THE TURKISH EMBASSY LETTERS

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

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broadview editions

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 Ecologues." 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.

2 It does not appear in Halsband's presentation of the letters.

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.

Letter 25

To Mr. ____[2]

Belgrade, Feb. 12, O. S. 1717

I did verily intend to write you a long letter from Peterwaradin, where I expected to stay three or four days, but the Bassa here was in such haste to see us, he dispatched our courier back (which Mr. [W]_____ had sent to know the time he would send the convoy to meet us) without suffering him to pull off his boots. My letters were not thought important enough to stop our journey, and we left Peterwaradin the next day, being waited on by the chief officers of the garrison, and a considerable convoy of Germans and Rascians. The Emperor has several regiments of these people, but to say the truth, they are rather plunderers than soldiers, having no pay, and being obliged to furnish their own arms and horses. They rather look like vagabond gypsies, or stout beggars than regular troops. I can't forbear speaking a word of this race of creatures, who are very numerous all over Hungary. They have a patriarch of their own at Grand Cairo, and are really of the Greek Church, but their extreme ignorance gives their priests occasion to impose several new notions upon them. These fellows, letting their hair and beards grow inviolate, make exactly the figure of the Indian Bramins. They are heirs general to all the money of the laity, for which in return they give them formal passports signed and sealed for Heaven, and the wives and children only inherit the houses and cattle. In most other points they follow the Greek rites.

2 To Alexander Pope.

This little digression has interrupted my telling you we passed over the fields of Carlowitz,[1] where the last great victory was obtained by Prince Eugene over the Turks. The marks of that glorious bloody day are yet recent, the field being strewed with the skulls and carcasses of unburied men, horses and camels. I could not look without horror on such numbers of mangled human bodies, and reflect on the injustice of war, that makes murder not only necessary but meritorious. Nothing seems to me plainer proof of the irrationality of mankind (whatever fine claims we pretend to reason) than the rage with which they contest for a small spot of ground, when such vast parts of fruitful earth lie quite uninhabited. 'Tis true, custom has now made it unavoidable, but can there be a greater demonstration of want of reason than a custom being firmly established so plainly contrary to the interest of man in general? I am a good deal inclined to believe Mr. Hobbs, that the state of nature is a state of war,[2] but thence I conclude human nature not rational, if the word reason means common sense, as I suppose it does. I have a great many admirable arguments to support this reflection, but I won't trouble you with them, but return in a plain style to the history of my travels.

We were met at Betsko (a village in the midway between Belgrade and Peterwaradin) by an Aga of the janissaries,[3] with a body of Turks exceeding the Germans by one hundred men, though the Bassa had engaged to send exactly the same number. You may judge by this of their fears. I am really persuaded that they hardly thought the odds of one hundred men set them even with the Germans, however I was very uneasy till they were parted, fearing some quarrel might arise notwith-

1 Now Sremski Karlovci, Serbia. Prince Eugene of Savoy defeated the Grand Vizier Damat Ali Pasha at Petrovaradin on 5 August 1716. The Turkish commander and roughly 10,000 Ottoman soldiers died in the battle; the Austrians for their part lost approximately 5,000 men. From here Eugene went on to take the Banat fortress at Temesvar in mid-October 1716. Roughly twenty years earlier, Prince Eugene of Savoy had defeated the Grand Vizier Elmas Mehmed Pasha and over 30,000 Turkish troops at the Battle of Zenta in 1697. Prince Eugene's victory resulted in the Peace of Karlowitz (1699).

2 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), 62-64.

3 Janissaries were soldiers in the standing army of the Ottoman Empire. The Janissaries formed a distinctive social class and were an extremely powerful presence. Initially, through the system of *devshirme*, Christian boys, largely from the Balkans, were conscripted and converted to Islam. Charles Perry, who published *A View of the Levant* in 1793, writes about the *devshirme* practice of taking Christian children as payment (tribute) as if it was happening at the time of his travels, when in fact the practice, which was recorded in Rycaut, had died out in the second half of seventeenth century.

standing the parole given. We came late to Belgrade, the deep snows making the ascent to it very difficult. It seems a strong city fortified on the east side by the Danube, and on the south by the River Save, and was formerly the barrier of Hungary. It was first taken by Solyman [the] Magnificent, and since by the Emperor's forces, led by the Elector of Bavaria, who held it only two year, it being retaken by the Grand Vizier, and is now fortified with the utmost care and skill the Turks are capable of, and strengthened by a very numerous garrison of their bravest janissaries commanded by a Bassa *Seraskier* (i.e., General).[1] This last expression is not very just, for to say truth the Seraskier is commanded by the janissaries, who have an absolute authority here, not much unlike a rebellion, which you may judge of by the following story, which at the same time will give you an idea of the admirable intelligence of the Governor of Peterwaradin, though so few hours distant.

We were told by him at Peterwaradin that the garrison and inhabitants of Belgrade were so weary of the war, they had killed their Bassa about two months ago in a mutiny, because he has suffered himself to be prevailed upon by a bribe of five purses (£500 sterling) to give permission to the Tartars to ravage the German frontiers. We were very well pleased to hear of such favourable dispositions in the people, but when we came hither, we found the governor had been ill informed, and this the real truth of the story. The late Bassa fell under the displeasure of his soldiers for no other reason but restraining their incursions on the Germans. They took it into their heads from that mildness, he was of intelligence with the enemy, and sent such information to the Grand Signior at Adrianople.[2] But redress not coming quick enough from thence, they assembled themselves in a tumultuous manner, and by force dragged their Bassa before the *Cadi* and *Mufti*,[3] and there demanded justice in a mutinous way; one crying out, why he protected the Infidels? another, why he squeezed them of their money? that easily guessing their purpose, he calmly replied to them that they asked him too many questions, he had but one life, which must answer for all. They immediately fell upon him with their scimitars (without

1 Belgrade was captured by Süleyman I (1494-1566) in 1521 and by Maximilian II, the Elector of Bavaria (1662-1726) in 1688. Koprulu Fazil Mustapha Pasha (1637-91) was Grand Vizier from 1689-91 and in 1690 he recaptured Belgrade, which the Turks held until August 1717.

2 Ahmed III (1673-1736) was Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1703 to 1730.

3 A kadi, or senior judge, administers both Islamic and Ottoman law. A Mufti is the highest ranking religious official.

waiting the sentence of their heads of the law) and in a few moments cut him in pieces. The present Bassa has not dared to punish the murder. On the contrary, he affected to applaud the actors of it as brave fellows that knew how to do themselves justice. He takes all pretences of throwing money amongst the garrison, and suffers them to make little excursions into Hungary, where they burn some poor Rascian houses. You may imagine I cannot be very easy in a town which is really under the government of an insolent soldiery. We expected to be immediately dismissed after a night's lodging here, but the Bassa detains us till he receives orders from Adrianople, which may possibly be a month coming.[1]

In the mean time we are lodged in one of the best houses, belonging to a very considerable man amongst them, and have a whole chamber of janissaries to guard us. My only diversion is the conversation of our host Achmet-Beg, a title something like that of count in Germany.[2] His father was a great Bassa, and he has been educated in the most polite Eastern learning, being perfectly skilled in the Arabic and Persian languages, and is an extraordinary scribe, which they call *Effendi*. This accomplishment makes way to the greatest preferments, but he has had the good sense to prefer an easy, quiet, secure life, to all the dangerous honours of the Porte. He sups with us every night and drinks wine very freely. You cannot imagine how much he is delighted with the liberty of conversing with me. He has explained to me many pieces of Arabian poetry, which I observed are in numbers not unlike ours, generally alternate verse, and of a very musical sound. Their expressions of love are very passionate and lively. I am so much pleased with them, I really believe I should learn to read Arabic if I was to stay here a few months. He has a very good library of their books of all kinds and, as he tells me, spends the greatest part of his life there. I pass for a great scholar with him by relating to him some of the Persian tales, which I find are genuine.[3] At first he believed I understood Persian. I have frequent disputes with him concerning the difference of our customs, particularly the confinements of women. He assures me there is nothing at all in it, only says he, we have the advan-

1 See Appendix B6, pp. 242-43.

2 Grundy (135) suggests that they likely conversed in Italian.

3 Lady Mary is referring to *Les Mille et un jours, contes persans* (1710-12) by François Pétis de la Croix (1653-1713). In the preface the author claims that during his residence in Pera in 1675, he translated these tales into French from a manuscript entitled *Hazár ú Yek Rúz* (The One Thousand and One days). The five-volume set of these tales (1732), along with other tales about the Orient, were part of Lady Mary's library, now housed at Sandon Hall.

tage that when our wives cheat us, nobody knows it. He has wit and is more polite than many Christian men of quality. I am very much entertained with him. He has had the curiosity to make one of our servants set him an alphabet of our letters, and can already write a good Roman hand.

But these amusements do not hinder my wishing heartily to be out of this place, though the weather is colder than I believed it ever was anywhere but in Greenland. We have a very large stove constantly kept hot, and yet the windows of the room are frozen on the inside. God knows when I may have an opportunity of sending this letter, but I have writ it in the discharge of my own conscience, and you cannot reproach me that one of yours can make ten of mine.

Letter 26

To Her Royal Highness the P___[1]

Adrianople,[2] April 1, O. S. 1717

I have now, Madam, past a journey that has not been undertaken by any Christian since the time of the Greek emperors, and I shall not regret all the fatigues I have suffered in it, if it gives me an opportunity of amusing Your Royal Highness by an account of places utterly unknown amongst us; the Emperor's ambassadors, and those few English that have come hither, always going on the Danube to Nicopolis.[3] But that

1 To the Princess of Wales. Caroline of Anspach (1683-1737) married George Augustus in 1705 and succeeded as Queen consort in 1727. Like Lady Mary, she was known for her intelligence and beauty, and was also an avid reader, owned an extensive library, and survived smallpox. She was instrumental in the spread of Lady Mary's smallpox inoculation. Convincing the court of its efficacy, the Princess had three of her own children inoculated.

2 Adrianople is the English name for present day Turkish city of Edirne, which lies close to the Greek and Bulgarian border. It was the capital of the Ottoman Empire (1365-1453) prior to the conquest of Constantinople; Mustapha II (1695-1703) resided in Edirne most of the time, a decision that outraged Istanbul. On taking power, Ahmet III promised never to reside there (see Mansel 180), but it remained an important city. Wortley first met with the Grand Vizier in Adrianople; see his letter to Addison of 10 April 1717 in Appendix B6, as the court was temporarily ensconced there (Grundy 140).

3 Preveza, Greece. Nikopolis is the ancient name for the city. As Halsband notes (1.310n3), Lady Mary is exaggerating; "Christians had made the journey by land as early as the sixteenth century." However, she is likely the first Christian woman to write about the route.

river was now frozen, and Mr. [W]_____ so zealous for the service of His Majesty, he would not defer his journey to wait for the conveniency of that passage.[1] We crossed the deserts of Servia, almost quite overgrown with wood, though a country naturally fertile, and the inhabitants industrious, but the oppression of the peasants is so great, they are forced to abandon their houses and neglect their tillage, all they have being a prey to the janissaries whenever they please to seize upon it. We had a guard of five hundred of them, and I was almost in tears every day to see their insolences in the poor villages through which we passed.

After seven days travelling through thick woods, we came to Nissa,[2] once the capital of Servia, situate in a fine plain on the river Nissava, in a very good air, and so fruitful a soil that the great plenty is hardly credible. I was certainly assured that the quantity of wine last vintage was so prodigious, they were forced to dig holes in the earth to put it in, not having vessels enough in the town to hold it. The happiness of this plenty is scarce perceived by the oppressed people. I saw here a new occasion for my compassion. The wretches that had provided twenty wagons for our baggage from Belgrade hither for a certain hire, being all sent back without payment, some of their horses lamed and others killed, without any satisfaction made for them. The poor fellows came round the house weeping and tearing their hair and beards in a most pitiful manner without getting anything but drubs from the insolent soldiers. I cannot express to Your Royal Highness how much I was moved at this scene. I would have paid them the money out of my own pocket with all my heart, but it had been only giving so much to the Aga, who would have taken it from them without any remorse.

After four days journey from this place over the mountains we came to Sophia situate in a large beautiful plain, on the river Isca,[3] surrounded with distant mountains. 'Tis hardly possible to see a more agreeable landscape. The city itself is very large and extremely populous. Here are hot baths, very famous for their medicinal virtues.[4] Four days journey from hence we arrived at Philippopoli after having

1 Halsband (1.310n4) gives Wortley's account, which suggests the river was not frozen.

2 Niš is one of the oldest cities in the Balkans, the medieval capital, and the birthplace of Constantine the Great.

3 Sofia and the Iskar River, Bulgaria.

4 Both the Romans and Ottomans built public baths around the thermal mineral springs that are still enjoyed today. See Letter 27, where Lady Mary describes her visit to them.

passed the ridges between the mountains of Haemus and Rhodophe,[1] which are always covered with snow. This town is situate on a rising ground near the river Hebrus, and is almost wholly inhabited by Greeks. Here are still some ancient Christian churches. They have a bishop; and several of the richest Greeks live here, but they are forced to conceal their wealth with great care, the appearance of poverty (which includes part of its inconveniencies) being all their security against feeling it in earnest. The country from hence to Adrianople is the finest in the world. Vines grow wild on all the hills, and the perpetual spring they enjoy makes everything gay and flourishing, but this climate, as happy as it seems, can never be preferred to England with all its snows and frosts, while we are blessed with an easy government under a king who makes his own happiness consist in the liberty of his people, and chooses rather to be looked upon as their father, than their master.—This theme would carry me very far, and I am sensible I have already tired out Your Royal Highness's patience, but my letter is in your hands, and you may make it as short as you please, by throwing it into the fire when you are weary of reading it.

I am, Madam, with the greatest respect etc.

Letter 27

To the Lady ____[2]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S. 1717

I am now got into a new world where everything I see appears to me a change of scene, and I write to Your Ladyship with some content of mind, hoping at least that you will find the charm of novelty in my letters, and no longer reproach me that I tell you nothing extraordinary. I won't trouble you with a relation of our tedious journey, but I must not omit what I saw remarkable at Sophia, one of the most beautiful towns in the Turkish Empire and famous for its hot baths that are resorted to both for diversion and health. I stopped here one day on purpose to see them. Designing to go *incognito*, I hired a Turkish

1 Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The Greek name was Philippoupolis and the Turkish name Filibe.

2 To Lady _____. The addressee of this crucial letter is not specified. Although the letter is addressed from Adrianople, Lady Mary is relating events that happened in Sofia. This letter inspired the famous orientalist painting, *Le Bain turc* (1862) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), who copied several passages from it in his notebook. See p. 173, note 1 and Appendix I3.

coach; these voitures are not at all like ours, but much more convenient for the country, the heat being so great that glasses would be very troublesome. They are made a good deal in the manner of the Dutch coaches, having wooden lattices painted and gilded, the inside being painted with baskets and nosegays of flowers, intermixed commonly with little poetical mottos. They are covered all over with scarlet cloth, lined with silk, and very often richly embroidered and fringed. This covering entirely hides the persons in them, but may be thrown back at pleasure, and the ladies peep through the lattices. They hold four people very conveniently, seated on cushions, but not raised.

In one of these covered wagons I went to the *bagnio* about ten o'clock. It was already full of women. It is built of stone, in the shape of a dome, with no windows but in the roof, which gives light enough. There was five of these domes joined together, the outmost being less than the rest, and serving only as a hall, where the portress stood at the door. Ladies of quality generally give this woman the value of a crown or ten shillings, and I did not forget that ceremony. The next room is a very large one, paved with marble, and all round it raised two sofas of marble, one above another. There were four fountains of cold water in this room, falling first into marble basins, and then running on the floor in little channels made for that purpose, which carried the streams into the next room, something less than this, with the same sort of marble sofas, but so hot with steams of sulphur proceeding from the baths joining to it, 'twas impossible to stay there with one's clothes on. The two other domes were the hot baths, one of which had cocks of cold water turning into it, to temper it to what degree of warmth the bathers have a mind to.

I was in my travelling habit, which is a riding dress, and certainly appeared very extraordinary to them, yet there was not one of them that showed the least surprise or impertinent curiosity, but received me with all the obliging civility possible. I know no European court where the ladies would have behaved themselves in so polite a manner to such a stranger. I believe in the whole there were two hundred women, and yet none of those disdainful smiles, or satiric whispers that never fail in our assemblies, when anybody appears that is not dressed exactly in the fashion. They repeated over and over to me, *Uzelle, pek uzelle*, which is nothing but *Charming, very charming*. The first sofas were covered with cushions and rich carpets, on which sat the ladies, and on the second their slaves behind 'em, but without any distinction of rank by their dress, all being in the state of nature, that is, in plain English, stark naked, without any beauty or defect concealed, yet there was not the least wanton smile or immodest gesture amongst them. They walked, and moved with the same majestic grace which Milton describes of our

General Mother.[1] There were many amongst them as exactly proportioned as ever any goddess was drawn by the pencil of Guido or Titian, and most of their skins shiningly white, only adorned by their beautiful hair divided into many tresses hanging on their shoulders, braided either with pearl or ribbon, perfectly representing the figures of the Graces.

I was here convinced of the truth of a reflection that I had often made, that if it was the fashion to go naked, the face would be hardly observed. I perceived that the ladies with the finest skins and most delicate shapes had the greatest share of my admiration, though their faces were sometimes less beautiful than those of their companions. To tell you the truth, I had wickedness enough to wish secretly that Mr. Gervase[2] could have been there invisible. I fancy it would have very much improved his art to see so many fine women naked, in different postures, some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet, and many negligently lying on their cushions, while their slaves (generally pretty girls of seventeen or eighteen) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty manners. In short, 'tis the woman's coffee-house, where all the news of the Town is told, scandal invented, etc.[3]

They generally take this diversion once a week, and stay there at least four or five hours without getting cold by immediate coming out of the hot-bath into the cool room, which was very surprising to me. The lady that seemed the most considerable amongst them entreated me to sit by

1 John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667) 4.304-18:

> She, as a veil down to the slender waist,
> Her unadorned golden tresses wore
> Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
> As the vine curls her tendrils—which implied
> Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,
> And by her yielded, by him best receiv'd,
> Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
> And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.
> Nor those mysterious parts were then conceal'd:
> Then was not guilty shame. Dishonest Shame
> Of Nature's works, Honour dishonourable,
> Sin-bred, how have ye troubl'd mankind
> With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure,
> And banish'd from man's life his happiest life,
> Simplicity and spotless innocence!

2 Charles Jervas (c. 1675-1739), an Irish portrait painter who painted many of London's intellectuals including Pope and Swift, became the Principal Portrait Painter to King George I in 1723. He painted Lady Mary in 1716.

3 The coffee houses in England (the first opened in 1637, almost a hundred years after the first coffee house in Istanbul) were mostly closed to women clients during this period, although women could own them and did serve in them.

her, and would fain have undressed me for the bath. I excused myself with some difficulty, they being all so earnest in persuading me. I was at last forced to open my skirt and show them my stays, which satisfied them very well, for I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine that it was not in my own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband.[1] I was charmed with their civility and beauty, and should have been very glad to pass more time with them, but Mr. W_____ resolving to pursue his journey next morning early, I was in haste to see the ruins of Justinian's church, which did not afford me so agreeable a prospect as I had left, being little more than a heap of stones.[2]

Adieu, Madam. I am sure I have now entertained you with an account of such a sight as you never saw in your life, and what no book of travels could inform you of. 'Tis no less than death for a man to be found in one of these places.[3]

Letter 28

To the Abbot ___.[4]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S. 1717

You see that I am very exact in keeping the promise you engaged me to make, but I know not whether your curiosity will be satisfied with the accounts I shall give you, though I can assure you that the desire I

1 Halsband (1.314n3) notes: "In 1741, when LM met Joseph Spence in Rome, she related this episode, and quoted the lady's remark that 'the Husbands in England were much worse than in the East; for that they ty'd up their Wives in little Boxes, of the shape of their bodies.'" Working against the tradition of male travel literature that emphasized the enslavement of Turkish women, Lady Mary instead offers herself up as a figure in need of saving.

2 Lady Mary is referring to the few remains of antiquity left in the ancient city of Sardica, the church founded by the Emperor Justinian I (ruled from 527 to 565).

3 Male travelers had no access to women's quarters, yet fantastical accounts of the abuse of Turkish women in the harem are standard tropes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel narratives to the Levant. See Appendix E.

4 To the Abbé Conti. Antonio Schinella Conti (1677-1749) was a Venetian cleric and literary figure from Padua who visited England in 1715 and in 1717-18. While in England he became a member of the Royal Society and adjudicated in the controversy between Leibniz and Newton over the invention of differential calculus. Princess Caroline received him, and throughout 1715 he attended Lady Mary's weekly suppers of authors and intellectuals. They were reacquainted when Lady Mary moved to Venice in 1739, and he translated nine of her poems and one essay into Italian. See Grundy 89 and 405 and Appendix B3 for a letter she wrote to him in French.

have to oblige you to the utmost of my power has made me very diligent in my inquiries and observations. 'Tis certain we have but very imperfect relations of the manners and religion of these people, this part of the world being seldom visited but by merchants who mind little but their own affairs, or travellers who make too short a stay to be able to report anything exactly of their own knowledge. The Turks are too proud to converse familiarly with merchants or etc., who can only pick up some confused informations which are generally false, and they can give no better an account of the ways here than a French *refugée*, lodging in a garret in Greek Street,[1] could write of the Court of England. The journey we have made from Belgrade hither by land cannot possibly be passed by any out of a public character. The desert woods of Servia are the common refuge of thieves who rob fifty in a company, that we had need of all our guards to secure us, and the villages so poor that only force could exhort from them necessary provisions. Indeed, the janissaries had no mercy on their poverty, killing all the poultry and sheep they could find, without asking who they belonged to, while the wretched owners durst not put in their claim for fear of being beaten. Lambs just fallen, geese and turkeys big with egg, all massacred without distinction! I fancied I heard the complaints of Meliboeus for the hope of his flock.[2] When the bassas travel 'tis yet worse. Those oppressors are not content with eating all that is to be eaten belonging to the peasants; after they have crammed themselves and their numerous retinue, they have the impudence to exact what they call *teeth money*, a contribution for the use of their teeth, worn with doing them the honour of devouring their meat. This is literal known truth, however extravagant it seems, and such is the natural corruption of a military government, their religion not allowing of this barbarity any more than ours does.

I had the advantage of lodging three weeks at Belgrade with a principal effendi, that is to say, a scholar. This set of men are equally capable of preferments in the law or the Church, those two sciences being cast into one, a lawyer and a priest being the same word.[3] They

1 A street in Soho, London. An area that was populated by French Protestant refugees (Huguenots) that escaped to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

2 See Virgil, *Eclogue I*. In Virgil, Meliboeus, who had his farm expropriated by a veteran in Octavian's army, bemoans the effects of officially sanctioned extortion. For many of Lady Mary's readers this passage and the reference to Virgil would have resonated with on-going debates regarding the corruptibility and the danger of a standing army. England was one of the last European powers to institute a standing military.

3 Kadi or Islamic judge.

are the only men really considerable in the Empire; all the profitable employments and church revenues are in their hands. The Grand Signor, though general heir to his people, never presumes to touch their lands or money, which goes in an uninterrupted succession to their children. 'Tis true they lose this privilege by accepting a place at Court or the title of bassa, but there are few examples of such fools amongst them. You may easily judge of the power of these men who have engrossed all the learning and almost all the wealth of the Empire. 'Tis they that are the real authors, though the soldiers are the actors of revolutions. They deposed the late Sultan Mustapha, and their power is so well known, 'tis the Emperor's interest to flatter them.[1]

This is a long digression. I was going to tell you that an intimate daily conversation with the effendi Achmet-Beg gave me an opportunity of knowing their religion and morals in a more particular manner than perhaps any Christian ever did. I explained to him the difference between the religion of England and Rome, and he was pleased to hear there were Christians that did not worship images, or adore the Virgin Mary. The ridicule of transubstantiation appeared very strong to him. Upon comparing our creeds together, I am convinced that if our friend Dr. _____[2] had free liberty of preaching here, it would be very easy to persuade the generality to Christianity, whose notions are very little different from his. Mr. Wh___[3] would make a very good apostle here; I don't doubt but his zeal will be much fired if you communicate this account to him, but tell him he must first have the gift of tongues before he could possibly be of any use.

Mahometism is divided into as many sects as Christianity, and the first institution as much neglected and obscured by interpretations. I cannot here forbear reflecting on the natural inclination of mankind, to make mysteries and novelties. The *Zeidi*, *Kadari*, *Jabari*, etc. put me in mind of the Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist, etc., and are equally

1 The "abdication" of Mustapha II in 1703 in favour of his brother, the reigning Sultan Ahmed III, was known as the Edirne Incident. Istanbul citizens, unpaid Janissaries, and most religious leaders (the *ulema*), all participated in the revolt against the deposed Sultan.

2 Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), Rector of St. James's Church, Piccadilly, was criticized by more orthodox churchmen for promulgating deism to his congregation. He was a close acquaintance of Lady Mary, whom he had met in 1715. See p. 105, note 3.

3 The English mathematician, historian, and theologian William Whiston (1667-1752) held that the early church believed in Arianism, a doctrine that held that Christ was created and therefore separate and inferior to God. He was expelled from Cambridge for his views. He was a close friend of Clarke and also part of Lady Mary's circle.

zealous against one another.[1] But the most prevailing opinion, if you search into the secret of the effendis is plain deism,[2] but this is kept from the people, who are amused with a thousand different notions, according to the different interests of their preachers. There are very few amongst them (Achmet-Beg denied there were any) so absurd as to set up for wit by declaring they believe no God at all. Sir Paul Rycaut is mistaken[3] (as he commonly is) in calling the sect *Muserin* (i.e., the secret with us) atheists, they being deists, and their impiety consists in making a jest of their prophet.[4] Achmet-Beg did not own to me that he was of this opinion, but made no scruple of deviating from some part of Mahomet's Law by drinking wine with the same freedom we did. When I asked how he came to allow himself that liberty, he made answer, all the creatures of God were good and designed for the use of man; however, that the prohibition of wine was a very wise maxim and meant for the common people, being the source of all disorders amongst them, but that the prophet never designed to confine those that knew how to use it with moderation; however, scandal ought to be avoided, and that he never drank it in public. This is the general way of thinking amongst them, and very few forbear drinking wine, that are able to afford it. He assured me that if I understood Arabic I should be very well pleased with reading the Alcoran, which is so far from the nonsense we charge it with, 'tis the purest morality delivered in the very best language. I have since heard impartial Christians speak of it in the same manner, and I don't doubt but all our translations are from copies got from the Greek priests, who would not fail to falsify it with the extremity of malice. No body of men ever were more ignorant and more corrupt, yet they differ so little from the Romish Church, I confess there is nothing gives me a greater abhorrence of the cruelty of your clergy than the barbarous persecutions of them, whenever they have been their masters, for no other reason than not acknowledging the Pope. The dissenting in that one article has got them the titles of heretics, schismatics, and what is worse, the same treatment. I found at Philippopoli a sect of Christians that call themselves Paulines.[1] They show an old church where, they say, St. Paul preached, and he is their favourite saint after the same manner as St. Peter is at Rome; neither do they forget to give him the same preference over the rest of the Apostles.

But of all the religions I have seen the Arnounts seem to me the most particular. They are natives of Arnountlick, the ancient Macedonia, and still retain the courage and hardiness, though they have lost the name of Macedonians, being the best militia in the Turkish Empire and the only check upon the janissaries.[2] They are foot soldiers. We had a guard of them, relieved in every considerable town we passed. They are all clothed and armed at their own expense, generally lusty young fellows, dressed in clean white coarse cloth, carrying guns of a prodigious length, which they run with upon their shoulders as if they did not feel the weight of them, the leader singing a sort of a rude tune not unpleasant, and the rest making up the chorus. These people living between Christians and Mahometans, and not being skilled in controversy, declare that they are utterly unable to judge which religion is best; but to be certain of not entirely rejecting the truth, they very prudently follow both, and go to the mosque on Fridays, and the church on Sundays, saying for their excuse, that at the Day of Judgement they are sure of protection from the True Prophet, but which that is they are not able to determine in this world. I believe there is no other race of mankind, who have so modest an opinion of their own capacity. These are the remarks I have made on the diversity of religions I have seen. I don't ask your pardon for the liberty I have taken in speaking of the Roman. I know you equally condemn the quackery of all churches, as much as you revere the sacred truths in which we both agree.

You will expect I should say something to you of the antiquities of this country, but there are few remains of ancient Greece. We passed

1 The two main sects of Islam are Sunni and Shi'a, but within these two there are many other smaller divisions. Zaidiyah and Kadariyah are the ones to which Lady Mary is referring. Jabari may be Jafariyah, a subset of Kadariyah (although Halsband [1.317n4] has it listed as Djabarīya). For more on Muslim sects see Ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdadi.

2 Deists believe in a supreme being on purely rational grounds without any reliance on revealed religion.

3 Sir Paul Rycaut (1629-1700) was a prominent member of the embassy to the Ottoman Porte from 1660-65. While carrying out his duties for the Levant Company, he compiled the information that would eventually be published as *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1686). Printed as a continuation of Richard Knolles's *The Generalle Historie of the Turkes* (1603), Rycaut's text was one of the most influential works about the Ottomans.

4 Rycaut (129) had claimed that the Muserin (Mu'tazila) were atheists, but Lady Mary is more accurate when she describes them as deists as this sect holds that knowledge is derived from reason and that the Qur'an as created could not be co-terminous with the eternal.

1 See p. 100, note 1 on her visit. The Paulicians formed a new centre in Philippopoli; they were a dualistic and heretical sect who venerated the apostle St. Paul.

2 Arnauts were Albanians who were highly regarded as mercenary soldiers in the Ottoman military, but who never fully embraced either Islam or Christianity and were fiercely independent.

near the piece of an arch, which is commonly called Trajan's Gate,[1] as supposing he made it to shut up the passage over the mountains between Sophia and Philippopoli, but I rather believe it the remains of some triumphal arch (though I could not see any inscription), for if that passage had been shut up there are many others, that would serve for the march of an army; and notwithstanding the story of Baldwin, Earl of Flanders,[2] being overthrown in these straits after he won Constantinople, I don't fancy the Germans would find themselves stopped by them. 'Tis true, the road is now made (with great industry) as commodious as possible for the march of the Turkish army. There is not one ditch or puddle between this place and Belgrade that has not a large strong bridge of planks built over it. But the precipices were not so terrible as I had heard them represented. At the foot of these mountains we lay at the little village of Kiskoi, wholly inhabited by Christians, as all the peasants of Bulgaria are. Their houses are nothing but little huts raised of dirt, baked in the sun, and they leave them and fly into the mountains some months before the march of the Turkish army, who would else entirely ruin them by driving away their whole flocks. This precaution secures them in a sort of plenty, for such vast tracts of land lying in common, they have liberty of sowing what they please, and are generally very industrious husbandmen. I drank here several sorts of delicious wine. The women dress themselves in a great variety of coloured glass-beads, and are not ugly, but of tawny complexions. I have now told you all that is worth telling you, (and perhaps more) relating to my journey. When I am at Constantinople, I'll try to pick up some curiosities and then you shall hear again from etc.[3]

Letter 29

To the Countess of B____[4]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S. 1717

As I never can forget the smallest of Your Ladyship's commands, my first business here, has been to enquire after the stuffs you ordered me to look for, without being able to find what you would like. The

1 A historic mountain pass at Ihtiman, Bulgaria.
2 Baldwin I (1172-1205), Count of Flanders, was Emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople. He was captured by the Bulgarians at the Battle of Adrianople (1205) and died later that year.
3 This is the end of the first volume of the 1763 edition.
4 To Lady Bristol.

difference of the dress here and at London is so great, the same sort of things are not proper for caftans and manteaus. However, I will not give over my search, but renew it again at Constantinople, though I have reason to believe there is nothing finer than what is to be found here, being the present residence of the Court. The Grand Signor's eldest daughter was married some few days before I came, and upon that occasion the Turkish ladies display all their magnificence. The bride was conducted to her husband's house in very great splendor. She is widow of the late Vizier[1] who was killed at Peterwaradin, though that ought rather to be called a contract than a marriage, not having ever lived with him; however, the greatest part of his wealth is hers. He had the permission of visiting her in the Seraglio, and being one of the handsomest men in the empire had very much engaged her affections. When she saw this second husband, who is at least fifty, she could not forbear bursting into tears. He is a man of merit, and the declared favourite of the Sultan, which they call *Mosayp*, but that is not enough to make him pleasing in the eyes of a girl of thirteen.[2]

The government here is entirely in the hands of the army, and the Grand Signor with all his absolute power as much a slave as any of his subjects, and trembles at a janissary's frown. Here is, indeed, a much greater appearance of subjection than amongst us. A minister of state is not spoke to but upon the knee. Should a reflection on his conduct be dropt in a coffee-house, (for they have spies every where) the house would be razed to the ground, and perhaps the whole company put to

1 Fatma Sultan (1704-33) was married first in 1709 to the Ottoman General Silahdar Ali Pasha (c. 1667-1716), who was Grand Vizier from 1713 until his death at Petrovaradin. She was subsequently married to Nevsehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha (c. 1666-1730), who became Grand Vizier in 1717 and directed the government for twelve years. Ibrahim Pasha was a consummate and extremely influential politician; he not only engaged with European ambassadors and artists in Istanbul, but also sent Ottoman ambassadors to Paris and Vienna to report back about life in Europe. The extravagant lifestyle of the Sultan and the ruling class, which were financed by the Grand Vizier, led to much discontent amongst the population during this period. See Stanford Shaw's *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Volume 1 (233-38).
2 Wortley's account suggests that an air of crisis had enveloped the court of Ahmed III: "The Mosaip, it is certain has very earnestly pressed for an order to consummate his marriage with the Grand Signior's daughter, who is the widow of the late Vizier, and is now in this favourite's house. It is refused him, as it is said the Grand Signior declares this is not a proper time for the rejoicings that are usually made at this Court upon such occasions, and that he chose him for his son-in-law to take care of his affairs." See Wortley's Letter to Joseph Addison of 10 April 1717 in Appendix B6.

the torture. No huzzaing mobs, senseless pamphlets, and tavern disputes about politics:

> A Consequential ill that Freedom draws,
> A Bad Effect but from a Noble Cause,[1]

none of our harmless calling names; but when a minister here displeases the people, in three hours time he is dragged even from his master's arms. They cut off his hands, head and feet, and throw them before the palace-gate with all the respect in the world, while that Sultan (to whom they all profess an unlimited adoration) sits trembling in his apartment, and dare neither defend nor revenge his favourite. This is the blessed condition of the most absolute monarch upon earth, who owns no law but his will. I cannot help wishing (in the loyalty of my heart) that the Parliament would send hither a ship-load of your passive obedient men, that they might see arbitrary government in its clearest, strongest light, where 'tis hard to judge whether the prince, people or ministers are most miserable.[2] I could make many reflections on this subject, but I know, Madam, your own good sense has already furnished you with better than I am capable of.

I went yesterday along with the French Ambassadress[3] to see the Grand Signor in his passage to the mosque.[4] He was preceded by a numerous guard of janissaries with vast white feathers on their heads, *Spahis* and *Bostangees*, these are foot and horse guard, and the royal gardeners, which are a very considerable body of men, dressed in different habits of fine lively colours, so that at a distance they appeared like a parterre of tulips.[5] After them the Aga of the janissaries in a robe

1 These lines recur in Lady Mary's "On Seeing a Portrait of Sir Robert Walpole" (c. 1730) with "that Freedom" changed to "good-nature" (13-14).

2 The doctrine of passive obedience espoused by Tory monarchists was based on the belief in the divine right of kings.

3 Madeleine-Françoise de Gontaut-Biron (1698-1739) married Jean-Louis D'Usson, Marquis de Bonnac (1672-1738), in 1715. He had arrived in Istanbul as the French Ambassador in 1713 and wrote a memoir about his time there: *Mémoire historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople.* France, unlike England, was interested in ensuring that the Ottoman Empire remained a threat to the Habsburgs. The teenage bride gave birth to a boy in December 1716. Despite the tension between the husbands, Lady Mary and Madeleine-Françoise spent a good deal of time together.

4 Ahmed III (1673-1736) was Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1703 to 1730.

5 From 1718 onward, in a period known as the Tulip Era, Ahmed III, with the assistance of the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha, established a courtly culture marked by conspicuous consumption. The propagation of luxury led to an efflorescence in the arts and to growing unrest among the people and the military that culminated in the Janissary rebellion of 1730.

of purple velvet, lined with silver tissue, his horse led by two slaves richly dressed. Next him the *Kuzlir Aga* (Your Ladyship knows this is the chief guardian of the Seraglio ladies)[1] in a deep yellow cloth (which suited very well to his black face) lined with sables, and last his Sublimity himself in green lined with the fur of a black Muscovite fox, which is supposed worth £1000 sterling, mounted on a fine horse with furniture richly embroidered with jewels. Six more horses richly furnished were led after him, and two of his principal courtiers bore, one his gold, and the other his silver coffee pot, on a staff. Another carried a silver stool on his head for him to sit on. It would be too tedious to tell your Ladyship the various dresses and turbans (by which their rank is distinguished) but they were all extreme rich and gay, to the number of some thousands, that perhaps there cannot be seen a more beautiful procession. The Sultan appeared to us a handsome man of about forty, with a very graceful air, but something severe in his countenance, his eyes very full and black. He happened to stop under the window where we stood, and (I suppose being told who we were) looked upon us very attentively, that we had full leisure to consider him, and the French Ambassadress agreed with me as to his good mien.[2]

I see that lady very often. She is young, and her conversation would be a great relief to me, if I could persuade her to live without those forms and ceremonies that make life formal and tiresome, but she is so delighted with her guards, her twenty-four footmen, gentlemen-ushers, etc. that she would rather die than make me a visit without them, not to reckon a coach full of attending damsels, ycleped maids of honour. What vexes me is that as long as she will visit me with this troublesome equipage, I am obliged to do the same. However, our mutual interest makes us much together. I went with her the other day all round the town in an open gilt chariot, with our joint train of attendants, preceded by our guards, who might have summoned the people to see what they had never seen, nor ever would see again, two young Christian ambassadresses never yet having been in this country at the same time, nor I believe ever

1 Although held by a slave, the Kislar Agha was the chief Black Eunuch and responsible for the harem and its finances. Having direct access to the Valide Sultan and the Sultan, he was both immensely powerful and wealthy as signalled here by Lady Mary's description of his dress that was trimmed with rare furs. See Penzer 125-33.

2 Ahmed III had long cultivated close relations with the French as part of his policy of resisting the Russians. His spouse Aminā Mehr-îShâh (1693-1732) was of French decent and his other one, Râbi'a Serm-î (1698-1732), was also likely French.

will again. Your Ladyship may easily imagine that we drew a vast crowd of spectators, but all silent as death. If any of them had taken the liberties of our mob upon any strange sight, our janissaries had made no scruple of falling on them with their scimitars without danger for so doing, being above the law. Yet these people have some good qualities. They are very zealous and faithful where they serve, and look upon it as their business to fight for you on all occasions, of which I had a very pleasant instance in a village on this side Phillipopolis, where we were met by our domestic guard. I happened to bespeak pigeons for my supper, upon which one of my janissaries went immediately to the *cadi* (the chief civil officer of the town) and ordered him to send in some dozens. The poor man answered that he had already sent about, but could get none. My janissary, in the height of his zeal for my service, immediately locked him up prisoner in his room, telling him he deserved death for his impudence in offering to excuse his not obeying my command, but out of respect to me, he would not punish him but by my order, and accordingly he came very gravely to me to ask what should be done to him, adding by way of compliment that if I pleased, he would bring me his head.[1] This may give you some idea of the unlimited power of these fellows, who are all sworn brothers, and bound to revenge the injuries done to one another, whether at Cairo, Aleppo, or any part of the world. And this inviolable league makes them so powerful, the greatest man at Court never speaks to them but in a flattering tone, and in Asia any man that is rich is forced to enrol himself a janissary to secure his estate. But I have already said enough, and I dare swear, dear Madam, that by this time 'tis a very comfortable reflection to you, that there is no possibility of your receiving such a tedious letter but once in six months. 'Tis that consideration has given me the assurance to entertain you so long, and will I hope plead the excuse of dear Madam, etc.

Letter 30

To the Countess of ____[2]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S. 1717

I wish to God (dear Sister) that you was as regular in letting me have the pleasure of knowing what passes on your side of the globe, as I am

1 See Appendix C3 for Baron François de Tott's dismissive remarks on this episode. He suggests Lady Mary has misinterpreted the exchange.

2 To Lady Mar.

careful in endeavouring to amuse you by the account of all I see that I think you care to hear of. You content yourself in telling me over and over that the town is very dull; it may possibly be dull to you, when every day does not present you with something new, but for me, that am in arrear at least two months news, all that seems very stale with you would be fresh and sweet here. Pray let me into more particulars. I will try to awaken your gratitude by giving you a full and true relation of the novelties of this place, none of which would surprise you more than a sight of my person as I am now in my Turkish habit, though I believe you would be of my opinion that 'tis admirably becoming. I intend to send you my picture; in the mean time accept of it here.[1]

The first piece of my dress is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes, and conceal the legs more modestly than your petticoats. They are of a thin rose coloured damask, brocaded with silver flowers. My shoes are of white kid leather, embroidered with gold. Over this hangs my smock of a fine white silk gauze, edged with embroidery. This smock has wide sleeves hanging half-way down my arm and is closed at the neck with a diamond button, but the shape and colour of the bosom very well to be distinguished through it.—The *antery* is a waistcoat made close to the shape, of white and gold damask, with very long sleeves falling back and fringed with deep gold fringe, and should have diamond or pearl buttons. My *caftan*, of the same stuff with my drawers, is a robe exactly fitted to my shape and reaching to my feet, with very long strait falling sleeves. Over this is the girdle, of about four fingers broad, which all that can afford have entirely of diamonds or other precious stones. Those that will not be at that expense, have it of exquisite embroidery on satin, but it must be fastened before with a clasp of diamonds. The *curdée* is a loose robe they throw off or put on according to the weather, being of a rich brocade (mine is green and gold) either lined with ermine or sables; the sleeves reach very little below the shoulders. The headdress is composed of a cap, called *talpock*, which is in winter of fine velvet embroidered with pearls or diamonds, and in summer of a light shining silver stuff. This is fixed on one side of the head, hanging a little way down with a gold tassel, and bound on either with a circle of diamonds (as I have seen several) or a rich embroidered handkerchief. On the other side of the head, the hair is laid flat, and here the ladies are at liberty to show their fancies, some putting flowers, others a plume of heron's feathers, and, in short,

1 During her stay, Lady Mary had her portrait painted twice by Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, who had been based in Istanbul since 1699. In the one she had done for her sister, she is alone, and in the other she is with her son. See Appendix I1.

what they please; but the most general fashion is, a large bouquet of jewels, made like natural flowers, that is, the buds of pearls, the roses of different coloured rubies, the jessamines of diamonds, the jonquils of topazes, etc. so well set and enamelled, 'tis hard to imagine anything of that kind so beautiful. The hair hangs at its full length behind, divided into tresses braided with pearl or ribbon, which is always in great quantity.

I never saw in my life, so many fine heads of hair. I have counted 110 of these tresses of one lady's, all natural, but it must be owned that every beauty is more common here than with us. 'Tis surprising to see a young woman that is not very handsome. They have naturally the most beautiful complexions in the world and generally large black eyes. I can assure you with great truth, that the Court of England (though I believe it the fairest in Christendom) cannot show so many beauties as are under our protection here. They generally shape their eye-brows, and the Greeks and Turks have the custom of putting round their eyes on the inside a black tincture that, at a distance, or by candle-light, adds very much to the blackness of them. I fancy many of our ladies would be overjoyed to know this secret, but 'tis too visible by day. They dye their nails a rose-colour; I own I cannot enough accustom myself to this fashion to find any beauty in it.

As to their morality or good conduct, I can say, like Harlequin, that 'tis just as 'tis with you,[1] and the Turkish ladies don't commit one sin the less for not being Christians. Now I am a little acquainted with their ways, I cannot forbear admiring either the exemplary discretion or extreme stupidity of all the writers that have given accounts of them.[2] 'Tis very easy to see, they have more liberty than we have, no

1 In Aphra Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687), Harlequin declares the same moral codes exist on the moon as those on earth (III.i).

2 A common theme in the travel and histories of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey was the oppression of Muslim women and the comparative freedom of European women. Jean de Thevenot (1687) writes: "the Turks do not believe that Women go to Heaven, and hardly account them Rational Creatures; the truth is, they take them only for their service as they would a Horse" (56-57). Aaron Hill in his 1709 account wrongly reports that Turkish women are denied entry into Paradise and promises to give "British ladies, an enlivening taste of Turkish arrogance" in order that they will see "how little cause [they] have to grieve" as in contrast British men "posses a just and mild pre-eminence by nature's laws and those of matrimony" (42). He further informs the reader that Turks "boast a sort of unconfined authority, which makes their wives submissively obedient" (97). See Appendix E5. Around the question of women's confinement, Hill (97) and Dumont (268) erroneously declare that women are strictly sequestered. Dumont remarks that "There is no Slavery

woman of what rank soever being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes, and another that hides the whole dress of her head, and hangs half way down her back; and their shapes are also wholly concealed by a thing they call a *ferigée*, which no woman of any sort appears without. This has strait sleeves that reaches to their fingers' ends, and it laps all round them, not unlike a riding-hood. In winter 'tis of cloth, and in summer plain stuff or silk. You may guess how effectually this disguises them, that there is no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street.

This perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery.[1] The most usual method of intrigue is to send an appointment to the lover to meet the lady at a Jew's shop, which are as notoriously convenient as our Indian houses,[2] and yet even those that don't make that use of them do not scruple to go to buy pennorths[3] and tumble over rich goods, which are chiefly to be found amongst that sort of people. The great ladies seldom let their gallants know who they are, and 'tis so difficult to find it out that they can very seldom guess at her name, they have corresponded with above half a year together. You may easily imagine the number of faithful wives very small in a country where they have nothing to fear from their lovers' indiscretion, since we see so many that have the courage to expose themselves to that in this world, and all the threatened punishment of the next, which is never preached to the Turkish damsels. Neither have they much to apprehend from the resentment of their husbands, those ladies that are rich having all their money in their own hands, which they take with them upon a divorce, with an addition which he is obliged to give them.[4] Upon the whole, I

equal to that of the Turkish Women.... The Door of the Womens Apartment is a *Ne plus ultra* for every thing that looks like a Man, and the utmost limit of the Womens Liberty" (268). In contrast, Joseph de Tournefort in his *Relation d'un voyage du Levant* (1717) states that most women could pursue their affairs without detection.

1 Masquerades were a very popular aristocratic entertainment throughout Europe and England at this time. In the literature and art of the period, they were often depicted as places of sexual intrigue.

2 Lady Mary had suggested she and Edward secretly meet at an Indian house—rooms that were let out to distressed lovers—when they were engaged in their clandestine courtship that led to their elopement.

3 In this context, pennyworths means bargains.

4 Refers to married Muslim women's rights to own property; the Qur'an established women's right to the *mahr*, which is granted to the bride (*continued*)

look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the Empire. The very Divan pays a respect to them, and the Grand Signor himself, when a *bassa* is executed, never violates the privileges of the *haram*,[1] (or women's apartment) which remains unsearched entire to the widow. They are queens of their slaves, whom the husband has no permission so much as to look upon, except it be an old woman or two that his lady chooses. 'Tis true their law permits them four wives, but there is no instance of a man of quality that makes use of this liberty, or of a woman of rank that would suffer it. When a husband happens to be inconstant (as those things will happen) he keeps his mistress in a house apart, and visits her as privately as he can, just as 'tis with you. Amongst all the great men here, I only know the *Tefterdar*[2] (i.e., treasurer) that keeps a number of she-slaves for his own use (that is, on his own side of the house, for a slave, once given to serve a lady, is entirely at her disposal) and he is spoke of as a libertine, or what we should call a rake, and his wife won't see him, though she continues to live in his house.[3] Thus you see, dear Sister, the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe. Perhaps it would be more entertaining to add a few surprising customs of my own invention, but nothing seems to me so agreeable as truth, and I believe nothing so acceptable to you. I conclude with repeating the great truth of my being, dear Sister, etc.

on her marriage. In contrast, the English dowry was given to the husband and British women were subject to the doctrine of "coverture," where wives and all their assets were the property of and under the control of their husbands.

1 Harem means sanctuary or sacred place.

2 A defterdar or book-keeper was a high ranking official in charge of the finances of the Ottoman Empire.

3 Wortley makes similar observations in a private letter to Joseph Addison: "The men of Consideration among the Turks appear in their conversation as much civilized as any I have met with in Italy and are not unlike the Italians in their Carriage. Those that are in good credit have but one wife. She has commonly several slaves, which the Husband does not see; if he does it makes an intire breach with the wife. But they frequently keep women at private places. The wives who go abroad with their faces hid are thought to take as much liberty as they do in Italy. The Privilege of having more wives than one is very rarely made use of unless by those that travel into distant Countries" (22 August 1717, Tickell MS; quoted in Halsband 1.329 n3).

Letter 31

To Mr. P---[1]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S. 1717

I dare say you expect at least something very new in this letter, after I have gone a journey not undertaken by any Christian of some one hundred years. The most remarkable accident that happened to me was my being very near overturned into the Hebrus, and if I had much regard for the glories that one's name enjoys after death, I should certainly be sorry for having missed the romantic conclusion of swimming down the same river in which the musical head of Orpheus repeated verses, so many ages since

> *Caput a cervice revulsum,*
> *Gurgite cum medio, portans Oeagrius Hebrus*
> *Volveret, Euridicen vox ipsa, et frigida lingua*
> *Ah! Miseram Euridicen anima fugiente vocabat,*
> *Euridicen toto referebant flumine ripæ.*[2]

Who knows but some of your bright wits might have found it a subject affording many poetical turns and have told the world in an heroic Elegy that

> as equal were our souls, so equal were our fates,[3]

I despair of ever hearing so many fine things said of me as so extraordinary a death would have given occasion for.[4]

1 To Alexander Pope.

2 "Oeagrian Hebrus, down mid-current rolled,
Rent from the marble neck, his drifting head,
The death-chilled tongue found yet a voice to cry
'Eurydice! ah! poor Eurydice!'
With parting breath he called her, and the banks
From the broad stream caught up 'Eurydice!'" (Virgil, *Georgics*, 4.522-27)

3 "As equal were their souls, so equal was their fate," from John Dryden's "To the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew" (1686).

4 Geoffrey Tillotson argues that this letter inspired Alexander Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (1717) in his essay "Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*," *Review of English Studies* 12 (1936): 401-12.

I am at this present moment writing in a house situated on the banks of the Hebrus,[1] which runs under my chamber window. My garden is full of tall cypress trees, upon the branches of which several couple of true turtles are saying soft things to one another from morning till night. How naturally do boughs and vows come into my head at this minute! And must not you confess to my praise that 'tis more than an ordinary discretion that can resist the wicked suggestions of poetry in a place where truth for once furnishes all the ideas of pastoral? The summer is already far advanced in this part of the world, and for some miles round Adrianople the whole ground is laid out in gardens, and the banks of the river set with rows of fruit trees, under which all the most considerable Turks divert themselves every evening, not with walking, that is not one of their pleasures, but a set party of them choose out a green spot, where the shade is very thick, and there they spread a carpet on which they sit drinking their coffee and generally attended by some slave with a fine voice or that plays on some instrument. Every twenty paces you may see one of these little companies listening to the dashing of the river, and this taste is so universal that the very gardeners are not without it. I have often seen them and their children sitting on the banks and playing on a rural instrument perfectly answering the description of the ancient fistula, being composed of unequal reeds, with a simple but agreeable softness in the sound. Mr. Addison might here make the experiment he speaks of in his travels, there not being one instrument of music among the Greek or Roman statues that is not to be found in the hands of the people of this country.[2] The young lads generally divert themselves with making garlands for their favourite lambs, which I have often seen painted and adorned with flowers lying at their feet while they sung or played. It is not that they ever read romances, but these are the ancient amusements here, and as natural to them as cudgel playing and football to our British swains. The softness and warmth of the climate forbidding all rough exercises, which were never so much as heard of amongst them, and naturally inspiring a laziness and aversion to labour, which the great plenty indulges. These gardeners are the only happy race of country people in Turkey. They furnish all the city with fruits and herbs and seem to live very easily. They are most of them Greeks and

1 The ancient name for the Maritsa River, which runs through Edirne.

2 Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (London, 1705). Addison (1672-1719) wrote what was considered the definitive account of Italy in the eighteenth century, comparing its contemporary landscape to renditions of it by the classical poets. Lady Mary's library contained a copy of his travels.

have little houses in the midst of their gardens, where their wives and daughters take a liberty not permitted in the town, I mean, to go unveiled.[1] These wenches are very neat and handsome, and pass their time at their looms under the shade of their trees. I no longer look upon Theocritus as a romantic writer;[2] he has only given a plain image of the way of life amongst the peasants of his country, which before oppression had reduced them to want, were I suppose all employed as the better sort of them are now. I don't doubt had he been born a Briton, his Idylliums[3] had been filled with descriptions of threshing and churning, both which are unknown here, the corn being all trod out by oxen, and butter (I speak it with sorrow) unheard of.

I read over your Homer[4] here with an infinite pleasure and find several little passages explained that I did not before entirely comprehend the beauty of, many of the customs and much of the dress then in fashion being yet retained, and I don't wonder to find more remains here of an age so distant than is to be found in any other country, the Turks not taking that pains to introduce their own manners as has been generally practiced by other nations that imagine themselves more polite.[5] It would be too tedious to you to point out all the passages that relate to present customs, but I can assure you that the princesses and great ladies pass their time at their looms, embroidering veils and robes, surrounded by their maids, which are always very numerous, in the same manner as we find Andromache and Helen described.[6] The description of the belt of Menelaus exactly resembles those that are

1 It was common for women to go unveiled in rural areas.

2 Theocritus (c. 300 BCE) was an ancient Greek writer of Bucolic poetry. Because the *Idylls* attributed to him likely established the parameters of pastoral verse, his influence on European literature has been pervasive.

3 The *Idylls* are short poems that depict the everyday life of peasants, at times idealized.

4 Lady Mary was reading Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, which was published between 1715 and 1720. The second volume was published in 1716 and in his letter of June 1717, Pope indicates that he was sending her the recently published third volume and his *Works* (1717). See Appendix B5.

5 While the depiction of the timelessness of Greek culture (from ancient to modern) is a common convention of neo-classical English travelers, Lady Mary implies that the acceptance of Greek culture by the Ottomans is evidence of an accommodating model of empire.

6 Both characters are from Greek mythology. In the *Iliad*, 22.437-76, Homer depicts Andromache, Hector's wife, embroidering flowers on a purple cloak just prior to receiving news of Hector's death. The allusion to Helen is to the first moment she appears in the *Iliad*, where she is embroidering a scene depicting the siege of Troy (3.121).

now worn by the great men, fastened before with broad golden clasps and embroidered round with rich work. The snowy veil that Helen throws over her face is still fashionable;[1] and I never see (as I do very often) half a dozen old Bashaws with their reverend beards, sitting basking in the sun, but I recollect good King Priam and his counsellors.[2] Their manner of dancing is certainly the same that Diana is sung to have danced by Eurotas.[3] The great lady still leads the dance and is followed by a troop of young girls who imitate her steps, and if she sings, make up the chorus. The tunes are extreme gay and lively, yet with something in them wonderful soft. The steps are varied according to the pleasure of her that leads the dance, but always in exact time and infinitely more agreeable than any of our dances, at least in my opinion. I sometimes make one in the train but am not skilful enough to lead. These are the Grecian dances, the Turkish being very different.

I should have told you in the first place that the eastern manners give a great light into many scripture passages that appear odd to us, their phrases being commonly what we should call scripture language. The vulgar Turk is very different from what is spoke at Court or amongst the people of figure, who always mix so much Arabic and Persian in their discourse that it may very well be called another language; and 'tis as ridiculous to make use of the expressions commonly used in speaking to a great man or a lady as it would be to talk broad Yorkshire or Somersetshire in the drawing room. Besides this distinction, they have what they call the sublime, that is, a style proper for poetry, and which is the exact scripture style.[4] I believe you would be pleased to see a genuine example of this, and I am very glad I have it in my power to satisfy your curiosity by sending you a faithful copy of the verses that Ibrahim Bassa,[5] the reigning favourite, has made for the young Princess, his contracted wife, whom he is not yet permitted to visit without witnesses, though she is gone home to his house. He is a man of wit and learning, and whether or no he is capable of writing good verse himself, you may be sure that on such an occasion he would not want the assistance of the best poets in the Empire.[1] Thus the verses may be looked upon as a sample of their finest poetry, and I don't doubt you'll be of my mind that it is most wonderfully resembling the Song of Solomon, which also was addressed to a royal bride.

1 Lady Mary comments on another use of the veil, as fashion.

2 In the *Iliad*, Priam is the King of Troy.

3 Eurotas is one of the main rivers in the Peloponnese and named after a figure from Greek mythology. See Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.498, where Diana leads a dance on the banks of the river.

4 Ottoman divan poetry, influenced by Sufi thought, reached its peak between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

5 Ibrahim Pasha (1666-1730), who would shortly become the Grand Vizier, was a great patron of Ottoman poets and actively promoted the intellectual and artistic environment that characterized the Tulip era. See Shaw on both his political and intellectual contributions (233-38).

Turkish verses addressed to the Sultana, eldest daughter of Sultan Achmet 3rd.

Stanza 1st

1 V. The Nightingale now wanders in the Vines
Her Passion is to seek Roses.
2. I went down to admire the beauty of the Vines
The sweetness of your charms has ravish'd my Soul.
3. Your Eyes are black and Lovely
But wild and disdainful as those of a Stag.

Stanza 2nd

1. The wished possession is delayed from day to day
The cruel Sultan Achmet will not permit me to see those cheeks, more vermillion than roses.
2. I dare not snatch one of your kisses
The sweetness of your charms has ravish'd my Soul.
3. Your Eyes are black and lovely
But wild and disdainful as those of a Stag.

Stanza 3rd

1. The wretched Bassa Ibrahim sighs in these verses,
One Dart from your Eyes has pierc'd through my Heart.
2. Ah when will the Hour of possession arrive?
Must I yet wait a long time
The sweetness of your charms has ravish'd my soul,
3. Ah Sultana stag-ey'd, an Angel amongst angels,
I desire and my desire remains unsatisfied,
Can you take delight to prey upon my heart?

Stanza 4th

1. My cries pierce the Heavens,
My Eyes are without sleep

1 The most celebrated poet of the Tulip era, Ahmet Nedîm Efendi (1681?-1730), was patronized by Ibrahim Pasha. As a court poet he frequently wrote occasional verse for weddings and other holidays.

Turn to me, Sultana, let me gaze on thy beauty.

2. Adieu I go down to the Grave
If you call me I return
My Heart is hot as Sulphur, sigh and it will flame.

3. Crown of my Life, fair light of my Eyes, my Sultana, my Princess,
I rub my face against the Earth, I am drown'd in scalding Tears—I rave!
Have you no Compassion? Will you not turn to look upon me?

I have taken abundance of pain to get these verses in a literal translation, and if you were acquainted with my interpreters, I might spare myself the trouble of assuring you that they have received no poetical touches from their hands. In my opinion (allowing for the inevitable faults of a prose translation into a language so very different) there is a good deal of beauty in them. The epithet of stag-eyed (though the sound is not very agreeable in English) pleases me extremely, and is I think, a very lively image of the fire and indifference in his mistress' eyes. Monsieur Boileau has very justly observed,[1] we are never to judge of the elevation of an expression in an ancient author by the sound it carries with us, which may be extremely fine with them at the same time it looks low or uncouth to us.[2] You are so well acquainted with Homer, you cannot but have observed the same thing, and you must have the same indulgence for all oriental poetry. The repetitions at the end of the two first stanzas are meant for a sort of chorus and agreeable to the ancient manner of writing. The music of the verses apparently changes in the third stanza, where the burden is altered, and I think he very artfully seems more passionate at the conclusion as 'tis natural for people to warm themselves by their own discourse, especially on a subject where the heart is concerned, and is far more touching than our modern custom of concluding a song of passion with a turn which is inconsistent with it. The first verse is a description of the season of the year, all the country now being full of nightingales, whose amours with roses is an Arabian fable as well known here as

1 The French poet and critic Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's (1636-1711) *L'Art poétique* (1674) was a crucial text of neo-classical criticism. He heavily influenced both the verse and criticism of Dryden and Pope.

2 Lady Mary is referring to a passage in Boileau's *Réflections critiques sur quelques passages du Rhéteur Longin* [*Critical Reflections on Several Passages by Longinus the Rhetorician*] (1694-1710), in which he argues this point with regard to translating the diction of Homer and Virgil.

any part of Ovid amongst us, and is much the same as if an English poem should begin by saying: Now Philomela sings—Or what if I turned the whole into the style of English poetry to see how it would look?[1]

Stanza I

Now Philomel renews her tender strain,
Indulging all the night her pleasing Pain
I sought the Groves to hear the Wanton sing,
There saw a face more beauteous than the Spring
Your large stag's-eyes where 1,000 glories play,
As bright, as Lively, but as wild as they.

2

In vain I'm promised such a heavenly prize,
Ah, Cruel Sultan who delays my Joys!
While piercing charms transfix my amorous Heart
I dare not snatch one kiss to ease the smart
Those Eyes like etc.

3

Your wretched Lover in these lines complains
From those dear Beauties rise his killing pains.
When will the Hour of wished-for Bliss arrive?
Must I wait longer? Can I wait and live?
Ah bright Sultana! Maid divinely fair!
Can you unpitying see the pain I bear?

Stanza 4th

The Heavens relenting hear my piercing Cries
I loath the Light, and Sleep forsakes my Eyes.
Turn thee Sultana ere thy Lover dies.
Sinking to Earth, I sigh the last Adieu—
Call me, my Goddess and my Life renew.

1 Common symbols in Ottoman, Persian, and Arabic poetry, epics, and legends. The nightingale represents the constant lover or the rose, which is both beautiful and thorny. Lady Mary is referring to the myth of Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VI. King Tereus lusts after her, rapes her, and cuts out her tongue. She weaves a tapestry depicting the act and sends it to his wife, who murders their son and serves him to the King for dinner. The King then tries to murder the two women, but all three are turned into birds. Philomel is sometimes used to refer to a nightingale.

My Queen! my Angel! my fond Heart's desire
I rave—my bosom burns with Heavenly fire.
Pity that Passion which thy charms inspire.

I have taken the liberty in the second verse of following what I suppose the true sense of the author, though not literally expressed. By saying he went down to admire the beauty of the vines and her charms ravished his soul, I understand by this a poetical fiction of having first seen her in a garden where he was admiring the beauty of the spring. But I could not forbear retaining the comparison of her eyes to those of a stag, though perhaps the novelty of it may give it a burlesque sound in our language. I cannot determine upon the whole how well I have succeeded in the translation. Neither do I think our English proper to express such violence of passion, which is very seldom felt amongst us, and we want those compound words which are very frequent and strong in the Turkish language.[1] You see I am pretty far gone in oriental learning, and to say truth I study very hard. I wish my studies may give me an occasion of entertaining your curiosity, which will be the utmost advantage hoped from it by etc.

Letter 32

To Mrs. S. C___[2]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S. 1717

In my opinion, dear S., I ought rather to quarrel with you for not answering my Nimeguen[3] letter of August till December than to excuse my not writing again until now. I am sure there is on my side a very good excuse for silence, having gone such tiresome land journeys, though I don't find the conclusion of them so bad as you seem to imagine. I am very easy here, and not in the solitude you fancy me; the great quantity of Greek, French, English and Italians that are under our protection make their court to me from morning till night, and I'll assure you are many of them very fine ladies, for there is no possibility for a Christian to live easily under this government but by

1 As Halsband notes (1.337n1), Lady Mary owned Thomas Vaughn's *A Grammar of the Turkish Language*, and she wrote translation exercises in a Commonplace Book now held in the Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

2 To Sarah Chiswell. In Malcolm Jack's edition, Letters 32-35 have the wrong date: they are listed as 1718 and should be 1717.

3 Lady Mary is referring to Letter 3, dated 13 August 1716.

the protection of an ambassador, and the richer they are the greater their danger.

Those dreadful stories you have heard of the plague have very little foundation in truth.[1] I own I have much ado to reconcile myself to the sound of a word, which has always given me such terrible ideas, though I am convinced there is little more in it than a fever, as a proof of which we passed through two or three towns most violently infected. In the very next house where we lay in one of them, two persons died of it. Luckily for me, I was so well deceived that I knew nothing of the matter, and I was made believe, that our second cook who fell ill there had only a great cold. However, we left our doctor to take care of him and yesterday they both arrived here in good health, and I am now let into the secret that he has had the plague. There are many that escape of it, neither is the air ever infected. I am persuaded it would be as easy to root it out here as out of Italy and France, but it does so little mischief, they are not very solicitous about it and are content to suffer this distemper instead of our variety, which they are utterly unacquainted with.

Apropos of distempers, I am going to tell you a thing that I am sure will make you wish yourself here. The smallpox so fatal and so general amongst us is here entirely harmless by the invention of engrafting (which is the term they give it).[2] There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation. Every autumn in the month of September when the great heat is abated, people send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the smallpox. They make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together) the old woman comes with a nutshell full of the matter of the best sort of smallpox and asks what vein you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch) and puts into the vein as much

1 See in contrast Alexander William Kinglake, in chapter 18 of his *Eothen* (1844), for a very exaggerated and orientalist account of the plague in Cairo. Reports on the plague were commonplace both in travel literature and in diplomatic dispatches. Lady Mary underestimates the virulence of the plague, which killed large numbers in both Europe (last major outbreak in 1720 in Marseilles) and in the Ottoman Empire; port towns were particularly vulnerable.

2 Lady Mary was disfigured by smallpox in 1715 and her brother had died of it two years earlier. She had her son Edward (1713-76) inoculated in Turkey and later her daughter Mary (1718-94) in 1721, when an outbreak was sweeping England.

venom as can lie upon the head of her needle and after binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell and in this manner opens four or five veins. The Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in the middle of the forehead, in each arm and on the breast to mark the sign of the cross, but this has a very ill effect, all these wounds leaving little scars, and is not done by those that are not superstitious, who choose to have them in the legs or that part of the arm that is concealed. The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day and are in perfect health till the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark, and in eight days time they are as well as before their illness. Where they are wounded there remains running sores during the distemper, which I don't doubt is a great relief to it. Every year thousands undergo this operation, and the French Ambassador says pleasantly that they take the smallpox here by way of diversion as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of any one that has died in it, and you may believe I am very well satisfied of the safety of the experiment since I intend to try it on my dear little son. I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England, and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it if I knew any one of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue for the good of mankind, but that distemper is too beneficial to them, not to expose to all their resentment the hardy wight that should undertake to put an end to it.[1] Perhaps if I live to return I may, however, have courage to war with them. Upon this occasion, admire the heroism in the heart of your friend, etc.

1 Her attempts to introduce inoculation into England were met with resistance and Lady Mary correctly predicted that she would have to "wage war" with the English doctors (see Appendix D2). Reports of the success of smallpox inoculation in the East were already circulating in England from about 1700, but were largely ignored despite the presentation of the practice to the Royal Society.

Letter 33

To Mrs. T___[1]

Adrianople, April 1, O. S., 1717

I can now tell dear Mrs. T___ that I am safely arrived at the end of my very long journey. I will not tire you with my account of the many fatigues I have suffered. You would rather hear something of what I see here; and a letter out of Turkey that has nothing extraordinary in it would be as great a disappointment as my visitors will receive at London if I return thither without any rarities to show them. What shall I tell you of? You never saw camels in your life and perhaps the description of them will appear new to you. I can assure you the first sight of them was very much so to me, and though I have seen hundreds of pictures of those animals, I never saw any that was resembling enough to give me a true idea of them. I am going to make a bold observation, and possibly a false one, because nobody has ever made it before me, but I do take them to be of the stag-kind; their legs, bodies, and necks are exactly shaped like them, and their colour very near the same. 'Tis true, they are much larger, being a great deal higher than a horse, and so swift, that, after the defeat of Peterwaradin, they far out-run the swiftest horses and brought the first news of the loss of the battle to Belgrade.[2] They are never thoroughly tamed. The drivers take care to tie them one to another with strong ropes, fifty in a string, led by an ass on which the driver rides. I have seen three hundred in one caravan. They carry the third part more than any horse, but 'tis a particular art to load them because of the bunch on their backs. They seem to me very ugly creatures, their heads being ill formed and disproportioned to their bodies. They carry all the burdens, and the beasts destined to the plough are buffaloes, an animal you are also unacquainted with. They are larger and more clumsy than an ox. They have short black horns close to their heads, which grow turning backwards. They say this horn looks very beautiful when 'tis well polished. They are all black with very short hair on their hides and extreme little white eyes that make them look like devils. The country people dye their

1 To Mrs. Thistlethwayte. See p. 53, note 3.

2 By referring to it as a "loss," Lady Mary betrays her sympathies for the Turkish powers. Shortly after the date of this letter Prince Eugene would initiate a successful campaign against Belgrade that would have a significant impact on Wortley's diplomatic mission. See Letter 39.

tails and the hair of their foreheads red by way of ornament. Horses are not put here to any laborious work, nor are they at all fit for it. They are beautiful and full of spirit, but generally little and not so strong as the breed of colder countries, very gentle with all their vivacity, swift and sure-footed. I have a little white favourite that I would not part with on any terms. He prances under me with so much fire you would think that I had a great deal of courage to dare mount him, yet I'll assure you I never rid a horse in my life so much at my command.[1] My sidesaddle is the first was ever seen in this part of the world and gazed at with as much wonder as the ship of Columbus was in America. Here are some birds held in a sort of religious reverence, and for that reason multiply prodigiously: turtles on the account of their innocence, and storks because they are supposed to make every winter the pilgrimage to Mecca.[2] To say truth, they are the happiest subjects under the Turkish government, and are so sensible of their privileges they walk the streets without fear and generally build in the low parts of houses. Happy are those that are so distinguished, the vulgar Turks are perfectly persuaded that they will not be that year either attacked by fire or pestilence. I have the happiness of one of their sacred nests just under my chamber window.

Now I am talking of my chamber, I remember the description of the houses here would be as new to you as any of the birds or beasts. I suppose you have read in most of our accounts of Turkey that their houses are the most miserable pieces of building in the world. I can speak very learnedly on that subject, having been in so many of them, and I assure you 'tis no such thing. We are now lodged in a palace belonging to the Grand Signor. I really think the manner of building here very agreeable and proper for the country. 'Tis true they are not at all solicitous to beautify the outsides of their houses, and they are generally built of wood, which I own is the cause of many inconveniences, but this is not to be charged on the ill taste of the people but the oppression of the government. Every house upon the death of its master is at the Grand Signor's disposal, and therefore no man cares to make a great expense which he is not sure his family will be the better for. All their design is to build a house commodious and that will last their lives and are very indifferent if it falls down the year after. Every

1 Originating in the Arabian Peninsula and one of the oldest breeds in the world, the Arabian horse was much sought after to improve other breeds. Lady Mary returned with four horses. See Donna Landry on Arabian horses and Lady Mary.

2 Revered in Islam, storks are believed to incarnate the souls of Muslims who failed to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and thus now make it as a bird.

house, great and small, is divided into two distinct parts, which only join together by a narrow passage. The first house has a large court before it and open galleries all round it, which is to me a thing very agreeable. This gallery leads to all the chambers, which are commonly large and with two rows of windows, the first being of painted glass. They seldom build above two stories, each of which has such galleries. The stairs are broad and not often above thirty steps. This is the house belonging to the lord and the adjoining one is called the haram that is the ladies' apartment, for the name of Seraglio is peculiar to the Grand Signor's. It has also a gallery running round it towards the garden to which all the windows are turned, and the same number of chambers as the other, but more gay and splendid both in painting and furniture. The second row of windows are very low, with grates like those of convents.

The rooms are all spread with Persian carpets and raised at one end of them (my chamber is raised at both ends) about two foot. This is the sofa and is laid with a richer sort of carpet, and all round it a sort of couch raised half a foot, covered with rich silk according to the fancy or magnificence of the owner. Mine is of scarlet cloth with a gold fringe. Round this are placed, standing against the wall, two rows of cushions, the first very large and the next little ones, and here the Turks display their greatest magnificence. They are generally brocade or embroidery of gold wire upon satin. Nothing can look more gay and splendid. These seats are also so convenient and easy I shall never endure chairs as long as I live. The rooms are low, which I think no fault, and the ceiling is always of wood, generally inlaid or painted and gilded. They use no hangings, the rooms being all wainscoted with cedar set off with nails or painted with flowers, which open in many places, with folding doors and serve for cabinets, I think more conveniently than ours. Between the windows are little arches to set pots of perfume or baskets of flowers, but what pleases me best is the fashion of having marble fountains in the lower part of the room which throws up several spouts of water, giving at the same time an agreeable coolness and a pleasant dashing sound falling from one basin to another. Some of these fountains are very magnificent. Each house has a bagnio, which is generally of two or three little rooms leaded on the top, paved with marble, with basins, cocks of water, and all conveniences for either hot or cold baths.

You will perhaps be surprised at an account so different from what you have been entertained with by the common voyage-writers, who are very fond of speaking of what they don't know. It must be under a very particular character, or on some extraordinary occasion, when a Christian is admitted into the house of a man of quality, and their

harams are always forbidden ground.[1] Thus they can only speak of the outside, which makes no great appearance, and the women's apartments are all built backward, removed from sight, and have no other prospect than the gardens, which are enclosed with very high walls. There is none of our parterres[2] in them, but they are planted with high trees, which give an agreeable shade and, to my fancy, a pleasing view. In the midst of the garden is the *chiosk*, that is, a large room, commonly beautified with a fine fountain in the midst of it. It is raised nine or ten steps and enclosed with gilded lattices, round which vines, jessamines and honey-suckles twining make a sort of green wall. Large trees are planted round this place, which is the scene of their greatest pleasures, and where the ladies spend most of their hours, employed by their music or embroidery. In the public gardens, there are public chiosks where people go that are not so well accommodated at home and drink their coffee, sherbet, etc. Neither are they ignorant of a more durable manner of building. Their mosques are all of free stone, and the public *hans* or inns extremely magnificent, many of them taking up a large square, built round with shops under stone arches, where poor artificers are lodged gratis. They have always a mosque joining to them, and the body of the han is a most noble hall, capable of holding three or four hundred persons, the court extreme spacious, and cloisters round it, that give it the air of our colleges. I own, I think these foundations a more reasonable piece of charity than the founding of convents. I think I have now told you a great deal for once. If you don't like my choice of subjects, tell me what you would have me write upon. There is nobody more desirous to entertain you than, dear Mrs. T, etc.

Letter 34

To the Countess of ___[3]

Adrianople, April 18, O. S.

I writ to you (dear Sister) and to all my other English correspondents by the last ship, and only Heaven can tell when I shall have another opportunity of sending to you, but I cannot forbear writing, though

1 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Jean Dumont, and Ottaviano Bon are among the many male travel writers who reported on the lascivious goings on in harems, despite the fact they had no access to them. See Appendix E.

2 A formal garden, usually with a symmetrical pattern.

3 To Lady Mar.

perhaps my letter may lie upon my hands this two months. To confess the truth, my head is so full of my entertainment yesterday that 'tis absolutely necessary for my own repose to give it some vent. Without farther preface I will then begin my story.

I was invited to dine with the Grand Vizier's lady,[1] and 'twas with a great deal of pleasure I prepared myself for an entertainment which was never given before to any Christian. I thought I should very little satisfy her curiosity, (which I did not doubt was a considerable motive to the invitation) by going in a dress she was used to see, and therefore dressed myself in the court habit of Vienna, which is much more magnificent than ours. However, I chose to go incognito to avoid any disputes about ceremony, and went in a Turkish coach only attended by my woman that held up my train, and the Greek lady who was my interpretess. I was met at the court door by her black eunuch who helped me out of the coach with great respect and conducted me through several rooms, where her she-slaves, finely dressed, were ranged on each side. In the innermost, I found the lady sitting on her sofa in a sable vest. She advanced to meet me and presented me half a dozen of her friends with great civility. She seemed a very good woman, near fifty year old. I was surprised to observe so little magnificence in her house, the furniture being all very moderate, and, except the habits and number of her slaves, nothing about her that appeared expensive. She guessed at my thoughts, and told me she was no longer of an age to spend either her time or money in superfluities, that her whole expense was in charity, and her employment praying to God.[2] There was no affectation in this speech; both she and her husband are entirely given up to devotion. He never looks upon any other woman, and what is much more extraordinary, touches no bribes, notwithstanding the example of all his predecessors. He is so scrupulous in this point, he would not accept Mr. W___'s present, till he had been assured over and over 'twas a settled perquisite of his place at the entrance of every ambassador.

She entertained me with all kind of civility till dinner came in, which was served one dish at a time to a vast number, all finely dressed after their manner, which I don't think so bad as you have perhaps heard it represented. I am a very good judge of their eating, having lived three weeks in the house of an effendi at Belgrade,[3] who gave us very magnificent dinners dressed by his own cooks, which the first

1 Haci Halil Pasha (1655-1733), an Albanian, was the Grand Vizier from 5 August 1716 to 26 August 1717.

2 Lady Mary does not distinguish between Allah and God here.

3 Achmet-Beg. See Letter 25.

week pleased me extremely, but I own I then begun to grow weary of it and desired my own cook might add a dish or two after our manner, but I attribute this to custom. I am very much inclined to believe that an Indian who had never tasted of either would prefer their cookery to ours. There sauces are very high, all the roast very much done. They use a great deal of very rich spice. The soup is served for the last dish, and they have at least as great a variety of ragouts as we have. I was very sorry I could not eat of as many as the good lady would have had me, who was very earnest in serving me of everything. The treat concluded with coffee and perfumes, which is a high mark of respect. Two slaves kneeling censed my hair, clothes, and handkerchief. After this ceremony she commanded her slaves to play and dance, which they did with their guitars in their hands, and she excused to me their want of skill, saying she took no care to accomplish them in that art. I returned her thanks and soon after took my leave.

I was conducted back in the same manner I entered, and would have gone straight to my own house, but the Greek lady with me earnestly solicited me to visit the Kahya's lady, saying he was the second officer in the Empire and ought indeed to be looked upon as the first, the Grand Vizier having only the name while he exercised the authority. I had found so little diversion in this haram that I had no mind to go into another, but her importunity prevailed with me, and I am extreme glad that I was so complaisant. All things here were with quite another air than at the Grand Vizier's, and the very house confessed the difference between an old devotee and a young beauty. It was nicely clean and magnificent. I was met at the door by two black eunuchs, who led me through a long gallery between two ranks of beautiful young girls with their hair finely plaited almost hanging to their feet, all dressed in fine light damasks brocaded with silver. I was sorry that decency did not permit me to stop to consider them nearer, but that thought was lost upon my entrance into a large room or rather pavilion, built round with gilded sashes, which were most of them thrown up, and the trees planted near them gave an agreeable shade, which hindered the Sun from being troublesome. The jessamins and honey-suckles that twisted round their trunks shedding a soft perfume increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water in the lower part of the room, which fell into three or four basins, with a pleasing sound. The roof was painted with all sort of flowers, falling out of gilded baskets that seemed tumbling down.

On a sofa raised three steps and covered with fine Persian carpets sat the Kahya's lady, leaning on cushions of white satin embroidered, and at her feet sat two young girls, the eldest about twelve year old, lovely as angels, dressed perfectly rich, and almost covered with

jewels. But they were hardly seen near the fair Fatima (for that is her name) so much her beauty effaced every thing. I have seen all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany, and must own that I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful, nor can I recollect a face that would have been taken notice of near hers. She stood up to receive me, saluting me after their fashion, putting her hand upon her heart with a sweetness full of majesty that no court breeding could ever give. She ordered cushions to be given me and took care to place me in the corner, which is the place of honour. I confess, though the Greek lady had before given me a great opinion of her beauty, I was so struck with admiration that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features! that charming result of the whole! that exact proportion of body! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art! the unutterable enchantment of her smile! But her eyes! Large and black, with all the soft languishment of the bleu! every turn of her face discovering some new charm. After my first surprise was over, I endeavoured by nicely examining her face to find out some imperfection, without any fruit of my search but being clearly convinced of the error of that vulgar notion that a face perfectly regular would not be agreeable. Nature having done for her, with more success, what Apelles[1] is said to have essayed by a collection of the most exact features to form a perfect face, and to that a behaviour so full of grace and sweetness, such easy motions with an air so majestic yet free from stiffness or affectation, that I am persuaded could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite throne of Europe, nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous. To say all in a word, our most celebrated English beauties would vanish near her.

She was dressed in a caftan of gold brocade flowered with silver, very well fitted to her shape and showing to advantage the beauty of her bosom, only shaded by the thin gauze of her shift. Her drawers were pale pink, green and silver, her slippers white, finely embroidered; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds, and her broad girdle set round with diamonds. Upon her head a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver, her own fine black hair hanging a great length in various tresses, and on one side of her head some bodkins of jewels. I am afraid you will accuse me of extravagance in this description. I think I have read somewhere that women always speak in rapture when they speak of beauty, but I can't imagine why they should not be allowed to do so. I rather think it virtue to be able

1 According to the historian Pliny the Elder, Apelles of Kos (4th century BCE) was the greatest painter of ancient Greece.

to admire without any mixture of desire or envy. The gravest writers have spoke with great warmth of some celebrated pictures and statues. The workmanship of Heaven certainly excels all our weak imitations, and I think has a much better claim to our praise. For me, I am not ashamed to own, I took more pleasure in looking on the beauteous Fatima than the finest piece of sculpture could have given me. She told me the two girls at her feet were her daughters, though she appeared too young to be their mother.

Her fair maids were ranged below the sofa to the number of twenty, and put me in mind of the pictures of the ancient nymphs. I did not think all nature could have furnished such a scene of beauty. She made them a sign to play and dance. Four of them immediately begun to play some soft airs on instruments between a lute and a guitar, which they accompanied with their voices, while the others danced by turns. This dance was very different from what I had seen before. Nothing could be more artful or more proper to raise certain ideas, the tunes so soft, the motions so languishing, accompanied with pauses and dying eyes, half-falling back and then recovering themselves in so artful a manner that I am very positive the coldest and most rigid prude upon Earth could not have looked upon them without thinking of something not to be spoke of. I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no music but what is shocking to the ears,[1] but this account is from those who never heard any but what is played in the streets, and is just as reasonable as if a foreigner should take his ideas of the English music from the bladder and string, and marrow bones and cleavers. I can assure you that the music is extremely pathetic. 'Tis true I am inclined to prefer the Italian, but perhaps I am partial. I am acquainted with a Greek lady who sings better than Mrs. Robinson,[2] and is very well skilled in both, who gives the preference to the Turkish. 'Tis certain they have very fine natural voices, these were very agreeable. When the dance was over, four fair slaves came into the room with silver censors in their hands and perfumed the air with amber, aloes wood, and other rich scents. After this, they served me coffee upon their knees in the finest Japan china, with *soûcoupes*[3] of silver gilt. The lovely Fatima entertained me all this time in the most polite agreeable

1 See Hill, 72-73.

2 From 1714 to 1724, Anastasia Robinson (c. 1692-1755) was one of the leading singers in London. She was a regular attendant of Lady Mary's suppers, and a lodger at Twickenham. Before her journey, Lady Mary would have seen her perform at the Queen's Theatre in a variety of roles including early Italian operas by Handel.

3 Saucer (French).

manner, calling me often *Uzelle Sultanam*, or the beautiful sultana, and desiring my friendship with the best grace in the world, lamenting that she could not entertain me in my own language. When I took my leave, two maids brought in a fine silver basket of embroidered handkerchiefs. She begged I would wear the richest for her sake, and gave the others to my woman and interpretress. I retired through the same ceremonies as before, and could not help fancying I had been some time in Mahomet's paradise, so much I was charmed with what I had seen. I know not how the relation of it appears to you. I wish it may give you part of my pleasure, for I would have my dear sister share in all the diversions of etc.

Letter 35

To the Abbot of ___[1]

Adrianople, May 17, O. S. 1717

I am going to leave Adrianople, and I would not do it without giving you some account of all that is curious in it, which I have taken a great deal of pains to see. I will not trouble you with wise dissertations whether or no this is the same city that was anciently called Orestesit or Oreste,[2] which you know better than I do. It is now called from the Emperor Adrian,[3] and was the first European seat of the Turkish Empire and has been the favourite residence of many Sultans.[4] Mahomet the 4th, the father, and Mustapha, the brother of the reigning Emperor, were so fond of it that they wholly abandoned Constantinople, which humour so far exasperated the janissaries, it was a considerable motive to the rebellions which deposed them: yet this man seems to love to keep his court here.[5] I can give no reason for this par-

1 To the Abbé Conti.

2 According to Greek mythology, Orestes, son of king Agamemnon, built this city as Orestias, at the confluence of the Tonsus (Toundja) and the Ardiscus (Arda) with the Hebrus (Maritsa).

3 In the second century, Hadrian renamed the city Hadrianopolis and made it capital of Thrace.

4 Modern day Edirne. See p. 98, note 2.

5 Sultan Mehmed IV (1642-93) was deposed by the janissaries in 1687 and imprisoned in Topkapi, although he died in Edirne Palace. Sultan Mustapha II (1695-1703), son of Mehmed IV was born at Edirne Palace. Hungary was lost under his rule and he abdicated in 1703 when his brother Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1736) took power. In 1730 the janissaries revolted and Ahmed III was forced to relinquish power.

tiality. 'Tis true, the situation is fine and the country all round very beautiful, but the air is extremely bad and the Seraglio itself is not free from the ill effect of it. The town is said to be eight mile in compass, I suppose they reckon in the gardens. There are some good houses in it, I mean large ones, for the architecture of their palaces never makes any great show. It is now very full of people, but they are most of them such as follow the court or camp, and when they are removed, I am told 'tis no populous city. The river Maritza (anciently the Hebrus) on which it is situated is dried up every summer, which contributes very much to make it unwholesome. It is now a very pleasant stream; there are two noble bridges built over it.

I had the curiosity to go see the Exchange in my Turkish dress, which is disguise sufficient, yet I own, I was not very easy when I saw it crowded with janissaries, but they dare not be rude to a woman and made way for me with as much respect as if I had been in my own figure. It is half a mile in length, the roof arched, and kept extremely neat. It holds 365 shops furnished with all sort of rich goods, exposed to sale in the same manner as at the New Exchange[1] in London, but the pavement kept much neater, and the shops all so clean they seemed just new painted. Idle people of all sorts walk here for their diversion or amuse themselves with drinking coffee or sherbet, which is cried about as oranges and sweetmeats are in our playhouses.

I observed most of the rich tradesmen were Jews. That people are in incredible power in this country. They have many privileges above the natural Turks themselves, and have formed a very considerable commonwealth here, being judged by their own laws,[2] and have drawn the whole trade of the Empire into their hands, partly by the firm union amongst themselves, and prevailing on the idle temper and want of industry of the Turks. Every bassa has his Jew, who is his "*homme d'affaires*." He is let into all his secrets, and does all his business. No bargain is made, no bribe received, no merchandise disposed of but what passes through their hands. They are the physicians, the stewards, and the interpreters of all the great men. You may judge how advantageous this is to a people who never fail to make use of the smallest advantages. They have found the secret of making themselves so necessary, they are certain of the protection of the court whatever ministry

1 Opened in 1609, the New Exchange was a shopping center in the Strand, a fashionable area of West London, where people could gather to socialize and buy luxury items.

2 Not unique to the Jews, the millets—the main ones being Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Armenian—enjoyed an impressive amount of power, collecting their own taxes and setting their own laws.

is in power. Even the English, French, and Italian merchants, who are sensible of their artifices, are however forced to trust their affairs to their negotiation, nothing of trade being managed without them, and the meanest amongst them is too important to be disobliged since the whole body take care of his interests with as much vigour as they would those of the most considerable of their members. They are many of them vastly rich, but take care to make little public show of it, though they live in their houses in the utmost luxury and magnificence.

This copious subject has drawn me from my description of the Exchange, founded by Ali Bassa,[1] whose name it bears. Near it is the Shershi, a street of a mile in length, full of shops of all kind of fine merchandise but excessive dear, nothing being made here. It is covered on the top with boards to keep out the rain that merchants may meet conveniently in all weathers. The Bisisten near it is another exchange, built upon pillars where all sorts of horse furniture is sold, glittering everywhere with gold, rich embroidery and jewels; [it] makes a very agreeable show.[2] From this place I went in my Turkish coach, to the camp, which is to move in a few days to the frontiers. The Sultan is already gone to his tents, and all his court. The appearance of them is indeed very magnificent. Those of the great men are rather like palaces than tents, taking up a great compass of ground and being divided into a vast number of apartments. They are all of green, and the bassa's of three tails[3] have those ensigns of their power placed in a very conspicuous manner before their tents, which are adorned on the top with gilded balls, more or less according to their different ranks. The ladies go in their coaches to see this camp as eagerly as ours did to that of Hyde Park,[4] but 'tis easy to observe that the soldiers do not begin the campaign with any great cheerfulness. The war is a general grievance upon the people, but particularly hard upon the tradesmen.

Now the Grand Signor is resolved to lead his army in person, every company of them is obliged upon this occasion to make a present according to their ability. I took the pains of rising at six in the morning to see that ceremony, which did not however begin till eight. The

1 Built by the famous architect Mimar Sinan for Hersekli Semiz Ali Pasha in 1569, this covered bazaar was the center of commercial life. See p. 93, note 1.

2 The Bedesten is a covered market.

3 Pashas were distinguished by the number of horse tails, with three denoting the highest rank.

4 In 1715, an encampment of 3,000 soldiers gathered in Hyde Park, preparing for the Jacobite Rebellion. It was visited by King George I and became a social scene for the elite.

Grand Signor was at the Seraglio window to see the procession, which passed through all the principal streets. It was preceded by an effendi mounted on a camel richly furnished, reading aloud the *Alcoran*, finely bound, laid upon a cushion. He was surrounded by a parcel of boys in white singing some verses of it, followed by a man dressed in green boughs, representing a clean husbandman sowing seed. After him several reapers with garlands of ears of corn, as Ceres[1] is pictured, with scythes in their hands seeming to mow. Then a little machine drawn by oxen, in which was a windmill and boys employed in grinding corn, followed by another machine drawn by buffalos carrying an oven, and two more boys, one employed in kneading the bread and another in drawing it out of the oven. These boys threw little cakes on both sides amongst the crowd, and were followed by the whole company of bakers marching on foot, two and two, in their best clothes, with cakes, loaves, pasties and pies of all sorts on their heads, and after them two buffoons or jack puddings, with their faces and clothes smeared with meal, who diverted the mob with their antic gestures. In the same manner followed all the companies of trade in their empire. The nobler sort, such as jewellers, mercers, etc., finely mounted, and many of the pageants that represented their trades perfectly magnificent, amongst which the furriers made one of the best figures, being a very large machine set round with the skins of ermines, foxes, etc., so well stuffed the animals seemed to be alive, and followed by music and dancers. I believe they were, upon the whole, at least twenty thousand men, all ready to follow his Highness if he commanded them.

The rear was closed by the volunteers, who came to beg the honour of dying in his service. This part of the show seemed to me so barbarous I removed from the window upon the first appearance of it. They were all naked to the middle, their arms pierced thorough with arrows left sticking in them, others had them sticking in their heads, the blood trickling down their faces, and some slashed their arms with sharp knives, making the blood spout out upon those that stood near, and this is looked upon as an expression of their zeal for glory.[2] I am told that some make use of it to advance their love, and when they are near the window where their mistress stands (all the women in town being veiled to see this spectacle) they stick another arrow for her sake, who gives some sign of approbation and encouragement to this

1 Roman goddess of agriculture and fertility.

2 As Halsband notes (1.357n2), "Sieur Du Loir tells (in 1640) how the soldiers in a military procession demonstrated their affection for the Sultan by piercing their temples with arrows and their arms with muskets."

gallantry. The whole show lasted near eight hours, to my great sorrow, who was heartily tired, though I was in the house of the widow of the Captain Bassa (Admiral), who refreshed me with coffee, sweetmeats, sherbet, etc., with all possible civility.

I went two days after, to see the Mosque of Sultan Selim the 1st,[1] which is a building very well worth the curiosity of a traveller. I was dressed in my Turkish habit and admitted without scruple, though I believe they guessed who I was by the extreme officiousness of the door-keeper to show me every part of it. It is situated very advantageously in the midst of the city and in the highest part, making a very noble show. The first court has four gates and the innermost three; they are both of them surrounded with cloisters, with marble pillars of the Ionic order, finely polished, and of very lively colours. The whole pavement being white marble, the roof of the cloisters being divided into several cupolas or domes, leaded, with gilt balls on the top, in the midst of each court fine fountains of white marble, before the great gate of the mosque a portico with green marble pillars. It has five gates, the body of the mosque being one prodigious dome. I understand so little of architecture I dare not pretend to speak of the proportions; it seemed to me very regular; this I am sure of, it is vastly high, and I thought it the noblest building I ever saw. It had two rows of marble galleries on pillars with marble balusters, the pavement marble covered with Persian carpets; and in my opinion, it is a great addition to its beauty that it is not divided into pews and encumbered with forms and benches like our churches, nor the pillars (which are most of them red and white marble) disfigured by the little tawdry images and pictures that give Roman Catholic churches the air of toy shops. The walls seemed to me inlaid with such very lively colours in small flowers, I could not imagine what stones had been made use of; but going nearer, I saw they were crusted with Japan china, which has a very beautiful effect. In the midst hung a vast lamp of silver gilt besides which I do verily believe there was at least two thousand of a lesser size. This must look very glorious when they are all lighted, but that being at night no women are suffered to enter. Under the large lamp is a great pulpit of carved wood gilt and just by it a fountain to wash, which you know is an essential part of their devotion. In one corner is a little gallery enclosed with gilded lattices for the Grand Signor. At the upper end a large niche, very like an altar, raised two steps, covered with gold brocade, and standing before it two silver gilt candlesticks the height of a man, and in them white wax candles as

1 The Selimiye Mosque in Edirne is considered Mimar Sinan's masterpiece. It was commissioned by Selim II and finished in 1575.

thick as a man's waist. The outside of the mosque is adorned with four towers vastly high, gilt on the top, from whence the Imams[1] call the people to prayers. I had the curiosity to go up one of them, which is contrived so artfully as to give surprise to all that see it. There is but one door, which leads to three different stair cases going to the three different storeys of the tower in such a manner that three priests may ascend rounding without ever meeting each other, a contrivance very much admired. Behind the mosque is an exchange full of shops where poor artificers are lodged gratis. I saw several dervishes at their prayers here;[2] they are dressed in a plain piece of woollen, with their arms bare, and a woollen cap on their heads like a high crowned hat without brims. I went to see some other mosques built much after the same manner, but not comparable in point of magnificence to this I have described which is infinitely beyond any church in Germany or England. I won't talk of other countries I have not seen. The seraglio does not seem a very magnificent palace, but the gardens very large, plentifully supplied with water, and full of trees, which is all I know of them, having never been in them.

I tell you nothing of the order of Mr. W___'s entry and his audience.[3] Those things are always the same and have been so often described, I won't trouble you with the repetition.[4] The young prince,[5] about eleven year old, sits near his father when he gives audience; he

1 Men who lead prayer and serve as spiritual guides for the community and/or mosque.

2 A dervish is a Sufi ascetic. They were known for their poverty and austerity. In Turkey, dervishes are most commonly associated with the Mevlevi order, whose most famous practitioner was the poet Rumi. This order was noted for a ceremony known as the Sema in which the dervishes performed a whirling dance in order to achieve a state of ecstasy. See also Letter 42.

3 Wortley had his audiences with the Grand Vizier and the Sultan Ahmed III in late March and early April. For Haci Halil Pasha, see p. 131, note 1.

4 Halsband notes (1.359n3) that the ceremony is described in Dumont, Sandys, and Du Loir. Sandys in his *Travels* (1673) writes: "When the *Sultan* entertaineth Embassadours, he sitteth in a Room of white Marble, glistering with Gold and Stones, upon a low Throne, spread with curious Carpets, accommodated with Cushions of admirable workmanship; the *Bassas* of the Bench being by, who stand like so many Statues without speech or motion. It is now a custom that none do come into his presence without presents.... The Stranger that approacheth him is led between two [Bassas].... They go backward from him, and never pull off their hats, the shewing of the head being held by the *Turk* to be opprobrious indecency" (58-59).

5 Süleyman (1710-32) was the son of Sultan Ahmed III and nearly seven at the time. As Lady Mary notes, he did not succeed to the sultanate.

is a handsome boy, but probably will not immediately succeed the Sultan, there being two sons of Sultan Mustapha (his eldest brother) remaining, the eldest about twenty year old, on whom the hopes of the people are fixed.[1] This reign has been bloody and avaricious, I am apt to believe they are very impatient to see the end of it.[2] I am, Sir, your etc.

I will write to you again from Constantinople.

Letter 36

To the Abbot ___[3]

Constantinople, May 29, O. S. 1717

I have had the advantage of very fine weather all my journey, and the summer being now in its beauty, I enjoyed the pleasure of fine prospects, and the meadows being full of all sort of garden flowers, and sweet herbs, my berlin[4] perfumed the air as it pressed them. The Grand Signor furnished us with thirty covered wagons for our baggage and five coaches of the country for my women. We found the road full of the great *Sipahi*[5] and their equipages coming out of Asia to the war. They always travel with tents, but I chose to lie in houses all the way. I will not trouble you with the names of villages we passed in which there was nothing remarkable, but at Ciorlu[6] we were lodged in a *conac*, or little seraglio, built for the use of the Grand Signor when he goes this road. I had the curiosity to view all the apartments destined for the ladies of his court. They were in the midst of a thick grove of trees, made fresh by fountains, but I was surprised to see the walls almost covered with little distiches[7] of Turkish verse writ with pencils.

1 Mustafa II's (1664-1703) two other sons were Mahmud I (1696-1754) and Osman III (1699-1757).

2 Ahmed III and the ruling class were known for their extravagance, and a growing and embittered underclass in Istanbul revolted in 1730. The Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, had financed this excess by restructuring taxes and allowing rampant inflation—under pressure, his corpse was flung from the palace into the streets and the Sultan stepped down. Mahmud I, Sultan from 1730-54, was succeeded in 1754 by Osman III, who reigned until his death in 1757.

3 To the Abbé Conti.

4 A four-wheeled closed carriage.

5 Ottoman cavalry corps.

6 Çorlu, a city in north-western Turkey.

7 A unit of verse consisting of two lines, comparable to a couplet, that is especially common in Greek and Latin elegiac poetry.

I made my interpreter explain them to me, and I found several of them very well turned, though I easily believed him that they lost much of their beauty in the translation. One runs literally thus in English:

We come into this world; we lodge, and we depart
He never goes that's lodg'd within my heart.

The rest of our journey was through fine painted meadows by the side of the sea of Marmora, the ancient Propontis.[1] We lay the next night at Selivrea, anciently a noble town. It is now a very good sea port, and neatly built enough, and has a bridge of 32 arches. Here is a famous ancient Greek church. I had given one of my coaches to a Greek lady, who desired the conveniency of travelling with me. She designed to pay her devotions, and I was glad of the opportunity of going with her. I found it an ill built place, set out with the same sort of ornaments but less rich than the Roman Catholic churches. They showed me a saint's body, where I threw a piece of money, and a picture of the Virgin Mary drawn by the hand of St. Luke, very little to the credit of his painting; but, however, the finest Madonna of Italy is not more famous for her miracles. The Greeks have the most monstrous taste in their pictures, which for more finery are always drawn upon a gold ground. You may imagine what a good air this has, but they have no notion either of shade or proportion. They have a bishop here, who officiated in his purple robe, and sent me a candle almost as big as myself for a present when I was at my lodging. We lay the night at a town called Büjük Cekmege, or Great Bridge, and the night following at Kujük Cekmege, Little Bridge, in a very pleasant lodging, formerly a monastery of dervishes, having before it a large court, encompassed with marble cloisters with a good fountain in the middle. The prospect from this place and the gardens round it are the most agreeable I have seen, and shows that monks of all religions know how to choose their retirements. 'Tis now belonging to a *Hojia* or Schoolmaster, who teaches boys here, and asking him to show me his own apartment, I was surprised to see him point to a tall cypress tree in the garden, on the top of which was a place for a bed for himself, and a little lower one for his wife and two children, who slept there every night. I was so much diverted with the fancy I resolved to examine his nest nearer, but after going up fifty steps, I found I had still fifty to go, and then I must climb from branch to branch with some hazard of my neck. I thought it the best way to come down again.

We arrived the next evening at Constantinople, but I can yet tell you

1 The ancient Greek name for the Sea of Marmora.

very little of it, all my time having been taken up with receiving visits, which are at least a very good entertainment to the eyes, the young women being all beauties, and their beauty highly improved by the good taste of their dress. Our palace is in Pera, which is no more a suburb of Constantinople than Westminster is a suburb to London. All the ambassadors are lodged very near each other. One part of our house shows us the port, the city and the Seraglio, and the distant hills of Asia, perhaps all together the most beautiful prospect in the world.

A certain French author[1] says that Constantinople is twice as large as Paris. Mr. W_____ is unwilling to own 'tis bigger than London, though I confess it appears to me to be so, but I don't believe 'tis so populous.[2] The burying fields about it are certainly much larger than the whole city. 'Tis surprising what a vast deal of land is lost this way in Turkey. Sometimes I have seen burying places of several miles belonging to very inconsiderable villages, which were formerly great towns and retain no other mark of their ancient grandeur. On no occasion do they remove a stone that serves for a monument. Some of them are costly enough, being of very fine marble. They set up a pillar with a carved turban on the top of it to the memory of a man, and as the turbans, by their different shapes, show the quality or profession, 'tis in a manner putting up the arms of the deceased; besides, the pillar commonly bears a large inscription in gold letters. The ladies have a simple pillar without other ornament, except those that die unmarried, who have a rose on the top of it. The sepulchres of particular families are railed in and planted round with trees. Those of the sultans and some great men have lamps constantly burning in them.[3]

When I spoke of their religion, I forgot to mention two particularities, one of which I had read of, but it seemed so odd to me I could not believe it. Yet 'tis certainly true that when a man has divorced his wife in the most solemn manner, he can take her again upon no other terms, than permitting another man to pass a night with her, and there are some examples of those that have submitted to this law rather than not have back their beloved.[4] The other point of doctrine is very extraor-

1 Dumont, 147.

2 In 1700 the population of Istanbul was roughly 600,000 compared to Paris's 500,000 and London's 575,000. See Mansel, 438.

3 Turkish cemeteries became a standard tourist attraction.

4 Rycaut and other writers have commented on this practice (see Appendix E4). The Qur'an 2:230: "If a man divorces his wife, he shall not remarry her until she has wedded another man and been divorced by him." In the Qur'an, divorce is allowed by either party but must be carefully considered; this condition of remarriage is likely about discouraging impulsive decisions.

dinary; any woman that dies unmarried is looked upon to die in a state of reprobation. To confirm this belief, they reason that the end of the creation of woman is to increase and multiply, and she is only properly employed in the works of her calling when she is bringing children or taking care of them, which are all the virtues that God expects from her.[1] And indeed their way of life, which shuts them out of all public commerce, does not permit them any other. Our vulgar notion that they do not own women to have any souls is a mistake.[2] 'Tis true they say they are not of so elevated a kind and therefore must not hope to be admitted into the paradise appointed for the men, who are to be entertained by celestial beauties; but there is a place of happiness destined for souls of the inferior order, where all good women are to be in eternal bliss. Many of them are very superstitious and will not remain widows ten days for fear of dying in the reprobate state of a useless creature.[3] But those that like their liberty and are not slaves to their religion content themselves with marrying when they are afraid of dying. This is a piece of theology very different from that which teaches nothing to be more acceptable to God than a vow of perpetual virginity. Which divinity is most rational, I leave you to determine.

I have already made some progress in a collection of Greek medals. Here are several professed antiquaries who are ready to serve anybody that desires them, but you can't imagine how they stare in my face when I enquire about them as if nobody was permitted to seek after medals till they were grown a piece of antiquity themselves. I have got some very valuable of the Macedonian Kings, particularly one of Perseus, so lively I fancy I can see all his ill qualities in his face.[4] I have a porphyry[5] head finely cut of the true Greek sculpture, but who it represents is to be guessed at by the learned when I return, for you are not to suppose these antiquaries (who are all Greeks) know anything. Their trade is only to sell. They have correspondents at Aleppo,

1 See Hill, Appendix E5.

2 A popular and persistent error. Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, writes: "unless in true Mahometan strain, he [Milton] meant to deprive of us souls" (100). Here are two of several passages in the Qur'an on the afterlife: "I will deny no man or woman among you the reward of their labours. You are the offspring of one another" (3:195) and "Enter Paradise, you and your spouses, in all delight" (43:70).

3 The Qur'an commands that divorced women must wait a longer period. 2:228: "Divorced women must wait, keeping themselves from men, three menstrual courses."

4 Perseus (212-166 BCE) was the last Macedonian King in the line of Alexander the Great.

5 A very rare marble used for statues.

Grand Cairo, in Arabia, and Palestine, who send them all they can find, and very often great heaps that are only fit to melt into pans and kettles. They get the best price they can for any of them, without knowing those that are valuable from those that are not. Those that pretend to skill generally find out the image of some saint in the medals of the Greek cities. One of them, showing me the figure of a Pallas[1] with a victory in her hand on a reverse, assured me it was the Virgin holding a crucifix. The same man offered me the head of a Socrates[2] on a sardonix,[3] and to enhance the value gave him the title of Saint Augustine.[4] I have bespoke a mummy, which I hope will come safe to my hands notwithstanding the misfortune that befell a very fine one designed for the King of Sweden.[5] He gave a great price for it, and the Turks took it into their heads that he must have some considerable project depending upon it. They fancied it the body of God knows who, and that the fate of their empire mystically depended on the conservation of it. Some old prophecies were remembered upon this occasion, and the mummy committed prisoner to the Seven Towers, where it has remained under close confinement ever since.[6] I dare not try my interest in so considerable a point as the release of it, but I hope mine will pass without examination. I can tell you nothing more at present of this famous city. When I have looked a little about me, you shall hear from me again. I am, Sir, etc.

1 Pallas Athena was the Greek goddess of war.

2 Socrates (469-399 BCE), classical Athenian Greek philosopher known through the writings of his students Plato and Xenophon. He was frequently rendered in classical sculpture and appeared on numerous coins.

3 A variant of onyx distinguished by bands of white, brown, and tan.

4 St. Augustine (354-430), a Christian philosopher, author of *Of the City of God* and *Confessions*.

5 Charles XII (1682-1718) escaped to the Ottoman Empire when he was defeated by the Russians in 1709. A "guest" of the Sultan, he tried to convince Ahmed III to go to war against Russia. After five years, he had outstayed his welcome and was seized by the janissaries guarding him. Released by the Porte, he returned destitute to Sweden.

6 The Yedikule Hisari or Fortress of the Seven Towers served both as the treasury and archive for the Ottoman Empire and as a notorious prison, located at the Golden Gate of Istanbul. It was here that foreign ambassadors that had displeased the Sultan were held. Lady Mary is referring to a mummy taken from Charles XII by the Ottomans and deposited in the Seven Towers.

Letter 37

To Mr. P___[1]

Belgrade-Village, June 17, O. S. 1717

I hope before this time, you have received two or three of my letters. I had yours but yesterday, though dated the 3rd of February, in which you suppose me to be dead and buried. I have already let you know that I am still alive; but to say truth, I look upon my present circumstances to be exactly the same with those of departed spirits. The heats of Constantinople have driven me to this place, which perfectly answers the description of the Elysian fields.[2] I am in the middle of a wood consisting chiefly of fruit trees, watered by a vast number of fountains, famous for the excellency of their water, and divided into many shady walks upon short grass, that seems to me artificial, but I am assured is the pure work of nature, within view of the Black Sea, from whence we perpetually enjoy the refreshment of cool breezes that makes us insensible of the heat of the summer. The village is wholly inhabited by the richest amongst the Christians, who meet every night at a fountain forty paces from my house to sing and dance, the beauty and dress of the women exactly resembling the ideas of the ancient nymphs as they are given us by the representations of the poets and painters. But what persuades me more fully of my decease is the situation of my own mind, the profound ignorance I am in of what passes amongst the living, which only comes to me by chance, and the great calmness with which I receive it. Yet I have still a hankering after my friends and acquaintance left in the world, according to the authority of that admirable author,[3]

> That spirits departed are wondrous kind
> To friends and relations left behind
> Which no body can deny

1 To Alexander Pope. This letter in the letter-book is not in Lady Mary's hand, but in that of the copyist who also inscribed Letters 39 and 42.

2 In Roman mythology, heroic and virtuous souls retired to the Elysian Fields after death.

3 The author in question is unknown, but the chorus "Which no body can deny" can be traced back to a popular French song "Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre" that satirized the ostensible death of the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Malplaquet (1709). This song is the basis for "He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

Of which solemn truth I am a dead instance. I think Virgil is of the same opinion, that in human souls there will still be some remains of human passions:

> —*Curæ non ipsâ in Morte relinquunt*[1]

and 'tis very necessary to make a perfect Elysium that there should be a river Lethe,[2] which I am not so happy to find. To say truth, I am sometimes very weary of this singing and dancing and sunshine, and wish for the smoke and impertinencies in which you toil, though I endeavour to persuade myself that I live in a more agreeable variety than you do; and that Monday setting of partridges, Tuesday reading English, Wednesday studying in the Turkish language (in which, by the way, I am already very learned), Thursday classical authors; Friday spent in writing; Saturday at my needle, and Sunday admitting of visits and hearing music, is a better way of disposing of the week, than, Monday at the drawing room, Tuesday Lady Mohun's,[3] Wednesday the opera; Thursday the play; Friday Mrs. Chetwynd's,[4] etc., a perpetual round of hearing the same scandal and seeing the same follies acted over and over, which here affect me no more than they do other dead people. I can now hear of displeasing things with pity and without indignation. The reflection on the great gulf between you and me cools all news that comes hither. I can neither be sensibly touched with joy or grief when I consider that possibly the cause of either is removed before the letter comes to my hands; but (as I said before) this indolence does not extend to my few friendships. I am still warmly sensible of yours and Mr. C___'s[5] and desire to live in your remembrance, though dead to all the world beside.

1 *Aeneid* vi.444 : "Their cares leave them not in Death itself." In Book vi, Aeneas travels to the underworld to see his father in the Elysian fields. The cited line is part of the passage in which Aeneas and the Cumaean Sybil come upon the dead who remain consumed by desire for their lovers.

2 In Greek mythology, the river of forgetfulness, one of the five rivers in Hades.

3 Elizabeth Lawrence (d. 1725) was the widow of the Whig Lord Charles Mohun, who died in a notorious duel with the Tory Lord Hamilton over an estate (Sandon Hall). He left her a large inheritance and she married the much younger Charles Mordaunt, nephew of the Earl of Peterborough in 1717 (see Pope's letter of June 1717, Appendix B5). Lady Rich was her daughter by her first husband, Colonel Edward Griffith.

4 Mary Berkeley (c. 1671-1741) married Walter Chetwynd, 1st Viscount Chetwynd of Bearhaven, in 1703. She was Maid of Honour to Queen Anne and a noted gossip and socialite.

5 In the letter-book, Congreve's name is crossed out by Lady Mary.

Letter 38

To the Lady ____[1]

Belgrade Village, June 17, O. S. 1717

I heartily beg Your ladyship's pardon, but I really could not forbear laughing heartily at your letter and the commissions you are pleased to honour me with. You desire me to buy you a Greek slave who is to be mistress of a thousand good qualities. The Greeks are subjects and not slaves. Those who are to be bought in that manner are either such as are taken in war or stolen by the Tartars from Russia, Circassia, or Georgia, and are such miserable awkward, poor wretches, you would not think any of them worthy to be your housemaid. 'Tis true that many thousands were taken in the Morea,[2] but they have been most of them redeemed by the charitable contributions of the Christians or ransomed by their own relations at Venice. The fine slaves that wait upon the great ladies, or serve the pleasures of the great men, are all bought at the age of eight or nine year old and educated with great care to accomplish them in singing, dancing, embroidery, etc. They are commonly Circassians, and their patron never sells them, except it is as a punishment for some very great fault. If ever they grow weary of them, they either present them to a friend or give them their freedoms. Those that are exposed to sale at the markets are always either guilty of some crime or so entirely worthless that they are of no use at all. I am afraid you'll doubt the truth of this account, which I own is very different from our common notions in England, but it is not less truth for all that.

Your whole letter is full of mistakes from one end to the other. I see you have taken your ideas of Turkey from that worthy author Dumont,[3] who has writ with equal ignorance and confidence. 'Tis a particular pleasure to me here to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far removed from truth and so full of absurdities, I am very well diverted with them. They never fail giving you an account of

1 This is how the address line reads in the letter-book. Wharncliffe identifies the addressee as Lady Rich (2.35), but the addressee is unidentified in Halsband.

2 The Peloponnesian peninsula in southern Greece. The peninsula was captured by the Venetians in the Morean War or the sixth Ottoman-Venetian War (1684-99), but the Ottomans recaptured it in 1715.

3 Jean Dumont (1667-1727) was the author of *Nouveau Voyage du Levant* (1694, trans. 1696).

the women, which 'tis certain they never saw, and talking very wisely of the genius of the men, into whose company they are never admitted, and very often describe mosques, which they dare not peep into. The Turks are very proud and will not converse with a stranger they are not assured is considerable in his own country. I speak of the men of distinction, for as to the ordinary fellows, you may imagine what ideas their conversation can give of the general genius of the people.

As to the balm of Mecha,[1] I will certainly send you some; but it is not so easily got as you suppose it, and I cannot in conscience advise you to make use of it. I know not how it comes to have such universal applause. All the ladies of my acquaintance at London and Vienna have begged me to send pots of it to them. I have had a present of a small quantity (which I'll assure you is very valuable) of the best sort, and with great joy applied it to my face, expecting some wonderful effect to my advantage. The next morning the change indeed was wonderful; my face was swelled to a very extraordinary size, and all over as red as my Lady [ ]'s.[2] It remained in this lamentable state three days, during which you may be sure I passed my time very ill. I believed it would never be otherwise, and to add to my mortification Mr. W____ reproached my indiscretion without ceasing. However, my face is since in statu quo; nay, I'm told by the ladies here, that 'tis much mended by the operation, which I confess I cannot perceive in my looking glass. Indeed, if one was to form an opinion of this balm from their faces, once should think very well of it. They all make use of it, and have the loveliest bloom in the world. From my part, I never intend to endure the pain of it again; let my complexion take its natural course, and decay in its own due time. I have very little esteem for medicines of this nature; but do as you please, Madam, only remember before you use it that your face will not be such as you'll care to show in the drawing room for some days after.

If one was to believe the women in this country, there is a surer way of making one's self beloved than by becoming handsome, though you know that's our method. But they pretend to the knowledge of secrets that by way of enchantment give them the entire empire over whom they please. For me, that am not very apt to believe in wonders, I cannot find faith for this. I disputed the point last night with a lady who really talks very sensibly on any other subject, but she was downright

1 Also known as the Balm of Gilead, a cosmetic made from resin of a tree that grows especially around the Red Sea. The anonymous work *The Duties of a Lady's Maid* (1825) has an entry under cosmetics that explains how to use it (267-71). Lady Mary is describing an allergic reaction, a possible side effect.

2 The letter-book is illegible here. It may be "TS."

angry with me that she did not perceive she had persuaded me of the truth of forty stories she told me of this kind, and at last mentioned several ridiculous marriages that there could be no other reason assigned for. I assured her that in England, where we were entirely ignorant of all magic, where the climate is not half so warm, nor the women half so handsome, we were not without our ridiculous marriages, and that we did not look upon it as anything supernatural when a man played the fool for the sake of a woman. But my arguments could not convince her against (as she said) her certain knowledge, though she added that she scrupled making use of charms herself, but that she could do it whenever she pleased; and staring in my face said (with a very learned air) that no enchantments would have their effect upon me, and that there were some people exempt from their power, but very few. You may imagine how I laughed at this discourse, but all the women are of the same opinion. They don't pretend to any commerce with the devil, but that there are certain compositions to inspire love. If one could send over a shipload of them, I fancy it would be a very quick way of raising an estate. What would not some ladies of our acquaintance give for such merchandise?

Adieu my dear Lady ____, I cannot conclude my letter with a subject that affords more delightful scenes to imagination. I leave you to figure to yourself the extreme court that will be made to me at my return if my travels should furnish me with such a useful piece of learning. I am, dear Madam, etc.

Letter 39

To Mrs. T ____[1]

Pera of Constantinople, Jan 4, O. S. 1718[2]

I am infinitely obliged to you, dear Mrs. T_____, for your entertaining letter. You are the only one of my correspondents that have judged right enough to think I would gladly be informed of the news amongst you. All the rest of them tell me (almost in the same words) that they

1 To Mrs. Thistlethwayte. See p. 53, note 3. This is one of three letters in the letter-book that is not in Lady Mary's hand. Lady Mary inscribed the heading and the date and retroactively crossed out the name Thistlethwayte. The rest of the letter is in a copyist's hand.

2 There is a gap of over six months between Letters 38 and 39. During this interlude Wortley's ambassadorial actions were undermined by English rivals at the Viennese court. Wortley was endeavoring to achieve a peace treaty by

suppose I know everything. Why they are pleased to suppose in this manner I can guess no reason except they are persuaded that the breed of Mahomet's pigeon[1] still subsists in this country, and that I receive supernatural intelligence. I wish I could return your goodness with some diverting accounts from hence, but I know not what part of the scenes here would gratify your curiosity or whether you have any curiosity at all for things so far distant. To say the truth, I am at this present writing not very much turned for the recollection of what is diverting, my head being wholly filled with the preparations necessary for the increase of my family, which I expect every day.[2] You may easily guess at my uneasy situation, but I am, however, in some degree comforted by the glory that accrues to me from it, and a reflection on the contempt I should otherwise fall under. You won't know what to make of this speech, but in this country 'tis more despicable to be married and not fruitful than 'tis with us to be fruitful before marriage. They have a notion that whenever a woman leaves off bringing children 'tis because she is too old for that business, whatever her face says to the contrary, and this opinion makes the ladies here so ready to make proofs of their youth (which is as necessary in order to be a received beauty as it is to show the proofs of nobility to be admitted Knight of Malta[3]) that they do not content themselves with using the

the autumn of 1717, but Prince Eugene besieged Belgrade and utterly razed the city in late August. As Grundy notes, the fate of Lady Mary's friend Achmet-Beg is unknown; thus this gap in the letters carries a certain affective weight, especially in light of her remarks on the aftermath of Petrovaradin. After the fall of Belgrade, news of Wortley's recall arrived and threw his household finances into chaos. Although criticized for being too pro-Turk, the terms on which Wortley negotiated peace were eventually adopted and he had the humiliating experience of being excluded from the congress at which the treaty was signed. The gap in the letters means that Lady Mary doesn't have to address these reverses in her husband's career. Grundy also notes that Lady Mary was pregnant and gave birth to her daughter Mary Wortley Montagu during this period. (See Grundy, 155-58.)

1 Halsband (1.371n3) glosses this passage by referring to Joseph Pitts, *A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans* (1704): "The Story of the *Pidgeon*, which is said to have been taught by Mahomet to pick Corn out of his Ear, and which the vulgar took to be the whispers of the Holy Ghost, hath no better Foundation, that ever I could learn than a Castle ... in the Air."

2 Lady Mary was pregnant with her daughter Mary, the future Lady Bute.

3 The Knights of Malta, a chivalric military and religious order dating back to the Crusades, were drawn only from nobility, and their lineage was strictly scrutinized. They were based in Rhodes from 1310 to 1530, (*continued*)

natural means, but fly to all sort of quackeries to avoid the scandal of being past child-bearing and often kill themselves by them. Without any exaggeration, all the women of my acquaintance that have been married ten year have twelve or thirteen children, and the old ones boast of having had five and twenty or thirty apiece, and are respected according to the number they have produced. When they are with child, 'tis their common expression to say they hope God will be so merciful to them to send two this time, and when I have asked them sometimes how they expected to provide for such a flock as they desire, they answer that the plague will certainly kill half of them, which, indeed, generally happens without much concern to the parents, who are satisfied with the vanity of having brought forth so plentifully. The French Ambassadress is forced to comply with this fashion as well as myself. She has not been here much above a year, and has lain in once and is big again.[1] What is most wonderful is the exemption they seem to enjoy from the curse entailed on the sex. They see all company the day of their delivery, and at the fortnight's end return visits, set out in their jewels and new clothes.

I wish I may find the influence of the climate in this particular, but I fear I shall continue an English woman in that affair as well as I do in my dread of fire and plague, which are two things very little feared here, most families having had their houses burnt down once or twice, occasioned by their extraordinary way of warming themselves, which is neither by chimneys nor stoves but a certain machine called a *tendour*, the height of two foot in the form of a table, covered with a fine carpet or embroidery. This is made only of wood, and they put into it a small quantity of hot ashes and sit with their legs under the carpet. At this table they work, read, and, very often sleep; and if they chance to dream, kick down the tendour and the hot ashes commonly sets the house on fire. There was five hundred houses burnt in this manner about a fortnight ago, and I have seen several of the owners since who seem not at all moved at so common a misfortune. They put their goods into a bark, and see their houses burn with great philosophy, their persons being very seldom endangered, having no stairs to descend.

But having entertained you with things I don't like, 'tis but just I should tell you something that pleases me. The climate is delightful in

when they were defeated by Süleyman the Magnificent. From Rhodes they retreated to Malta and remained a prominent force in the Mediterranean from 1530 to 1798. The Knights fought against the Turks on numerous occasions, most notably at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

1 She gave birth to François-Armand de Bonnac (1716-82) in Istanbul on 7 December.

the extremist degree. I am now sitting, this present 4th of January, with the windows open, enjoying the warm shine of the sun, while you are freezing over a sad sea-coal fire; and my chamber set out with carnations, roses, and jonquils, fresh from my garden.[1] I am also charmed with many points of the Turkish law, to our shame be it spoken, better designed and better executed than ours, particularly the punishment of convicted liars (triumphant criminals in our country, God knows). They are burnt in the forehead with a hot iron, being proved authors of any notorious falsehood. How many white foreheads should we see disfigured? How many fine gentlemen would be forced to wear their wigs low as their eyebrows were this law in practice with us? I should go on to tell you many other parts of justice, but I must send for my midwife.

Letter 40

To the Countess of ____[2]

Pera of Constantinople, March 10, O. S. 1718

I have not writ to you (dear Sister) these many months, a great piece of self-denial! but I knew not where to direct or what part of the world you were in. I have received no letter from you since your short note of April last in which you tell me, that you are on the point of leaving England, and promise me a direction for the place you stay in, but I have in vain expected it till now, and now I only learn from the *Gazette* that you are returned, which induces me to venture this letter to your house at London.[3] I had rather ten of my letters should be lost than you imagine I don't write, and I think it 'tis hard fortune if one in ten don't reach you. However, I am resolved to keep the copies as testimonies of my inclination to give you (to the utmost of my power) all the diverting part of my travels, while you are exempt from all fatigues and inconveniences.[4]

1 See "Verses written in the Chiosk of the British Palace at Pera," Appendix B4.

2 To Lady Mar.

3 Lady Mar visited her exiled husband on the continent in April 1717 and returned to London on 15 October 1717. Lady Mary's information appears to be gleaned from the *London Gazette*. Lady Mar's husband, John Erskine, Earl of Mar (1675-1732) led the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1715 and went immediately into exile after its failure. At this time he was following the Pretender's court as it moved through France and Italy.

4 A clear indication that Lady Mary kept copies of her correspondence.

In the first place then, I wish you joy of your niece, for I was brought to bed of a daughter five weeks ago.[1] I don't mention this as one of my diverting adventures, though I must own that it is not half so mortifying here as in England, there being as much difference as there is between a little cold in the head, which sometimes happens here, and the consumptive coughs so common in London. Nobody keeps their house a month for lying-in, and I am not so fond of any of our customs as to retain them when they are not necessary. I returned my visits at three weeks end, and about four days ago crossed the sea which divides this place from Constantinople to make a new one, where I had the good fortune to pick up many curiosities.

I went to see the Sultana Hafise,[2] favourite of the last Emperor Mustapha,[3] who, you know (or perhaps you don't know) was deposed by his brother, the reigning Sultan, and died a few weeks after, being poisoned, as it was generally believed. This lady was immediately after his death saluted with an absolute order to leave the Seraglio and choose herself a husband from the great men at the Porte. I suppose you may imagine her overjoyed at this proposal—quite the contrary—these women, who are called and esteem themselves queens, look upon this liberty as the greatest disgrace and affront that can happen to them. She threw herself at the Sultan's feet and begged him to poniard her rather than use his brother's widow with that contempt. She represented to him, in agonies of sorrow, that she was privileged from this misfortune by having brought five princes into the Ottoman family. But all the boys being dead and only one girl surviving, this excuse was not received, and she was compelled to make her choice. She chose Bekir Effendi,[4] then secretary of state, and above fourscore year old, to convince the world that she firmly intended to keep the vow she had made of never suffering a second husband to approach her bed, and since she must honour some subject so far as to be called his wife, she would chose him as a

1 Lady Mary's daughter Mary was born on 19 January. She married John Stuart (1713-92), the third Earl of Bute, who became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during the reign of George III. Lady Bute burned her mother's journal and some of her correspondence.

2 Hafise kadin efendi was one of the kadins of Mustafa II. Sultans were limited to four kadins, and, although they were not married, the kadin was the equivalent of a legal wife and was given apartments, slaves, dresses, and jewellery; she was ranked according to her election.

3 Mustafa II (1664-1703) assumed the sultanate in 1695 but was forced to abdicate in 1703. He died at Topkapi palace four months later. During his reign, the empire lost Hungary under the terms of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.

4 Halsband (1.381n1, via Alderson) identifies him as Ebubekir Efendi (d. 1723), Reis-ül Küttab (Minister for Foreign Affairs).

mark of her gratitude, since it was he that had presented her at the age of ten year to her lost lord. But she never permitted him to pay her one visit, though it is now fifteen year she has been in his house, where she passes her time in uninterrupted mourning with a constancy very little known in Christendom, especially in a widow of twenty-one, for she is now but thirty-six. She has no black eunuchs for her guard, her husband being obliged to respect her as a queen and not to enquire at all into what is done in her apartment, where I was led into a large room, with a sofa the whole length of it, adorned with white marble pillars, like a *ruelle*,[1] covered with pale blue figured velvet on a silver ground, with cushions of the same, where I was desired to repose till the Sultana appeared, who had contrived this manner of reception to avoid rising up at my entrance, though she made me an inclination of her head when I rose up to her. I was very glad to observe a lady that had been distinguished by the favour of an emperor to whom beauties were every day presented from all parts of the world. But she did not seem to me to have ever been half so beautiful as the fair Fatima I saw at Adrianople,[2] though she had the remains of a fine face, more decayed by sorrow than time.

But her dress was something so surprisingly rich I cannot forbear describing it to you. She wore a vest called *dualma*, which differs from a caftan by longer sleeves, and folding over at the bottom. It was of purple cloth, straight to her shape, and thick set, on each side down to her feet and round the sleeves, with pearls of the best water, of the same size as their buttons commonly are. You must not suppose that I mean as large as those of my Lord_____ but about the bigness of a pea; and to these buttons, large loops of diamonds, in the form of those gold loops so common upon birth-day coats. This habit was tied at the waist with two large tassels of smaller pearl, and round the arms embroidered with large diamonds; her shift was fastened at the bosom with a great diamond shaped like a lozenge. Her girdle, as broad as the broadest English ribbon, entirely covered with diamonds. Round her neck she wore three chains which reached to her knees: one of large pearl at the bottom of which hung a fine coloured emerald as big as a turkey egg; another consisting of two hundred emeralds close joined together of the most lively green, perfectly matched, every one as large as a half-crown piece and as thick as three crown pieces; and another of small emeralds perfectly round. But her earrings eclipsed all the rest; they were two diamonds shaped exactly like pears, as large as a big hazelnut. Round her *talpoche* she had four strings of pearl, the whitest and most perfect in the world, at least enough to make four necklaces every one as large

1 A private assembly room.

2 See Letter 34.

as the Duchess of Marlborough's,[1] and of the same size, fastened with two roses, consisting of a large ruby for the middle stone, and round them twenty drops of clean diamonds to each. Beside this, her head-dress was covered with bodkins of emeralds and diamonds. She wore large diamond bracelets and had five rings on her fingers all single diamonds (except Mr. Pitt's)[2] the largest I ever saw in my life. 'Tis for jewellers to compute the value of these things, but according to the common estimation of jewels in our part of the world, her whole dress must be worth above £100 thousand sterling. This I am sure of, that no European queen has half the quantity, and the Empress's jewels (though very fine) would look very mean near hers.

She gave me a dinner of fifty dishes of meat, which (after their fashion) was placed on the table but one at a time, and was extremely tedious, but the magnificence of her table answered very well to that of her dress. The knives were of gold, but the hafts set with diamonds, but the piece of luxury which grieved my eyes, was the table-cloth and napkins, which were all tiffany embroidered with silks and gold in the finest manner in natural flowers. It was with the utmost regret that I made use of these costly napkins, as finely wrought as the finest handkerchiefs that ever came out of this country. You may be sure that they were entirely spoiled before dinner was over. The sherbet (which is the liquor they drink at meals) was served in china bowls, but the covers and salvers, massy gold. After dinner water was brought in a gold basin and towels of the same kind of the napkins, which I very unwillingly wiped my hands upon, and coffee was served in china with gold *soûcoupes*.

The Sultana seemed in very good humour, and talked to me with the utmost civility. I did not omit this opportunity of learning all that I possibly could of the seraglio, which is so entirely unknown amongst us. She assured me that the story of the Sultan's throwing a handkerchief is altogether fabulous,[3] and the manner upon that occasion no other but he sends the Kuslir Aga[4] to signify to the lady the honour he intends her. She is immediately complimented upon it by the others, and led to

1 Sarah Jennings (1660-1744), Duchess of Marlborough and, at this point, friend of King George I, was one of the most influential and richest women in England.

2 Thomas Pitt (1653-1726), also known as Diamond Pitt, was a merchant who traded in India and bought the diamond in Madras. He sold it to the French Regent in 1717 and it became part of the French Crown jewels. It is now on display at the Louvre.

3 See Paul Rycaut on the handkerchief in Appendix E4.

4 See p. 111, note 1.

the bath where she is perfumed and dressed in the most magnificent and becoming manner. The Emperor precedes his visit by a royal present, and then comes into her apartment. Neither is there any such thing as her creeping in at the bed's feet.[1] She said that the first he made choice of was always after the first in rank, and not the mother of the eldest son, as other writers would make us believe. Sometimes the Sultan diverts himself in the company of all his ladies, who stand in a circle round him, and she confessed that they were ready to die with jealousy and envy of the happy she that he distinguished by any appearance of preference. But this seemed to me neither better nor worse than the circles in most courts, where the glance of the monarch is watched, and every smile waited for with impatience and envied by those who cannot obtain it.

She never mentioned the Sultan without tears in her eyes, yet she seemed very fond of the discourse. My past happiness (said she) appears a dream to me, yet I cannot forget that I was beloved by the greatest and most lovely of mankind. I was chose from all the rest to make all his campaigns with him.[2] I would not survive him if I was not passionately fond of the Princess my daughter, yet all my tenderness for her was hardly enough to make me preserve my life when I lost him. I passed a whole twelvemonth without seeing the light. Time has softened my despair, yet I now pass some days every week in tears devoted to the memory of my Sultan. There was no affectation in these words. It was easy to see she was in a deep melancholy, though her good humour made her willing to divert me.

She asked me to walk in her garden, and one of her slaves immediately brought her a pelisse of rich brocade lined with sables. I waited on her into the garden, which had nothing in it remarkable but the fountains, and from thence she showed me all her apartments. In her bed-chamber, her toilet was displayed, consisting of two looking glasses, the frames covered with pearls, and her night *talpoche* set with bodkins of jewels, and near it three vests of fine sables, every one of which is at least worth 1,000 dollars, £200 English money. I don't doubt these rich habits were purposely placed in sight, but they seemed negligently thrown on the sofa. When I took my leave of her, I was complimented with perfumes as at the Grand Vizier's, and presented with a very fine embroidered handkerchief. Her slaves were to the number of thirty, besides ten little ones, the eldest not above seven year old. These were the most beautiful girls I ever saw, all richly dressed,

1 See Penzer (179-80) for a discussion of "creeping up the bed"; he suggests this was required behaviour of men married to sultanas.

2 See Leslie Pierce on the political power of women in the harem.

and I observed that the Sultana took a great deal of pleasure in these lovely children, which is a vast expense, for there is not a handsome girl of that age to be bought under £100 sterling. They wore little garlands of flowers, and their own hair braided, which was all their headdress, but their habits were all of gold stuffs. These served her coffee kneeling, brought water when she washed, etc. 'Tis a great part of the business of the older slaves to take care of these girls, to learn them to embroider and serve them as carefully as if they were children of the family.

Now do I fancy that you imagine I have entertained you all this while with a relation that has (at least) received many embellishments from my hand. 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 writ by an author of this country and (excepting the enchantments) are a real representation of the manners here.[1] We travellers are in very hard circumstances. If we say nothing but what has been said before us, we are dull and we have observed nothing. If we tell anything new, we are laughed at as fabulous and romantic, not allowing for the difference of ranks, which afford difference of company, more curiosity, or the changes of customs that happen every twenty year in every country. But people judge of travellers exactly with the same candour, good nature, and impartiality, they judge of their neighbours upon all occasions. For my part, if I live to return amongst you, I am so well acquainted with the morals of all my dear friends and acquaintance that I am resolved to tell them nothing at all to avoid the imputation (which their charity would certainly incline them to) of my telling too much. But I depend upon your knowing me enough, to believe whatever I seriously assert for truth, though I give you leave to be surprised at an account so new to you.

But what would you say if I told you that I have been in a haram where the winter apartment was wainscoted with inlaid work of mother of pearl, ivory of different colours, and olive wood, exactly like the little boxes you have seen brought out of this country; and those rooms designed for summer, the walls are all crusted with Japan china, the roofs gilt, and the floors spread with the finest Persian carpets? Yet there is nothing more true; such is the palace of my lovely

1 It is difficult to locate a single "master" text as these tales circulated in both written and oral form. A three-volume Syrian manuscript was likely the source of Antoine Galland's early eighteenth-century French translation, *Les Mille et une nuits, contes arabes* (1704-17). Lady Mary's library contains all twelve volumes. See Appendix F2.

friend, the fair Fatima, whom I was acquainted with at Adrianople. I went to visit her yesterday, and (if possible) she appeared to me handsomer than before. She met me at the door of her chamber, and giving me her hand with the best grace in the world, you Christian ladies (said she with a smile that made her as handsome as an angel) have the reputation of inconstancy, and I did not expect, whatever goodness you expressed for me at Adrianople, that I should ever see you again; but I am now convinced that I have really the happiness of pleasing you, and if you knew how I speak of you amongst our ladies, you would be assured that you do me justice if you think me your friend. She placed me in the corner of the sofa, and I spent the afternoon in her conversation with the greatest pleasure in the world.

The Sultana Hafise is what one would naturally expect to find a Turkish lady, willing to oblige, but not knowing how to go about it, and 'tis easy to see in her manner that she has lived excluded from the world. But Fatima has all the politeness and good breeding of a court, with an air that inspires at once respect and tenderness; and now I understand her language, I find her wit as engaging as her beauty. She is very curious after the manners of other countries and has not that partiality for her own, so common to little minds. A Greek that I carried with me who had never seen her before (nor could have been admitted now if she had not been in my train) showed that surprise at her beauty and manner, which is unavoidable at the first sight, and said to me in Italian: This is no Turkish lady, she is certainly some Christian. Fatima guessed that she spoke of her and asked what she said. I would not have told her, thinking she would have been no better pleased with the compliment than one of our court beauties to be told she had the air of a Turk. But the Greek lady told it to her, and she smiled, saying: It is not the first time I have heard so; my mother was a Poloneze taken at the siege of Caminiec,[1] and my father used to rally me, saying, he believed his Christian wife had found some Christian gallant, for I had not the air of a Turkish girl. I assured her that if all the Turkish ladies were like her, it was absolutely necessary to confine them from public view for the repose of mankind, and proceeded to tell her what a noise such a face as hers would make in London or Paris. I can't believe you (replied she agreeably) if beauty was so much valued in your country as you say, they would never have suffered you to leave it. Perhaps (dear Sister) you laugh at my vanity in repeating this compliment, but I only do it as I think it very well turned and give it you as an instance of the spirit of her conversation. Her

1 Kamieniec, a fortified Polish town, was besieged and conquered by Mehmed IV in 1672.

house was magnificently furnished and very well fancied, her winter rooms being furnished with figured velvet on gold grounds, and, those for summer with fine Indian quilting embroidered with gold. The houses of the great Turkish ladies are kept clean with as much nicety as those in Holland. This was situated in a high part of the town, and from the windows of her summer apartment we had the prospect of the sea, and the islands, and the Asian mountains.——My letter is insensibly grown so long, I am ashamed of it. This is a very bad symptom, 'tis well if I don't degenerate in a downright storyteller. It may be our proverb that knowledge is no burden[1] may be true as to one's self, but knowing too much is very apt to make us troublesome to other people.

Letter 41

To the Lady ___[2]

Pera, Constantinople March 16, O. S. 1718

I am extremely pleased (my dear Lady) that you have at length found a commission for me that I can answer without disappointing your expectation, though I must tell you that it is not so easy as perhaps you think it, and that if my curiosity had not been more diligent than any other stranger's has ever yet been, I must have answered you with an excuse, as I was forced to do, when you desired me to buy you a Greek slave. I have got for you, as you desire, a Turkish love-letter, which I have put in a little box and ordered the captain of the Smyrniote[3] to deliver it to you with this letter. The translation of it is literally as follows. The first piece you should pull out of the purse is a little pearl,[4] which is in Turkish called *ingi*, and should be understood in this manner:

1 George Herbert (1593-1633), poet and Anglican priest; many of his proverbs are still used today.

2 Wharncliffe identifies her as Lady Rich (2.55), but she is more likely the anonymous Lady of Letter 38 (17 June 1717) as it refers again to the Lady's request for a Greek slave.

3 According to Halsband (1.388n1), the *Smyrniote* was a merchantman commanded by Captain Nathaniel Clark that arrived in Smyrna in February 1718 and again in April 1718 on its way back to England. Smyrna (modern day Izmir) was an ancient port and important factory for the Levant Company.

4 In the poem below, "pearl" is placed next to the Turkish text and "Ingi" comes next to the English. In light of the subsequent lines, this would appear to be an error in Lady Mary's rendering.

Pearl Ingi	Sensin Uzellerin gingi Fairest of the young.
Caremsil A clove	Caremfilsen cararen Yok Conge gulsun timarin yok Benseny chok tan severim Senin benden haberin Yok
	You are as slender as this clove; You are an unblown Rose; I have long loved you, and you have not known it.
Pul a Jonquil	derdime derman bul Have pity on my passion.
Kihat paper	Biîlerum sahat sahat I faint every hour.
ermut pear	ver bize bir umut Give me some hope.
sabun Soap	Derdinden oldum Zabun I am sick with Love.
chemur coal	Ben oliyim size umur May I die, and all my years be yours!
Gul, A Rose	ben aglarum sen gul May you be pleased, and all your sorrows mine!
hazir a straw	Oliîm sana Yazir Suffer me to be your slave.
Jo ha cloth	ustune bulunmaz Paha Your price is not to be found.
tartsin cinnamon	sen ghel ben chekeim senin hargin But my fortune[1] is yours.
Gira a match	Esking-ilen oldum Ghira I burn, I burn, my flame consumes me.

1 The word "estate" is crossed out.

Sirma	uzunu benden ayirma
Goldthread	Don't turn away your face.
Satch	Bazmazun tatch
Hair	Crown of my head.
Uzum	Benim iki Guzum
Grape	My eyes.
tel	uluyorum tez ghel
Gold Wire	I die—come quickly.

And by way of postscript:

biber	Bize bir dogru haber
pepper,	Send me an Answer.[1]

You see this letter is all in verses, and I can assure you there is as much fancy shown in the choice of them as in the most studied expressions of our letters, there being (I believe) a million of verses designed for this use. There is no colour, no flower, no weed, no fruit, herb, pebble, or feather, that has not a verse belonging to it; and you may quarrel, reproach, or send letters of passion, friendship, or civility, or even of news, without ever inking your fingers.[2]

1 There is a literal translation of these verses in Lady Mary's Commonplace Book (18-20) at the Fisher Library, University of Sydney. It appears that the verse was first rendered in Latin script from the Ottoman. The text here is exactly as it appears in the letter-book. See Halsband (1.464-65) for a corrected version.

2 Lady Mary is credited with introducing the "sélam" into Europe. Dumont and other travelers describe similar letters composed of objects rather than words: "But wou'd you not be surpriz'd, instead of a *Billet-doux*, to find nothing but bits of *Charcoal*, *Scarlet Cloth*, *Saffron*, *Ashes*, and such like Trash, wrapt in a Piece of Paper. 'Tis true, these are as significant as the most passionate Words; but 'tis a Mystical Language that cannot be understood without a *Turkish* Interpreter" (*New Voyage*, 268). The sélam was supposedly a game played by women in the harem, where a message comprised of flowers and other objects was sent to a lover and was in turn decoded based on a word that rhymed with the object. Lady Mary's example in this letter influenced the craze for the "language of flowers" in Europe in the nineteenth century—although this language, unlike the sélam, was emblematic and flowers were designated a specific meaning. See Beverly Seaton (62) and Baron Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, "*Sur le langage des fleurs*," *Fundgruben des Orients*, I, Wien, 1809, 32-42.

I fancy you are now wondering at my profound learning, but alas dear Madam, I am almost fallen into the misfortune so common to the ambitious: while they are employed on distant insignificant conquests abroad, a rebellion starts up at home. I am in great danger of losing my English. I find it is not half so easy to me to write in it as it was a twelve-month ago. I am forced to study for expressions, and must leave off all other languages and try to learn my mother tongue. Human understanding is as much limited as human power or human strength. The memory can retain but a certain number of images, and 'tis as impossible for one human creature to be perfect master of ten different languages as to have in perfect subjection ten different kingdoms, or to fight against ten men at a time. I am afraid I shall at last know none as I should do. I live in a place that very well represents the Tower of Babel; in Pera they speak Turkish, Greek, Hebrew, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Slavonian,[1] Wallachian,[2] German, Dutch, French, English, Italian, Hungarian; and what is worse, there are ten of these languages spoke in my own family. My grooms are Arabs; my footmen French, English, and Germans; my nurse an Armenian; my housemaids Russians; half a dozen other servants Greeks; my steward an Italian; my janissaries Turks, that I live in perpetual hearing of this medley of sounds, which produces a very extraordinary effect upon the people that are born here.[3] They learn all these languages at the same time and without knowing any of them well enough to write or read in it. There is very few men, women, or even children here that have not the same compass of words in five or six of them. I know myself several infants of three or four year old that speak Italian, French, Greek, Turkish, and Russian, which last they learn of their nurses, who are generally of that country. This seems almost incredible to you, and is (in my mind) one of the most curious things in this country, and takes off very much from the merit of our ladies who set up for such extraordinary geniuses upon the credit of some superficial knowledge of French and Italian. As I prefer English to all the rest, I am extremely mortified at the daily decay of it in my head, where, I'll assure you (with grief of heart) it is reduced to such a small number of words, I cannot recollect any tolerable phrase to conclude my letter, and am forced to tell Your Ladyship very bluntly that I am your faithful humble servant.

1 Slovenian is a southern Slavic language.

2 Wallachia is part of modern-day Romania.

3 Like many travelers, Lady Mary remarks on the heterogeneous and cosmopolitan population of Istanbul.

Letter 42

To the Countess of B ___[1]

At length I have heard, for the first time from my dear Lady B_____.[2] I am persuaded you have had the goodness to write before, but I have had the ill fortune to lose your letters. Since my last, I have stayed quietly at Constantinople, a city that I ought in conscience to give Your Ladyship a right notion of since I know you can have none but what is partial and mistaken from the writings of travellers.[3] 'Tis certain, there are many people that pass years here in Pera without having ever seen it, and yet they all pretend to describe it. Pera, Tophana, and Galata, wholly inhabited by Frank Christians (and which together make the appearance of a very fine town) are divided from it by the sea,[4] which is not above half so broad as the broadest part of the Thames, but the Christian men are loath to hazard the adventures they sometimes meet with amongst the Levents or seaman (worse monsters than our watermen) and the women must cover their faces to go there, which they have a perfect aversion to do. 'Tis true they wear veils in Pera, but they are such as only serve to show their beauty to more advantage, and which would not be permitted in Constantinople. Those reasons deter almost every creature from seeing it, and the French Ambassadress will return to France (I believe) without ever having been there. You'll wonder, Madam, to hear me add that I have been there very often. The *asmak*, or Turkish veil, is become not only very easy but agreeable to me, and if it was not, I would be content to endure some inconveniency to content a passion so powerful with me as curiosity; and indeed the pleasure of going in a barge to Chelsea is not comparable to that of rowing upon the canal of the sea here, where for twenty miles together down the Bosphorus the most beautiful variety of prospects present themselves. The Asian side is covered with fruit trees, villages, and the most delightful landscapes in nature. On the European stands Constantinople, situate on seven hills. The unequal heights make it seem as large again as it is (though one of the largest cities in the world)

1 To Lady Bristol. This letter has no place designation and no date. The heading is in Lady Mary's hand; otherwise, the letter is in the same hand as Letters 37 and 39.

2 "ristol, this present 10th of April, 1718. Yet" is struck out but still legible in Lady Mary's letter-book.

3 The promise to provide a truer or more correct version than previous accounts is a common convention in travel writing of the period.

4 The Golden Horn.

showing an agreeable mixture of gardens, pine and cypress trees, palaces, mosques, and public buildings, raised one above another, with as much beauty and appearance of symmetry as Your Ladyship ever saw in a cabinet adorned by the most skilful hands, jars showing themselves above jars, mixed with canisters, babies, and candlesticks. This is a very odd comparison, but it gives me an exact image of the thing.

I have taken care to see as much of the Seraglio as is to be seen. It is on a point of land running into the sea, a palace of prodigious extent, but very irregular; the gardens a large compass of ground full of high cypress trees, which is all I know of them; the buildings all of white stone, leaded on top, with gilded turrets and spires, which look very magnificent, and indeed I believe there is no Christian king's palace half so large. There are six large courts in it all built round and set with trees, having galleries of stone: one of those for the guard, another for the slaves, another for the officers of the kitchen, another for the stables, the fifth for the Divan, and the sixth for the apartment destined for audiences. On the ladies' side there is at least as many more, with distinct courts belonging to their eunuchs and attendants, their kitchens, etc.

The next remarkable structure is that of St. Sophia, which 'tis very difficult to see.[1] I was forced to send three times to the *Caimaicam* (the governor of the town), and he assembled the chief effendis or heads of the law, and inquired of the mufti whether it was lawful to permit it. They passed some days in this important debate, but I insisting on my request, permission was granted.[2] I can't be informed why the Turks are more delicate on the subject of this mosque than any of the others, where what Christian pleases may enter without scruple. I fancy they imagine that having been once consecrated, people on pretence of curiosity, might profane it with prayers, particularly to those saints who are still very visible in mosaic work, and no other way defaced but by the decays of time; for 'tis absolutely false what is so universally asserted that the Turks defaced all the images that they found in

1 The Aya Sophia was originally a Byzantine church (360-1453) rebuilt under Emperor Justinian (532-27), and the largest cathedral in the world for almost a thousand years. The mosaics and its dome were considered to be among the greatest achievements in Christendom. When the city was conquered by the Turks in 1453 under Mehmet II, the church was converted into a mosque. Christians were generally forbidden to enter the mosque, but other travelers, including Dumont (154), indicate that exceptions were sometimes made.

2 As Halsband notes (1.398n2), Lady Mary told Joseph Spence in 1741 that she and the Princess of Transylvania dressed as men and risked their lives to visit the mosque.

the city.[1] The dome of St. Sophia is said to be 113 foot diameter, built upon arches, sustained by vast pillars of marble, the pavement and stair-case marble. There is two rows of galleries supported with pillars of parti-coloured marble, and the whole roof mosaic work, part of which decays very fast and drops down. They presented me a handful of it. The composition seems to me a sort of glass or that paste with which they make counterfeit jewels. They show here the tomb of the Emperor Constantine[2] for which they have a great veneration. This is a dull, imperfect description of this celebrated building, but I understand architecture so little that I am afraid of talking nonsense in endeavouring to speak of it particularly.

Perhaps I am in the wrong, but some Turkish mosques please me better. That of Sultan Soliman[3] is an exact square, with four fine towers on the angles; in the midst is a noble cupola supported with beautiful marble pillars, two lesser at the ends supported in the same manner, the pavement and gallery round the mosque of marble. Under the great cupola is a fountain adorned with such fine coloured pillars I can hardly think them natural marble. On one side is the pulpit of white marble, and on the other the little gallery for the Grand Signor. A fine stair-case leads to it, and it is built up with gilded lattices. At the upper end is a sort of altar where the name of God is written, and before it stands two candlesticks as high as a man, with wax candles as thick as three flambeaux. The pavement is spread with fine carpets and the mosque illuminated with a vast number of lamps. The court leading to it is very spacious with galleries of marble with green columns, covered with twenty-eight leaded cupolas on two sides, and a fine fountain of three basins in the midst of it. This description may

1 Lady Mary was right despite the contrary opinions of other travelers. Boston archaeologist Thomas Whittemore (1871-1950) was granted permission to work on the preservation of the mosaics in 1931 and found they had been concealed but not defaced by the conquering Muslims.

2 Constantine (272-337), the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity, is the namesake of Constantinople. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles, the second most important church in Constantinople after the Aya Sophia. Sacked in 1204 in the Fourth Crusade, the church and tombs were plundered by crusaders. There is a mosaic of Constantine with a model of the city (c. 1000) in the Aya Sophia.

3 Süleymaniye Mosque, built between 1550 and 1558 by Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan, is the second largest in the city next to the Aya Sophia. It combines Byzantine-style domes and half-domes with elegant, tall minarets. It is an extensive complex that combined religious and social buildings.

serve for all the mosques in Constantinople; the model is exactly the same, and they only differ in largeness and richness of materials. That of the Validé is the largest of all, built entirely of marble, the most prodigious and (I think) the most beautiful structure I ever saw, be it spoke to the honour of our sex, for it was founded by the mother of Mahomet the 4th;[1] (between friends) St. Paul's Church[2] would make a pitiful figure near it, as any of our squares would do, near the *Atlerdan* or place of horses, *At* signifying a horse in Turkish.[3]

This was the Hippodrome in the reign of the Greek Emperors. In the midst of it is a brazen column of three serpents twisted together, with their mouths gaping. 'Tis impossible to learn why so odd a pillar was erected. The Greeks can tell nothing but fabulous legends when they are asked the meaning of it, and there is no sign of its having ever had any inscription.[4] At the upper end is an obelisk of porphyry probably brought from Egypt,[5] the hieroglyphics all very entire, which I look upon as mere ancient puns. It is placed on four little brazen pillars upon a pedestal of square free stone full of figures in bas relief on two sides; one square representing a battle, another an assembly. The others have inscriptions in Greek and Latin. The last I took in my pocket-book and is literally:

1 The Yeni Mosque in Üsküdar was completed in 1665 by Turhan Hatice, Valide Sultan (1627-82). The first mosque built by a woman, it demonstrates Ottoman women's public and political power. She was the formal representative of her son, the child sultan, Mehmed IV (1648-87).

2 St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Rebuilt between 1675 and 1710 by Christopher Wren, after the Great Fire of London, St. Paul's has one of the largest church domes in the world.

3 Known as Atmeydani Square (Horse Square) or Sultanahmet Meydani under the Ottomans, the Hippodrome of Constantinople was constructed in 203 CE and was expanded by Emperor Constantine and used for games and horse races; it could accommodate 40 to 50 thousand people.

4 The Serpent Column celebrated the victory of the Greeks over the Persians. Emperor Constantine had the column moved from the Temple of Apollo at Delphi to the Hippodrome. The serpents' heads were destroyed and repaired several times, which explains the varying descriptions by travelers. Nothing now remains but the base at the site, but the partial remains of one of the serpents' heads are now at the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul.

5 The obelisk was brought from Egypt to Constantinople and erected by Theodosius the Great in 390, but was originally made for Thutmose III, who ruled Egypt from 1479 to 1425 BCE. The ancient pink granite stone continues to sit on its marble pedestal.

Difficilis quondam, Dominis parere serenis
Iussus, et extinctis palmam portare Tyrannis
Omnia Theodosio cedunt, sobolique perreni.[1]

Your Lord will interpret these lines. Don't fancy they are a love-letter to him.[2] All the figures have their heads on, and I cannot forbear reflecting again on the impudence of authors who all say they have not, but I dare swear the greatest part of them never saw them, but took the report from the Greeks, who resist, with incredible fortitude, the conviction of their own eyes whenever they have invented lies to the dishonour of their enemies.[3] Were you to ask them, there is nothing worth seeing in Constantinople but Sancta Sophia, though there are several larger mosques. That of Sultan Achmet[4] has that of particular, its gates are of brass. In all these mosques there are little chapels where are the tombs of the founders and their families, with vast candles burning before them.

The exchanges are all noble buildings, full of fine alleys, the greatest part supported with pillars, and kept wonderfully neat. Every trade has their distinct alley, the merchandise disposed in the same order as in the New Exchange at London.[5] The Bisisten[6] or jeweller's quarter, shows so much riches, such a vast quantity of diamonds, and all kind of precious stones, that they dazzle the sight. The embroiderers' is also very glittering, and people walk here as much for diversion as business. The markets are most of them handsome squares, and admirably well provided, perhaps better than in any other part of the world. I

1 The full inscription is as follows: DIFFICILIS QVONDAM DOMINIS PARERE SERENIS IVSSVS ET EXTINCTIS PALMEM PORTARE TYRANNIS OMNIA THEODOSIO CEDVNT SOBOLIQVE PERENNI TER DENIS SIC VICTVS EGO DOMITVSQVE DIEBVS IVDICE SVB PROCLO SVPERAS ELATVS AD AVRAS. Translation: "Once it was difficult to conquer me, but I was ordered to obey mild masters and to carry the subdued tyrants' palm. Everything cedes to Theodosius and his eternal descendants. Thus conquered I was tamed in thrice ten days. When Proculus was judge, I was erected to the skies."

2 Lady Bristol's husband, John Hervey (1665-1751), first Earl of Bristol.

3 More likely, this discrepancy is explained by attempts to repair the heads.

4 Built between 1609 and 1616 under Ahmed I and known as the Sultanamet Camii or the Blue Mosque for the blue tiles on the interior. There was a metal chain at the entrance of the West courtyard that the Sultan, who was the sole person who could enter the courtyard by horse, was forced to bow under, reminding him of humility in the face of the Divine.

5 The Grand Bazaar.

6 In the oldest section of the Bazaar, the Cevahi Bedesteni (Jewellery Market).

know you'll expect I should say something particular of that of the slaves, and you will imagine me half a Turk when I don't speak of it with the same horror other Christians have done before me, but I cannot forbear applauding the humanity of the Turks to those creatures. They are never ill used, and their slavery is in my opinion no worse than servitude all over the world. 'Tis true they have no wages, but they give them yearly clothes to a higher value than our salaries to any ordinary servant.[1] But you'll object that men buy women with an eye to evil. In my opinion they are bought and sold as publicly and more infamously in all our Christian great cities.[2] I must add to the description of Constantinople that the Historical Pillar is no more, dropped down about two year before I came. I have seen no other footsteps of antiquity except the aqueducts, which are so vast that I am apt to believe they are yet ancienter than the Greek Empire, though the Turks have clapped in some stones with Turkish inscriptions to give their Nation the honour of so great a work, but the deceit is easily discovered.[3]

The other public buildings are the hans and monasteries; the first are very large and numerous; the second few in number and not at all magnificent. I had the curiosity to visit one of them, and to observe the devotions of the dervishes,[4] which are as whimsical as any in Rome. These fellows have permission to marry, but are confined to an odd habit, which is only a piece of coarse white cloth wrapped about them, with their legs and arms naked. Their order has few other rules, except that of performing their fantastic rites every Tuesday and Friday, which is in this manner. They meet together in a large hall, where they all stand with their eyes fixed on the ground, and their arms across, while the Imam or preacher reads part of the Alcoran from a pulpit placed in the midst, and when he has done, eight or ten of them make a melancholy concert with their pipes, which are no unmusical instru-

1 Ottoman slaves were part of the household and could rise to some of the most powerful positions in the Empire. For example, the Kislar Agha (Chief of the Black Eunuchs) and the Valide Sultan (mother of the Sultan).

2 Estimates suggest about 63,000 prostitutes were working in the alleyways and brothels of London in 1700, about one fifth of the female population. Eight-, nine-, and ten-year-old girls were not uncommon. See Cruickshank.

3 The Valens aqueduct in the Fatih district of Istanbul was completed by Emperor Valens in the late fourth century and was one of the terminal points for a water supply network that extended for over 250 kilometres. The Roman structure was repaired by several Sultans, including Mustapha II (there is an inscription commemorating the event) and Ahmed III.

4 See p. 140, note 2. Lady Mary's account of the whirling dance performed during the Sema is typical of travel narratives of the period.

ments. Then he reads again and makes a short exposition on what he has read, after which they sing and play 'till their superior (the only one of them dressed in green) rises and begins a sort of solemn dance. They all stand about him in a regular figure, and while some play, the others tie their robe (which is very wide) fast round their waists and begin to turn round with an amazing swiftness, and yet with great regard to the music, moving slower or faster as the tune is played. This lasts above an hour without any of them showing the least appearance of giddiness, which is not to be wondered at when it is considered they are all used to it from infancy, most of them being devoted to this way of life from their birth, and sons of dervishes. There turned amongst them some little dervishes of six or seven years old, who seemed no more disordered by that exercise than the others. At the end of the ceremony they shout out: There is no other God, but God, and Mahomet is his Prophet; after which they kiss the superior's hand and retire. The whole is performed with the most solemn gravity. Nothing can be more austere than the form of these people. They never raise their eyes, and seem devoted to contemplation, and as ridiculous as this is in description, there is something touching in the air of submission and mortification they assume. This letter is of horrible length, but you may burn it when you have read enough.[1]

Letter 43

To the Countess of ___[2]

I am now preparing to leave Constantinople, and perhaps you will accuse me of hypocrisy when I tell you 'tis with regret, but I am used to the air and have learnt the language. I am easy here, and as much as I love travelling, I tremble at the inconveniencies attending so great a journey with a numerous family and a little infant hanging at the breast. However, I endeavour upon this occasion to do as I have hitherto done in all the odd turns of my life; turn them, if I can, to my diversion. In order to this, I ramble every day wrapped up in my *ferace* and

1 Crossed out in the letter-book: "Mr. Wortley is not yet here, but I may assure your Ladyship in his name of the respect he has for you. I give humble service to my Lord Bristol and Mr. Hervey." (See p. 51, note 2.)

2 Wharncliffe identifies the addressee as the Countess of Bristol (2.68). Halsband leaves the addressee blank, but guesses at the date (which is also not given) as May 1718. There is no place designation. Crossed out in the letter-book are the first lines: "Your Ladyship may be assured I received yours with very great pleasure. I am very glad to hear that our friends are in good health, particularly Mr. Congreve, who I heard was ill of the gout."

yashmak[1] about Constantinople and amuse myself with seeing all that is curious in it. I know you'll expect that this declaration should be followed with some account of what I have seen, but I am in no humour to copy what has been writ so often over. To what purpose should I tell you that Constantinople is the ancient Byzantium, that 'tis at present the conquest of a race of people supposed Scythians,[2] that there is five or six thousand mosques in it, that Sancta Sophia was founded by Justinian, etc.? I'll assure you 'tis not want of learning that I forbear writing all these bright things. I could also, with little trouble, turn over Knolles and Sir Paul Rycaut to give you a list of Turkish Emperors, but I will not tell you what you may find in every author that has writ of this country.[3] I am more inclined, out of a true female spirit of contradiction, to tell you the falsehood of a great part of what you find in authors. As for example the admirable Mr. Hill, who so gravely asserts that he saw in Sancta Sophia, a sweating pillar very balsamic for disordered heads.[4] There is not the least tradition of any such matter, and I suppose it was revealed to him in vision during his wonderful stay in the Egyptian Catacombs, for I am sure he never heard of any such miracle here. 'Tis also very pleasant to observe how tenderly he and all his brethren voyage-writers lament on the miserable confinement of the Turkish ladies,[5] who are (perhaps) freer than any ladies in the universe,[6] and are the only women

1 Outer coat and veil.

2 The history of the Scythians continues to be debated. Various theories suggest they originated in either Turkestan and Western Siberia or the Pontic-Caspian steppe.

3 See p. 106, note 3 and Appendices E1 and E4.

4 There is a sweating pillar in the Aya Sophia, and the moisture is rumoured to have healing properties. Aaron Hill states in *A Full and Just Account* (1709) that "you may see great numbers of promiscuous People wiping off the Moisture with their Cloaths or Foreheads, some expecting by its sovereign Power, to be protected from the least Misfortune" (138).

5 The depiction of the Muslim woman as oppressed is a standard trope that continues to the present day. See Appendices E and F.

6 Many female travel writers after Lady Mary, including Lady Craven in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople* (1789), commented on the "freedom" of Turkish women largely because Muslim women had the right to own property. The Qur'an established women's right to the *mahr*, which is granted to the bride on her marriage, unlike the English dowry that was given to 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 64).

in the world that lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure, exempt from cares, their whole time being spent in visiting, bathing, or the agreeable amusement of spending money and inventing new fashions. A husband would be thought mad that exacted any degree of economy from his wife, whose expenses are no way limited but by her own fancy. 'Tis his business to get money and hers to spend it, and this noble prerogative extends itself to the very meanest of the sex. Here is a fellow that carries embroidered handkerchiefs upon his back to sell, as miserable a figure as you may suppose such a mean dealer, yet I'll assure you his wife scorns to wear anything less than cloth of gold, has her ermine furs, and a very handsome set of jewels for her head. They go abroad when and where they please. 'Tis true they have no places but the bagnios, and there can only be seen by their own sex; however that is a diversion they take great pleasure in.

I was three days ago at one of the finest in the town and had the opportunity of seeing a Turkish bride received there and all the ceremonies used on that occasion, which made me recollect the epithalamium of Helen by Theocritus,[1] and it seems to me that the same customs have continued ever since. All the she-friends, relations and acquaintance of the two families newly allied meet at the bagnio; several others go out of curiosity, and I believe there was that day at least two hundred women. Those that were or had been married placed themselves round the rooms on the marble sofas, but the virgins very hastily threw off their clothes, and appeared without other ornament or covering than their own long hair braided with pearl or ribbon. Two of them met the bride at the door, conducted by her mother and another grave relation. She was a beautiful maid of about seventeen, very richly dressed and shining with jewels, but was presently reduced by them to the state of nature. Two others filled silver gilt pots with perfume and begun the procession, the rest following in pairs, to the number of thirty. The leaders sung an epithalamium, answered by the others in chorus, and the two last led the fair bride, her eyes fixed on the ground with a charming affectation of modesty. In this order they marched round the three large rooms of the bagnio. 'Tis not easy to represent to you the beauty of this sight, most of them being well proportioned and white skinned, all of them perfectly smooth and polished by the frequent use of bathing. After having made their tour, the bride was again led to every matron round the rooms, who saluted her with a compliment and a present, some of jewels, others pieces of

1 The 18th Idyll of Theocritus (3rd century BCE) celebrates the mythological wedding of Menelaus and Helen.

stuff, handkerchiefs, or little gallantries of that nature, which she thanked them for by kissing their hands.[1]

I was very well pleased with having seen this ceremony, and you may believe me that the Turkish ladies have at least as much wit and civility, nay liberty, as ladies among us.[2] 'Tis true the same customs that give them so many opportunities of gratifying their evil inclinations (if they have any) also puts it very fully in the power of their husbands to revenge them if they are discovered, and I do not doubt but they suffer sometimes for their indiscretions in a very severe manner. About two months ago there was found at day break not very far from my house, the bleeding body of a young woman, naked, only wrapped in a coarse sheet, with two wounds with a knife, one in her side, and another in her breast. She was not yet quite cold, and was so surprisingly beautiful that there were very few men in Pera that did not go to look upon her; but it was not possible for anybody to know her, no woman's face being known. She was supposed to be brought in dead of night from the Constantinople side and laid there. Very little inquiry was made about the murderer, and the corpse privately buried without noise. Murder is never pursued by the King's officers as with us. 'Tis the business of the next relations to revenge the dead person, and if they like better to compound the matter for money (as they generally do) there is no more said of it. One would imagine this defect in their government should make such tragedies very frequent, yet they are extremely rare, which is enough to prove the people not naturally cruel. Neither do I think in many other particulars they deserve the barbarous character we give them.

I am well acquainted with a Christian woman of quality who made it her choice to live with a Turkish husband, and is a very agreeable sensible lady. Her story is so extraordinary I cannot forbear relating it, but I promise you it shall be in as few words as I can possibly express it. She is a Spaniard and was at Naples with her family when that kingdom was part of the Spanish dominion.[3] Coming from thence in a felucca,[4] accompanied by her brother, they were attacked by the

1 This passage was also copied by Ingres in his notebook and influenced his orientalist painting *Le Bain turc* (1862). See p. 100, note 2 and Appendix I3.

2 Hill's comment, accusing Turkish women of lewd and lascivious behaviour, is again typical among the male travelers: "'tis no wonder they have no more regard to their *Vertue* or their *Honour*." A persistent myth that circulated in these narratives is that cucumbers were cut up before they were allowed into the harem to prevent the women from using them wantonly. See Ottaviano Bon and Aaron Hill in Appendices E3 and E5.

3 Naples was ruled by Spain from 1506 to 1714.

4 A narrow sailing vessel used on the Mediterranean Sea.

Turkish admiral, boarded and taken; and now how shall I modestly tell you the rest of her adventure? The same accident happened to her that happened to the fair Lucretia[1] so many years before her, but she was too good a Christian to kill herself as that heathenish Roman did. The admiral was so much more charmed with the beauty and long-suffering of the fair captive that as his first compliment he gave immediate liberty to her brother and attendants, who made haste to Spain and in a few months sent the sum of £4,000 sterling as a ransom for his sister. The Turk took the money, which he presented to her, and told her she was at liberty, but the lady very discreetly weighed the different treatment she was likely to find in her native country. Her Catholic relations, as the kindest thing they could do for her in her present circumstances, would certainly confine her to a nunnery for the rest of her days. Her infidel lover was very handsome, very tender, fond of her, and lavished at her feet all the Turkish magnificence. She answered him very resolutely that her liberty was not so precious to her as her honour, that he could no way restore that but by marrying her. She desired him to accept the ransom as her portion and give her the satisfaction of knowing that no man could boast of her favours without being her husband. The admiral was transported at this kind offer and sent back the money to her relations, saying he was too happy in her possession. He married her and never took any other wife, and (as she says herself) she never had any reason to repent the choice she made. He left her some years after one of the richest widows in Constantinople, but there is no remaining honourably a single woman, and that consideration has obliged her to marry the present Captain Bassa (i.e., admiral), his successor.[2] I am afraid you will think that my friend fell in love with her ravisher, but I am willing to take her word for it that she acted wholly on principles of honour, though I think she might be reasonably touched at his generosity, which is often found amongst the Turks of rank.[3]

'Tis a degree of generosity to tell the truth, and 'tis very rare that any Turk will assert a solemn falsehood. I don't speak of the lowest

1 The revenge taken for the rape and ensuing suicide of the legendary Roman matron Lucretia is said to have led to the overthrow of the Roman monarchy and the establishment of the Roman republic.

2 Halsband (1.409n1) suggests that the admiral in this tale is Ibrahim Pasha, Lord Admiral 1706-09 and 1717-18.

3 Judith Tucker, in a presentation at Yale (May 2012) entitled "Women, Men, and Violence: Middle East Piracy from a Gendered Perspective," considered the agency of women in ransom negotiations (forthcoming in *JMEWS*, 2013). Also, see her *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law* for a broader discussion of women and marriage.

sort, for as there is a great deal of ignorance, there is very little virtue amongst them, and false witnesses are much cheaper than in Christendom, those wretches not being punished (even when they are publicly detected) with the rigour they ought to be. Now I am speaking of their law, I don't know whether I have ever mentioned to you one custom peculiar to this country. I mean adoption, very common amongst the Turks, and yet more amongst the Greeks and Armenians. Not having it in their power to give their estates to a friend or distant relation,[1] to avoid its falling into the Grand Signor's treasury, when they are not likely to have children of their own, they choose some pretty child of either sex amongst the meanest people, and carry the child and its parents before the cadi, and there declare they receive it for their heir. The parents at the same time renounce all future claim to it, a writing is drawn and witnessed, and a child thus adopted cannot be disinherited. Yet I have seen some common beggars that have refused to part with their children in this manner to some of the richest amongst the Greeks. So powerful is the instinctive fondness natural to parents! Though the adopting fathers are generally very tender to these children of their souls as they call them. I own this custom pleases me much better than our absurd following our name. Methinks 'tis much more reasonable to make happy and rich an infant whom I educate after my own manner, brought up (in the Turkish phrase) upon my knees, and who has learnt to look upon me with a filial respect, than to give an estate to a creature without other merit or relation to me than by a few letters. Yet this is an absurdity we see frequently practiced.

Now I have mentioned the Armenians, perhaps it will be agreeable to tell you something of that nation, with which I am sure you are utterly unacquainted. I will not trouble you with the geographical account of the situation of their country, which you may see in the map, or a relation of their ancient greatness, which you may read in the Roman history. They are now subject to the Turks, and, being very industrious in trade, and increasing and multiplying, are dispersed in great numbers through all the Turkish dominions. They were (as they

1 Laws of entailment ensured that aristocratic estates in England would not be broken up or fall into a female line; thus these lands would be inherited by the male progenitor (the nearest male descendent). Edward Wortley Montagu refused to agree to this condition to entail his estate to a male heir, which is one of the reasons Lady Mary had to elope with Edward. See Halsband 1.51-52 for Lady Mary's letter to Wortley that discusses this matter. Wortley eventually disinherited his son Edward.

say) converted to the Christian religion by St. Gregory,[1] and are (perhaps) the devoutest Christians in the whole world. The chief precepts of their priests enjoin the strict keeping of their Lents, which are at least seven months in every year, and are not to be dispensed with on the most emergent necessity. No occasion whatever can excuse them if they touch anything more than mere herbs or roots (without oil) and plain dry bread. That is their Lenten diet. Mr. W____ has one of his interpreters of this nation, and the poor fellow was brought so low with the severity of his fasts that his life was despaired of, yet neither his master's commands or the doctor's entreaties (who declared nothing else could save his life) were powerful enough to prevail with him to take two or three spoonfuls of broth. Excepting this, which may rather be called custom than an article of faith, I see very little in their religion different from ours. 'Tis true they seem to incline very much to Mr. Wh—'s doctrine;[2] neither do I think the Greek church very distant from it, since 'tis certain the insisting on the Holy Spirit only proceeding from the Father is making a plain subordination in the Son. But the Armenians have no notion of transubstantiation, whatever account Sir Paul Rycaut gives of them (which account I am apt to believe was designed to compliment our court in 1679)[3] and they have a great horror for those amongst them that change to the Roman religion.

What is most extraordinary in their customs is their matrimony, a ceremony I believe unparalleled all over the world. They are always promised very young, but the espoused never see one another till three days after their marriage. The bride is carried to church with a cap on her head in the fashion of a large trencher, and over it a red silken veil which covers her all over to her feet. The priest asks the bridegroom whether he is contented to marry that woman, be she deaf, be she blind? These are the literal words, to which having answered yes, she is led home to his house accompanied with all the friends and relations on both sides, singing and dancing, and is placed on a cushion in the

1 Saint Gregory is credited with converting Armenians from paganism to Christianity; Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity officially in 301 CE.

2 William Whiston. See p. 105, note 3.

3 Rycaut wrote that Armenians, like Catholics, believed in transubstantiation in his *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches*, which was written "at the command of Charles II" and published in 1679 in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis (1678-81). The Exclusion Bill sought to prevent Charles's brother James from succeeding to the throne for fear of his Catholicism. The Whigs (like Lady Mary) supported the Bill, while the court party, the Tories, opposed it.

corner of the sofa, but her veil never lifted up, not even by her husband, till she has been three days married.[1] There is something so odd and monstrous in these ways that I could not believe them till I had enquired of several Armenians myself, who all assured me of the truth of them, particularly one young fellow who wept when he spoke of it, being promised by his mother to a girl that he must marry in this manner, though he protested to me he had rather die than submit to this slavery, having already figured his bride to himself with all the deformities in nature—.

I fancy I see you bless yourself at this terrible relation. I cannot conclude my letter with a more surprising story yet 'tis as seriously true as that I am, dear Sister,[2] your etc.[3]

Letter 44

To the Abbot of ___.[4]

Constantinople, May 19, O. S. 1718

I am extremely pleased with hearing from you, and my vanity (the darling frailty of human kind) not a little flattered by the uncommon questions you ask me, though I am utterly incapable of answering them. And indeed, were I as good a mathematician as Euclid himself, it requires an age's stay to make just observations on the air and vapours.[5] I have not been yet a full year here, and am on the point of removing, such is my rambling destiny. This will surprise you, and can surprise nobody so much as myself. Perhaps you will accuse me of laziness or dullness, or both together, that can leave this place without giving you some account of the Turkish Court. I can only tell you that if you please to read Sir Paul Rycaut,[6] you will there find a full and true account of the Viziers, the Beglerbey's, the civil and spiritual government, the officers of the Seraglio, etc. things that 'tis very easy to

1 Armenian marriage practices were often commented on in travel narratives and histories, including in the works of Sandys and Rycaut.

2 The letter begins addressed to the Countess and concludes with salutations to her sister. The crossed-out lines at the opening of the letter suggest a discrepancy between the initial address and the closing salutation.

3 This is the end of the second volume of the 1763 edition.

4 To the Abbé Conti.

5 The great Greek mathematician Euclid lived in the third century BCE. His *Elements* is one of the most influential texts in the history of mathematics.

6 Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1665).

procure lists of, and therefore may be depended on; though other stories, God knows—I say no more—everybody is at liberty to write their own remarks. The manners of people may change, or some of them escape the observation of travellers, but 'tis not the same of the government, and for that reason, since I can tell you nothing new, I will tell nothing of it. In the same silence shall be passed over the arsenal and Seven Towers; and for mosques I have already described one of the noblest to you very particularly.[1] But I cannot forbear taking notice to you of a mistake of Gemelli,[2] (though I honour him in a much higher degree than any other voyage-writer) he says that there is no remains of Calcedon; this is certainly a mistake.[3] I was there yesterday and went cross the canal in my galley, the sea being very narrow between that city and Constantinople. 'Tis still a large town, and has several Mosques in it. The Christians still call it Calcedonia,[4] and the Turks give it a name I forgot, but which is only a corruption of the same word. I suppose this is an error of his guide, which his short stay hindered him from rectifying, for I have (in other matters) a very just esteem for his veracity.

Nothing can be pleasanter than the canal, and the Turks are so well acquainted with its beauties, all their pleasure-seats are built on its banks, where they have at the same time, the most beautiful prospects in Europe and Asia. There are near one another some hundreds of magnificent palaces. Human grandeur being here yet more unstable than anywhere else, 'tis common for the heirs of a great three-tailed bassa, not to be rich enough to keep in repair the house he built; thus in a few years they all fall to ruin. I was yesterday to see that of the late Grand Vizir who was killed at Peterwaradin.[5] It was built to receive his royal bride, daughter of the present Sultan, but he did not live to see her there.[6] I have a great mind to describe it to you, but I check that inclination, knowing very well that I cannot give you, with my best description, such an idea of it as I ought. It is situated on one of the most delightful parts of the canal, with a fine wood on the side of a hill

1 See p. 145, note 6 and Letter 42.

2 Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1651-1725) was a famous traveler and author of *Giro Del Mondo* (1699).

3 The ancient city of Bithynia, Chalcedon was on the Sea of Marmara, close to the mouth of the Bosporus.

4 Now Kadiköy.

5 Silahdar Ali Pasha (1667-1716) was Grand Vizier from 1713 until his death at Petrovaradin; he was known as Şehit Ali Pasha (martyr) after his death.

6 Ali Pasha's betrothed was Sultana Fatma. After Ali Pasha's death she married Nevsehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha in 1718, the same year he became Grand Vizier. See p. 109, note 1.

behind it. The extent of it is prodigious; the guardian assured me there is eight hundred rooms in it. I will not answer for that number since I did not count them, but 'tis certain the number is very large and the whole adorned with a profusion of marble, gilding, and the most exquisite painting of fruit and flowers. The windows are all sashed with the finest crystalline glass, brought from England, and here is all the expensive magnificence that you can suppose in a palace founded by a vain young luxurious man, with the wealth of a vast empire at his command. But no part of it pleased me better than the apartments destined for the bagnios. There are two exactly built in the same manner, answering to one another, the baths, fountains, and pavements of all white marble, the roofs gilt, and the walls covered with Japan china. But adjoining to them: two rooms, the upper part of which is divided into a sofa, in the four corners falls of water from the very roof, from shell to shell of white marble, to the lower end of the room, where it falls into a large basin, surrounded with pipes that throw up the water as high as the room. The walls are in the nature of lattices, and on the outside of them vines, and woodbines, planted, that form a sort of green tapestry, and give an agreeable obscurity to these delightful chambers. I should go on and let you into some of the other apartments, (all worthy of your curiosity) but 'tis yet harder to describe a Turkish palace than any other, being built entirely irregular. There is nothing that can be properly called front or wings, and though such a confusion is (I think) pleasing to the sight, yet it would be very unintelligible in a letter. I shall only add, that the chamber destined for the Sultan when he visits his daughter is wainscoted with mother of pearl, fastened with emeralds like nails. There are others of mother of pearl and olive wood inlaid, and several of Japan china. The galleries (which are numerous and very large) are adorned with jars of flowers and porcelain dishes of fruit of all sorts, so well done in plaster and coloured in so lively a manner that it has an enchanting effect. The garden is suitable to the house, where arbours, fountains, and walks are thrown together in an agreeable confusion. There is no ornament wanting except that of statues.

Thus you see, Sir, these people are not so unpolished as we represent them. 'Tis true, their magnificence is of a different taste from ours, and perhaps of a better. I am almost of opinion they have a right notion of life, while they consume it in music, gardens, wine, and delicate eating, while we are tormenting our brains with some scheme of politics; or studying some science to which we can never attain, or if we do, cannot persuade people to set that value upon it we do ourselves. 'Tis certain what we feel and see is properly (if anything is properly) our own; but the good of fame, the folly of praise, hardly purchased, and when

obtained——poor recompense for loss of time and health! We die, or grow old and decrepit, before we can reap the fruit of our labours. Considering what short-lived, weak animals men are, is there any study so beneficial as the study of present pleasure? I dare not pursue this theme, perhaps I have already said too much, but I depend upon the true knowledge you have of my heart. I don't expect from you the insipid railleries I should suffer from another in answer to this letter. You know how to divide the idea of pleasure from that of vice, and they are only mingled in the heads of fools.—But I allow you to laugh at me for the sensual declaration in saying, that I had rather be a rich effendi with all his ignorance, than Sir Issac Newton with all his knowledge.[1] I am, Sir, etc.

1 At one level, this plays into the stereotypical representation of the East as irrational and sensual. But the passage also offers an unusual—for this time period—recognition of the limits of Newtonian rationality.