III. Lady Montagu’s Orientalism

Speaking of the people of the Orient, Karl Marx is reported to have remarked, ‘They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented’. So what one considers ‘Orientalism’, is but a representation from the standpoint of the ‘Occident’ which may or may not correspond to facts and realities in the Orient. It is in this context that the influential scholar, Edward W. Said defines ‘Orientalism’ as ‘a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience’.¹ This ‘way’ is most explicit in anthropological researches and academic studies but in both these aspects, Orientalism surfaces as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and (most of the time) the ‘Occident’.

Said looks upon 19th century scholars’ works on the Orient, based on the premise of ‘knowledge as power’ and, therefore, concludes that these were written to fetch the required knowledge of the conquered peoples for effective colonial conquest. His critics argue that he has not taken into account the ‘heterogeneity of works on the Orient’,² and that his analysis is relevant to twentieth-century circumstances only. Hence, some modern scholars use the word ‘Orientalism’ for pointing out the imitation or depiction of aspects of Eastern cultures in the West by writers, designers and artists while others restrict it to ‘writings of the Imperialist era exhibiting pro-Eastern attitudes’. They emphasize its twin aspects: “Orientalism is the study of Near and Far-Eastern societies and cultures by westerners. But it can also refer to the imitation or depiction of aspects of Eastern cultures in the West by writers, designers and artists.”³
They also emphasize that “In literature as well as in art, the Orient became associated with lush landscapes, eroticism, mystery, rich costume, and fierce military campaigns”. This diversity and contrast makes the study of the historical development of variant flavours of Orientalism, especially literary Orientalism, the area of our focus, very central and meaningful.

2.1 Towards Literary Orientalism

The greater part of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Praefectura Praetorio Orientis, comprised the geographical regions starting from the eastern Balkans and having the Dioecesis Orientis, which approximated to Greater Syria, as its easternmost part. But this Orient (the East) continued to expand eastward with Western travelers’ forays deeper and deeper into Asia until they approached the Pacific Ocean, currently designated as the Orient. Thus the regions from the Middle East to sub-continental India to Indo-China came to be known as 'the Orient' and its correlates as the 'Oriental', though these terms are considered derogatory in some parts of the world because of the discrimination against Chinese and Japanese. Even in contemporary English, Oriental refers to things and peoples of East Asia and usually excludes Indians, Arabs, and most other West Asian peoples. The present study concentrates on regions falling in the ‘Oriental’ Turkey.

Said traces the beginning of Orientalism to the decision of the Church Council of Vienna in 1312 to establish Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac chairs at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca. This strand represented ‘Professional or Academic Orientalism’. Muller, Goldziher and Noldeke have been the representatives of this strand of Orientalism. But Said is skeptical about the nature of this field of study:
Fields, are of course, made.--- it goes without saying that a field of study is rarely as simply defined as even its most committed partisans---usually scholars, professors, experts and the like---claim it is. Besides, a field can change so entirely, in even the most traditional disciplines like philology, history or theology, as to make an all-purpose definition of subject matter almost impossible.⁴

This happened in France where ‘Literary Orientalism’ was seeded to depict the Orient in the French authors’ way. Antoine Galland published the first French translation of The Arabian Nights in 1704 Montesquieu’s Persian Letters appeared in 1721, in which the Orient was romanticized to present its false image before the Westerners. Initially, the Orient was neither an imaginary entity nor was it romanticized in England but treated as a hard fact of life:

The choice of ‘Orientalism’ was canonical; it had been employed by Chaucer, and Mandeville, by Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope and Byron. It designated Asia or the East, geographically, morally, culturally. One could speak in Europe of an Oriental personality, an Oriental atmosphere, an Oriental tale, Oriental despotism, or an Oriental mode of production, and be understood.⁵

This Orientalism was confined to studying and representing eastern cultures. But on the whole, Said points out a flaw in cultural Orientalism: ‘The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline or governing’.⁶
However, British scholars were to pick up the French thread soon. A key figure in this venture was Silvestre de Sacy who had produced an impressive range of literature on Islam, Arabic literature, the Druze religion and Sassanid Persia by the close of the eighteenth-century. Said describes him as ‘the teacher of Champollian and of Franz Bopp, the founder of German comparative linguistics’ but he conjectures that this scholarship originated in either Britain or France and was then ‘elaborated upon by Germans’:

The German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies or even novels, but it was never actual---What German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas and languages almost literally gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain and France.7

He further claims that Goethe’s Westöstlicher Diwan and Friedrich Schlegel’s Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier were penned on the basis of these writers’ experiences in a journey along the Rhine and the material searched from Paris libraries, implies that these texts contain figments of imagination and not realistic experiences in the Orient. Nevertheless, German Orientalism shared the claim of ‘intellectual authority over the Orient’ in common with Anglo-French Orientalism, as was done later by American Orientalism.

Almost simultaneously, there arose ‘Biblical Orientalism’ under the influence of German Biblical scholars, especially through Raymond Schwab. Its reference point was the Old world of the Biblical era and the ‘Holy Land’ was its main metaphor.
This was the beginning of dividing ontological space with the coinage of a ‘Far Orient’ and a ‘Near Orient’ in which the latter was identified with antiquity and not with Islam or Muslims. These devices worked as the memory of militant pilgrims and the Crusades was still fresh in those days. But it also sowed the germs of anti-Islam polemics and stereotyping of Islam and Muslims. Islam was judged, rather misjudged, as a ‘fraudulent version’ of Christianity and the tacit call was to conquer Muslims, although the ‘Old Biblical World’ was purely imaginary.

Another offshoot of Biblical Orientalism was the advent of Romanticism in literature which Edward Said ascribes to E. S. Shaffer’s ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘The Fall of Jerusalem’, the masterpieces that cast lasting influence through Coleridge, Browning and T. S. Eliot while Romanticism itself became the fount of Oriental literature. Almost every romantic poet right from Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats to, Byron, Southey and Moore has spun fantastic Oriental tales but if one tries to find a common thread between them it is the negative depiction of Islam and a search for a ‘new world’.

If the ‘Old World’ could work, why should the Greeks not serve as a reference point? After all, the Orient was known to them since at least the second century B. C. and their traveller historian Herodotus and warrior king Alexander had already charted hitherto unknown quarters of the Orient. With the inclusion of these two sources of imaginative geography, there started the era of ‘Geographical Orientalism’, heralding a movement to reorganize the Orient. Had Aeschylus’ The Persians not prophesied the downfall of the East? Had Romans and Greeks not staked their claim to superiority over other people?
In more ways than one, geographical Orientalism was a precursor of ‘Political Orientalism’ which became, according to Edward Said, ‘a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient’ \(^9\) and, thus, for transforming the relationship between Occident and Orient into ‘a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony’. \(^10\) that demarcates a cultural division between ”us” Europeans and “those” non-Europeans to give superiority to European identity and, therefore, European thought. Of course this positional supremacy was engendered by certain historical realities prevalent in the eighteenth century.

Rapid development of Western capitalism in the seventeenth century onwards had not only spurred increasing levels of interaction and popularization of travel but also made the Ottomans extremely vulnerable, making their status unsure among European nations. Yet the erstwhile Orientalist discourse focused on the Ottomans as a precedent for England regarding what it should become or avoid. At that time, no need was felt for the realignment of East-West relations or for abandoning of previous 'knowledge' of the Orient; instead there were calls for opening up spaces. But no sooner than the rhetoric of the ‘powerful neighbour’ faded in the wake of the foreseeable decline of Turkey, the rhetoric of Oriental despotism and enslaved Oriental women became vociferous and suggestions were forwarded to remodel Britain's self-conception, especially in the arenas of inter-nation politics by restoring the emerging power imbalance.

Political Orientalism expedited this process of ‘owning the Orient’ by knowing it thoroughly. Therefore some, like Said, claim that it was imperialism which motivated Orientalism and this is the sole reason that Orientalism follows ‘a detailed logic
governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections\textsuperscript{11} which put the Westerner ‘in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand’.\textsuperscript{12} This positional superiority, Said argues, is the reason behind the ‘distortion’, ‘inaccuracy’, ‘too dogmatic generality’ and ‘too positivistic (but) localized focus’ found in the works of great Orientalists right from Silvestre de Sacy to Renan to Gobineau.

In the final analysis, Said argues that only political facts cannot define Orientalism because these are cultural realities that allow its shaping and reshaping and, therefore, he gives an exhaustive definition of Orientalism:

“Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative or expressive of some nefarious “Western” imperialist plot to hold down the “Oriental” world. It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, orient and occident) but also of a whole series of “interests”---it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world----it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a
degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do).  

The above survey shows that literary Orientalism played an important, formative and varied role in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe. Critics like Edward W. Said, Eric Meyer, and Jerome Christensen suggest that literary Orientalism must also be viewed in the light of colonial and imperial expansionary tactics of Western countries to appropriate political power by claiming to civilize the Orient. On the other hand, critics like Patrick Brantlinger, Reina Lewis, and Alicia Carroll have pointed towards the role of literary Orientalism in the critique of British nationalism through characterization, choice of theme, and treatment of both Oriental and domestic settings. Some other critics, for instance, Alan Richardson, Meyda Yeğenoğlu, and Joseph W. Lew have analyzed the role of literary Orientalism in highlighting gender justice and other women-related issues.

Expressing his reaction over the newly-published volume of TEL, the renowned historian Gibbon had remarked in exclamation: ‘What fire, what ease, what knowledge of Europe and Asia!’ These sentiments are further corroborated by Halsband’s judgment on TEL: ‘These letters are her public testament, the brilliantly polished record of the observations and thoughts of an enlightened, emancipated woman whose view goes beyond insular England to embrace all of Europe and the realm of Islam. The letters are Lady Mary’s credentials as simultaneously a benign
spirit and (by precept and example) a feminist champion. Through being a great letter writer she achieved her ambition of being a woman-of-letters’. Both these excerpts encompass the coverage and brilliance of Lady Mary’s Orientalism.

Indeed, Lady Mary set many precedents through her travel and travelogue. Fanny Parks, a woman traveler to Turkey, admitted in 1850, ‘The perusal of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s work has rendered me anxious to visit a zenana, and to become acquainted with lives of the East’. It is just one, though thoroughly unconventional and tempting aspect of Lady Mary’s vision of the Orient presented in TEL.

European technological developments had been conducive to foreign travels and in turn, these travels opened diverse vistas to expedite the flowering of scholarship on Eastern literature, history, philosophy, and religion. George Sale had already completed his translation of the Koran, and scholars like William Jones, who translated Oriental literature from Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, and Sanskrit, had acquainted Western readers with classical texts like the Mahabharata and the Arabian Nights. Besides, the developing environment had established the importance of military as well as the cultural reconnaissance of the Orient, especially after the threats of war. This was enough of a background motivation for travel to the Orient but what was more congenial for Lady Mary, is the latent fact that she was born and brought up in the ‘Enlightened society of eighteenth century that boasted of the Age of Reason. While the 'enlightened society' was characterized by knowledge, self-control and open-mindedness, the ‘age of reason’ added ‘tolerance’ as a litmus test of being a true European. These values translated in Lady Mary’s quest for truth and veracity as, in what Anita Desai calls, an “extraordinary” attitude to an alien culture, the two key features of her brand of Orientalism.
In **TEL**, Lady Mary has amassed almost everything Turkish and of interest for an Orientalist. This may be attested in a glimpse over Table 3.1 that lists Oriental themes presented in **TEL**.

### Table 3.1: Oriental Themes in Turkish Embassy Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Rubric of Study</th>
<th>Themes (Letter Nos.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Turkish Society</td>
<td>Turkish Women (36, 38, 40, 48), Turkish Ladies (30), Turkish Damsel (30), Turkish Marriage (38, 39), Turkish Bride (29, 48), Wife’s ransom (48), Marital revenge (48), Four Wives (30), Child-bearing (39, 47), Widows (41), Widow’s Waiting period (36), Turkish Houses (33, 45, 49), Turkish Habits (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Turkish Institutions</td>
<td>(a) Social Institutions: Turkish Bath (27), Harem (30, 33, 34), Lovers (30, 42, 48), Veil (46), Wine (28, 40), she-slaves (30, 34), Adoption (48) (b) Religious Institutions: Islam (28), Al-Qur’an (28, 40, 52), Mosque (33, 38, 46), Ramadan (50), Deism (38, 48) (c) Politico-Legal Institutions: (i) Administration: Sultan (29, 33), Grand Vizier (24), Divan (30) Minister (29), Pasha (24), Pasha Sarakier (52), Effendi (24, 28), Cadi (240, Mufti (24), Aga (52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(ii) Judiciary:
Turkish Law (39, 40), Lying (39), Murder (48)

(d) Economic Institutions:
Ali Pasha Exchange (35, 46), Bedestan Exchange (35)
Shreshi Market (35), Traders (33, 34, 48)

(e) Art and Literature:
Oriental Poetry (24, 31, 50), Story-telling (31, 41), Dance and Music (34)

| 3. Turkish Personalities | Achmet Bey (24, 28), Ibrahim Pasha ((31), Grand Vizier (34), Fatima (41), Sultana Hafise (41), Lady Kabya (34) |

TEL is not devoid of the art of creating imaginary geography; ancient is much resurrected there as is the Holy Land, as are references to Arabian tales and Turkish passion for violence, but Lady Mary does not distort the real world she witnesses all around her. She engages in detailed Orientalist discourses, but as a nonjudgmental observer and concerned informer she leaves the judgment up to the reader. These approaches gave her the moral authority to point out the errors of previous voyage writers and indicate that this contentious knowledge could be the source of hegemony and disunity in the name of Orientalist discourse.

However, one wonders over the lack of political data in TEL, although Lady Mary gives sufficient details of military establishment, Pashas, Agas, volunteers, military parade and fortifications etc. Considering the fact that irrespective of her being a female and a member of eighteenth-century aristocracy, she had skillfully played her role in political machinations and successfully campaigned for her husband, it is
curious that she appears a dedicated house wife in Turkey, visiting the ‘zenana’, religious places and pleasurable sites but maintaining a prudent silence on politics of the host country. Anita Desai gives two reasons:

\[
\ldots\text{one, that she later edited out of the letters all references to politics that might have been there originally, and two, that when on foreign soil she became at least partially a victim of what Sara Suleri has called ‘the feminine picturesque’ that permitted English women in the East no other role but that of an ‘amateur ethnographer’.}^{17}
\]

Both reasons seem improbable, or at least the latter, for Lady Mary has acknowledged that she felt freer in Turkey. Moreover, she was enough of a non-conventionalist to tread a traditionalist path in vain. Other more plausible reasons may be cited for this lapse on her part. For instance, she was a companion to the ‘Ambassador Extraordinary’ and any frank political statement could go against the ambassadorial protocol. Moreover, there were no parliamentary institutions in Turkey. She found the Turkish government to be an autocratic and military establishment in which janissari soldiers could discipline their governor and the Grand Vizier could behead a minister but had no courage to censure effendis.

The Oriental diction of TEL is neither very exhaustive nor so impressive (Table 3.2). It also does not show her interest in acquiring detailed or precise knowledge regarding the Oriental way of life. The explanation in brackets identifies the word as an Arabic (A) / Persian (P) / Turkish (T) word.
Table 3.2: Oriental Diction of Lady Mary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Explanation (Page No. in Malcolm Jack’s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pasha</td>
<td>(Pasha Sinan), the Commander under whom Turks took Raab (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P/T)</td>
<td>(Abd Pasha), Governor of Buda (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Pasha Saraskier/Sar-e-‘Asakir), the general in command of Janissaris (though) to say truth, the saraskier is commanded by the janissaris (52).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(great Pasha) and (great three-tailed Pasha) are senior grades of Pashas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janissari</td>
<td>Para-military forces who claimed to sacrifice their lives for the Sultan and exercised absolute authority locally (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aga (T)</td>
<td>Head (of the janissari unit) (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadi (A)</td>
<td>Judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mufti (A)</td>
<td>One who is enquired ‘whether it was lawful’ (127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effendi (T)</td>
<td>Perfectly skilled in the Arabic and Persian languages, and an outstanding scribe (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A scholar (61) equally capable of preferment in the law or the Church,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Grand Signor never touches their lands or money but they lose this privilege by accepting a place at Court or the title of Pasha (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(principal or chief Effendi) is their senior incumbency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sipahi (P)</td>
<td>Foot-guard of janissaris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bostci (T)</td>
<td>Horse-guard of janissaris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuslar/Kilar Aga (T)</td>
<td>Chief guardian of seraglio ladies (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entari (T)</td>
<td>A waistcoat (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalpak (T)</td>
<td>Headdress composed of a cap (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferace (T)</td>
<td>Covering of inner dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divan (A)</td>
<td>Council or ministry of Sultan (175 n 146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harem (A)</td>
<td>Women’s apartment (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teferdar (T)</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imam (A)</td>
<td>LM confuses his function as to ‘call the people to prayer (96) or to preach (131). Imam is one who leads the prayer. Preaching may be his auxiliary function A Mu’azzin calls people to prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dervish (P)</td>
<td>A Sufi sect not to be confused with Druze, a sect of Shiite Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan (A)</td>
<td>The monarch, literally, very powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogia (T)</td>
<td>School master (99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendir (P)</td>
<td>A wooden machine used in place of stoves to warm the house (Tandoor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussalman (A)</td>
<td>A word of dubious origin, found neither in the Qur’an nor in any Hadith, but popularly used to connote a Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolaman (T)</td>
<td>A vest (115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talpak (T)</td>
<td>Headdress put on at night (178 n 220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talpak (T)</td>
<td>Turkish veil (126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayamakam</td>
<td>Qa’im-Maqam (acting incumbency); LM has wrongly defined him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmedan (T)</td>
<td>LM defines it as ‘Place of Horses’. Since ‘at’ signifies a horse and ‘medan’ means a ground, it must be something like a race course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultana (A)</td>
<td>widow of the late Emperor (133)/ wife of Sultan (113) / Sultan’s daughter (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan (A)</td>
<td>Muslim month of fasting that LM takes as equivalent to ‘lent’ (149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bey (T)</td>
<td>A subject to the Turks (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeidi (A)</td>
<td>Al-Zadiyyah, an Islamic sect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kudi (T)</td>
<td>Al-Qadiriyyah, an Islamic sect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabariya (A)</td>
<td>Another Islamic sect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muserin (T)</td>
<td>‘i.e. secret with us’ (62), deist (sect) (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoran (A)</td>
<td>Al-Qur’an, the Book revealed by Allah to the Prophet of Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although she must be credited with rectifying a number of mistakes and misrepresentations. One reason behind the short assortment of her Oriental diction may be the fact that she usually translates these notions in English, for instance, seraglio, burying fields, eunuch, transubstantiation, caftan, cupelos and many more. No doubt, Oriental terms exude their own air but the communication of import forced her to use their English equivalent and she succeeded in this respect.

A seminal question at this juncture is: what was the reference point of Lady Mary in writing these letters? No single point can be pin-pointed as her writings display a range of reference points. Culturally and politically, English nationalism is her reference point to which she reverts very frequently. In her March 10, 1718, letter to her sister, she refers to Holland as a parental and ideal nation:
Her house was magnificently furnished and very well fancied, her winter rooms being furnished with figured velvet on gold ground, and those for summer with fine Indian quilting embroidered with gold. The houses of the great Turkish lades are kept clean with as much nicety as those in Holland.\textsuperscript{18}

She updates Abbe Conti on suburbs of Constantinople being in likeness to Westminster:

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 altogether the most beautiful prospect in the world.\textsuperscript{19}

She keenly observes dissimilarities in habits of the two countries and promptly reports to Lady Bristol:

The 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.\textsuperscript{20}

In moral and ethical domains, her point of reference is Christianity i.e. Protestant Christianity: She wrote to the Countess of Bristol:

To what purpose should I tell you that Constantinople was the ancient Byzantium, that 'tis at present the conquest of a race of people
supposed Scythians, that there is five or six thousand mosques in it, 
that St Sophia was founded by Justinian etc.²¹

In a similar vein, she addressed Abbe Conti, a cosmopolitan Catholic:

Mohammedism 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, Kudi, Jabari etc. put me in
mind of the Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, etc., and are equally zealous
against one another.²²

But ideologically and for the issues of civilization she leans on ancient Greece with its
Greco-Roman civilization:

The rest of our journey was through fine painted meadows by the side
of the sea of Marmora, the ancient Propontis. 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 thirty two arches. Here is a
famous ancient Greek church.²³

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, and it seems to me that the same
customs have continued ever since.²⁴
These are just a few examples and many such reference points are easily available in TEL.

Simultaneously, her standard of value judgment are intimately tied with the values of Enlightenment, along with its attendant humanism and the Age of Reason, though she never mentions so explicitly.

A discussion of Lady Mary’s Orientalism along the lines indicated in Table 3.1 can expose its contents quite satisfactorily but the intellectual and ideological intricacies of her narration asserted by her rhetoric might get lost. Teresa Hefferman has identified three strands of Lady Mary’s rhetoric in TEL: rhetoric of difference, rhetoric of similarity and rhetoric of tolerance. Indeed, these strands cover the widest range of TEL material and this is a sufficiently concise scheme. But there are a number of passages that do not fit in well in this framework and one could identify more strands on this pattern, for instance, rhetoric of comparison, rhetoric of refutation or rhetoric of otherness, and, of course, rhetoric on Islam. But the point to ponder is whether these strands of her rhetoric have any relation with her reference points?

A deeper study of TEL, shows that Lady Mary employed ten distinct strands of rhetoric: rhetoric of difference, rhetoric of identification or likeness, rhetoric of tolerance, rhetoric of compassion, rhetoric of semiotics (of natural scenes, Turk architecture and), rhetoric of otherness, rhetoric of reason, rhetoric of savagery, rhetoric of erotica and rhetoric on Islam. It is not very difficult to discern that like Lady Mary’s personality, some of these strands are contrary to others. But a binary comparison of these strands shows that this contradiction is resolvable as the binary
pairs appear to be pods and anti-pods, for instance otherness vs. identification, difference vs. tolerance, semiotics vs. reason, savagery vs. compassion and erotica vs. Islam. Seen this way, it becomes easy to relate Lady Mary’s reference points with her strands of rhetoric. Clearly, savagery, semiotics, differences and otherness is narrated with reference to her English nationalism, her views on identification, tolerance, reason and Islam reflect Enlightenment values, compassion speaks for Christian values and erotica is a Greco-Roman heritage. Thus the whole scheme of Lady Mary’s rhetoric can be depicted as follows:

Rhetoric of Otherness ←-----------------------------→ Rhetoric of Identification
(based on English Nationalism) (based on Enlightenment values)

Rhetoric of Difference ←-----------------------------→ Rhetoric of Tolerance
(based on English Nationalism) (based on Enlightenment values)

Rhetoric of Semiotics ←-----------------------------→ Rhetoric of Reason
(based on English Nationalism) (based on Enlightenment values)

Rhetoric of Savagery ←-----------------------------→ Rhetoric of Compassion
(based on English Nationalism) (based on Protestant values)

Rhetoric of Erotica ←-----------------------------→ Rhetoric on Islam
(based on Greco-Roman values) (based on Enlightenment values)
This analysis shows that Enlightenment and English nationalism greatly, and perhaps equally, influence Lady Mary’s value judgments while Greco-Roman and Protestant ones are relatively less important because these deal with long-term scenarios. This means that the overwhelming focus of TEL has been on issues of immediate consequence.

Rhetoric of Identification

Lady Mary utilizes the rhetoric of identification in a positivistic and progressive way. She performs best in her pursuit where she encourages ‘partial identification’ with aristocratic classes of England and Turkey. Her most forceful argument for identification is ‘as it is with us’. This allows her to project the possibility of ‘inclusion’. But Meyda Yegenoglu, has put forward a novel argument while justifying her feminist credentials, “Lady Mary assumes a masculine role (a role unavailable to her in the ‘masculine’ West), ‘attaches a penis to herself,’ and penetrates a ‘feminized’ East, thus complementing rather than challenging the work of the male colonist.26 Ostensibly, she implies that Lady Mary had been working for expansion of imperialist colonization. Whatever the case maybe, TEL does not seem to support this conjecture.

In a number of her Letters, Lady Mary has presented Turkish nobility as a parallel to those of English Court, and she often sublimates them. But the undertones betray ulterior motives too.
Grand Vizier

With the dexterity of a master artist, she paints the following picture of Turkish grandeur, in her description of the Grand Vizier’s Lady. She highlights the Oriental set up and characteristic features and practices of the East but maintains comparable decorum:

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 that 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. 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 on this point, he would not accept Mr Wortley's present till he had been assured over and over that 'twas a settled perquisite of his place, at the entrance of every ambassador.²⁷

However, this information leaves one perplexed regarding the efficiency of Turkish administration. Alternatively, one feels compelled to think if correct data were accessible to her or she was prognosticating the impending decline of Turkey:

The Greek lady with me earnestly solicited me to visit the Kabya'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
harem that I had no mind to go into another. 28

Sultana Hafise

Another pompous character portrayed by Lady Mary is Sultana Hafise (perhaps
Hafizah, or Hafifah, as Halsband says, that may be a transcription of ‘Afifah). She
writes in high esteem about her but the greater part of her narration is quite involved
as it overemphasizes the Sultan instead of the Sultana. The following excerpts leaves
the reader wondering if Lady Mary is protesting over the ruin of the Sultana’s life by
patriarchy or is really ‘penetrating a ‘feminized’ East’, as Meyda opines:

I went to see the Sultana Hafise, favourite of the last Emperor Mustafa,
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 Port. I suppose you imagine her overjoyed at this proposal.
Quite 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 chose Bekir Effendi, 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 choose him as a mark of her gratitude, since it was he that had presented her at the age of ten year old to her lost lord. But she has 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. 29

However, Lady Mary perfectly maintains her charms and graces besides balancing her dignity at par with her English nobility, rather exceeding those standards:

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, the hafts set with diamonds, but the piece of luxury that 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 spoilt 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 soucoupes.

The Sultana seemed in very good humour and talked to me with the
utmost civility. I did not omit this opportunity of leaving all that I
possibly could of the seraglio, which is so entirely unknown amongst
us\textsuperscript{30}

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 bedchamber
her toilet was displayed, consisting of two looking glasses, the frames-
covered with pearls, and her night talpak set with bodkins of jewels,
and near it three vests of fine sables, every one of which is at least
worth 1000 dollars, £200 English money---\textsuperscript{31}

**Kabya’s Lady**

This character is Lady Mary’s favourite and the following excerpts obviate any need
to brood why:

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,---- 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.  

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----smiled, saying: ‘It is not the first time I have heard so. My mother was a Poloneze taken at the Siege of Camieniec, 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.
Court Circle

While describing the typical habits of the monarch, Lady Mary explains:

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 that cannot obtain it. 34

This description she sent to Lady Mar from Constantinople:

It would be too tedious to you to point out all the passages that relate to the 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. The description of the belt of Menelaus exactly resembles those that are 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, and I never see half a dozen of old bashaws (as I do very often) with their reverend beards sitting basking in the sun but I recollect good King Priam and his counselors. 35
Rhetoric of Otherness

At places where Lady Mary does not want to concur or is in partial agreement or wants to downplay the subject, she avoids direct confrontation by resorting to the rhetoric of ‘otherness’. This helps her disown the details without causing any annoyance or precipitating any bias. Such discourse usually pertains to ‘their religion’, ‘their law’, or ‘that nation/ country’, ‘that religion’ or ‘that people’. Even Catholic religion is ‘that religion’ for her. If the context supports dissociation, she may replace ‘that’ with ‘this’. Otherness of ‘their’ is present markedly in her Islamic discourse:

Turkish Law

Lady Mary points out that Turkish Law is not exactly Islamic Law but a secular one:

They make a frank profession of deism amongst themselves or to those they can trust, and never speak of their law but as of a politic institution, fit now to be observed by wise men, however at first introduced by politicians and enthusiasts.36

Here she is working with two ‘othernesses’, one from Islamic law and the other with English law. This dissociation helps her admit the harshness of this law at one place while she deprecates it at another place.

Lying

Lady Mary wrote to Anne Thistlethwayte:
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 know). They are burnt in the forehead with a hot iron, being proved the authors of any notorious falsehood.

Then she asks a very poignant but double–ended question:

How many white foreheads should we see disfigured? How many fine gentlemen would be forced to wear their wigs as low as their eyebrows were this law in practice with us? 37

Murder

In the following she criticizes both the Turkish government and the ill-informed Western opinion:

She was supposed to be brought in the dead of night from the Constantinople side and laid there. Very little enquiry 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 to deserve the barbarous character we give them.

Her lack of Islamic knowledge is quite evident. Actually her view of Islamic law is sharply coloured by her class perception, according to which Turks of rank and distinction are always upright while vulgar Turks are disregarded:

Witness

'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 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. 38

Lady Mary has also furnished details of certain social customs of Turkey using the same rhetoric some of which are positive to the extent of being unconventional while parts of these are contestable:

Four Wives (Polygamy)

'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 (ie treasurer) that keeps a number of
she-slaves for his own (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.  

Re-marriage (Halalah)

When I spoke of their religion I forgot to mention two peculiarities, 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 lack their beloved----

Reprobation

The other point of doctrine is very extraordinary; 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; and indeed, their way of life, which shuts them out of all public commerce, does not permit them any other.

She carries her narration to the extreme:
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.  

Marital Revenge

'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 don't doubt but they suffer sometimes for their
indiscretions in a very severe manner. About two months ago there was
found at daybreak 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.  

Another challenging stand taken by Lady Mary is on the so-called slavery (in Islamic
terms, ‘Riqqa’, commonly, though wrongly, translated as a slave in Islam). Perhaps
she was aware of the originality of her description:

Riqqa

----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. But you'll object 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. 44

Indicating the rarity of this phenomenon, she writes:

Amongst all the great men here, I only know the tefterdar (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. 45

Lady Mary closely verifies the rights of slaves in Islam when she writes:

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 stole 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, 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.\textsuperscript{46}

Clearly, she implies that ‘slaves are not an everyday public commodity and are almost
exclusively employed by women.’ Giving an example of the living standards of
‘slaves’ she cites an example of those serving Sultana Hafise:

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, 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 their entire headdress, but their habits 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.\textsuperscript{47}

The final description studied under this category is that of the effendis. Lady
Mary is very eloquent in their description but one can easily read between the
lines of the impending downfall of Turkey:
Effendi

… the Turks are not so ignorant as we fancy them to be in matters of politics or philosophy, or even of gallantry. 'Tis true that military discipline such as now practiced in Christendom does not mightily suit them. A long peace has plunged them into a universal sloth. Content with their condition and accustomed to boundless luxury they are become great enemies to all manner of fatigues. But to make amends, the sciences flourish amongst them. The effendis (which is to say, the learned) do very well deserve this name. They have no more faith in the inspiration of Mohammed than in the infallibility of the pope. They make a frank profession of deism amongst themselves---\(^{48}\)

One wonders if this was a spy’s data or the real description of learning in Turkey?

The hegemony of effendis, however, was really overwhelming:

They are the only men really considerable in the empire; all the profitable employments and church revenues are in their hands---- 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 Mustafa; and their power is so well known 'tis the emperor's interest to flatter them.\(^{49}\)
Rhetoric of Tolerance

Lady Mary makes use of the rhetoric of tolerance in convincing her audience that contrary to the opinion of most voyage writers, the Orient is not very different from the West. Most of her narrations of Turkish customs and the religion of Islam are penned in this vein. She demonstrates that ‘the manners of mankind do not differ so widely’. Her force of persuasion comes from her favourite argument: as 'tis with you (Letter 72), or she pleads: “Which divinity is most rational I leave you to determine. (Letter 100) or I know not what your thought may be concerning this”. (Letter 110)

The spirit of humanism finds full expression in such letters. Rather, she appreciates Turkish practices in these letters, a trend that had been unconventional and non-traditional till her day. Here are some examples:

Turkish Women

Lady Mary’s trend-setting views on Muslim women have earned her both exceptional acclaim and harsh criticism. She has, nevertheless, raised a number of misconceptions in vogue in the West, especially England, under the influence of previous writers. In writing these letters she was inspired by two strong motives: one, searching for the truth and two, extending the horizons of feminism, and, therefore, coming ‘out of a true female spirit of contradiction’, which imbued her with a missionary zeal, as the following topics suggest:
Our vulgar notion that they do not own women to have any souls is a mistake. '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.\textsuperscript{50}

Though her refutation with existing misconception is justified and her conclusion is also valid, her argumentation is unsound and seems to be founded on opinions held by lowly masses of the Turkish community, an ethnic opinion, which may have stemmed from the short-sighted commentary of certain ‘weak’ Hadith. The Qur’an nowhere discriminates against women. The following argument is framed in better words:

As to your next enquiry, I assure you 'tis certainly false, though commonly belived in our parts of the world, that Mohammed excludes women from any share in a future happy state---- On the contrary he promises a very fine paradise to the Turkish women. He says indeed that this paradise will be a separate place from that of their husbands. But I fancy the most part of them won't like it the worse for that, and that the regret of this separation will not render their paradise the less agreeable.\textsuperscript{51}

After studying the condition of Turkish women in the harem as well as in markets and bagnios, she explodes another Western myth regarding them:
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—"Tis also very pleasant to observe how tenderly he and all his brethren voyage-writers lament on the miserable confinement of the Turkish ladies, who are, perhaps, freer than any ladies in the universe, and are the only women 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 public places but the bagnios, and there can only be seen by their own sex. However, that is a diversion they take great pleasure in.\textsuperscript{52}

Turkish women’s economic freedom, both passive and active, is a recurrent theme in her letters:

It remains to tell you that the virtues which Mohammed requires of women to merit the enjoyment of future happiness are: not to live in
such a manner as to become useless to the world, but to employ themselves, as much as possible in making little musulmans.---- For women, says he, not being capable to manage affairs of state, nor to support the fatigues of war, God has not ordered them to govern or reform the world but he has entrusted them with an office which is not less honourable, even that of multiplying the human race.\textsuperscript{53}

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. Upon the whole, I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire.\textsuperscript{54}

This emphasis may have come from two sources, first, as she stressed, “want of money which is the source of a thousand basenesses’ (p 9), secondly, as a reflection of Protestant ethics. Here is another domain of this narration in which she praises the wit, civility and liberty of Turkish ladies:

\textbf{Turkish Bride}

All the she-friends, relations and acquaintances 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 200 women. Those that were or had been married placed themselves round the room 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, 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 stuff, handkerchiefs, or little gallantries of that
nature, which she thanked them for by kissing their hands.

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 amongst us.55

Although this account seems outlandish or at least exceptional, the details are quite
impressive and exhilarating. Some critics have pointed out that her reference to ‘white
skin’ exposes racial attitude but this is a far-fetched accusation. In the next account,
Lady Mary breaks Rycaut’s myth that the Grand Signor selected a woman from the
seraglio by throwing his handkerchief. Her account is based on information from the Sultana herself:

**Sultan’s Handkerchief**

She assured me that the story of the Sultan's throwing a handkerchief is altogether fabulous, and the manner upon that occasion no other but that he send the Kuslir Aga to signify to the lady the honour he intends her. She is immediately complimented upon it by the others and led to 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. She said that the first he made a choice of was always after the first in rank and not the mother of the eldest son, as other writers would make us believe.56

At least two letters included in TEL undo previous accusations of iconoclasm against Turks/ Muslims:

**Iconoclasm**

Mr. Hill who so gravely asserts that he saw in St. Sophia a sweating pillar very balsamic for disordered heads. 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.57
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 deface all the images that they found in the city. ⁵⁸

An interesting piece of information is found in some letters of TEL, which may be unacceptable to many Muslims but it came from no ordinary person but Achmet Bey, a drunkard effendi!

**Wine**

If I remember right I think I have told you in some former letter that at Belgrade we lodged with a great and rich effendi, a man-of-wit and learning, and of a very agreeable humour. We were in his house about a month and he did constantly eat with us, drinking wine without any scruple. As I rallied him a little on this subject he answered me, smiling, that all the creatures in the world were made for the pleasure of man and that God would not have let the vine grow were it a sin to taste of its juice. But that nevertheless the law, which forbids, the use of it to the vulgar, was very wise because such sort of folks have not sense enough to take it with moderation. This effendi appeared no stranger to the parties that prevail among us. ⁵⁹

Thankfully, the argument convinced Lady Mary that wine is unsuitable for lowly men or in public!
To certify that the Turks are a civilized nation having good tastes, she has dwelt on the Turkish practices of dancing, music and poetry including the Grecian arts of Turks of Greek descent. Regarding the first two she says, Turks have their own ways or notions of entertainment:

**Dance, Music and Oriental Poetry**

I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no music but what is shocking to the ears, 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 English music from the bladder and string or the 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 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.

Their manner of dancing is certainly the same that Diana is sung to have danced on the banks by Eurotas. 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 Grecian dances, the Turkish being very different.⁶¹

Lady Mary expresses high opinion of Oriental poetry and she places the Turkish Pasha at par with Homer:

---they have what they call the sublime, that is, a style proper for poetry, and which, is exact scripture style---to see a genuine example of this,----a faithful copy of the verses that Ibrahim Pasha, the reigning favorite----He is a man of wit and learning and whether or no he is capable of writing good verse himself----would not want the assistance of the best poets in the empire. 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 Songs of Solomon--- 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.⁶²

**Rhetoric of Difference**

Truly speaking, Lady Mary has not used this rhetoric much, so its instances are few in TEL. This rhetoric characterizes travelogues written by male travellers who were bent upon highlighting differences between Western and Oriental cultures, even by exaggerating or fabricating facts. By suppressing this rhetoric Lady Mary also attempted to augment the traditional feminist rhetoric. Instead of this rhetoric she positively promoted the rhetoric of identification and the rhetoric of tolerance.
A brilliant example of this rhetoric found in TEL, when she speaks of Tunisian peasants is:

They are not quite black, but all mulattoes, and the most frightful creatures that can appear in a human figure. They are almost naked, only wearing a piece of coarse serge wrapped about them, but the women have their arms to their very shoulders and their necks and faces adorned with flowers, stars and various sort of figures impressed by gunpowder; a considerable addition to their natural deformity, which is, however, esteemed very ornamental amongst them, and I believe they suffer a good deal of pain by it.63

This is a description of Tunisian peasants whose wives were seen by her thus:

Their posture in sitting, the colour of their skin, their lank black hair falling on each side of their faces, their features and the shape of their limbs differ so little from their own country people, the baboons, 'tis hard to fancy them a distinct race, and I could not help thinking there had been some ancient alliances between them.64

This is striking, especially when compared to her description of the Viennese, whose ugliness was only ‘natural’ and ‘with which God Almighty has been pleased to endow them’ It is not clear whether Lady Mary knew only class-based difference or she had some affinity with religion-based difference too, but the following example points to the latter type of difference:
The Genoese were once masters of several islands in the archipelago and all that part of Constantinople which is now called Galata. Their betraying the Christian cause by facilitating the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, deserved what has since happened to them, the loss of all their conquest on that side to those infidels. They are at present far from rich, and despised by the French since their Doge was forced by the late King to go in person to Paris to ask pardon for such a trifle as the arms of France over the house of the envoy being spattered with dung in the night.65

**Rhetoric of Reason**

Lady Mary stood for modernity and as a product of the Age of Reason, she was enamoured of reason but she did not encourage producing another divide; the East/West divide in the name of modernity. Therefore, she always preferred to resort to reason. For instance, she seems to be sharing with Achmet Bey the ridicule of Whiston’s philosophy of Transubstantiation. In another letter, she suggested to Samuel Clark preaching in the Orient as he was known for his rational theology. Here are a few excerpts from TEL representing Lady Mary’s rhetoric of reason:

> The yasmak, 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 inconvenience to content a passion so powerful with me as curiosity.66

At other places she claimed that the veil serves the purpose of hiding the persona so that illicit overtures do not become known. One may call it utilitarian ethics, an attitude she frankly demonstrates with respect to money-matters:
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 that I had rather be a rich effendi with all his ignorance than Sir Isaac Newton with all his knowledge.  

The effendis were the richest and most powerful men in Turkey. She lauds similar attitudes of Achmet Bey, though she did not care about him when his house was ruined in the war in Belgrade:

Achmet Bey

I was going to tell you that an intimate daily conversation with the effendi Achmed Bey gave me the 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.

Nay, he seemed to have some knowledge of our religious disputes and even of our writers, and I was surprised to hear him ask, amongst other things, how Mr. Toland did?

In her February 1718 letter to Abbe Conti, she sounds as rational as Darwin himself:

Origin of Races

The suburbs of Pera, Jtophana and Galata are collections of strangers from all countries of the universe. They have so often intermarried that
this forms several races of people the oddest imaginable. There's not one single family of natives that can value itself on being unmixed. You frequently see a person whose father was born a Grecian, the mother an Italian, the grandfather a Frenchman, the grandmother an Armenian and their ancestors English, Muscovites, Asiatics, etc.

This mixture produces creatures more extraordinary than you can imagine. Nor could I ever doubt but there were several different species, of men, since the whites, the woolly and the long-haired blacks, the small-eyed Tartars and Chinese, the beardless Brazilians, and, to name no more, the oily-skinned yellow Nova-Zemblians have as specific differences under the same general kind as greyhounds, mastiffs, spaniels, bulldogs or the race of my little Diana, if nobody is offended at the comparison. Now as the various intermixing of these latter animals causes mongrels, so mankind have their mongrels too, divided and subdivided into endless sorts. We have daily proofs of it here, as I told you before. In the same animal is not seldom remarked the Greek perfidiousness, the Italian diffidence, the Spanish arrogance, the French loquacity and all of a sudden he’s seized with a fit of English thoughtfulness bordering a little upon dullness, which many of us have inherited from the stupidity of our Saxon progenitors.

But the family which charms me most is that which proceeds from the fantastical conjunction of a Dutch male with a Greek female. As these are natures opposite in extremes ‘tis a pleasure to see how the differing atoms are perpetually jarring together in the children…

70
Rhetoric of Semiotics

It has been suggested that as a woman and a traveler, Lady Mary not only extended the horizons of geographical knowledge about the Orient but also produced considerable imaginative geography. In her rhetoric of semiotics, she uses narrations of natural scenes to evoke the memory of pastoral England and her architectural data conjures the ancient:

The description may serve for all the mosques inConstantinople; the model is exactly the same; and they only differ in largeness and richness of materials. That of the Valide 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 Mohammed IV. Between friends, St Paul's Church would make a pitiful figure near it, as any of our squares would do near the Atmeydan, or Place of Horses, ‘at’ signifying horse in Turkish.

This was the Hippodrome in the reign of the Greek emperors.\footnote{71}

…Mr. Wortley resolving to pursue his journey the 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.\footnote{72}

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 ripae

Rhetoric of Compassion

Whereas Lady Mary’s emphasis on compassion and concern for the distressed peasants reaffirms the eighteenth-century feminist discourse and extends a 'philanthropic' role to the women of the Victorian era, it also represents the value of humanism, instant concern for man. Nevertheless, she skillfully uses this rhetoric to communicate other messages between the lines as this excerpt shows:

I saw here a new occasion for my compassion. The wretches that had provided twenty wagons for our luggage 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 the 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 would only have been giving so much to the aga who would have taken it from them without remorse.\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{Rhetoric of Savagery}

To place emphasis on their barbarity, Lady Mary paints a disgusting scenario, in which she deploys her rhetoric of savagery:

I am threatened at the same time with being froze to death, buried in the snow and taken by the Tartars, who ravage that part of Hungary I am to pass. 'Tis true we shall have a considerable escort so that possibly I may be diverted with a new scene by finding myself in the midst of a battle. How my adventures will conclude I leave entirely to Providence; if comically, you shall hear of them.\textsuperscript{75}

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 stole 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.\textsuperscript{76}

They were all naked to the middle, their arms pierced through 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.\textsuperscript{77}
Rhetoric of Erotica

Anna Secor writes that Nussbaum identifies homoeroticism in the text, through which Lady Mary identified herself with the sexualized Oriental women.\textsuperscript{78} This is seen in her description of the beauty of Turkish women, their loving overtures and the Turkish Bath.

Turkish Bath

The Turkish Bath has been highly debated as the site of homoeroticism between women since 1610 when George Sandys viewed the hamams, or public baths during his travels in the Ottoman empire. Lady Mary not only entered but countered imaginative male accounts of lesbian sex there. Although her description of these baths challenges this notoriety, the baths were also significant in the context of colonialism. Nabahat Avcioglu writes: “David Urquhart, a diplomat and traveler, regarded them with the political context with Britain in mind, as a foreign model that embodied progress. (pg 69)----What he tried to achieve demonstrated the possibility not only of social mobility ---but also of cultural mobility from East to West .\textsuperscript{79}

A look at the text is necessary for vouchsafing these commentaries:

I must not omit what I saw remarkable at Sofia, 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.(57)

---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. There were many amongst them as exactly proportioned as ever any goddess was drawn by the pencil of Guidor 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. (59)…

I perceived that the ladies with 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 Gervaser 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 women's coffee house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented etc.

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 her and would fain have undressed me for the bath. I excused myself with some difficulty, they being however all so earnest in
persuading me, I was a last forced to open my shirt, 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.\textsuperscript{80}

Judy Mabro further elaborates: “When Lady Mary Montague was pressed by the women in a Turkish bath to take off her clothes and join them, she undid her blouse to show them her corset. This led them to believe, she said, that she was imprisoned in a machine which could only be opened by her husband. Both groups of women could see each other as prisoners---and of course they were both right.”\textsuperscript{81}

Lady Mary was very amused on discovering the intrigues employed by Turkish lovers. Here she talks about how some women take full advantage of the veil and utility of Jews’ shops in having their affairs with their lovers:

\textbf{Jews’ Shop}

You may guess then 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 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. 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, and yet, even those that don't make use of them do not scruple to go to
buy pennyworths 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. 82

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that Lady Mary intended to promote infidelity. In fact, she had been raising philosophical questions of public versus private morality.

She, as well her correspondents knew very well how the court women or lady politicians were exploited and tangled with ignominious scandals. Her desexualizing of the voluptuous feminine space was a mockery of that official hypocrisy, which is also the reason why she presented Ciscisbeismo as a preferable institution.

Ciscisbeismo

I do not doubt but the custom of cicisbeismo has very much improved their airs. I know not whether you have ever heard of those animals. Upon my word, nothing but my own eyes could have convinced me there were any such upon earth.
The fashion begun here and is now received all over Italy, where the husbands are not such terrible creatures as we represent them. There are none amongst them such brutes to pretend to find fault with a custom so well established and so politically founded, since I am assured here that it was an expedient first found out by the senate to put an end to those family hatreds which tore their state to pieces, and to find employment for those young men who were forced to cut one another's throats pour passer le temps, and it has succeeded so well that since the institution of cicisbeismo there has been nothing but peace and good humour amongst them.

These are gentlemen that devote themselves to the service of a particular lady (I mean a married one, for the virgins are all invisible, confined to convents). They are obliged to wait on her at all public places, the plays, opera and assemblies (which are called here conversations), where they wait behind her chair, take care of her fan and gloves if she plays, have the privilege of whispers, etc. When she goes out they serve her instead of lackeys, gravely trotting by her chair. 'Tis their business to present against any day of public appearance, not forgetting that of her name. In short, they are to spend all their time and money in her service who rewards them according to her inclination (for opportunity they want none), but the husband is not to have the impudence to suppose 'tis any other than a pure platonic friendship.
'Tis true they endeavour to give her a cicisbeismo of their own choosing, but when the lady happens not to be of the same taste (as that often happens) she never fails to bring it about to have one of her own fancy.83

Rhetoric on Islam

In her rhetoric on Islam, she seems intent on representing Islam with the maximum possible accuracy but frequently shows lack of information as perusal of the following excerpts shall clarify:

Islam

Lady Mary has nowhere mentioned Islam, but ‘their law’, ‘their religion’ or ‘the law of Mohammed’, which she often calls ‘Mohammedism’.

Mohammedism 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.84

She further says about Muslims:

In effect there's nothing so like as the fables of the Greeks and of the Mahommedans and the last have multitudes of saints at whose tombs miracles are by them said to be daily performed, nor are the accounts of the lives of those blessed musulmans much less stuffed with extravagancies than the spiritual romances of the Greek papas.85
Prophet of Islam

He was too much a gentleman and loved the fair sex too well to use them so barbarously.\textsuperscript{86}

Al-Qur’an

You have a true notion of the Alcoran, concerning which the Greek priests (who are the greatest scoundrels in the universe) have invented out of their own heads a thousand ridiculous stories in order to decry the law of Mohammed; to run it down, I say; without any examination, or as much as letting the people read it, being afraid that if once they begun to sift the defects of the Alcoran they might not stop there but proceed to make use of their judgement about their own legends and fictions. In effect there’s nothing so like as the fables of the Greeks and of the Mahommedans.\textsuperscript{87}

And the last have multitudes of saints at whose tombs miracles are by them said to be daily performed, nor are the accounts of the lives of those blessed musulmans much less stuffed with extravagancies than the spiritual romances of the Greek papas.\textsuperscript{88}

However, her account of what Achmet Bey told her about Al-Qur’an is much better:

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 that it is 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 that 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 or
more corrupt. 89

Ramadan is mentioned by her, only in passing in a letter as ‘Lent’. She has described
several mosques, giving St. Sophia a special place. But her description of mosques
must be seen as a semiotic description as discussed above. She calls the Muslim
graveyard a burying field and this description is worth reading:

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 they
remove a stone that serves for a monument. Some of them are costly
enough, being of a 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 top of it. The sepulcher, of particular families are railed in and
planted round with trees. Those of the sultans and other great men have
lamps constantly burning in them. 90
The word, “harem” has been much maligned and employed in titillating the white man’s curiosity by depicting the erotic. Billie Mellman argues that this is because the West looks at a Harem as exotic, with ‘a desire to penetrate’. She further writes: “The encounter with a non-monogamous system of sexuality that denies women public freedoms, often resulted in an analogy between the position of Muslim women and women in Britain. In what follows, harem literature is considered a challenge both to traditional notions on the Orient and the middle-class gender ideology in Britain.” 91 Grewal extends this concept and links it with colonialism: “Both ‘home’ and ‘harem’ are, I argue, relational nationalist constructs that require the deployment of women and female bodies within the antagonistic and comparative framework of colonial epistemology.” 92

However, Lady Mary’s description of the harem seems free from these aberrations. She has restored sanctity to it in TEL:

We are now lodged in a palace--- 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 storeys, 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 harem, that is, the ladies’ apartment.93
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 harems are always forbidden ground. Thus they can only speak of the outside, which makes no great appearance, and the women's apartments are always, built backward, removed from sight, and have no other prospect than the gardens, which are enclosed with very high walls.94

Since this word is also used for the ladies of the house, Lady Mary has aptly described their status:

The very Divan pays respect to them and the Grand Signor himself, when a pasha is executed, never violates the privileges of the harem (or women's apartment) which remains unsearched entire to the widow.95

3. TEL’s Influence on Byron and Moore

Lady Mary’s Travelogue, TEL, embodying her Orientalism has cast wide-ranging influence on the later Orientalist writers, especially on Byron and Thomas Moore. A brief sketch of this influence is briefly given in this section:

Byron is an established Oriental poet. Even Edward Said who is otherwise critical of the entire Oriental literature acknowledges Byron’s creative skill in this arena:

---William Beckford, Byron, Goethe and Hugo restructured the Orient by their art and made its colors, lights and people visible through their images, rhythms and motifs. At most, the “real” Orient provoked a writer to his vision; it very rarely guided it.96
Jeoffery W. Vail has identified two phases of Byron’s Oriental writings, first, their ‘Early Lyrics’, ranging from 1801 till the winter of 1811-12, when both of them became acquainted as ‘Whig poets’. Byron was very much under the influence of Thomas Moore during this period. Besides mutual respect, Byron, as a young poet, was deeply influenced by their shared convictions that often led him to follow Moore’s ideas. He was interested in Ireland and Armenia in this phase of his Orientalism. If he loved the mountains of Greece, it was because they reminded him of Scotland. If he wrote anything on the Islamic East, it was out of his ‘objective’ experience gained from books, especially from travel books. Said’s comment is related to this phase of Byron’s Orientalism:

Popular Orientalism during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth attained a vogue of considerable intensity. But even in this vogue easily identifiable in William Beckford, Byron, Thomas Moore, and Goethe, cannot be simply detached from the interest taken in Gothic tales, pseudo-medieval idylls, visions of barbaric splendor and cruelty. Thus in some cases the Oriental representation can be associated with Piranesi’s prison, in others with Tiepolo’s luxurious ambiences, in still others with exotic sublimity of late-eighteenth-century paintings.

But this was a temporary phase. By 1812, the year when Byron’s first poem with some Oriental content and context, Childe Harold II, was published, the whole perspective of East-West relations had drastically changed. The Turkish threat to Europe had subsided and the West was emerging with its own expansionist agenda. Another development was the popularization of George Sale’s translation of the Qur’an, and
John Richardson’s translation of the Arabian Nights, that had defanged the horror with which Dante had painted the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed in Hell, and was necessary to be more explicit about what belief in Islam involved. No doubt, this new knowledge was yet to translate into a better understanding or real sympathies and the mystery of the East along with its attendant houris, odalisques, eunuchs and djinns, crafty caliphs, oppressive sheikhs and flying carpets prevailed as a cliché. But a market for Oriental literature was created in which Byron’s rival, Robert Southey, was in the lead. Critics have pointed out that Southey heavily borrowed from William Beckford’s novel *Vathek* (1786) for his epic *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810). *Vathek* was to become Byron’s first literary influence. Here he found a set of value-judgments different from those in Christianity and therefore, contrary to Moore’s approach regarding the Orient. Moreover:

---in depicting things Islamic, Beckford does not, however, distort or disparage Islamic beliefs and practices: *Vathek* is singularly free from polemical note.----the significance of *Vathek* consists also in providing Byron with a number of Oriental images and allusions in ‘Turkish Tales’…

Lady Mary’s influence is another significant factor in Byron’s Orientalism. Byron discovered Lady Mary in Europe where he came across a copy of *Turkish Embassy Letters*. Byron read it with avidity and admired its contents. Later, he recommended its fresh publication and advised many others to consult it. Emphasizing the over-all effect of TEL on Byron, Kidwai remarks:
Lady Montagu’s *Letters*, in a sense, anticipate Byron’s Orientalism in that both writers make a clean break from the conventionally prejudiced view of the Islam, show a fine understanding of Islam helped partly by their eyewitness accounts, rich in genuine local topographical and cultural description, and use the Oriental setting for examining a wide range of issues by comparing the Islamic code of life with the traditional Christian/British one, without claiming the latter’s moral superiority.\(^{101}\)

Just like Lady Mary was the first woman to travel to the Orient, Lord Byron was the only Englishman among his contemporaries who actually travelled to the Orient. Both of them experienced it intimately, by absorbing it into their daily routine, not for political and/or religious propaganda but for grasping the real feel of the culture.

Byron also adopted the Oriental habit. Thomas Philips painted Byron in 1814 in an Albanian dress. The costume was purchased by Byron in Epirus in 1809. He termed it ‘magniques’ and ‘the only expensive item in this country’ in a letter to his mother.\(^{102}\) Naturally, he could not present the Orient and its peoples in distorted images and this led to the popularity of his Oriental writings. Grewal writes:

> Murray was Byron’s first publisher and Byron’s poems and exotic tales were themselves travel accounts, including illustrations by Byron’s traveling companion, John Hobhouse. Clearly, Byron’s works had given an immense impetus to foreign travel. Murray’s biographer suggests the beginnings of the famous Murray’s travel guides lie in Hobhouse’s letter to Murray, in which he complained in 1817 that
most books of European travel were inadequate, and that if anyone writes a book of travels without telling the truth about the masters and the subjects in this most unfortunate country [i.e. Italy], he deserves more than damnation and a dull sale.  

Search for truth was another common factor between Byron and Lady Mary. Lady Mary’s influence on Byron is also visible on a literary plane. Byron has borrowed a number of terms used by Lady Mary in her travelogue as part of his Oriental diction. In *Don Juan* alone, this list covers about 39 per cent words taken from TEL. Shahzad Ahmad Siddiqui has compiled a list of Oriental diction of Byron in *Don Juan*. Out of these 64 words, 24 words are common between TEL and *Don Juan*. A list of these common words follows below:

<table>
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<th>Pasha (39)</th>
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<td>Sherbat (62)</td>
<td>Concubine (43)</td>
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</table>

To be specific, Byron uses the word ‘Ramadhan’ in the *Giaour* about which Kidwai notes:

Here McGann simply refers to D’Herbelot’s entry on the Muslim fasting, Ramadhan. He and other scholars, moreover, miss out not only Lady Montagu’s Works but also George Sale’s translation of The
**Our’ân**, both of which describe what Byron does in the above-quoted passage, the latter in greater detail and in terms similar to Byron’s.\(^{105}\)

Lady Mary equates Ramadhan with ‘lent’ and describes it as “fast till the going down of the sun and spend the night in feasting.”\(^{106}\)

Another common topic between the two is the status of women in Islam on which Byron dwelt in the Giaour:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Oh! Who young Leila’s lance could read} \\
\text{And keep that portion of his creed} \\
\text{Which saith, that woman is but dust} \\
\text{A soulless toy for tyrant’s lust} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\((487-90)\)

It was assumed in the West, that women, according to Islamic belief, have no souls. But Byron added a note to this stanza:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A vulgar error: the Koran allots at least a third of Paradise to well-behaved women; but by far the greater number of Mussalmans interpret the text their own way, and exclude their moities from heaven.}\(^{107}\)
\end{align*}
\]

Obviously, Byron spoke without any evidence. Neither do Muslims believe in anything like this assertion nor did Sale’s translation speak of this. Moreover, critics have raised objections as to how Byron arrived at the 33 per-cent figure? At the very best, Byron seems to have confused the Islamic law of sharing inheritance between sons and daughters with women’s status in the life hereafter. Even Lady Mary says something contrary to it: “Our vulgar notion, that they do not own women to have any
soul is a mistake.” Kidwai clarifies “the note brings out the disparity between what Muslims believe and what they actually practise”, though this is only an opinion not substantiated by any proof. Yet, Kidwai maintains, “Byron’s note on The Giaour—dispels the Western misconception about women’s position in Islam—Byron disavows here what he believed earlier.

It is possible that Byron changed his stance after departing from Moore and accepting TEL’s influence as discussed above. Yet, the controversy clearly demonstrates that even as Byron borrowed Oriental topics from Lady Mary, he did not ape her but followed what suited his discourse.

Lady Mary’s influence is also visible in The Bride of Abydos where he describes the graves of Selim and Zuleikha with ‘a turban carved in stone’ and a single rose shedding’ respectively. This description reminds one of the ‘burying fields’ mentioned in TEL:

On no occasion they remove a stone that serves for a monument. Some of them are costly enough, being of a 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 top of it.

Pointing out to this evidence, Kidwai writes:
Byron’s account of Muslim funeral rites is singularly correct. (II 627-32) Coleridge and Wiener convincingly trace Byron’s debt on this account to D’Ohsson’s *Tableau Generale*, Scott’s edition of *The Arabian Nights* and Lady Montagu’s *Works*.\(^{112}\)

Finally, there is some discussion of wine in *The Corsair:*

> Though to the rest the sobber berry’s juice,

> The slaves bear round for rigid Moslem’s use. \(^{112}\) (II 33-34)

This reminds one of Lady Mary’s discussions with Achmet Bey on the matter of consumption of alcohol among muslims, as discussed earlier. Commenting on this passage, Kidwai points out:

> The wine is forbidden in Islam, and that some Muslims flout this rule, most probably comes to Byron’s notice during his stay in Turkey. Wiener, however, directs our attention to Scott’s edition of the *Arabian Nights*. Lady Montagu and Sale make the same point about the Islamic prohibition of wine and its violation.\(^{113}\)

A common theme between Byron and Moore is the revolt against Muslim tyrants and both of them present their revolts as having failed, like the revolts of Greek slaves. Was it a pessimistic approach to transforming the Orient? Kidwai opines:

> In Loan and Cythna’s revolt and eventual success against the Sultan Othman, Nigel Leask perceives Shelly’s ‘reaction against the negativity of Tom Moore’s 1817 account of Oriental revolution.
Significantly enough, both the Oriental revolutions in *Lalla Rookh* (in ‘The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan’ and ‘The Fire-Worshippers’) and in Byron’s *Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair* are failed revolutions.\(^{114}\)

When Byron was reviewing *Lalla Rookh* and his Oriental poetry after concluding his *Don Juan*, he advised Moore to upgrade his knowledge about the Orient. This was the beginning of ‘role reversal between him and Moore, an indirect influence of Lady Mary, one may say. But for most of his Oriental outpouring, Moore preferred the traditional outlook of Western writers. This is one reason that TEL’s influence on his writings is not that strong, as Kidwai emphasizes:

Moore uses the Oriental pretext for bringing home the ideas close to his heart. The diatribe against Mahmood and Arab invaders is reflective of his revulsion at the British domination in Ireland whereas his condemnation of the ‘impostor’ Mokanna is directed against zealotry and demagogy which has its parallel in the contemporary Irish political situation.

Moore faithfully retains another feature of Western literary Orientalism—calumnious stories about the Prophet, some of which figure also in Southey’s works, but, significantly enough, none in Byron’s.\(^{115}\)

At another place, Kidwai mentions:

Moore’s other poem with some Oriental content and context *The Loves of the Angels* too, is vitiated by the inclusion of a medieval story
about the Prophet Muhammad’s dove or pigeon that he had allegedly trained and paraded its whisperings into his ears as a divine sign that brought him revelations.\textsuperscript{116}

Nevertheless, this is a clear evidence of TEL’s influence on Moore. Lady Mary has mentioned this allusion under the name of Mohammad’s Pigeon. On January 4, 1718, she wrote to Anne Thistlethwayte from Pera:

I am infinitely obliged to you, dear Mrs. Thistlethwayte, 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 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 Mohammed's pigeon still subsists in this country and that I receive supernatural intelligence.\textsuperscript{117}

In an endnote, Anita Desai explains:

A pigeon is said to have taught Mohammed to pick corn out of his ear; thought to be whisperings of the Holy Ghost.\textsuperscript{118}

Halsband has given more details on the subject which also shed light on Lady Mary’s strong influence:

The story of the \textit{Pidgeon}, which is said to have been taught by \textit{Mahomet} to pick Corn out of his Ear, and which the \textit{Vulgar} took to be the Whispers of the \textit{Holy Ghost}, hath no better Foundation, that ever I
could learn than a *castle---* in the ‘Air’ (Joseph Pitts: *A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans*, 1704, 4th edition, 1738, pp.x-xi) This legend was cited by Pope in his 1743 *Dunciad* (iv. 364).  

It is worth mentioning here, that Lady Mary’s indirect influence may also be traced in Scott and the Orientalist Blunt couple via Byron. Regarding Scott’s ‘The Talisman’, the book is praised for its insight into Islam by no less an authority than H.A.R. Gibb. Edward Said conjectures: ‘Scott’s knowledge probably came from Byron and Bedrock’. (Blunt couple, Lady Annabella, daughter and heiress of Baron William King, child of Lady Annabella Isabella and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.) Billie Melman gives further information:

Blunt’s own brand of Orientalism was cemented not only by familial and social connections----but by the Byronic myth. Blunt himself would compare his own Arabophil sympathies to Byron’s Philhellenism. In the *Secret History of British Occupation of Egypt* he claims that Lady Anny’s relationship to Byron makes her, and, by implication Blunt himself, filiated to the poet: ‘the inheritor of the poet’s admiration for the Orient’ and of Byron’s attitude towards Eastern nationalism.

Lady Mary’s Orientalism was both infectious and effective. Her writings often draw a comparison between the position of women in eighteenth-century England and those living in the Orient, who, under the laws of Islam, have the right to own property, divorce and remarry. It seems she had at the back of her mind the idea of generating a
new plan for Oriental studies and setting an agenda of change for the acceptance of new ideas when she embarked on writing these letters.
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