

A Comparative Study of the Effects of Gender on Travel Writing in
Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's
Turkish Embassy Letters

Meredith Zackey
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Professors Allen and Roberts
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"Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living." -Miriam Beard

Travel is more than a journey to a new place or an album full of pictures; it can be a life-altering, formative experience. It can affect perceptions, alter ideas, erase prejudices, and, perhaps most importantly, expand minds. These changes in attitude and perspective have fascinated writers and audiences for thousands of years, from Homer's *Odyssey* to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Each travel writer's journey represents a new adventure rife with possibility and opportunity, captivating and inspiring the reader.

Historically, women have faced great difficulty in breaking into the travel narrative genre; through the 18th and 19th centuries, it was both very difficult for women to travel independently and for women to have their works published. One woman, however, managed to fight her way into the genre. Lady Mary Montagu, an English noblewoman, wrote a series of letters during her travels to Constantinople with her husband. The letters were published in 1763, one year after Montagu's death. A little more than a century later, a French author named Pierre Loti wrote what was to become one of his lesser-known works, *Madame Chrysanthème*, a novel that focuses on Loti's journey to Japan with the Navy and his marriage to a Japanese woman. Loti, heavily grounded in the tradition of male travel writers, serves as an excellent contrast to the fresh and vivacious Montagu.

Madame Chrysanthème and *Turkish Embassy Letters* both span a specific period of time and focus on describing the country being visited for the western audience. Both works are loosely autobiographical. The travels have an undeniable effect on the authors, but the effects are quite different. Montagu, a married English noblewoman, takes pleasure in the smallest details of the Turks and their culture; Loti, a French seaman recently married to a Japanese girl,

is incredibly bored by Japan and detests most everything. The two authors' depictions of their travels and the effects of travel on their perspectives toward the Other are inextricably linked to gender. Montagu's travels to Turkey allow her to experience new social and gender roles, while Loti's travels solidify his role as a western presence dominating the Japanese people and their culture.

Historical background for both authors is necessary to understand why Loti's travels affected him differently than Montagu's¹. Pierre Loti was the pen name of Julien Marie Viaud, a French sailor who became famous for his travel narratives. Loti was born in Rochefort in 1850. He was educated there until the age of seventeen, at which point he entered the naval school in Brest. During the course of his travels with the navy, Loti kept a diary of his experiences. In 1876 some of his fellow officers convinced him to convert his diary into a novel, the result of which was *Aziyadé*, a loosely autobiographical romance that takes place in Constantinople. Loti went on to publish several more novels belonging to the travel narrative genre, the most famous of which were *Le Mariage de Loti*, which takes place in Tahiti, *Le Roman d'un Spahi*, which chronicles the adventures of a soldier in Senegambia, and *Mon Frère Yves*, a novel that details the life of a French naval officer, Pierre Loti, and a Breton sailor, Yves Kermadec, in different parts of the world.

Loti published *Pêcheur d'Islande* in 1886, a novel concentrating on life among Breton fisherfolk, which is one of his most popular works. *Madame Chrysanthème* was published in the following year, and contains the characters of Loti and Yves who were first introduced in *Mon Frère Yves*. Loti continued to travel with the Navy, and he was in Algiers when he was notified

¹ This paper will discuss Loti first and Montagu second in each of its sections. Although Montagu precedes Loti in the genre, Loti will be discussed first in order to establish him as a contrast to Montagu.

of his election to the Académie Française in 1891. Loti published several more novels as well as his journals in the ensuing years, but none of his later works achieved the same fame as his earlier works. After a prolific writing career and lengthy travels, Loti died in 1923 at Hendaye and was interred on the Île d'Oléron with a state funeral. After Loti's death, his extensive collection of exotic items was preserved in his home at Rochefort, symbolizing Loti's obsession with consuming the objects of the Other.

Madame Chrysanthème is a loosely autobiographical representation of Pierre Loti's visit to Japan. In the novel, Loti and his friend Yves travel to Japan with the Navy, and upon their arrival, Loti conveys to Yves his intention to purchase a wife to entertain him during his stay. After receiving Madame Chrysanthemum through a marriage broker, however, Loti is disappointed because he finds his wife quite boring. After a few months pass by, Loti begins to worry that Yves and Chrysanthemum are in love; he doesn't express any jealousy, but rather cares only about maintaining his friendship with Yves. Nothing transpires between Yves and Chrysanthemum, however, and Loti continues to be extremely bored with both his wife and Japan. Roughly a year after their arrival, Loti and Yves are ordered to leave Japan for China. Loti bids goodbye to Chrysanthemum without much feeling, and she contents herself by counting the silver dollars he has left her.

Unlike Loti, the easily and frequently published author, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was an English noblewoman who is chiefly remembered in the world of literature today for her posthumously published letters. Lady Mary was born in 1689 in Thoresby Hall to an aristocratic family. She was known for her beauty and wit from a young age, and she took charge of her own education when her father showed little interest in educating her. Lady Mary formed a close friendship with Anne Montagu, another British noblewoman, and they carried on an

animated correspondence during Montagu's adolescent years. Anne's brother, Edward Wortley Montagu, frequently edited and transcribed Anne's letters, and after Anne's death in 1709, Lady Mary and Edward continued the correspondence.

Edward and Lady Mary expressed a desire to marry, but Lady Mary's father considered the match unsuitable, and so Edward and Mary eloped in 1712. After spending the first few years of married life in seclusion in the country, Edward was appointed to Parliament in 1715 and was soon after made Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. When Lady Mary finally joined Edward in London, her wit and beauty made her a popular and prominent figure at court. Edward was appointed ambassador at Constantinople in 1716, at which point he traveled to Turkey with Lady Mary and their two young children.

The *Turkish Embassy Letters* are a series of fifty-eight letters written between 1716 and 1718 chronicling Lady Montagu's travels from England to Turkey and back. She addresses many cultural issues in these letters, focusing specifically on dress, gender relationships, medical practices, and female freedoms like using the veil as a way to disguise an affair and deceive one's husband. The letters were written to various correspondents, among them Lady Montagu's sister Lady Mar, Lady Montagu's husband Edward, and Alexander Pope.²

Many years after her return from Turkey, Lady Mary grew tired of England and her husband, and in 1739, she left her husband and went abroad to Italy and France. Although their parting was perfectly amiable, they never saw each other again. She was disfigured by a painful skin disease later in life, and her writings hint at the possibility of her suffering from mental

² Lady Montagu was famous for her friendship with Pope, which suffered a violent quarrel after Lady Mary's return from Turkey. After their falling out, Pope wrote extremely nasty poems and stories about Lady Mary attacking her reputation. The cause of their falling out remains a mystery. Lady Mary also became famous upon her return for introducing the medical practice of smallpox inoculation in England, having her own children inoculated against smallpox.

illness due to the pain. Edward spent the remainder of his life increasing his fortune through trade, and he is said to have been a millionaire at his death in 1761. Lady Mary returned to England only in her final year of life, dying in August of 1762.

Montagu's letters, published in the following year, serve as the first female travel narrative since the fourth century BCE. The history of the travel narrative genre begins with Homer's *Odyssey*, written in the eighth century BCE. This fictionalized account, transcribed from oral histories, details Odysseus' obstacle-ridden voyage home from the Trojan War. Odysseus spends nearly a decade trying to return to his wife, son, and kingdom in Ithaca, traveling by sea. His crew is lost gradually through a series of brutal episodes, and Odysseus alone manages to survive. Upon his return, he manages to regain control of his kingdom and win his wife back by disguising himself as a stranger and conspiring with his son to kill the suitors. This fantastical account is followed nearly two thousand years later by a non-fiction account of a man's intentional journeys to foreign lands. Marco Polo's *Travels*, written in 1298 during Polo's imprisonment in Genoa, details his travels to the Far East and his period of employment in the imperial service of Kublai Khan.

This work piqued the interest of another well-known explorer, Christopher Columbus. Fascinated by Polo's account of his travels and determined to find a western route to Cathay, one of Polo's destinations, Christopher Columbus set sail under the Spanish flag. Columbus' journal of his travels was originally presented to Queen Isabella and later transcribed by Bartolomé de la Casa in the sixteenth century. Richard Hakluyt's work, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, appeared in 1589, with the intent to refute claims that the English were less enterprising and adventurous than other nations. This work includes both a group of ten narratives of voyages pre-dating the Norman Conquest and several narratives on

various battles of the Crusades. A few years after Hakluyt's work is published, Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Discoverie of the Large, rich, and Beautiful empyre of Guiana, with a relation of the great and Golden citie of Manoa (which the Spaniards call El Dorado)* became available. Raleigh's narrative is a fictionalized version of his vain search for El Dorado.

These exploratory-driven travel narratives are followed nearly two centuries later by a new sub-section of the travel narrative genre: autobiographical, trip-based narratives. In 1773, Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, two well-known British authors, take a trip to Scotland, which inspires them to write *A Tour to the Western Islands of Scotland* (Johnson) and *A Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (Boswell). These two works were followed by Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1816), which Byron crafted following his Grand Tour of the Orient, and Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* (1845), which details Darwin's three-year scientific voyage. Henry David Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and the Merrimack Rivers* also belongs to this sub-section of the genre. The travel narrative genre entered the twentieth century with such authors as Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, Paul Bowles, Jack Kerouac, V.S. Naipaul, Paul Theroux, and Bruce Chatwin.

What we notice, however, as we study the history of the travel narrative genre, is the total lack of female representation as authors of travel narratives, rather than objects of study. As a genre fueled by travel, it has historically excluded women, in that women were not free to travel alone, nor were they easily published authors. There is some evidence, however, that one of the very first travel narratives was, in fact, written by a woman. In the years 384 to 381 BCE, an early Christian woman named Egeria, also known as Aetheria, made a pilgrimage from her home on the northwest coast of Gaul to the Holy Land. Egeria wrote a long letter to her women friends at home detailing her travels. Only portions of Egeria's letter remain, but these portions have

been named the *Itinerarium Egeriae*, or the *Travels of Egeria*. While there is some speculation that Egeria was a nun, it is generally believed that she addresses her female friends as "sorores", or sisters, merely as a term of endearment and in reference to their Christianity. Many factors make it seem likely that Egeria was a wealthy woman of the middle class: her freedom to make such a long pilgrimage and to change plans at will, the high cost of such a journey, her extremely high level of education, and the fact her letter focuses not on the miracles, but the physical sights of the Holy Land, unlike the letters of monks at that time. Egeria describes the monks, various holy places and geographical points, and even details the liturgical practices of the church at Jerusalem. Egeria's narrative represents the first and only female travel narrative for nearly 1500 years.³

Lady Mary Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, published after her death, in 1763, represents the next female travel narrative.⁴ The female travel narrative was a near impossibility until the eighteenth century; women were neither free to travel alone nor able to have their writing published.

Traveling in Turkey forces Mary Montagu to undergo several transitions. By undergoing these transitions, Montagu is able to embrace her role as female travel writer and define this role for women to follow. These transitions are from passive observed to active participant, from occupying a role in society which limits her to fixed interactions with a select group of people to

³ Egeria's letter also provides scholars with valuable information about changes and modifications in the development of the grammar and vocabulary of Vulgar Latin.

⁴ Mary Kingsley, an English writer and explorer, became the next iconic female travel writer after Lady Mary Montagu because her ingenuity and fortitude led her to Africa on an independent journey. Mary Kingsley traveled throughout Africa in 1897 after the death of her parents left her with an income of £500 a year and freedom from familial responsibilities. Kingsley published two works about her travels: *Travels in West Africa* (1897) and *West African Studies* (1899).

occupying a role in society which allows her to engage with various groups, and from proper, formal actions to adventurous and informal actions. Montagu must undergo changes to her social role and her gender role in order to embrace her role as a female travel writer. A female travel writer must be an active participant, capable of accessing society at various levels and not afraid to be adventurous and informal, and Montagu's confining English social and gender role do not allow for these qualities. By undergoing the transitions necessary to achieve these qualities, Montagu defines the traits that female travel writers must possess in years to come.

Loti does not undergo these transitions because he has established himself as a male travel writer. Unlike Montagu, he is a consumer in Japan, seeking to oversimplify Japan's culture by using a series of purchased objects to represent the entire diverse culture. Loti is traveling through Japan, using the country and its culture as a means for publication rather than as an opportunity for cultural exploration, which is evidenced by his extreme boredom with Chrysanthemum and lack of engagement with her or the Japanese culture. Loti's role as an established male travel writer precludes changes to his social or gender role. Loti exists in a strong tradition of male travel writers, and it is because he is so rooted in this tradition of dominance over the Other that he cannot undergo changes to his social or gender role. Loti occupies a position of power, assured in his status and comfortable in his role; the idea of changing his social or gender role is therefore impossible.

The genre of travel writing is particularly intriguing in that the writer experiences challenges to his/her identity when faced with other cultures and countries. Kristi Siegel posits that all travel writers, both male and female, necessarily undergo this experience:

Travel writing elicits a[n] identity upheaval. Arguably, whether travel writers record the collision of their identity with a new culture or not, travel necessarily

brings about change. Travelers might lose their sense of identity altogether or, conversely, find their sense of self sharpened by the journey (7).

According to Siegel, travel has an undeniable effect on identity, regardless of whether the effect is explicitly noted by the writer in her work. The process of travel writing necessarily heightens the writer's own understanding of self; when continually faced with the Other, the writer must constantly re-evaluate her own culture as well as her own understand of herself. The effects of this re-evaluation differ from writer to writer; this paper will argue that the difference in effects is due to gender. For men, travel strengthens the writer's pre-existing attitudes; for women, it allows the writer to create an entirely new identity out of the ashes of their previous one. For Montagu and Loti, it is Loti's status as a male that is solidified and Montagu's role as a female travel writer that is created.

Part of Montagu's process in assuming the role of a female travel writer involves taking on a new social role. Susan Bassnett asserts that travel represents an opportunity for women to take on an entirely different social role, one that was not available to them at home: "Travel for some women [...] offered a means of redefining themselves, assuming a different persona and becoming someone who did not exist at home" (234). Women were frequently forced into the position of inactive objects, useful in society only as something to be observed.⁵ Men were freer than women to travel both to different countries and between different social spheres. As a female travel writer, Montagu was able to take on an entirely new social role, one of action; in Turkey, she learned new languages, investigated new religions, and was free to travel about town without her husband. Thus, Montagu assumed the role of an active observer with a fluid role in society, able to explore Turkey's culture and people with more freedom than she was afforded in

⁵ Montagu, for example, was restricted to the basic tasks of British nobility. She attended court, made appearances at parties, but was not presented with opportunities for education, or to make the acquaintance of entirely foreign people.

England.

For women like Montagu, travel offered many freedoms, including, in particular, an escape from the limitations of the British social structure and an opportunity to impart this escape vicariously to their female friends at home. Susan Bassnett argues that women traveled in search of this freedom, writing, "The underlying impression gained [...] is that the woman traveller was somehow in flight from something, seeking to escape from the constraints of her family or her society" (226). Most women were confined to marital or familial roles by societal constraints; those who were unmarried frequently lacked the funds to travel. Montagu suffered from this feeling of stifling confinement and therefore seized upon travel as an opportunity to escape from her prison.

In escaping from her society, however, Montagu alienated herself in more ways than one. Not only did Montagu distinguish herself from her male counterparts, but she also set herself apart from her fellow females back home. Susan Bassnett comments on this difficult position of isolation female travelers are faced with, writing,

Women travellers are [...] categorised as doubly different: they differ from other, more orthodox, socially conformist women, and from male travellers who use the journey as a means of discovering more about their own masculinity (226).

According to Bassnett, female travellers are necessarily distinguished as different than the majority of women who remain in their home countries. In addition to this estrangement from their female peers, women travellers also diverge from male travellers because the women are engaging in travel as a means of recreating or exploring their identity as females. Males, according to Bassnett, differ from women travelers in that they travel in order to confirm their status as powerful males. Females differ from these men in that they travel in search of less conformist social roles that will afford them greater freedom and agency.

Because, as Bassnett argues, female travellers are categorized as doubly different, their writings often begin with an attempt to appease society's disapproval of their audacity in traveling. These women feel that they need to provide their readers with some sort of explanation for writing because, unlike male travel writers, female travel writers in the 18th century had no canon to rely on. Kristi Siegel argues that female travel writers made this attempt in order to set the readers at ease, writing,

Most early [women's] travel writing began with an apology (e.g., for writing in the first person, for engaging in such inappropriate activity, for bothering the reader with their trivial endeavors, and so forth) that, again, affirmed their status as ladies and also served to reassure readers they would not be competing with men (3).

Women travel writers expected their readership to be disapproving of their behavior. As an attempt to counteract this perceived disapproval, therefore, female travel writers often placed apologies at the beginning of their work. Most women also used an apology to convey to their readers their unwillingness or lack of desire to compete with their male counterparts. Montagu's letters begin with an apologetic style, but as the letters progress, she distinguishes herself more and more frequently from her male peers.

Unlike their male peers, female travel writers were very infrequently actually requested to travel by a patron. Jane Robinson argues that this difference between male and female travel writers actually allowed female travel writers to be more relaxed in their writing, saying, "Women have rarely been *commissioned* to travel', hence in the absence of a patron or authority figure 'women can afford to be more discursive, more impressionable, more *ordinary*'" (227) than men. The fact that female travel writers were not traveling at the request or order of anyone made their writing unique; the women were free to write about anything they desired, from dress, to conversation, to relationships, to customs.

Travel writers who were commissioned to travel were, for the most part, easily published authors and therefore wrote with publication in mind. Because female travel writers were not commissioned to travel, however, and because women were rarely published authors, some female travel writers wrote with no particular intention of future publication. Because the prospect of publication was not available to them, many female travel writers tended to dismiss the idea:

It is important also to note that not all the writings by women travellers were intended from the outset for publication. Male writers for the most part appear, at least from the way in which their texts are presented, to have had publication in mind from the outset (Bassnett 232).

This fundamental difference in writing style is exhibited through the female travel writers' more discursive, more informal writing style. Montagu's work is presented in epistolary form, which adds a confidential quality to her writing and allows her readers to feel as if they are accompanying her on her journey.

Gillian Rose offers a compelling theory behind to explain the stark contrast between male and female travel writing styles. For Rose, the distinction between male and female travel writing styles stems from an essential contrast in the way men and women view geography and travel. Rose argues,

The belief that everything is knowable and mappable is fundamentally a patriarchal concept: there is no part of the planet, no society so distant that it cannot be mapped, described and hence contained. But a feminist concept of geography sees the world differently: here the goal is not to map every detail, but [...] to engage with the everyday as an end in itself, not as a means to a different end (230).

According to Rose, female travel writers comment on the ordinary, the mundane, the banal as the focus of their work because they perceive the world differently. Unlike the male travel writers who are often focused on the goal assigned by their patron or authority figure, female travel

writers focus on the smaller details of their journeys and the people they encounter. Men view the world as entirely capable of being reined in, being controlled; there is no aspect of the Other that is not able to be defined and hence subdued, known. Women, on the other hand, view the world as an opportunity for a continual process of learning; travel represents a chance to experience new cultures and places, not to contain or control them. Where male travel writers offer up numerous descriptions of famous places and structures, the female travel writers focus more on the relationships they form with people from other cultures and the effects of these relationships on their attitude and perspective.

Rose's theory maps quite well onto Loti and Montagu. Loti, because of his male perception of geography, makes no lasting connections with any of the Japanese people, and spends most of his work describing Japan's culture in terms of its representation in consumer objects commonly found in France, attempting to contain Japan and prove its status as eminently knowable. Montagu, on the other hand, forms several deep bonds with Turkish men and women and enjoys exploring the culture itself, bringing many cultural ideas and practices from Turkey when she returns to England, and allowing Turkey to exist as an Other that is not completely knowable or able to be contained.

Rose's theory of different geographical concepts based on gender is demonstrated in different writing styles and purposes between male and female travel writers. Certain traits are common to female travel writing; Siegel comments on these traits, writing:

Following a course similar to theorizations on women's life writing, some critics have posited that women's travel writing demonstrates unique characteristics: compared to travel writing by men, it is less directed, less goal-oriented, less imperialistic, and more concerned with people than place (5).

Because female travel writers were not usually commissioned to travel for a specific reason or to a particular end, they were able to write in a much more relaxed fashion. Montagu's work in

particular is less directed and less goal-oriented because it is presented in epistolary form; each letter has a certain subject, but the collected letters lack a specific cohesive goal. In contrast, the major male travel writers who mobilized the genre and served as inspiration for future writers were sent with the explicit goal of exploring and conquering foreign lands. For instance, Columbus was instructed to claim any lands he encountered for Spain, and Raleigh took possession of Virginia as British property. Unlike these male travel writers who were simultaneously dominating and describing foreign lands, Montagu and women to follow traveled in order to investigate new cultures.

The final way in which female travel narratives differ from their male counterparts is noted in Bassnett's article: access to women's society. Although female travel writers are faced with barriers and hurdles to overcome and they lack a tradition in the genre, these women also have an advantage over men in that they are able to access areas of culture previously unexplored by men. Many Eastern female rituals and locations exclude males, but female travel writers are welcomed and brought into the forbidden space:

[...] Women had access to women's society, and as a result were able to describe daily life in the harem in terms of the normality of women's customs and practices, rebutting male-inspired fantasies about harems as places of highly charged sexuality (229).

Bassnett makes reference to two female travel writers - Montagu and her successor in the genre, Lucie Gordon - who were able to actually physically enter harems, and were able to describe the previously unseen harem and its occupants. Montagu's famous letter about the Turkish baths is an excellent example of this female access to clandestine spaces, in which she proudly refutes the previous descriptions of her male predecessors. Montagu's access to the bath allows her to debunk previously existing lies and exaggerations fabricated by male travel writers who wrote about places they had never seen or experienced.

Pierre Loti does not travel to seek new social roles, but rather to solidify his social role as a powerful male. Loti delights in the opportunity to restrict women's freedoms, entrapping a young Japanese girl into a loveless one-year marriage. While in Japan, the social role Loti enjoys is that of a male in an entirely male-dominated culture; his social role in Japan is merely an exaggerated version of his role in France. He is able to do whatever he wants at the expense of the women around him, subverting everything that does not please him. While in the Orient, Loti is able to purchase a wife, rather than actually having to search for love or affection. He treats Chrysanthemum with distaste and disgust, always bored with her and annoyed at her inability to please him. A concrete example of this treatment occurs when Loti writes, "Quel dommage que cette petite Chrysanthème ne puisse pas toujours dormir: elle est très décorative, présentée de cette manière, - et puis, au moins, elle ne m'ennuie pas" (115)⁶. Unlike France, a country where women were more equal with men, at least in the sense that they were not available for purchase, Japan represents an opportunity for masculine expression of power for Loti. In Japan, Loti can actually possess his wife as property, collecting her as another consumerist object from the Orient.

In Loti's novel, marriage represents an opportunity for Loti to have some fun, a way to amuse himself during his long stay in Japan. The amusement he seeks in marrying is representative of his attempt to enforce his dominant role as a male. Loti expects Chrysanthemum to be exactly what he wants, and it is with this intention that he marries her. He decides before he even sets foot on Japanese soil that he will get married upon arrival, telling his

⁶ What a pity that this little Chrysanthemum cannot always sleep: she is very decorative, presented in this manner, - and then, at least, she does not bore me.

friend Yves,

Moi, disais-je, aussitôt arrivé, je me marie ... Oui ... avec une petite femme à peau jaune, à cheveux noirs, à yeux de chat. –Je la choisirai jolie. –Elle ne sera pas plus haute qu'une poupée (2)⁷.

The way Loti describes his future wife makes it clear that he is viewing Chrysanthemum as an object, rather than as a woman. Loti tells Yves he will choose a pretty one; this notion of choice suggests that Loti's understanding of Japan involves a sort of marriage market. Loti has heard about the way to get a wife in Japan, and he knows that he can purchase a woman to possess during his stay. These comments of Loti's demonstrate his wish to possess Chrysanthemum as property; Loti's role in Japan is that of the authoritative man, seeking to simultaneously occupy and own aspects of Japan's culture.

According to Carol Weisbrod, "In *Madame Chrysanthème*, the temporary marriage is a commercial transaction throughout" (3). Weisbrod acknowledges that, for Loti, marriage represents not a loving union, but an economic exchange. It is clear that Loti views his future wife as merely a piece of property to be bought and sold; he is picky, therefore, when Monsieur Kangourou presents him with a woman: "Elle est bien jeune, dis-je, - et puis trop blanche; elle est comme nos femmes françaises, et moi j'en désirais une jaune pour changer" (52)⁸. Loti wants his wife to look like his idea of a Japanese woman; he wants to purchase an exotic doll to entertain him. Throughout the novel, Madame Chrysanthemum is treated as a commodity rather than as a person; Loti expects his doll to amuse him, and when she acts more like a human than a doll, he is displeased. Comparing Chrysanthemum with the other Japanese girls who seem to be without a care and complaining that Chrysanthemum seems sad, Loti writes, "Je l'ai prise pour

⁷ Me, I said, as soon as we arrive, I will marry ... Yes ... to a young woman with yellow skin, black hair, eyes like a cat. –I will choose a pretty one. –She won't be bigger than a doll.

⁸ She is quite young, I said, - and too white; she is like our French women, and I would like a yellow one for a change.

me distraire, et j'aimerais mieux lui voir une de ces insignifiantes petites figures sans souci comme en ont les autres."⁹ Loti views his trip to Japan as an opportunity to command a social role – that of the forceful, formidable man – at the expense of Chrysanthemum.

Margaret Topping argues that this unbalanced power dynamic between Loti and his wife has the effect of making Chrysanthemum appear child-like:

Thus, for example, Loti's fictionalized autobiography denies Chrysanthème a voice, her relationship with Loti narrated by the western male. She is spoken of as a commodity by Loti and M. Kangourou, the marriage-broker, and is infantilized by Loti's tendency to report only single-word utterances offered by her (310-311).

On the rare occasions that Loti mentions his conversations with Chrysanthemum, her responses frequently consist of one-word replies. In one conversation, when Loti asks Chrysanthemum several questions in an attempt to determine why she is so frightened, her response consists only of the words, "Non!!... *Dorobo!!* (Les Voleurs!!)"¹⁰ (258). This device allows Loti to minimize Chrysanthemum's participation in the action of the novel and to increase her doll-like qualities. By reducing her role in conversation to one-word answers, Loti is able to dominate all conversation, as well as make it appear that Chrysanthemum is a simple creature. Much like a doll that is limited to a few responses, Chrysanthemum is confined to a minor, inferior role in conversations. By emphasizing his wife's doll-like qualities, Loti solidifies his role as a dominant male; Chrysanthemum cannot speak out against Loti, nor can she offer more substantial thoughts or expressions to make the reader see her as a human being rather than as a doll.

At the start of the novel, Loti wonders to himself whether Chrysanthemum is really a

⁹ I took her to distract me, and I would prefer to see her one of the insignificant little figures without worry like the others.

¹⁰ Robbers!!

human being, whether she really exists: "Est-ce une femme ou une poupée? ... Dans quelques jours, je le découvrirai peut-être..."¹¹ (57). Loti wonders to himself whether the creature he has married is a woman or a doll; he decides to spend some time with her to attempt to discover which category she falls into. Because he associates Chrysanthemum with consumer representations of Japan – drawings on porcelain teacups, for example – Loti is confused about whether Chrysanthemum is a woman or an object. His consumerist attitude toward Japan's culture and people make it difficult for him to understand them as slightly different, but equivalent to their French counterparts. At first glance, it seems as if Loti must simply get used to his wife in order to understand her and begin to recognize her emotions and expressions in order to see her as human.

Several months later, Loti writes, "Elle avait un air de fée morte. Ou bien encore elle ressemblait à quelque grande libellule bleue qui se serait abattue là et qu'on y aurait clouée"¹² (114). This time around, Chrysanthemum is compared to a dead fairy and a large blue dragonfly; these choices severely dehumanize Chrysanthemum. Dragonflies and fairies are fantastical creatures; one is an insect, the other is a fictional creature. By choosing to compare Chrysanthemum to a dead animal that has been pinned down as a specimen, Loti conveys to his readers both how little Chrysanthemum appears to be alive and how she is his object of study. Loti does not interact with Chrysanthemum as his wife, but rather as something to be examined; he views her from his standpoint as a writer, attempting to capture each detail exactly for his readers. He is unable to simply view her in terms of their relationship as a married couple, man to woman, because he does not believe they are really married. From the outset of the novel, it is

¹¹ Is it a woman or a doll? ... In a few days, maybe I will find out..."

¹² She seemed like a dead fairy. Or rather, she looked like some big blue dragonfly that was knocked down and that one had pinned there.

clear that Loti sees the marriage as a temporary diversion, not as a loving connection. Because Loti does not feel committed to Chrysanthemum as her husband and because he is using his experience as Japan as material for his novel, Loti views Chrysanthemum as a specimen, not as a woman. Loti solidifies his superior status through this behavior; he is a man, Chrysanthemum is a specimen.

When Loti leaves Chrysanthemum at the end of the novel, it is clear from their goodbye that he has regarded her as nothing more than an object. He hands her a few coins and says a brief goodbye: "Je t'avais prise pour m'amuser; tu n'y as peut-être pas très bien réussi, mais tu as donné ce que tu pouvais, ta petite personne, tes révérences et ta petite musique; somme toute, tu as été assez mignonne, dans ton genre nippon"¹³ (317). Loti's description of Chrysanthemum's qualities is extremely condescending; using the diminutive "petite" in reference to her music and her actual body suggests that these things are trifles, nothing special. His comment that she was cute enough suggests that he was extremely disappointed in his doll-wife; she offered up what she could, but her entire existence and culture was not enough to successfully please Loti. Because Loti was not amused by Chrysanthemum, she failed him; he views her as a pathetic little doll, devoid of any particularly exciting or amusing qualities and not worth his money. Loti's goodbye to Chrysanthemum makes it clear that he saw her only as a doll, only as an object of amusement; she is the subverted object for the commanding westerner.

Loti is also unmoved during this goodbye because he never recognizes his marriage to Chrysanthemum as a real marriage. When he suspects his friend Yves of being in love with his wife, he suggests that Yves could have her if he wanted:

¹³ I took you to amuse me; you didn't perhaps succeed much, but you gave what you could, your little person, your reverences and your little music; all told, you were cute enough, in your Japanese way.

Tu sais, après tout, si elle te faisait tant de plaisir ... Je ne l'ai pas épousée, elle n'est pas ma femme, en somme...
Très surpris, il me regarde:
-Pas votre femme, vous dites? – Si! par exemple ... Voilà justement, c'est qu'elle est votre femme... (280-281).¹⁴

Loti argues here that if Chrysanthemum really makes Yves happy, then he should take her; according to Loti's conception of marriage, Chrysanthemum is not his wife. Because he purchased her in a foreign country, Loti doesn't believe that Chrysanthemum is really his wife. Loti considers Chrysanthemum as an object; as with any purchase, Loti believes the object can be exchanged or returned. Loti mentions throughout the novel that his time in Japan is limited and that his "marriage" to Chrysanthemum is a temporary arrangement, a way for him to have a companion to amuse him during his vacation of sorts. Yves is shocked by Loti's argument, responding that of course Chrysanthemum is his wife; for Yves, Chrysanthemum is not an object but a woman, worthy of respect and most certainly not exchangeable. Unlike Loti, who views his marriage as subject matter for his novel and a form of entertainment, Yves is shocked to discover that Loti considers his relationship with Chrysanthemum so casually. In the end, Loti solidifies his social role as a powerful western male by refusing to recognize his marriage and by treating Chrysanthemum as a subhuman object.

Montagu embraces her role as a travel writer because it represents an opportunity to escape from her role as a wit and a beauty in English court society. As a married, foreign female in Turkey, Montagu has more liberty in terms of travel and dress than she would if she were in England; Turkey's culture allows married females to travel as they please if their husbands agree to it, and

¹⁴ You know, after all, if she made you so happy ... I didn't marry her, she's not really my wife...
-Quite surprised, he looks at me:
Not your wife, you say? – Yes! That's exactly what she is - she's your wife.

as the wife of an ambassador, Montagu is given access to many different aspects of Turkish society. Montagu travels around Constantinople and the surrounding cities, visiting important people and exploring spaces previously undiscovered by male travel writers, such as the Turkish baths. Particularly intriguing for Montagu, however, is the "costume" she wears while traveling about the country because of the freedom it affords her.

Montagu's description of her costume for traveling is extensive in a letter to her sister, detailing everything from the petticoat to the headdress. By the end of the description, it almost seems as if Montagu is wearing every piece of clothing to be found in Turkey:

The first piece of my dress is a pair of drawers [...] Over this hangs my smock... The *entari* is a waistcoat [...] My caftan of the same stuff with my drawers, is a robe exactly fitted to my shape [...] Over this is a girdle [...] The *cüppe* is a loose robe they throw off, or put on, according to the weather [...] The headdress is composed of a cap... (XXX).

By dressing in the Turkish clothing, Montagu attempts to blend into Turkish society and experience the culture as member of it, rather than as an observer. Montagu uses the Turkish dress to become an active participant in the society. Montagu's role has changed from that of the passive English female who is observed in court and by her husband and her female peers to that of an active participant in the Turkish culture who tries to assimilate in order to better understand the culture and its people.

Mary Jo Kietzman describes Montagu's discussion of her costume in terms of Montagu's position toward the Turkish society, claiming that Montagu's willingness to don the native clothing of Turkey represents a desire to truly join the society rather than to study it from a distance:

By calling attention to her costume, Montagu paints an ironic self-portrait that emphasizes the tentative essays of a foreigner who is willing to interrogate her positionality and to assume the relatively limited role of participant in the creation of culture rather than that of a detached cultural analyst (3).

Montagu is aware that her enthusiasm for Turkey and its culture is a little extreme; her attempts to assimilate into Turkish society by donning various items of native clothing are contradicted in a way by her ostentatious appearance. Her willingness to try out the native clothing and her attempts to adapt to the fashion of the Turkish women, however, represent a desire to place herself on equal footing with the Turkish people. Montagu frequently travels in a Turkish coach in order to blend in: "... I chose to go incognito to avoid any disputes about ceremony, and went in a Turkish coach, only attended by my woman that held up my train and the Greek Lady who was my interprestess" (XXXIV). Montagu wants to engage with the Turkish people on the level of an insider rather than as a foreigner, and though she is overenthusiastic at first, her attempts at assimilation are based in an honest desire to fit in. Unlike many male travel writers who place themselves on a sort of critical pedestal in order to study the people and places they explore, Montagu strives to participate in Turkish culture and society on a smaller scale, setting herself on equal footing with the people in her path. Montagu does this because, as a woman who has not been commissioned to travel, she enjoys describing the details of her everyday life rather than approaching her letters with a specific goal in mind.

Kietzman makes a similar argument about Montagu's descriptions of the Turkish people she encounters abroad, saying, "Montagu identified to a certain extent with some of the women she met but had enough respect for Turkish women's difference to approach them as teachers, regarding their ways as viable alternatives to her own" (3). Montagu both identifies with and respects the Turkish women simultaneously, but she frequently examines the differences between their culture and hers rather than the similarities between their cultures. In a letter to her friend Abbé Conti, Montagu writes, "Thus you see, sir, these people are not so unpolished as we represent them. 'Tis true their magnificence is of a different taste from ours, and perhaps of a

better" (XLIX). This choice to accept Turkish cultures or clothing styles or mannerisms is a vital part of Montagu's departure from the male travel writer's attitude toward the Other; Montagu is, unlike male counterparts like Loti, willing to accept that Turkey's culture is not inferior, but simply different from that of England.

Another example of Montagu's willingness to accept Turkish cultures is represented in her discussion of Turkish women wearing the veil. Montagu's approving comments on the Muslim veil have been quite controversial in recent years, leading critics to argue over whether Montagu's stance on the veil was pro-feminist or anti-feminist. During her travels throughout Turkey and her journeys through the streets of Constantinople, Montagu was intrigued by the Turkish veil and its uses. Unlike most critics of the veil today, who label it as misogynistic and confining, Montagu sees the veil as liberating, remarking, "This perpetual masquerade gives [Turkish women] entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery" (XXX). Here, Montagu is referencing the ability of women to travel about town and cheat on their husbands without fear of retribution; since the women are covered by the veil, they are unrecognizable and therefore cannot be identified as adulterers.

Kietzman argues that Montagu saw the veil as a way for Turkish women to claim their own female space:

Montagu saw that gender segregation could provide women the opportunity to shape themselves and their societies, and she saw the veil as a further symbol of this constructive segregation – a means of establishing a personal female domain – not proof of Islam's fundamental misogyny, as it has always been read by the West (6).

Kietzman suggests that the veil represents an opportunity to assert ownership of certain spaces, in other words, a voluntary decision to create a domain that excludes males from entry. Montagu clearly envies the ease with which Turkish women can escape from their husbands, as well as the

help the veil offers in this deception.

Montagu repeats several more times in this letter that she believes the Turkish women are really quite free in their society, stating, "Upon the whole, I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire" (XXX). Here Montagu argues that it is, in fact, only the Turkish women who are free in the sense that they are able to travel about town and deceive their husbands while the husbands are unable to resist. She contrasts her perspective on the veil with that of previous male travel writers, saying,

Now that I am a little acquainted with their ways I cannot forbear admiring either the exemplary discretion or extreme stupidity of all the writers that have given accounts of them. 'Tis very easy to see they have more liberty than we have... (XXX).

Montagu pokes fun at the travel writers who have preceded her, suggesting that they are either too polite or too unintelligent to point out what activities the Turkish women are conducting underneath their veils. She seems to welcome the opportunity to fashion her own social role as an active participant and a traveler free to roam around town and meet Turks in many different social circles, rather than simply accepting the social role of passive observer and proper foreigner assigned to her by society; as she observes these cultural habits, Montagu assumes them herself.

Both Loti and Montagu face challenges to their gender roles in their travels. Loti's role as a powerful male is made more secure by these challenges, while Montagu's role as a passive female is critically modified. While each writer conceives of his/her gender in a different way, only Montagu re-constructs her gender role during her journey. For Montagu, traveling in Turkey represents an opportunity to escape from the narrow confines of her restrictive role as a passive female observer. For Loti, traveling in Japan serves as a chance to further exert his male

dominance over the female gender, solidifying his status as a powerful, superior male.

Loti's role as a commanding male is placed into question by his lack of attraction to and boredom with his wife, Madame Chrysanthemum. He claims that he marries Chrysanthemum out of boredom; once they are married, however, Loti's boredom persists. This boredom with Chrysanthemum and total lack of attraction to her place Loti's heterosexuality into question. If Loti were attracted to Chrysanthemum, he would not find her boring. Richard Berrong writes, "Nothing about [Chrysanthemum] appeals to [Loti]" (122). (A concrete example of this lack of appeal is the quotation used on page 15). Loti's boredom with Chrysanthemum manifests a non-attraction, which suggests sexual ambiguity in Loti's character. That is, Loti's status as a powerful, comfortable, assured male is called into question when he does not exert his power over his wife sexually.

This lack of desire in Chrysanthemum supports and augments Loti's distaste for Japan and its culture. He is disappointed with the Japanese women as a whole because his wife cannot please him, and Chrysanthemum's inability to entertain him leaves him feeling bored with not just her but Japan as well. One critic writes, "Loti never establishes real contact with Madame Chrysanthemum or Japan" (Lerner 123). Another argues, "There was never the slightest emotion in this arrangement" (Blanch 123). This lack of emotion and engagement with Chrysanthemum stems from Loti's original idea for entering into the marriage: "Par ennui, mon Dieu, par solitude, j'en étais venu peu à peu à imaginer et à désirer ce mariage" (2)¹⁵. The outlook Loti assumes on his marriage mirrors his attitude toward Japan; for him, the voyage is simply a diversion, a way to stave off boredom and loneliness. It is clear from the quotation referenced earlier (p.20) that Loti views his marriage as a temporary arrangement, a way to entertain himself during his stay.

¹⁵ Out of boredom, my God, out of loneliness, I came to imagine little by little and desire this marriage.

One might argue that Loti does not want to become sexually involved with Chrysanthemum because he knows he is leaving her; this still seems problematic, however, when coupled with the previous descriptions of Loti's condescension to Chrysanthemum and unwillingness to recognize her as human.

This boredom with Chrysanthemum is particularly intriguing, however, when viewed alongside Loti's festering jealousy of Yves. Only a few months after his marriage, Loti begins to suspect that Yves is having an affair with Madame Chrysanthemum:

Il est certain qu'ils se plaisent beaucoup, Chrysanthème et lui. Mais j'ai confiance toujours, et je ne me figure pas que cette petite épousée de hasard puisse jamais amener un trouble un peu sérieux entre ce 'frère' et moi (110)¹⁶.

Loti's refusal to believe that Chrysanthemum could be capable of creating trouble seems to speak to the strength of the bond that Loti shares with Yves. By using the term 'frère' to describe Yves, Loti also expresses the deep bond that they share. Once again, Loti sets himself and his male western friend up as superior to his little spouse, Chrysanthemum, solidifying his role as a powerful male figure.

It is strange that Loti seems to fear Yves is falling in love with Chrysanthemum, considering that no evidence is presented to support Loti's theory. The jealousy festers in Loti throughout the novel, fueled by an unknown source. At one point, Loti writes, "D'ailleurs, de plus en plus, je le crois amoureux de Chrysanthème" (128)¹⁷. The more time passes, the more Loti suspects Yves of being in love with his wife. Loti's suspicions are unfounded, however, as Yves neither expresses a love for Chrysanthemum explicitly nor acts in such a way as to promote suspicion. What bothers Loti must be the potential disruption to the assertion of his power; as a

¹⁶ It is certain that they are often happy, Chrysanthemum and he. But I have confidence always, and I don't imagine that this little coincidental wife could ever bring serious trouble between this brother and me.

¹⁷ Moreover, more and more, I believe him to be in love with Chrysanthemum.

commanding male figure in his marriage, Loti does not want Chrysanthemum to be deceiving him behind his back. The possibility of her betrayal puts his superior power in their dynamic at risk.

Loti worries not just about Chrysanthemum, but also the effect her betrayal would have on his friendship with Yves: "De cette Japonaise, je me soucie comme de rien. Mais Yves ... ce serait mal de sa part, et cela porterait une atteinte grave à ma confiance en lui" (155)¹⁸. Loti's feelings suggest that the strength of the bond between himself and Yves greatly surpasses the strength of the bond between Loti and his wife.¹⁹ Loti decides he doesn't care about the deception by his foreign wife; he cares only about the deception by his western male friend, once again subverting the Other and representing Chrysanthemum as totally inferior to Yves.

Montagu's conception of her gender is questioned several times throughout her letters, but most significantly in the Turkish bath letter. The scene described below occurs just after Montagu has entered the bath and observed the naked Turkish women:

The lady that seemed the most considerable amongst them entreated me to sit by her and would fain have undressed me for the bath. I excused myself with some difficulty, they being however all so earnest in persuading me, I was at last forced

¹⁸ Of this little Japanese, I worry very little. But Yves ... it would be bad on his part, and it would strike a severe blow to my trust in him.

¹⁹ This deeper sentiment has led some critics to attempt a gay reading of the novel. From the outset of the novel, just after Loti has informed Yves of his intention to marry upon his arrival in Japan, Loti makes it clear that Yves will be welcome in his new house: "Tu auras ta chambre chez nous" (2) (You will have your room in our home). Loti's emphasis on Yves' future room in his home, as well as his jealousy at Yves' supposed feelings for Chrysanthemum serve as evidence for Loti's potential homosexuality. There is, however, no sense that the feeling is mutual. As Richard Berrong puts it, "...there is no real concern with whether Yves Kermadec reciprocates Pierre Loti's love" (121). While we as readers view a few select moments of affection on the part of Loti's character, we never read of any feelings on Yves' part. It is true, however, that a gay reading of the love story is livelier than a heterosexual one. As Berrong puts it, "*Madame Chrysanthème* seems very pale as a gay love story. As a heterosexual love story, it is altogether lifeless" (124).

to open my shirt, and show them my stays, which satisfied them very well, for I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine, that it was not in my own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband (letter XXVII)

While Montagu suggests that the Turkish women believe that her husband has locked her up in her dress, this explanation of her outfit allows her to remain dressed in the room of otherwise nude women. According to Rebecca Chung, Montagu takes charge of the situation and avoids potential embarrassment:

Montagu figures her stays as a device used by her husband to lock her up. Montagu is positioned, and positions herself, as a successful negotiator of potentially humiliating challenges both to her sexual agency and her understanding of political discretion (115).

Montagu is in an awkward position in the baths; she does not want to remove her clothes because nudity would endanger her modesty, but she also wants to be included in the society even though she is not nude. By allowing the Turkish women to believe she is incapable of undressing, she is able to remain in the baths and maintain her modesty. Because Montagu is fully clothed and observing this secret world, however, her gender is placed into question; if she is a woman, but she is not undressed, what is her gender role? Montagu is observing, yet she is permitted to remain in the clandestine bath world of women, their secret space for gossip and conversation; therefore, is she a female observer, or a male participant?

Montagu makes a reference to the artist Gervase in the Turkish bath letter, mentioning that she wishes he could be present to be able to paint all of the beautifully displayed nude women. Campbell posits that this comment represents Montagu's inability to occupy the female role in this scene, arguing that Montagu cannot conceive of a female observer because it seems to contradict her role as a passive woman:

Finding herself in the position of the observer and interpreter of female bodies rather than that of the observed and represented, Lady Mary can only imagine that position as a male one, and she fantasizes herself as replaced in the baths by an

invisible male artist (80).

Campbell's argument is problematic for several reasons. First of all, Montagu comments that she wishes Gervase could be present, but makes no mention of wishing to become Gervase. In effect, Montagu is already painting a portrait of the women in the baths by describing them in her letter. It is true that Montagu recognizes that her position is an unusual one, and rather unconventional in that she is a female observer, but she does not express a desire to be replaced by Gervase. Montagu is amused that she is able to exist in the harem both as a female and as a writer even though she did not remove her clothing.

Montagu faces challenges to her gender role in that she is able to exist as an active female observer rather than as the passive object of study. She takes the challenges in stride, however, and welcomes the opportunity to break ground for females to come. Letters such as the Turkish bath letter make it clear that Montagu is quite capable of maneuvering through issues of gender and gender roles. She welcomes the opportunity to create a new gender role for herself as a female travel writer, that of an active female observer who is capable of infiltrating previously inaccessible spaces.

Though Loti was primarily a sailor by occupation, as he became more and more well known as a writer, he began to use his travels with the navy as subject for his novels. Juliette Adam, a French writer and founder of a publication known as the *Nouvelle Revue*, offered Loti the opportunity to publish his novels, and supported the continuation of his writing endeavors. Matt Matsuda discusses the relationship between Adam and Loti:

With his patron and muse, Juliette Adam, Loti created a romantic French Pacific [...] telling tales of naval missions and amorous liaisons that erased the distinctions between love story and imperial ideology (1).

By creating tales of exotic romances taking place in the Far East, Loti obscured his distaste for foreign lands and desire to possess other cultures by consuming their products and using these products as stand-ins for the culture itself. This tactic seemed to work quite well for Loti in the beginning of his career; he wrote such bestsellers as *Aziyadé* and *Le Mariage de Loti*. Later on in his career, however, Loti ceased to disguise his distaste for the Other; in such works as *Madame Chrysanthème*, the pale love story fails to cover Loti's blatant distaste for Japan.

Alec Hargreaves comments on Loti's obvious distaste for Japan and his use of travel to make money:

[Loti] was willing to continue cashing in on his travels even when he felt he had nothing significant to say about the lands he visited. Not all his works were motivated by the spirit of crude exploitation plainly involved in some of those of the loathed Far East ...(81).

Loti's perspective as a superior westerner came through in his novels and became stronger with each work, as did his distaste for the foreign lands he visited. Loti was easily published through the aid of Juliette Adam; he could, therefore, market his personal opinion of a country to the public. Because this public was generally unable to travel and experience foreign countries for themselves, they relied on Loti's representations as truthful portrayals. By writing of his distaste for Japan, therefore, Loti transmitted a sentiment of distaste toward Japan to his public, thereby exploiting Japan as merely fodder for a possibly lucrative novel.

Though Loti strongly disliked Japan, he seemed to have no problem with bringing it back to France with him. He stuffed his chateau in Rochefort full of "exotic" items, devoting an entire room to articles and objects from the Far East. Richie argues that this represents Loti's desire to purchase rather than experience culture:

The bad tourist, always imperialistic, does not wish to learn or to experience. The aim, rather, is to acquire as much as cheaply as possible, then to return home with the loot. This is what Loti did (98).

Loti purchased objects in Japan in order to consume the culture and transport it back to France; through buying objects representative of Japan's culture, Loti was able to recreate Japan in his home without needing to relate these objects to their culture or their people. Rather than experience the culture and allow the culture to infiltrate his sense of self, Loti instead purchases as much of the culture as possible and removes it from its native surroundings by placing it in his own French home. This purchasing and removal of Japanese objects is indicative of Loti's desire to appear well traveled and his need to possess the objects of the Other as a dominant westerner.

Loti not only oversimplifies the country by choosing objects as symbols for the entire culture; he also oversimplifies the Japanese people, especially Japanese women, throughout his novel. Just after Loti has married Chrysanthemum, he describes her to his readers:

Cette petite Chrysanthème ... comme silhouette, tout le monde a vu cela partout. Quiconque a regardé une de ces peintures sur porcelaine ou sur soie, qui encombrent nos bazars à présent, sait par coeur cette jolie coiffure apprêtée, cette taille toujours penchée en avant pour esquisser quelque nouvelle révérence gracieuse ... (67).²⁰

Loti suggests that everyone knows what Chrysanthemum looks like from the Far Eastern objects they have purchased in France. He simplifies Chrysanthemum by comparing her to one image on a teacup or a piece of silk. This over-simplification of Chrysanthemum's appearance and physical features is indicative of Loti's dismissive feelings toward Japan and towards its entire culture. He feels that he already knows Japan and its people from consumer objects, and so his visit to Japan is entirely superfluous in the sense that he has no need to involve himself in the culture of Japan.

²⁰ "This little Chrysanthemum ... like a silhouette, everyone has seen it everywhere. Anyone who has looked at one of these paintings on porcelain or silk, which clutter up our bazaars, knows by heart this pretty finished hairstyle, this waist always tilting forward to highlight some new gracious reverence..."

Loti attempts to combat this image of the bad tourist in his introduction, claiming that Japan's effect on him has played a large role in his novel:

Bien que le rôle le plus long soit en apparence à Madame Chrysanthème, il est bien certain que les trois principaux personnages sont Moi, le Japon, et l'Effet que ce pays m'a produit" (Introduction).²¹

Loti wants his readers to believe that Japan has had a great impact on him because his novels focus on the idea of traveling to a foreign country and experiencing an attack on identity and perspective. What Loti does not realize is that because he is a male travel writer and because he has become so ingrained in the tradition of dominance, he does not allow Japan to affect him at all. His social and gender roles are strengthened by the journey, and his role as a writer remains the same. Whether Loti truly believes Japan affected him is unclear; the fact that it did not affect his status as a powerful western male is obvious in light of the preceding argument and evidence.

Unlike Loti, Montagu suffered great hardship in attempting to get her letters published. Montagu also suffered from the problem of attempting to write in a genre that excluded her. Susan Bassnett argues that not only Montagu, but all female travelers, suffered from this handicap:

Women travellers had [...] to write about their experiences from within a tradition that denied them a role, for if the image of the coloniser is sexualised as a man bent on raping virgin lands, then a woman from the colonising culture is effectively erased (231).

Montagu is in limbo in the travel narrative tradition, as she is not a sexualized female, but rather a powerful female writer; she is an active observer, not a passive observed object.

Montagu obviously entertained feelings of insecurity as a female travel writer, often times apologizing for the length of her letters, or commenting to her readers that they were most

²¹ Even though the most extensive role appears to be that of Madame Chrysanthemum, it is certain that the three main characters are Myself, Japan, and the Effect this country had on me.

likely bored and should throw out the letter when they were tired. One example of this type of apology occurs in a letter written to the Princess of Wales:

This theme would carry me very far and I am sensible I have already tired out your Royal Highness' patience, but my letter is in your hands and you may make it as short as you please by throwing it into the fire when you are weary of reading it (XXVI).

Montagu has just finished describing Adrianople in great detail to the Princess, but worries that she will become bored, and so offers her the chance to reject her opinions and dispose of the letter at any time. Montagu is worried because she is the first female travel writer; she has no tradition of female travel writers to support her or to solidify her status as worthy of attention. As she writes her letters, therefore, she offers her readers a way out as a self-defense mechanism. Montagu is wary of exerting the authority a travel writer must express in order to convince the reader that his/her work is worth reading because she wants to retain her readership; she fears that if she assumes her public is interested in her work, she might lose them. She lacks the authoritative quality Loti possesses; in order to embrace her role as a female travel writer, she must create this authority and self-esteem as a writer.

As Montagu's letters progress, her insecurity as a writer becomes less apparent, signaling a growing sense of authority and self-confidence as a writer. In one letter, Montagu subjugates an apology to a post-script and asks her sister to apologize to a mutual friend rather than apologizing to the friend directly:

P.S. I have writ a letter to my Lady– that I believe she won't like, and upon cooler reflection I think I had done better to have let it alone, but I was downright peevish at all her questions, and her ridiculous imagination, that I have certainly seen abundance of wonders which I keep to myself out of mere malice. She is angry that I won't lie like other travellers. I verily believe she expects I should tell her of the anthropophagi²², and men whose heads grow below their shoulders. However, pray say something to pacify her (XXI).

²² Cannibals.

Montagu begins to feel comfortable criticizing the extravagant and fantastic descriptions her male predecessors have offered up of foreign peoples and cultures because she is able to recognize many of the male travel writer's accounts as fabrications now that she is actually traveling herself. Montagu is tired of the preposterous stories offered up by many of her male counterparts, but the fact that she still apologizes for having stated the truth indicates that she is not entirely ready to set herself completely at odds with her predecessors. Montagu is clearly becoming more comfortable with the idea of disagreeing publicly with her male peers in the genre, but this postscript is indicative of a reluctance that Montagu still harbors about setting herself at odds with the male travel narrative tradition. As previously stated, Montagu is not at all assured that her public will maintain interest in her letters, and so she continues to attempt to pacify them by apologizing for diverging from what they have accepted until now as the truth.

As Montagu's letters progress, however, she apologizes more infrequently and attacks her male counterparts more frequently for their exaggerated descriptions of cultures and peoples, embracing her newfound role as a confident female travel writer. She stresses that she values the truth more than anything else. In one letter to her sister, Lady Mar, Montagu writes,

Thus you see, dear sister, the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe. Perhaps it would be more entertaining to add a few surprising customs of my own invention, but nothing seems to me so agreeable as truth, and I believe nothing so acceptable to you (XXX).

Montagu sets herself up in opposition to her male counterparts, arguing that she is unwilling to fabricate or exaggerate Turkish culture. It is clear from this statement that Montagu is finally comfortable standing up to her male counterparts and their previous accounts of foreign countries. Her experience in Turkey and her modified social and gender roles provide her with the confidence required to embrace her authority as a writer.

Banerjee explains this, saying "Her self-fashioning as a somewhat intrepid traveler signals an anxiety to eliminate doubts regarding her capability to undertake a challenging endeavor marked, thus far, primarily as masculine" (36). Montagu makes it clear in her letters that she is just as capable as male travel writers and that being female does not make her fear a challenge. In one letter to the Princess of Wales, Montagu writes:

I have now, madam, passed a journey that has not been undertaken by any Christian since the time of the Greek emperors, and I shall not regret all the fatigues I have suffered in it if it gives me an opportunity of amusing your Royal Highness by an account of places utterly unknown amongst us, the emperor's ambassadors and those few English that have come hither always going on the Danube to Nicopolis (XXVI).

Montagu wants her readers to understand that she is up to the task of travel writing; she is willing to make difficult journeys in order to provide her public with the truth about foreign countries and foreign cultures. Her position as a woman does not preclude her from making the voyages necessary to reach distant lands.

The more Montagu travels, the more she realizes that not only is she the equal of her male counterparts, but in some ways, she has the upper hand. At the end of her Turkish bath letter, Montagu writes, "... I am sure I have now entertained you with an account of such a sight as you never saw in your life, and what no book of travels could inform you of, as 'tis no less than death for a man to be found in one of these places" (XXVII). Not only is Montagu creating an entirely new identity within the genre - that of female travel writer, rather than observed woman - she is also breaking new ground in that she has access to spaces that male travel writers cannot penetrate. Therefore, she commands potentially enlightening information, information that can prove that her male counterparts are exaggerating the truth in their stories. In one letter to Lady Rich, Montagu mockingly details the errors of Lady Rich's "knowledge" of Turkey:

Your whole letter is full of mistakes from one end to the other. I see you have

taken your ideas of Turkey from that worthy author Dumont, who has writ with equal ignorance and confidence. 'Tis a particular pleasure to me here to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far removed from truth and so full of absurdities I am very well diverted with them. They never fail to give you an account of the women, which 'tis certain they never saw, and talking very wisely of the genius of men, into whose company they are never admitted, and very often describe mosques which they dare not peep into (XXXVIII).

Because Montagu lives in Turkey and because she is accepted into Turkish society as a female and as the wife of an ambassador, she is able to access Turkish culture in a way that male travel writers could not. In reading that her friend thoroughly believed in Dumont's narrative on Turkey, which Montagu now understands is completely wrong on many accounts, Montagu is amused and entertained, ready to set her friend straight. Now that she is in Turkey and experiencing the culture firsthand, Montagu is not shy about setting herself apart from her male peers in the genre and exposing their fabrications and lies.

Montagu wants her readers to know that her letters represent an entirely new view of Turkey, and that she should not simply be lumped in with the male travel writers like Dumont who have come before her. She stresses that many of her male predecessors enjoy writing about things they have not actually experienced. In one letter to a friend, Montagu writes, "You will perhaps be surprised at an account so different from what you have been entertained with by the common voyage writers, who are very fond of speaking of what they don't know" (XXXVIII). She does not want to be grouped with male travel writers since she stresses that she values honesty, unlike these male counterparts. Because she is going against what has become accepted knowledge in England, Montagu must constantly stress that she is in fact telling the truth: "I am afraid you'll doubt the truth of this account, which I own is very different from our common notions in England, but it is not less truth for all that" (XXXVIII). Although it takes Montagu time to adjust to the idea that the information male travel writers before her have

provided about Turkey is untrue, she eventually warms to the idea, and is able to embrace her role as a truthful female travel writer. It is through her experience in Turkey and the continuing act of writing that Montagu builds her self-confidence as a writer and is able to embrace her role as a female travel writer.

Montagu underwent several transitions in order to embrace her role as a female travel writer; she encountered challenges to her social and gender roles, as well as to her role as a writer. After undergoing the transition from passive observed to active observer and formulating social and gender roles that allowed her to travel and explore, Montagu was able to rid herself of her insecurities as a writer and accept her role as a female travel writer, defining the role for women to follow. Loti did not undergo the transitions Montagu underwent because, as a male travel writer steeped in a strong tradition of male travel writers, the idea of a change to his social or gender role was impossible.

Both writers faced challenges to their social and gender roles as well as their roles as writers. For Loti, these challenges merely strengthened his previously existing role and solidified his status as a powerful male westerner. For Montagu, these challenges represented an opportunity to completely remake herself and define the female travel writing traits – more discursive, less goal-oriented, engaged with the everyday, in comparison with male travel writing - for centuries to come. The fundamental difference between the writing styles of Loti and Montagu and between *Madame Chrysanthème* and *Turkish Embassy Letters* was therefore the identity re-fashioning or lack thereof. Montagu's re-formulation of her social and gender roles and her role as a writer injected her writing with a vivacious, passionate, and eager attitude toward the Other; Loti, in contrast, remained the same from beginning to end of his novel,

imbuing his writing with a negative and uninterested attitude toward the Other.

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