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Expanding the 18th Century Travel Narrative:
Rationalism and Sentimentalism in Lady Mary Wortley
Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters*

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Abstract

“Lady Mary...shines like a comet...all irregular and always wandering...born with fine parts enough for twenty men.” – Joseph Spence

Though there has been much research done in the past three decades on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s writing in regards to her promotion and description of femininity in Turkey, as well as her historical and societal contributions to eighteenth-century England through her knowledge of inoculation, there are still some dualisms which cannot be easily categorized or placed in literary history. One such important dualism is the author’s simultaneously rational and sentimental style, which when explored shows that Montagu’s aesthetic expands the period’s travel writing narrative. Though Montagu is hailed as one of the first to bring smallpox inoculation to England from Turkish practice, or praised for her epistolary style of travel writing, or even widely acknowledged for her depictions of harems and Turkish women, the question that arises is this: how, and why, are these accomplishments actually depicted in her literature, or more specifically, in her *Turkish Embassy Letters*? Some critics have simply acknowledged her work for its unique feminine content, while others have tried to narrowly place her in either a strict travel or feminist genre, pertaining to a distinct segment within the divided rational and sentimental segments of the Enlightenment. In blending rationalism and sentimentalism by depicting exactly what she is most known for – depictions of Turkish femininity, epistolary travel writing, and smallpox inoculation - and by doing so in a specific epistolary style, Montagu is able to engage in feminist discourse by straying from the travel narrative’s typically patriarchal and often biased tropes. Montagu’s alternating logos and pathos-filled style, her portrayals of European and Turkish women, particularly in her rendering of Turkey as a feminotopia, and ultimately her novel, boundary-breaking depictions of smallpox, allow the *Letters* to fit into an

overarching feminist context that cannot be restricted to simply one aspect of either rationalist or sentimentalist thought. In referring to the *Letters* and conducting close reading, Montagu's many dualities and uniqueness within literary history are illustrated, and her enhancement of the travel writing form is evident.

Introduction

Despite aristocratic boundaries disallowing the need for publishing of some of her writing until after her death, the past four decades have been a fruitful time of study of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and her works; centuries after she herself wrote, the true depth and meaning of her prose and letters, as well as the person behind them, have slowly become unveiled. Much is now known about her personal life accomplishments, from being well known in English literary circles with the likes of Swift and Pope, to bringing smallpox inoculation to England, to even writing enthralling descriptions of Turkish women and harems, which unlike many travel writers before her, her sex allowed. Even more unique to the travel narrative is Montagu's flowing prose that constantly strives for a certain truthfulness and objectivity, while at the same time making marked emotional forays into the same variety of topics pertaining to the feminine world she most observes.

Critics today analyze Montagu's writing itself quite thoroughly, resulting in remarks on her prose in her earliest letters, to exclusive feminist readings in *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), to noting both stylistic and feminist themes over to her published *Nonsense of Common Sense* (1737), where more of her political thoughts are brought to light. Yet, interestingly, there is not as much overlap in analysis by these critics between these most defining moments in her life, and her writing itself. Montagu does contribute to inoculation, for instance, but how, and

more importantly why, does she write about it? Some critics have relied on solely feminist and often rationalist readings, which indeed do have much basis and ground. Nonetheless this interpretation of feminism, often restricted or observed only in letters where women are involved, does not do justice to Montagu; there are too many dualities in the author's writing, such as interplay between the rational and sensible, or sentimental, to categorize her as just one or the other. Further, when epistolary style is noted, it is rarely interlaced with these dual thematic concepts. Perhaps it is indeed true that "Lady Mary is so unique that she remains difficult to place within literary history", but even this does not allow for a too-narrow reading of her *Letters* (Anscomb). This question of where to place Montagu is not as complicated if one considers her writing to call for a greater umbrella of theory, style, and genre; in other words, if one looks at her dualities as beginning to define a new tradition of travel narrative.

Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* specifically show both rational and sentimental early eighteenth century thought, especially pertaining to both theories' influence on femininity, which in turn allows the author to reinvent the travel narrative genre through depictions of her most well known feats: from her epistolary form of travel writing, to her depictions of the women's domestic sphere, to smallpox inoculation. Notably, the more modern term of "feminotopia", or idealized feminine space within literature, also applies to the *Letters* and is often emphasized. Montagu does not write her letters, despite their address, to be read by a sole person, describe women simply to admire them, or write about smallpox simply to inform. Yet, by doing so she manages to expand previous forms of mainly male-dominated travel writing. This is not to say that closely reading her *Letters* under the conventions of eighteenth century feminist discourse and observing themes running through the whole of the collection rather than specific letters alone, will be an exhaustive approach to Montagu or even give a definite answer to where she

belongs in literary history. Nevertheless, by acknowledging the author's own life, looking at what 18th century feminist thought contains, and analyzing her work by applying these dualistic rational and sentimental themes, the subtleness of her writing about the very subjects she is most known for work together to give a more-encompassing, logically and emotionally descriptive feminist reading of her works; it is thus that she manages in both form and content to shift the travel narrative genre of the period. Instead of writing familiar letters alone, or generally biased travel narratives as was common for women and male travelers accordingly, Montagu uses the differing theories of the Enlightenment to cause the narrative form to become both more available to women and more accurate. It has been said of Montagu that her wit and beauty are a "double-edged sword", but her life and works are riddled with other pertinent dualities: aristocratic woman and published author, victim and healer, mother, and yet traveler and scholar of other cultures (Anscomb). If she emphasizes rational feminist thought, it is not at the expense of the sentimental, and through the interplay of both theories Montagu's place in 18th century literature must be thought of more broadly as she broadens the scope of the travel narrative.

18th Century Feminism: Reason and Sentiment

Though there are many ways to segment and define the dualities of the Age of Enlightenment, an exact definition of how critics distinguish between rational and sentimental aspects of eighteenth century feminism is helpful in tracing Montagu's use of the theories throughout the *Letters*. The century is variable enough in terms of theme that it moves from rational feminist thought in its early stages and to more sentimental feminist thought by the end of the century, later leading into romanticism. In fact, there were "Enlightenment contradictions abound: the age of scientific revolution paradoxically laid the foundation for scientific racism,

the rise of feminism was the premise and occasion for newly fixed models of sexual difference” (Nussbaum 21). Where rationalism has a certain influence on Montagu’s notions of gender equality in marriage and education, sentimentalism emphasizes gender difference. It is this very dichotomous nature of the Enlightenment that allows the split between earlier rational and later sentimental thought, which leads to the question of where Montagu’s writing, written early in the century but published after the middle of it, falls.

At the start of this theoretically diverse century, an integral societal notion taking hold in England was that marriage was slowly being regarded as more of “an intimate lifelong companionship” than the previously accepted arrangement or contract, and with this a woman could have more of a “voice in choosing the man who would control her life”; by refusing her father Montagu already echoes rational thought in her life (Rogers 1). Still a far cry from the rights the modern reader enjoys, this same mindset also gave rise to the idea that a woman should also have a good, or better, education, so that she may be an adequate “companion to her husband”, though still remaining subordinate to him (Rogers 1). A general increase in women’s confidence and expectations specifically inspired feminist thinking, especially in believing that their “minds were comparable to men’s”, which in effect also increased an optimism for the future in which they are treated overall in comparable, more equal, ways (Rogers 1). Montagu indeed took advantage of her education, and through her simultaneous travel-epistolary writing illustrated that perhaps women were slowly becoming “freer to express their wishes and more aware of the inequities that persisted” (Rogers 1).

More specifically, this slight shift to a more logic-based, intellectual equality between the sexes falls under the title of rationalism. This theory, starting when Locke attacks the age-old argument of a king ruling a country by divine authority, and by extension paralleling the same

argument to a father ruling a family, puts reason as its “highest value” (Rogers 2). In doing so, rationalists challenge the association of “feminine” with “non-rational”, and refrain from construing women as innately weak and helpless. Rationalism aims to expose “weaknesses unworthy of an adult human being,” and in doing so sees through “sentimental falsifications” that may come, for example, under the mask of love (Rogers 2). This ideal, then, seems to serve at least one prejudice that women had been struggling with for centuries previous; that of a certain inequality of mind, and weakness of emotion associated with solely their gender. In considering the theory in travel narratives, rationalist thought agreed with Descartes’ notion of the separation of mind and body to claim that a “narrative that combined inner and outer voyage was not only possible but even predictable”, which, in turn for travel writing meant that “the emotions, thoughts, and personal quirks of the narrator become more accessible and more dominant” while at the same time “the world itself, its plants, animals, and people, also become a source of knowledge for their own sake” (Blanton 11, 12). This duality between emotion and knowledge for its own sake is seen throughout many aspects of Montagu’s letters, especially in her writing on smallpox inoculation.

The emphasis on rationalism increased the value of chastity, which at the time was often associated with a woman’s “virtue and honor” (Rogers 9). This makes sense on the anti-sentimental side of rationalism as well, for often a chaste woman would not as easily give way to passion, or for that matter, any kind of excess emotion or helpless frivolity. As a virtue, chastity, once lost, would be irrecoverable; as such, women were to avoid “any company, any reading, any actions that could arouse suspicions of her sexual purity in the narrowest mind” (Rogers 9). Though this implies a double standard – rationalism alone did not outright support rights for women separate from their roles in men’s lives – it was nonetheless a wife’s duty to be pleasing

to her husband within the marriage while publicly remaining devoid of excess passion. In the same vein, if women would try to support themselves, age-old associations with prostitution would still arise, and thus even publishing would be considered unchaste even by association. For this reason authors such as Montagu published anonymously, or even posthumously. At the same time, rationalism contributed to the liberation of women since a “sentimental haze” could often “glamorize dependency”, indicating a small step towards increased independence in not being solely reliant on their husbands and chastity within their relationship, but rather as companions (Rogers 39).

Rationalist thought also spurred advancement for education in leisure-class women. Many upper-class families, for example, began to provide tutoring for their daughters. Due to focus on logic and furthering mental equality between the sexes, the eighteenth century mindset shifted increasingly towards increased tutoring, though not necessarily formal education, for women. However, an aristocratic woman’s education would often still fall into her own hands, as with Montagu, but while “girls struggled to teach themselves Latin to establish their mental equality with men...men became absurdly uncomfortable” (Rogers 28). Rationalism did not eradicate an irrational fear of educated women in men. Still, the theory itself was progressive in its own right, and had the backing of influential persons such as Joseph Addison, who wanted to educate the “fair”, thinking that the publication of *The Spectator*, which often published educational elements, would help in this education (Rogers 30). Thus knowing how it would be perceived by readers, Montagu uses the Latin she learns with as much ease as a second language in her letters in order to enhance the logical appeal of her writing. Even within the umbrella of rationalist thought, though, opposing viewpoints on whether women should be educated in

regards to their companionship to men, or for their own natures, still existed, and Montagu in her later life would advocate as much education as possible for her granddaughters.

Jonathan Swift and Mary Astell, major scholars and rationalists, both influence Montagu's position on gender equality. Swift, for one, believes that "rational friendship" is ideal for marriage, and also that women cannot be "reasonable companions" to men unless they receive a better education (Rogers 58). While this is progressive, Swift does not acknowledge sexual difference at all, believing instead that women should make themselves more like men by "divesting themselves of distinctively feminine characteristics" (Rogers 62). Astell, however, uses rationalism to argue that women have "equal capacity" with men, also proposing a separate convent-like education for women and encouraging women to "acquire experience" themselves, the latter of which Montagu does whole heartedly (Rogers 74). In fact, it is not until the 1790's, and far after Montagu's time, that the bluestocking feminist group has similar ideas. In Montagu's time, the typical eighteenth century woman is "neither so bold nor so systematic in their approach to women's rights as Astell" (Rogers 3). This relative timidity, especially in the *Letters*, requires a deep, close analysis, because feminism could be so intermittingly veiled. With this in mind, and acknowledging that "Since oppression of women was based on ill-defined moral assumptions or alleged natural differences, any clear-headed examination of their situation was potentially liberating", Montagu should be viewed as no different in her conservatism and rationalism, with her writing even more so than her autobiography hinting towards this (Rogers 79).

Yet, while this rational feminism has definite ground and basis in Montagu's work, the later part of the century's changing ideology towards sentimentalism is also integral in the *Letters*, and thus must also be defined before full analysis can occur. Sentimentalism can be

described as an “assertion of the value of emotion in reaction to the tough, matter-of-fact rationalism of the Restoration” (Rogers 119). Unlike rationalism that focused so intensely on the mind and logic, sentimentalism “glorified the possibilities of sexual and domestic love”, giving much more respect and freedom to emotion that perhaps could not be as easily defined as certain rational principles (Rogers 119). The evolving ideology focuses more on being able to find happiness in the domestic circle and out of the public sphere, with women “identified with private feelings and emotional life of the family”, though false emotion in excess, as in rationalism, is discouraged (Rogers 120).

Less focused on education but dealing more with emotional responsiveness, sentimentalism manages to bring this “emotional dimension” that adds to the “starkly intellectual approach of such earlier feminists as Mary Astell” (Rogers 143). Instead of avoiding emotion and focusing on logic, sentimentality is focused on pathos, but with no shock-factor; it instead accepts the period’s traditional definitions of masculine and feminine, with sentiment mainly, and positively, associated with women, highlighting a certain difference between genders (Rogers 143). Rather than this detracting from rationalism, sentimentalism focuses on an entirely different mode of analyzing theory. When the two are looked at together, they complement each other nicely. With sentimentalism, what determines feminist vs. feminine writing is whether the author identifies with women or simply wrote about their attitudes (Rogers 120). Montagu manages to observe but also use emotion in both content and style to relate her own position as an aristocratic woman to what she sees. Thus, there is no reason that Montagu should not be included in this part of eighteenth century thought either; she is perhaps less apologetic or veiled in her writing than she may at first seem, and in true Enlightenment form features rationalism and sentimentalism alike. It is entirely possible that what she cannot outright do in her own life,

such as fully be considered an educated equal or outwardly praise foreign feminist practices, Montagu brings to the forefront in her letters.

Sentimentality in the period is often thought of as a certain overemphasis of human sensibility. The Enlightenment era, also often referred to as an Age of Sensibility, can then further be understood as a “way to understand how the social world comes to be organized through sympathetic affiliation” (Menely 114). This affiliation applies both in form and content of literature, such as emotions considered to be “infectious, moving as promiscuously between one person and another as between texts and their readers” (Menely, 114). In the *Letters*, Montagu keeps her audience in mind with the epistolary form, but also infuses various segments with emotion when observing the world around her, especially seen in her portrayal of beauty in women. Sensibility can also be described as regarding the “human body as an eloquent object”, where “eloquence arises from the performance of an inscribed system of gestures and expressions”, especially in dealing with shaping and directing how both male and female bodies should appear in public (Goring 5). Montagu expertly executes sensible rhetoric then, especially when depicting female bodies in separate spheres from men, as she observes in harems. As David Hume says, “reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions”; in the following analysis, then, anything pertaining to these passions allows for some interchangeable use between sentimentality and sensibility (Menely 114).

Lastly, while the majority of some eighteenth-century feminists assert the importance of traditional values like emotion, sensibility, spontaneity in the sentimental era of the Enlightenment, which gained momentum following the height of rationalist thought, others continued to emphasize the earlier thoughts of intellectual equality with men (Rogers 247). Montagu, in her time, indeed writes with both aspects in mind.

A New Travel Narrative

Montagu's unique blend of rational and sentimental feminist discourse allows her to reinvent the genre of the travel narrative itself. Prior travel narratives are mainly written by men and focus on observations of male domains, such as politics and public discourse. These narratives were also generally Eurocentric and depicted Turkey with biased observations of customs that due to their foreignness, were perceived as barbarous. Montagu alters the form by making a conscious effort to write truthfully, in an epistolary form, while incorporating her English background and writing about the feminine sphere that she knows best.

During the early eighteenth century the view depicted in much travel writing was that the "Ottoman Empire was a barbaric culture whose inferiority was palpable in its rejection of Christianity, its segregation of women, its practice of slavery and its lack of technological advance" (Grundy 5). Montagu often notes that "the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe", and does not only say so in order to force connections between what she sees, but because she writes what she believes is truth from her observations (Montagu 72).¹ Aside from quite literally being a companion to her husband during the travels, and thus having "the privilege of a traveler" she also does not shy from logic-based observations and conclusions; however, these differ from what was typically written about (10). Thus Montagu, despite knowingly straying from what an audience is accustomed to, refuses to "lie like other travellers", also indicating that her goal is not necessarily to simply tell tales, but also to accentuate her commitment to empirical observation that is not only vital to her, but also falls under rational ideals of honor and integrity (44). This is not to say that her observations are

All subsequent citations are from Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (published Virago, 1994).

easy to make, as throughout the letters she notes that “’tis always a mortification to me to observe that there is no perfection in humanity”; yet, she continues to write the truth from what she observes (43). Though she writes from the definite viewpoint of an aristocratic female traveler, she writes of the areas of Turkish life to which she has access, which is women, domesticity, and descriptions of culture that she can relate or compare her own English culture to. This is unlike, in her eyes, the “common voyage writers, who are very fond of speaking of what they don’t know”, satirically noting her disinterest in “titles given to jaw bones and bits of worm-eaten wood” (85, 8). Montagu would rather write about what she has intimate access to and what she knows, such as entry into the harem, that previously is unknown to her readers and is therefore of interest.

What travel narratives contain, Casey Blanton argues, is an “interplay between observer and observed, between a traveler’s own philosophical biases and pre-conceptions and the tests those ideas and prejudices endure as a result of the journey”, which in turn “allow the writer to celebrate the local while contemplating the universal” (5). Montagu uses her education and acute observations to not only show a certain equality with previous travel writers, but also to assert her greater objectivity. She does not reproduce the bias that Turkey represents “men’s incontestable dominion over women,” but instead trusts her own perceptions based on what she sees, aspiring to be as objective as possible and often empowering women in doing so (Nussbaum 16). The epistolary form itself gives the illusion of being more authentic and credible than other narratives written in third person because of the personal voice at hand; the recipient has little reason to believe a familiar letter, from a known acquaintance or friend, is written to deceive. Nonetheless, Montagu is realistic about achieving complete objectivity, often noting what she believes is wrong in both letters she receives and writes. Though a touch condescending

when writing “Your whole letter is full of mistakes...so full of absurdities I am very well diverted in them”, she also keeps those who receive her letter in mind as well, commenting “I am afraid you’ll doubt the truth of this account, which I own is very different from our common notions in England” (104). She is careful to acknowledge her audience; which, in eighteenth century literary circles, means that letters were circulated and read by groups of people, not just by who the letter was addressed to, thus achieving a more broadly accessible kind of travel narrative through epistolary writing.

Montagu enters another duality when entering the public sphere of writing as an aristocratic woman, treading a boundary “between an acceptable and admired display of ‘wit’ and intellect among social and cultural peers and entry into the public arena of print and the literary marketplace,” since in rationalist thought publishing would be associated with lack of integrity, and ultimately chastity (de Groot 77). Montagu does indeed find the fine line between her observations and asserting her intellect, never outright writing to support herself, but also having a definite purpose to her letters. In her own life, it is only towards the very end of that that she deigns to leave a manuscript of her *Letters* with a reverend in Rotterdam to ensure their publication, so that it is in 1763, years after she pens her observations, that her *Turkish Embassy Letters* posthumously appears in print. As scholar Cynthia Lowenthal notes, Montagu’s letters are an example of the “persistence of ‘rationalist feminist’ writing” which contests “other, oppositional representations of women’s experience” and “the shifting norms of patriarchal constructions of women even when constrained by their own difficulties” (Lowenthal 10). In this case, Montagu’s logical observations fall into rationalist thought about the differing culture of Turkish women, and are made difficult to share by both her sex and place in society. Along with this, she also cannot escape another inherent duality of the epistolary nature, with women writing

letters praised as both “naturally better” and “naturally disorderly” throughout the majority of the period (van Hensbergen 513). Careful chronicling allows a precise, intentional order of events, and Montagu stylistically is careful not to give any excuse for disarray, pointing all reader attention to what she would believe are better observations; that is, honest depictions about the women and practices she sees and knows most about.

In order to be able to truly analyze Montagu’s “feminine consciousness” present in the *Letters*, Jill Campbell argues for a historicizing of literature, that intrinsically, along with understanding the author’s cultural background, leads to another interesting facet of Montagu’s stylistic and rational writing (4). That is, one must acknowledge historical and cultural content – which can be deemed Montagu’s “Englishness” – to truly understand it. Western travelers tend to imagine the different cultures they encounter as “inhabiting the distant past of their own culture’s history or prehistory”, which allows Montagu to define these cultures she finds in her own terms (Campbell 75). As she observes cultural difference and the “essential historicity of gender roles”, she can then manipulate what she sees in different ways. In other words, by accepting her own English background, and often including it in her own literature, Montagu is able to write what she sees with a certain feminist purpose in acknowledge cross-cultural difference between feminine spheres, and backing very specific aspects. Her own femininity and culture are thus very closely intertwined; when observing Turkish women, for instance, Montagu is just as much an English writer as she is a woman writer. Moreover, she uses cultural difference in her travel narrative as opposed to previously common cultural superiority.

Montagu constantly compares and contrasts what she believes to be important with what she knows in England, keeping in mind her audience and writing only what she believes is “quite new”, or what can be read with “some pleasure” (50). An example of this analysis in difference

is done in a very rational context in acknowledging her companionship to Edward Wortley, her husband. As a young woman, she breaks social expectations by choosing Wortley over someone “impossible to Love” and elopes with him, a man “struck by her witty conversation” (Rogers 12). Despite rebellious beginnings, and alongside his acknowledgement of her wit, Montagu constantly sees herself as her husband’s companion, including him even on her own observational opinion on Constantinople, for instance, penning “Mr. Wortley is unwilling to own ‘tis bigger than London, though I confess it appears to me to be so, but I don’t believe ‘tis so populous” (99). Whether it is in associating Wortley with England, or being reminded of her culture in other ways, it is during these comparisons between English and Turkish women that Montagu’s ideas on feminism are most evident. Care, however, must be taken to avoid seeing her observations as *only* a critique of England. The *Letters* are very much travel writing with more of a description to the positive than a critique for the negative; comparisons must be drawn because she is an English writer and can explain most logically in this manner. Montagu, from her writing, can be seen to have far more respect, shown in both rationality and sentimentality, for Turkish and Viennese women in her travels than to use them as simply a tool to argue against England. Rather, through her Englishness she creates points for their own value. If she compares an observation to that of her husband’s thoughts or of England, it is to make a point about the difference itself; to say a woman is freer in one country than another, for instance.

Thus, while it is evident that Montagu writes plenty in the rationalist mindset to promote her argument towards helping women in comparisons and various different kinds of observations, the true power in her writing in the *Letters* comes from the fact that she does incorporate deliberate pathos, and a certain sensibility, from the Enlightenment. Instead of deterring from her other arguments, the sentimental aspects of her writing only show her subtle

feminism, and dualistic tendencies, further. As rationalist as her style can be, for example, there are sentimental aspects of travel writing, the epistolary form, and even her Englishness.

Throughout her many observations as a new kind of travel writer, Montagu writes of different cultural tastes in what can be considered magnificent ways, highlighting difference in sentiment such as when questioning “Considering what short lived, weak animals men are, is there any study so beneficial as the study of present pleasure?” (142). Here it is no rational thought or experiment that enthralls her, but the pure sentiment of what man finds pleasurable. However, she also goes to the other extreme to show the “proof of the irrationality of mankind” when traveling past fields of battle-torn Karlowitz (51). She ardently queries, “...can there be a greater demonstration of want of reason than a custom being firmly established so plainly contrary to the interest of man in general? I am a good deal inclined to believe Mr Hobbes that the state of nature is a state of war, but thence I conclude human nature not rational, if the word reason means common sense...” (51). Aside from directly going against rational thought in observing that the outcome is so gruesome and saddening, Montagu also points to the fact that in dealing with, or observing, humans and their general interest, rational thought alone may not be enough. Judith Still believes that when Montagu is describing this “small spot of ground”, the author also shows her “openness to cultural difference”; this is possible, as Montagu does not focus on commenting on the victor of the battle, but rather evokes pathos in challenging ways different cultures handle conflict, and allows an opening for feminine observations of cultural difference later (Still 89).

In general, however, travel writing cannot exist without sentimentality, or an inevitability of some aspect of writing to appear superfluously dramatic, and perhaps not as objective as it should be, as Montagu herself notes:

“We travellers are in very hard circumstances. If we say nothing but what has been said before us we are dull and we have observed nothing. If we tell anything new, we are laughed at as fabulous and romantic...But people judge of travellers exactly with the same candour, good nature and impartiality they judge of their neighbors upon all occasions” (118).

Montagu realizes that a lot of what she writes will be taken as sentimental notion in an era that still leans heavily towards empiricism during the time she writes. Nonetheless, she highlights the problem and chooses to write anyway. She is willing her readers to accept her writing as they would her neighbors, in a familiar, generally trusting manner, despite it straying from strict rationality at some points.

The author has the same mindset in inclusivity of sentimentalist writing in relation to feminist thought when she notes that “voyage-writers lament on the miserable confinement of the Turkish ladies, who are, perhaps, freer than any ladies in the universe”, who “lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure” and “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...that is a diversion they take great pleasure in” (134). The key in what she writes here is pleasure, and her fascination with the women leading such a life whilst not being reliant on their husbands, who, she notes, supply riches for their wives’ pursuits. Knowledge just for its own sake, she writes, may be no burden to oneself, but “knowing too much is very apt to make us troublesome to other people” (120). This knowledge combined with a certain sentimentality and purposeful writing, however, has a different effect. Montagu’s attention to sentiment, or pleasure in this case, allows the author to observe more about Turkish women’s agency than if she stuck strictly to rationalist observation.

Montagu’s general epistolary style reflects the shifts in the interplay between public and private spheres in letter writing. In the eighteenth century letter writing began moving “toward a looser, more emotive and expressive style”, where the “rhetoric of gallantry yielded to the

language of sentimentality, and in the process the letter moved from the arena of official public discourse...to a world of privacy..." (Epstein 399). By the very content of what she writes, such as by describing harems, Montagu enters a private world and fittingly describes in a more intimate stylistic manner. This shift towards a world of privacy is seen in her letters which contain "observations about daily female rituals, the domestic concerns, the 'womanly' elements long hidden from view" (Lowenthal 93). Again, the author's travel descriptions are different from earlier travel writers even in the access of the feminine world she is privy to. Another duality, then, that runs through Montagu's familiar letters is that of private versus public realms. This duality, inherent in epistolary writing, allows Montagu to "maintain intimacy on two levels, with two audiences, both private and public," intentionally encompassing both women and men in this manner (Gardner 117). Her voice in the letters also allows her to say whatever she wants without fear of contradiction; while she has publication in mind only much later in her life, she still writes as part of a public literary conversation. In this conversation then, as with common communication with friends and family, that pathos in important issues plays a role.

Montagu's Englishness has sentimental aspects and enters this conversation as well, an example being her poetry in comparisons with England as a country compared with Adrianople: a "perpetual spring...can never be preferred to England with all its snows and frosts" (57). Again, she does not err towards bias to either prefer England's ways strictly, or over-sentimentalize the new cultures she observes. An advocate of Montagu's sentimental side, Jill Campbell, believes that the author "attempts to use her experience of cultural disjunctions to construct a voice that can speak of ... aesthetic pleasure" (66). These cultural comparisons and the differences they may highlight indeed do allow Montagu to form an opinion on the feminine and express her opinion with a certain pathos, pointing and enjoyment in pleasure. Instead of

pointing to cultural elitism, Montagu again uses comparison to point out a positive aspect, and constantly sticks to a standard of honesty that is enhanced by sentimentality.

Representations of Continental and Turkish Women

It is in Montagu's numerous observations of women in other countries specifically that both rational and sensible, sentimental thought combine to further show how the author's content also begins to expand travel narrative confines. Montagu's rationalist mindset influences her nuanced depictions of women. Rather than creating flat, stereotypical portraits of women as beautiful objects, she notes the positive as well as negative aspects of what she sees. Before she even arrives in Turkey, in Vienna she notes that there are women who wear fashions "more monstrous and contrary to all common sense and reason than 'tis possible for you to imagine...they build certain fabrics of gauze on their heads, about a yard high, consisting of three or four storeys"; not stopping here, she even continues rather harshly that doing so "improves the natural ugliness with which God Almighty has been pleased to endow them all generally" (17). Montagu immediately demonstrates that even as a woman, she as narrator is not prone to give way to simply any fashion, observing another culture with a certain degree of rationality. In Prague, she observes that a "person is so much lost between headdress and petticoat, they have as much occasion to write upon their backs 'this is a woman'" (31). This indeed defines woman strangely, but in doing so Montagu illustrates that excess fashion and nearly illogical requirements affect women negatively, hiding their true form. When reading the *Letters*, Montagu is not writing as a "godlike creator and interpreter of the Other," as the travel writers before her were prone to do, but instead is "reproducing optical experience...her descriptions of women...imitate the arbitrary and random quality of vision itself" (Kietzman 542). Instead of

writing women as simple “templates” rather than as the largely factual and generally unbiased observations Montagu attempts, she thus serves as an exception to embellishment or narrating solely based on women’s physical beauty; it is thus that she acts as a “humanizing corrective to the usual story,” giving women and their society “an uncustomary measure of complexity” (Faroqhi 228, 242).

In fact, this difference between simply berating women and doing so with a humanizing, accurate, purpose is all the more evident when Montagu compares other countries’ customs with England’s. When in Hanover, the author notes that the “Saxon ladies resemble the Austrian no more than the Chinese do those of London.” She highlights differences in the women speaking or moving “in a natural manner” in order to show a certain freedom from social guidelines. She also approves of natural and accepted virtue rather than that which can be forced or implied by the same strict guidelines she knows (21). Her willingness to acknowledge these differences between women allows Montagu to admit when another country’s customs are more progressive than England’s in creating better conditions for women. For example, Montagu writes that a “woman till five and thirty is only looked upon as a raw girl,” and that there is a certain comfort in knowing that “there is upon earth such a paradise for old women, and I am content to be insignificant at present, in the design of returning when I am fit to appear no where else” (21). She acknowledges “mortifications” in the realization of a poorer treatment of older women in her own country, saying it is “only owing to the barbarous customs of our country” (21). Thus, while there is a slight critique of England and a personal stake in what she writes, she is also rationally extending virtue and honor by commenting on cultural difference rather than cultural elitism.

Cultural difference in how women are treated is also seen in Vienna, where Montagu realizes that “reputation has quite another meaning here than what you give it at London...ladies being much more respected in regard to the rank of their lovers than that of their husbands” (22). In this complete juxtaposition with the rational mindset of England, Montagu continues with saying that the people in Vienna are the “best natured set of people in the world, and look upon their wives’ gallants as favourably as men do upon their deputies” (22). This is key because it shows that it is the men that approve of this in Vienna as well, and not just women doing as they wish. Indeed it is still very much a companionship between the sexes that Montagu observes, not stressing independence of women but simply more liberty in their companionship with men. In fact, as Karen Rogers notes, Montagu often argues that the Turkish women she may define as free “in order to bring into question the remarkable liberty that English women were supposed to enjoy: in fact, she implies, they were not much better off than their Oriental counterparts”; after all, the liberty given to these female lovers can be argued to not be true liberty (Rogers 4). Montagu as a female writer also does not forget her own place as companion as it is she who still asks her husband’s permission in what to do with her allotment, and it is still he who she follows throughout her travels (Rogers 7).

Although Montagu observes and describes women, such as noting beauty which is often “more common here than with us”, and where “the court of England, though I believe it the fairest in Christendom, cannot show so many beauties as are under our protection here...”, it is important to note that she is also willing to subject herself to other women’s gazes, something not seen in male-authored travel writing (70). In Greece, “many of the women flocked in to see [her] and we were equally entertained with viewing one another” (151). There is thus a certain observational logic and fairness that Montagu brings to her writing. Montagu is also not easily

swayed, and often considers both sides of what she observes; of Austria, for instance, she notes that while one cannot “write with vivacity...they are never lively but upon points of ceremony”, unlike what she is perhaps used to “pedigree is much more considered by them than either the complexion or features of their mistresses”, and even money is “seldom any advantage to the man [women] marry” (24, 25). In general, the author does not mention details without reason, and takes care to not write “the dullest stuff that ever was read”, but instead she logically makes comparisons that illuminate differences, and perhaps a certain lack, in a society (26). Again, Montagu writes what she knows, intentionally bringing as little as possible bias into her writing, and acknowledging that a cultural difference can be seen from two directions.

Because of the nature of travel, it cannot be ignored that Montagu is immersed in culture, and that her letters show a rational approach in her own life and actions. When she is questioned as to not having a lover, a “little affair in the heart”, in her writing she on one hand upholds her own chastity and virtue, but on the other hand is careful to respect cultural difference. She is not offended by the question since she is “well enough acquainted” with they way of the countries she is in. It is key for her observational, rational and logical tone that she realizes that “gallantry and good breeding are as different in different climates as morality and religion. Who have the rightest notions of both we shall never know till the day of judgement” (23). When she gives birth to her daughter, she again writes her own personal life into her letters but to show more overarching and general statements, such as “in this country it is more despicable to be married and not fruitful than it is with us to be fruitful before marriage”, thus placing herself within the foreign culture as well and immediately illuminating a variation in rationalist thought, where chastity is considered differently (107). Doing so allows her to comment on other Turkish women with a rational, rather observational perspective, commenting that the “ladies of the

country respect women only for the number of their offspring” without necessarily implicating herself (132). This objectivity again allows rational Montagu to notice that, for example, in Vienna the “only beautiful young women...witty and agreeable” are nuns, which lead the author to lament “so agreeable a young creature buried alive” (28). Yet, instead of leaning heavily towards her own prejudices and definite “zeal against popery”, she reinforces her points with reason, and even qualifies her own observations in order to give the clearest picture possible (28).

Montagu uses a rational method to further explore aspects of domesticity and femininity beyond women and fashion. In one instance, she remarks upon the day to day lives of women in Belgrade in comparison to England: “...Monday setting of partridges, Tuesday reading English, Wednesday studying the Turkish language...Thursday classical authors...is a better way of disposing the week than Monday at the Drawing Room, Tuesday Lady Mohun’s, Wednesday the opera, Thursday the play...” (103). Here she distinctly uses rationalist thought in promoting education and more intellectual day to day activities for women; yet, she does not mention this in regards to being a companion to man, thus echoing Astell’s sentiments.

Further highlighting a willingness to witness women outside of the domestic sphere can be seen when Montague muses on the Turkish practice of placing stoves in places outside of the kitchen. The author discusses the invention of a stove in relation to domesticity, when she notices the number of orange trees in a cold climate are due to stoves brought “to such perfection” that she is surprised “we do not practice in England so useful an invention” (39). Stoves, mostly used in a woman’s domain, and thus allowing her rational musing, then lead Montagu to make a more general argument in noting cultural “obstinacy in shaking with cold six months in the year rather than make use of stoves...so far from spoiling the form of a room that

they add very much to the magnificence of it” (39). If a metaphor is drawn from this referring to domesticity, and perhaps the use or education of women in livening up a room, then Montagu is still staying within rationalist thought while at the same time promoting a scientific invention and advocating for women. As she writes in French to Abbé Conti, the idea of both this thought read metaphorically and scientifically intrigues Montagu: “the Turks are not so ignorant as we fancy them to be in matters of politics or philosophy...the sciences flourish amongst them” (110). Again, Montagu strays from the typical portrayal of Turkish culture as perpetuated by previous English travel writers before her, seen especially when she deals with the position of women.

On the other hand, it is also important to note that the author’s observations, in fact, often give way in epistolary form to “romanticism and sensuality in which she reveled”, while still writing in, and stretching, the travel narrative tradition (Desai xxxii). It is important to be able to see more personal, private connections between Montagu and the women and the general aesthetics of femininity that she observes, especially those connections which are most evident when looked through a sentimental viewpoint. Most abundant in Montagu’s writing are her comments on the beauty of the women she sees; she is often “not without a great impatience to see a beauty that has been the admiration of so many different nations”, but also has more to admire than the surface (14). In one instance, even after satirically mocking some customs of a Viennese empress, she follows with words of praise, writing “When she smiles, ‘tis with a beauty and sweetness that forces adoration. She has a vast quantity of fine hair; but then her person! One must speak of it poetically to do it rigid justice; all that the poets have said of Juno, the air of Venus, come up not to the truth. The Graces move with her; the famous statue of Medicis was not formed with more delicate proportions...” (18). Beyond just the standard outer

beauty, Montagu notes the inner delicacy of beauty, and compares it to the Greek gods to describe the woman as more than just beautiful, but as a piece of art.

While critics believe this description is Montagu's way of "othering" the empress, it is important that the author follows with being sorry that "my rank here did not permit me to kiss" the hands of the woman; in other words, the sentimentality she shows, and exclamation of "her person!" is not in mockery of the woman, but in true, emotional, praise. There is a true feeling of human exquisiteness in her description of the feminine body, and therefore definite sensibility as well. Here, as in many other areas of her writing, she again notes how the custom is "very different from that of England. No man enters it but the old grand master..." (18). The sentimentality she shows then, is restricted to a woman praising another with no other intent or gain; there is no mention of man, or of being a companion to one. Allusions to Greek literature continue, as Montagu notes that with archery only ladies "had permission to shoot", with the first prize for the lady who wins making "as good a figure as the prize shooting in the Aeneid, if [she] could write as well as Virgil" (20). Again, the pathos evoked when alluding to mythical prizes and to women only helps emphasize the positive sentiment Montagu feels toward the pleasurable entertainment that caters to women. In writing women as heroic she gives them not only praise but empowers them as well, while comparing her own writing to the classical great Virgil gives herself, as a female author, a similar sense of empowerment. Even with grouping herself in the same group as a male author, she does not eroticize women but still focuses on their achievement. Further, this fascination and admiration she writes of is not just a fleeting one; the emotional impression left on Montagu is great enough for the author to refer back to the empress later, saying even whilst in Hanover that while she is "not at all partial to people for their titles," she does "love that charming princess" (37).

When in Hanover, Montagu writes of a parable of a Countess of Cosel, who is a “prisoner in a melancholy castle” and mistress of a King (33). She is brought money by the King, leaves her own husband to be with the King, divorces publicly, and requests a formal contract of marriage. Though the parable at first has rather rationalist qualities with traditional gender roles changing a bit, and the woman doing everything to be man’s companion, Montagu shifts away from this with her own analysis of the story. She writes, “Men endure everything while they are in love, but when the excess of passion was cooled by long possession his majesty began to reflect on the ill consequences of leaving such a paper in her hands”; thus, the man himself is driven by an excess of emotion (33). However, despite this, the woman chooses “to endure all the most violent effects of his anger than give it up...she has refused the offer of the continuation of a large pension”, meaning that her own emotion gives her strength against a man’s violent anger (33). It is the countess’s own passion which allows her to stand for her own virtue and want of a marriage contract. Montagu has “some compassion for a woman that suffers for a point of honour”, yet through sentimentality (33). In this parable, the typical Montagu dualism is shown; rationalism in the point of containing honor, yet a necessary sentimental addition in the method of attempting to keep this honor. It is the validation of the woman’s emotion itself giving strength to stand up against a man that leads to the positive quality of maintained honor for the countess.

A second parable of a Spanish widow falling in love with a Turk shows similar values in sentiments playing a key role in strengthening women. The widow undergoes scandal due to being raped and is faced with entry into nunnery, but decides “...very resolutely that her liberty was not so precious to her as her honour” and nonetheless refuses (136). While this very much holds rational sentiment, as Montagu supports further, writing “I am afraid you’ll think that my

friend fell in love with her ravisher, but I am willing to take her word for it that she acted wholly on principles of honour”, it is still nonetheless important to note that Montagu does sensor her own sentimentality as well (136). While she could have very well entered into previous discourse of the “erotic” nature of the Orient and emphasized the suffering of the widow and with intense pathos recreating her terror, Montagu instead, with careful sentimental prose, shows a balance between rationalist honor and the sentiment of the story. The sentimentalism the woman shows in holding on to her honor – even if there is love included – does not deter from Montagu’s point, and rationalism combined with it only helps show the woman in a more favorable light. As critic Cynthia Lowenthal notes, there is a certain power in this fictional construct Montagu includes, where “violence is essentially erased, and a dangerous and powerful man is transformed into a means of female triumph”; thus, there are sentimental qualities (110). Yet rationalism again cannot be ignored, as there is also a “moral lesson about female values illustrated by her heroine’s motives” (Lowenthal 110). This romance narrative shows that a woman can be removed from danger and have a happy ending; yet, Montagu does not do this simply to emit or draw emotion from the reader, but to show a powerful duality of sentimental thought leading to rationalist values within the liberty and wants of women.

Stylistically, feminine discourse with sentimentality is also observed when Montagu discusses foreign poetry, or ways in which men and women can converse. She finds that Arabian poetry is “in numbers not unlike ours, [has] generally alternate verse, and of a very musical sound” (53). It is in her analysis of these poems that she, especially in her letters to Alexander Pope, enters into conversation about differences in “customs, particularly the confinements of women” (54). Montagu’s writing turns very prose-like and infused with many allusions, such as saying she can “no longer look upon Theocritus as a romantic writer; he has only given a plain

image of the way of life amongst the peasants of his country”, indicating that her interest goes past pastoral writing, and into the intricacies of every day life (74). Though it is educational, and rationalist though in using references to Homer, the actual content of what she writes is rather sentimental: “princesses and great ladies pass their time at their looms embroidering veils and robes...in the same manner as we find Andromache and Helen described” (75). Again, she describes women in the same context as with beauties in famous literature. In her tone and style of writing, and allusion after allusion of positivity, Montagu’s writing is saturated with praise.

The author here may be more prone to accenting her education as she was chiefly responsible for it from a young age, being even early on interested in both modern and ancient writing (Anscomb). Yet, though it is naturally logically accurate Greek mythology, Montagu is definitely using pathos to also inspire the like-minded Pope. She continues writing, “Their manner of dancing is certainly the same that Diana is sung to have danced on the banks by Eurotas”, layering further allusions but also again praising women for skill rather than just for outer beauty (75). On another level she is indeed flaunting her education, but in supporting women through her writing, on a certain level she is able to converse with a published contemporary and not necessarily use Latin and allusions as a sign of distinction, but give as accurate descriptions she can of previously unmentioned women and their natures. As Jill Campbell argues, doing so allows Montagu to leap from simple descriptions of “female clothing and faces to bodies themselves”; to give the intricacies of the actual women – their skill, and actions - that she finds missing from previous narratives (Campbell 79). Another critic, Cynthia Lowenthal, notes that by “inhabiting the world of the dead, [Montagu] can interpret the frivolity of English life as stifling and trivial in its regularity in contrast to the pleasures of her intellectual work”, that by employing romanticized sentiment and pastoral motifs Montagu can play “the

empowered observer who writes philosophically” (Lowenthal 56, 59). The world of the dead, or that of allusions to ancient Greek writing, does provide a contrast to previous rationality, and as a philosophical observer then Montagu is free to show femininity in an accurate form, showing both what Turkish culture can offer and thus what could theoretically change in her own. In a dualistic relation to her own life, Alexander Pope, would ironically later attempt to destroy Montagu’s reputation due to quarrel with public sexual insults, using pathos she evoked with him to hurt her in very rationalist, chastity-driven ways.

Alongside her own prose, Montagu chooses to include translated, and ardent, Turkish poetry in the *Letters*, analyzing it and saying, for example, that an “epithet of stag-eyed, though the sound is not very agreeable in English, pleases me extremely and is, I think, a very lively image of the fire and indifference in his mistress’ eyes” (77). She is referring to a passionate piece of prose, where its lovers are ““ravish’d”, in an “hour of possession”, and ends with the emotion of being “drown’d in scalding tears” (77). Montagu, knowing that her letters would be circulated and acknowledging the importance of detail, does not put in a piece of merely observational, rational work to show that Turkish literature does evoke a certain passion; even more importantly, she illustrates that women depicted in the poem, such as the “mistress”, are celebrated in this sentimental form (77). Montagu, further noting her readers, states that “neither do I think our English proper to express such violence of passion, which is very seldom felt amongst us” (79). She comments on this difference between cultures, but does not dismiss the Turkish sentimental writing any more than she praises the pastoral or other forms of English prose she is accustomed to. By interpreting and translating the poem, Montagu is allowed to re-imagine herself in another female identity of Turkish life, by “compounding conventional masculine and feminine roles” through the interpretation of the Turkish poems, “rather than by

reimagining either of them” (Cambell 78). Man and woman, for instance, are equally subject to the passion following the “hour of possession”, and Montagu can identify with both as interpreter of the prose (77). It is in this vein that Lowenthal believes that Montagu can “control the beautifully sensuous and romantic subject through the detached but empowered intelligence she wants to project”, thus remaining rational even when talking about sentimental objects; Montagu’s duality does not waver (61).

A final example that must be mentioned when looking at sentiment in Montagu’s descriptions are in her very detailed writings on Fatima, a woman whose “beauty effaced everything I have seen all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany and [I] must own that I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful” (89). As observational and detached as Montagu can be in some letters, it is again when describing this woman, an epitome of femininity, that her tone turns softer and pathos echoes from her words. She notes that Fatima put “her hand upon her heart with a sweetness full of majesty that no court breeding could ever give”, and that even as an observer Montagu “could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing” (89). In this way she urges the reader to feel much the same way; with the backing of her previous rational comments, Montagu has by this point built up enough *logos* that this sentimental reading still comes as truthful – but, beautifully, and sensibly so. Montagu continues with a constant praise of the woman: “That surprising harmony of features! That charming result of the whole! That exact proportion of body! That lovely bloom of complexion, unsullied by art!”, and continues for a while with similar exclamations, proclaiming that she has a “collection of the most exact features, to form a perfect face”, that “nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous. To say all in a word, our most celebrated English beauties would vanish near her” (89). This example is

one of the most outwardly romanticized and passionate examples of Montagu's writing, but towards what effect? By infusing pathos into her descriptions of Fatima, Montagu draws a specific focus to her in a non-controlling or eroticizing manner, and in describing her so defines woman as near perfection. As Joanna de Groot notes, this "romance of exotic charm, material glamour and female harmony, as well as rational cultured reflections on the 'meanings' of seraglio practices" help the reader understand the "veracity" of everything Montagu reports; again, sentimental writing only helps what is already rational (69). Indeed, Montagu's purpose in writing about the "real" experience of the seraglio works due to both "sensual romance and in displays of wit, learning and authorial control" (de Groot 70).

Montagu herself outright supports sentimental descriptions as she writes of reading "somewhere that women always speak in rapture when they speak of beauty, but [she] can't imagine why they should not be allowed to do so"; she believes it is a "virtue to be able to admire without any mixture of desire or envy", in this way also giving more value to sentimentality associated women (90). In depicting woman as art, Montagu implies worth more than "celebrated pictures or statues", where she outright says she takes more "pleasure in looking on the beautiful Fatima than the finest piece of sculpture" (90). In refusing to strictly eroticize the women as male observers before her do, Montagu successfully draws attention to beauty that helps show femininity in a positive light. Immediately before returning to England, Montagu writes one more letter to Pope, saturated with Latin, saying that she is not eager to return to "receive and pay visits, make curtsies and assist at tea tables", that she would rather stay "where ease and quiet made up the happiness of my indolent life" (158). Thus, Montagu, ever the proponent of education and more equality for women, does put some value in sheer pleasure away from the confines of propriety and society.

Though some critics believe that Montagu “fails to perceive the violence and pain endured by some women in Turkey because she views female sorrow through the veil of romance”, it is due to the author’s very dualism that this is not entirely true (Lowenthal 82). Romance does not stop the author from observing cultural difference and leaving out bias, or from focusing on the intricacies of the women instead of eroticizing them unnecessarily. In focusing on the women’s aesthetic beauty and various skills, and giving into her sentimental side more, Montagu gains a freedom in expressing emotionally, through a new form of travel writing, what she believes rationally, not necessarily using one mindset in opposition to the other.

Feminotopia

Aside from more general aspects of femininity, Montagu has a distinctive approach which echoes both rational and sentimental thought on feminotopia in the gender separatist world of Turkey, which is especially observed in her depictions of Turkish baths, harems and clothing – all of which are also previously inaccessible to travel writers. It is first that a certain kind of rational feminotopia can be observed in the *Letters*. Scholar Nicole Pohl notes that the “utopian impulse is at once an urge to represent the most perfect social relationships ‘boudoir, the closet, the convent and the harem...[which] enforce the ideals of domesticity, intimacy, and retirement’” while at the same time can be “spaces of resistance” with authors designing a community or setting in order to “establish and strengthen its existence” (Pohl 2). In other words, Montagu does show familiar feminine aspects in her writing, but also treads a fine line in depicting a space outside of the usual. Since “woman was supposed to be happy in her freedom from the cares and temptations of the outside world”, and the “assumption that woman was

created for others... unfortunately prevailed throughout the period”, this means that Montagu also treads a fine line in rationalist thought, on one hand depicting women as happy companions to men, while on the other showing the benefits of separation (Rogers 37).

Though many scholars tend to strictly eroticize how Montagu perceives Turkish women in the baths, there are many non-sexual and rational elements to consider. As Keitzman notes, “Montagu did not appear to sense a contradiction between socializing with and enjoying the company of Turkish women in unoccupied female space, and freely following her intellectual inclinations” (548). In this all-female space, the baths, Montagu describes the women and their habits, such as how they receive her “with all the obliging civility possible. I know no European court where the ladies would have behaved themselves in so polite a manner to a stranger” (58). For the English reader, this politeness and propriety is not the first thing that would be associated with the baths. Montagu drives the point home when she describes the women as “all being in the state of nature, that is, in plain English, stark naked, without any beauty or defect concealed. Yet there was not the least wanton smile or immodest gesture amongst them” (59). It is in this way Montagu uses even the implied virtue of modesty inherent in rationalism to describe Turkish women handsomely, and yet deviate from typical English norms. Her observations are indeed something that “no book of travels could inform you of, as ‘tis no less than death for a man to be found in one of these places” (60). Montagu is free even in rationalist thought to express her own desires in remarking on the freedom of the baths, without seeming immodest or illogical. Her very femininity allows for these comparisons, though even her careful depictions of the baths show that these women are not beholden to, or companions to, any man. Still, Montagu is careful not to “Other the women by making them stand for generalized Oriental humanity or for the disjunction between eastern and western cultures”; she explores the differences rather objectively

instead, and remarks when the women do share “similar concerns and struggles” (Kietzman 538, 540). Though she does have a certain fantasy of the female autonomy she sees, and her observations provide “an imaginative resistance to the domestic confinement at home”, Montagu is still careful not to simply use the women as symbols but instead describes them in such a way where a reader can understand them for their own worth; the comparison and feminist implications of the freedom is a secondary purpose (Pohl 138). This occurs when Montagu replaces the typical male gaze with female voyeurism, and looks at the women she observes as more than “overtly sexual or immodest beings” (Pohl 139).

When Montagu visits harems, she remarks that it is as if she is visiting “forbidden ground”, since the “women’s apartments are always build backward, removed from sight...they are planted with high trees which give an agreeable shade, and, to my fancy, a pleasing view” (85). Instead of the highly-sexualized, erotic writings previously associated with harems, Montagu instead remarks on the architecture, the beautiful gardens, and “scene of their greatest pleasures...employed by their music or embroidery” (86). In this highly modest description, she is still careful not to over-eroticize; even when visiting the inside of an apartment, she continues with proper observations, remarking that she does “prefer their cookery”, thus complimenting the domestic sphere in a rational manner in staying within the traditional feminine space (88). Even education plays a role here, since it is a “common denominator” of much female utopian writing; the space, as shown by Montagu’s observations of outside beauty and domestic skill, indeed points to one that is “governed by feminized principles of social harmony, chastity and exclusive fellowship” (Pohl 131).

The detailed, proper observations continue into descriptions of the Turkish habit, which is

“admirably becoming” and conceals Turkish women “more modestly than...petticoats” (69). Again, Montagu is careful to show a non-eroticized side of the lives of the Turkish women, going into increasingly detailed descriptions: “...headdress is composed of a cap, called kalpak which is in winter of fine velvet embroidered with pearls or diamonds and in summer of a light shining silver stuff.” (70) With English dress seen as a kind of “machine”, so much emphasis and fascination with Turkish dress makes sense if it allows Montagu to comment on “alternative conventions”, even within the sphere of clothing (Campbell 81). The form of the veils and dress itself also intrigue Montagu, who “speaks with admiration and envy not only of women’s freedom from dress in the all-female social gathering of the baths but also of the complete concealment and disguise allowed by the veils and loose draping” (Campbell 81). This enthusiasm is closely related to perceived freedom through anonymity which she observes and is continuously very specifically objective about. She explicitly writes that she “cannot forbear admiring either the exemplary discretion or extreme stupidity of all the writers that have given accounts of them. ‘Tis very easy to see they have more liberty than we have, no woman, of what rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins...wholly concealed by a thing they call a *ferace* which no woman of any sort appears without” (71). Again, it is with increased modesty, a facet of rationalist thought, that Montagu remarks on liberty of women, and the error with which women had been portrayed previously. As Joanna de Groot notes on Montagu’s objectivity, it serves as “not only as a legitimizing strategy for her depictions of places, people and situations in Ottoman territory, but also as a way to locate herself as a critical and ambivalent observer and commentator” (de Groot 68). It is as this observer that Montagu can make general claims about feminine liberty.

Though there is a risk in romanticization when employing sentiment to feminotopia, Montagu is nonetheless able to use the sentimental alongside rationalism to add to honest and often empowering descriptions of a separatist feminine space. This sentimental side of feminotopia critic Nicole Pohl characterizes as “worlds of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure” (Pohl 125, 146). Montagu enters feminotopic writing in expanding these women’s spheres, and in turn the narrative sphere as well. Further, these idealized worlds “contest masculine versions of experience, even though they are often confined to the private domestic sphere” (135). It is in this very ambiguity of the sensibility in human experience that again Montagu flourishes, and just as in rational thought, sentimental feminotopian thought is clear in her depictions of Turkish baths, harems, and clothing.

In depicting the baths, Montagu moves into sentimental prose as she once again refers to ancient Greeks and classic authors, writing that the women “walk and moved with the same majestic grace which Milton describes of our general mother...exactly proportioned as ever any goddess was drawn by the pencil of Guido or Titian, and most of their skins shingly white...perfectly representing the figures of the Graces” (59). Her letters again take on a very poetic tendency as she modestly but generously describes the beauty of the women she sees. This importance Montagu places on these women in a separatist space, and the “majestic” or perfect representations is all the more emphasized when the pathos is absent in her depictions of architecture, which she very methodically describes. She also refers to the baths as “women’s coffeehouse”, where sentimentality can run free, and even more importantly man cannot observe what Montagu’s very femininity allows her to see (59). Viewing the women does not allow Montagu to make them inferior, but instead shows them in their nakedness to be “quintessential examples of ancient womanhood: the Graces and Eve”, thus giving women, through praise, a

high designation (Lowenthal 103). At the same time, Montagu uses the baths to “explore intimacies and erotic possibilities among women which challenge the sexual norms or assumptions of readers” (de Groot 80). Though Joanna de Groot does not label this as sentimental, believing instead that is Montagu associated with “homoerotic awareness and desire”, this portrayal of sexuality seems slightly excessive (de Groot 81). Montagu is careful not to direct her gaze from a male-oriented setting, comparing them to mythical or biblical women rather than as objects of desire. An erotic observation is not Montagu’s sole purpose in using sentimentality; she could, instead of using the biblical Eve, for instance, use other examples of lasciviousness or overindulgence in the erotic if her intent was to emphasize sexuality. It is important to keep in mind that due to her duality, her observations are nonetheless backed by rationalist thought as well. In referring to the harem as a coffee-house, Montagu also emphasizes the important aspect of the feminotopic baths in that it is a place for women to “cathartically express” worries and “share views and exchange ideas”, rather than engage in solely sexually liberating activities (Al-Rawi 26). Nussbaum is also accurate in stating that the “baths, seraglio, and veils create an enviable feminotopia in Montagu’s eyes, and subject England’s notions of its benevolent treatment of women to question”; why, after all, are women at the time not allowed a female “coffeehouse”, and modesty in nakedness (138)?

From the outside in, Montagu uses sentimentality to describe the harem, another enviable feminotopia, further. Even in describing the outdoor garden, a prose-like tendency begins which differs from more observational and detached descriptions of other architecture or mentionable monuments. She writes about “an agreeable shade which hindered the sun from being troublesome, the jessamines and honeysuckles that twisted round their trunks shedding a soft perfume, increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water in the lower part of the

room”, which, aside from drawing the reader into the impeccably described scene, also foreshadow to the many descriptions of Fatima which follow (88). Without explicitly stating anything, Montagu already sets a positive tone to the harem, a place without men, but also without over-eroticized women; the depictions of white, soft, sweet, and imagery of water add a certain element of peace and even purity to the harem. In this instance it is again visible that Montagu, through pathos, shows a certain sympathy to observations of the East. She, in fact, “criticizes the Western preoccupation with emotionless rationalism, preferring the spontaneity and naturalness seen in the East” (Al-Rawi 19). While she may be writing from a place of envy, especially due to her own sense of “emotional neglect” in a failing marriage, Montagu uses familiar letters so that through description, truth and meaning can be gained through the emotion and “naturalness” (Anscomb).

In the Turkish habit and clothing, Montagu notes the emotional benefits for women, such as it being “impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her”, as well as indicating the immense freedom veils, for instance, give the women. She writes that the “perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery” (71). Here very much straying from the idea of rational woman-as-companion, Montagu continues to say that she sees “the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire...Signor himself...never violates the privileges of the harem” (72). The freedom she observes is then brought about by dress and location. In this instance, instead of stylistically writing with pathos, Montagu instead describes the emotional dimension of the content she observes, especially when noting the danger and every-day hazards they face. Because of her immersion in the culture, Montagu herself wears a veil to “content a passion so powerful with me... curiosity” in Constantinople (127). Far from simply distancing herself as an observer,

giving way to emotion while still remaining a fair writer adds to Montagu's duality as a writer and also allows a feminotopia to be brought to life through the *Letters* while stretching travel narrative bounds.

Despite Montagu's appeal to sentiment alongside rational thought in her writing, some critics like Nussbaum believe that a large point of her writing is to show that women are "beautiful, sociable, and free to act on their sexual desires" (Nussbaum 149). Though this is true to an extent, Montagu does not use sentimentalism solely for sexual reasons; there is a certain element of intellectualism and education that she values. For instance, though there may be some truth in a connection between rational education and being connected with prostitution in the eighteenth century, by using sentimentalism in a non-sexual way, such as by comparing women to models of ancient beauty and purity, she may have been advocating for education and freedom as well. Mary Jo Kietzman is accurate in saying that Montagu has a feminotopic goal and does not allow her biases to "distort an objective reality", though through observing the Turkish women in their society, she has a certain desire for the freedom she perceives (Keitzman 546). The rational side of Montagu does not allow for an abundant, sentimental, overexcess in emotion, but instead a definite sensible connection between reader and letter, and thus one across cultures and genre as well.

Smallpox and Invention

Thus far there have been some examples of Montagu's observations in the private or domestic sphere also showing a certain degree of rational and sentimental thought in feminism, but no example is clearer than when she observes women's roles in the public sphere through smallpox inoculation. Alongside a personal stake in the disease, with both her brother and herself

having survived smallpox, from a young age Montagu also wanted a knowledge of the “natural world”, leading to a later experiment with “compounding herbs into medicines” (Grundy 4). Montagu’s interest in science and medicine appears in publications such as her “Saturday; The Small Pox”, where she comments on the superficiality of living based on appearance alone, and even praises the practice of inoculation. Also an entirely separate publication, a “Plain Account of the Inoculating of the Small Pox” echoes her letters but with more passion, details, and a “blunt, strident vigor...a contrast to the glittering wit of her letters” (Halsband 402). It is specifically in her *Letters* that these sentiments are explored and help again with depictions of private feminine spaces as well. Indeed, as scholar Anita Desai notes, it is important to remember that while she had an “extraordinary interest in the Turkish method of inoculation...it is finally as a writer that she is known and must be judged”, as will be seen by looking closely at what she chooses to mention on the subject in her letters (xxx).

First, some background on smallpox, especially in regards to rationalist thought, is surely necessary. In the eighteenth century, an “Age of Smallpox”, the disease was very much a plague with a “very distinctive symptom pattern...the first sign being a high temperature accompanied by head and back aches, followed by general debility and sometimes vomiting”, where “victims developed the characteristic rash...often spreading over the whole body” (Shuttleton 5). Aside from the medical aspect of the cause and treatment of the disease, which Montagu had a vested interest in learning more about, smallpox also had a social discourse that was “gendered: referring to men, it spoke of the danger to life; referring to women, of the danger to beauty”, where “smallpox scars could seriously diminish a young woman’s marital prospects (Shuttleton 117, Bennett 499). This societal implication of the disease provides an avenue for Montagu to incorporate ideas about women’s place in society in her writing as well. Montagu herself

survived a bout with the disease where her complexion and eyelashes both were lost, and with this loss of beauty came a certain loss of a “prerequisite for social success” (Anscomb). Thus, even though women were even taught to write letters to relatives or friends explaining their loss of beauty, fortunately Montagu does not do this as much as empower women by trying to rationally explain a way to cure the disease. The disease is also gendered in that it was mostly women, nurses and midwives specifically, that would diagnose and treat smallpox, which Montagu has in mind as she writes of other ways the disease can be prevented (Bennett 499). Though smallpox was often perceived as “misfortune” from God, who good health came from, and though doctors, and thus men, had a role to play in decisions on inoculation, it was women that “actively informed themselves” about new procedures – thus educating themselves – and allowing for a certain amount of “rational domesticity” that allows women to apply “domestic experience and education, the concerns of family and relations, to the world outside the home” (Starr 36, Bennett 501). In fact, if there were worrisome cases, it would be an older woman with reputation or skill that would be turned to first (Starr 32). Thus, when Montagu writes, as a woman, to try to help this crippling disease, it is more than an imbalance between woman and doctor that she implies, but perhaps more of one over fate even. Undeniably, even though her writing often falls within rationalist guidelines of logic and separation of mind and body, the concept of inoculation is not easily accepted.

As a victim of the disease, Montagu wants to help her family and friends, but it also intellectually impels her “curiosity and aggressiveness” (Halsband 390). In her very logic-driven, “pragmatic cast of mind”, what she observes in Turkey she sees as irrefutable proof of a way to prevent the disease which she wants to bring back to England (Halsband 394). However, in most of her writing and actions she had to fight not only suspicion with the method of inoculation, but

take part in the “history of the struggle of the progress against conservative tradition”; fortunately, her *Letters* are able to serve as a “weapon in the war against intolerance and superstition”, some of which is brought on by the travel writers before her who never would have thought to adopt such a drastic procedure (Halsband 404).

In order to understand a rationalist and feminist view of inoculation, it helps to be reminded of Montagu’s interest in the simple invention of a stove fitting into the domestic world. Aside from providing an example of domestic observations, Montagu with use of the stove first allows a more subtle entry into the subject science as well as the idea of the incorporation of inventions from foreign lands into every-day life before she writes her famous letter on the concept of inoculation, or “engrafting”. Montagu notices fruit that grows by “enchantment”, since the season would normally be too cold to bear it, and attributes it to the invention of perfection of certain stoves that give “to every plant the degree of heat it would receive from the sun in its native soil” (39). In these words alone the author dispels the mysticism often associated with the Orient by giving a rational and logical explanation of the growth of fruits that would normally be impossible to enjoy. Not only this, but she immediately compares it to nature and sun, universal elements that the English would understand, and that are not as immediately connected to foreign perspectives. When she is surprised England does not have a similar invention, she claims that upon her return she will attain such a stove, in “defiance to the fashion” (39). With these last statements, Montagu primes her readers to open their eyes to other possible inventions her travels to the East may bring.

Therefore, when she arrives in Adrianople, Turkey, Montagu prefaces the mention of smallpox engrafting with one more example of a general plague, trying to unify English and Turkish concepts of disease before delving into smallpox particularly. First she explains that

“those dreadful stories you have heard of the plague have very little foundation in truth”, with “little more in it than a fever” (80). Already questioning the nature of disease, Montagu’s statements also serve to show the apparent safety of travelling in a country where plague exists; in the rationalist viewpoint, she shows no weakness of emotion. Instead, Montagu cleverly, and calmly, states that “In the very next house where we lay...two persons died of it” (80). At this point, not only is she building credit in having experience with foreign disease, but her objectivity in coming to close encounters with a deadly disease, and then comparing it to smallpox that is not necessarily as deadly but still affects England, sets up her following arguments pertaining to inoculation specifically – and with maximal rationality. The fact that a doctor lets her “into the secret” of him at the time suffering from the plague allows Montagu not only personal, feminine insight into the disease, but from there allows her a certain amount of knowledge that allows her to compare both sorts of disease (80).

Despite this plague, it is nonetheless in Turkey that “smallpox, so fatal and so general amongst us, is... entirely harmless by the invention of engrafting”, and Montagu makes sure to note the feminine aspects of the procedure (81). After bringing to mind death by plague, a concept of possibly negating such a disease, even a foreign concept, begins to sound appealing. Montagu slowly opens a lens into the feminine world as she describes that it is “old women who make it their business to perform the operation”, specifically an “old woman [who] comes with a nutshell full of the matter of the best sort of smallpox, and asks what veins you please to have opened” (81). Knowing that it was mainly doctors, and therefore men, that would be able to inoculate in England, Montagu could intentionally be writing this in order to attribute medicinal expertise to women. Continuing in an observatory tone, Montagu explains how the woman “immediately rips that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a

common scratch) and puts into the vein as much venom as can lie upon the head of her needle, and after binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell” (81). This detailed explanation would seem abrupt, had it not been for previously explained plague. To English culture at the time, this process of “ripping” would still seem barbarous. However, Montagu continues with “Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in...to mark the sign of the cross, but this has a very ill effect...and is not done by those that are not superstitious”, thus saying that there is indeed a ludicrous side to engrafting; that side, however, is not with the method or purpose, but rather only when it is laced with uneducated superstition (81). By differentiating between method and superstition, once again Montagu exercises rationality in that superstition, or superfluous sentiment to what could be a deadly disease, does not appear in her writing. In referring to Grecians, she again flaunts the education she does have, which in this case concerns a possible solution to a disease that affects not only men, but women and children as well. Going one step further, she uses her own children and takes a great personal stake in attempting inoculation, explaining that her “boy was engrafted last Tuesday, and is at this time singing and playing and very impatient for his supper” (123). While stressing the positive results of the procedure on one child, again she is very metered in her words; she cannot engraft her daughter yet, it is because “her nurse has not had the smallpox”, and ever the logical observer and participant, Montagu acknowledges the folly in this (124). Montagu, as a rationalist female author writing about her children, also does not ignore her role as wife and companion, writing to her husband Wortley “Your son is very well; I cannot forbear telling you so, though you do not so much as ask after him” (125). Yet, even here her slightly dark and biting tone shows that it is as a woman – and with that her woman’s rationality – that is responsible for her son’s health and well-being, quite separate of the work and worry of her husband.

Because of the rationalist emphasis on reason and logic, not to mention education, it is important to note that Montagu's own education serves her in being able to observe the procedure, understand it, and not be terrified by it. Although she never receives higher formal education, Montagu is still able to take something universally understandable – the heating of a house from her example with the stove– and apply it to the healing of a body. This method, however, proves scientifically accurate as years later in 1754, Dr. James Kirkpatrick writes that smallpox contributed “inflammation consequent to infection”, also relating the disease to seeds (virus) implanting into the ground (human), metaphorically – like Montagu - attempting to explain the nature of the disease by literally referring to universal nature (28, 37). The physician also notes that that no one ever gets smallpox twice, as if it “left some positive and material quality in the constitution” (Kirkpatrick, 29). This idea, then, lends itself to inoculation, which in many different ways and methods was usually a deliberate infection of a human through a small skin wound. In other words, if someone is infected with smallpox once and survives, the disease could not be fatal later on. Kirkpatrick agrees and describes inoculation as “the most immediate and simple Contamination of the Blood...a very slight and superficial Wound or two is made...nervous Fibrills are divided...coming into immediate Contact with the Orifices of the divided capillary Vessels” (57). After a few days the patients may feel nausea, he writes, but recover swiftly (Kirkpatrick 257). It is in this manner that he describes a vaccine-like inoculation, bringing a small amount of the disease directly into the blood with a needle. Thus, Montagu, by objectively observing foreign methods and culture, again flaunts a certain education in being able to bring those observations accurately into a more world-wide sphere, by at the same time showing its relevance to women. Her writing is thus logically backed by medicine; as Cynthia Lowenthal states, “Lady Mary removes Turkish reality from the barbarous and degraded

world previous travelers described by placing its ‘folk’ medicine in an Enlightenment context” (Lowenthal 87).

Indeed, as a woman writing about a medical procedure that could save lives, Montagu promotes women’s education, and she also manages to bring scientific, foreign, and previously unavailable knowledge directly to women. As Michael Bennet writes in “Jenner’s Ladies: Women and Vaccination against Smallpox in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain,” Montagu empowers women by allowing them to have more control over the running of their households; that is, over disease. As in Turkey, inoculation slowly became more part of the women’s sphere in England, and this is due in part, Bennett notes, to Montagu’s willingness to suffer ridicule (500). Despite her well crafted words, the concept of engrafting still took time for England to accept. Yet, this acceptance could very well go beyond just the concept of “ripping” in inoculation, but to the very idea that it is women and non-Western medicine that gave birth to the idea of engrafting that frightened England and much of the rest of the Western World. After Montagu’s initial start of inoculation in England, much promotion of the idea relied on women specifically, who at times broke the domestic sphere to filter what knowledge and promotion of inoculation they could into general society through connections to powerful aristocracy (Bennett 510). Though women could directly inoculate children, they could in this manner also help indirectly by promoting the concept in their households – and this, in itself, may have been one reason inoculation took so long to be accepted (Bennett 508). English society remained at the time unwilling to promote full education of women, especially with knowledge brought from a foreign source.

Despite her great achievement, it is not just the treatment of smallpox that intrigues Montagu in the field of science. She also writes of a healing ointment known as the “Balm of

Mecca”, which her friends request her to send back to England. Upon her own experimentation with it, her “face was swelled to a very extraordinary size...I passed my time very ill” (105). As with smallpox, Montagu is again not shy in experimenting for the sake of bettering an aspect of women’s lives, even at the expense of her own skin or of evoking the “mortification” of her husband who reproaches her “indiscretion without ceasing” (105). Though she concludes that she would rather “Let my complexion take its natural course and decay in its own due time”, having “very little esteem for medicines of this nature”, she knows that her friends will still want her to send some back (105). As a parallel to the balm, she knows what smallpox is like on a first-hand basis as well. Unlike the balm, she is willing to write about and support inoculation to the point of having the procedure performed on her children, using the “Balm of Mecca” only as logos to rationally prove her point, and back it with her own experimentation.

Nonetheless, as Montagu very well knows, smallpox in the period had as much of an emotional and sentimental impact on society as it was a strictly medical problem. Hailing from earlier times, even in the eighteenth century there is an “intimate link between poetics and therapeutics; an alliance symbolized by the mythical figure of Apollo, god of poetry and medicine”, which of course is interesting considering the many mythical illusions Montagu makes to Apollo (Shuttleton 12). The social implications of smallpox, such as the loss of beauty and health were then seen in Montagu’s “poetics” of her letters, but she also faced opposition in even writing of healing the disease, as many believed inoculation to simply be the “learned mimics of a few ignorant Greek women” (Bennett 500). There also existed the issue of people in England believing meddling with smallpox could still be opposed to the “will of God” (Halsband 399). Smallpox also did not make a distinction “between ‘public’ and ‘private’”, and even the decision to inoculate thus could not be entirely private and outside of the more public social

sphere (Bennett 502). Yet, the concept of getting rid of smallpox, or eventually the concept of vaccination, can be poetically deemed the “first fruit of the Enlightenment, the first substantive step in the amelioration of the human condition...a feature of the new romantic sensibility” (Bennett 502). Montagu plays a definite sentimental role in this as it was aristocratic women who “sponsored and encouraged vaccination through voluntary societies and in their own spheres of influence”; Montagu’s sphere of influence is through her writing (Bennett 512). By inoculating her son, she deliberately faces the possibility of something going wrong. This passion for curiosity that runs through her letters can thus not be entirely rationally based.

When Montagu writes of smallpox, she appeals to parental sentimentality of children and young patients being able to “play together all the rest of the day”, that even after “they keep in their beds two days...they have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark...in eight days time they are as well as before” (81). By writing this, and following it with the claim to “try it on [her] dear little son”, Montagu appeals to her maternal role, this time again immersing herself into the culture and by doing so drawing another connection between what the old women of Turkey, and aristocratic women of England, may be able to do (81). As Lowenthal notes, Montagu’s writing is very much a “measured and intentional balance between the pain of the procedure...and the extraordinary results” (Lowenthal 86). Montagu continues to describe the procedure as something that “thousands undergo”, even explaining that the people of Turkey “take the smallpox here by way of diversion, as they take the waters in other countries” (81). In an interesting parallel, by the conclusion of her letter she draws the initially shocking concept of engrafting to the same level of commonality as her previously mentioned stove, saying that she is “patriot enough...to bring this useful invention into fashion in England” (81). As much as a stove may be a part of the domestic sphere in warming the house, so too can the inoculation procedure

be moved into an English woman's hands. She also repeatedly notes that "there are many that escape of it", that the air is not infected, and that many are "content to suffer this distemper, instead of our variety, which they are utterly unacquainted with" (80). This is seen as emotional as she is outright comparing diseases in order to show that smallpox truly can be manageable; here her comparison to England is to show that a disease can truly be avoidable. It is of note to reiterate that at the time, "physicians declined to work with their hands and only observed, speculated, and prescribed" (Starr 37-38). Thus, Montagu takes this direct role of physician by observing, and speculating, and does so passionately. In this indirect manner of narrating her observations that she gives even more power to the women that do inoculate.

Even in the case of the Balm of Mecca, Montagu agrees to "enact the scientist's imperative" on herself by experimenting, even after already having her own face damaged by smallpox (Lowenthal 85). She is willing to do so based on her friends' pleas and not as much strict logic, necessarily, so that when she does "stake her reputation on one truly transformative procedure", inoculation, the failed balm only points to the wonder that smallpox, the "deadly disease", can indeed "be eradicated" by women's hands (Lowenthal 86).

Conclusion

To look at Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters* to belong just to rationalist thought or solely to sentimentalist thought would be to ignore half of what she writes, and half of her argument pertaining to feminist writing, thus perhaps clouding just how different her travel narrative writing truly is. Montagu does not belong to simply one half of the Enlightenment, but to both, just as her epistolary form is meant to be read as a more intimate, more encompassing narrative compared to the male-oriented previous versions. Where bias and a third-person

narrative voice often accompany these earlier narratives, Montagu writes of her intimate knowledge of the foreign women and their domestic spaces through letters, as well as of entrance into more public spaces through medicine, all while maintaining a fairness and truthfulness throughout.

This expansion of the travel narrative is first observed in her representations of women. Montagu accurately notes both positive and negative aspects of physical beauty, choosing to denote cultural difference instead of cultural elitism in the women she observes. The difference she observes allows her to realize the gaze she receives in return as well. Her praise of beauty is meant to complement and empower, with sentimental emotion leading to enhance a rationalist set of values such as honor, as seen in her parables. This in itself helps her writing avoid strict eroticization that can be seen in earlier narratives.

In entering an even more private feminine world that the Turkish gendered world allowed, Montagu's descriptions of perceived feminotopia lead to observations of modesty and education, as well as an acceptance of pleasure and emotion. Again the author does not eroticize when describing the beauty of the modest women in the baths and harems, where she notes that often they are gaining pleasure by educating themselves. Montagu also writes of freedom through increased modesty in clothing, one of anonymity in public. While it would be easy for the author to romanticize these intimate spaces, Montagu instead uses sentimentalism to explain merits of a separate space, and to emphasize previously unseen descriptions of both the skill and beauty of women.

Yet, even in a more public domain such as one of medicine and science, Montagu writes for women's education on the subject, and supports her arguments with emotional standings. Through her various descriptions she indicates that women can be a cause of a cure of deadly

disease when doctors cannot, and with personal examples she outlines logically the effects of inoculation. She begins with more minor exits from the domestic sphere, such as with descriptions of the stove outside of the kitchen or with the Balm of Mecca, and moves to add a layer of pathos to fully illustrate the impact that she believes inoculation can make. Where previous writers would not pay attention to a foreign procedure, Montagu not only accepts inoculation and promotes it through her writing, but in doing so empowers women to a degree.

As much as her own personal life leads her to choose what specifically she writes on, Montagu's very character and travels allowed for two opposing theories of the time period to be observed in her writing. The rationalist mindset of logic, woman-as-companion, education for man, separate from emotion, and importance of chastity only adds to what she writes of the sentimental and sensible theory – that of giving way to emotion and passion, various emotional dimensions, and a sensible eloquence in expression. All this adds to an accurate account through an aristocratic woman's eyes into another world, and through this look into the feminine combined with the stylistic efforts of observatory accuracy, a markedly different travel narrative is observed. In not limiting Montagu – woman, traveler, and first and foremost writer - to one theory, the very dualities that are rampant in her writing allow for a comprehensive view of the narrative she weaves in order to show previously unseen kinds of femininity in a logical and sensible manner, thereby shifting the travel writing genre to that of a more gender-inclusive and truthful one.

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