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Typically enough, what began as a limited exercise morphed into a project far vaster than anything even remotely imagined at the outset. For this I am thankful, as the years spent in the world of the late Ottoman palace have been rich indeed. Nonetheless the long and wandering paths of this undertaking contained treacherous potholes. In many of them I undoubtedly still languish without knowing it. If so I take full responsibility for the errors that occur when attempting to convey the spirit of one culture to inhabitants of another, later, culture. My goal has been to replicate in English the sense of life in this era that is relatively recent in time but vastly different in spirit. If the translation succeeds in that, I shall be content.

And so a tip of the hat—no, surely a floor *temenna*—in heartfelt thanks to the three ladies who share their lives in these pages. Translating your writings has been a privilege and a delight. I wish I could have known you all.

## THE CONCUBINE, THE PRINCESS, AND THE TEACHER

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