THE REPRESENTATION of TURKISH WOMEN in ENGLISH TRAVEL WRITING and TURKISH WOMAN as THE JUSTIFIED 'OTHER' in *TURKISH EMBASSY LETTERS*

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Abstract: In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said states that the studies about the Middle East have been dominated by masculinism and he shows the significance of women's role in undermining this dominance by demonstrating the "diversity and complexity of experience that works beneath the totalizing discourses of Orientalism and of Middle East (overwhelmingly male) nationalism" (Said, 1993, p.XXİV). In my study, I showcase the certain complicity between Orientalism's imperialist functions and Western feminism. The "simulation of sovereign masculine discourse" by Western women reflect the very feminist, orientalist, and imperialist tendencies (Yeğenoglu, 1998, p. 107). Although seventeenth and eighteenth century writers like Evans, Chevers and Wollstonecraft happen to be the repetitive voice of their male counterparts and of previous generations with their biased portrait of the East, other women writers, like Lady Mary Montagu and Manley Delarivier stress the significance of the likeness between cultures and project their own life experiences into literature that sheds light on the dark corners of the Orient. Lady Mary Montagu with her *Turkish Embassy Letters* is one of the most important contributors for the unbiased portrayal of Ottoman life during the imperial era. She fearlessly deconstructs the common assumptions and claims about the oppression of Muslim women in her Ottoman accounts.

Key Words: Orientalism, Feminist Orientalism, Deconstruction, Muslim women, Lady Mary Montagu, Edward Said.

İngiliz Gezi Yazılarında Türk Kadını'nın Temsili ve Şark Mektupları'nda Aklanan Türk Kadını

Özet: Oryantalizm üzerine çalışmaların öncülerinden olan Edward Said, "Kültür ve Emperyalizm" kitabında Ortadoğu çalışmalarının maskülinizm tarafından kuşatıldığını söyler. Kadın faktörünün bu erkek egemenliğinin ve Oryantalizm ve Ortadoğu (çoğunlukla erkek) milliyetçiliği söylemlerinin arka planındaki tecrübelerin çeşitlilik ve

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karmaşasını ortaya çıkarıp yok etmede önemini gösterir (Said, 1993, p. XXİV). Çalışmamda, Oryantalizm'in emperyalist işlevi ve Batı feminizmi arasında kesin bir ortaklık olduğunu öne sürmekteyim. Batılı kadın tarafından taklit edilen egemen erkek söylemi feminist, oryantalist ve emperyalist eğilimleri aynen yansıtır (Yeğenoglu, 1998, p. 107). 17. ve 18. yüzyıllardaki Evans, Chevers ve Wollstonecraft gibi kadın yazarlar Doğu'yu önyargıyla karşılama hususunda erkek çağdaşlarının ve daha önceki dönemlerdeki yazarların tekrarı niteliğinde olsalar da, yine aynı yıllar içinde Doğu'nun karanlık köşelerini aydınlatan, kültürlerin benzeştiği noktaları ele alıp edebiyata kendi hayat tecrübelerini katan Manley Delarivier ve Lady Mary Montagu gibi kadın yazarlar da mevcuttur. Lady Mary Montagu *Turkish Embassy Letters* adlı eseriyle imparatorluk çağında, zamanının Oryantalist anlayışının dışında kalarak Osmanlı yaşamının tarafsız ve önyargısız portresine katkı sağlayan çok önemli yazarlardandır. İngiliz büyükelçisinin eşi olarak, Lady Mary yaygın varsayımları ve Müslüman kadının ezilmişliği hakkındaki iddiaları Osmanlı notlarında/kayıtlarında korkusuzca yapısöküme uğratmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oryantalizm, Feminist Oryantalizm, Yapısökümcülük, Müslüman kadınlar, Lady Mary Montagu, Edward Said.

In 1717, Lady Mary Montagu travelled to the Ottoman Empire with her husband, Edward Wortley, who was appointed British ambassador in the empire. During their stay in the empire, Edward tried to negotiate peace between Ottomans and Austrians to protect English interests on maritime commerce. Meanwhile, Lady Montagu wrote her embassy letters on Turkish culture and habits. The letters were published one year after her death in 1763. The letters became so popular that they received reviews from famous figures like Dr. Johnson, Voltaire, and Gibbon.

Recent analyses of the letters largely focus on the credibility of Lady Montagu's narrative as a feminist text. Does it contribute to or resist the Orientalism of her male and female counterparts? Lisa Lowe, Professor of English and American studies and the writer of such influential books as *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* and *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, claims that Lady Montagu's work employs a feminist discourse to resist the Orientalist tropes so far found in the travel accounts of the male writers such as George Sandys, Jean Dumont, and Aaron Hill (Lowe, 1991, p.31). Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998), a Professor of cultural studies, on the other hand, suggests that Montagu's accounts of the Orient "cannot be disentangled from the masculinist and imperialist accounts of the Orient offered by male travellers" and, thus, complements the work of the male colonist rather than objecting to it (p.82). There are various comments on Lady Montagu's vision and mission during her stay in Turkish Ottoman quarters: While it is possible to accept all suggestions, it seems also impossible to interfere in the issue without any clues

from Lady Montagu's background or her personal life, which deeply affected her view of Turkish women. It is also undeniable that unlike Western diplomats, whose visits were limited to the palaces of Istanbul, far from the events and people of everyday life, both Lady Montagu and missionary women had access to the inner quarters of ordinary Turkish women. There is a difference, though, between the initial aims of those women. The missionaries saw oriental women as a prime target for missionary work because the Orientalist discourse imposed the idea of Muslim women having a woeful status.

Cultures certainly have structures, and they must be analysed within these structures. We as human beings perceive things in pairs or oppositions, which need one another for a just definition. As Levi-Strauss put it, it is thanks to the voyages that human behaviour began to change from egoist, self-centred one to the analytical and experimental one.

> ... that crucial moment in modern thought when, thanks to the great voyages of discovery, a human community which had believed itself to be complete and in its final form suddenly learned ... that it was not alone, that it was part of a greater whole, and that, in order to achieve self-knowledge, it must first of all contemplate its recognisable image in this mirror. (Strauss, 1973, p. 102)

Falling into the Orientalist "rhetoric of difference" at times, Lady Montagu mostly deployed a feminist discourse that is a "rhetoric of likeness," as Lowe (1991) has noted (p.32). That is, Lady Montagu identified herself with the Turkish women rather than searching for humiliating differences between two cultures. However, her resentment over her financial dependence on Wortley, her husband, and his failure in gaining economic and political success changed Lady Montagu, who would once "prefer liberty to a chain of diamonds" (Montagu, 1966, p. 246). Seeing the liberty of Turkish women who spent their time exempt from any cares, Lady Montagu desired the same. In the Ottoman quarters, "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" (p. 406). She is not simply comparing her own life with that of the Turkish ladies, but she is drawing a visible line between the miserable, suppressed Turkish women in the West's imagination and the wealthy, free, and happy Turkish women in reality.

While Lady Montagu searched for ways to better and further represent Turkish women to the West, Said asserted that travel literature further manifested the differences between people of two distant spheres. For Said, English or French people create their identity by constructing another antagonistic people, the "Others." Oriental travellers "essentialized" the East and followed the East from "afar and, so to speak, from above" (Said, 1979, p. 333). Whether Lady Montagu

had hidden implications behind her gaze or not cannot be judged narrowly or strictly in our day, yet from her travel accounts it is obvious that her visit to the Levant was truly exploratory. It is also undeniable that her curiosity was an upper-class woman's wonder about the outer world that automatically put her in a higher rank. Kabbani (1986) writes, "The Orient becomes a pretext for self-dramatization and differentness; it is the malleable theatrical space in which can be played out the egocentric fantasies of Romanticism" (p. 11). Some writers even claim that the bath scenes or women's private quarters displayed by Lady Montagu's letters stimulate the desire of her male readers. Her descriptions are claimed to be "notoriously orientalist themselves" and "the forgeries of male authors" (Çevik, 2011, p. 466). Lady Montagu, as she intended in her letters, emphasized the commonalities between peoples, not their differences. At one point, Lady Montagu seems to have missed the point of her visit to the bath, which turned out to be an erotic adventure for some. According to Campbell (1994), Lady Montagu "fantasizes herself replaced in the baths by an invisible male artist" and thus the aesthetic is interwoven with the erotic (p. 80). Lady Montagu established a close link between her body and the ladies', yet she could not avoid the male gaze constructed by her Englishness. In a letter to Lady Bute, however, Lady Montagu undermined the differences between peoples saying that "Mankind is everywhere the same: like Cherries or Apples, they may differ in size, shape colour, from different soils, species" (vol. III 15). Not considering the homoerotic fantasies or the shows that she was claimed to generate, Lady Montagu simply made an effort to find the same human nature in Islamic lands. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (1981) sees Montagu as "remarkably free of ethnocentrism and reinforcing the enlightenment ideals of empiricism, egalitarianism, and objectivity" (p. 331). She was not a mere gazer; she was at the same time able to adopt the Muslim women's point of view. She went even further praising Muslim women for the path they chose in terms of the financial and spiritual freedom. Montagu's appreciation of Turkish ways reminds one of Demetra Vaka and her view on the issue. "And since internationalism can save our civilization, each nation should learn the better qualities of the others" (Vaka, 1952, p. 26). One can also recall David Hume's (1975) aphorism from the Enlightenment period: "Mankind are so much the same in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature" (p. 83).

As Lady Montagu set up rhetoric of likeness in her observations of the Eastern life, Emelia Bithynia Hornby also established identification between Western and Turkish women:

> I had seen how sweetly gentle and kind the Turkish women are, and lifted up the charmed curtain with much more confidence and pleasure than I should have entered an assembly of Englishwomen [...]. We were

> in the midst of a vast apartment, with lofty, dome-like roof [...]. An immense staircase was on the other side, lighted by a window which reached from roof to floor, and in the projecting half-moon of the balusters was a beautiful white-marble fountain. The whole was covered with the same gold-colored matting. Rich crimson divans under each enormous window at either end, and raised three steps. (Montagu, 1966, p. 238)

It is quite hard to witness a male traveller establishing such close connections with the object of his curiosity. Their approach to observing and writing about Eastern women was more disconnected from the target group, while women tended to be involved in the family circles and formed their perceptions, likes and dislikes, accordingly. The interiors were depicted in such detail that one could visualize it easily. Women travellers had more authentic views of oriental spaces and people than their male counterparts although they still remained thrilled "outsiders" to the exotic "other" partly because it was inaccessible to male travellers.

Billie Melman (1995) reminds her reader of something very significant about the aim of travels. Although it holds some truth, travel cannot be labelled as merely a form of domination; instead it has another crucial aspect which is the "comparison between 'self' and 'other'" (p. 9). The explorers, missionaries, ethnographers are all protagonists in their own drama. It would be unjust to write them out from their own story and impersonalize their accounts. Labelling them as only serving kingdom, religion, etc. distances ourselves from the mere fact of individual experience. The women's experience of the Orient, for example, was more private than public, more individual and a-political. Yet as Melman (1995) points out, it would be ignoring the fact of imperialism to thoroughly "de-politicize that experience" (p. 12). We as readers should not allow some trendy points to alienate us from the less debatable issues. Comparison between cultures and social behaviour is an important quality in the perception and reception of the travel accounts by its audience. Biddulph, for example, believed that the English would find much to appreciate about their country after they read his accounts in the "ungodly places" he travelled. He insisted that "the English will learn to appreciate having a 'good and gratious King' (...); women will learn 'to love their husbands, when they shall read in what slavery women live in other Countries'; servants will learn duty to their benevolent masters" (Bernadette, 2007, p. 80). This invites us to inquire into the cause of this statement by Biddulph. What might really have happened during Biddulph's stay in Istanbul that he thought too negatively about the situation of women in the East?

Contrary to Melman's belief, the Syrian historian Rana Kabbani, a disciple in comparative literature, believes that Lady Montagu and such travellers might

be serving a dangerous end though they may seem innocent with their writings. For Kabbani (1986), "To write a literature of travel cannot but imply a colonial relationship. The claim is that one travels to learn, but really one travels to exercise power over land, women, peoples" (p. 10). Applying Kabbani's thesis on Lady Montagu's position as a Western gazer in the Turkish bath, it is easily deduced that Lady Montagu held power in her eyes through observing the half naked Turkish women while they were sharing their most special and self-defining practices among each other. Displaying it before a stranger was already the manifestation and thus the collapse of the "unknown."

There are several travel narratives through which we can find out the other's perception of the Western world as represented via its representatives. Intersubjectivity, as we call it, is thus "not only constructing the 'I' as subject but acknowledging the presence of other subjects and the possibility of imagining the self as an-other to an-other subject" (Adak, 2001, p. 4). In Lady Montagu's accounts, for instance, we see both the apprehension and uneasiness of her being invited to go naked in front of other ladies in the bath in Adrianople and the content at the same time over being welcomed with the greatest civility. By the looks centred on her, she embraced the possibility of being gazed at. Adak (2001) specifies this exchange between two different poles as "the razing of the hierarchy between Self/Other, West/East, in order to enable the *fluidity* and *reciprocity* of exchange between the poles of these dichotomies" (p. 5). It is not a static exchange as seen from the one-sided Western travel accounts. In the accounts recorded by various female authors like Lady Montagu, Pardoe, Vaka, and Ellison, the Eastern women wrote back or subverted the monologic discourse, indeed. They either spoke through their veils or chose the way they represented their culture to the foreigners. Mikhail Bakhtin defines this monologic discourse as the subordination of "the social diversity of speech types" to a single authoritative voice. This exchange between East and West requires the deconstruction of this monologic discourse in favor of dialogism, that is, "[a] plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). After all, journey to a foreign land, if aimed for purposes and ends other than religion and trade, requires a process of unlearning.

Lady Montagu's presence in the bath as an English lady and her description of the scene in the very private female quarters put her in a position such that she looked like "mimicking the voyeuristic male gaze of an Orientalist painter" (Konuk, 2004, p. 395). Hers was not a reaction but a mere depiction of the scene that she eye-witnessed:

> To tell you the truth, I had wickedness enough to wish secretly that Mr Gervase (an Irish portrait painter) 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. (Montagu, 1966, p. 314)

Claiming herself to be the first Western female entering the hamam, Lady Montagu needed to portray the scene either to prove her presence there or to arouse the same curiosity for the others. The several stereotypes that already fossilized in people's minds were once more revived through Lady Montagu's depiction of the hamam scene. It even became a source of inspiration for the famous Orientalist painter, Auguste-Dominique Ingres's painting *The Turkish Bath*. Srinivas Aravamudan, despite Lady Montagu's harmless sexual content in her description of the Bath, also claims that the descriptions are "suggestive of lesbian possibilities" (Montagu, 1966, p. 85). The homoerotic content, as she called it, is full of implications that were hidden behind Lady Montagu's sympathetic attitudes. However, Kader Konuk (2004) asserts that Lady Montagu put on the male gaze to "establish her narrative authority" (p. 395). It neither has the risk of being seen as a lesbian act nor indicates a hegemonic discourse over Muslim women. Lady Montagu (1966) prevented this happening by raising her credibility. As she confirmed it, there was no "wanton smile" or "immodest gesture" among the Turkish women or slaves while she was in her riding dress (p. 313). She was also not fully naked in the end so as to avoid possible rumours or misunderstandings.

The passage reveals Lady Montagu's opposition to the previous male travel writers who represented women either as lascivious or unattractive in the female bath. What Weitzman (2002) finds interesting in this section is yet "the voyeuristic male artist that Lady Montagu uses as a measure of the women" in the bath (p. 351). The female flesh being aestheticized was likened to the naked women in the paintings of the Italian school of female beauty. Lady Montagu also sympathized with Turkish ladies drinking coffee in the bath, the scene being similar to one in coffee houses in London. Lady Montagu established a common link and friendship between Turkey and Europe, thus avoiding any implication that these women lived in an exotic world alien to Europe (Weitzman, 2002, p. 351).

Similarly, Henry Blount, who voyaged to the Ottoman Empire from 1634 to 1636, was presented by his contemporaries to be willing to counter English customs conflicting with his worldview and to encourage English subjects to use it in their imperialist and Orientalist efforts. After his voyage, he stopped drinking English spirits; instead, he became a drinker of water and coffee. In contrast to Dallam and Biddulph, Blount's travel accounts together with his

views influenced English society at all levels, from royal households to common readers. Blount gathered knowledge about the Ottoman Empire to oppose all the anti-Islamic views. Thus he caused an "imperial envy" for the English, who wanted to become rivals with the Ottomans on a global scale (MacLean, 2004, p. 126). As Bernadette Andrea (2007) put it in her review, "the absence of Orientalism in Blount's narrative actually rendered it more usable for subsequent English imperialist efforts" (p. 9).

The relationship between travel and gender is often reduced to Trollopian stereotypes. It is often assumed that women's experience of the Orient was greatly dependent on their husbands or brothers and their role was simply "supportive" (Melman, 1995, p. 26). Indeed travels are always seen as strings firmly attached to the literary field instead of social and cultural phenomena. However, it was a cultural thing that inspired and influenced others' experiences. Lord Byron, for instance, was inspired to travel to the East as a young boy, being influenced by Lady Montagu's Turkish letters that he read "'before [he] was *10 years* old'" (Winch, 2013, p. 2). Like their male contemporaries, women writers also were the actors of their own experiences.

Some students of women's autobiographical writing have found that both men and women tended to relate their experiences or narratives to that of others. "Their sense of the past is collective rather than individual" (Melman, 1995, p. 27), as seen in their travel accounts. French novelist Gérard de Nerval, for instance, had already constructed an image of an erotic harem in his mind before he arrived in the East since Europe imposed the illusion so successfully on its subjects. Upon searching about the sleeping arrangements in the viceregal harem, his discovery of the sexes sleeping apart and religious law forbidding them to see each other naked below the neck shed light on his previous knowledge. He was even shocked upon hearing from the sheik that the legitimate wife had the right to demand a divorce if she had to "divide with another the honor of sleeping next to her husband" (Nerval, 1851, p. 2: 262, 369). After all, he said to the consul, "what an illusion still persists in Europe regarding the customs of these people. The life of the Turks is for us the ideal of power and pleasure, and I see that they are not even masters in their own houses" (p. 2: 262, 369).

In the countries where colonization was not an issue, such as Turkey, the biggest impact was the cultural domination. Though the beginning of the twentieth century saw a fast growing interest of the Turkish population for the Western way of life, in furniture, clothing, or mentality, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed this interest only partially, which did not reach the extremes to abandon their cultural and religious roots. Lady Montagu's compliments and admiration for the Turkish women in Constantinople do justice to Turkish women in the sense that they were not yet overwhelmed by Western

habits at the time. Individual alienation was absent from Ottoman ladies, as their sole purpose was to perform and spread Turkish values in the women's quarters.

Travelling to foreign lands and making statements on social and cultural structure is quite easy. The difficult thing is to follow the same path with so much curiosity in questioning one's own origins also. The Mediterranean societies before the Arab conquest of the Middle East, the Greeks, and the Hebrews all claimed to have performed polygamy and various forms of segregation (Melman, 1995, p. 60). Even the usage of eunuchs dates back to the Byzantines. Just as seclusion by Christians was widely researched by art-historian Barnette Miller, the harem and its Christian past was profoundly observed by Grace Ellison. Ellen Chennels, and Catherine Elwood, who were among the later writers on the harem, also emphasized the secure nature of harem life. Elwood saw the husband's protective self as "the natural wish of the husband to guard his beloved from even the knowledge of the ills and woes that mortal men betide" (Elwood, 1830, p. 154) She regarded women's private quarters as a "retreat" which is sacred, respected, and guarded. Ellen Chennels was another figure who four decades earlier cited that Mohammad did not bring a religion of polygamy. Instead, he did his best to prevent people from committing adultery. His rules brought restrictions to the universal license that long prevailed (Melman, 1995, p. 72).

The Victorian and Edwardian middle class women's perception of the world, particularly harem life, was constructed through the lens of their own values. Middle-class travellers projected their own values onto Middle Eastern families (Melman, 1995, p. 140). The dichotomy between the sexes and their spheres was coded and respected as a value by middle-class British women. Domestic woman was safe from the sins and temptations of the outside world. Thus, she remains virtuous and refrains from sinning. The man's world is the complete opposite of the woman's: It is the public sphere, where protection is hard to achieve. Therefore, the private sphere, namely the domestic sphere, is where women were expected to inhabit. It is sacred and "safe from all intrusion" (Melman, 1995, p. 441). The women's quarters in the Ottoman Empire were as separate yet sacred as it was in the West. The masculine representation of women longing to reach the master and of the deep hatred they nurtured for each other with the desire for the master was simply a way to divide those women. It was also to display a deceptive image of a sex whose sole desire was to engage with men at the cost of harming her same sex. There were, however, alternative voices that stood up against these stereotypes. Their rewriting of Western harem literature, as Zeynep Çelik (1996) argues, dissolves the "frozen" parts of Orientalism, subverting all the assumptions of "both the colonizer's unilateral power and the disquieting powerlessness of the colonized" (p. 204). It is clear that Lady Montagu also perceived women's quarters in the empire as "safe" spaces that belonged to women only (Boer, 1995, p. 59). They were safe both in terms

of their distance to the men's controlling and sharing information and staying up- to-date about the latest issues.

It was not only Lady Montagu who shed light on the issue of monogamous marriages in Istanbul. Anna Bowman Dodd (1903) was also aware of the misperceptions and misconceptions in the West about Eastern marriages. Polygamous marriages were few and made by the élite who emulated the imperial model (p. 435). Unlike this wealthy minority, most of the population in Turkey had only one wife. Harem for Turkish society simply meant a home for the family. It might be composed of other family members than wife and children; yet not necessarily a second wife. It was claimed and written by many Western travellers that Osmanli women were deprived of basic human rights while their men had the privilege of being free. Bowman Dodd (1903), however, challenged these views and stated that "it is the European rather than the Osmanli women who seem to be still in bondage" (p. 434). The Victorians and Edwardians readily accepted the harem as a feminine quarter free from the male libido. They perceived it as autonomous and self-ruling as the valide sultan, the mother of the Sultan, who ranked the highest among all the women. Moreover, the role of the women in decision-making or in other political issues was not trivial. The mother-in-law had supreme power.

The "passive compliance," as MacLean (2004) called it, is applicable to both slaves and women under Ottoman rule only if the observer is negligent enough not to consider the cultural and religious difference between Christian and Islamic communities (p. 97). The slaves were as highly valued and considered a part of the house or imperial harem as other Ottoman subjects; as for women, they were the "namus" or symbol of honor and decency for all the household, and therefore any intentional harm would bring destruction to the very core of the family.

Concubinage is one of the most debated issues in terms of its link to slavery. Women in eighteenth-century Britain were strong supporters of the anti-slavery movement. The association between slaves and women in terms of their place in public was open to discussion for these women. Concubinage in the Middle East was therefore an important issue to be touched upon. It was crystal clear that hierarchical Middle Eastern society was more mobile and flexible than Victorian class society. Harriet Martineau, Mary Louisa Whately, and even the evangelical missionaries agreed that slavery in the Middle East was quite different from the Afro-American experience of slavery (Melman, 1995, p. 146). Although slavery in the Middle East was also bondage for the slaves, was not permanent or changeless unlike African-American slavery. Rather, it provided an upward mobility for the female circles. Concubinage meant emancipation for those from Georgian and Circassian regions who wanted to flee from the poor conditions of their lives. Even the families preferred their daughters to be ac-

cepted into the imperial harem as a concubine as these girls were kindly treated and well-educated in the harem. They were even married to Viziers or Pashas by the Sultan when they were of age. According to Adolphus Slade, "the harem was to Oriental women what India had been to English men: a social ladder" (Sancar, 2012, p. 89).

Lady Montagu compared free Turkish women with confined European Christian women with an intention to eliminate all blind prejudices back then. She did not deny the existence of slavery in Turkish households, yet brought a new understanding to the concept of slavery in Islam by relating it to Christian households. In her letter to Lady Bristol she confesses,

> I 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 an ordinary servant. But you'll object men buy women with an eye to evil. In my opinion they are bought and sold as publically and more infamously in all our Christian great cities. (Montagu, 1966, p. 402)

The women's situation in Ottoman lands was also justified by providing similar exercises performed by Christians. According to Weitzman, Lady Montagu held concubinage equal to European prostitution. He evaluated Lady Montagu's opinion about slavery of women and said the concubinage in Muslim lands or prostitution in Christian quarters were "each civilization's addiction to essentially the same vice" (Montagu, 1966, p. 353)

The representations of Eastern women in their domestic sphere were not as innocent and defensive as Lady Montagu's though. Inspired by accounts of male travellers, painters had artistic representations of Eastern women gently lying on divans. The relaxed bodies and the loose clothes wrapping them were all the assumptions of the Western males about harem women. The oriental women were depicted as seductive and lazy as they were allowed to be. These paintings unfortunately caused people to establish a close association between the idea of bodily comfort and the East. Muslim women, loyal both to religion and tradition, wore flowing clothes but it was modest, not seductive. In the paintings by Western males, these women's robes revealed the female body beneath and constructed them as sexual objects. Also a relationship was set up between the freely lying body and the relaxation of sexual taboos.

Melman (1995) strongly believes that the Western women did not represent the women's situation in the Middle East, they rather depicted or projected what they had seen or experienced there. And she puts it in a very clever way, "seeing is a pre-programmed activity" (p. 308). The women travellers from England were perceived from their middle-class gender ideology, which based female solidarity on particular virtues. There were also some women writers from the Middle East who completely disagreed with the logic behind the harem. Huda Sha'rawi (1879- 1947), Nabawiya Musa (1890-1951) and Zaynab Fawaz (1860-1919) were only some of these women who drew a dreadful picture of harem life. For these women, harem meant exploitation, oppression, isolation, and mostly hatred and violence among women.

Tolerance toward the "difference" was outstanding as a permanent characteristic of the Augustans. Lady Montagu was one of those Augustans who sympathized with the ways in which others sustained their lives. It was especially toward the sexual other that the Augustans were attracted in terms of the distinct ways of living cultures. Lady Montagu (1966), for instance, was so much affected by the verses that Ibrahim Bassa wrote for his contracted wife that she thought of him as a "Man of Wit" and his verses "a Sample of the finest poetry" (p. 334). She even wrote down some verses in her letters addressed to the Sultana, Eldest daughter of Sultan Achmet III, "The Nightingale now wanders in the Vines / Her Passion is to seek Roses" (p. 334). There, she emphasized once more that, "The vulgar Turk is very different from what is spoke at Court or amongst the people of figure" (p. 333). She called the language they used as Scripture Language when they were addressing a great lady or a man. She also praised the sublime style Turkish people had both in their manners and in their poetry.

The Victorians, on the other hand, tried to find out the similarities between Western and other cultural, familial structures. Western women in the nineteenth century especially believed the uniformity of all women regardless of their ethnicity, class, or culture. They shared many things in common, such as maternal instincts, domesticity, naivety, and the desire to serve others. In contrast to the majority of observations by travellers about the laziness and uselessness of Oriental women, Emily Beaufort, the Victorian author of travel books on the Near East, gave an instance from the Lebanese civil war of 1863. Though the Muslim population was still reduced racially to the lowest degree of humanity, Beaufort was able to respect the contributions made by women in that war (Finn, 1866, p. vi). Her portrayal of those women was dominated by activity. The Druze and Christian women both had nationalist pride and raised war-cries, mourned the fallen, and stayed beside their men.

The citationary nature of Orientalist writing, particularly travel writing, was existent in the sixteenth century as well. The report of Istanbul in Biddulph's

The Travels was almost identical to Thomas Washington's 1585 translation of Nicolas de Nicolay's *Navigations* (MacLean, 2004, p. 73). Though Biddulph criticized the travellers who believed straight away what they were told, he personally accepted anything in print as true. When he wrote about the deflowering of Byzantium emperors' wives and the cutting them in pieces by Mehmed II in 1453, he simply repeated Nicolay's sentences (p. 76). Such vigorous narration, as if he had witnessed the events, reminds us not to confirm every written record without further investigation.

The motive and motivation in travel determines the travellers' perception of foreign lands and cultures. In Biddulph's case, we see the condemnation of Muslims for simply being racially different. Because Islam was not much to his taste, he did not even bother to draw historical and racial lines between Arabs, Saracens, and Turks; all were tyrannical and devilish in the end. Just his opposite, Lady Montagu sympathized with Islam as a religion and its rules brought by the Prophet Mohammed. She wrote in her embassy letters that his religion bestowed more rights upon women than any others. The seclusion or restrictions to sexual license protected women from claims made by males to her individual rights.These were various reasons for travellers to set off for the Levant. Meeting other Christian communities was the reason in the case of Biddulph. Yet he made the most of every opportunity to instruct lessons to the women in his community. For this, he explained the duties of Muslim women to their husbands, the severe punishment for whoredom, and the in-house activities of women. Comparing his community to the pastoral Muslim nomads' – whom he calls "Turcomanni" – Biddulph found lessons for his people in England:

> the women keepe their tents, and spend their time in spinning, or carding, or knitting, or some household huswifery, not spending their time in gossiping and gadding abroade from place to place, and from house to house, from ale-house to wine-taverne, as many idle huswives in *England* doe. (MacLean, 2004, p. 81)

Biddulph addressed women in Muslim quarters and in Christians, which was quite offensive, for he praised the first group for their womanly duties but the second group were condemned for taking male liberties. The Christian supernaturalism dominating his views on travel hindered him from seeing the relative nature of cultures.

Lady Montagu's sense of justice most resembled that of Henry Blount, a travel writer from the seventeenth century. In his *Voyage to the Levant* (1636), he wrote he was not that sort of traveller who would "sit down with a booke knowledge thereof," but instead witnessed everything through personal encounter, be it hazardous or challenging (MacLean, 2004, p. 127). Lady Montagu took

the same view so that whatever she saw or heard in Constantinople, she applied it to her own use and made her own discourse of it. Once she had a conversation with a lady in Constantinople with whom she kept a friendship afterwards. The lady asked Lady Montagu how Christian men could allow their wives to offer themselves to public men as freely as they wished. It was totally contrary to the Muslim belief that a woman be permitted to receive visits from as many men as she thought proper and to drink an unlimited amount of wine. When Lady Montagu corrected the lady about Turks' wrong assumptions on Christian women, the Turkish lady came with a question about English women's necks, eyes, hands, conversations that were all presented in public. After this sincere conversation between these two women, Lady Montagu (1966) found the woman reasonable enough to choose the "Mahometan manners" and she was persuaded that "a woman who is determined to place her happiness in her husband's affections, should abandon the extravagant desire of engaging publick adoration" (p. 260).

Experience may go hand in hand with pre-acquired knowledge, but the first comes closer to understanding human institutions. Blount not only disproved the preconceived certainties about the East, but at the same time used travel for his own self-reconstruction. He believed that before any judgment of the East and any advantage could be obtained, Eastern culture must be observed in its place. Women had a disadvantage of being excluded from communities who studied "things Oriental" until the 1900s. Female explorers like Lady Anne Noel Blunt and Gertrude Bell were not allowed to present their experiences to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), the promoter of Victorian and Edwardian exploration and geographical societies until much later.

Lady Montagu distinguished herself from those writers who had never been to Turkey but were ever easy to associate "Turk" with "Islam." Used as a synonym for Islam, "Turk" was seen as an enemy to be discovered, challenged, and constructed in Western terms. Wollstonecraft (1792), unlike Lady Montagu, claimed the superiority of Western values and believed that "despotism that kills virtue and genius in the bud" does not "hover over Europe with that destructive blast which desolates Turkey" (p. 131). She found the Eastern ways agreeable to the Muslim women, yet she could not comprehend the European ladies' slavish attitude and servitude to their husbands. While it was natural to her Eastern counterparts, it went against her cultural background and values. Likewise, the English husband who applied Islamic culture to his women was even more shameful, according to Wollstonecraft, since the despotism of the harem was so foreign to European cultures. Montagu used the "rhetoric of likeness" and thought that East had equal qualities with the West and that the West misrepresented the East and its people. She even brought back home useful Turkish practices such as inoculation against smallpox. She herself was plagued with the disease, and her son was healed after the inoculation. In order to understand the

importance of Montagu and her observations, one has to examine the mainstream Western attitudes toward the East and Islam before the nineteenth century. After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, Islam was considered to be the biggest threat for Christians. Martin Luther (1483-1546), for instance, believed that the one "who fights against the Turks [...] should consider that he is fighting against an enemy of God and a blasphemer of Christ, indeed, the devil himself" (Grislis, 1974, p.183). The term "Turk" had many negative connotations in Europe and the word was attributed to any Muslim as well. It meant "a cruel, tyrannical man, barbarian; one who treats his wife hardly" (OED, 1989) Similarly, the East, especially Turkey, was labelled as a despotic state that followed Islamic rules and its exotic teachings strictly and blindly. Thomas Carlyle, English philosopher, writer, and essayist during the Victorian era, praises Lady Montagu to be "the first Englishwoman who combined the knowledge of classical and modern literature with a penetrating judgment and correct taste" (Carlyle, 2010, p. 77).

To conclude, Montagu is considered an influential figure of Western Oriental writings. She challenged her day's common travelogues, which attempted to give a picture of the East based on preconceived stereotypes. Regarding her social position and background, she can be partly blamed for her involvement only with the upper class. Yet as Arthur Weitzman (2002) points out, Montagu "pierced the myths of [the] orient by refusing to demonize the Turks" and when "she looked at the 'other' she saw herself (p. 357).

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