

Esthers in the Seraglio: Jewish Women in Early Modern English Travel Narratives on Turkey

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In the last decades of the sixteenth century, as Englishmen endeavoured to secure a foothold in the eastern parts of the Mediterranean, numerous travel narratives about “the lands of the Ottomans” began to appear. In the last thirty years these narratives have been closely scrutinised from a postcolonial perspective. Studies have touched on such themes as the cruelty and sensuality of the “Turks”, while depictions of women have been characterised as “doubly other”. Such theorising oversimplifies the early modern imagination about people of both genders living under Ottoman rule. In particular, Jewish women have received scant attention. In this essay I will look at how “Jewesses” were portrayed in travel books about Turkey. I will investigate how these portrayals differed from those based on Western European Jewish women and explore what functions the descriptions might have served for early modern English men and women. Jews in early modern English literature have mostly attracted scholarly attention in the context of drama thereby leaving a multitude of depictions unaddressed. The Jewish women of Turkey were perceived rather differently from “the beautiful Jewesses” in Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s plays. I want to stress the multiple readings found in travel narratives and the active imaginative process undertaken by their authors of appropriating and producing “foreign knowledge”.

The early modern English, both men and women, were fascinated by travel accounts. By the end of the sixteenth century a substantial number of travel books on Turkey were being published in order to satisfy the public’s growing appetite.¹ It has been observed that early modern travel writers were engaged in the conquest of new worlds and further, that these mostly male authors gendered the places and peoples they visited and wrote about. Narratives depicting foreign countries

¹ The literature on early modern English travel writing is extensive. Editions of travel books published by the Hakluyt Society have grown in numbers since its foundation in 1846. See <http://www.hakluyt.com/index.htm>

and their inhabitants being seduced, ravished and overpowered probably fed this interpretation. The women in such narratives were characterised as “doubly other”, more other than men because of their sex.²

In the present article, I challenge this notion by looking at the ways in which Jewish women were portrayed in early modern English travel books on Turkey. I will explore the meanings attached to their imagined appearance, their habits and their ways of living and investigate what function the portrayals served for early modern English people. Jewish men are frequently portrayed in European travel narratives, yet Jewish women are seldom the focus of attention. In contrast, books about Turkey tell a rather different story with different tones, even if their examples of the Jewesses are just as rare. I will discuss ways in which Jewish women living in Turkish dominions were presented and explore why these accounts differed from the accounts that concentrated on Europe.³ The passages that I am discussing are the only instances in which Jewish women surface in early modern English books about the Ottomans. Most narratives focused more on male Jews, if they chose to depict Ottoman minorities at all.

In the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, the Turkish Ottoman Empire became the subject of serious study. Nicolas de Nicolay's famous *Navigations into Turkie* had been translated into English in 1585, and soon thereafter Englishmen began to write about “Turkie” themselves. Richard Hakluyt (1552–1616) and his successor Samuel Purchas (1575–1626) were among the first to translate foreign travel narratives into English and compile them into extensive printed collections that also contained narratives about Turkey.⁴ Their work coincided with English efforts to break into Ottoman trading areas and to gain a foothold in the eastern parts of the Mediterranean.⁵ Since the Ottoman

2 See Ania Loomba, 2002. *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Nabil Matar 1999. *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press; Lynda Boose 1994. “The Getting of a Lawful Race”: Racial Discourse in Early Modern England and the Unrepresentable Black Woman. In Margo Hendricks & Patricia Parker (eds.) *Women, “Race” and Writing in The Early Modern Period*. New York: Routledge; Stephen Greenblatt 1991. *Marvelous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press co-published with Oxford University Press; for a discussion of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and a critique from a feminist perspective, see Reina Lewis 2004. *Rethinking Orientalism. Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1–11. Ania Loomba states that “non-European women are depicted as either dangerous (sometimes grotesque, sometimes very beautiful), and needing to be purged and annihilated, or alienated from their own society and made tractable, and therefore ready to be converted and assimilated into European family and society”. Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, 28.

3 It is not clear if or how the lack of a visible Jewish community in early modern England influenced the portrayals of Jews in travel writing. The writers were not necessarily a homogeneous group despite some shared mutual interests. On the historiographical treatment of the absence of Jews from early modern England, see James Shapiro 1996. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press. 62–76.

4 On Samuel Purchas, see David Armitage 2005. Samuel Purchas (the elder). Online. Available at <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22898> (accessed 1 March 2005).

5 Excellent recent studies about English contacts with the Ottoman Empire and travel narratives of the same include Gerald MacLean 2004. *The Rise of Oriental Travel. English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580–1720*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave; Gerald MacLean 2004. Strolling in Syria with William Biddulph. *Criticism* 46, 415–439; and Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen*.

dominions had substantial Jewish communities in several cities, travel writers were expected to examine them along with other exotic phenomena in the area.⁶ The production of travel narratives about Turkey was largely in the hands of men, and their interests – weaponry, legislation, professions and morality – were reflected in the texts. Prior to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters* (written in 1716–1718), there were no personal accounts of Turkey written by female authors, despite the fact that many women accompanied their merchant and ambassador husbands to the country. Consequently, books seemed to concentrate solely on male endeavours.⁷

Only rarely have studies of Jews in early modern English literature or history touched on the portrayals of Jewish women in travel narratives.⁸ Jewesses, as Jewish women were often called,⁹ have mostly attracted scholarly attention in the context of drama; the famous figures of Jessica and Abigail, the tormented daughters of Shylock and Barabas in Shakespeare and Marlowe come especially to mind.¹⁰ There is a powerful scholarly tradition behind this emphasis. The study of Jews in English literature has mainly drawn attention to stereotypes and stock characters: usurers, poisoner-doctors, Jew-devils, Marranos and “the beautiful Jewess”.¹¹ This perspective has had an influence on the creation of a further

6 Nicolas de Nicolay 1585. *The Nauigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, Made Into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay Daulphinois, Lord of Arfeuille, Chamberlaine and Geographer Ordinarie to the King of Fraunce: Conteining Sundry Singularities Which the Author Hath There Seene and Obserued: Deuided Into Foure Bookes, With Threescore Figures, Naturally Set Forth as Well of Men as Women, According to the Diuersitie of Nations, Their Port, Intreatie, Apparell, Lawes, Religion and Manner of Liuing, Aswel in Time of Warre as Peace: With Diuers Faire and Memorable Histories, Happened in Our Time. Translated Out of the French by T. Washington the Younger.* London: Imprinted at London by Thomas Dawson; on Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire, see Justin McCarthy 1997. *The Ottoman Turks. An Introductory History to 1923.* London & New York: Longman, 130; on Sephardic and Middle Eastern Jewries, see Sarah Abrevaya Stein 2005. Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries since 1492. In Martin Goodman, Jeremy Cohen & David Sorkin (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies.* Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 327–362; the classic study is Benjamin Braude & Bernard Lewis (eds.) 1981. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society I & II.* New York: Holmes & Meier. On English trade and travel in the Ottoman Empire, see MacLean *The Rise of Oriental Travel.* For a comparative Muslim perspective on Europe, see Nabil Matar (ed. and tr.) 2003. *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century.* New York & London: Routledge.

7 See MacLean *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 221–225.

8 Influential studies are by David S. Katz 1982. *Philosemitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603–1655.* Oxford: Clarendon Press; David S. Katz 1994. *The Jews in the History of England 1485–1850.* Oxford: Clarendon Press; and Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews.*

9 I employ the word “Jewess” because it was commonly used in early modern English books and I want to emphasise the differences writers tried to maintain. Jewish women were also referred to as “Iewes women” or “their women” and “women of the Jews”.

10 See for example Mary Janell Metzger 1998. Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew: Jessica, The Merchant of Venice, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 113, Special Topic: Ethnicity, 52–63; Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, 156–160; Janet Adelman 2003. Her Father’s Blood: Race, Conversion, and Nation in The Merchant of Venice. *Representations* 81, 4–30; Lisa Lampert 2004. *Gender and Jewish Difference. From Paul to Shakespeare.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 143–145.

11 See Frank Felsenstein 1990. Jews and Devils: Anti-Semitic Stereotypes of Late Medieval and Renaissance England. *Journal of Literature and Theology* 4, 15–28; Frank Felsenstein 1995. *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes. A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660–1830.* Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Bernard Glassman 1975. *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*

stereotype in scholarship: the notion that the English perceived Jewish women as mostly being young, beautiful and ready to convert to Christianity if tempted by their Christian suitors. It follows that only the figure of the “beautiful Jewess” draws modern scholarly attention, whilst the multitude of female depictions remains outside discussion. The terms “Iewes” or “Jewes” in early modern English texts referred to Jewish people as a religious and ethnic community, but they were treated almost exclusively as males. “Ottoman Turkes” were also discussed in this manner.¹² Because portrayals of Jewish males and references to “the Jew” and the Israelites were more numerous than portrayals of “the Jewess”, the tendency in scholarship has been to generalise or overlook depictions of women.¹³

In recent discussions, portrayals of Jews are usually treated as constructions and the function of Jewish otherness is interpreted as a tool of almost every discourse. In medieval studies this constructedness of Jews has led to the theorisation of Jews as “paper Jews”, “spectral Jews”, “hermeneutical Jews” or “virtual Jews”. The weakness of such labels is that they tend to exclude positive viewpoints and ignore the possibility of genuine interest in and points of contact with foreign cultures.¹⁴ The results are also gendered (perhaps unintentionally), thereby giving a quantitative focus to male endeavours that leads to contextualisation of Jewish women with the help of gendered presuppositions. Constructions of Jewish women are usually referred to in chapters dealing with Jewish domestic life, sexuality and the body. In the process, Jewish women become more bodily, sexual and “other”, even though depictions of Jewish men could also be more thoroughly examined from these vantage points. Views of Jewish men are interpreted through references to early nationalist or proto-racist thinking, Biblical views and similar “serious” topics.¹⁵

Without Jews. Images of Jews in England 1290–1700. Detroit: Wayne State University Press; Edward N. Calisch 1969 (1909). *The Jew in English Literature, as Author and as Subject.* Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press; J. L. Cardozo 1925. *The Contemporary Jew in the Elizabethan Drama.* Amsterdam: H.J. Paris; Peter Berek 1998. *The Jew as Renaissance Man. Renaissance Quarterly* 51, 128–162. See also Bryan Cheyette 1993. *Constructions of “the Jew” in English Literature and Society, Racial Representations 1875–1945.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

12 There is a considerable bibliography of recent scholarship on “the Turk” in English drama and culture. See, for example, Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*; Daniel Vitkus 2003. *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630.* Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave. “Turke” was not a stable category and could even refer to people outside Turkey.

13 James Shapiro has suggested that “the fact that Jewish men were represented as endowed with male and female traits goes a long way toward explaining why representations of Jewish men almost entirely displaced those of Jewish women at this time”. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 38.

14 For a summary of these discussions, see Anthony Bale 2006. *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms 1350–1500.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 20. On spectral Jews, see Steven F. Kruger 2006. *The Spectral Jew. Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe.* Medieval Cultures, Volume 40. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, xxii–xxiii; on virtual Jews, see Sylvia Thomasch 2000. *Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew.* In Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (ed.) *The Postcolonial Middle Ages.* Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave. On the notion of the lachrymose history of the Jews, see Stein, Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries, 328; and Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 48.

15 James Shapiro’s study *Shakespeare and the Jews* was among the first to take gender into account, even if gender was not the focus of his book. For a more recent discussion on gender and Jewish difference, see Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference.*

Jews are often treated as discursive stereotypes without taking into account the imaginative process behind these constructions, a process that included widely varying viewpoints and perceptions, cultural contacts and the material spaces involved in encounters with foreign cultures.¹⁶ Focusing attention on stereotypes can lead to a letting go of the multiple voices that commented on Jews – both male and female – in early modern English books. I do not mean that accepting the early modern multiplicity of views necessarily leads to viewing English attitudes towards Jews as less gendered or biased. Indeed, I believe that in order to interpret travel narratives in their cultural settings one has to be aware that they provided the early modern reader with a multiplicity of views that were constructed from sources not easily reducible to a specific nationality or culture.¹⁷ Jewish women rarely appeared in early modern English travel writing, but when they did, they were depicted as having depths and characteristics far beyond clichéd notions of beauty, submissiveness and subalternity. Depending on the context, a Jewess could be portrayed in a variety of guises: powerful or even “on top”,¹⁸ ugly or beautiful, passive or active.¹⁹

Jewish women were used as tools to discuss such issues as religious/ethnic identity or bodily difference in the same way as Jewish men could be.²⁰ In addition,

16 Critics have been attracted by post-structuralist theories of the other, and discussion about early modern cultural contacts has centered more closely on contacts between the old and new worlds, rather than contacts in the Mediterranean and the co-existence of peoples on the continent. This tide has recently changed with an ever-growing interest in the Mediterranean and cultural contacts with the East and the West. See Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 1–24; Daniel Goffman 2002. *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press; Lisa Jardine & Jerry Brotton 2000. *Global Interests. Renaissance Art between East and West*. London: Reaktion Books; Nancy Bisaha 2004. *Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Gerald MacLean 2005. Introduction: Re-Orienting the Renaissance. In Gerald MacLean (ed.) *Re-Orienting the Renaissance. Cultural Exchanges with the East*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan. See also Valeria Finucci (ed.) 2007. Special issue: Mapping the Mediterranean. *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37.

17 Early modern travel narratives made cross-national references to all kinds of texts: biblical, classical, patristic and humanist. See Bisaha, *Creating East and West*. On early modern practices of reading, see James Raven, Helen Small & Naomi Tadmor 1996. Introduction: The Practice and Representation of Reading in England. In James Raven, Helen Small & Naomi Tadmor (eds.) *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–21; a classic study of early “anthropological writing” is Margaret T. Hogden 1964. *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

18 On “women on top” and as shrews see Natalie Zemon Davis 1987. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France. Eight Essays*. Oxford: Polity Press, 124–151; Anu Korhonen 2001. Äkäpussin kesytys. Uuden ajan alun väkivaltavihde sukupuoliskurssina. In Anu Lahtinen (ed.) *Tanssiva mies, pakinoiva nainen. Sukupuolten historiaa*. Turku: Turun historiallinen yhdistys, 137–167.

19 In his recent study Matthew Biberman argues that conceptualising Jewish men as weak somehow produces the figure of the unruly Jewish woman. Biberman offers interpretations of Jonson’s play *The Alchemist* and its figure of female Jewish unruliness, epitomised in the character of Dol Common. See Matthew Biberman 2004. *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern English Literature. From the Satanic to the Effeminate Jew*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 5, 49–51. I find his argument lacks nuance in relation to the description of Jewish women in travel writing, where they were not represented as unruly simply to accentuate the “effeminate” qualities of Jewish men.

20 Similar functions of “the Jew” have been found by Anthony Bale in medieval English contexts. See Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*. On narratives that “assaulted” Jews in late medieval Europe, see Miri Rubin 1999. *Gentile Tales. The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

I would argue that both Jewish men and Jewish women were seen as keys to understanding different cultures – such as that of the Turks – and were portrayed for precisely that purpose in individual chapters and passages that sought to explain their character and their situation to early modern English readers. Early modern “readings” of these texts could be numerous and could relate to such issues as gender, class, education and the differing motivations for reading.²¹ The English writers did not portray foreigners of both sexes only in order to construct Englishness (with the help of denigrating others). There was not a stable and coherent entity of “Englishness”. Englishness was negotiated in tandem with producing knowledge of the surrounding world but this did not overshadow the variety of other motivations and meanings that early modern English travel writers processed and helped to produce. Early modern English men and women read, translated and even published travel books in their own name that originally had been written in French, German and Italian. This process contributed to the formation of English travel writing. Diverse new phenomena were presented to English readers by comparing them to habits at home and by seeking the etymological origins of foreign words and phrases. The production of travel narratives was an active cultural process of selecting, appropriating and producing knowledge about the surrounding world.²²

In her recent work, *Trickster Travels*, inspired by Homi Bhabha’s thinking on hybridity, Natalie Davis discusses the possibility of an early modern individual having “double vision, sustaining two cultural worlds, sometimes imagining two audiences, and using techniques” from different cultural repertoires.²³ Davis expounds new challenges and new possibilities for historians of early modern culture focusing on representations of foreign cultures and asks where does culture – be it Christian, Islamic, Jewish or hybrid Mediterranean – reside in travel narratives. On numerous occasions the reason for discussing specific Jewish communities of Turkey derived partly from the fact that the Ottoman territories were important settlements for both Ashkenazim and Sephardim, with the latter group consisting of both recently arrived migrants from Western Europe and earlier settlers.²⁴ However, personal tastes and ambitions seemed to dictate what writers said, with English writers mostly

21 Anu Korhonen argues that multiple readings of early modern narratives of gendered violence are possible and that those interpretations cannot be reduced to a reader’s gender. For example, women could read narratives of domestic violence “against the grain”. Korhonen, *Äkäpussin kesytys*, 151–152.

22 Cultural negotiations and exchanges of course happened both ways. See for example William Dalrymple 2005. Foreword: The Porous Frontiers of Islam and Christendom: A Clash or Fusion of Civilizations? In Gerald MacLean (ed.) *Re-Orienting the Renaissance. Cultural Exchanges with the East*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan; also MacLean, Introduction; Jás Elsner & Joan-Pau Rubiés 1999. Introduction. In Jás Elsner & Joan-Pau Rubiés *Voyages & Visions. Towards a Cultural History of Travel*. London: Reaktion Books, 31. On cultures as contradictory, loosely integrated, contested and subject to constant change, see William H. Sewell 2005. *Logics of History. Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 169–171. On translation as negotiation, see Umberto Eco 2003. *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 88–91.

23 Natalie Zemon Davis 2006. *Trickster Travels. A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. New York: Hill and Wang, 12–13. See also Vitkus, *Turning Turk*.

24 The diversity of Ottoman Jewries was unique. There were Greek Jews, Italian Jews and Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe and Germany, Karaites, Musta’rabim, Maghrebi, Iberian Sephardi Jews and Conversos. See Stein, Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries, 338.

concentrating on the Jews of Istanbul, Rome and Venice, even if other cities also had significant and visible Jewish communities. It seemed to be only in Venice and Rome that the subgroups of Jews were recorded in a more detailed way.²⁵

Varieties of Jewesses

In Italy, Englishmen observed Jewish women sitting in the upper gallery of synagogues, at Jewish wedding ceremonies and at circumcision rituals. Comparisons between the morals and conduct of Jewish men and those of Jewish women often favoured the latter. The separation of the sexes in the synagogue, for example, was usually seen as a positive thing, and Jewish women were described as obedient, silent and demure.²⁶ Jews – whether men or women – captured the attention of Englishmen who visited synagogues, streets, squares and homes in the continental ghettos.²⁷ Western European Jewish women were described as occupying limited but socially acceptable spaces, which could partly be seen as a result of the guarded social spheres in European Jewish communities.²⁸ However,

25 On the Jewish communities in Rome and Venice, see Anthony Munday 1582. *The English Romayne Lyfe. Discovering The Liues of the Englishmen at Roome: The Orders of the English Seminarie: The Dissention Betweene the Englishmen and the Welshmen: The Banishing of the Englishmen Out of Roome: The Popes Sending for Them Againe: A Reporte of Many of the Patrie Reliques in Roome: Their Vautes Under the Grounde: Their Holy Pilgrimages: And Number of Other Matters, Worthy to Be Read and Regarded of Euery One. Therevnto is Added, the Cruel Tyranny, Vsed on an Englishman at Roome, His Christian Suffering and Notable Martirdome, for the Gospell of Iesus Christe, in Anno. 1581. Written by A.M. Sometime Popes Scholler in the Seminarie Among Them. Honos Alit Artes. Seene and Allowed. Imprinted at London, by John Charlewoode, for Nicholas Ling: Dwelling in Paules Churchyarde, at the Signe of the Maremaide. Anno 1582.* London: John Charlwood for Nicholas Ling, 32–33; Moryson, Fynes 1903 (1626?). *Shakespeare's Europe. Unpublished Chapters of Fynes Morysons Itinerary. Being a Survey of the Condition of Europe at the End of the 16th Century. With an Introduction and an Account of Fynes Moryson's Career by Charles Hughes.* London: Sherratt & Hughes, 488–489; John Evelyn 2000. *The Diary of John Evelyn. Now First Printed in Full from the Manuscripts Belonging to Mr. John Evelyn.* Ed. E.S. De Beer. Oxford: Clarendon Press, II: 291–292; Skippon, Philip 1704–1747 (1664–1665). *An Account of a Journey Made Thro' Part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy, and France. By Philip Skippon, Esquire. In A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Some Now First Printed from Original Manuscripts, Others Now First Published in English. In Six Volumes With a General Preface, Giving an Account of the Progress of Navigation, from Its First Beginning. Illustrated with a Great Number of Useful Maps and Cuts, Curiously Engraven.* A. Churchill, ed. VI, 361–736. London: Printed by Assignment from Messrs Churchill, For John Walthoe, over-against the Royal-Exchange, in Cornhill; Tho: Wotton, at the Queen's-Head and Three Daggars over-against St. Dunstan's Church, in Fleet-street; Samuel Birt, in Ave-Mary-Lane, Ludgate-sreet; Daniel Browne, at the Black-Swan, without Temple-Bar; Thomas Osborn, in Gray's-Inn; John Shuckburgh, at the Sun, next the Inner-Temple-Gate, in Fleet-street; and Henry Lintot, at the Cross-Keys, against St. Dunstan's Church, in Fleet-street, 677.

26 Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures* (1632): 143; Blount, *A Voyage to the Levant* (1636): 122. See also Eva Johanna Holmberg, 2005. *Indecent Roaring: Reading Irreverence and Confusion in Jewish Worship in Early Modern England.* In Eva Johanna Holmberg & Tom Linkinen (eds.) *Practices of Inclusion and Exclusion in Premodern Culture.* Cultural History 5. Turku: k&h, 183.

27 On seeing people as material aspects of urban space, see Elizabeth S. Cohen 1998. *Seen and Known: Prostitutes in the Cityscape of Late-Sixteenth-Century Rome.* *Renaissance Studies* 12, 392–409; on urban experience voiced in a polyphony of narratives in the Renaissance, see Fabrizio Nevola 2003. "Lieto e trionfante per la città": experiencing a mid-fifteenth-century imperial triumph along Siena's Strada Romana. *Renaissance Studies* 17, 606.

28 On Jewish women's spheres in European Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities, see Anna Foa 2000. *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death.* Trans. Andrea Grover. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 56–57, 70–72.

the diarist John Evelyn (1620–1706) wrote of being able to meet Jewish women at a wedding in Venice on 24 March 1646 and that “at this ceremony” he and his companion “saw divers very beautifull Portuguez-Jewesses” and “had some conversation” with them.²⁹ The gentleman traveller Thomas Coryate (1577–1617), who was famous for his alleged walk across Europe in 1608, saw Jewish women in Venice and claimed that they:

[...] were as beautiful as euer I saw, and so gorgeous in their apparell, iewels, Chaines of gold, and rings adorned with precious stones, that some of our English Countesses do scarce exceed them, hauing maruailous long traines like princesses that are borne vp by waiting women serueng for the same purpose. An argument to proue that many of the lewes are very rich.³⁰

Coryate linked the beauty of Jewish women to the overall material well-being of Venetian Jews. In this city they seemed to have it all – freedom, tolerance and riches – despite the ghetto gates that separated them from the other citizens of Venice.

The beautiful appearance of Jewesses was not always reflected in travel narratives. George Sandys for one gives an opposing viewpoint in the narrative of his travels in Italy and the Middle East, first published in 1615, and in shorter form in Samuel Purchas’s monumental travel writing collection, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625).³¹ Sandys, who only wanted “to speake a word or two of their women”, wrote that Jewesses in Turkey “mabbled their heads in linen”, wore loose gowns, were goggle-eyed and fat, and stank of immorality:

[...] They are generally fat, and ranke of the sauours which attend vpon sluttish corpulency. For the most part, they are goggle eyed. They neither shun conuersation, nor are too watchfully guarded by their husbands. They are good work-women, and can and will doe any thing for profit, that is to be done by the Art of a woman, and which sutes with the fashion of these Countries. Vpon iniuries receiued, or violence done to any of their Nation, they will crie out mainly at their windowes, beating their cheekes, and tearing of their garments. Of late they haue beene blest with another Hester, who by her fauour with the Sultan, preuented their intended massacre, and turned his furie vpon their accusers. They are so skilled in lamentations, that the Greeke doe hire them to crie at their funerals.³²

29 Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, II, 477.

30 Coryate, Thomas 1611. *Coryats Crudities Hastily Gobled Vp in Five Moneths Trauells in France, Sauoy, Italy, Rhetia Co[m]nly Called the Grisons Country, Heluetia Alias Switzerland, Some Parts of High Germany, and the Netherlands; Newly Digested in the Hungry Aire of Odcombe in the County of Somerset, & Now Dispersed to the Nourishment of the Trauelling Members of This Kingdome*. London, 233.

31 George Sandys (1578–1644) was the son of Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York. George was educated at Oxford and travelled to Virginia as a treasurer for the Virginia Company. On Sandys’ life, see Jonathan Haynes 1986. *The Humanist as Traveler. George Sandys’ Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610*. Rutherford N.J.: Associated University Presses for Farleigh University Press.

32 George Sandys 1625. In Samuel Purchas, *Pvrchas His Pilgrimes. In Five Bookes. The Sixth, Contayning Nauigations, Voyages, and Land Discoueries, with Other Historicall Relations of Africa. The Seuenth, Nauigations, Voyages, and Discoueries of the Sea-Coasts and In-Land Regions of*

In the past critics have studied these travel narratives in order to glean eyewitness accounts of Jewish fashions and dress. Consequently, authorial strategies, motives and discursive power have not been given as much attention. What was Sandys' motive, for example, in describing Jewish women in this manner? By repudiating the famed beauty of Jewesses the author turned upside-down preconceived notions. The mocking of the women's appearance is accompanied, however, by other kinds of impressions. Englishmen discussed the professions and trades of foreign countries extensively, believing that these dimensions of society could reveal a great deal about the intrinsic nature of a country as well as giving insight into the social standing, respectability and character of its citizens.³³

In addition to ridiculing the appearance of Jewish women, Sandys informed his readers that in Turkey these women were skilled in trades suitable for Oriental women and that they appeared just as keen to profit from their businesses as Jewish men. In Sandys' view, Jewish women did not "shun conversation" (with men other than their family members), were cunning traders and were not too closely guarded by their husbands. This last point could be interpreted as emphasising a lack of male authority and masculinity, but it could also be understood as a business hint or even a warning: Jewish women were a force to be reckoned with. English tradesmen in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were interested in promoting their rights in Turkey, and Jewish women were perhaps perceived as offering useful connections to achieve this end.³⁴ Beauty might even have been considered an undesirable attribute for active women of all ages, with wives and widows being described favourably as having such "masculine" traits as an aptitude

Africa, Which is Generally Called Aethiopia: By English-Men and Others. The Eighth, Peregrinations and Trauels by Land in Palestina, Natolia, Syria, Arabia, Persia, and Other Parts of Asia. The Ninth, Peregrinations and Discoveries by Land, of Assyria, Armenia, Persia, India, Arabia, and Other In-Land Countries of Asia, by English-Men and Others; Moderne and Ancient. The Tenth, Praetorium, or Discoveries of the World, Specially Such as in the Other Bookes Are Omitted. The Second Part. London, 1307–1308; Sandys, George 1615. *A Relation of a Iourney Begun An: Dom: 1610. Fovre Bookes. Containing a Description of the Turksh Empire, of Egypt, of the Holy Land, of the Remote Parts of Italy, and Ilands Adioyning.* London, 149.

33 Some guides for travellers as well as some travel writers encouraged such discussions of trade and the professions. See Albrecht Meyer 1589. *Certaine Briefe, and Speciall Instructions for Gentlemen, Merchants, Students, Souldiers, Marriners, &c. Employed in Seruices Abrode, or Anie Way Occasioned to Conuerse in the Kingdomes, and Gouvernementes of Forren Princes.* London; Fynes Moryson 1617. *Fynes Morysons Itinerary. Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell Through the Twelve Domjnions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turky, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Diuided Into III Parts.* London, III, 14; James Howell 1642. *Instructions For Forreine Travell. Shewing by What Course, and in What Compasse of Time, One May Take an Exact Survey of the Kingdomes and States of Christendome, and Arrive to the Practicall Knowledge of the Languages, to Good Purpose. Post Motum Dulcor Inde Quies.* London. On the importance of professions in early modern England, see Rosemary O'Day 2000. *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450–1800: Servants of the Commonweal.* Harlow: Longman, 18–26. On humanist ideas as an influence on travel writing, see Andrew Fitzmaurice 2003. *Humanism and America. An Intellectual History of English Colonisation, 1500–1625.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

34 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, xiii-xiv; Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*; Leslie Pierce 1993. *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

for trading.³⁵ Despite this possibility, I believe that Sandys depicted Jewesses as ridiculous and unwholesome in order to break the prevailing beauty narrative and perhaps to make his version at least a little different from others.³⁶

Some writers produced detailed descriptions of Jewish appearance, clothing and gestures; others dismissed these matters and merely estimated the number of members in the Jewish communities in both Italy and Turkey. The presence and number of Jews, together with their different manners and lifestyles in diverse cities, were often cited as evidence of how foreign princes and sultans treated minorities under their rule. A territory with a large Jewish community was usually believed to have a greater degree of tolerance for minority groups. Tolerance did not, however, preclude the possibility of hatred: the English thought that Jews were hated wherever they happened to wander.³⁷

A rich Jewess sliced into pieces

John Sanderson (1560–1627?), who travelled to Turkey and the Levant, narrated a short and exceptionally cruel story involving a Jewish woman. His tale was first published in Samuel Purchas's *Purchas His Pilgrimes* in 1625.³⁸ Sanderson had travelled to Istanbul for the first time in March 1585 as an apprentice with the Levant Company. Later he was in the service of two English ambassadors, Henry Lello and Paul Pinder. In the middle of his narrative about Istanbul, Sanderson writes

35 On early modern beauty and ugliness as cultural constructions, see Anu Korhonen 2005. Washing the Ethiopian White: Conceptualising Black Skin in Renaissance England. In T. F. Earle & K. J. P. Lowe (eds.) *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 96–97. On the largely overlooked history of early modern Jewish women, see Chava Weissler 1998. *Voices of the Matriarchs. Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*. Boston: Beacon Press.

36 John Evelyn, who readily exploited earlier writings, seemed to adjust Sandys' text to fit his description of Jewesses in Amsterdam. See Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, II, 42.

37 Paradoxically, Jews were thought to be both tolerated and hated in Turkey, a land often perceived to be a safe haven for Iberian and other Jewish refugees. See de Nicolay, *The Nauigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, Made Into Turkie*, sigs. 93r-93v, 130v-131r; Moryson, *Shakespeare's Europe*, 489; Sandys. In *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 1307; Henry Blount 1636. *A Voyage Into the Levant. A Breife Relation of a Iourney, Latelý Performed by Master H.B. Gentleman, from England by the Way of Venice, Into Dalmatia, Sclavonia, Bosnah, Hungary, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Rhodes and Egypt, Unto Gran Cairo: With Particular Observations Concerning the Moderne Condition of the Turkes, and Other People Under That Empire*. London, 113–114; Ottaviano Bon, Withers Robert & Greaves Robert 1653. *A Description of the Grand Signour's Seraglio; or Tvrkish Emperours Covrt. By John Greaves, Late Professor of Astronomie in the University of Oxford*. London: Printed for Jo. Ridley, at the Castle in Fleet-street by Ram-Alley, 54, 145–146; Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste 1677. *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne; Through Turky, Into Persia and the East-Indies, For the Space of Forty Years. Giving An Account of the Present State of Those Countries, Viz. Of the Religion, Government, Customs, and Commerce of Every Country; and the Figures, Weight, and Value of the Money Currant All Over Asia. To Which is Added, A New Description of the Seraglio. Made English by J.P. Added Likewise a Voyage Into the Indies, &c. By an English Traveller, Never Before Printed: Publish'd by Dr Daniel Cox*. London: Printed by William Godbid, for Robert Littlebury at the King's Arms in Little Britain, and Moses Pitt at the Angel in St Paul's Church-yard, 85.

38 Sanderson's manuscripts, a short autobiography and a collection of his letters are preserved in London, The British Library, Lansdowne MS 241, Sanderson, John, "Diary 1560–1610". It has been argued that Sanderson finished his manuscript by 1604, and befriended Samuel Purchas in 1611. Sanderson also left some money to Purchas in his will. See William C. Foster (ed.) 1931. *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584–1602. With His Autobiography and Selections from His Correspondence*. London: Hakluyt Society, ix–xl.

that he has seen some of the cruellest methods of execution in Turkey, with one in particular arousing his horror:

[...] a lewish woman of the greatest credit and wealth in Constantinople, was brought out of her House and stabbed to Death in the Vice-royes yard, thence by a window in the Serraglio wall where the Grand Signior, Sultan Mahomet stood to see; shee was drawne with Ropes to the publikest place in the Citie, and there (betweene a Pyramed piller erected by Theodosius, and the Brasen tripled Serpent) layd for the Dogges to eate, who did deuoure her all saue her bones, sinewes of her legges, and soales of her feete. Her head had been carryed vpon a pike through the Citie, and alike her shamefull part; also many small peeces of her Flesh, which the Turkes Ianizaries and others carried about tyed in a little Pack-thred, shewing to the lewes and others, and in derision sayd, Behold the Whoores flesh; one slice of her I did so see passe by our doore in Galata [...]. This was an act of the Spahies in spite of the Great Turkes Mother; for by the hands of this lew woman shee tooke all her Bribes, and her Sonnes were chiefe Customers of Constantinople; who tooke all the gainefull businesse into their owne hands, doing what they listed. The Mother and Children were worth Millions, which all went into the Great Turkes Cofers. After this their Mala Pasqua, for it was at their time of Passeouer, the chiefest Feast of the lewes.³⁹

The Jewish woman was known as Chara, Chira or Kira, who was “of greatest credit and wealth” until her sudden fall from power.⁴⁰ The parading of her head and “her shameful part” passed through Galata, the traditional abode of strangers in the city, where Sanderson mentions having seen “a slice of her”. He describes the woman in derogatory terms as a “short fat trubkin” and adds that the dogs had difficulties devouring the flesh of her son the following day.⁴¹ The execution was said to be “an act of the Spahies”, horsemen of the Ottoman army, who rebelled in 1600 in protest at the deleterious effects of inflation on their wages. Their anger seemed to be directed towards the Jews and other favourites of the Sultan’s mother. After this incident Sanderson headed towards Jerusalem and travelled throughout the Levant until his return to England in 1602.⁴²

The editor of Sanderson’s texts in the early 1930s, William Foster, concluded that the author seemingly enjoyed the above-mentioned “cruel spectacles”.⁴³ Foster failed to note that Sanderson tried to give an example of all the terrifying incidents he had witnessed, whilst highlighting the one he deemed to be most cruel. The Turks were widely regarded as a powerful and severe nation, and a description

39 Sanderson, John 1625. In *Pvrchas His Pilgrimes*, 1622.

40 See Sanderson, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584–1602*, 201, note 1.

41 Sanderson, In *Pvrchas His Pilgrimes*, 1622. “Her eldest sonne the next day in like manner cruelly stabbed and murdered in the sayd Vice-royes court; dragged thence and layd by his Mother, but was so fat and ranke that the Dogges would not seaze vpon him, or else they were satiate with the Womans flesh the day before, who was [a] short fat trubkin. So together with his Mothers bones the next day was this body burned in that place. Her second Sonne became Turke to saue his life; so would his dead Brother, if hee could haue had the faouour. The third Sonne a young youth, their wrath being appeased, they permitted to liue”.

42 Foster, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584–1602*, xxvi.

43 Foster, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584–1602*, xxvi.

such as that given by Sanderson fits contemporary preconceptions perfectly. Descriptions of stranglings, hangings, slashings, pikings and drownings were stock ingredients of narratives about travelling in the lands of the Ottomans and were used as examples of foreign cruelty in contemporary drama and picaresque novels. The striking detail in this instance is that the victim was a Jewish woman. The story presents a cautionary example about what happens when a rich person – here it only happens to be a short and ugly Jewess – steps on the toes of too many rivals.⁴⁴

The printed marginalia that accompanied the text also inform the reader that “Master Henry Lillo, the Ambassadour [Paul Pinder] and my selfe [Sanderson] went of purpose and thus did see these two, Mother and Sonne”. Sanderson had a positive view of the character of both the woman and her son. The fat and foul-smelling Jewish man was portrayed as goodly and gentlemanly, whilst the “short fat trubkin woman” was described as shedding tears and hosting the English gentlemen in her own house.⁴⁵ It could well be that Sanderson wanted to anticipate the woman’s fate by describing her tears. The contradiction between the horrific story and the testimony of an intimate contact with the victim is perplexing. It reveals, however, that Sanderson’s view of the Jewish woman was not entirely negative and that he probably did not enjoy seeing his acquaintances die in such a terrifying manner. Sanderson’s printed marginalia summarised the main text and enabled him to present conflicting and sometimes contradictory information.⁴⁶

The editor of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Samuel Purchas, often added his verdicts on the accuracy of Catholic, Jewish and Muslim, and occasionally even English, authors in his collections to his marginal notes. Purchas thus had the power either to endorse or question the authority of Sanderson, whose positive view of the Jews could well have been regarded as controversial by his contemporaries. Purchas chose instead to add a short annotation after Sanderson’s text, giving information about Sanderson’s other journeys. Purchas also regretted that Sanderson’s manuscripts were too extensive to be published in their entirety, although he decided to retain Sanderson’s marginal annotations.⁴⁷

44 Thomas Nashe 1594. *The Vnfortvnate Traveller. Or, The Life of lacke Wilton. Qui Audiunt, Audita Dicunt*. London, includes an even more exaggerated and tormented description of an execution of a Jewish character. On the cruelty of the Turks, particularly in regard to their executions, see Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 117–118; also see Bisaha, *Creating East and West*; and Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*.

45 “He was a goodly Gentleman lew, (so)me few dayes before, I had shewed him our Ship, and had talked with him at his Mothers house, and Master Paul Pinder and my selfe, were with his Mother, to whom shee deliuered for the Ambassadour, to send the Queene a Stafana (i. e. a tiara), of Rabines (i.e. rubies) from the Sultana, and another of Diamonds from her selfe, with teares in her eyes I well remember”. Sanderson, In *Pvrchas His Pilgrimes*, 1622. Pinder was the future English ambassador to Turkey. On Pinder, see MacLean *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 11, 40, 224.

46 In the sixteenth century, printed pages were made to resemble manuscripts and their marginalia, in order to ease transition from one textual form to another. See Andrew Slights 2001. *Managing Readers. Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 8; Anthony Grafton 1991. *Discitur ut agatur: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy*. In Stephen A. Barney (ed.) *Annotation and Its Texts*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press. 108–129.

47 See Purchas. In *Pvrchas His Pilgrimes*, 1637. John Sanderson wrote that when travelling, he preferred the company of Jews to that of his own countrymen.

A surviving letter from Sanderson to an English friend or business associate confirms the importance of having some knowledge about the exploits of Jewish women. When placed in the collection of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, the story was supposed to be informative and to entertain wealthier readers who could afford the expensive folio edition.⁴⁸ In the letter, the death of the woman was given as one of the causes for changing the currency rate. This news was important for men whose living depended on foreseeing such events. Sanderson's letter informs the reader that both the woman and her son were "littell pitied" and that the woman was "wourth a millian and more".⁴⁹ The letter did not concentrate on describing the body parts that had been hacked off, but tried to summarise the reasons behind the incident and its effects. The account published in *Purchas His Pilgrimes* served other purposes: it had to be a "page-turner" and the reader had to be able to study the text easily for many reasons. Englishmen themselves were not innocent of carrying out corporal and capital punishment. Sanderson wanted to emphasise, however, that no other nation equalled the Turks in terms of cruelty. In part, this famed cruelty was used to explain their military success, and it was also linked to their supposedly corrupt sensuality.⁵⁰

Layered knowledge

Many travel accounts that claimed to rely on first-hand evidence were influenced by humanist principles of combining information from classical sources and Christian tradition. Many of these sources were in Italian and French and consequently had to be translated before being distributed to the English-reading public. In addition, the writings were often accompanied with printed marginalia, as in the case of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. The mixed messages and voices presented in these marginalia can provide us with information about the techniques used to define authorial credibility and insights into how these works were supposed to be read. The historian Andrew Slight has argued that the printed marginal notes found in translated works played a particularly important role in accommodating texts to a novel cultural context.⁵¹

48 *Pilgrimes* was an impressive folio-sized edition in several parts. There is evidence, however, that even gentry widows could buy the books for their sons. See Vivienne Larminie 1995. *Wealth, Kinship and Culture. The Seventeenth Century Newdigates and their World*. Woodbridge & Rochester: The Royal Historical Society & The Boydell Press, 196.

49 John Sanderson to Nicholas Leate in London, 30 March 1600, in Sanderson, *The Travels of John Sanderson*, 201–202.

50 See Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 118. The cruel practices inflicted on the body of the woman seem to strengthen such an argument. On extreme representations of the human body in early modern culture, see Florike Egmond & Robert Zwijnenberg (eds.) 2003. *Bodily Extremities. Preoccupations with the Human Body in Early Modern European Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

51 Both the collections of Samuel Purchas and Richard Hakluyt included translations of various foreign travellers' accounts. It is usually easy to see who produced the notes in these texts. Passages that had been translated usually had notes by the editors. See Purchas, *Pvrchas His Pilgrime*, 1437. Here Purchas discredits some information given by Benjamin of Tudela, who began his travels in 1160. See also Richard Hakluyt (ed.) 1589 (1581). *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Quer Land, to the Most Remote and Farthest*

This device was also important when writers tried to describe either foreign cultures or surprising and unusual events. It was in these spaces that information deemed supplementary to the regular text found a niche. Often, passages mentioning Jewish women were indicated by the use of section titles, even if they were short or located at the end or in the middle of chapters. These texts – with their printed marginalia – are a good example of how early modern writers expressed their own liminality: they were in-between traditions, cultures, audiences and conflicting voices.⁵²

Some early modern travel narratives found their way into English printing shops by interesting routes. Writings originally composed by a Venetian bailo in Istanbul, Ottaviano Bon (1555–1622), for example, were first published in England under the name of a John Withers.⁵³ Under the heading “Iewish women, their arts”, the text states that Jewesses could easily enter the Sultan’s Seraglio in Istanbul by claiming to be proficient in “Needle-worke” and selling “Painting stuffes for [...] Faces”. Under the cover of these trades, they could then engage in the jewel trade and thereby gain vast sums of money:

And hence it is, that all such Iewes women as frequent the Serraglio, doe become very rich. For whatsoever they bring in they buy it cheape, and sell it deare to them; and then on the contrary, when they haue Iewels to sell for the Sultanaes (which are to bee conueighed out by stealth) they receiue their true value for them of Strangers, and then tell the simple Ladies who know not the worth of them, (and are afraid to bee discovered) that they sold them peradventure for halfe that which they had for them.⁵⁴

Distant Quarters of the Earth at any Time Within the Compasse of These 1500 Yeeres: Deuided Into Three Seuerall Parts, According to the Positions of the Regions Wherunto They Were Directed. By Richard Hakluyt Master of Artes, and Student Sometime of Christ-Church in Oxford. London.

52 Slights, *Managing Readers*, 13–14, 15. See also Constance C. Relihan 2004. *Cosmographical Glasses. Geographic Discourse, Gender, and Elizabethan Fiction*. Kent & London: The Kent State University Press, 9. Marginalia had the potential to influence the reading and interpretation of a text profoundly: such annotations could accentuate or subvert authority, serve as a mnemonic device and help to arrange a text so that a reader could access specific information more easily.

53 A bailo was approximately the same rank as an ambassador. It is possible that Sir Paul Pinder, who had contacts in Venice, had acquired Bon’s manuscript. Pinder had been apprenticed to a Venetian merchant and was an agent of Robert Cecil. The youth, Robert Withers, is a more obscure figure, who claimed to have studied in Istanbul as a protégé of the English ambassador. John Greaves was a Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. On Ottaviano Bon and his book, see Godfrey Goodwin 1996. Introduction. In Ottaviano Bon (ed.) *The Sultan’s Seraglio. An Intimate Portrait of Life at the Ottoman Court* (From the Seventeenth-Century Edition of John Withers). London: Saqi Books. 11–19. Ottaviano Bon’s case is a good example of literary theft in the context of travel writing. Many times his accounts seemed to be only slightly rephrased. Greaves attributed the book to Withers, see Bon, *A Description of the Grand Signour’s Seraglio*, sigs. A2v-A3v.

54 Withers in Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 1589. Jewish women had contacts to both the New and the Old Seraglio, the place for the wives of earlier sultans or wives who had fallen from favour. See Bon, *A Description of the Grand Signour’s Seraglio*, 52–54, 100–101, 150 where we read: “And as in the Kings Seraglio, the Sultanas are permitted to employ divers Jewes-women about their ordinary occasions: so these women likewise of this Seraglio, have other Jews-women, who daily frequent their companies, and sell their labours for them”. On Jewish women as a possible source of information about life in the Seraglio, see Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier*, 85–86, and Du Vignay, sieur des Joanots 1688. *The Turkish Secretary, Containing The Art of Expressing Ones Thoughts, Without Seeing, Speaking, or Writing to One Another; With the Circumstances of a Turkish Adventure: As Also A Most Curious Relation of Several Particulars of the Serrail That Have not Before Now Ever Been Made Publick. Translated by the Author of the Monthly Account. Licensed July 3. R. Midgley*. London: Printed by J.B. and sold by Jo. Hindmarsh at the Golden Ball over against the Royal Exchange, and Randal Taylor at Stationer’s Hall.

The lesson of the story follows: because Jewish women were cunning social climbers, a trait believed to be characteristic of all Jews,⁵⁵ they could easily fall from favour. This often led to poverty or even death “for being discovered to be rich, and their wealth to be gotten by deceit, they oftentimes lose both Goods and life too”.⁵⁶ This loss was seen as a logical destiny for a sinner culpable of avarice and deceit.

Ill-fated Jews can be found everywhere in later medieval and early modern English sources, from drama to proverbs. Stories of Jews who were expelled, forcibly converted and tried for treason and ritual murders can be read there in abundance.⁵⁷ Success stories were more common in travel writing than in drama, for example. The fate and treatment of Jews could be seen as an indicator of the overall level of freedom or tolerance of foreign societies.⁵⁸ If Jews were tolerated in any given society, the English believed that their merchants would be similarly tolerated. In any case, it was deemed best to acquaint oneself with possible rivals and colleagues in advance, whatever their gender or religion.

The portrayal of Jewesses as active, influential and cunning surfaces again in two accounts of Turkey that were translated into English from French originals in the latter part of the seventeenth century. By this time the flow of “Turkey-books” seemed to have satiated the reading public, and authors had to justify why yet another book on the subject was being written. Some themes were omitted and readers were guided to earlier sources. A later seventeenth-century English translation of Jean Du Vignay’s *The Turkish Secretary* (1688) states that “All our other Relations concerning Turkey, treat only of Policy, Fire and Sword, whereas this displays nothing but Flowers, Fruits and Gallantries, which I should think most seasonable”.⁵⁹ In the text a Jewess called Boul-Ester is portrayed as a go-between

55 de Nicolay, de Nicolay, *The Nauigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, Made Into Turkie*, 131; Blount, *A Voyage Into the Levant*, 114. Blount’s view was that “desperate fortunes, and forraine conversation” had transformed the Jews into “Merchants, Brokers, and Cheaters”. On Jews, Italians and Turks as “Machiavellian merchants”, see Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 163–198.

56 Withers in Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 1589.

57 Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 46–47, 102; Bale, Anthony 2004. Stow’s Medievalism and Antique Judaism in Early Modern London. In Ian Gadd & Alexandra Gillespie (eds.) *John Stow (1525–1605) and the Making of the English Past. Studies in Early Modern Culture and the History of the Book*. London 2004, 69–80. On narratives of Jewish destinies in medieval Europe, see Nirenberg, David 1996. *Communities of Violence. Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, and Rubin, *Gentile Tales*.

58 See William Thomas 1561. *The Historye of Italye. A Booke Exceding Profitable to Be Red Because It Increaseth of the Astate of Many and Dyuers Common Weales, How They Haue Bene, and Now Be Governed*. London: Imprinted at London in Fletestrete nere to Sainct Dunstons Church by Thomas Marshe, 85–85v; Moryson, *Fynes Morysons Itinerary*, 88; Moryson. *Shakespeare’s Europe*, 488–489; Howell, *Instructions For Forreine Travell*, 180. Howell warned writers against making easy generalisations of foreign nations. Coryate, *Coryats Crudities Hastily Gobled Vp in Five Moneths Trauells*, 233–234.

59 “I would give an ample and large description of all [...] if I was not willing to spare the Reader the repetition of what so many others before me have written upon the matters of Turkey, and particularly Monsieur Tavernier, and Monsieur de la Croia, formerly Secretary of the Embassy at Constantinople in his Memoirs. Wherefore I shall now only dwell upon the secrets I could attain to, concerning the Sultanas and Women that serve them”, in Du Vignay, *The Turkish Secretary*, 51.

and mediator for a pair of troubled lovers. A Jewess becomes both a source of information about the mysterious Seraglio and a secondary character in a love story.⁶⁰

A more sombre English translation made of Jean Baptiste Tavernier's book, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier* (1677), refutes the value of Jewish women as informers. Under the heading "The Commerce between the Jewesses and the Sultanesses", Tavernier states that "it might be imagin'd, that, by the relation of the Jewesses, it were possible to have some account, of the embellishments of the Halls and Chambers of the Appartment of the government of that Female Republick [i.e. Seraglio]". However, this is not possible since [...] it is to be noted, That these Jewesses are not permitted to go far into it; for there is a Chamber appointed for the management of their Traffick, and the Negro-Eunuchs are the Brokers between them, and the Sultanesses".⁶¹

Either the Eunuchs had started to interfere in the trade between women, or, more plausibly, the influence of the Jewish women was completely denied.

* * *

The travel narratives on Turkey printed in early modern England contain a small array of stories about Jewish women, whose fortunes and misfortunes were only rarely connected to their outward appearance. These Jewish women were imagined to be good sources of information, cunning traders, go-betweens and rich powerbrokers. In addition to traditional and perhaps more "feminine" contexts, Jewish women were given a place among the exploits and adventures in the Seraglio or they could be, as in Sanderson's story, cruelly executed and shamefully paraded through the streets of Istanbul. The writers were engaged in creative selection and appropriation, thus creating accounts that could be read as practical advice on how to conduct trade in Turkey. Despite some guiding principles, the writers allowed readers to navigate their texts quite freely. The bodies of Jewish women were sometimes depicted as a surface upon which descriptions of Ottoman cruelty, power struggles and treatment of "strangers" and citizens could be inscribed. They could emerge on the thresholds of the Seraglio or as go-betweens in love stories. The influx of new information, religious controversies and the varying expectations of the expanding book market in England were among the guiding forces and motivators for this literature. As books on Turkey became more numerous and varied, authors began to justify their writing in other terms and leave out parts they considered

60 Boul-Ester is said to have "free Access into the Seraglio, where she sold a World of Toys to the Sultanas". Boul-Ester is also characterised as "a principall Actress" in the story. See Du Vignay, *The Turkish Secretary*, 6, 11. Recently, a similar go-between Jewess, Esther, was portrayed by Turkish Nobel prize winner Orhan Pamuk in his novel *My Name is Red*. See Orhan Pamuk 2002 (1998). *My Name is Red*. Orig. Benim adim kirmizi. Transl. Erdag M. Göknar. New York: Random House. On later (1662–1785) English fictions of Turkey, see Ros Ballaster 2005. *Fabulous Orientals. Fictions of the East in England 1662–1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 36–57.

61 Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier*, 85–86.

unnecessary. The Jewesses of Turkey, however, seemed to survive this process, even if the manner of representing their influence and visibility in the Ottoman lands could change over time.

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