as the "gold of Europe," creating a frenzy that was symptomatic of the extravagance and excess of this period. Under the rule of Ahmet, a poet and calligrapher himself, Ottoman culture flourished: buildings were restored and new mosques were built, artists and poets were celebrated, tortoises with candles on their shells wandered through beautiful gardens illuminating the tulips, a Turkish printing press was established in Istanbul, and Ottoman ambassadors were sent abroad to Europe.[1] As this period in Turkey was devoted to pleasure, beauty, and art, it is not surprising to find Lady Mary writing: "I am almost of opinion they have a right notion of life ... they consume it in music, gardens, wine, and delicate eating" (L44).

A Canonical Yet Problematic Text

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's surviving letter-book, which records these travels, is among the greatest achievements of eighteenth-century literature, yet, in comparison to the work of her peers, the text has received decidedly less commentary than it deserves. No doubt part of this neglect can be traced back to the scorn directed at her by Alexander Pope and Horace Walpole. Intelligent and witty, like many women who rebelled against gender conventions, she was the target of vicious attacks. The combination of a damaged reputation and, more generally, the historical neglect of women writers means that her writing has only recently regained its canonical status. But character assassination and systemic neglect are only part of the issue. The letter-book itself poses many critical challenges that ultimately raise questions about the very practice of reading, writing, and interpretation in a global framework.

As soon as one starts reading this work, a number of issues relating to its production, circulation, and reception immediately arise. In 1716 Lady Mary's husband Edward Wortley Montagu was named British Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte and she accompanied him on his

1 Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Effendi went to France in 1720, encouraged by the Marquis de Bonna, the French Ambassador while the Montagus were in Istanbul. Çelebi produced his *Sefâretnâme*, an account of his travels in France. See Ali Uzay Peker.

diplomatic mission to negotiate a peace treaty between the Hapsburg Monarchy in Austria and the Ottoman Empire. Like any eighteenth-century woman of her rank and education, Lady Mary carried on an extensive correspondence with other aristocratic women in England and with a number of prominent literary men. However, very few of the letters actually sent from the stopping points on her journey to Constantinople and back again survive, and it is not safe to assume that the missives that make up the her letter-book are transcriptions of actual correspondence. The text variously known as *The Turkish Embassy Letters*; *Embassy to Constantinople: The Travels of Lady Mary Montague*; *Letters from the Levant during the embassy to Constantinople, 1716-18*; and *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague: Written During Her Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa* is derived from two leather-bound volumes of continuous fair-copy text carefully written out by Lady Mary and an unknown copyist. The text likely was composed sometime between her return from Constantinople in 1718 and 1724. We can establish this time frame because Lady Mary loaned the letter-book to the feminist writer Mary Astell in 1724 and Astell inscribed a note "To the Reader" and a brief poem about the text in the blank pages at the back of the second volume. This was how the letter-book circulated for roughly the first forty years of its existence.

Literary historians tend to think of the eighteenth century as the era in which the print public sphere inexorably dominated the field of literary production. But the old model of scribal coteries exchanging hand-written manuscripts did not immediately die out with the emergence of periodicals such as *The Spectator* and the rise of the novel. Alongside the commercial world of print, one can discern literary sub-cultures or coteries where the circulation of manuscripts was an end in itself. As Margaret Ezell and others have argued, "rather than being a nostalgic clinging to an outdated technology representing a fading aristocratic possession of the world of letters, the older practice of circulating scribal texts was instead a choice" (12). Authors such as Pope, who are conventionally associated with the emergence of commercial print culture, also partook in scribal production: important works including *The Pastorals* and the poem "Windsor Forest" circulated as fair-copy manuscripts well before they were printed.[1] He also made a holograph copy of Lady Mary's "Town Eclogues." Like Pope, Lady Mary addressed both public and private audiences via print and scribal production: she prepared some texts, such as her essay on smallpox inoculation and her magazine *The Nonsense of Common Sense*, for print publication, but wanted her

1 See Ezell, *Social Authorship*, 61-83.

identity kept secret; and she circulated other works, such as the letter-book, to friends and acquaintances.[1]

Because publicity itself was deemed inimical to a sound reputation, women's relation to print was always more complex than that of their male contemporaries, and Lady Mary was certainly not alone in using pseudonyms or anonymous publications to avoid public censure in the world of print. Like many women writers, she attempted to control when, where, and how her works were printed, but at times her works were pirated from manuscript copy and put into circulation, often at significant personal cost. When Edmund Curl published some of her "Town Eclogues" in 1716 (under the title of "Court Poems") without her consent, she found herself misread and suddenly out of favor at court.

Based on the practices of other scribal coteries it is reasonable to assume that the loan to Astell was not a singular event. The Letter-book would have been shared with friends and like-minded acquaintances in the period between its composition and Lady Mary's death. Letter 31 has all the hallmarks of scribal exchange: both commentary on the flow of texts between Lady Mary and her addressee, and the transcription of poems both received and original are typical of the scribal miscellanies of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The notion of what Ezell refers to as "social authorship" has important ramifications for the form of the letter-book because Lady Mary chose to present the text as a series of letters to friends and acquaintances. Even without identifying the addressees of the letters, epistolary discourse establishes a relation of intimacy between the writing subject and the letter's ostensible recipient.[2] Elsewhere in Lady Mary's manuscripts there is a key to the addressees of the letters, but a number of the recipients remain unknown and are perhaps fictional. However, for readers of the letter-book, part of the interpretive process involves characterizing the addressees: for some readers in Lady Mary's immediate circle the addressees would have been not only identifiable, but actual acquaintances, relatives, friends, or enemies. Needless to say, the intimacy that conditions both the circulation of the letter-book and its formal strategies plays a crucial part in its interpretation.[3]

1 See Halsband and Grundy (1993) for Lady Mary's non-epistolary writings.

2 See Cynthia Lowenthal on Lady Mary and the female epistolary tradition.

3 One could also claim, as Ezell does in relation to Motteux's *Gentleman's Journal*, that the epistolary form of the text is itself a trace of social authorship because so much scribal exchange was framed by letters. See Ezell, "The 'Gentleman's Journal' and the Commercialization of Restoration Coterie Literary Practices."

Lady Mary's letters to her husband during her stay in Turkey (see Appendix B2) are more obviously "private," detailing both practical and intimate concerns, but eighteenth-century epistolary discourse was also a public medium. Letters, like other texts, were often read aloud. All through the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, manuals were published to help mostly aristocratic men and women exhibit an air of sophistication and civility. Letters were also not an uncommon medium for published disquisitions on philosophy, science, religion, history, and politics. And of course the emergence of the novel is inextricably tied to epistolary fictions. Thus when Lady Mary veers into these areas of enlightened enquiry, she is not deviating from generic expectations, but rather merely shifting discourses within an already hybrid and elastic form.

Near the end of her life, Lady Mary returned to London from a period of voluntary exile in Italy. The immediate reason for her return to London in 1761 had to do with legal matters relating to her estranged husband's estate, but on her journey she gave the letter-book, which she carried with her for most of her life, to Benjamin Sowden, a British clergyman in Rotterdam. It is generally assumed that she intended Sowden to shepherd the letter-book into print, but in return for 200 pounds he handed it over to Lord Bute, the husband of Lady Mary's daughter and at that time the First Lord of the Treasury. However, Sowden did lend out the letter-book to two English travelers for a night; it was hastily transcribed and published after Lady Mary's death in 1762. One of the copyists was related to the bookseller Thomas Becket and an error-laden version of the letter-book was published in three volumes as *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M__y W___y M____e: Written, during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, To Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c. in different Parts of Europe. Which Contain, Among other Curious Relations, Accounts of the Policy and Manners of the Turks* by Becket and De Hondt in London in 1763. In 1767 another edition from the same bookseller added five spurious letters.[1]

Walpole affirmed that it was Lady Mary's deathbed wish that these letters be published and it seems she wrote them with publication in mind. Highly crafted and aesthetically coherent, the letter-book frequently engages with the conventions of travel narratives that have preceded hers; the list of letters that she offers, which is rarely ever discussed,[2] organizes the text not by addressee, but by place and topic, as was typical of the genre. Significantly, the book's printed title and preface, derived from Astell's commentary, suggest that while

1 For the publication history of various editions, see Halsband 1.xvii-xx.

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Lady Mary had "condemned it to obscurity during her life," her letter-book was also written as a direct challenge to male travel narratives so "that the world should see, to how much better purpose the Ladies travel than their Lords." As soon as the book appeared in print, it was glowingly reviewed, gained immediate notoriety, and twenty-three editions were published between 1763 and 1800. At the head of each entry in the letter-book Lady Mary provides a date and place of ostensible composition. For readers first encountering the book in its printed form, all of the narrated events would have taken place roughly fifty years in the past; and the geo-political coordinates referred to would have accrued new significance in the interim. Furthermore, some aspects not only of Anglo-Austro-Ottoman relations, but also of European social history would have receded into historical oblivion. Thus Lady Mary's print readers would now be recovering a past moment and the significance of many of her critiques and observations would be measured in ways very different than those who read the letter-book prior to its publication.

This complicated history of production, circulation, and reception means that care must be taken not to mistake the letters for actual letters, and the performance of writing needs to be constantly at the fore of the contemporary reader's mind. Furthermore, attention needs to be paid to Lady Mary's complex engagement with earlier travel narratives, histories, and literature about Turkey and with classical literature, and to the letter-book as a stylistic whole. Conditioned by, but also significantly critical of, the emerging orientalist discourse of the eighteenth century, the intercultural challenges posed by the text are fascinating. We will be discussing these precursor texts later in this Introduction, but for the moment it is important to recognize that orientalism itself has a complex history that impinges directly on the reception of this text during the period of its manuscript circulation, following its initial publication, and for that matter, at the moment of its present reading in the twenty-first century. Perhaps the single greatest challenge posed by this text is unraveling preconceptions not only about Anglo-Ottoman relations in the eighteenth century, but also about shifting yet enduring stereotypes about intercultural relations between Christian Europeans and Islamic subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The letter-book is unquestionably of its time, but it also presents opportunities for interpretation that speak to many aspects of our current global predicament. As we write, the figure of the veiled woman, the rhetorical opposition of Islam and the West, and the legacy of Oriental and Occidental relations have all surfaced as contentious topics, while wars and uprisings dominate the news in what is now known as the Middle East, as the global power balance is, once again, shifting.

The complexity of Lady Mary's intercultural engagement is perhaps most evident in her famous representations of Turkish women.[1] In part, this is due to the extraordinary burden placed on the representation of sex and gender in the European representations of Islamic societies in the eighteenth century, a legacy that continues to the present day. The complexity of Lady Mary's observations regarding women's place in Turkish society is equally due to her own far-reaching analysis of European sex/gender systems. Throughout her career, Lady Mary wrote eloquently about the pernicious effects of the laws of marriage in England, about the discriminatory practices around married women's property, and also about the warped sense of public discourse resulting from the silencing and surveillance of women both in the domain of print and in the larger world.

That said, Lady Mary's analysis of the sex/gender system in Britain and the Ottoman Empire is, in part, underwritten by fundamental assumptions about rank. Born to an aristocratic family at the end of the seventeenth century, educated in the classics, and brought into fashionable and literary society in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, Lady Mary lived in a world defined by a network of aristocratic sociability that enabled not only her education and writing, but also the other heterodox aspects of her later life. When Lady Mary describes social encounters in the courts of Vienna and Hanover and in the hamams and harems of Adrianople and Constantinople, she relates to the women she meets as social equals: it is rank above all that grounds the performance of intercultural exchange. This is especially apparent in Letter 45, marked from Tunis, where Lady Mary's separation from the common people she meets is registered in what seems like uncharacteristically racist discourse that belies her own commitment to understanding cultures as relative. However, this denigration of the Tunisian women has as much to do with their lower rank as their physical appearance. In contrast Letter 29 finds her waxing poetically about how well the "black face" of the *kizlar aga* (the chief of the black eunuchs and a high-ranking slave) is framed by the rich colors of his robes, which are also lined with expensive furs.

1 See, for instance, Lisa Lowe, who argues Lady Mary's feminist work counters standard orientalist discourse. Srinivas Aravamudan focuses on Lady Mary's interest in performance, masquerade, and her "positive orientalist ideal." Likewise, Anita Desai, in her Introduction to the Malcolm Jack edition of *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, discusses Lady Mary's early interventions on the controversy surrounding veiling. Alternatively, Meyda Yegenoglu argues that Lady Mary's portrayal of veiled women is complicit in orientalism.

A Privileged Yet Heterodox Life

Lady Mary's aristocratic background was both a privilege and a constraint. As the marriageable daughter of the duke of Kingston, she experienced the double-edge of having a sizeable fortune and notable reputation.[1] Reputation was a complicated challenge for a woman of her status: it posed problems for her career as a writer because publicity was often seen as a breach of feminine decorum; in addition, scholarly aspirations and learning were often outside the scope of normative femininity. It was precisely on these terms that she was viciously attacked by Pope after the disintegration of their friendship in the 1720s. As a valuable commodity in the marriage market, she also experienced its limits. Lady Mary had conducted an extensive and secret correspondence with Edward Wortley Montagu prior to her marriage. The very fact of the correspondence would have been considered indiscreet. Her interest in Wortley became a problem when his suit was rejected by her father because Wortley would not agree to pass property to his son. Under pressure from her father to marry an unwanted suitor named Clotworthy Skeffington, Lady Mary eloped with Wortley in 1712. The correspondence between Lady Mary and Wortley up to and including the elopement reveals a series of almost comic complications that would not be out of place in a novel from the period except that the entire affair was carried on at such a risk to Lady Mary's reputation.

By 1715 Lady Mary was an active member of literary coteries in London. She met Pope, Gay, and Congreve, among others, and she exchanged early poems and translations with these prominent writers. In the same year, she also contracted smallpox and barely survived the illness. During her stay in Turkey, Lady Mary witnessed the practice of inoculation first-hand and became convinced of its utility, becoming deeply involved in the promulgation of inoculation in England on her return, and it was around this issue that she chose to enter the world of print in the 1720s. As the controversy surrounding the practice raged, Lady Mary was frequently criticized for risking the lives of her children, as she had had them both inoculated.

Struggling with this public opprobrium, Lady Mary entered the public sphere in an entirely different way. In 1728, her sister, Lady Mar, whose husband had been part of the failed Jacobite uprising of 1715 and was in debt, became mentally ill. The brother of Lady Mar's husband attempted to gain control of her fortune by declaring her

1 For an excellent and authoritative biography of Lady Mary, see Isobel Grundy's *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Comet of the Enlightenment.*

incompetent. Lady Mary successfully challenged his attempt in the courts. In 1736 Lady Mary's daughter married Lord Bute, the future prime minister, a marriage Wortley objected to, denying his daughter a dowry (an ironic protest, given the similar behavior of his father-in-law), but it was a transformation in Lady Mary's own marriage that was most notable. In that year, Lady Mary met and fell in love with the Venetian scholar and critic Francesco Algarotti. He was thirty years her junior and was a man of many attractions. It is unclear precisely when she became estranged from Wortley, but by 1739 she was traveling to Italy with plans to meet Algarotti. Although Algarotti was pursuing diplomatic and commercial opportunities in Russia, she established herself in Venice and a new phase of her life began. Although the affair with Algarotti was over by 1741, she spent the next twenty-three years on the continent. Her son Edward, a pseudo-convert to Islam, whom she refused to see, was also living in exile in Europe. She held a salon in Rome from 1740-42, resided briefly in Avignon from 1742-46, and in a set of strange circumstances found herself immured in Brescia in the Veneto under the control of the banditti-like figure of Count Ugalino Palazzi. Palazzi had some degree of financial control over Lady Mary, and she was frequently ill, but it was not until 1756 that she escaped to Venice where she divided her time between the city and a house in Padua. When Wortley died in 1761 and left his estate to his daughter Lady Bute, the will was contested by his dissolute son Edward. Lady Mary likely returned to England to ensure that the property went to her daughter. It was on that journey that Lady Mary bestowed the letter-book on Benjamin Sowden. If it had not been copied it is likely its publication would have been blocked by Lady Bute's family. By this time Lord Bute had become extremely close to George III and the family was at the pinnacle of political power. On her death, Lady Bute destroyed the voluminous life-long journal of Lady Mary, which included her Turkish voyage, but the letter-book, along with a wide range of other manuscript materials, were kept in the family's private collection, where they remain today.

A Complex and Volatile World

When the *Embassy Letters* were published posthumously in 1763, long after Lady Mary's travels, Britain had just won the Seven Years' War and found itself in possession of the world's first truly global empire. With holdings from North America to Bengal and control over the oceans, Britain's imperial future nevertheless was still uncertain. Lady Mary's daughter's husband, Lord Bute, was in charge of the world's largest and most baffling economy. Insistent questions about

how such a vast and differentiated empire would be managed would eventually reach a crisis point with the American Revolution. In many ways, the vision of empire represented in the letter-book was both less triumphal than the imperial discourse of the 1760s and based more on trade than territorial acquisition. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Britain had only recently come through its own period of internecine crisis. With the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the Acts of Union (1706-07) came stability within the British Isles. Victory over the Dutch in the War of Spanish Succession and the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) inaugurated a period of rapid growth in Britain's mercantile empire because it marked a period of British domination of the seas. Merchants in the East India Company were developing unprecedented commercial monopolies in India and the Far East. Even after the collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720 (a British trade company in Spanish South America that Lady Mary also speculated and lost on when this economic bubble burst), British mercantile operations in India continued to expand. The English dominated trade in the area, eclipsing the Portuguese, and were exempted from paying taxes; by the mid-eighteenth century, the East India Company had been transformed from a trading to a ruling enterprise with the military defeat of the Nawab of Bengal (1757).

In contrast, British merchants had long jockeyed with other countries for preferential trade relations at the Ottoman Porte, outstripping their European competitors in the seventeenth century. But trade was declining by the time of Lady Mary's visit, in part because China and India offered cheaper supplies of silk. These transitions in trade are registered throughout the letters in Lady Mary's responses to requests for items. In her answer to Mrs. S___'s demand for lace from the Hague, for instance, Lady Mary remarks that it is very "dear" and instead offers to send her friend much cheaper Indian goods (L2). In her descriptions of the Exchange in Adrianople (made up of 365 shops), which she describes as a cleaner version of London's New Exchange, she notes the wealth of these markets, "perhaps better than in any other part of the world" (L42). The strength of not just international trade but of internal trade in Turkey is also evident when she singles out a mile-long street lined with shops, commenting that their goods are very expensive, as they are all imported (L35). Despite the British decline in trade with the Porte, Wortley's mission was all about maintaining stability in the region and ensuring a balance of power that was amenable to Britain's world economy, from Cairo to Madras. Unlike the polycentric Ottoman Empire, which allowed for more loosely structured trading in multiple cities, the strong ties between English politics and commerce—dominated by London—is suggested by Wortley's position both as representative of the Levant Company and as British Ambassador at the Porte.

At the height of its power, the Ottoman Empire extended into Asia, Europe, and North Africa, but after its loss at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, European powers united to curb Ottoman dominance. Over the next centuries, the Empire slowly shrank until it was dissolved in 1923, replaced by the Republic of Turkey. From the medieval period through to the eighteenth century, the Islamic world outpaced Christian Europe—it enjoyed a superior military, a thriving intellectual, scientific, and cultural community, and it was a powerful center of commerce and trade. However, early modern representations and maps of the Ottoman Empire offered no neat borders between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe. As Palmira Brummet argues, the designations of "Turkey in Europe" and "Turkey in Asia" were later additions to maps, and it was not until the eighteenth century that "the state had become the standard by which lands were divided and demarcated" (35).

In the early part of the 1600s Turkish raiding parties, which often invaded European waters in search of Christian captives, even voyaged up the Thames to attack coastal towns.[1] Fatima's tale to Lady Mary about being often mistaken for a "Christian" and her account of her mother's capture at the Siege of Camieniec (a Polish fortress), as well as Lady Mary's account of a Spanish woman who was captured by a Turkish admiral and then happily marries "her very handsome, very tender" "infidel lover," were not at all exceptional (L40 and L43). As Leslie Pierce notes about the Imperial Harem, "the sultans' alliances were both ethnically and religiously exogamous.... all royal consorts after the first two Ottoman generations (with one exception) were neither Muslim nor Turkish by birth" (37). Substantial numbers of British soldiers and travelers also converted to Islam, attracted as they were by the opportunity for social and economic advancement that was impossible in a more rigidly class structured Britain, a trend that spoke to both the power and allure of the Ottoman civilization. As these conversions and forays indicate, there was a great deal of exchange between Europe and Turkey, suggesting relatively porous and fluid borders and identities.

If it was the convention for Christian writers in Europe to denounce Islam as a false religion started by a fraudulent prophet, Islam on the other hand positioned itself as the culmination of both the Jewish and

1 See Nabil Matar for more on the power of Islam in the early modern period, which he argues has been largely ignored by twentieth-century scholars as they insist on viewing East/West relations through the lens of post-colonialism.

Christian religions, accepting earlier texts and prophets as part of its legacy. The Ottoman populations were so linguistically, religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse and intermixed that no easy binary between Muslim/Turkish and Christian/European was sustainable. Lady Mary frequently comments on this mix, writing that "I do live in a place that very well represents the Tower of Babel; in Pera they speak Turkish, Hebrew, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Slovenian, Wallachian, German, Dutch, French, English, Italian, Hungarian" (L41). Reflecting the difficulty of categorizing the Ottoman population, throughout the long eighteenth century, European travelers often used the term Turk to refer to Muslims (hence the term "to turn Turk") or to refer to all the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the cosmopolitan nature of the Empire caused a great deal of unease from the outset. The traveler, Sir Paul Rycaut, whose writings were exceedingly influential in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, suggested that because the Turks have more children by slaves than by their wives, Constantinople was full of "a strange race, mixture, and medley of different sorts of blood" (17). He refers dismissively to Turkey as the "great Babylon." Lady Mary also comments on this heterogeneity in her letter to Abbé Conti: "This Mixture produces Creatures more extraordinary than you can imagine. Nor could I ever doubt but there were several different Species of Men" (Appendix B3).

Lady Mary's engagement with Muslim women was not without precedent. Queen Elizabeth 1 (1533-1603), one of the most powerful women in Europe, had also corresponded with the similarly immensely powerful Safiye (1550-1619), who was the favorite wife of Sultan Murad III (1574-95) and then Valide Sultan, mother of the ruling Sultan Mehmed III (1595-1603). As a latecomer to the clamor for preferential trade relationships with Turkey, England established the Levant Company in 1581 and an exchange of gifts between Turkey and England not only fostered a lucrative trading arrangement but cemented an alliance that was largely built around both parties' mutual dislike of Catholic Spain and the Catholic Hapsburg powers. Queen Elizabeth first sent a clock and then later an automaton organ to the Ottoman Empire in 1599 with Thomas Dallam, who wrote an account of his voyage.[1]

The English Queen had begun corresponding with Murad and the Sultana Safiye, and when war broke out with the Spanish in 1585, Elizabeth even contemplated a military alliance with the Ottomans, whom she supplied with ammunition and tin. The Queen and the Sultan and the Sultana agreed that Protestantism and Islam—as both

1 See James Mather for a succinct history of the Levant Company.

religions rejected the "worship of idols"—had much more in common than either had with Catholicism. Lady Mary's frequent criticisms of Catholicism and her acceptance of Islam can be read in the context of this earlier history. When Mehmet took over after his father's sudden death, the now Valide Sultan Safiye was effectively in power. Her reign was part of what was known as the "sultanate of women," Ottoman women who, despite all European representations to the contrary, wielded immense political clout, a period that extended from Hurrem/Roxlana (1520-66) to Turhan (1651-83). Elizabeth was hoping to further secure a favorable trade arrangement between England and the Ottoman Empire and the women carried on a friendly correspondence and sent each other gifts of perfume and cosmetics (see Appendix G1). The Valide Sultan sent the Queen a Turkish dress and the Queen sent her an English carriage and a portrait of herself.[1] The alliance between these two powerful women, however, soured with the outbreak of conflicts between the Ottomans and Austria in the Long War (1593-1606) that fueled anti-Ottoman sentiments in the rest of Europe. In 1684, European powers joined together, forming the Holy League, to fight the Ottoman Empire. Referred to as the Great Turkish Wars, this series of battles encompassed the Ottoman-Hapsburg Wars, the Polish Ottoman War, Ottoman-Venetian Wars, and the Russo-Turkish War. The Battle of Vienna (1683) is what many historians view as the turning point that ended Ottoman expansion in Europe. Ottoman troops had held the city for two months until Polish, Hungarian, Austrian, and German forces came together and crushed them. The Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) thus ended Ottoman control of large parts of Europe.

This was a period of constantly changing borders, of conquests and re-conquests, and of shifting allegiances. The Ottomans were certainly feared in Europe, but the borders between Islam and Christianity and the East and the West were not rigid. Although we can now, in retrospect, view the Treaty of Karlowitz as a further step in the contraction of the Ottoman Empire, the particular period that covers Wortley's term as ambassador at the Porte was still critical. Having successfully defeated the Russians at Pruth River in the Russo-Turkish War (1710-11), and having re-conquered the Morea from the Venetians in 1715 (Venice had been given the Morea under the 1699 Treaty), the Ottomans, spurred on by pro-war factions, set out to regain Hungary. Leaving some troops at home to guard against a possible attack by the

1 See Bernadette Andrea for an excellent reading on the exchange of gifts and letters between these powerful women, and Susan Skilliter's pioneering "Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Sāfiye to Queen Elizabeth I."

Russians, and sending others to Albania to guard Corfu, the Grand Vizier and Sultan's son-in-law, Damat Ali Pasha, was perhaps overly confident as he marched north. Eugene of Savoy, the talented Austrian Hapsburg military leader, who had fought at the Battle of Vienna and defeated the Turks at the Battle of Zenta in 1697, was once again victorious at Petrovaradin on 5 August 1716 and the Grand Vizier died from his battle wounds.

One month earlier, Edward Wortley Montagu became the Ambassador Extraordinary and Representative of the Levant Company to the Ottoman Porte. He and Lady Mary expected to be in Turkey for at least five years. Worried about the upset in the balance of power in Europe and the instability caused by warfare, England, under George I, was hoping to prevent a war between the Hapsburgs, who were coming to the aid of Venice, and the Turks. But Wortley was too late—as he and Lady Mary were traveling overland to Vienna, the Hapsburgs took Temesvar in mid-October 1716 and finally, against the odds, razed Belgrade on 16 August 1717. Following these defeats, the Porte requested that the Dutch and British mediate a peace, as they had done previously. Hampered by enemies in England, a change in government in Whitehall, and a Sultan who wanted Temesvar restored to him, a request Vienna ignored, Wortley was dismissed, much to the shock and disappointment of his wife. They left in July 1718 just as Nevsehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha, the sultan's close advisor, who was pro peace, was appointed Grand Vizier and as a settlement was reached at Passarowitz on 21 July 1718.

The Politics of Travel Writing

The political transitions narrated above were matched by important changes to the genre of travel writing and prose fiction. Pre-modern and classical travel narratives were largely fabulous and eloquent tales about extraordinary beasts and magical places. However, the Royal Society, founded in 1660 and devoted to a scientific world view, directed travelers to write in "plain" language and to write accurate and detailed accounts based on their observations. "Truth" then became the standard for the genre, but "truth" is always a complicated thing and travel literature itself operated in a liminal space between fiction and fact. The rise of the English novel in the eighteenth century, for instance, which was heavily influenced by the genre of travel narratives, often replicated its commitment to "truth." For example Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave. A True History* (1688) thoroughly intertwines ostensibly empirical observations from the author's travels in Surinam with clearly fictional material. Furthermore, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a fictional account about a man who voyages around the globe in search of money-making opportunities and finds himself shipwrecked on an island, presents itself as an authentic record of the voyages of Crusoe, "written by himself."

The burgeoning market for travel literature about the East, which had a voracious readership, was tied in part to the expansion of the British Empire, to the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire, to the fragmentation of the Mughal Empire, and to shifts in the global power balance. Travel writing played a pivotal role in positioning Turkey in relationship to Europe, with ambassadors, diplomats, merchants, and historians all contributing to the genre. Yet, despite the directive for "impartial scholarship," the majority of travel narratives that were in circulation at the time of the publication of Lady Mary's letters offered an increasingly consistent portrayal of Turkey as exotic, backward, and utterly foreign and in direct contrast to an enlightened, free, and rational England. With the expansion of the British Empire and the solidification of Europe's national boundaries, a more rigid boundary dividing the Occident from the Orient was replacing the earlier more porous borders. While Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism* (1978) has been criticized for being too monolithic and too sweeping, it has persuasively argued that from the eighteenth century on there was a consistency in citation and repetition of Orientalist tropes in British representations of the East that in turn helped to consolidate the ideology of imperialism. In other words, Said argues that a tyrannical and exotic Orient was set up as a foil to a liberal and rational Europe, a legacy that continues to have repercussions today.

Often limited by language, the complexities of the Ottoman social structure, and the "pride of the Turks" as Lady Mary calls it (Turks thought it bad form to talk of their households and harems), western travelers, despite their frequent claims to original eye-witness observations, relied heavily on previous published historical and fictional European sources that inevitably framed their accounts. Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et une nuits* (*Arabian Nights*), published between 1704 and 1717, instantly became a metonym for an exotic undifferentiated Orient, and these fantastical and popular tales continued for centuries to serve as a standard reference for Western travel accounts.[1] Lady Mary, who owned the twelve-volume French edition, writes, following her visit to the Sultana Hafise's palace: "This is but too like, says you, the Arabian tales; these embroidered napkins, and a jewel as large as a turkey's egg! You forget, dear sister, those very tales were

1 For a survey of Orientalist fiction from the eighteenth century, see Ros Ballaster.

writ by an author of this country and, excepting the enchantments, are a real representation of the manners here" (L40). Before they even got to the Levant, travelers were so influenced by other narratives and fictional accounts that a hundred or two hundred years could pass, and yet descriptions of events and people remained almost identical as if the East was a static and unchanging place. Here is just one of many examples: George Sandys, in his 1610 account of his travels, writes that Greek women "for the most part are brown of complexion, but exceedingly well-savored, and excessively amorous" (80). A hundred years later Aaron Hill uses almost the exact wording to describe Greek women as "for the most part, exquisitely shaped, generally of a brown complexion ... and the most amorous" (175).

Citation emerges as a powerful medium in constructions of the Orient as a decadent and brutal place. The story of the Sultan selecting his bedmate by throwing a handkerchief at her—that Lady Mary exposes as a fiction (L40)—is often cited, appearing in both Ottaviano Bon's and Rycaut's accounts. Bon and others also reported on such things as women in the harem being tied up, put in sacks, and dumped in the Bosphorous, and the oft-cited apocryphal story of Sultan Ibrahim I (1640-48) drowning close to three hundred women in his harem continues to circulate today. The nineteenth-century traveler, Lady Annie Brassey, more than doubles the number of the supposed murdered women and moreover relates this story as if it was a current event: "Not so very long ago," she writes, "six hundred women of the Imperial harem actually suffered this fate.... their bodies [were] sunk in sacks in the Gulf of Ismid, close to where our fleet has been lying recently" (387).

If traveling, to some degree, involves a disorienting and sometimes disturbing encounter with other cultures, obsessive repetition of tropes and cultural stereotypes suggests a neurotic reaction to this encounter with the unfamiliar. Repetition, then, is a way of keeping the foreigner contained and the traveler and the reader of travel writing stable. One of the most pervasive stereotypes of the East that emerged during this period was that of the highly sexualized, backward, and oppressed Muslim woman, a trope that persists to the current day. Veils and harems are largely absent from Medieval and Renaissance literature, and the portrayal of Turkish women in these earlier periods is comparatively diverse; it was not until the late sixteenth century that the words "seraglio" (1581) and "harem" (1624) appeared in English.[1] Veils were adopted into Islam from Mediterranean practices—both Christians and Jews veiled—and were a sign of class and status among

1 See Mohja Kahf for more on early representations of Muslim women.

the three faiths, and also, likely, as with male dress in the region, a smart response to weather conditions. But by the late seventeenth century, the figure of the erotic and/or imprisoned harem woman, held captive by her own culture inhabited by the lascivious Turk and awaiting liberation by Westerners, makes a frequent appearance in literature, suggesting the changing power dynamic between East and West. The orientalist fictions in Appendix F provide a brief survey of some of these portrayals, from Defoe's Roxana, a courtesan who uses Turkish dress and dance to attract the most powerful of men, to Brontë's Jane Eyre, an English heroine who rebels against her English "sultan" and promises to liberate Turkish women from their harems.

From the eighteenth century right up to the current day, the representation of Muslim women, ostensibly imprisoned by veils and enslaved in harems, becomes one of the most explicit markers with which Europe differentiates itself from the Levant. As if these European male writers were themselves all proto-feminists in their own countries, male travelers denounced the treatment of Muslim women. There is "no slavery equal to that of the Turkish Woman," Jean Dumont declared and suggested that this treatment was the result of a mind that "is at the bottom nothing else but a pure Insensibility and a Weakness that is altogether inexcusable in any reasonable creature" (261). In other words, in his logic, the poor treatment of Turkish women was symptomatic of the East's irrationality while Europe's supposed superior treatment of women suggested in contrast an enlightened mind. The figure of the enslaved Turkish woman, along with the Ottomans' relative acceptance of same-sex love (homosexuals in Europe at the time were subject to imprisonment or death), set off a range of pornographic fantasies that filled the pages of Europeans' accounts of the Levant. In 1625 Ottaviano Bon wrote of the "young, lusty, lascivious wenches" in the harem who were allowed radishes, cucumbers, and gourds only in slices to prevent them from engaging in any unnatural or unclean acts (57). Jean Baptiste Tavernier corrects the rumor of the cucumbers (although this does not stop its circulation) informing us that these earlier writers "have forg'd the story not knowing that it is custome in the Levant to cut the Fruit across, into great thick slices" and yet he goes on to write in a homophobic vein, like many of his fellow travelers, of "the wicked Example of the Men, who, slighting the natural use of Women-kind, are mutually inflam'd with a detestable love for one another, unfortunately inclines the Women to imitate them" (86). Other writers, like Hill, wrote of women, lacking in any virtue or honor, collectively seducing any man whom they could entrap in the harem: "if *by the ingenuity of their Contrivances* they can procure the Company of *some Stranger* in

their Chamber, they claim *unanimously* an equal share of his *Caresses*, and proceed *by Lots* to the Enjoyment of his Person; nor can he be permitted to leave them, till having exerted his *utmost Vigour* in the Embraces of the *whole Company*" (see Appendix E5). It is as if all Turkish women were sex-starved and obsessed, desperate for each other or for any phallic shape that crossed their paths.

It is into this discursive milieu that Lady Mary threw down her gauntlet. Just as this representation was gaining dominance, she proclaimed that the Turkish women she met were free, intelligent, and graceful. Wise to the marketing strategies and politics of travel narratives, Lady Mary, as she said, refused to "add a few surprising customs of [her] own invention" to her letters (L30). Nor did she indulge in the sensational representations of foreign places that added to the entertainment value of travel narratives, preferring the "truth" even as her letters are also self-consciously performative. She resisted the prevalent tendency to represent the Levant as foreign and strange, commenting that "the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe" (L29). While not discounting the misery of a population living under arbitrary rule, where sultans or ministers could find themselves suddenly and violently deposed (L28) or the vigilante justice practiced in a society that viewed murder as a private affair (L43), Lady Mary found Turkey to be no more "barbarous" than her own country. Like many of the writers that preceded her, she was very well read on the subject and cites many previous influential writers, such as Rycaut, Dumont, Hill, and Sandys. However, aware of the prejudices that plagued the representations of her own sex in Britain, she did not accept unquestioningly the authority of male historians and travelers. Reluctant to entertain the view of Muslim women rendered through a European masculine lens, she invoked the authority of the popular "eye-witness" convention to strategically intervene in these highly politicized accounts, noting that these male writers had no access to women and harems despite their detailed accounts of them.

While writers such as Hill were quick to suggest that English women should be grateful for the liberty they enjoyed in their own country, Lady Mary noted (as many women travelers after her also did) that, despite all the "tender" portrayals by male writers of the "miserable confinement of the Turkish ladies," in reality Turkish women enjoyed a great deal of liberty (L43). Thanks to their relative economic independence, they were perhaps "freer than any ladies in the universe," wrote Lady Mary (L43). English women did not have any independent status under the Common Law that legislated that they and their property belonged to their husbands or fathers, rendering them vulnerable to abuse. Further, the English dowry was given to the husband in exchange for the bride. In sharp contrast, the Qur'an established Muslim women's right to the *mahr*, which was granted to the bride on her marriage—a financial gift that the husband had to pay to her and that protected her from arbitrary divorce. While the *mahr* guaranteed Muslim women's financial independence and was set in accordance with the wealth of the husband, British women were subject to the doctrine of "coverture," where wives and all their assets were under the control of their husbands. To her future husband's inquiries about her dowry, Lady Mary responded: "People in my way are sold like slaves, and I cannot tell what price my Master will put on me" (Halsband, 1.64).

The *Embassy Letters* are perhaps most famous for how they deploy the Turkish sex/gender system to critique the conventions of marriage and the notions of sexual propriety and reputation that immured eighteenth-century British women in plain sight. The slavery metaphor used by Lady Mary in the above letter to describe her condition as a commodity in the marriage market is a harbinger of similar rhetorical gestures in the letter-book. One of her most powerful strategies is to take the tropes used so often as a figure for Muslim women's oppression and re-orient them so that accepted British norms look constraining by comparison. This is nowhere more obvious than in her representation of the veil and of the sequestration of women in the harem. Lady Mary notes some of the varied uses of the veil, which has no fixed cultural or historical meaning and was a largely urban practice, from a flirtatious fashion in Pera to a protective and enabling disguise in Muslim Constantinople. For Lady Mary, veils allowed an anonymity that facilitated women's circulation in public that could only leave heavily surveilled elite British women envious. Thus Lady Mary writes of the great pleasure in donning Turkish dress that allowed her to roam around the city without being recognized. She further offers up the Turkish women's misreading of her "stays" as a form of imprisonment by her husband, when she visits the hamam, as an apt cultural counter. Similarly, her representations of the hamam and the harem, which afforded the intimacy of a sexually segregated space, highlighted the degree to which "mixed company" severely limited female conversation. The fact that men in Britain had a whole range of spaces devoted to homosocial exchange subtly emerges as an enabling force in men's lives that was routinely denied to British women. Without directly indicting the inequities of British gender ideology, Montagu uses key aspects of Turkish life as specifically enlightened counter-norms. Her likening of a Turkish bath to a "women's coffee house" restores the history of scholarship among Muslim

women—early prints of harems, for instance, depict women engaged in learned pursuits. One image from a 1594-95 manuscript printed in Istanbul, "Rayhana, Daughter of Ka'b ibn Malik, Neglected by her Husband," on display at the Chester Beatty Library, depicts a woman in a room that features a writing desk, an inkpot and two manuscripts. Contrast these images of Turkish women as intellectuals with Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' erotic one (see Appendices I3 and I4). In this regard, Lady Mary both acknowledges the scholarly pursuits of Turkish women, countering their depiction as "wanton" and "immodest," and offers a strategic analysis of Ottoman society and culture for her own ends.

Learning Rather than Turning

Lady Mary's letters about Turkey are framed by important displays of learning. While other travelers to the Levant dismissed Turkey as "backward," Lady Mary not only appreciated the language, art, and culture of Turkey, but, in a more pragmatic vein, she also learned from her Turkish hosts. Her entry into Ottoman territories is staged in two separate letters (L25 and L27). The first narrates her intellectual friendship with the effendi Achmet Beg. In her discourses with Achmet Beg, Lady Mary not only demonstrates her own learning, but also indicates the degree to which she was harvesting information about Ottoman and Arabic culture. The model of enlightened conversation inaugurated in this letter spreads through the *Turkish Embassy Letters* as she records and analyses samples of Turkish poetry, describes and critiques Ottoman architecture, and observes the complex weave of cultural influences in the world around her. This same spirit of enquiry and sociability infuses the famous hamam letter. Here on the frontier of the Ottoman Empire, Montagu presents herself as an ethnographer of sorts, but also as one whose self-awareness allows her to explicitly stage her aestheticization of Turkish women as itself a sign of her learning. One way of reading the ensuing letters establishes this very aestheticization as that which must be overcome to become a receptive cultural interlocutor. Lady Mary's text carefully registers how she must unlearn key assumptions about both Turkish and British society.

This helps to explain why her departure from Ottoman territory is presented as a dense citation of classical journeys. Close inspection of Letter 45 reveals that Lady Mary's departure from Constantinople is almost scene for scene a reverse performance of the journey to Constantinople recorded by George Sandys in his famous *Travels*. It is a very explicit echo and she is picking up on a key aspect of earlier narratives about the region. Sandys, like many other travel writers, litters his narrative with allusions to Virgil and other Roman poets. Virgil is important here because the first part of the *Aeneid* tells the story of the fall of Troy, Aeneas' betrayal of Dido in Carthage, and the journey to the underworld that solidifies the prophecy that Aeneas' progeny will found the Roman Empire. In Letter 45, Lady Mary replicates Aeneas' journey from Troy to Carthage but with a difference. At the very moment when Pope is publishing his translation of the *Iliad*, Lady Mary turns her attention to the aftermath of the Trojan War and how the horror of that loss is registered in the tragedies of the Trojan women. After the fall of Belgrade, Lady Mary's text develops a tight weave of allusions that demonstrate that she learned something from the geopolitical predicament of the Ottomans at this juncture. Explicit comparisons of Turkish women to Helen of Troy and implicit invocations of Hecuba and Andromache converge to form a subtle rejoinder to the celebration of war nascent in Pope's translation of the *Iliad*. Lady Mary's rehearsal of the *Aeneid* is suffused with the wisdom of someone who has seen the struggle between empires at close range.

If Lady Mary's political and literary education is registered subtly in the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, we can easily point to less allusive acts of learning. Nowhere is her willingness to learn from Ottoman society more in evidence than in her adoption of smallpox inoculation. When England experienced a virulent outbreak of smallpox in 1721, Lady Mary introduced her country to the procedure she had learned about in Turkey. She had lost her brother to smallpox and was herself struck down by the deadly disease in December 1715. Her body was covered in itchy, painful pustules, her face was swollen and unrecognizable, her fever raged, and the treatments—purging, bleeding, left in blazingly hot or frigidly cold dark rooms—were ineffective and likely made the unimaginable horror of the disease worse. She survived but was left badly scarred, with deep pits, and she lost her "fine eyelashes."[1]

In the letter she wrote about having her son inoculated in Turkey (L32), she refers rather scathingly to the English doctors, but her frustration and cynicism are perhaps understandable given the resistance of the medical community to a procedure that would have saved her brother and preserved her complexion. Reports of the success of inoculation in the East were already circulating in England from about 1700, with Joseph Lister's report of the practice in China, Emanuel Timoni's letter to John Woodward from Constantinople, and Giacomo

1 For a discussion of her disfigurement, see Jill Campbell.

Pylarini's account about it in Smyrna. Despite the fact that members of the Royal Society had debated these works and commented on the benefits of this method, none of the physicians attempted it but remained trapped by a growing national arrogance. In 1724, William Clinch wrote in *An Historical Essay on the Rise and Progress of Smallpox* that "the English Physicians have taken more Pains, and succeeded better, in the Cure of the Smallpox, than the Physicians of any other Nation" (49).

Lady Mary wrote to the retired doctor Maitland, who had attended her in Turkey, to ask him to "engraft" her daughter as an epidemic was sweeping England. This procedure was witnessed by, among others, Princess Caroline. Although impressed, the Princess requested further experiments, which were conducted on six prisoners at the infamous Newgate, who were promised their freedom in turn for participating, and on children in an orphanage in Westminster. The success of these inoculations finally convinced the Princess to have her two daughters treated. When other aristocratic families followed suit, Lady Mary wrote to her sister in 1722 about "the growth and spreading of the inoculation of the small-pox, which is become almost a general practice, attended with great success" (Halsband 2.15).

However, Lady Mary's predictions in her letter about having to war against the doctors and their territorial attitudes proved correct, as the Royal College of Physicians were busy trying to prevent unlicensed practitioners—apothecaries and surgeons—from encroaching on their domain. A huge controversy erupted over her promotion of smallpox engrafting in both the religious and medical community. Maitland himself was a surgeon and therefore not a member of the Royal College, and when he inoculated Lady Mary's son in Istanbul the procedure was performed under her direction. When he inoculated her daughter, Lady Mary, realizing Maitland would not have much influence, invited several prominent physicians to witness the procedure, including Sir Hans Sloane, who had attended Lady Mary when she was sick with the disease but who had remained steadfastly opposed to the Turkish practice. Controversy raged as Lady Mary predicted, and engrafting was dismissed as corrupt because it was "foreign," "backward," and practiced by women. Dr. Warren, in a pamphlet from 1733, referred to it as a "barbarous and dangerous Invention was about 10 years past imported at *London* from *Turkey*." In the confluence of science and culture, this practice of inoculation was dismissed by doctors such as William Wagstaffe, who wrote: "Posterity perhaps will scarcely be brought to believe, that an Experiment practiced only by a few *Ignorant Women*, amongst an illiterate and unthinking People, shou'd on a sudden and upon a slender Experience, so far obtain in one

of the Politest Nations in the World, as to be receiv'd into the *Royal Palace*" (*A letter*, n.p.). In keeping with an explicit orientalist, nationalist, and patriarchal attitude, Ottomans were dismissed as "illiterate and unthinking" and the women in charge of the practice deemed "ignorant."

On the other hand, those in favor of inoculation, including factions at the Royal Palace, downplayed the feminine and oriental origins of the practice, re-situating it as scientific, rational, and masculine. In an account by the doctor William Douglas, "Mr. Maitland" is given the credit of introducing the procedure and Lady Mary is not mentioned. Whether for or against inoculation, in many of these pamphlets the East is credited with being the source of the disease rather than the prevention of it. In one from 1725, entitled "A New Essay on the Small-Pox," the author writes "why should we cherish the cruel Brood of Africa or Asia in our Bowels ... the Import of our Holy Wars in former days" (see Appendix D1) and in another from 1730, the argument is made that just as the Arabs spread their religion and Empire, so did they spread "smallpox," which was introduced, the author argues, into Europe via their Spanish colony (Douglas 10). Under a pseudonym, Lady Mary interjected in these debates, writing a piece in the *Flying Post* entitled "A Plain Account of the Inoculating of the Small Pox by a Turkey Merchant" (Appendix D2). In it she explained the procedure and cited case studies of it in the Ottoman Empire. Masquerading as a man and rejecting both sides of the debate raging in England over this medical practice, Lady Mary insisted on the origins of the cure as both Turkish and feminine. This relatively simple procedure performed by Ottoman women, she related, had been overly complicated by Western doctors who practiced it in order ensure the need for their "expertise"; they were trying to "improve" on it by aggressively bleeding and purging patients and using knives to insert large quantities of the virus deep into the body, which in turn contributed to the death of some of those inoculated. A large number of these patients died with these invasive procedures and inoculation was then often dismissed as ineffective. In response to these "improvements," Lady Mary wrote: "Out of compassion to the numbers abused and deluded by the knavery and ignorance of physicians, I am determined to give a true account of the manner of inoculating the small pox as it is practiced at Constantinople with constant success, and without any ill consequence whatever. I shall sell no drugs, nor take no fees, could I persuade people of the safety and reasonableness of this easy operation. Tis no way my interest (according to the common acceptation of that word) to convince the world of their errors; that is, I shall get nothing by it but the private satisfaction

of having done good to mankind, and I know no body that reckons that satisfaction any part of their interest" (see Appendix D2).

Robert Squirrell wrote about inoculation: "Immortal be the name of Lady Wortley Montagu, whose philanthropy by introducing it has prevented the misery, and saved the lives of millions" (4). However, Squirrell's desire that "her name live in the memory of man" was never realized as Edward Jenner, who developed a vaccination that used cow pox, at the end of the century, and was subsequently given the credit for the eradication of the disease, overshadowing her contribution. Much like her letters, it is only more recently that her strategic and intelligent engagement with Ottoman culture is being mined.

The orientalist and patriarchal cultural anxieties evident in the responses of England to this practice perfectly intersect with a scientific practice that understands disease as the enemy of the patient's body, just as Turkey and the feminine threaten to contaminate England as it seeks to establish a coherent national identity. In contrast, inoculation uses the "disease" as part of the cure. The practice itself, however, suggests that contact with the "other" ensures the survival of the host. As a good "patriot," Lady Mary in her introduction of this practice to England, and in her general attitude toward Turkey, practiced this contact, studying Islam, Turkish, and Arabic, and engaging with the people she met on her sojourn. She neither went "native," one response that travelers adopted, nor remained closed to other cultures, the more prevalent alternative. Rather, she adopted an intelligent, measured, and critical stance as she negotiated sexual and national boundaries.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: A Brief Chronology of Her Life and Times

1688-69	"Glorious Revolution" forces the Catholic James II and his court into exile. William and Mary of Orange become Protestant King and Queen of England. Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave.*
1689	Mary is born to Evelyn Pierrepont and Lady Mary Fielding.
1690	Evelyn Pierrepont becomes Earl of Kingston (Duke in 1715); Mary becomes Lady Mary.
1692	Mary's mother dies.
1694	Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest.*
1695	Mustafa II becomes Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.
1697	William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*; John Dryden, *Works of Virgil*; Daniel Defoe, *An Essay on Projects.*
1697	At the Battle of Zenta, Prince Eugene of Savoy routs the Grand Vizier and over 30,000 Ottoman troops.
1699	The Treaty of Karlowitz is signed, ending hostilities between the Ottomans and the Habsburg dynasty. By the treaty the Ottomans lose control of Hungary and Transylvania.
1700	William Congreve, *The Way of the World.*
1701	Act of Settlement establishes terms of the Hanoverian succession to the English throne.
1702	England joins the War of Spanish Succession and remains involved until 1713. Queen Anne ascends to the throne, inaugurating a period of Tory rule.
1703	Ahmed III (1673-1736) becomes Sultan of the Ottoman Empire after the deposition of Mustafa II.
1704-17	English translation of Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et une nuits.*
1706-07	Acts of Union. England and Scotland unite to form Great Britain.
1709	Delarivier Manley, *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean.*
1709	Fatma Sultan (1704-33) marries Silahdar Ali Pasha (1667-