

## LETTERS FROM AND TO LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU\*

Ercan KAÇMAZ\*\*

Fusun ÇOBAN DÖŞKAYA\*\*\*

### Abstract

Mary Wortley Montagu's travel letters were written to some individuals such as Lady Mar, Alexander Pope, and Abbé Conti. Katharine Branning's travel letters, on the other hand, have been written to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu but at the same time, the writer is addressing these letters to her family, friends, readers and also Turkish people. Branning, who has spent some thirty years in Turkey, is now explaining what has changed in the country so far and sharing her personal experiences. Thus, this article examines two memoirs of two women travel writers. The idea that these women travelogs had in mind was to be the voice of Turkish people; therefore, they both wrote about Turkey, its people and their way of life. So, this study will determine how Turkish women and Turkish way of life have been depicted by two western women, British and American. Moreover, there will also be some focus on the image of Turkish Women. The main intention is to discover whether there have been great changes in the Turkish way of life and the living conditions after Montagu's memoir, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*.

**Keywords:** *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Katharine Branning, Travel Writers, Turkish people, Turkish Women, Harem, Image.*

## LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU'DAN VE ONA MEKTUPLAR

### Öz

Mary Wortley Montagu'nun seyahat mektupları, Lady Mar, Alexander Pope ve Abbé Conti gibi kişilere yazıldı. Öte yandan, Katharine Branning'in seyahat mektupları ise Lady Mary Wortley Montagu'ya yazılmış olmakla birlikte, aynı zamanda yazar bu mektupları ailesine, arkadaşlarına, okuyucularına ve ayrıca Türk halkına da hitap etmektedir. Türkiye'de yaklaşık otuz yıl geçiren Branning, şimdیه kadar ülkede nelerin değiştiğini anlatırken, kişisel deneyimlerini de paylaşmaktadır. Böylece, bu makalede iki kadın seyahat yazarının

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\*\* Assist. Prof. Dr., Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language Teaching. ([ercan@nevsehir.edu.tr](mailto:ercan@nevsehir.edu.tr)).

\*\*\* Assist. Prof. Dr., Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Letters, American Culture, and Literature Department. ([fcdoskaya@hotmail.com](mailto:fcdoskaya@hotmail.com)).

iki anı yazısı incelenmektedir. Bu kadın seyahat yazarlarının akıllarındaki tek düşünce Türk halkının sesi olmaktı; bu nedenle ikisi de Türkiye, Türk halkı ve insanların yaşam tarzı hakkında yazmışlardır. Bu çalışmada, Türk kadınlarının ve Türk yaşam biçiminin İngiliz ve Amerikalı iki batı kadını tarafından tasvir edilmesi ortaya konulacaktır. Ayrıca Türk Kadınlarının imajına da değinilecektir. Makale temelde, Montagu'nun seyahat mektupları olan Şark Mektuplarından sonra Türk yaşamında ve yaşam koşullarında büyük değişiklikler olup olmadığı üzerinde duracaktır.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Katharine Branning, Seyahat Yazarları, Türk halkı, Türk Kadını, Harem, İmaj.*

## Introduction

This article compares the travel writings, in particular, travel letters, of two travel writers; Lady Montagu and Branning, the former one being an old traveler and the latter one being a modern time traveler. In this writing, the former one will tell stories from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century; the latter one will be talking about Modern Turkey. The former one will give examples of certain topics such as the traits of Turkish people, the beauties of Turkish women, while the latter will be comparing and addressing back to her.

Lady Montagu had to travel to the Ottoman land because of her husband's political duty. However, Branning's adventure of Turkey begins with the Gök Madrasa slide, which she sees in France. Her book, which is comprised of 28-letters, is a collection of letters, all of which are addressed to Lady Mary Montagu. Katherine Branning expresses that writers of other nations have written many negative sentences about Turkey. Her essential solution about this as follows:

*"I have learned that your viewpoint onto the world is always tainted by the perspectives that you carry inside of you, inherited from your native land and from your upbringing. When you are confronted by an unexplainable situation, you must take a deep breath and stand back from it, and then remove your Western hegemonic eyeglasses. Then, and only then, can you start to analyze what is theirs, yours, and the truth."<sup>1</sup>*

Lady Montagu must have been disappointed by the false information written "by the common voyage writers. She knew that a Christian was not admitted into their harems let alone into the house since harems were forbidden places. Therefore; the harem writings of her day were made up stories because those writers did not know anything related to the harem life. Since this was the case, she thought she had to tell this to her friends.<sup>2</sup>

1 Katharine Branning, *An American Women's Letters to Turkey: Yes, I Would Love another Glass of Tea*, Blue Dome Press, New York, 2012, p. 5.

2 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), Virago, London, 1994, p. 85.

Branning thinks that anybody coming to Turkey to travel and write about the country and the cultural traits of them, one must remove his / her “hegemonic eyeglasses.” This is absolutely necessary, actually more than necessary; it is a need to be objective if the writing carries some social and cultural messages. Branning loves Montagu’s writing style because she regards her letters untainted, objective, and unprejudiced. Therefore; Branning writes her letters back to a dead person, Montagu, just to share whether there have been any profound changes in the life of Turkish people for about three hundred years.

Branning is of the opinion that a European is always prejudiced against Turks.<sup>3</sup> Since Lady Montagu’s letters are far from fake information, Branning assumes that Montagu is not on this list. She utters that: “Did I come on that first trip with any prejudices against Turks? I don’t think so because I am an American and not a European, and so I was not branded with the stigma of the Terrible Turk knocking at the doors of Vienna. I only had images of Turks fighting shoulder to shoulder with my countrymen in Korea and standing by our side in NATO.”<sup>4</sup>

## 1. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Mary Wortley Montagu’s father was a well-known person. Her mother died at a young age, and her father planned to marry his daughter Mary. She hated her father’s choice, so she eloped with Edward Wortley Montagu, whom she was madly in love with. This marriage provided her a short period of pleasure. In 1716, Edward Montagu, the husband of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, was appointed British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Montagu did accompany her husband, and she wrote a series of letters that included her experiences and impressions of Ottoman culture and society. She wrote some of these letters on the way to İstanbul, some when she was in İstanbul, and some on her way back to England. Lady Mary arrived in the Ottoman land during the reign of Sultan Ahmet III (1703-1730) when the Empire was just about to begin the Tulip Era<sup>5</sup> (1718-1730). Her time in Turkey was wonderful and she had the opportunity to visit some upper-class ladies. She stayed in İstanbul for about 14 months.

3 Grace Ellison also struggled to break the British prejudice against the Turks and did everything she could. Ellison did not come to Turkey with an Orientalist and colonialist mission as some others carried with them. It is really good to hear the confession from other Western writers that many Western writers were actually biased. For more information, see: Teresa Heffernan and Reina Lewis. “Introduction to the Reprint: Feminist Dialogues Across Cultures: An English Woman in a Turkish Harem and the Turkish Harem in an English Woman”, *An Englishwoman in a Turkish Harem*, (1915) By Grace Ellison. Gorgias Press, New Jersey, 2007.

4 Branning, p. 31.

5 For more information see Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Lale Devri (1718-1730): Tarihe Yolculuk, Geçmiş Asırlarda Osmanlı Hayatı*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011.

Lady Mary loved the Muslim culture. She had coffee with harem ladies, studied oriental languages, collected cultural artifacts, and investigated inoculation against smallpox. When they turned back they had some problems, at this point, Lady Mary decided to leave England. She was madly in love with a young Italian boy, about the age of her son.<sup>6</sup> At her husband's death, she turned back to Europe and died in 1762. Her letters were published in 1763.

## 2. Katharine Branning

Katharine Branning, is vice-president of Education of the French Institute Alliance Française in New York City, where she serves as the Director of FIAF's Library. For her noteworthy entrepreneurship about the French language and culture, she was awarded the Ordre national du Mérite from the President of France in 2006. Branning graduated from the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. Her major was Islamic arts, specifically interested in Islamic glass. She has collected a large amount of information about Seljuks and Caravanserais.<sup>7</sup> She exhibited Seljuk art in the United States, which was called 'The Song of Stones' in 2011.

She is the author of *An American Woman's Letters to Turkey: Yes, I would Love another Glass of Tea*. The book has been translated into Turkish as *Lady Montagu'nun İzinde: Bir Çay Daha Lütfen*. She is the English editor of the Heritage of the Great Seljuks, published in June 2013. She has written a historical novel called *Moon Queen*, based on Mahperi Hatun, the wife of Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad. The book was published in Turkish and English in 2014. She has lectured internationally on cross-cultural issues, and her articles have appeared in many newspapers and magazines.

## 3. Social Traits Of Turkish People

According to Branning, there are similarities between America and Turkey in terms of social structure. Meritocracy is very important for both countries. Both in Turkey and America, the "society is made up by citizens who have earned their fame by hard work, not what they inherited by class and birth, like in France and...England."<sup>8</sup> The citizens of both countries share the same traits. Both nations are: "headstrong, determined, positive, can-do people, not afraid to make mistakes."<sup>9</sup> When people share similar characteristics with other societies, being friends with them and loving them may become easier. Just like what Branning feels like as she is in Turkey. Finding such beautiful words and

6 For more information see Mina Urgan, *İngiliz Edebiyatı Tarihi*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, pp. 448-451.

7 She is the author and webmaster of an internet site about Hans and Caravanserais: <http://www.turkishhan.org/homebase.htm>

8 Branning, p. 32.

9 Ibid, p. 32.

consuming good phrases for the Turkish community can be a matter of shared features and commonalities.

Branning keeps a hold on this when talking about the similarities of the two cultures. The emphasis is mostly on family ties. According to her, family ties are so strong in Turkey that it is impossible to destroy or remove them and “Turkish families stick together like glue.”<sup>10</sup> The fact that they are attached to an adhesive is actually provided by two very important words. These two words are; love and respect. These are the two words that Turks probably use the most. It is even used more like this: “love for the young, respect for the elderly.”

Lady Mary confesses that “the Turks are not so ignorant.”<sup>11</sup> Branning, on the other hand, adds that the ignorant ones are the people in the West, “especially in matters concerning the Turks.”<sup>12</sup> Unlike other travel writers, both Lady Mary and Branning admit that mistakes were made in the judgments about the Turks.

Branning uses a lot of words to describe Turks some of which are “melodramatic and emotional”, “sentimental and effusive”, “curious”, “patriotic.”<sup>13</sup> In the letters describing her visits to harem ladies Montagu presented the details about daily life, insights into the character of women, and she also mentioned about the world-famous Turkish hospitality. In addition to love and respect, there is also a feature unique to the Turks, hospitality. Both books mention about this feature which is a worldwide known fact. Hospitality does not have the same significance in any country as it is in Turkey. Because; the guests in Turkey are welcomed as the god sent people. Turkish houses have rooms just for their guests. There are “only for guests plates and cutlery” in Turkish houses. There are guest towel sets in Turkish houses. If there is a guest in a house, everything must be complete and it takes for days for the landlady to make preparations for her guest. So Branning states that: “You can rest assured, Lady Mary, that things have not changed much since you were received into those Turkish homes.”<sup>14</sup>

Branning has some fears that this Turkish hospitality will disappear. But, this is an artificial fear because as she quotes, it “is a common characteristic of Muslims all around the world.”<sup>15</sup> For her, “the Turks just do not content themselves with being the most hospitable people in the world; they have to go above and beyond this already noteworthy sense of charity by offering you some astonishing and incredible acts of human kindness. Most of these acts are in fitting with their sense of politeness and natural human elegance.”<sup>16</sup>

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10 Ibid, p. 45.

11 Montagu, p. 110.

12 Branning, p. 90.

13 Ibid, pp. 95-98.

14 Ibid, p. 139.

15 Ibid, pp. 139-140.

16 Ibid, p. 148.

Zeyneb Hanım, in Chapter XIII of her book *A Turkish Woman's European Impressions*, is being boastful about "Oriental hospitality." She says: "Go to Turkey and you will see for yourself that everywhere you will be received like a Queen. Everyone will want to be honored by your presence in their home."<sup>17</sup> Although Sir Charles Fellows thinks Turkish women are ignorant when education is concerned, he acknowledges that there are certain things that strike him. One of them is the hospitality of the people and the other is their honesty.<sup>18</sup>

For Turks clean houses mean clean minds. The Turks do not let people into their houses with shoes. Their houses are disinfected; the carpets and curtains are washed periodically. Europe and America do not have such a sense of hygiene. Turkish homes are clean and tidy and untouched. However, personal care is a bit overlooked in Turkey. The importance Turks attach to cleanliness is not given to personal cleanliness. The outside of the building looks dirty but the inside of it looks spotlessly clean. Actually there are two sayings about being clean in Turkey. The first one is religious one: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". The other one carries a social message: "If everyone sweeps in front of his own door or house, everywhere will be clean." Before each prayer, for example, Turks clean outward parts of their body, which is a must for a Muslim. They wash their hands before and after each meal.

In the letters of Montagu, the taste of the Turks was explained as different from the taste of the British. According to Branning, the taste includes the famous "four F's" such as "family, friends, food, and fine settings."<sup>19</sup> She calls this change with another expression as "Turkish Touch,"<sup>20</sup> and argues that "... their country, their families, their faith, and their crafts are very important."<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. Social Traits Of Turkish Women

Montagu spent most of her days in and around İstanbul. However, in the 7th letter bearing the name "Türkiyem" (My Turkey), Branning says that her Turkey is far from İstanbul. Leaving the big city lives, seashores, coasts, discotheques, big clubs and the lives of elite people aside, she chooses the plains of Anatolia. She says: "It is not the Turkey of sophisticated, wealthy, and urbane cities of Istanbul, Antalya, Bursa, or Ankara."<sup>22</sup> And she finishes her letter thus: "... if only I could have been your guide to "My Turkey ": I am sure you would come to love it as much as I do."<sup>23</sup>

17 Zeynep Hanoum, (1913) *A Turkish Woman's European Impressions*. Gorgias Press, Piscataway, New Jersey, 2004, p. 139.

18 Sir Charles Fellows, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, More Particularly in the Province of Lycia*, London, 1852.p. 223.

19 To Branning, Turkish people live for the four F's. (family, friends, food, and fine settings)

20 Branning, p. 200.

21 Ibid, p. 212.

22 Ibid, p. 34.

23 Ibid, p. 37.

Montagu had many opportunities to make observations about Turkish women, regarding their beauty and freedom. Having very much affected by the beauty of Turkish women, in the letter on April 1, 1717, she states: "I never saw in my life so many fine heads of hair. It must be owned that every beauty is more common here than with us. 'Tis surprising to see a young woman that is not very handsome. They have naturally the most beautiful complexions in the world and generally large black eyes."<sup>24</sup> Branning admits that she is not impressed by the beauty of Turkish women, but she admits that Turkish women "are very stylish and feminine."<sup>25</sup> Some western writers showed Turkish Women less free compared to the women in the West, yet when the beauty is concerned the women are shown as eye-catching.<sup>26</sup>

One of the major themes of Montagu's observations about Turkish women is their freedom.<sup>27</sup> More than two centuries ago, In 1789 Lady Elizabeth Craven collected her annotations in a book. She claims that she has never seen "a country where women enjoy so much liberty, and are free from all reproach, as in Turkey."<sup>28</sup> Montagu insists that veiled women are the freest of all women: "*This perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their Inclinations without danger of Discovery,*" and she ends, "*upon the whole, I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the Empire.*"<sup>29</sup> Turkish people may seem free from an outside perspective, but freedom may have different interpretations. Some women may be economically independent but unhappy, while others may be economically dependent but happy. Some women use the veil to do some clandestine activities, while others use the veil to show how religious they are. Thus, it is hard to decide who is free and who are happy. The meaning of freedom changes from person to person.

For example, Anna Bowman Dodd thinks that not only Turkish women but their slaves are free too. And she goes on to say that "it is the European rather than the Osmanli women who seem to be still in bondage."<sup>30</sup> In one of her letters, Lady Mary relates a very touching compliment to her friend Fatima:

24 Montagu, p. 70.

25 Branning, p. 115.

26 For more information see: Ercan Kaçmaz, *Turkish Women, Education and Missionary Practices in the Works of Hester Donaldson Jenkins*, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), Dokuz Eylül University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2014, p. 139.

27 According to Irvin Cemil Schick this freedom has something to do with sexual freedom. For more information see: Irvin Cemil Schick, "The Women of Turkey as Sexual Personae: Images from Western Literature", *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"*. Ed. Zehra F. Arat. Palgrave Press, New York, 1999, p. 97.

28 Elizabeth Lady Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, G.G. J. and J. Robinson, London, 1789, p. 205.

29 Montagu, pp. 71- 72.

30 Anna Bowman Dodd, *In the Palaces of the Sultan*, Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1903, pp. 454, 434.

"I proceeded to tell her [Fatima] what a noise such a face as hers would make in London or Paris. 'I can't believe you', replied she agreeably; 'if beauty was so much valued in your country, as you say, they would never have suffered you to leave it.'"<sup>31</sup>

Lucy M. J. Garnett, who is one of the first writers about the Ottoman women, gives excellent details about the complexion and appearance of Turkish women:

. . . Osmanli women have in their veins some of the best blood, not only of the Alarodian Circassians and Georgians, but also of the Aryan Greeks and Slavs. . . . An Osmanli woman is usually about, or perhaps slightly above, the middle height, with softly rounded contours, small hands and feet, and a waist innocent of stays. Her abundant hair is soft and silky, and ranges in colour from light brown to glossy black; her eyes, now languid in their expression, now sprightly, may be brown, black, blue, or grey, and are shaded with long sweeping lashes, and surmounted by finely marked eyebrows, "curved like a Frankish bow; "her nose is either straight or slightly aquiline, and delicately shaped, and between her rosebud lips gleam the pearliest of teeth. But not satisfied with what Nature has done for her, the Osmanli belle, to enhance her charms, calls art largely into requisition."<sup>32</sup>

Branning's observations, on the other hand, about Turkish Women have been different and lucrative. She has seen "women of all walks of life, not just high-born court ladies."<sup>33</sup> She has met a wide range of Turkish women. For example: "women library directors", "women doctors", " a farmer's wife", " female lawyers", " housewives", "an illiterate village woman", and "country women".<sup>34</sup> Branning thinks that "Turkey is a country of paradoxes", and adds that "[o]n the one hand, they are at the cusp of professional modernity, with a rate of female doctors and university professors that exceeds those of America and Europe. On the other hand, they are still murdered by their kin in the villages for any sully of the family honor,"<sup>35</sup> Even if one has seen women of all walks of life or just high-born ladies, it might be courageous to tell a set of things about the members of that society. It is a known fact that this "paradox" about women existed in the past and still exists today.

Better to put the contradictions, irregularities, paradoxes, inadequacies aside, because Turkish women are always connected to each other. When they are in a restaurant, in a living room, in the mosque, or even in the street, they mingle with other women, not with men. They instinctively refrain from sitting together. "The sisterhood of women is a strong one in Turkey."<sup>36</sup> Although some

31 Montagu, p. 119.

32 Lucy M. J. Garnett, *The Women of Turkey and Their Folk-Lore*, David Nutt, London, 1891, pp. 426-427.

33 Branning, p. 112.

34 Ibid, pp. 112-113.

35 Ibid, p. 113.

36 Ibid, p. 115.



writers like Hester Donaldson Jenkins<sup>37</sup> thinks about this attitude as bigotry, Branning assumes that it is their way of life, and considers it as *sticking together*. While this separate sitting is being conveyed as an undesirable condition by other authors, Branning refers to this meeting as a sincere behavior. When it comes to the traits of Turkish women, she says: “[Turkish women] are determined, head-strong, courageous, and resourceful and have commonsense.”<sup>38</sup> When the women of other nations are included, Branning collates them as: “work, family, emotional life, spirituality, health, femininity, and hobbies.”<sup>39</sup> Although Branning puts work in the first place, for some, the family comes first. For most of the Turkish women, work comes first until the baby<sup>40</sup> is born. When the baby is born the expectations of the society from the mother changes.

In the past, there were two main activities for Turkish women; one was to visit public baths, the other was to welcome friends and serve meals to them.<sup>41</sup> Montagu writes in one of her letters about the hamam visit, “*I know no European court where the ladies would have behaved themselves in so polite a manner to a stranger.*”<sup>42</sup> Today hamam (Turkish Bath) visiting is rare, but welcoming guests is absolutely in practice. Turkish women welcome anybody with great care and hospitality, but when they meet foreign women, they do it with the double alert system. According to Branning only then will the “the traits of respect, kindness, generosity, patience, and humor be in full evidence.”<sup>43</sup>

Many authors, including men, have written about Turkish baths, in which only women were allowed to enter. Some people have even drawn pictures of hamam scenes, which are just imaginary pictures of their minds. Down here is a description of a Turkish bath by Montagu:

I was here convinced of the truth of a reflection I have often made, that if it were the fashion to go naked, the face would be hardly observed. I perceived, that the ladies of the most delicate skins and finest shapes had the greatest share of my admiration, though their faces were sometimes less beautiful than those of their companions. To tell you the truth, I had wickedness enough, to wish secretly, that Mr. Gervais could have been there invisible. I fancy it would have very much improved his art, to see so many fine women naked, in different

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37 For more information about Hester Donaldson Jenkins see Kaçmaz.

38 Branning, p. 114.

39 Ibid, p. 116.

40 For Turks children are very important. Hester Donaldson Jenkins says: “What are a Turkish lady’s duties? She has but two; to be attractive to her husband and to bear him children.” See Hester, Donaldson Jenkins, (1911) *Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of a Turkish Woman’s life*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway, New Jersey. 2004, p. 123. When you meet a Turk perhaps not the first but the second questions “you are always asked as a woman is “How many children do you have?” See Branning, p. 48.

41 For more information see: Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918*, Greenwood Publishing Group, New York, 1986.

42 Montagu, p. 58.

43 Branning, p. 66.

postures, some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet, and many negligently lying on their cushions, while their slaves (generally pretty girls of seventeen or eighteen) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty manners. In short, 'tis the women's coffee-house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented etc.<sup>44</sup>

Lady Mary described the service of dinner during her visit to Lady Hafise: "She gave me a dinner of fifty dishes of meat, which, after their fashion, was placed on the table but one at a time..."<sup>45</sup> Turks are in the top five in the world regarding food culture and food variety. About three hundred years ago Montagu saw the variety of dishes. People have talked about Turkish or Ottoman cuisine and have always remembered the taste of them. "Even today, those dishes just keep coming out, one at a time. They are not served in portions like in Europe..."<sup>46</sup> When you taste a Turkish dish, it is highly impossible to forget the taste of it. If you eat twice, most probably you will try to cook on your own at home.

Lady Mary talked much about Turkish religion in her letters as well. She tried in her letters to correct many of the negative, Western perceptions of Turkey and its religion. She refitted the Western view of the irrationality of Islam. While she was criticizing the Catholic faith harshly, she was too mild when Islam was concerned. Because she learned that Islam does not allow barbarity. So while writing about this religion, she managed to "keep distance from doctrines and differences, and see only the societal aspects of them." Branning has tried to do the same in her encounters with Islam.<sup>47</sup> She once visited the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne and then stated: "[I]n my opinion it is a great addition to its beauty that it is not divided into pews and encumbered with forms and benches like our churches, nor the pillars disfigured by little tawdry images and pictures that give the Roman Catholic churches the air of toyshops."<sup>48</sup>

For every foreign visitor, there was a person to guide them during their stay. Apart from ladies of pashas, Lady Mary met a man called Achmed (Ahmed). In a letter dated February 12, 1717, to her friend Alexander Pope, she relates her appreciation of Arabic poetry, taught to her by Achmed Bey. She learned many pieces of Arabian poetry and was taken aback by a very good library of Achmed Bey.<sup>49</sup> Branning's guide is the Kayseri poet and Historian Muhsin İlyas Subaşı. She has had the inspiration for writing a book about Turkey just after the suggestion of him. Therefore, Muhsin İlyas Subaşı has not only been a guide to her but also an inspirational figure for her book.

44 Montagu, p. 59.

45 Ibid, p. 116.

46 Branning, p. 189.

47 Ibid, p. 223.

48 Montagu, p. 96.

49 Ibid, pp. 53-54.

It's hard to see changes about Turkish people in Lady Mary's letters because she stayed in Turkey for a very short time. On the other hand, Branning's experience has shown the reader this considerable change over the course of nearly thirty years. Especially the change that she has written about women is interesting. She has told this change in the following extract:

*When I first came to Turkey in 1978, I estimated in my notes at the time that 95% of the women that I saw were covered, falling into two distinct groups: the black veiled chador-style covering and the more modest tesettür style. I never saw a woman driving a car alone, a woman waiter or service staff, and few women traveling on busses. Yet now, women are making fast inroads. In 2001, I had my gas pumped by a girl in the Black Sea town of Cide, a first. In 2002, I ate in a pide salon in Şavşat, run entirely by women with not one man present, something unheard of before. I see women behind the wheel on roads everywhere now, sitting in restaurants and in business meetings. The age-old view of the place of women in public places as a connotation of her virtue is breaking down.<sup>50</sup>*

Back in the 1700s, travelling was worse with the narrow roads, high mountains, and uncomfortable transportation system. Montagu survived some dangerous scrapes on her travels; both on the way to Turkey and on her way back home to London. In her letter of November 21, 1716, she relates a hair-raising crossing of the Alps on the journey to Turkey:<sup>51</sup>

*We passed by moonshine the frightful precipices that divide Bohemia from Saxony at the bottom of which runs the river Elbe, but I cannot say I had reason to fear drowning in it, being perfectly convinced that, in case of a tumble, it was utterly impossible to come alive at the bottom. In many places the road is so narrow that I could not discern an inch of space between the wheels and the precipice, Yet I was so good a wife not to wake Mr. Wortley, who was fast asleep by my side, to make him share in my fears...I have been told since 'tis common to find the bodies of travelers in the Elbe; but thank God that was not our destiny.<sup>52</sup>*

Branning has had some problems with transportation as well.

*I, too, have experienced some dangerous incidents along the roads of Turkey. I have seen huge transport trucks topple over on their sides on the edge of perilous night highways I have risked being taken, like you, by potential ambushers on remote stretches in Eastern Turkey during the Kurdish difficulties. I have both dodged and witnessed the most atrocious of car crashes. I have seen impacts that have thrown people in the air like raggedy-dolls; and in one particularly horrid incident in Southern Turkey, I -witnessed, from below, a car carrying a family of four plummet over the cornice cliff and land mangled practically at my feet. All of this reminds me of your thanksgivings of "arriving safe... so much tired with fear and-fatigue that it is not possible for me to compose myself to write..."<sup>53</sup>*

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50 Branning, p. 116.

51 Ibid, p. 320.

52 Montagu, pp. 31-32.

53 Branning, p. 321.

The first journey of Branning started in 1978, and she has been traveling back and forth for nearly 30 years. She has met people from all walks of life. While she has helped some people, some others have helped her. She has stayed in comfortable places; spent days in unclean hotel rooms. She has talked to old people, discussed issues with educated people, and played games with young children. She has spent a lot of time with women, been to wedding ceremonies, parties, national holidays, and markets. She has spent money on clothes, carpets, souvenirs, bits, and pieces. She has studied Turkish, visited historical sites of Anatolia. Above all, she has been an expert on Turkish hans. Branning has a more positive approach towards Turks when compared to Lady Montagu. Positive aspects outweigh the negativity in her work.

### Conclusion

There have been so many visitors to the Ottoman lands so far. Some of these visitors wrote books about Turkey when they went back to their countries; some did write their collections when they were in Turkey; some sent letters to their friends and then printed them as a book. Some writers such as Rose Macaulay came to Turkey with a mission. For instance, her primary purpose was to spread Christianity among the Turkish women, and thought that this change would make them more modern and sophisticated.<sup>54</sup> Some writers like Hester Donaldson Jenkins believed that the best way to be good and educated mothers, the American way of education was needed.<sup>55</sup> Some others like Mary Mills Patrick shared the idea that moral teaching was necessary in the country but a Protestant one had to be chosen.<sup>56</sup>

It could be said that Lady Montagu was the person with most accurate determinations among female travelers. Being the first Christian lady to visit the Ottoman land makes her more special. But beyond that, her preeminence is that the concepts of elegance, grace, honor, and freedom she saw in the Ottoman Turkey were expressed in her letters. This means she was no stranger to the Ottoman women. Katharine Branning has gone far beyond Lady Montagu, because she has spent more years (about thirty years) and done more detailed, more elegant, more comprehensible, and more Turkish explanations.

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54 Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond*, Fontana Books, London 1967, p. 180. For more information about Rose Macaulay see Fatih Öztürk, *A New Historicist Approach To Rose Macaulay's The Towers Of Trebizond*, (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Erciyes University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Kayseri, 2008.

55 Ercan Kaçmaz in his doctoral dissertation states that: "Those having a biased and Orientalist point of view looked through the hole of their own fantasies, and portrayed Turkish woman in the fantastic imaginary harem scenes, as exotic and seductive. When the European travelers found the opportunity to see the position of the real harem in the society, they described Turkish women as noble and elegant." For more information See Kaçmaz, p. 152.

56 Carolyn Goffman, "Introduction", *Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of A Turkish Woman's Life*, by Hester Donaldson Jenkins, Gorgias Press, Piscataway, New Jersey, 2004, pp. v-xxix.

It is highly believed that the strict seclusion of women is greatly responsible for the backward condition of most Eastern races; because if mothers are restricted in cultivating their natural intellect, they cannot give much in the education of their children. The children of such mothers cannot keep pace with the people of Europe in the path of progress. Above all, there is one thing all women writers even men counterparts think that all the young people need education. People wish there had been more Turkish parents who supported a solid education for their children.

When the works of the travel writers are taken into account, considering the Ottoman people and the Ottoman women, it is a known fact that European travelers often misunderstand the social position of the Ottoman woman. "While one writer clearly rejects veiling, the other could be in favor of it. While one writer thinks Turkish women are not free, the other considers that Turkish women are the freest ones in the world. While one agrees that family life is unknown amongst the Turks,"<sup>57</sup> the other makes clear that Turkish families stick together like glue. This means "foreigners produced their own imagery and prescriptions."<sup>58</sup> Above all, there is one thing all women writers even men counterparts think that everybody needs education including the young in Turkey, girls in particular.

Although there was a lot of literary counterfeits, Ellison<sup>59</sup> appeared as a woman who did not lose faith in the Turkish people in the darkest hours of history. Montagu was the leader of this genre, which was direct, pure, objective, and logical. Branning is perhaps the only one who carries this noble mission that is always based on logic and truth and never loses her faith in Turkey.

*"My dream is that Turkey - its citizens, politicians, lawmakers, military, and religious leaders - will cross a few more bridges towards these goals and cultivate a garden as lovely as the ideal one they depict on their tulip-strewn Iznik wares. For above all things, I believe in the people of Turkey."*<sup>60</sup>

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57 Kaçmaz, p. 157.

58 Zehra F. Arat, "Introduction: Politics of Representation and Identity", *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"*. Ed. Zehra F. Arat. Palgrave Press, New York, 1999, p. 11.

59 For more information see: Grace Ellison, (1915) *An Englishwoman in a Turkish Harem*. Cultures in Dialogue Series One. Gorgias Press, New Jersey, 2007.

60 Branning, p. 319.

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