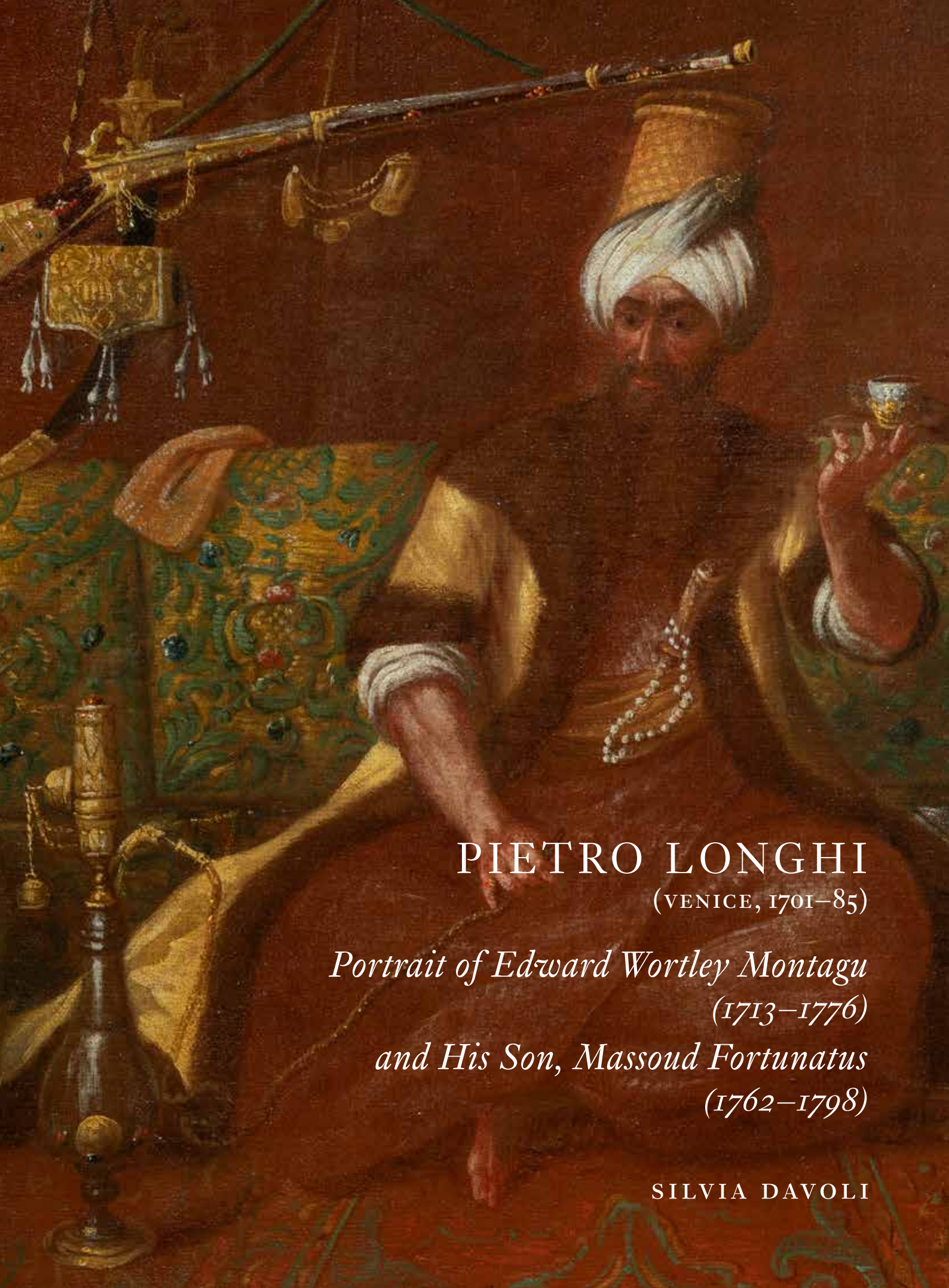

PIETRO LONGHI

(VENICE, 1701–85)

Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu (1713–1776) and His Son, Massoud Fortunatus (1762–1798)

SILVIA DAVOLI

Pietro Longhi

Portrait of
Edward Wortley Montagu
(1713–1776)
and His Son,
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TRINITY FINE ART LTD

Pietro Longhi
(Venice, 1701–85)

Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu (1713–1776)
and His Son, Massoud Fortunatus (1762–1798)
c. 1770–5
Oil on canvas, 52 × 67 cm

T. PIGNATTI, *Aggiunte per Pietro Longhi*, in 'Arte Illustrata', 5, 1972, p. 3, reproduced fig. 4, p. 28;

T. PIGNATTI, *L'opera completa di Pietro Lon*ghi, Milan 1974, Cat. No. 203, p. 102, reproduced fig. 207;

F. SORCE, under the heading 'Pietro Longhi', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 65, Rome 2005, p. 667.

THE CENTURY OF THE ENLIGHTMENT witnessed an exceptional growth in scientific research and geographical exploration motivated by man's desire to impose order on the world though meticulous descriptions and new taxonomic principles. New scientific methods were disseminated through illustrated publications such as Diderot and D'Alambert's *Encyclopédie des sciences*, whose volumes of plates were published between 1762 and 1772.

New languages, exotic lands and hitherto unknown customs became part and parcel of the European imagination. This desire for knowledge found travel to be the tool best suited to it. In the age of the Grand Tour, young men from wealthy families visited Italy and its Classical ruins, but the more adventurous among them went even further. From Sicily or the port of Leghorn, via Malta and the Ionian Islands, they ventured as far as the lands of the Ottoman Empire which, at the time, included a large part of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 had marked the end of the clash between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, thus fostering the development of trade routes, promoted in England by the Levant Company. This company ran manufactories in Smyrna, Constantinople and Aleppo, and until the early years of the 19th century it fulfilled a quasi-diplomatic function, facilitating the circulation of travellers, goods and, of course, ideas. While Europe had shown an interest in *Turqueries* since the Renaissance, it was not until the 18th century that we find a fully-fledged desire to emulate the sophisticated culture of the Ottoman world. The testimonials of travellers, the spread of albums depicting customs and traditions and the acquisition of ancient Arabic manuscripts by collectors in the West were accompanied by a renewed interest in the study of Arabic and by the translation of major works of literature, including the oriental novels known as the *The Thousand and One Nights* or *Arabian Nights* (translated by Antoine Galland in 1704–17). Levantine life as whole, amplified by the realistic images produced by painters who had lived in Constantinople such as Jean-Etienne Liotard (1702–89) and Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737), influenced Western fashions, literature, music – one has but to think, for example, of Handel's *Tamerlane* or of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* – and visual and decorative arts. Janissaries, women drinking coffee, shirts with puffball sleeves, coloured

turbans, gaudy rugs, fans and hookahs, threatening scimitars and jewel-encrusted daggers all became part of a broadly shared visual vocabulary.

One of those who helped to spread a deeper knowledge of the Levant was the mother of Edward Wortley Montagu, the sitter in the portrait under discussion in this paper. Mary Wortley Montagu, an English aristocrat née Pierrepont (1689–1762), was an extremely cultivated woman for her age, much admired in society and adulated by such celebrated men of letters as Alexander Pope and John Gay, a gifted writer and, according to the writer Horace Walpole, a rather eccentric figure altogether.[1] Mary as a writer was an early adept of the Romantic style, but she was also a sophisticated polemicist and she spent a long time in Italy out of love for the learned Francesco Algarotti (1712–64). In 1716 she accompanied her husband, Edward Wortley Montagu sr. (1678–1761) to Constantinople when he was appointed to the post of British Ambassador Extraordinary to the Sublime Porte. While Montagu himself was not a great success as a diplomat, eventually being removed from his post, Mary described the fascinating details of the journey to Turkey and of the time they spent there in a collection of letters entitled *Turkish Embassy Letters*, published posthumously in 1763.[2] Lady Montagu's letters became a bestseller primarily on account of the unprecedented themes she addressed, ranging from the condition of women to detailed descriptions of areas normally barred to foreigners such as, for example, the Sultan's Harem and the Hammam, making her arguably the most famous Turkish traveller of the 18th century. Equally surprising is the fact that, after observing the technique of vaccination against smallpox traditionally adopted in Turkey and Armenia, she had little Edward vaccinated even though he was only four years old and proceeded to import the custom into England in the wake of an awareness campaign, thus becoming the first person to spread the concept of inoculation in Europe. A portrait of Lady Mary and her young son Edward, painted by the Flemish artist Jean-Baptiste Vanmour in 1717, shows them in Constantinople dressed in Turkish attire and accompanied by two servants: a woman playing a typical Turkish string instrument known as the *bağlama*, seated on a long divan similar to the one shown in Longhi's painting, and an attendant delivering a letter (fig. 1). Vanmour had accompanied the then French Ambassador, Marquis Charles de Ferriol (1652–1722), to Constantinopole in 1699 and the Marquis had commissioned him to produce one hundred paintings depicting the local people. The artist stayed on in the city in the service of other diplomats, a position which allowed him easy access to the court of Sultan Ahmed III. His paintings became immensely popular and were often reproduced as prints, thus providing all the elements required for a faithful visual reproduction of refined Ottoman interiors.

FIG. 1
Jean Baptiste Vanmour, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and her Son, Edward Wortley Montagu*, c.1717, National Portrait Gallery, London (no. 3924)

Described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as a 'traveller and criminal', Edward Wortley Montagu jr. (1717–76) lived the unconventional, roguish life of a wanderer and, like other restless types of the age such as Claude Alexandre de Bonneval for instance, he ended up converting to Islam (fig. 1). A pupil at Westminster School in London, he ran away on several occasions, chalking up a considerable number of vaguely picaresque adventures while still a youth. First he went to Oxford in a precocious attempt to seek admission to the University in order to study Arabic,

then he worked as a fisherboy in the docks on the Thames, and finally he embarked on a ship as cabin boy and sailed to Portugal. 'I am vexed to the blood by my young rogue of a son' his mother confessed in one of the many letters in which she complains of her son's conduct.[3] In an attempt to forestall any further scandal or trouble, it was decided to send him to the West Indies, but we have no information regarding his time there. Back in London at the age of seventeen, he devoted his energy with considerable determination to gambling, drinking and keeping questionable company, ending up secretly marrying a washerwoman named Sally, merely the first of his many wives. His parents were absolutely livid and in 1740 they packed him off again, this time on the Grand Tour in the company of a tutor named John Anderson whose thankless task was to curb his excesses and his ceaseless demands for money, a task in which Anderson had little success. On Edward's return, he enrolled at the University of Leiden where he studied oriental languages under the illustrious Albert Schultens (1716–88). With the War of the Austrian Succession about to break out, his father thought that a commission in the Army might offer an excellent opportunity to redeem his son's 'weak' character. In 1742, after visiting London again and spending time in a debtors' prison, he was commissioned with the rank of Cornet in Sir John Cope's Dragoon Regiment, the Seventh Hussars, thanks to powerful family influence. He was soon promoted to Captain-Lieutenant and distinguished himself in the Battle of Fontenoy on 12 May 1745, earning a mention in despatches.

Following the siege of Brussels in 1746, he was captured by the French and confined in Liège until his release on the occasion of an exchange of prisoners. He left the Army and travelled to London in the hope of being awarded a diplomatic post. He joined the Divan Club, a club in which membership was reserved exclusively for those who had travelled to Turkey. The club had been founded by his cousin John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich (1718–92), 'the Insatiable Earl', who was its first Vizir.[4] John himself had travelled to Turkey in 1738 and had lived in Constantinople, accompanied by an entourage which included the painter Liotard. The memoirs of his journey were subsequently published in a book entitled *Voyage round the Mediterranean in the years 1738 & 1739*.[5] On John's initiative, his cousin Edward attended the peace conference in Aix-la-Chapelle which marked the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. Edward's talent as a linguist, which proved to be extremely useful on that occasion, facilitated his election to Parliament in 1747. And indeed he appeared to have matured, but his old habits soon resurfaced. Thanks to his parliamentary post, he could travel freely between Paris and London, where he fell into his old

FIG. 2
Abdülcelil Celebi Levni, *Posthumous portrait of Mustafa II dressed in full armour*, first half of the eighteenth century, Musée du Louvre, Paris (MAO 2009)

ways again, living lavishly and frequenting gambling dens. In 1751, even though he had not divorced his first wife, he married his second wife, Elizabeth Ashe, but after a few months he cast her aside, leaving her pregnant with his son Edward Wortley Montagu III, the third of the illegitimate children he had had from previous relationships, the first two being George and Mary (the latter was to end her days as a nun in a convent in Rome). Horace Walpole describes this new phase in Edward's life with his customary irony:

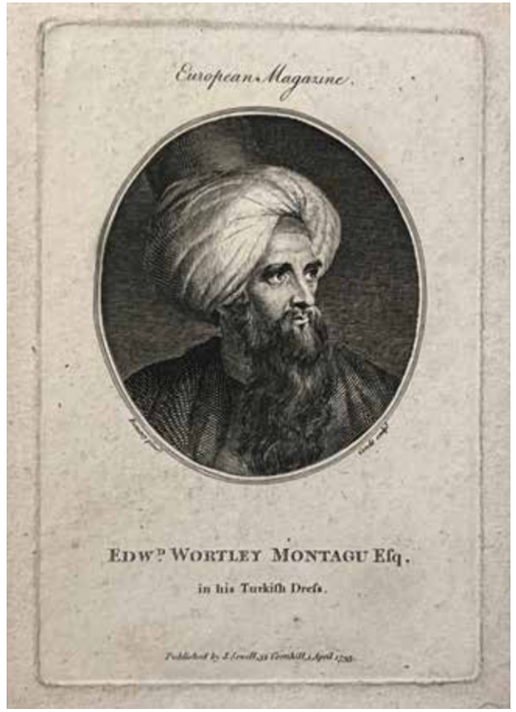
> *His father scarce allows him anything: yet he plays, dresses, diamonds himself, even to distinct shoe buckles for a frock, and has more snuff-boxes than would suffice a Chinese idol with an hundred noses. But the most curious part of his dress, which he has brought from Paris, is an iron wig; you literally would not know it from hair – I believe it is on this account that the Royal Society have just chosen him of their body*.[6]

His time in Paris was crowned by a charge of aggression against Abraham Payba during a game of Faro (a gambling card game). Montagu and another English MP were tried and imprisoned for extortion.[7] His father died in 1761 and left his entire and fairly substantial estate to Edward's younger sister – a tough blow which prompted Edward to leave London once again, but this time for good. It was in this context, possibly the better to mark his distance from the family whom he felt had rejected him, that Edward began to spread a rumour which, while unfounded, became immensely popular, to the effect that his mother had had an affair with the Sultan Mustafa II and that he was therefore Mustafa's legitimate descendant. (fig. 2).

His father's betrayal marked a decisive turning point in Montagu's life. From this moment on he devoted his energies solely to pursuing his career as an explorer and scholar: 'I am setting out at last to explore the orient' he wrote to his old tutor John Anderson. 'I shake the dust of an ungrateful country from my heels perhaps, it will appear, for the last time. I shall journey in splendour to Constantinople, and hope to be received of the Sultan – not unmindful of that portion of Turkish smallpox I ever carry in my blood'.[8]

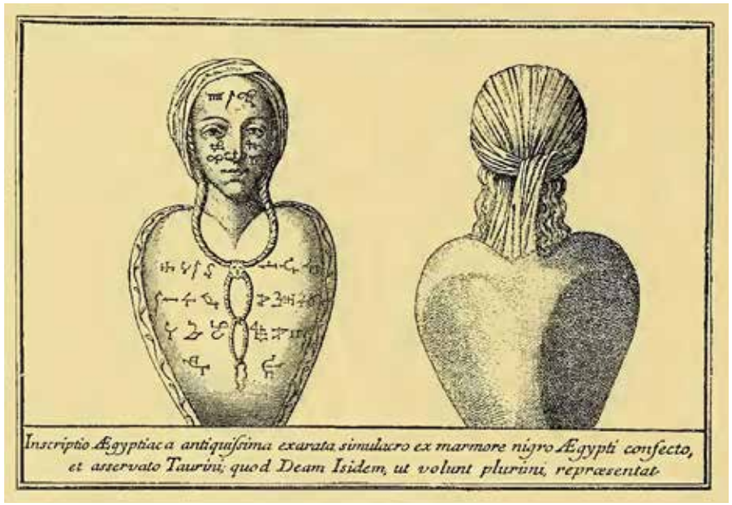
To that end, Montagu returned to Leiden and enrolled at the University once again to study Arabic, buying a large number of books and the optical and scientific instruments required by any serious explorer. A clergyman named William Robinson, who was Montagu's relation by marriage, met him in Venice in 1762 and found him intent on studying

FIG. 3
Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu with a long wavy beard and moustache, after Romney. Illustration to Seward's 'Anecdotes', 1785, stipple and engraving (Heinz Archive)



Arabic and planning his journey. 'He rises before daylight', Robinson wrote, 'and has let grow his whiskers – this, with the addition of a turban, which he wears in the house, makes him a very odd figure' (fig. 3).[9] During this period spent in Italy, Montagu also took an interest in hieroglyphics and Egyptian antiquities, becoming a correspondent of the Royal Society. At the same time, he published a report on a celebrated ancient bust of Isis in Turin bearing a number of inscriptions on its base which were interpreted by the priest and biologist John Needham (1713–81) as Chinese ideograms, thus proving that the two distant civilisations had been in contact with one another (fig. 4).[10]

Montagu disagreed and identified the bust as a modern artefact. In an effort to prove his point, he consulted such leading experts of the period as Cardinal Alessandro Albani, Winkelmann who recognised the bust as 'a modern imposture', and Giuseppe Simone Assemani, an expert in oriental languages, who identified the engravings as neither hieroglyphics nor yet Chinese ideograms but modern astronomical signs or the twelve signs of the Zodiac.[11]



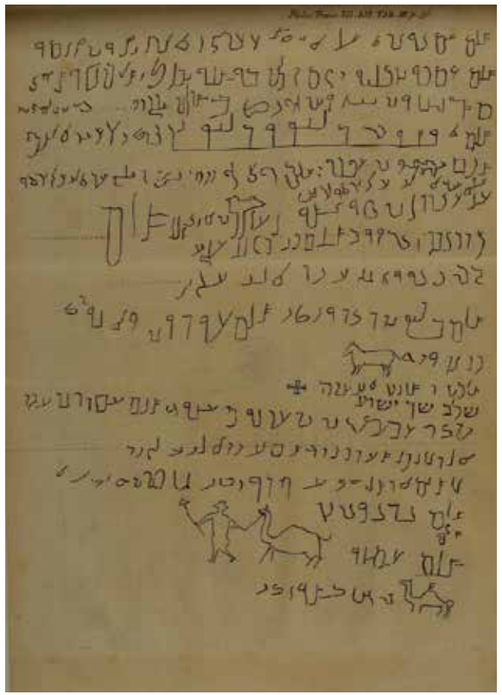


FIG. 4
Illustration in John Turberville Needham, *De inscriptione quadam Ægyptiaca Taurini inventa et characteribus Ægyptiis* (Rome, 1761)

FIG. 5
Transcription by Edward Wortley Montagu of the rock engravings descovered in Jebel el Macaatab published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. LVI, chapter VIII, 1766, pl. III, p. 57.

FIG. 6
Anthropoid coffin of sycamore fig wood, made for a man named Itineb, Late Period, Saqqara, British Museum, London (EA6693)

FIG. 7
Architectural Slab of black siltstone with inscriptions of Nectanebo I, 370 BC, British Museum, London (EA22)

In 1762 Horace Mann, the resident British Envoy in Florence, informed Walpole that Edward Montagu was about to leave Italy in order to visit Egypt 'in search of antiquities and literature'; some months later, however, he reported that Montagu was still in Florence and on the point of setting out on a long journey to Ethiopia.[12] Finally, in April 1763, taking the future Consul Nathaniel Davison (*c.*1736–1809) with him as his secretary and assistant, he sailed from Leghorn bound for Alexandria where, resorting to deception, he married the Danish Consul's wife Caroline Dormer Feroe after convincing her that her husband had died while travelling.[13] From Alexandria, Montague set out on a journey retracing the steps of the Jews fleeing Pharaoh's wrath. He used the Old Testament as his primary source, visiting Mount Sinai, the valleys of Jebel-al-Maktab where he studied rock engravings which he identified as Kufic, Jerusalem, and finally Armenia (fig. 5). In the Nile Delta region, as we learn from Davison, 'Mr Montagu has picked up many valuable antiquities […] I make no doubt but he'll do himself, as well as his country, very great honour'.[14] Donated by Montagu to King George III, these Egyptian antiquities were among the first to enter the collections of the British Museum in 1766, where they can still be seen today (figs 6, 7).[15]

By 1765 Montagu was back in Venice, a city in which his mother had also chosen to live some time before, considering it ideal on account of the presence of ministers from all over the world 'who, as they have no Court to employ their hours, are overjoyed to enter into commerce with any stranger of distinction'.[16] In this melting pot of nationalities bent on enjoying the pleasures of life, Edward Wortley Montagu soon became one of the city's star attractions: *'one of the most curious sights we saw amid these curiosities was the famous Mr. Montagu',* a surgeon named Samuel Sharp tells us, adding:

> *He had just arrived from the East, he had travelled through the Holy Land, Egypt, Armenia, &c. with the Old and New Testament in his hands, he had visited Mount Sinai, and flattered himself he had been on the very part of the rock where Moses spake face to face with God Almighty: his beard reached down to his breast, and the dress of his head was Armenian. He was in the most enthusiastick raptures with Arabia and the Arabs: his bed was the ground, his food rice, his beverage water, his luxury a pipe and coffee.*[17]

Montagu spent that winter in Pisa, whence he sent the Royal Society an account of his journey from Cairo to Mount Sinai.[18] He also spent time in Leghorn and sailed for Alexandria again in the autumn of 1766. From here he travelled to Zakynthos, sending the Royal Society in 1767 his 'New Observations on what is called Pompey's Pillar in Egypt' in which he proposed a new date for the giant red granite column in Alexandria.[19] He visited Thessalonica and Smyrna, using Homer and Virgil as his guides: 'I have followed Ulysses and Aeneas. I have seen all they are said to have visited',[20] but he later abandoned the great epic poets in favour of Suetonius in order to deepen his knowledge of the Battle of Actium, in which Octavian fought Anthony and Cleopatra. He subsequently returned to Constantinople, dressed as a Turk with a beard and turban and claiming to be a Muslim, then settled in Rosetta in 1769, drawing and collecting views of Egypt. This is when we first hear mention in his correspondence of a Nubian girl named Ayesha whom he had met years before in Cairo, and of young Massoud (Mas'ud) who was probably his son.

Returning to Italy in 1773 in the company of Massoud, whom he rechristened Fortunatus, he settled in Padua and Venice, surrounded by his antiquarian and collector friends, men such as the Consuls John Udny (1727–1800) and John Strange (1732–99) and the Paduan antiquarians Alberto Fortis (1741–1803) and Giovanni Marsili (1727–95). Once again the eccentric Englishman turned Turk became an attraction in Venice.

FIG. 8
George Romney, *Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu*, 1775
(Private collection)

FIG. 9
Mace and sword belonging to Edward Wortley Montagu, depicted in the Romney painting
(Private collection)

A description of a visit by the 8th Duke of Hamilton (1756–99) to Edward Montagu's Venetian palazzo, which contained a room decorated in the Turkish style with tiles on the walls, a painted wooden ceiling, a *banquette* or low sofa and a small fountain in the middle of the room, matches the scene painted by Longhi in many details*: 'we had a great deal of conversation with this venerable-looking person […] There were no chairs, but we were desired to seat ourselves on a sopha, while Mr. Montagu placed himself on a cushion on the carpet, with his legs crossed in the Turkish fashion*'.[21] The guests were served coffee which was *'sticky and sickly-sweet 'put up' in small white vessels like egg-cups which*

rested on beautifullly wrought golden pedestals'. The young Massoud, elegantly dressed and sporting a turquoise silk turban, offered the guests *rahat lokum*, or what we today would call Turkish delight. The account adds that: *'Edward permitted the boy to hold his right hand, kiss it and press it to his brow, when the elaborate water-pipe had been set on the floor beside him'.* Another visitor, Count Maximilien Joseph de Lambarg (1729–92), tells us in his *Mémorial d'un Mondain* that Edward *'rises before the sun, says his prayers and performs his ablutions and lazzis according to the Mohamedan ritual […]. During the most intense cold he carries out these ablutions in icy water, rubbing his body with sand from the thighs to the feet',* and indeed young Fortunatus observed the same ritual.[22] Other witnesses tell us that Montagu's beard was died with henna and that he was in the habit of putting kohl around his eyes. He met the painter George Romney (1734 – 1802) through the good offices of the British Consul John Udny in 1775, during the two months the English painter spent in Venice.[23] The two men became the best of friends and Romney painted Montagu in a splendid portrait sporting a turban, arms and Ottoman attributes, perfectly capturing the sitter's flamboyant spirit (figs 8–9).[24]

That same year, Montagu was also portrayed in his now customary oriental attire by the painter Matthew William Peters (1741–1814) (fig. 10).

In November 1775, while preparing to visit Mecca and Medina, and aware both of his great age and of the perils he would inevitably be facing on the journey, Edward drew up a will leaving £5,000 and his Arabic and Turkish library to his *'reputed son Fortunatus Montagu called in Arabic Massoud who has hitherto passed for my slave as he is almost black'*,[25] and arranged for the young man to be educated in England after his death. Like his mother before him, Edward spent his last years in Venice and Padua, where he died on 29 April 1776. In accordance with his will, his ashes were buried in the 'English cloister' in the church of the Eremitani in Padua. His manuscripts were sold at auction in London in 1786 and 1787. A manuscript of the *Arabian Nights* in Arabic was owned for a time by the great collector and writer William Beckford (1760 – 1844) who, with the help of a translator named Zemir, used it for *Vathek*, his best-known and most 'oriental' novel, while the other manuscripts, after various tribulations, found their way into the Bodleian Library in Oxford.[26]

Once again we have Horace Walpole, with his enviable acumen and sense of humour, to thank for capturing in a few words the essence of this contradictory character who was so difficult to define. He argues that Montagu's mindset was not *'proportionate, ranging between linguistic brilliance and profligate squalor'*, while in another letter he voices the opinion that

FIG. 10
Matthew William Peters, *Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu*, 1775, National Portrait Gallery, London (no. 4573)

Montagu's adventures *'deserve better to be known than his writings'*.[27] In the event this turned out to be the case, if we consider that few of the scholars who have turned their attention to him have dwelt at any length on his writings or on his talent as a scholar and orientalist, while he is universally remembered for his roguish lifestyle and his spectacular adventures in Europe and the Middle East.

Terisio Pignatti argued on stylistic grounds that Pietro Longhi must have painted the portrait under discussion in this paper late in his career, in other words some time between 1770 and 1775. Pignatti's suggestion certainly tallies with the dates of Montagu's arrival in Venice in 1773 and his death in April 1776.[28] Longhi is known to have worked chiefly for Venetian patrons and aristocrats, including the Grimani with whom Lady Mary associated assiduously during her time in Venice and whom Edward Montagu must also have known. It is thus entirely possible that Montague

commissioned the painting himself. The commemorative inscription in Latin was probably added after his death and emphasises his scientific and exploratory work. It is similar in content to the epitaph that Edward composed for himself and to the far more grandiloquent epitaph composed by the archaeologist and Consul John Strange.[29]

> *Edward Wortley Montagu, a noble Englishman, a member of the Royal Society and of the Academy of Sciences of the Institute of Bologna, a worshipper of science. He visited almost the entire globe and all the peoples therein. Focusing on historical, critical, and philosophical observations, he illustrated the monuments of Antiquity. He was very well versed in the languages of the East and in the customs of Confucius, and as a supporter of the poets, himself deserved to obtain the dignity of Beij, or prince. His most admirable traits always shone forth, and he met his end with civility and with a full heart. Still alive, nothing **

The painting depicts a sophisticated interior in the Ottoman style, probably the Turkish cabinet in Montagu's Venetian palazzo, with a banquette lined with precious brocade and a Persian carpet in warm colours. Montagu is shown in the centre, sitting barefoot on a sofa with his legs crossed. He wears a typical fur-lined costume and a large turban, his face is framed by a long beard and he turns his penetrating gaze on the observer. His belt holds a jewel-encrusted dagger, while the arms, scimitars and scabbards adorned with semi-precious stones hanging on the wall behind him conjure up the same exotic and bellicose mood found in Romeny's famous portrait. Smoking a hookah with one hand, he holds out his other hand to receive a cup of coffee from an elegantly attired young man. The descriptions cited above tell us that the young lad, who must be about ten years old, is unquestionably Massoud/Fortunatus. We can also make out an open book resting on the divan between the two figures, suggesting that the portrait was painted in a pause during a lesson. Montagu tells us in his memoirs and in numerous letters that he taught his young son Turkish and Arabic, and it was to him that he left his precious Arabic, Persian and Turkish books and manuscripts.

The composition of the painting and the colours chosen are extraordinarily reminiscent of the palette and descriptive style of the Flemish painter Jean-Baptiste Vanmour – see, for instance, his painting entitled *The Reis Effendi, Head of the Chancery* now in the Rijkmuseum in Amsterdam (fig. 11). While Longhi may not have known Vanmour personally, he unquestionaly knew *of* him through the many prints inspired by his work.

FIG. 11
Jean Baptiste Vanmour,
De Reis Effendi (*Head of Chancery*),
c. 1727–30, Rijksmuseum
(SK-A-2024)

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NOTES

1 Walpole did not like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and his remarks about her are frequently mocking and irreverent, see for example *Walpole's Correspondence* 1937–83, vol. 30, p. 10 (letter addressed to Lord Lincoln on 31 January 1741). This dislike was probably caused by Lady Montagu's friendship with Maria Skerret, the second wife of her father, Prime Minister Robert Walpole.
2 Wortley Montagu M. 1763.
3 Wortley Montagu 1837, vol. 2, p. 227.
4 Finnegan 2006.
5 Sandwich1799.
6 *Walpole's Correspondence* 1937–83, vol. 20, p. 226 (letter to Horace Mann 9/02/1751).
7 Wortley Montagu 1752. They were later released and finally cleared of wrongdoing.
8 Curling 1954, p. 161.
9 Ibid., p. 163.
10 Wortley Montagu 1763.
11 Curling 1954, p. 166. Winckelmann was thoroughly taken with Montagu at first. They corrsponded at length when Montagu returned from Egypt in 1765 because Winckelmann had a particular intterest in the use and dissemination of porphyry in Egypt.
12 *Walpole's Correspondence* 1937–1983, vol. 22, p. 113 (letter from Horace Mann, 25 December 1762).
13 Davison subsequently wrote an account of their voyage for the Royal Society, see Grundy 2008.
14 Curling 1954, p.180.
15 Architectural Slab of black siltstone with inscriptions of Nectanebo I, 370 BC, (BM EA22); Black Basalt Block with hieroglyphics, 26th Dynasty (BM EA20); Anthropoid coffin of sycamore fig wood, made for a man named Itineb, Late Period, Saqqara (BM EA6693).
16 Wortley Montagu 1837, p. 395 (letter to Lady Pomfret, November 1739).
17 Wortley Montagu 1794, vol. 2, chapter XL, pp. 141–2.
18 *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. lvi, chapter VIII, 1766, pp. 40–57. See also the *Gentleman Magazine*, vol. 37, 1767, pp. 374, 401.
19 *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. lvii, chapter XLII, 1767, p. 438.
20 Curling 1954, p. 204.
21 Ibid., p. 213.
22 Ibid., p. 218.
23 Ibid., p. 226.
24 Kidson 2015.
25 Curling 1954, p. 226.
26 Châtel 2013.
27 *Walpole's Correspondence* 1937–83, vol. 20, p. 226 (letter to Horace Mann 9/02/1751).
28 Pignatti 1972, pp. 3, 28, fig. 4; Pignatti 1974, p. 102, no. 203, fig. 207.
29 Curling 1954, pp. 232–3.

IT IS MY OPINION, having studied and worked on the artist for many years, that the present painting, the *Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu*, is unquestionably by the hand of the Venetian artist Pietro Longhi (1701–1785). I make this judgement based on its close relationship to a number of other works by the artist and, more generally, its formal character.

First, I would suggest that the title of the work be changed to *Portrait of Edward Wortley Montagu and His Son, Massoud Fortunatus*, so as to acknowledge the presence of both characters in the work.

Second, in terms of genre, while the painting is rightly to be considered a portrait, as it depicts two historical figures, it should also be recognized as a genre painting, a conversation piece – the type of work for which Longhi gained his fame – in which, in his typical way, he depicted an interior room, filled, in this case, with 'exotic' near-Eastern objects, as carefully observed as the two figures, all depicted, as the contemporary painter and writer, Pietro Guarienti, described Longhi's manner, 'with such veracity and color that at a glance it is easy to recognize the people and places portrayed.'

In all of its physical and formal aspects, the painting is typical of Longhi. Its size – 52 × 67 cm – is in keeping the vast majority of his works, especially those of the 1770s. And the pictorial handling is also in keeping with that of his works from that decade – works in which, as succinctly described by Francesco Sorce (in his entry in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*), 'he began to tend toward a less refined manner in the graphic delineation of the figures [… and] to opt for a pasty application of color, rather dense and modulated in the darker tones.'

What makes this painting particularly fascinating are its subjects – Edward Wortley Montagu, one of the most colorful figures in 18th-century Europe, and his son, Fortunatus, born in 1762 and known by his Arabic name, Massoud, whom he fathered with an Egyptian woman, Ayesha. Their 'exoticism' places this painting within a sub-genre of Longhi's works – his depictions of curiosities and spectacles. Notable among these works are his *Rhinoceros* (known in two versions, both of 1751, one in the Ca' Rezzonico, the other in the National Gallery, London), the *Portrait of Magrath the Giant* (1757, Ca' Rezzonico), and his *The Display of the Elephant* (known in four versions, all of 1774, two in private collections; one in the Palazzo Leoni Montanari, Vicenza; and one in the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston). It is to these last four paintings that the present work most closely compares.

Although the present work is undated, all the evidence points to it having been painted ca. 1773–75. Beyond the formal aspects of the work that suggest this date, we know that Edward and his son were living in Venice at this time. It was there, in 1775, that Edward was portrayed by Matthew William Peters and George Romney, both of whose likenesses of the sitter compare closely to Longhi's. We know that Massoud was twelve years old in 1774, which accords with his appearance in the painting. And, finally, Longhi's image corresponds, in an almost uncanny way, with two descriptions of Montagu in his Venetian home: The first, was written by Mr Samuel Sharpe (in 1767): 'His beard reached down to his breast […] and the dress of his head was Armenian. He was in the most enthusiastic raptures with Arabia and the Arabs; his bed was the ground; his beverage water; his luxury a pipe and coffee'; the second was penned in 1775 by Dr John Moore, tutor to the Duke of Hamilton: 'There were no chairs […]; Mr Montagu placed himself on a cushion on the carpet, with his legs crossed in the Turkish fashion. They drank Turkish coffee and ate dried figs and Turkish delight. A young black slave [sic] sat by him […]'.

The inscription in the lower right corner of the painting may be compared to the inscriptions in the Rhinoceros, Magrath, Elephant, and other paintings by Longhi. However, in contrast to those in the other works, which appear integral to the compositions – as inscribed sheets of paper (sometimes framed) attached to walls or columns – here the inscription is written on an ill-defined, off-white ground, which does not relate to the space, and the handwriting does not accord with that in Longhi's other paintings. This leads me to believe that the inscription may be a later addition.

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