HIGHBROW HAREM PORTRAITURE, OR *TURQUERIE* AND ITS DISCONTENTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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The cultural consumption of *turqueries*—Turkish inspired items produced in the West—was extremely popular throughout the eighteenth century in England and France. Turkish coffee, carpets, and sofas were all fashionable commodities, although *turqueries* were most frequently consumed as paintings and prints. Eighteenth-century interest in the Levant grew in response to political and cultural factors, especially diplomatic visits and Turkey's military decline, making the conceit less threatening than it would have been otherwise. However, it was not so much the timeline of events that prompted an interest in things Turkish but the *idea* of Turkey as it was imagined and enhanced in Western culture. The despotic land fascinated European political theorists and made them consider whether such an unreasonable form of rule might overflow into Europe. This is closely related to the fact that the Ottoman Empire was a fount of fascination because of its association with sexual fantasy, not least in part because of the myth of the Turkish harem. For this reason it is generally accepted among scholars that eighteenth-century *turquerie* perhaps reveals less about Turkey than the European culture that created it.[1] Faux Turkish novels, the *Receuil de Cent Estampes*, and Turkish-inspired portraiture were among the more modified ways that Turkey took shape in the West.[2] In this paper, I argue that, at least for some women, the Turkish theme in portraiture signified more than mere eighteenth-century fashionablness . Frenchwoman Madame de Clermont commissioned *Mademoiselle de Clermont as a Sultana, after her bath, with her servants*, a revealing and sexually charged image in which she uses the motif to portray herself as a mistress who would have possessed much power in the Ottoman Empire. While it was understood that in Turkey women ruled men and thereby the

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1 I am speaking especially about the work of Perrin Stein, Julia Landwebber, and Alain Grosrichard, authors on whom I relied heavily in writing this paper.

2 There has been much written on Turkish-inspired literature during the eighteenth century. See Ziad Elmarsafy's "Submission, Seduction, and State Propaganda in Favart's *Soliman II, ou Les Trois Sultanes*" and *Exoticism and the Enlightenment*, edited by G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter.

government, this portrait speaks to that fear in the West. I relate this to the harem generally and the equally heretical world of the masquerade. Another woman who engaged in *turquerie*, Madame de Pompadour, the official mistress of Louis XV, even more directly aligns the Turkish theme with the erotics of power and prestige. The series for her *chambre à la turque* portrays her as a sexual figure when Louis would have no longer seen her as one. In so doing, Pompadour regains an important sexual/political power. However, changing attitudes towards Louis XV and the female gender affected the way eighteenth-century viewers perceived *turquerie*. While earlier in Pompadour's career as a First Mistress to the king the paintings were viewed as an affirmation of female power, a later commission for paintings with a Turkish theme was interpreted as a demonstration of the corrupting nature of female power and sexuality. These images present examples of Western projections onto an exoticized East. I conclude with a portrait of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu of England, which was created in a much different context and for a much different purpose than the French images. Lady Mary actually visited visited Turkey and immersed herself its culture. In her commission, she is portrayed with beauty and ease in Ottoman culture and is completely herself—not a "sultana." This portrait, I will argue, demonstrates how Lady Mary found a personal liberty in Ottoman culture that was not available to her in Western culture, with its emphasis on physical female beauty. Thus, I will demonstrate that while these exotic images may first speak to the eighteenth-century craze to be à la mode, they also raise critical notions regarding the link between female identity and power, exoticism, and eroticism in ways that were decidedly relevant to the women whom they portray.

In order to frame this discussion, it is necessary to first explore the complex shared history between the West and the Ottoman empire. Since the Crusades and the taking of Byzantium in 1453, Europeans regarded the Ottoman Empire as a vague source of terror and military threat, both "feared and respected...for their disciplined armies and burning faith."[3] This changed from the seventeenth

[3] Grosrichard, Alain. *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*. New York: Verso, 1998: 19. Grosrichard (per Aristotle and Montesquieu) writes at length about the peculiar nature of the Turkish people, particularly their desire to be slaves and simultaneously wish for death.

century onwards, as there was an increase in diplomatic exchange and travel between East and West and the Turkish government entered into certain military decline. In Europe, this latter aspect was attributed to the fact that sultans prior to the seventeenth century played leading roles in European affairs, yet those who succeeded them practiced a more detached style of rule and did not generally leave their imperial palace, where it was believed they remained under the sway of women.

In contrast to France, where the king was to be shown off, in the Ottoman Empire, the ruler was cut off from the world, surrounded by servile eunuchs, his mother, and a variety of women from foreign lands who existed only for the his *jouissance*, or pleasure.[4] But women were the tools of the Sultan only in appearance. He apparently could be reduced to nothing by his mother, whom he visited each morning. Moreover, power literally rested in the hands of women because power was passed through them. The daughters and sisters of the sultan were generally married to significant members of the government, like pashas or other grandees in order to keep potentially power-hungry men at the sultan's mercy. So, the sultan's exercise of power was really just a masquerade that hid his own fragility.[5] Obedience to the despot thus had little to do with the despot himself and more to do with his name as a signifier of his will and the imperial structure that was built up around him. In consequence, revolts multiplied. In the seventeenth century alone, four sultans were either deposed or assassinated and their grand viziers rarely died of natural causes.[6]

Political theorists in the West, like Montesquieu, regarded such a government as a challenge to good political sense, its existence explained only as a way for Providence to punish the Christians while offering them an opportunity to redeem themselves by annihilating it. At the same time, it was feared that such an unruly, monstrous form of government could overflow and infect the rest of the world; this opened up a dialog among European writers about the nature and future of their own monarchies. Travel writers to Turkey often looked for equivalents in “terms and function, comparing

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4 Ibid, 127.
5 Ibid, 127.
6 Ibid, 20.

the unknown with the known, foreign conduct with familiar rules."[7]

The history shared between the West and the East prior to the eighteenth century was not merely brutish; there was also a history of luxury consumption. The earliest examples of orientalist fashions are turbans in European biblical paintings and manuscript illuminations.[8] Travelers and scientists wore turbans and quasi-orientalist or even authentic Ottoman costumes in portraits as stand-ins for their high rank and membership to a network of *curieux*.[9] Oriental dress went beyond just "dress-up," however.

Louis XIV, who mandated and popularized all the major fashion trends among French elite (and beyond, especially to England) with the assistance of his court historian, Donneau de Vise and the *Mercure Gallant*, was particularly fond of exotic styling. The *déshabillé* dress that Louis mandated at Versailles was similar to Ottoman mourning dress. His notorious taste for diamonds (by the end of his reign Louis XIV carried 15,000 carats on his daywear, embellishing even his garters and shoes with them!) was adapted from Persia and picked up by Parisian elites and courtesans.[10] Thus, Louis used foreign goods as a way to unify the French nation, in which clothing marked participation. Interestingly, his mistresses also came to be seen as exotic accessories—Compte de Bussy called Madame de Montespan and Mademoiselle de Fontages, "les deux Sultanes" and Courtier Marquis de la Fare called Madame de Montespan the "Sultana Queen" (by extension, it is as though Compte de Bussy and Marquis de la Fare called Versailles a harem). Thus, Louis XIV was being noticed for his conspicuous and excessive material and sexual consumption, making it appear the style of the French court.[11]

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7 Ibid, 19.

8 See, for instance, the Limbourg Brothers, *Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry: Three Magi Meet at the Crossroads*, Fifteenth Century, (Musee de Conde, Chantilly, France).

9 McCabe, Ina B. *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Regime*. New York: Berg, 2008: 247.

10 Ibid, 251.

11 Ibid, 236. The complexity of Europe's relationship with Turkey is elegantly captured by Turkey's paradoxical representation at the Carrousel of 1662, the occasion for which was the birth of Louis XIV's son and heir. Among the activities, there was horse race in which horsemen had to take aim at two cardboard heads—one a Turk's head ("une teste de gros carton peinte et de la forme de celle d'un T'urc") and the other a Moor's head. Thus, there was a double discourse on the Turks, because although they were enemies on a target, they were also personified in the ceremony by the Prince de Condé, the highest ranking nobleman. Just as Europeans spoke of Turkey's military might and then their corruption, they simultaneously partook in the country's luxury goods and fashion sense.

There were also other opportunities for the French to come to know Ottoman culture. The first significant Turkish diplomatic mission of the eighteenth century was in 1721, when Mehmed Efendi and his retinue visited Paris to grant France permission to repair a church in Jerusalem and to negotiate the release of Muslim prisoners. For the French, however, the retinue came at a decidedly unflattering moment in their history—John's Law speculative monetary system began to collapse the year prior, the monarchy was in tremendous debt, and the recent harvests had been insufficient. And yet, the entourage offered the public a sense of reprieve from daily life. Paris was a smaller city than Constantinople, so an entourage of foreigners, with their peculiar religious and domestic habits would have excited Parisians. Moreover, as Europeans were able to see Turks for themselves, they realized that they were not in fact the fierce sort that had existed in art and the Western imagination for centuries prior[12]. Indeed, images of Mehmed Efendi, a diplomat, a poet, a treasurer, and a man of letters, are unique among most depictions of the Turk because he is portrayed as an individual, not as a threatening stereotype. A further visit by Mehmed Said Efendi, the son of the previous ambassador, no doubt strengthened this friendlier view of the Turks. Said was fluent in French even before he arrived in Paris, and primary sources praise his gallantry and familiarity with French customs. What is more, interest in Turkey among the French continued to grow as the ambassador sat for numerous artists, including Charles Parrocel and Hyacinthe Riguad, despite Muslim custom that prohibited the making and displaying of figural representations. These paintings were reproduced as prints, helping to spawn a cult of celebrity that grew up around him.[13]

On balance, there was a strong European diplomatic and mercantile presence in Turkey, which helped to facilitate the travels of a growing number of European visitors to the Ottoman Empire, also referred to as the *terra incognita* and the Sublime Porte.[14] As was custom on the grand tour and indeed whenever prestigious Europeans visited foreign lands, in 1699 the Marquis de Ferriol, the French

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[12] Stein, Perrin. “Exoticism as Metaphor: *Turquerie* in Eighteenth-Century French Art." Diss. New York University, 1997

[13] Stein, Exoticism as Metaphor, 132.

[14] For more information on this topic, please see Fatma Muge Gocek's *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century(Studies in Middle Eastern History)*.

ambassador to Constantinople, hired the then little known Flemish artist Jean-Baptiste Vanmour to document his trip. This resulted in the 1713 publication of the *Recueil de cent Estampes représentant différentes Nations du Levant*, a collection of one hundred fashion plates depicting a cross-section of Ottoman society, from ethnic and religious groups (fig. 1) to the Sultan's hierarchical household (fig. 2). The prints were quickly integrated into the European consciousness through numerous editions and speedy distribution, although as Mariette put it in his *Abecedario*, the "works are more curious for the things he represents than for the manner in which they are painted."[15] And rightly so, the works are stiff and sometimes clumsy, but these troubles are supposedly explained by the title page, which announces that Vanmour made the drawings directly from nature, thus accounting for his inelegant style but also adding to the credibility of the plates when they arrived in Europe.[16]

These engravings served as a strong visual basis for later Turkish inspired female portraits, so given their significance, it must be remarked that the content, assumed to be factual, is probably largely false. As Perrin Stein has argued, there is strong reason to believe that "Representations of libertine gatherings...should be seen more as reflections of the pictorial traditions [16th and 17th century precedents] of Vanmour's native Flanders, than as an objective documentary of Ottoman practices."[17] It is also clear that he relied on preconceived (albeit incorrect) Western notions of the East.[18] Thus, as I hope to convey below, as it became increasingly fashionable to be represented in Turkish theme, portraits that drew from the conventions established by the *Receuil* are doubly Westernized.

Women's disguise portraits in general grew in popularity during the eighteenth century as the male version became less popular, likely because while eighteenth-century men on the whole could *really* change their identity and rise to elevated social positions, women were limited to accomplishing great feats mostly inside the home. So, it is not surprising that specifically Turkish themed female portraits appeared during the eighteenth century. The motif would have been en vogue and it had, I

[15] Stein, "Exoticism as Metaphor," 59.
[16] Ibid, 59.
[17] Ibid, 60.
[18] For more on this, please see Madame de Clermont and Madame de Pompadour below.

hope to demonstrate, the potential to imbue the sitter with a certain power that was perhaps otherwise unattainable.

Marie-Anne de Bourbon-Condé, Mademoiselle de Clermont, a granddaughter of Louis XIV and a princess of a royal blood, is an early example of a prominent woman who deployed the Turkish conceit in portraiture. As a young woman, she stood out because of her beauty, as well as her accomplishments in learning and in music. Despite her suitability for marriage, the princess was never married, perhaps because of the absence of a father to broker a marriage deal and a dearth of bridegrooms in high enough standing. At twenty-seven, she was appointed *Superintendante de la Maison de la Reine* (Nicholson calls this position roughly equivalent to a "Chief of Staff" to convey its importance), a position she held the position until her death in 1744. She did well for herself in surviving the first seventeen years of Louis XV's reign, taking the queen's place at ceremonies she could not attend and accompanying Louis on walks when he obliged.[19]

For all this then, Jean-Marc Nattier's physically revealing *Mademoiselle de Clermont as a Sultana, after her bath, with her* servants (fig. 3) from 1733 is an extraordinarily bold work. Given the great sum of 3,000 *livres* that her account books show she paid Nattier, it is likely that she commissioned the work, and, since the artist never painted anything nearly like this for the rest of his career, it is also likely that she played a major role in determining its content.[20] Moreover, it is difficult to imagine an erotic portrait like this was conceived without the sitter's knowing it.

In the lower left hand corner of *Clermont as a Sultana*, there is a dropped handkerchief, a signifier no doubt borrowed from the second plate of the *Receuil* (fig. 4). The conceit held that the Sultan selected his companion for the evening by throwing his handkerchief before one of the many women from whom he could choose.[21] This is interesting because Clermont would have already

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[19] Nicholson, Kathleen. "Practicing Portraiture: Mademoiselle de Clermont and J.-M. Nattier." *Women, art, and the politics of identity in eighteenth-century Europe*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003: 60.

[20] Ibid, 80.

[21] Lady Mary Montagu swiftly debunked the myth in her 1717-18 letters, but they were not published until 1763, when the motif was already so absorbed into French culture that was common to use the phrase to denote the bestowal of sexual favors from a man to a woman.

reached a very advanced age (35) by the time her portrait was painted, well beyond the age she would have been thought of in terms of marriage (women were generally married at fifteen) or sexuality. What is remarkable about the image, then, is its daringness. Most Turkish inspired portraits of women are Turkish inspired in the outfit alone, and at a time when women were instructed to play modest, not supposed to let on their romantic intentions to potential suitors, Clermont is exhibited with extreme sexual confidence. Moreover, unlike Lady Montagu, who actually visited the Ottoman Empire and even the bathhouse at Sophia, there is no good reason for Clermont to be represented as a Sultana taking her bath. Perhaps to balance the falsity inherent in her youthfulness and the privileged view, Nattier also offers bits of truth. The woman in the image does really possess Clermont's features (as we know from other images of her) and her body is not a frail, unimaginable goddess' body. She is a real woman whose body requires washing and drying.[22] As such, the princess exists on the delicious edge of acceptability. In drawing upon the Turkish conceit, she is aptly in a flagrant state of undress (perhaps only to be outdone by Boucher's odalisques), which she exploits to promote herself as a sexual creature when she would no longer have been seen as one. In fact, Clermont is actually in the process of lifting her robe still higher for the viewer— all the while keeping her shapely legs crossed as etiquette would require for a princess, of course. She also demonstrates her self-confidence by holding her gaze directly at us.[23]

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[22] Nicholson, "Mademoiselle de Clermont and J.-M. Nattier," 84.

[23] Such seductive, forthcoming behavior in part recalls the general concern during the eighteenth century that a man could be undone by a woman's sexuality. In England, for instance, it was said that a good man could not go out without being accosted by a prostitute, and even in this supposedly mutually beneficial relationship, a man could be harmed. In the anonymous print *Deceitful Kisses, or the Pretty Plunders*, a man in nearly suffocating in the grips of three prostitutes. His purse has been removed from his breeches pocket without notice, and a monkey holds a books that reads, "who's the dupe?" (Carter, Sophie. *Purchasing Power: Representing Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004, 60). The man, oblivious to everything save his own arousal, conveys how a woman's sexuality can overwhelm and control men, thereby reversing the natural hierarchy of power. *The Midnight Spy* advised men to "...summon...your every virtue, and collect your reasoning powers; for...numbers of bewitching nymphs will soon play about you. Every art will be used to seduce you, every device practised to trepan you" (Ibid, 60). In *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex*, James Fordyce wrote "the company of artful women is always dangerous and often fatal." (Ibid, 70) Here Clermont is no doubt being "artful" (in the cosmetic sense) in pampering herself in preparation to spend the evening with the sultan. Thus, for the eighteenth century viewer, this image would likely recall the widely held belief that women could use artfulness and seduction to deceive men, and that was perhaps what Clermont wished to do. For more on this topic in relation specifically to France, please see Jill H. Casid's "Commerce in the Boudoir" from *Women, Art, and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*.

If current events and a desire to be portrayed sexually helps to explain why Clermont would have used the Turkish theme, there is still a missing piece, and that is the unique association between eroticism and power that a harem image would have conjured in the minds eighteenth-century viewers. For this reason, I believe it is useful to examine what the harem meant at the time (and by extension, its Western criticisms, especially those put forth by Montesquieu) and the masquerade—a Western ceremony that finds surprising parallels to the harem itself.

"Seraglio" refers to entire palace of the sultan while "harem" denotes the section of the seraglio where the sultan's women were cloistered with eunuchs and the mother of the sultan. The word harem is derived from the Arabic *haram*, which means unlawful, protected or forbidden. Haram also means "House of Happiness," no doubt in reference to the Sultan's privileged right to sexual grazing.[24] It is noteworthy that *Clermont as a Sultana* shows a view that would have been impossible in an actual eighteenth-century Turkish harem. No one except for the king and his eunuchs were allowed behind the third door ("the threshold of happiness") where the women were kept. It was in this prohibition, however, that there came to be so much pleasure attached to the harem, and the portrait allows the viewer to indulge in this unique pleasure. The seraglio of the Grand Turk was a necessary theme in all travel accounts of the Orient because of its promise of mystery and sexuality. Its reputation was stereotyped and frequently repeated by Westerners, who tailored the supposed situation relations to the "principles of its political institutions, the goals of education, the role of the family, and the enigma of the relations between the sexes."[25] What follows are some of the truths that were generally accepted by Westerners about the harem and the Ottoman Empire:

Everyone in the seraglio was believed to be the sultan's slave; there were no distinctions in degrees of freedom, only a variety of specialties in servitude.[26] Per Aristotle's views on barbaric Asiatic regimes, the power the sultan had over his servants was one in which there is no end but his pleasure.

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[24] Croutier, Alev Lytle. *Harem: The World Behind the Veil*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1989: 17.
[25] Grosrichard, 125.
[26] Ibid, 126.

In its structure, the seraglio is a complex machine, built from start to finish in order to suck in anything that might pleasure the master, whose "glorious body alone can make credible this dream of unalloyed sexual happiness."[27] The lowly inhabitants of the seraglio (including mutes, dwarves, buffons, and women and children from other countries) maintain their master's radical otherness by standing negatively against the body of the despot. And yet, the master remained hidden in the seraglio, where he steeped in the pleasures of his women and luxury. As such, his country was ruled by no more than the mention of his name.

The principle characters in the harem are the children, women, and eunuchs. Male children of the sultan were required to periodically send their father their cut hair in order to show how they were still children and not fit to rule. Nothing in their upbringing, including their monastic education, prepared them to occupy the throne. Children brought to the sultan as spoils of war were trained to serve the despot, some in his direct service, but there was no subtlety in training that would allow them to occupy the throne or harm the government.[28] The single goal of the training they received was blind obedience to the needs of the sultan.

Grosrichard refers to the eunuch as the "guardian of the thresholds." There were both white and black eunuchs. In Turkey, the white eunuchs were the Capi-Aga (the Grand Master of the Seraglio) and accompanied the sultan everywhere. Like white eunuchs, black eunuchs were prized possessions because they survived such a risky procedure, but they were especially prized because of how they contributed to master's *jouissance*. As they guarded the harem and were the only men apart from the sultan whom the women could see, the women no doubt thought about the master in comparison to the black eunuch. Seeing his disfigurements, they would surely find the sultan as an especially fine creature and worthy of love.[29]

As with the harem at Constantinople and Ispahan, a vast number of young virgins of

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[27] Ibid, 128.
[28] Ibid, 129.
[29] Ibid, 147.

unimaginable beauty and of foreign origin were given to the despot as gifts by high-ranking slaves (pashas, viziers, agas, etc.) who bought them with payment of gold to Jews. In the harem, they lived sequestered from the public, where they spent their lives reading, writing, embroidering, bathing and supposedly, waiting for the moment when the sultan might drop his handkerchief before them.[30] It was believed that such rigorous discipline turned the harem into a prison. Travel writers "observed" great sexual frustration among the women, claiming it would sometimes induce lesbian relations.[31] The women in the harem were thought to be hysterical for the phallus in every guise and form.

Perhaps the greatest event that might occur in the harem would be for a favorite to give birth to the child of the sultan who would eventually replace the. In this case, the mother would become the most powerful woman in the empire, the Valide Sultana. Of course, competition to be the mother of the sultan was high, and while it provided unimaginable wealth and power, there was little security. Women who bore male children of the sultan had many jealous rivals and threats to her and her son's life was an everyday reality.[32]

In Europe, there was no lack of commentary about Turkey's monstrous form of governance. In 1740, the Académie française defined despotism as, "a Form of government in which the sovereign is the absolute master, with limitless authority and absolute power, having no other law but his will. Thus is the government of Turkey...The principle, the character and the evils incurred by despotism have been well enough elaborated by the best writers."[33] Per Montesquieu (and Aristotle), the legitimacy of royal power in the West is rooted in domestic power, as the rule of a father over his wife and children. In a despotic government, however, it as if the sultan ruled over his wife and children (by extension, the country as a whole) as if they were slaves, depriving them of freedom. With any good

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30 An old Turkish proverb holds that, "If the sun had not been female, she would have never bee allowed to enter the harem" (Croutier, 41).

31 Baudier noted that such depraved behavior was so widespread among women in Turkey that whenever a man wished to marry a Turkish woman, he first inquired as to whether she was already in the "thrall of another woman" (Grosrichard, 170).

32 Croutier, 105.

33 The adjectival form, despotic, was used throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to describe the royal abuses of power for which the Sun King was guilty, so the word despotic already calls into question the monarchy itself (Grosrichard, 4).

government, the central goal must necessarily be the common interest of the governed, but if one treats the subjects as slaves, then events that benefit them are no more than incidental. Montesquieu put forth his so-called climate theory to explain the Ottoman's strange acceptance of servitude. He argued that people who live in cold climates (read: Europe) are more apt to behave with boldness, superiority, frankness, and activity, while those who live in warmer climates are more apt to feel dispossessed of power, faint, incapable, fearful and effeminate. He also believed that because there were more women than men born in Asia, that region as a whole possessed female characteristics. Thereby, Montesquieu established femininity and servitude as traits appropriately associated with Asia.[34]

Returning to Clermont's portrait then, in addition to displaying her as sexual creature, it is also a potentially dangerous in regards to the power she appears to possess. Her servants are of a variety of skin tones, perhaps suggesting the *actual* breadth of her rule, both inside and *outside* the harem (by influencing the sultan, she would influence the country). In addition, it was common to negatively link a women to power and the Turkish theme. Montesquieu's *Lettres Persannes* explores this very topic.

As Montesquieu's story goes, upon arriving in France from Persia, Usbek realizes he is in familiar territory, prompting him to write that "of all the types of government in the world, he would most favor either that of Turks, or that of our august Sultan, such is his esteem for Oriental policies."[35] Indeed, the bankruptcy of John Law's system, swift turns in fortunes, the decline of Parliament, and the rule of favoritism (especially the purported influence of mistresses) might have all appeared clear signs of nascent despotism. The tale ends with the seraglio, which had in Usbek's absence been left under the command of the harem women, falling apart. While the seraglio is not a political regime like the French monarchy, Montesquieu insinuates that it is like the French monarchy in its structure of power —women are taking control and the repercussions are disastrous.[36] In Usbek's absence, one woman

[34] Boer, Ingeborg Erica. "Rereading the Harem and the Despot.: Changes in French Cultural Representations of the Orient in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries." Diss. The University of Rochester, 1992: 15.
[35] Grosrichard, 26.
[36] Please see discussion of Pompadour and Marie-Antoinette below.

unveiled her face in public, another was found in bed with one of her slaves, and a man was discovered in the sacred space of the garden.[37] Roxane, apparently Usbek's most trusted and beloved wife, then explains to Usbek how he has been deceived by the feigned submission.

Montesquieu's Roxane was no doubt based on Roxalena, the first woman to legally marry a sultan and extraordinary strategist. Their marriage 1541 marked a period in Ottoman history called the "Reign of Women," in which sultans were ostensibly under the sway of their mothers, mistresses, and daughters and more interested in licentious pleasures than military expansion. The character Roxane [Roxalena, etc.] appeared in numerous eighteenth-century European novels, and as one scholar has put it, she "embodied ambition, sexuality, revenge, exoticism; in fact, in the eighteenth century she came to personify womanhood itself: mysterious, sensual, resentful."[38]

Thus, *Clermont as a Sultana* calls to mind that portraying oneself in the Turkish theme signifies more than simple whim and fashion. In commissioning the work, she was indirectly giving herself power that spoke directly to the fear that a sexual woman could undo a man, disrupt the natural flow of power, and generally corrupt. In preparing herself to see the sultan, the viewer can almost imagine Clermont trying to bend Louis XV's (the "sultan," as it were) will later that evening. As with the sultans in Ottoman empire, in France, it was feared that Louis XIV and Louis XV were ruled by their penchant for luxury and mistresses.

In her Turkish disguise, Clermont also recalls the peculiar eighteenth-century taste for masquerades, a topsy-turvy party in which even one's most basic cultural assumptions were overturned. In fact, the masquerade was continually claimed as a "rite of reversal," in which "the venerated topoi of eighteenth-century culture (humanity, masculinity, adulthood, nobility, rationality) merged with their despised opposites (the bestial, effeminacy, childishness, servility, madness)."[39] But if the masked ball

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[37] For more on the garden and the seraglio, please see "The Cucumber Signifier" in *The Sultan's Court* and "Green Seraglios: Tulips, Turbans, and the Global Market" by Benedict Robinson.

[38] Ballaster, Ross. "Performing *Roxane*: the Oriental Woman as the Sign of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century Fictions." *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires, and Delectable Goods*. Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003: 173.

[39] Please see "Travesty and the Fate of the Carnivalesque" in Castle, Terry. *Masquerade and Civilization: the*

was a kind of anarchy, it was (paradoxically) systematically so—it was a sort of "discordia concors."[40] It was systematic in that during the masked assembly it was understood that everything would be the opposite of the way nature intended. One observer wrote, "Everyone here wears a Habit which speaks him the Reverse of what he is."[41] With only negative relations to the outside world, upon entering the masquerade, as (one can imagine) upon entering a harem, where there is no sense of time save in relation to the sultan, there is a sense of "temps perdu."[42]

Women, for instance, were free to attend masquerades un-escorted, a privilege virtually disallowed with other public activities (with the exception of churchgoing). Respectable women, too, had the unprecedented right to strike up conversation with an unknown male without necessarily ruining their reputation (and like in the harem, where objects like cucumbers or various colors possessed unique significance, masked assemblies generally had their own ways of speaking, and individuals who attended the masquerade were called "masks.").[43] Like the harem, which was believed to enhance government corruption, the masquerade was believed to promote promiscuous behaviors under the cover of a mask. In this sense, it is possible to regard the masked assemblies as a reaction to women's erotic repression (a luxury not allowed to harem women). In the eighteenth century, Englishmen and Frenchmen of all classes had social institutions, like brothels, not to mention marriage itself, set up to satisfy their sexual desires. The masquerade thus provided women temporary relief from their repression, although those women who engaged in sex risked worse consequences than men, including the loss of reputation and pregnancy.

Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction. Stanford: University Press, 1986. Thank you Professor Plax for noting that, perhaps because Clermont occupied such a respected role, she was able to "play"a Sultana without consequence. If the woman was a courtesan or of lesser standing, she may not have "gotten away" with such a risqué portrait.

40 Ibid, 5.

41 Ibid, 5.

42 Ibid, 7.

43 Ibid, 4. While such behaviors were nearly unprecedented in eighteenth-century society, there were other ways in which women might express their individuality. For instance, a woman could have an "'active" love life,' so long as she didn't break any rules of etiquette, a member of la bonne compagnie...so long as she/he conformed to unwritten to unwritten rules which were part of le bon ton." (Lee, Vera. *The Reign of Women in Eighteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 13). In other words, "society would accept perfidy, infidelity, ingratitude, outrageous lying and heating, so long as it was all done in good form, that is, cloaked in noble and gracious manners." (Ibid, 15).

Interestingly, masked assemblies were often in Turkish theme, in which individual dressed in accordance with Turkish costume.[44] This was in part made possible because of the *Receuil de Cent Estampes* and other similar print collections. Perhaps the most popular of the Oriental costumes was that of the "sultana." As the harem was conceived as a locus of bizarre sexual exploits, so too in England there were a number of indiscreet encounters involving Turkish dress, leading one to suspect that there was a sense of indecorum attached to such a costume (at least in part because they were generally more form-fitting and low cut. Of one woman's costume, a critic wrote, "O Jesu-Cos-why this fantastick Dress? I fear some Frenzy does your head possess; That thus you sweep along a Turkish tail, And let that Robe o'er Modesty prevail."[45] Then, there was the infamous Miss Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston, who at the Jubilee Masquerade in 1748, in the guise of the mythological character Ighigenia, wore only two layers of fringe around her hips and was naked from the waist up.[46] In May 1775, *Town and Country* featured a moral tale titled *Masquerade Discovery*, in which a lady attending a masked ball in Turkish dress finds her husband with the housekeeper, also in Turkish habit.[47] This leads to the strongest critique of the masquerade, which was its ungodly mixing of things meant to remain apart—"its impulse, as it were, towards an incest of forms. The word "promiscuity" appears again and again in masquerade tracts in regards to a mixing of the classes but also sexual promiscuity and improper intercourse (between married women and men not their husbands, single women and men in general, members of the same sex and of family...came across a father and daughter...)."[48]

Common sense suggests that acting out in this way hints at underlying modicum of reality. As Landwebber suggests in "French Delight in Turkey," using masquerades to act out in this way was

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[44] While men and women would not generally dress in full Turkish costume for their everyday wear, the masked assembly was one occasion in which it was acceptable to wear full costume.

[45] Ribeiro, Aileen. *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730 to 1790, and Its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture*. Diss. Courtauld Institute of Art, 1975. New York: Garland, 1984: 32.

[46] Ibid, 32.

[47] Ibid, 235.

[48] Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 81.

crucial to constructing culture, so too, Clermont's portrait was crucial in constructing herself and how she wished to be seen.[49] By portraying herself as a sultana she brought to the forefront questions of sexuality, despotism, illegitimate power, and their respective critiques.

This brings us to Carle Van Loo's paintings for Madame de Pompadour's *chambre à la turque*, completed between 1753-55 for her château at Bellevue. The shift in emphasis from Clermont's portrait to Madame de Pompadour's portrait is logical; while the portrait of the former woman insinuated the sitter's power, the portrait of the latter woman makes an outright claim to power. Before delving into the specifics, it is useful to note that Pompadour had a relatively unremarkable background as the daughter of a financier, a position generally disrespected by the nobility of blood. Hence, it was a great accomplishment for Pompadour to become a royal mistress and to really be understood as a woman of quality. Vera Lee in *The Reign of Women in Eighteenth-Century France* describes a woman with a background like Madame de Pompadour's as follows:

> A relative nonentity from birth to marriage, shunted from nurse to governess to convent, timid and generally fearful of her parents and the world—only with marriage does she finally become someone. The change is radical. She is not merely her husband's shadow: she can go where she wants, think what she thinks and do pretty much as she pleases..make visits, write letters, pull every string possible to obtain some royal office or money for a charming male friend,or not charming husband[50]

The power women were thought to possess during the eighteenth-century cannot be understated in terms of breadth or capacity. As the Goncourt Brothers reflected in the nineteenth century:

> The Cardinal de Tencin obeys Madame de Tencin, Madame d'Estrades has the Comte d'Argenson in tow, the Duc de Choiseul is led around by the Duchesse de Grammont, without whom he might have accepted DuBarry's peace offerings, Madame de Langeac has the final word on the *Lettres de cachet* that Terray sends out, Mademoiselle Renard passes on army officers' promotions that Monsieur de Montbarey has the king sign, Mademoiselle Guimard on the ecclesiastical beneficiaries that Jarente hands out..[51]

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[49] Landwebber, Julia Anne. "French Delight in Turkey: the Impact of Turkey on the Construction of French Identity, 1660-1789." Diss. Rutgers, 2001. See also Landwebber, Julia Anne. "Celebrating Identity: Charting the History of Turkish Masquerade in Early Modern France." *Romance Studies* 23.3 (2005): 175-189. This is a common motif in eighteenth-century portraiture.

[50] Lee, 8.

[51] Ibid, 115.

Or, finally as Montesquieu put it in his *Lettres Persanes*:

> One day I heard a woman say 'I must do something for that young colonel; I know what he's worth; I'll speak to the minister about him.' Another said, 'It's surprising that this young abbot has been overlooked. He should be a bishop. He's well born and I can answer for his morals...' These women form a kind of republic whose ever active members give each other mutual help and services. It's like a new State within the State.[52]

Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, Madame d'Etiolles and Louis were formally introduced on February 25, 1745 at an exotic-themed masquerade held at Versailles to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin to the Infanta of Spain. The party came to be known as the *Bal Des Ifs* or the Yew Tree Ball because the king and seven other men came disguised as clipped yew trees. A print made after the evening by Cochin (fig. 5) focuses on eight faux-Turkish figures wearing comically over-sized Turbans as well as a variety of more conventional takes on Turkish costumes.[53] Madame d'Etiolles, dressed as a shepherdess, is shown in conversation with the king. It is said that when the guests observed the two, it was spread throughout the hall that "the handkerchief was thrown." While this initial reference to the handkerchief and the harem was likely not intentional on Pompadour's part, it became a powerful reference that informed much of her future relationship with the king and the art she commissioned.

Several years prior to the commission, physical relations between Pompadour and the king had ceased, so in order to maintain her power and standing at the court, she made herself useful to the the king through friendship and consultation, themes she made clear in the art she commissioned.[54] However, the exotic/sultana theme was nonetheless a potent symbol that would have acted as a happy reminder the occasion on which she subsequently became Louis XV's mistress (moreover, the king himself liked exotic works and commissioned numerous exotic hunt paintings).[55]

It is significant that these works hung in her bedroom, so if she conducted her toilette there it

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[52] Ibid, 15.
[53] Cochin also depicts other exotic costumes, including Chinese, Siamese, Indian, and Native American costumes.
[54] See, for instance, "Pigaelle and the Iconography of Friendship" by Katherine K. Gordon.
[55] For more on this topic, please see "Louis XV's Chasses Exotiques: *Turquerie* Moves up the Ladder" from *Exoticism as Metaphor*.

would have been powerful to see her so closely linked with the king. Also, at the time, the women's domestic dressing room was a relatively new architectural addition that prompted much public scrutiny because of the privacy it offered women. It was feared to be a site of sexual promiscuity and sexual transformation, the results of which could undo a man.[56] If the dressing room was a mistresses' room (as was Pompadour's), its sumptuous decoration would also reflect the importance of the mistress in the eyes of the man who commissioned it (the King of France). As for the images, the *Sultana Taking Coffee* (fig. 6) and the *Two Odalisques Embroidering* (fig.7) are horizontally oriented works that hung above two doors facing each other, and *An Odalisque Playing a Stringed Instrument* is a vertically oriented work that hung above a mirror between the two windows. Van Loo was an appropriate choice for the commission because he was popular among other patrons for exotic works. The actual content of the work is drawn largely from Vanmour's fashion plates, and Van Loo may have even accessed an original manuscript because there was one held in the king's library. In fact, Van Loo is so indebted to Vanmour in that in her dissertation Stein finds a parallel Vanmour image for each of Van Loo's.

Like Clermont, Pompadour would have been in her thirties and of waning beauty at the time of the commission, so her relative youthfulness and good looks in *A Sultana Taking Coffee* is not be overlooked. Unlike a queen, who gained prominence at court and significance in the king's eyes through an arranged marriage, Pompadour derived her position by stimulating his desire, and in order to maintain her position, she needed to continue to stimulate his desire, whether nostalgically (as she does here) or otherwise. Also, she is elevated to "Sultana," as opposed to the lesser "Femme" that Vanmour calls the woman who takes coffee in his fashion plates. As a mistress, Pompadour occupied a sort of intermediate position between the king and queen. Whereas the queen's power was legitimate and orthodox, Pompadour's was not.[57] In calling herself a sultana, she calls upon this sort of legitimacy as would have been recognized in the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the importance of the queen is

[56] For more on this topic, please see *Monstrous Dream of Reason*, "The Dressing Room Unlock'd: Eroticism, Performance, and Privacy from Pepys to the *Spectator*."

[57] Boer, 99.

displaced onto Pompadour the sultana, who might bear the sultan's children and become the valide sultana. Thus, the outright appeal to sexual desire through youthful good looks and her role as a sultana is employed to overcome strict demarcations in function and power.

Moreover, unlike the odalisques in the two other works, Pompadour is being waited on. She furthers her importance in the king's eyes by showing a dropped handkerchief by her side, demonstrating that the king/Sultan has selected *her* for the evening. She also wears a red rose, a symbol of love and sexuality, in her hair. Thus, unlike the iconography of friendship, she is here portrayed in a sexual role, made possible by the romantic connotations of the harem as it existed in the realm of convention and fantasy and not actuality. It should be noted too that the iconography in the painting conjures some these more conventionalized beliefs about the Turkish harem and the women who occupied it. The window emphasizes the viewer's awareness of being inside and calls to mind the secluded lifestyle of the harem. Also, the flowers in hair and the vase with the flowers on the windowsill point to the cultivatedness of flowers *and* the person wearing them (in other words, the careful preparations women would take before they saw the sultan).[58] Also, the coffee, a commodity introduced into France by an Ottoman sultan in the late seventeenth century and an increasingly fashionable commodity in eighteenth century, was highly refined and required careful preparation, just like a king's mistress or sultan's favorite.[59] Likewise, the coffee cup embodies qualities of being inside (refinement) and qualities of being outside (or something that is alien, imported to France). The window, too, embodies this tension between inside and outside, one's own culture and an alien culture. Such mix between something that is natural and something that is alien reflects Pompadour herself; she was a mistress (natural) but she is portrayed as a sultana (unnatural), which is really more in line with what her power was like (unnatural).

Pompadour made the image of herself as a harem mistress all the more poignant by literally

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[58] Ibid, 96.

[59] For more on the introduction of coffee to France, please see *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Regime*.

establishing a "harem." To maintain her importance to the King and the court, she initially attempted to groom her daughter Alexandrine to take her position in the king's bed. When Alexandrine died unexpectedly (an event that reportedly upset Pompadour primarily because it spoiled her plans), she instead conceived of and helped to oversee the Parc-Aux-Cerfs.[60] Located just off the château grounds at Versailles, the Parc was a sort of royal bordello that Pompadour stocked with an ever-changing supply of low-born beauties. The scheme was widely criticized, especially because of its exorbitant cost for a nation already in financial trouble. It was reported that the Parc cost the state one million *livres* per woman and Louis required two women per week; so too, it was said that the Parc was operated "by and for the benefit of Pompadour" (who would presumably used it to please the king and gain favor).[61] It is interesting to relate her role as a quasi-proprietress to the harem. In effect, during this time, she acted somewhat like a valide sultana. That is, while she no longer engaged in sexual relations with the king, she was still perceived as a cornerstone of his government and for this, Pompadour was increasingly the target of political criticism.

Even before her opulent Turkish bedroom, though, Pompadour was associated with *luxe* and excess spending in her artistic and theatrical endeavors (in 1747, she commissioned an expensive theater at Versailles). People pointed to her as the reason for the monarchy's levying taxes, which prompted the Parlement to protest in May 26, 1751. Moreover, she used her theatrical productions to flaunt her relationship with the king: dancing the part of love, announcing her desire to "subdue a superb conquerer," and singing "Finally he is in my power" (a blatant inversion of the natural order of power).[62] The marquis d'Argenson put it plainly when he wrote that the court appeared "a seraglio of women and eunuchs" and Pompadour had seemed to believe she had the right govern "absolutely and arbitrarily."[63] According to one critic, this sort of "monster despotism" is supposed to be even worse than the "franker, honester, barbarism of a Turkish government," because the people's own

[60] Kaiser, Thomas E. "Madame de Pompadour and the Theaters of Power." *French Historical Studies* 19.4 (1996):1037.
[61] Ibid, 1034.
[62] Ibid, 1034.
[63] Ibid, 1031.

unawareness to it promoted their condition.[64] So the king, who was once thought powerful, now appeared to be a tyrant, not because he wished for too much power but because he ruled through weakness, through his own frailty. The situation was altogether much like the one purported to exist in Turkey, where LaBoetie used the word "mannikin" to describe the tyrant as "the most cowardly and womanish in the land."[65]

Ultimately, while her artistic program at Bellevue did make her appear important in the king's eyes, it also gave additional fuel to her enemies, who saw it as evidence that she was in fact a major threat to France. Therefore, Pompadour's use of *turquerie* seems to be yet another way in which she staunchly demonstrated her power sexually and politically, all the while aggravating an already unstable political situation in France.

If Madame de Pompadour's turkish bedroom was the apex of making *turquerie* "work" to the sitter's advantage, then Amedée van Loo's *Le Costume Turc*, a major royal commission of five tapestry cartoons to be woven at the Gobelins manufacture and exhibited at the 1775 Salon, works to the female's disadvantage. The series was likely conceived as something of a sequel to the earlier (and more successful) overdoors for Pompadour's bedroom. While Amedée completed the series, the commission was originally awarded to Carle Van Loo in 1754 in recognition of his success with Pompadour's bedroom. However, the artist, who was then at the height of his career and very in-demand for private commissions, never made time for the commission. Then, in 1772, Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre (Premier Peintre du Roi) and Pierre de Marginy (Directeur General des Batiments du Roi) resurrected the commission and selected Amedée van Loo to complete it for, it would seem, primarily financial reasons: "a weaving of *Usages et Modes du Levant* from his hand would doubtless please the Public, and should be lucrative for the Manufactory."[66]

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64 Ibid, 1033.

65 Grosrichard, 167.

66 Stein, Perrin. "Amedee Van Loo's Costume Turc: The French Sultana." *The Art Bulletin* 78.3 (1996): 418. One cannot help but wonder what the series—which spares no touch of rococo flamboyance—might have looked like were it actually completed when originally intended. The negative attitudes regarding the capacity of women to possess illegitimate power only strengthened over the course of the eighteenth century.

While early records show it was government officials who commissioned Amedée, it was widely believed that Madame du Barry, Louis XV's former mistress, also had her finger in the pie. In one account that appeared at the time of the 1775 Salon, the author writes of du Barry in the images: "The French Sultana sought to represent herself, in foreign guise, before the eyes of her august lover, so as to fix his attention by any means."[67] (As discussed above, being portrayed as a sultana would in and of itself be associated negatively with power in the West). The Turkish theme would have been pleasing to du Barry given that she commissioned other exotic-inspired images (like, Jean-Baptise-André Gautier Dagoty, *Madame du Barry et Zamor lut apportant use tasse de* café, mezzotint, Musée national du château de Versailles.) and that she had a real life exotic accessory, Zamor, her Bengalese servant.[68] It is said too that the features of the woman in the portraits are similar to those of du Barry.

Nonetheless, this is only weak evidence for her being the patron or the subject. What seems to be more likely, as Perrin Stein argues, is that "a certain degree of unauthorized portraiture (perhaps even mild caricature) has come in through the back door. In fact, the latter conclusion is more plausible given the unflattering light in which the du Barry/sultana figure has been cast: as a spender of money and a consumer of luxuries."[69] A negative discourse on luxury and consumption was present since the ancient and medieval times, but that conversation became a great debate in the eighteenth century, especially in the years preceding the Revolution. Oriental goods and their European imitations played a central role, both in debates about luxury in France and in the formation of French economic thought and policy. France placed bans on luxury and instated sumptuary legislation.[70] The laws, however,

[67] Ibid, 419.

[68] Coffee, which was imported from the East, was extremely popular in France, as evidenced if nothing else than by the rise of the coffee shop. For more on this topic, please see McCabe, Ina B. *Orientialism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Regime*. New York: Berg, 2008.

[69] Stein, "Amedee Van Loo's Costume Turc: The French Sultana," 420.

[70] France had no gold or silver mines, so laws were instated to preserve the gold and silver that they did have. It was argued by some, like Jean Bodin, that Levant trade was beneficial because it enriched French merchants who held boutiques there and that friendship between the royal houses was important. Others, like Laffemas and Voltaire, were disdainful of French, whom they believed to be lazy and ungrateful for what France did have. Laffemas believed that France ought to be protected from foreigners and be entirely self-sufficient because the importation of luxury goods would be the ruin of France. During the seventeenth century, Henry IV passed laws to stop foreign imports, locate French mines, and control commerce generally. As early as 1614 when the Third Estate met it was advocated in pamphlets that Turkey immediately sever all relations with Turkey, including trade and luxury items. Richelieu, however, advocated Levant trade. He saw no reason for avoiding Oriental luxuries so long as they were bought by

were consistently broken, and the final efforts to enforce them were under Colbert in the 1660s and 1670s. By the late eighteenth century, sumptuary laws were no longer respected as a new class of rich bourgeoisie and artisans appropriated the formerly exclusive privileges of the nobility. As one scholar wrote, luxury consumption was "impoverishing the nobility all the while making marquis of merchants," contributing to a generalized sense of corruption and decline that was expressed in many pamphlets of the day.[71] Moreover, the luxury items consumed were often still exotic (diamonds, ostrich plumes, turbans, etc.), so likewise, exotic goods were held to contribute to the nation's economic and moral degeneracy at the close of the eighteenth century.

Montesquieu, of course, was not silent in this debate. On his picture,

> The consumption of luxury goods such as *turqueries* and of such frivolous activities as masquerades—all of which was very much in evidence around him—was no less than a way for the commercial classes to enslave the nobility and take control of the monarchy. He feared that should the French monarchy escape descent into outright oriental despotism, it still risked being undone by the increasing luxury demands of its nobility, and by the wealthy but morally corrupt merchants who were ready to serve them.[72]

He and the philosophes also maintained an association between excessive consumption and unchecked female sexuality. Book Seven of *The Spirit of the Laws* is titled "Consequences of the different principles of the three governments in relation to sumptuary laws, luxury, and the condition of women." Women's wardrobes became exponentially larger than their husbands, at times their contents were tens times larger. Fashion was feminized and luxury became the domain of women in the eighteenth century.[73] In associating luxury with women, there is also a third powerful connection—the East as the locus of luxury. Montesquieu claimed that luxury was necessary for a monarchy to flourish Europe, yet in the Asiatic region, he found it a destructive social force, a theory in part justified by

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French merchants. At the same time, Richilieu also approved previous sumptuary legislation and strengthened it further (embroideries, for instance, were forbidden to all) [McCabe, 275].

71 McCabe, 286.

72 Landwebber, *French Delight in Turkey*, 293.

73 For more on this topic, please see Chico, Tita. "The Dressing-Room Unlock'd: Eroticism, Performance, and Privacy from Pepys to the Spectator." *Monstrous Dreams of Reason*. Ed. Laura J. Rosenthal and Mita Choudhury. Lewisbury: Bucknell UP, 2002: 45-65.

climate theory and the weak will of those who lived there. This is similar to what happened to Marie-Antoinette as the revolution drew near. In light of how much people hated her for her excessive penchant for luxury, she aimed for greater simplicity and economy in fashion and likewise introduced the *gaulle*, a light and frilly white muslin dress that tied with a simple ribbon. A 1783 portrait by Vigée-LeBrun (fig. 8) shows in her such an outfit. Some said it was an image of Marie in her underwear, others said it was a foreigner in a foreign outfit. Paradoxically, in the image she has shed her diamonds, feathers, and brocades (all of which were required by the French court since Louis XIV); however, after a certain date, Marie simply could not do right. Even if stimulating the domestic economy through large orders from Lyon silk industry was patriotic in benefiting the wealth of the nation, her large orders were regarded as only laying waste to the French nation. Nonetheless, she fastidiously ordered new colors.[74] Moreover, in the same period, Marie-Antoinette and her ladies-in-waiting adopted turbans (bonnets a la turque) as a their new favorite headgear in response to a 1778 visit from Indian of ambassador of Mysore. Such hats appeared regularly in fashion journals along with hats styled au Levant, a la sultane, au Croissant, even hairstyles such as the pouf a l'asiatique, topped with feathers, lilac flowers, and tiger skin.[75] When the French Revolution commenced a decade later, American women with access to Paris fashion journals took up the turbans themselves as a sign of solidarity with their counterparts in France. Women understood these foreign hats as *really* French. Also, by the 1770s, Turkish masquerade and fashionable dress had become so completely intertwined in France that the details of a Turkish inspired everyday dress were derived from same costume and source books that inspired Turkish gowns being worn to masquerades and in fancy-dress portraits.

Decadence was also coupled with greed, vanity, sexual depravity, and a love of luxury. Interestingly, the French term *luxe* is sometimes interchanged with another—*luxure* from the classical root *luxus*, meaning excess indulgence, luxury and debauchery. *Luxus* is one of the seven deadly sins, which is usually depicted as sexual indulgence in French iconography and closely associated with

[74] McCabe, 272.
[75] Landwebber, *French Delight in Turkey,* 278.

luxuria, meaning excess or riot. On the rose window of Notre Dame, luxury is represented by a woman grooming and overdressing out of self-love, contrary to the love of God.[76] These sins were first attributed to the nature of the Persians and Ottomans but were soon reflected in the new political other in France—the hated aristocracy.

Given this culture of consumption, it is unlikely that Madame du Barry would *desire* to portray herself this way.[77] The first image is *La Toilette d'une sultane*. Here van Loo appears to have followed his instructions carefully, painting assistants "arranging her hair, others with preparing her dress, and the rest engaged in burning perfume."[78] The European toilette was an equally depicted process but travel writers ascribed the Turkish version much greater importance, with the Sultana choosing only her most prized odalisques to assist her in preparing to meet the Sultan. In general, though, by the end of the century, the toilette came to viewed as an endeavor in demonstrating a woman's falsity and theatrics. The next work is *Le Travail* or *La Sultane commande des ouvrages aux odalisques*, no doubt an extended version of Pompadour's *Two Odalisques Embroidering*. The scene might have recalled the costly, labor-intensive dresses embellished with gold and silver thread that du Barry preferred. Like the prior image, here also the hierarchical nature of the harem is stressed by the activity and the placement of the sultana. The third image, *Le Dejeuner*, also plays on this theme of servitude, with the sultana being the only figure to enjoy a rest and take a smoke from her pipe, which also represents her indulgence. The Sultan, the one by whom all of this luxury has been made possible, finally makes his debut *La Danse*, the final image of the suite, yet he appears only to *share* the place of honor with the Sultana. In contrast, the Turkish ambassador to France in 1721 remarked at what he saw placating to women's desires: "women do what they want and go where they please; their orders are everywhere obeyed. It is said, too, that France is their paradise, because they live there free of every hardship

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[76] McCabe, 274.

[77] Moreover, the official instructions from 1754 do not center on a single protagonist, but instead look for a general depiction of the harem.

[78] Stein, "Amedee Van Loo's Costume Turc: The French Sultana," 420.

aturbannd every care, and because whatever they may desire they easily obtain."[79] So, *La Danse* is likely representative of a French idea of gallantry that was grafted onto an exoticized East. Eighteenth-century viewers remarked on this, and in one review from the Salon of 1775, a critic wrote that the French "have the odd habit of turning the whole universe French. Look at these paintings by M. Vanloo, which represent a seraglio, where the beauties are surely not coiffed in the Turkish style."[80] It could equally be read as how much a man can be altered by a woman's desires (and in the case of Pompadour, this was believed to effect policy decisions). Additionally, the paintings would have been met with resistance at least in part because moralist critics like Diderot preferred the *drame bourgeois* over the erotic fantasies and indulgences of the harem. *Le Costume Turc* would have more likely been perceived as something of an anti-exemplar of culture—that is, too much consumption, especially on the part of women.

In conclusion, in it interesting to consider a different direction that *turquerie* took in England. Whereas the French examples incorporate the imaginary, exoticized, and eroticized East into a Western context, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu removes herself from the West in order to find real liberation from traditional female roles. Today, Lady Mary is remembered for her contributions to art, literature, and anthropology. In her early life, however, she was known for her great beauty. At seven, her father brought her to be toasted and presented at the Kit Kat Club, a literary and political club for men. The highly sexual overtones of displaying a pre-pubescent girl for the delectation of powerful older men is not to be ignored, but the scenario also betrays the extreme importance of a woman's beauty in eighteenth-century society.[81] Her looks were not solely her possession, however. Her appearance had value to her father, who would presumably use his daughter's looks to wager for a well-to-do spouse, and to her husband, who would use her looks to complete his noble picture in society. So, it was no doubt a great devastation to both Montagu and her family when she suffered an attack of smallpox (a

[79] Ibid, 429.
[80] Ibid, 433.
[81] My research on Lady Mary is heavily drawn from Marcia Pointon's "Going Turkish in Eighteenth-Century London: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Her Portraits" and "Killing Pictures."

disease that affected one quarter of eighteenth-century women) in 1715, the year before she left England to accompany her husband on his diplomatic appointment as Ambassador to the Sublime Porte (another name for the Ottoman empire). For those like Montagu who survived smallpox, they were left without eyelashes and pot marked, scarred skin. As such, her face would have lost the great currency of beauty that it once held.[82]

The move, however, would show her freedoms and powers that women uniquely possessed, prompting her to write, "Upon the Whole, I look upon the Turkish Women as the only free people in the Empire."[83] Significantly, she understood women's freedoms, such as the rights to own property and to get a divorce, as stemming from the "perpetual Masquerade" of the veil which "gives them entire Liberty of following their Inclinations without danger of Discovery."[84] Indeed, the mandated used of a veil for women demonstrates that the female face held no import in the public domain.[85] The loss of career prospects that Sir Edward Wortley Montagu might have endured in Europe as result of his wife's disfigurements had no purchase in Turkey.

The full-length portrait of Lady Mary attributed to Jonathan Richardson (fig. 9) is a particularly compelling rendering of her in the Turkish theme. Painted in 1725, she would have already reached the "advanced" age of thirty-six and was probably distressed about her wrinkles and pot marked skin. In the this image, however, her complexion is faultless and her body youthful. So in one sense, Richardson has empowered Montagu in Western eyes because her beauty is restored. And yet this is not simply nostalgia for her lost beauty because there is a view of Constantinople in the background; this was meant to portray a recent time in her life. Her clear complexion acts as a sort of veil, the sort of veil that she would have needed in England (in fact, she never returned to England—or to her husband after 1739). She flagrantly disavows her actual self in order reemerge, using the Turkish

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[82] Aravamudan, Srinvias. "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the Hammam: Masquerade, Womanliness, and Levantinization." *ELH* 62.1 (1995): 69.

[83] Ibid, 79.

[84] Ibid, 79-80.

[85] In is interesting for the contemporary reader to recognize that while Lady Mary saw the veil as a opportunity for freedom, today, one might sooner see the veil as a sign of isolation or impotence.

theme as a source of empowerment and a mirror unto how she would have wished to be viewed. This portrait has the mysterious effect of reinventing her, as if something actually had transformed her while she was in Turkey.

Beyond her beauty, the Turkish dress also serves to physically empower her. By 1725, hoop petticoats were growing in both ubiquity and diameter in England. As one contemporary worded it, such items give "a really fantastic volume that daily reduces the free space left for circulation."[86] Both the English hoop petticoat and the French pannier were notoriously expensive and uncomfortable yet wildly popular among women, who no doubt appreciated the ventilation and the delicious precariousness they offered (a woman who wore a hoop petticoat risked accidentally ["accidentally"] exposing her body underneath at any moment—a point made especially vivid by the fact that women wore no underwear in the eighteenth century). While women sought out these designs, men staunchly opposed them. Male critics argued that they were indicators of feminine foolishness (some women's crinolines were of such great proportions that the they had to leave buildings from balconies equipped with pulley systems).[87] This in part allowed men to conclude that "women and fashion were equally irrational, and that they were equally in need of restraint." Skeptics also warned that the "mechanism" was too capable of making "matrons and maidens look alike," such that "all those of the Fair Sex began to appear pregnant...; as was manifest by a particular Swelling in the Petticoats."[88] It was believed that this sort of appearing like a married, pregnant woman promoted sexual promiscuity and devalued marriage, both of which therefore made the hoop petticoat a tool that could be used by immoral women. Lady Mary's Turkish dress, however, escapes these negative remarks about women's fashion and the women who wore them. This is not to say that her costume was not scandalous, but it would have been acceptable under notion that she was "dressing the part" of a woman visiting Turkey.

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[86] Behamou, Reed. "Who Controls This Private Space?: The Offense and Defense of the Hoop in Early Eighteenth-Century France and England." *Dress* 28 (2001): 13.

[87] Ibid, 15.

[88] Chrisman, Kimberly. "Unhoop the Fair Sex: The Campaign Against the Hoop Petticoat in Eighteenth-Century England." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30.1 (1996): 12.

The painting recalls earlier full-length society portraits put forth by Van Dyck, like *Henrietta of Lorraine* (oil on canvas, 1634, English Heritage: Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood House), although Lady Mary wears a somewhat Europeanized version of Turkish dress. The foundation of the costume is an ankle-length white silk *salvar* over which she wears a gold colored *anteri*, a sort of waistcoast made to fit very closely to the body (much unlike the hoop petticoat). The modesty piece that is inserted into the outfit and the side (rather than central) opening of the waistcoat conform to English fashion at the time and recall the particular Rococo (not Turkish) taste for delicate, asymmetrical ornamentation. The end of the waistcoat appears to be looped to a jeweled belt such that her smock underneath is visible. Her *kirk*, the ankle-length coat, is blue and lined with ermine, which gives the outfit a regal air. These particular details, in addition to the fact that her *salvar* is in the form of a skirt rather than trousers and the relative smallness of her headdress betray a certain restraint of Turkish dress, however.[89] Also in contrast to Vanmour's Turkish women, Lady Mary is slender rather than plump. The black slave who hovers behind Lady Mary is her perfect complement. With metal collar and dark skin, he is clearly her inferior and present only to highlight her brilliant porcelain skin and her worldly power. It should be noted also that in contrast to Van Dyck's *Henrietta of Lorraine*, Montagu does not rest her hand on the boy's shoulder. It is as if she has no need for the additional demonstration of power. On the whole, these small revisions suggest that Montagu used the exotic Turkish theme to piece together a new version of herself under the guise of a merely documentary image from her trip to Turkey. Her adoption of Turkish dress also betrays a desire to express a sense of freedom from the traditional Western societal constraints in dress. She fashions herself as an aristocratic, luxurious Ottoman woman who would have been attached to a similar class as herself. However, the Turkish theme insinuates that she has more political freedoms and personal freedoms, thereby distancing herself literally and metaphorically from the West in order to reemerge with more power.

[89] Pointon, Marcia. "Killing Pictures." *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*. USA: Oxford UP, 1992: 50.

In summary, in this paper I have hoped to explore the complexities of Turkish-themed female portraiture during the eighteenth century in France and England. Early interest in *turqueries* sprang from diplomatic and mercantile endeavors and the conceit was quickly adopted by elegant female sitters. The portraits I have discussed are more than mere whim and fancy, though; they conjure significant notions of the link between power and sexuality. Lady Mary used her portrait to remove herself from Western gender constraints and to be reincarnated with the freedoms of prestigious Turkish woman. Thus, the image serves to empower her through the Turkish theme. When Clermont adapted it, it was with less credibility but more sexuality and more power, thereby making an intimation at an inversion of the natural order of power. This idea is closely related to the eighteenth-century masquerade. Pompadour used her Turkish bedroom to present herself as a sexual creature at a time when she no longer had sexual relations with the king. The paintings visually align her with the king in the same way she served the king in real life with the Parc-Aux-Cerfs. Amedée van Loo's work did not have a particular woman to glorify. Instead, the suite of paintings merely pictured the sultana/the woman in command as only a source of spending and consumption, an idea that stemmed at least in part from Pompadour's legacy and negative notions about luxury and consumption that ripened over the course of the eighteenth century.

Images

Fig. 1. Gérard-Jean-Baptiste Scotin, after Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, *Imam, ministre d'une mosquée*, engraving, plate 23 in the *Recueil de cent estampes* (New York Public Library, New York).

Fig. 2. Gérard-Jean-Baptiste Scotin, after Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, *La sultane asseki, ou sultane reine*, engraving, plate 3 in the *Recueil de cent estampes* (New York Public Library, New York).

Fig. 3. Jean-Marc Nattier, *Mademoiselle de Clermont as a Sultana*, oil on canvas, 1733 (Wallace Art Collection, London).

Fig. 4. Gérard-Jean-Baptiste Scotin, after Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, Le grand seigneur dans le serrail, avec le kislar agassi, plate 2 in the *Recueil de cent estampes* (New York Public Library, New York).

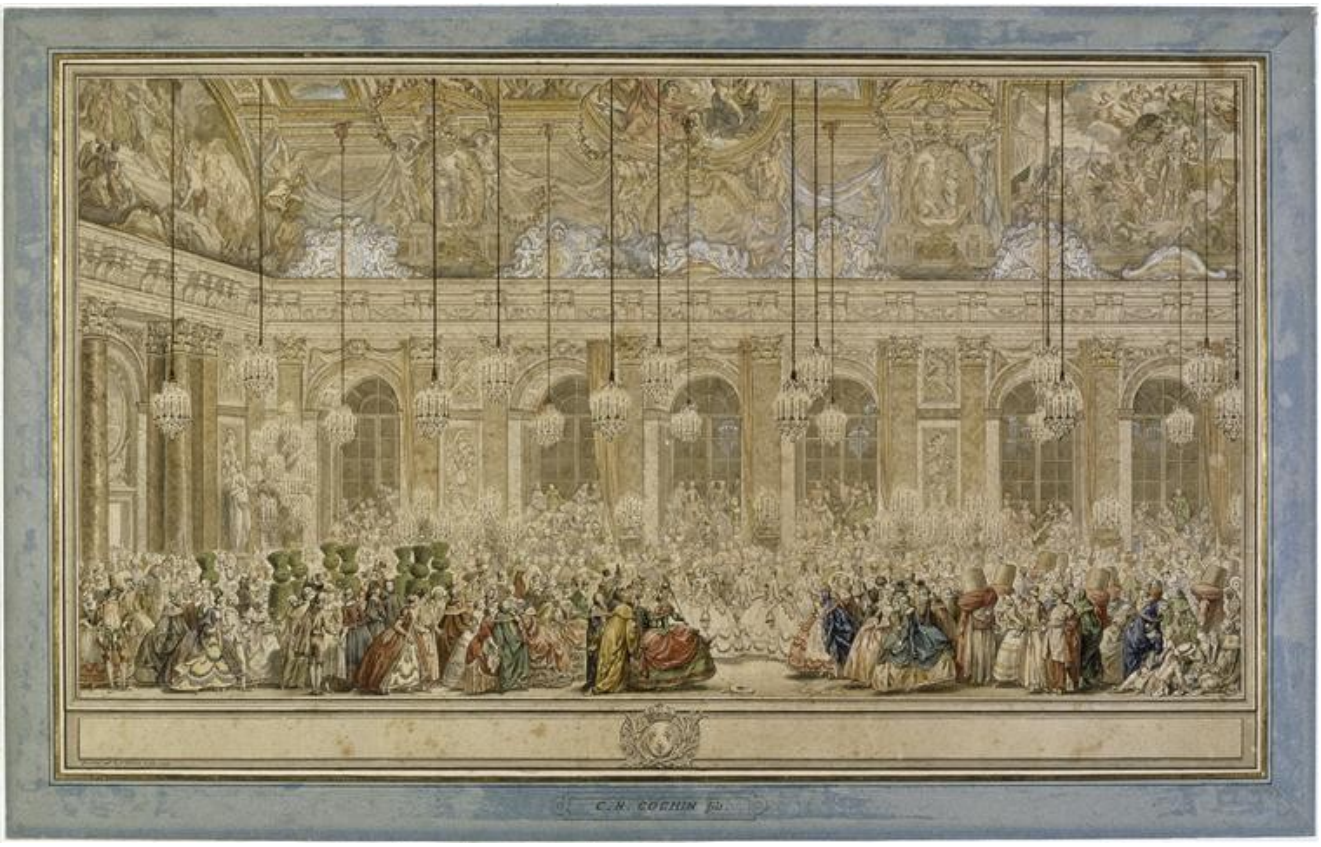

Fig. 5. Charles-Nicolas Cochin, father after Charles-Nicolas Cochin, son, *Decoration du bal masque donee par le Roy*, etching with engraving, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 6. Carle Van Loo, *A Sultana taking Coffee*, oil on canvas, 1753-55 (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg).

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Carle Vanloo
A Sultana at her Tapestry Frame with a Companion, about 1753
Oil on canvas, 130 × 127 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

Fig. 7. Carle Van Loo, *Two Odalisques Embroidering*, oil on canvas, 1753-55 (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg).

Fig. 8. Madame Vigée Le Brun, *Marie Antoinette en Chemise*, circa 1783.

Fig. 9. Attributed to Jonathan Richardson, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, c. 1725.

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