

Unveiling Orientalism: Ambiguity in c18 British Discourse on Travel

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Travel writing as medium of Differentiation

British Empire
Occident
Enlightenment
Modernity
Self

Ottoman Empire
Orient
Despotism
Tradition
Other

Agents of Ambiguity
authors, texts, genres
institutions, networks
c18 society

Ethnomasquerade
cross-dressing,
masquerade, veiling

Travel writing and Ambiguity

ambiguous people, places and practices
transgression, mimicry and transculturation

Genres and Media
Travelogues,
diaries and letters
Oriental tales and plays
maps, illustrations and portraits

Observations
Eunuchs
Castrati
Hermaphrodites
Hijra

Ambiguity and Gender

"I will not tell you what you may find in every author that has writ of this country"

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1777)

"They usually grow to a great Stature, and they have an Effeminate Voice, and never have any Hair grow on their Faces"

Joseph Pitts, *A true and faithful Account of the Religion & Manners of the Mahometans* (1719)

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Turkish dress (n.d.)
S. Hollyer after J. B. Wandesforde, Bildarchiv Austria

Francis Smith, Kisler Aga,
Chief of the Black Eunuchs
and First Keeper of the
Serraglio
(1763-1779)
Yale Center for British Art

Ambiguity and Religion

"These people [...] declare that they are utterly unable to judge which religion is best; but to be certain of not entirely rejecting the Truth, they very prudently follow both, and go to the Mosque on Fridays and the Church on Sundays"

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1777)

Hubert Jaillot, *Map of Ottoman Empire and its divisions* (1696) Harvard Map Collection

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DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft