2. The Inception of Global Civility
Henry Blount's *A Voyage into the Levant* (1636)

Islam was a constant presence in the political, cultural and religious life of early modern Christian Europe. A complex amalgam of fear and fascination governed western perceptions of the Muslim world, whose frontiers, unlike today, cut across the continent's centre.[1] Especially the Ottoman Empire, which rose to global prominence during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from its humble origins in central Anatolia, preoccupied the minds of Western observers. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453, as well as the first and second siege of Vienna in 1529 and 1683, respectively, brought home to Europeans the military capabilities of the Ottomans and sparked widespread fears of '[t]he glorious Empire of the Turkes, the present terrour of the world.'[2]

There was, however, a contrasting representational strand, particularly in English writings. '[C]ultural interest in the Ottoman Empire was becoming firmly rooted in English soil'[3] when commercial and political exchanges between both nations intensified from the late sixteenth century onwards. Englishmen going east witnessed a powerful empire straddling three continents, in which an Islamic meritocracy held important posts and capable converts could rise to the highest echelons of power. In this regard, the Ottoman realm differed decisively from European countries and their hereditary aristocracies, and provided foreign visitors with an ethno-religiously diverse imperial

1 Gerald MacLean, *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 2.

2 Knolles, Richard, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes, from The first beginning of that Nation to the rising of the Othoman Familie*, 5th ed., (London: Adam Islip, 1638), 1.

3 MacLean, *Looking East*, 56.

model that lent itself to emulation at the same time as it threatened Christianity with its military capabilities.

Indeed, English diplomats, merchants and travellers returning from Ottoman lands frequently expressed 'imperial envy,'[4] a complex structure of feeling denoting the lack of and desire for an imperial identity. Whilst the Ottomans had already established such an identity, the global imaginary of the English still lacked a 'real world referent […] – a British Empire.'[5] One traveller in particular, Henry Blount, made substantial contributions to British knowledge of the Ottomans by setting aside received wisdom in order to explore the reasons behind the Ottoman Empire's long-standing and continued success. He set out in 1634, at a time when the religious rivalries sparked by the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War made travel tremendously difficult. In such a troubled climate, Englishmen could not hope to tap new markets or establish mutually improving relations with continental European countries, many of which were

predominantly Catholic and as such opposed to English Protestantism. Looking and going east thus seemed a natural solution for curious and expansive minds in the British Isles.

The present chapter addresses Anglo-Ottoman relations in the first half of the seventeenth century by situating Henry Blount's *Voyage into the Levant* (1636) in an emergent discourse of global civility. The *Voyage* is a pivotal moment in the emergence of this formation, since its representation of the Ottomans is based on a strictly humanistic and 'secular logic'[6] rather than deeply entrenched stereotypes or religious propaganda. This scientific approach anticipates the rational patterns of thought central to the age of reason at the same time as it allows for the historically specific study of imperialisms, their expansive aspirations and power structures.

Frequently overwhelmed by the empire's military power and splendour, European travellers in Ottoman lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had to be civil. In this realm, they recognised their guides, interlocutors

4 Gerald MacLean, 'Ottomanism Before Orientalism? Bishop Henry King praises Henry Blount, Passenger in the Levant,' in Ivo Kamps & Jyotsna G. Singh, eds., *Travel Knowledge: European Discoveries in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 85-96, here 86.

5 Richmond Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576 – 1626* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 70.

6 MacLean, *Looking East*, 180.

and hosts as members of a highly advanced, if not superior, culture with both a global reach and a long history. Civility was thus not an end in itself but a crucial survival mechanism and a means to find out more about Europe's significant Islamic other. Blount's account, too, conforms to this pattern. His survey of the Ottoman Empire's military, religion, justice system and morality bespeaks admiration for these institutions and simultaneously judges them according to their relevance for the empire's success. The first part of this chapter discusses Blount's representation of these four cornerstones and contextualises them within his own imperial preoccupations. However, insider knowledge of Ottoman institutions and morals as Blount saw them are not the only things that return to Britain with him. The circulation of goods, institutions and skills in Anglo-Ottoman interaction was crucial to the emergence of western modernity. The second section will plumb the depth of these cultural flows and establish the extent to which the *Voyage* contributed to them, especially with regard to coffee and coffee-houses. Interestingly, this beverage is at the heart of Blount's first encounter with an Ottoman official in the Balkans and many comparable adventures follow when Blount is snooping around military or naval premises. He thus has to employ a good deal of cross-cultural showmanship in various situations and the third section explores these performative improvisations in the contact zone. The final part of this chapter examines the limits of Blount's receptivity to Ottoman culture. Although the empire's ethno-religious diversity is an intriguing constituent of his investigation, Jews have no place in his framework of imperial rationality. He resorts to denigratory and widely circulated stereotypes in order to show their contemptibility. However, as we shall see, this attempt at limiting his own receptivity brings into focus even more forcefully that which initially prompted him to go, namely an imperial vision on a global scale.

1. An imperial vision 300 years after Osman

In 1634, Henry Blount sets out to survey 'the only moderne people great in action, […] whose Empire hath so suddenly invaded the world, and fixt it selfe such firme foundations as no other ever did.'[7] These words portray the

7 Blount, Henry, *A Voyage into the Levant* (London: John Legatt, 1636), 2. (All further references are to this edition).

Ottomans as modern and global people with an imperial history that Europeans both envied and feared. Throughout the opening pages of his book, Blount enthusiastically represents 'Turky' (2) as dynamic locus of advancement and repeatedly expresses imperial envy. In this respect, his depiction of the East differs decisively from accounts of the post-Napoleonic era, in which the empire's crumbling vigour, backwardness and decay are predominant. However, since 'England threw itself into the competition for overseas trade and colonies'[8] from the early seventeenth century onwards, rhetorical structures and tropes such as imperial envy figure crucially in the (travel) literature of the period.

Blount's account in particular represents a sea change in travel and travel-writing, since it expresses both scientific cross-cultural curiosity and the desire to know how an empire is created, run and sustained. But the calamities caused by the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War rendered impossible the satisfaction of his intellectual endeavours in Europe.[9] Blount's desire for '*knowledge*' (1), which 'advances best, in observing of people, whose *institutions* much differ from ours' (1), thus lead him to the East where the Ottomans had established magnificence and stability under an imperial umbrella. Explaining his approach, Blount writes that

> customes conformable to our owne, or to such wherewith we are already acquainted, doe but repeat our old observations, with little acquist of new. So my former time spent in viewing *Italy*, *France*, and some little of *Spaine*, being countries of Christian institution, did but represent in a severall dresse, the effect of what I knew before. (1)

He suggests a comparative approach that replaces Christian supernaturalism, as well as images of the 'terrible Turk,'[10] with experiences of cultural difference. Blount wants to find out whether 'the *Turkish* way appeare absolutely barbarous, as we are given to understand, or rather an other kinde of civilitie, different from ours […]' (2). Aiming at the defamiliarisation of naturalised

8 Jonathan Haynes, 'Two Seventeenth Century Perspectives on the Middle East: George Sandys and Sir Henry Blount,' *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 3, The Self and the Other (Spring, 1983), 4-22, here 5.

9 GeraldMacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004) 136.

10 Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 115; see also: MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 129.

perceptual patterns, our Oxford graduate was aware that '[c]ultural difference is crucial to knowledge:'[11]

> The logic of Blount's argument is clear enough: the human intellect desires knowledge, and since experience of difference increases knowledge in proportion to increase in difference, the desiring intellect craves experience of radical difference.[12]

Blount's eagerness to leave behind tradition and received wisdom is a landmark in the development of global civility. He is ready to be favourably impressed by the Ottomans and willingly shares the fruits of his labour accumulated in the East with his contemporaries.

One of them, Bishop Henry King, even wrote a panegyric on his friend's achievements. Offering a comprehensive body of knowledge of the Levant and its rulers, the *Voyage* has 'at once informed' him of the Ottomans 'and cur'd' his desire to travel.[13] Most importantly, however, Blount's 'piercing judgement does relate/The policy and manage of each state'[14] by transforming 'travel writing from the collecting of interesting anecdotes about other cultures into a systematic programme of knowledge.'[15] As a Baconian man of science interested in empirical observation, Blount made available this system to the general interest in empire at the time and the learned Bishop praises him for doing so. Imperial and global management may, then, be characterised as Blount's preoccupation on his journey, and we may conclude from King's poem that he captured the political mood of his time. But what is more, Blount's personal thoughts on what he saw retreat into the background in his book. He ignores social relations and everyday matters except when they are immediately relevant to his imperial concerns.[16]

Unlike William Biddulph, who 'was the first English chaplain to publish an account of life in the Ottoman Empire'[17] in 1609, Blount did not 'set out

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11 MacLean, *Looking East*, 180-1.

12 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, p. 135

13 Henry King, 'To my Noble and Judicious Friend Sir Henry Blount upon his Voyage,' in George Saintsbury, ed., *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period*. 3 vols. (1905; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), Vol III., 223 – 226, here 225 (line 98).

14 Ibid., 226, (line 118)

15 MacLean, *Looking East*, 179.

16 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 149.

17 Ibid., 51.

to prove the correctness of his religious beliefs."[18] However, given his strictly secular, rational and scientific framework, Blount does not merely accumulate facts and figures. He looks at the Ottoman world 'through a lens of pragmatic curiosity' and 'is always ready to be favourably impressed."[19] For example, in the opening paragraph of the *Voyage*, Blount argues that '[i]ntellectual Complexions have no desire so strong, as that of *knowledge*' (1). But only a few lines later this sober and rational take on 'humaine affaires' (1) is blended with his admiration for the Ottomans and their empire: 'I was of opinion, that he who would behold these times in their greatest glory, could not finde a better *Scene* then *Turky*' (2). Anxious to see for himself the glorious eastern empire, Blount is concerned with 'foure particular cares' (2) that I would like to elaborate on in some detail, since they determine both the structure and content of his account:

> 'to observe the Religion, Manners, and Policie of the Turkes' (2)
> 'to acquaint [himself] with those other sects which live under the Turkes, as Greekes, Armenians, Freinks, and Zinganaes, but especially the Iewes (2)
> 'to see the Turkish Army, then going against Poland, and therein to note, whether their discipline Military encline to ours, or else be of a new mould, though not without some touch, from the countries they have subdued' (2)
> 'to view Gran Cairo, and that for two causes; first, it being clearely the greatest concourse of Mankinde in these times, and perhaps that ever was; there must needs be some proportionable spirit in the Government: for such vaste multitudes, and those of wits so deeply malicious, would soone breed confusion, famine, and utter desolation, if in the Turkish domination there were nothing but sottish sensualitie, as most Christians conceive: Lastly, because Egypt is held to have beene the fountain of all Science, and Arts civill, therefore I did hope to finde some sparks of those cinders not yet put out.' (2-3)

After Blount has related all his adventures, the *Voyage* passes from travel narrative to anthropological reflection. Here he reiterates both his interest in comparative cultural enquiries and the centrality of the four imperial cornerstones:

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18 Ibid., 126.

19 Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Cesare Vecellio, Venetian Writer and Art-book Cosmopolitan,' in Jyotsna G. Singh, ed., *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion* (Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, 2009), 305-322, here 319-20.

> The most important parts of all States are foure, Armes, Religion, Iustice, and Morall Cuftomes: in treating of these, most men set downe what they should be, and use to regulate that by their owne filly education, and received opinions guided by sublimities, and moralities imaginary; this I leave to Vtopians who doating on their phantastique suppofals, shew their owne capacitie, or hypocrifie, and no more: I in remembering the Turkish institutions, will only Register what I found them, nor censure them by any rule, but that of more, or lesse sufficiency to their ayme, which I supose the Empires advancement: (61-2)

Blount's primary interest in matters of statecraft is based on factual sobriety and pragmatic judgments. His account neither diminishes the global achievements of the Ottomans by resorting to Eurocentric 'hegemonic reflex[es]'[20] nor perpetuates contemporary phantasmagorias of unvarnished cruelty, essential difference and divine chastisement. Since he is not content with received opinions and 'would not sit downe with a book knowledge' (4) of the Ottomans, he boldly criss-crosses their lands and witnesses first-hand what other contemporary commentators only knew through representations. Occasionally, however, he loses his critical distance and his descriptions tip over into imperial envy. Accordingly, as opposed to a 'sedentary' or armchair traveller, who is content with perusing book pages, Blount is a 'nomadic' traveller, who actually travels.[21] As such, we should give him some leeway whenever impressions of Ottoman splendour override the rationality he so insistently preaches.

Bishop Henry King, on the other hand, seems to have preferred armchair adventures instead of putting himself through the hazards of Levantine travel:

> […] By your eyes
> I here have made my full discoveries;
> And all your countries so exactly seen,
> As in the voyage I had sharer been.[22]

Judging from his full-bodied praise, the *Voyage* is a fountain of knowledge and Blount was successful in surveying the Ottoman dominions, having seen what

20 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), 15.

21 Barbour, *Before Orientalism*, 106.

22 King, 'To my Noble and Judicious Friend,' 25, (lines 105 – 108).

only few people had seen before him – ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in a pragmatically organised empire. This achievement notwithstanding, both travel and travel-writing remained bones of contention, and were often seen as 'somehow unnecessary in the acquisition of true learning that comes from books.'[23] The number of British travellers, and by implication the number of published accounts, was consequently limited because only a few left their homes for foreign worlds in pre-imperial times. The swashbuckling and courageous ones, however, had to cope with what Donna Landry has called 'extreme travel' – 'travel in which extreme conditions, bodily deprivations, and various forms of painful perseverance and rare pleasures were at issue:'[24]

> Decade after decade, travelers speak of their journeys across steppes, deserts, and mountain landscapes, lodging in filthy khans, flea-infested camps, or drafty tents, where in the bitter cold of morning the scorpion might be lurking in one's boots […].[25]

Emphasising 'all the hazard and endurance of travell' (4), Blount joins this tradition, in which 'being incommoded was somehow integral to the experience.'[26] This prospect did not put him off, however, and the Ottoman Empire proved more attractive than the journey's dangers repulsive:

> The Ottoman Empire linked three continents, Asia, Europe, and Africa, encompassing an array of cultures, languages, peoples, climates, and various social and political structures. Ottomans negotiated between the contradictory, yet also complementary, visions and organizational forms of urban and rural; nomad and settled; Islamic and non-Muslim; Sunni Muslims, Shiites, and Sufi sects; scribes and poets; artisans and merchants; peasants and peddlers; and bandits and bureaucrats. They forged political institutions, combined military talent with territorial good fortune, and remained flexible and cognizant of the vastness of the imperial reach.[27]

There seems to have been hardly anything that the Ottomans did not have to cope with, organize or negotiate in the more than six centuries of their rule.

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23 Jyotsna G. Singh, 'Introduction: The Global Renaissance,' in Singh, ed., 1-27, here 12.

24 Donna Landry, 'Saddle Time,' *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 46: 3 (2004), 441-58, here 447.

25 Ibid., 445.

26 Ibid.

27 Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 7.

And it is, indeed, this vastness and plurality, sometimes achieved by the law of the iron fist, at other times established through dexterous negotiations, which is both intriguing and attractive to Blount. The dean of Renaissance political philosophy, Niccolo Machiavelli, had already formulated the pivotal point of empire building long before Blount set out: '[D]ifficulties arise when you acquire states in a land with different languages, customs, and laws. To keep these states, you need good fortune and much diligence.'[28] But how did the Ottomans implement this diligence in their empire? We can find the answer in those institutions that Blount set out to survey: '*Armes, Religion, Iustice,* and *Morall Cuſtomes*.'

The interconnectedness of imperial envy, the readiness to endure the hazards of travel and his comparative approach manifests itself in Blount's description of Ottoman institutions in both the narrative passages and the anthropological reflections at the end of the *Voyage*. Drawing on his experience in Europe, probably with the disastrous outcomes of the Thirty Years' War in mind, he states that 'we cannot raise two, or three *Companies* of Souldiers, but they pilfer, and rifle wheresoever they passe' (12/13). Although his first clash with soldiers in the Balkans seems to mirror his experiences,[29] he is nevertheless fascinated by Ottoman military practices in the ensuing encounters. In Belgrade he observes 'such brave horses, and men so dexterous in the use of the Launce I had not seen' (11) and goes on to admire 'the Ottoman system of military supply'[30] once this army is on the march:

> I wondred to see such a multitude so cleare of confusion, violence, want, sicknesse, or any other disorder; and though we were almost threescore thousand, and sometimes found not a towne in 7. or 8. dayes; yet there was such plentie of good Bisket, Rice, and Mutton, as wheresoever I passed up, and downe to view the Spahyes, and others in their tents, they would often make me sit, and eate with them very plentifull, and well. (13)

Similar pieces of information regarding size, supply and infrastructure as well as admiration of military skillfulness in this passage resurface in the anthro-

28 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, transl. by Peter Constantine (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 6-7.

29 Maclean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 143 & 145.

30 Ibid., 147.

pological reflection in the last part of his account. Not only are Ottoman soldiers 'admirable with their Bow and Arrowes' (70), they also

> [m]arch in Ranke and File with wonderfull silence, which makes commands received readily: they are always provided of Bisket, dryed flesh, and store of Rice, with a kinde of course Butter, so as in the greatest desarts, they are in plentie: thus their Armies passe the sandy barren Countreyes towards Persia, with lesse endurance then did the Romans in small numbers of old. (70-1)

That these two passages from different parts of his book contain comparable information is telling with regard to the author's imperial preoccupations. The Ottoman forces, which 'Western Europeans could not hope to overcome,'[31] differ considerably from 'the disorderly horde of prejudiced legend.'[32] Additionally, while the former passage centres on the Balkans and the troops there raised, the latter reiterates the given information and transposes the local focus onto a global scale, with Persia and the imperial Romans being points of geographical and historical comparison. Equally important are Blount's descriptions in terms of choice of words and style: 'wondred,' 'plentifull, and well,' 'wonderfull' and 'plentie' transgress the strictly factual framework of the Baconian man of science and hint at something deeper. Surrounded by a disciplined army, military splendour and an efficient infrastructure, Blount's descriptions are again expressive of imperial envy arising in a well-managed environment that seems to have made a deep impression on him.

In other parts of his account, Blount is more sober than envious in his description of military organization, but even here the Ottomans' managerial qualities are clearly exhibited. While staying in Belgrade, he observes that 'there is kept great part of the *Gran Signior* his treasure, to be ready when he warres on that side the *Empire*' (11).[33]A short time later, in 'Philippopolis' Blount 'saw the *Gran Signior* his stable of *Camels*, […] which carry his provision when he Warres on this side his Empire' (20).[34] These sentences bear witness to the remarkable infrastructure – in terms of supply, money and

31 Daniel J. Vitkus, 'Trafficking with the Turk: English Travelers in the Ottoman Empire during the Early Seventeenth Century,' in Ivo Kamps & Jyotsna G. Singh, eds., *Travel Knowledge: European Discoveries in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 35- 52, here 35.

32 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 147.

33 Ibid., 144.

34 Ibid., 155.

transport – that the Ottoman soldiers could rely on in their multinational, if not global, military enterprises and Blount, whether in transit or in place, records all the evidence thereof. Hence, his readiness to be favourably impressed has ubiquitous incentives. However, we have to ask some questions at this point: if one is interested in 'the organisation and longevity of empire'[35] and its literary representations, why should imperial envy be confined to the Ottoman case? Were other Empires – the Roman, Byzantine or Habsburg ones – not equally 'dominant and durable for a long period of time,'[36] with others gazing enviously at their institutions and consolidated power? 'Perhaps specific to the Ottomans,' according to Karen Barkey, 'was continued flexibility and adaptability'[37] in the interests of maintaining imperial power. The crucial point, then, is that '[m]anaging diversity [emerged as] the *sine qua no* of imperial persistence, requiring mechanisms that were flexible enough to endure.'[38] Consequently, one can describe empires as

> structurally resembling [a] hub-and-spoke network pattern, where each spoke was attached to the center but was less directly related to others. The fact that imperial relations were vertically integrated, and that peripheral entities communicated mainly with the center and with one another only through the center, provided centers with added control over the various peripheral entities. Divide and rule, "brokerage," segmentation and integration become the basic structural components of empire.[39]

The strong imperial centre thus operates a complex political entity that is unified and consolidated as well as polyvalent, adaptable and able to learn. If one follows Blount on his journey through Ottoman lands, it is exactly this seemingly paradox duality that comes to the fore.

On the one hand, there is, for example, the Ottoman army as a manifest sign of imperial strength and on the other, there is the need for it to adapt to different and changing demands. Probably with the picture of a strong, raiding and vast force before his mind's eye, Blount at one point

> enquired, why the Turkish Armies were not so numerous as in former times: among the many answers, the wisest hit upon three points, first that the

35 Barkey, 5.
36 Ibid., 15.
37 Ibid., 7.
38 Ibid., 132.
39 Ibid., 10.

> enemies now (excepting the Persian) were not so Potent as heretofore; Secondly, experience had taught them, that multitudes over-vast are neither capable of order, nor provision; wherefore to avoyde confusion, and famine, they bring no more into the field than necessary: the third was, before their Dominions were inlarged, they thought it better to employ their multitudes in new Conquests, then to leave them idle, necessitous, and dangerous at home; but since their inlarged territories, they are distributed into Colonyes to people, and manage them, which thereby will in time, become more populous, and potent, then ever. (69)

In this situation, he implements his comparative method by asking questions and gathering information. The Ottoman military apparatus emerges as an adaptable entity open to changes and past campaigns provide the experiential basis for future strategies. But what is more, by learning how to manage their troops in particular situations, the Ottomans have at their disposal the means to manage the entire empire and its diversity at the same time. Blount's questions and descriptions move from 'Turkish Armies' over 'inlarged territories' to 'Colonyes' and finally arrive at the conclusion that they 'will in time, become more *populous*, and *potent*, then ever.' It is again the idea of successful and flexible power that makes empire in general and the Ottomans in particular both attractive and modern in Blount's eyes.

We can find another pertinent example of how much Blount admired Ottoman managerial skills in those passages of the *Voyage* in which he writes about 'the greatest concourse of Mankinde in these time' (3) – Cairo. Here military power and the management of an ethnically and religiously diverse multitude converge in his survey of this metropolis, its inhabitants and the concomitant problems. One of the largest cities on the Mediterranean Sea, Cairo is 'the fountaine of all *Science*, and *Arts civill*' (3). This is not only a must for a learned and well-read traveller like Blount, but also a challenge:

> Notwithstanding the excessive compasse of this Citie, it is populous beyond all proportion; for as we rid up, and downe, the principall Streets were so thron'g with people, as the Masters of our Asses, went always before, shoving, and crying Bdaharack, that is, make roome; such infinite swarmes of Arabs, and Indians flocke to the plentie, and pleasures of Gran Cairo. (43-4)

While staying in Cairo, he 'expresses admiration at the Ottoman ability to rule a city and people that had been brutalized by centuries of invading armies and

repressive regimes' and provides his readers with concrete examples of that very ability:

> [The number of] the noted streets [is], foure, and twentie thousand, besides petty turnings, and divisions; some of those streets I have found two miles in length, some not a quarter so long; every one of them is lockt up in the night, with a doore at each end, and guarded by a Musketier, whereby fire, robberies, tumults, and other disorders are prevented. Without the Citie, toward the wildernesse, to stop sudden incursions of the Arabs from abroad, there watch on Horse-back foure Saniacks, with each of them a thousand Horsemen: Thus is this Citie every night in the yeare, guarded with eight, and twentie thousand men. (38)

Blount's account of Cairo illustrates the city's vastness and diversity and indicates, moreover, the expenditure – monetary and military – that is necessary to sustain it. Cairo is, accordingly, already a modern metropolis in the 1630s, demanding the Ottoman authorities' attention and skills in order to function. If sudden and fierce action is needed in Egypt, it will readily be applied, just like other means of imperial rule might have been appropriate elsewhere.

During his 11-month journey, Blount observed different strategies based on particular conditions on the ground: 'It is the custome of the Ottoman Crowne, to preserve the old Liberties, to all Countryes who come in voluntary […] but those whom they take by conquest, they use as booty, without pretending any humanitie, more then what is for the profit of the Conqueror; which most Conquerors doe in effect […]' (53).This example illustrates that it is 'the diversity of peoples, communities, and territories, as well as the diversity of rule, that made empires.'[40] Blount could see a particularly successful example at work and what he observed, especially in terms of military power, size and ethno-religious diversity, must have confirmed that he was *vis-à-vis* the 'only moderne people great in action.'

After Blount has admiringly, if not enviously, described the Ottoman army, he goes on to delineate the essential features of Islam as he sees and interprets it – through a military and pragmatic lens, that is. Comparing 'those daintie *Pictures*, and *Musicke* in *Churches* (77) with Islam, Blount is sure that '*Mahomet* […] rather chose to build it upon the *Sword*, which with more assurance commands *Mankinde*' (77). He thus centres this part of his survey on

40 Ibid., 12.

the ways in which Islam helps to promote, extend and consolidate Ottoman power by closely interweaving state and religion. Describing how 'the *Turkish Theology*' is framed 'excellently to correspond with the *State*' (79), he frames his argument in Machiavellian terms and treats 'the Prophet like a Renaissance prince skilled in the ways of imperial statecraft.'[41] For Blount, 'the *Turkish Empire* is originally compos'd to amplifie by warre' (95) and when the Prophet was asked what Miracles he had to approve his Doctrine, he drawing forth his Scymitar, told, that God having had his Miracles so long slighted by the incredulitie of men, would now plant his Lawes with a strong hand, and no more leave them to the discretion of Ignorant, and vaine man; and that hee had therefore sent him in the power of the Sword, rather then of Miracles. (77-8)

In Blount's version of Islam's historical trajectory, it is conducive to territorial expansion at the same time as it defies existing religious principles. As such, it serves the House of Osman well in its imperial ambitions and both converge in a 'supranational ideology'[42] at the heart of the empire's continued success. The primacy of the *raison d'état* is obvious in Blount's assessment of Islam, for he views religion through a Machiavellian lens.[43] When he characterises 'the *Sword*' as 'the foundation of *Empires*' (78) and interreligious struggles as 'serving right to the purpose of the State' (82), he echoes the pragmatic and flexible attitudes of statecraft first laid down by the famous Italian humanist. In Machiavelli's conceptualisation of the state all its constituent institutions and individuals have to bend to its interests. Especially religion is of paramount importance in this respect:

> The rulers of a republic or of a kingdom [...] should uphold the basic principles of the religion which sustains them in being, and, if this be done, it will be easy for them to keep their commonwealth religious, and, in consequence, good and united. They should also foster and encourage everything likely to be of help to this end, even though they be convinced that it is quite fallacious. And the more should they do this the greater their prudence and the more they know of natural laws.[44]

41 Ibid., 168.

42 Ibid., 13.

43 For Blount's attitude to Religion see: MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 168-9.

44 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses of Niccolo Machiavelli*, Vol. I, transl. by Leslie J. Walker (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 244.

According to this passage from Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, rulers should uphold and promote any doctrine that serves their and the state's interests, even if they do not agree with it: 'Relying on this functionalist concept of Religion, Machiavelli transforms it from the previous norm of politics into a mere means to an end.'[45] Instead of providing moral guidance, religious beliefs become part of a ruler's political toolbox, and in the event of territorial expansion, of imperial ideology, too.

Whilst Blount does not explicitly mention Machiavelli, his depiction of Islam and its role in the Ottoman state were probably inspired by the above and related thoughts. And he is, it will be recalled, a citizen of a nation with imperial ambitions and could observe the consequences of quarrelling religious factions in continental Europe, which probably also influenced the ways in which he framed Islam as a unifying and cohesive force. Commenting on the five daily prayers in the Islamic world, Blount asserts that 'the *opinions* of *Nations*, in point of *reverence* and *decency*' are 'so different' but at the same time emphasises 'that *Religion* runs no greater danger then of *Oblivion*, and therefore should bee often called to minde.' (88). His comparative method acknowledges culturally specific habits of worship in their own right, but his imperial preoccupations nonetheless determine the representation of these practices, namely that frequent prayers reinforce, albeit indirectly, the empire's 'supranational ideology.'

If, according to Blount, religion is one of the means through which the Ottomans socially and institutionally normalised imperial culture, how did early modern Britons envision, and popularise, their emerging global ambitions? In Elizabethan and Jacobean Britain, 'regularly, with rich trappings and strong rhetoric, playhouses projected fictions of geographic mastery, making actions in distant lands present to the imagination of islanded spectators.'[46] The various degrees of cultural difference, as well as the imagined worlds and empires, in *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Jew of Malta*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest* and *Othello* 'satisfied ethnographic curiosity and provided readers [and viewers] with the pleasures of the strange and foreign.'[47] Hence, theatrical

45 Thomas, Paulsen, 'Machiavelli und die Idee der Staatsraison,' *IfS-Nachrichten* 2 (1996), 6-28, here 21 [my translation, S.K.].

46 Barbour, *Before* Orientalism, 40.

47 Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 21.

entertainment and dramatic literature were crucial in the fabrication of imperial visions and concomitant exigencies, such as the negotiation of alterity and management of acquired territories.

The rise of the Ottomans, albeit some 300 years earlier, began in the often vague realm of the imaginary, too. A dream promised Osman, the eponymous first Sultan of his dynasty, the rule over a vast empire.[48] Caroline Finkel has called this dream a 'founding myt[h]' of the Ottoman Empire and described its function as 'conjuring up a sense of temporal and divine authority and justifying the visible success of Osman and his descendants.'[49] In both cases, 'founding myths' are key events in the imperial imaginary, no matter whether they precede the empire (the British case) or start to circulate 'a century and a half'[50] after the first ruler's death (the Ottoman case). They are thus related to the inception of empire by either providing an ideal to which the nation aspires or by retrospectively justifying and consolidating expansive endeavours. Travelling in 'a period of intensive intelligence-gathering,'[51] and often trying to make himself understood to the locals, Blount may very well have picked up some version or other of these fancy old stories, especially since they feed into his imperial concerns by emphasising conquest, expansion and *gaza* (holy war):

> [...] Ottoman chroniclers, writing in a period of prolonged warfare with the Christian states of the Balkans and beyond, emphasized a religious inspiration for the early conquests of the dynasty, representing the Turcoman frontiersmen as motivated solely by a desire to spread Islam. Writing at a time when the political environment was quite different, an imperial and theocratic state of which Sunni Islam was the official religion, they attributed militant piety to these frontiersmen: it seemed appropriate to assert that it had always been thus, that the state had been created by the tireless efforts of Muslim warriors struggling against their supposed antithesis, the Christian kingdoms of Byzantium and Europe.[52]

48 Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923* (London: Murray, 2005), 2.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 21.

52 Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 11.

When the Ottomans started writing histories of their early period the beginnings had already become 'a distant memory.'[53] However, both the English and the Ottomans used projections or narratives of greatness to endow their imperial efforts with sense, historical veracity being only a secondary concern. Similarly, Blount represents religion as being conducive to the national interest, and in so doing intertwines political philosophy, the cultural memory of the Ottomans and his own concerns into a dialectically productive relationship of religion and state.

Key to imperial success, such relationships were to be found in other fields, too. Whilst Blount represents both the Ottoman military and Islam as primarily geared towards the state's expansion, he shifts his focus to domestic affairs in his survey of the justice system. In keeping with his comparative perspective, he describes the 'maine points, wherein *Turkish Iustice* differs from that of other nations […]: it is more *Severe*, *Speedy*, and *Arbitrary*' (89). And like Ottoman religious practices, it is closely knitted together with imperial interests: 'Every *State* is then best fitted, when its Lawes, and *Governours* suit with the end whereto it is framed' (94). Since expansion and conquered territories necessitate the maintenance of public order throughout the empire, Blount both describes and rationalises the severity of Ottoman justice:

> They hold the foundation of all Empire to consist in exact obedience, and that in exemplary severitie; which is undeaniable in all the World, but more notable in their State, made up of severall People different in Bloud, Sect, and Interesse, one from another, nor linkt in affection, or any common engagement toward the publique good, other then what mere terror puts upon them; a sweet hand were uneffectuall upon such a subject. (89-90)

Imperial interests and social management on the one hand, and professional admiration and imperial envy on the other, converge in Blount's description of Ottoman justice. Although it is strict and built on deterrence, it seems to have been crucial to imperial success and the ethno-religious diversity that comes with conquered territories. Yet, managing this diversity was not an end in itself, but rather served Ottoman power: 'Tolerance, assimilation, and intolerance were on the menu of strategies designed to squeeze resources out of minorities and to enforce allegiance to the imperial state.'[54] The justice

53 Ibid.

54 Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 21.

system, it seems, is another brick in the imperial wall of highly flexible institutions that contributed to the consolidation, and maintenance, of Ottoman power. Of course, a '*sweet hand*' cannot achieve stability and Blount's favourable representation of Ottoman justice indicates that he 'assess[es] a regulation by its efficiency'[55] regardless of the immediate human cost involved.

In one of the most well-known passages from *The Prince*, Machiavelli makes a similar point by asserting that 'it is far safer to be feared than loved.'[56]

A ruler, he writes,

> must not fear being reproached for cruelty when it is a matter of keeping his subjects united and loyal, because with a few exemplary executions he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow the kind of disorder to spread that gives rise to plunder and murder. This harms the whole community, while an execution ordered by a prince harms only a single individual.[57]

Blount repeatedly endorses such strategic decision-making and emphasises that 'terror can be an effective way to drive a militarized empire forward while keeping the people in check.'[58] Comparing the Roman and Ottoman Empires, the '*Turke*' emerges as the more potent organiser of pacification in conquered territories:

> [T]he Turkish Iustice curbes, and executes, without either remorce or respect; which succeeds better, then ever did the Romans, with all their milder arts of Civilttie; compare their conquests, with those made by the Turke; you shall finde his to continue quiet, and firme, theirs not secure for many ages; witnesse first Italy, then Greece, and France, alwayes full of Rebellions, Conspiracies, and new troubles. (90)

Describing the nexus between a justice system 'quicke [in] dispatch' (91) and its successful outcome, Blount gravitates towards Ottoman legal culture and its execution. Here, as well as elsewhere in the *Voyage*, his strictly rational framework breaks down and is replaced by imperial envy. Losing his critical

55 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 146.
56 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 61.
57 Ibid., 60.
58 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 170.

distance, his choice of words indicates that empirical observation is insufficient in capturing the greatness of the Ottomans who 'bin[d] with the tye of *feare*, whereto humane nature is ever enthralled' (90-1).

Moving from the general to the specific features of Ottoman justice, Blount is particularly impressed by its procedural speed. In this regard, it differs decisively from English common law: 'the cause is ever in lesse then two houres dispatched, *execution* instantly performed,' there are 'no old deeds, or any other reckonings beyond the memory of man' and no 'suspence, delay, and charge of suit' (91) can harm the citizen in question. Thus, being quick 'avoyds *confusion*, and cleares the *Court*' (91). Blount repeatedly emphasises these qualities in his account, since the Ottoman system prevents both the tedium of studying precedents and the complicated codification of rules by having 'little fixt law' (92). But not only does he represent eastern justice as efficient, he also corroborates his favourable survey through personal encounters with it, citing two misunderstandings that got him into the dock. However, both were quickly dispelled and he was freed: 'I must eternally remember the *Turkish* justice for honourable to *Strangers*, whereof I have twice had experience' (92).

This favourable survey notwithstanding, Blount re-establishes comparative rationality by specifying the problems of Ottoman justice. For example, 'their unsatiable *covetousnesse*' is 'a thing of dangerous effect, many times disappointing commands of greatest consequence' (95). According to him, there cannot be 'any greater defeat of *publique* designes, then when the commands whereon they relye, are by the *avarice* of the inferior Magistrate made frustrate' (95). In the Balkans he had seen this for himself:

> [I]t is a pernicious piece of Government, that after the Bashaes had at Sophya made publique Proclamation to hang all Ianizaries who should be found behind them; yet did I see many very confidently stay behind, and make their peace for money with the Gouvernours of Provinces: some told mee that if it should come to the Emperours notice, hee would put those Governors to cruell deaths; and certainly such errours can have no lesse remedies. (96)

In this passage, Blount relates a local event to the empire's political framework at large. Both the 'inferior Magistrate' and the '*Gouvernours*' do not simply figure as officials, but as wheels in the complex governmental machinery which needs to run smoothly. Their misconduct has potential ramifications for '*publique* designes' and the '*Emperour*,' both of which originate in the imperial centre. Hence, Blount's analysis indicates that he was aware of the intri-

cacies of the 'hub-and-spoke network pattern [of empires], where each spoke was attached to the center,'[59] as well as the justice system's crucial role in maintaining order within that structure. Of course, this representation of Ottoman legal practices tells us more about his focus of interest than the system itself. But it nonetheless illuminates the ways in which our Oxford graduate tries to rationalise culturally specific habits within their own realm. In so doing, he contributes to the emergence of a discourse of global civility, whose epistemological grid allows for comparative cross-cultural enquiries at the same time as it safeguards the integrity of its objects of scrutiny.

For Blount's contemporaries, however, such receptivity reached its limits when it came to describing the '*morall* parts' (96) of the Ottomans. Steeped in 'traditional Christian moralizing,'[60] European verdicts frequently centred on the sexual corruption said to be both prevalent and pervasive in Ottoman society, emphasising the 'sottish sensualitie' (3) Blount sets out to dispel. Travellers in particular were prone to judging sensitive matters by their own standards, thus relying on, and consolidating, dichotomously structured patterns of representation:

> To translate the difference, the traveller has at his disposal the handy figure of inversion, whereby otherness is transcribed as anti-sameness. It is not hard to see why travelers' tales and utopias frequently resort to this method, since it constructs an otherness that is transparent for the listener or reader; it is no longer a matter of a and b, simply of a and the converse of a.[61]

Of course, the *Voyage*, too, belongs to the body of texts claiming comprehensively to represent and translate cultural difference as it found it. In other words, 'there is one world in which one recounts, another that is recounted.'[62] Blount's innovative thrust, however, lies in initiating and advancing global civility's inclusiveness that bends to cross-cultural exigencies instead of replicating traditional judgments.

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59 Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 55.

60 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 149.

61 Francois Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, transl. by Janet Lloyd (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 212-13.

62 Ibid., 212.

By rejecting received wisdom, Blount connects his comparative method to a larger humanist discourse. Dependent on commercial and cultural traffic, this discourse had a decidedly transnational, if not global, dimension which prompted Europeans to look beyond the narrow confines of their continent from the inception of the Renaissance onwards.[63] Various degrees of cultural difference bred by a great variety of geo-physical determinants were among the challenges that explorers, travellers and merchants had to confront both abroad and after they had returned home. Blount was aware of the potential ramifications of intensified travel and trade, but he does not draw rash conclusions when it comes to compartmentalising fellow human beings encountered in foreign lands:

> It hath been maintained, that men are naturally borne, some for slavery, others to command: divers complexions make men timid, dextrous, patient, industrious, and of other qualities right for service; others are naturally magnanimous, considerate, rapacious, daring, and peremptory; No man can say, Nature intends the one sort to obey; the other to rule; for if Nature have intentions, yet is it vanitie to argue them by our modell. (96)

Such a powerful methodological reiteration at the beginning of his section on 'their *morall* parts' (96) indicates his determination to judge foreign cultures within their particular frameworks and abstain from contortive attempts at transposing them to a realm that is not their own. This particular endeavour anticipates the Enlightenment project of completing the Great Map of Mankind, aimed at integrating unknown social practices into a coherent survey of human interactional patterns.

Within these patterns, sexuality and its representation figure as especially delicate configurations, since they touch on the fundamental question of what societies either conceptualise as permissible or sanction within their religious traditions. The Ottomans as Islamic society presented a peculiar challenge, and even Blount's boldness has its limits in this respect. Hence, he chooses to robe some delicate marital frictions he encountered in an Ottoman court in insinuating rather than descriptive language:

> I saw at Andrinople a woman with many of her friends went weeping to a Iudge; where in his presence, she tooke of her Shoe, and held it the sole up-

63 Compare: Lisa Jardine & Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (London: Reaktion, 2000)

> ward, but spake nothing; I enquired what it meant, one told me, it was the ceremony used when a married woman complaines that her husband would abuse her against nature, which is the only cause, for which she may sue a dicvorce as shee then did; that delivery by way of Embleme, seemed neate, where the fact was too uncleane for language. (106/107)

By soberly narrating what he saw Blount both circumvents 'traditional moral judgements about the Ottomans'[64] and grants different customs their culturally and historically specific spaces. In this situation, he represents the woman's fate in understanding, almost compassionate, terms and extends global civility's reach to the female sphere of his host culture. But what is more, he does not exploit this incident in order to repeat charges of sexual licentiousness in Ottoman dominions, thus refraining from Eurocentric verdicts and strictly following his own rationalist agenda.

However, some of the incidents recounted in the *Voyage* may indeed have been disconcerting for his Protestant English audience. But Blount being blunt, he does not side with his cultural or religious roots; instead, he goes further and stretches the limits of what some of his countrymen, especially pious ones, may have wanted to read:

> I remember when their Prophet in the Alcoran askes the Angell concerning venery, and some other delicacies of life, that God did not give man such appetites, to have them frustrate, but enjoy'd, as made for the gust of man, not his torment, wherein his Creator delights not. (82)

Adding that a 'politick ac[t] of the *Alcoran* […] permits *Poligamie*, to make a numerous People, which is the foundation of all great *Empires*' (82), Blount fuses religion, moral customs and politics in his account of sexual mores among the Ottomans. Far from moral degeneracy, they have established a system catering to both man's 'appetites' and the empire's needs. As such, Ottoman imperial organisation lends itself to emulation and Blount's Christian heritage, as well as its judgmental attitudes to the Islamic world, emerges as both culturally relative and disadvantageous to imperial endeavours. Blount is thus actively involved in a process of unlearning received wisdom, and favourably represents a political entity many of his contemporaries looked down upon as barbarous.

64 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 149.

Barbarity, however, is hard to detect in the *Voyage*, and the morality of the Ottomans points to pragmatic attitudes when it comes to sexuality and social life. Managing this life consistently is a challenge that comes with empire, and Ottoman authorities obviously had a clearly-delineated agenda as to how they would synchronise locally specific customs with their grander imperial scheme. According to Blount, baths are 'the first thing they erect' after 'the taking of any Towne' and '*hee* or *shee* who *bathe* not twice, or thrice a weeke, are held *nasty*' (100). Hence, not only are regular baths a Turkish custom, they are an indispensable measure of social management in Ottoman-held territories: 'so necessary a thing to prevent diseases, is cleanlinesse in hot *Countryes*'(101). One of the most famous oriental travellers, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, reiterates Blount's depiction of the bath more than a century later: '[T]is the women's coffee house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented etc. They generally take this diversion once a week, and stay there at least four or five hours.'[65] She, too, represents the Turkish bath, or hamam, as a social instution that keeps the population entertained as well as free from diseases. The Turks, it seems, may have appeared terrible on occasion but they were certainly not dirty.

2. Intertwined Histories, Global Circulation: Coffee and Cultural Indebtedness

Referring to the bath and the coffee-house, Lady Mary delineates separate spheres of male and female conviviality, respectively. In so doing, she touches upon an instance of cultural cross-fertilisation pivotal to the European Enlightenment project and its struggle for political emancipation. By the time her *Turkish Embassy Letters* were posthumously published (1763), both coffee and coffee-houses had already found their way to the British Isles from the Islamic East and were 'a characteristic feature of Dr. Johnson's London.[66]' Transplanted to the western metropolis, they gave rise to what Juergen Habermas has famously called the public sphere, 'a place where incipient democratic institutions took shape, and where the people became a political force for

65 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London: Virago, 1993), 59.

66 Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England During the Rennaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), 186.

change.'[67] German social thought has frequently attributed the emergence of this space to the liberalising tendencies of the English and French middle classes, outstripping their German contemporaries in both power and influence:

> In German social history one looks in vain for the social institutions which in England and France contributed powerfully to the formation of public opinion, the coffee-house and the salon, respectively. Germany's middle-classes lacked the commercial strength that made the coffee-house so important in England. In Europe, coffee-houses date back to the middle of the seventeenth century; they became popular as centers of news-gathering and news dissemination, political debate, and literary criticism. In the early part of the eighteenth century, London is said to have had no fewer than two thousand coffee-houses. Addison wanted to have it said of him that he had brought philosophy out of closets and libraries "to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea tables and in coffee-houses." The English middle classes began to accomplish their own education in the coffee-houses.[68]

This perspective regards the public sphere, and by implication the emancipatory changes it engendered, as genuine English and French innovation, without taking into account its cultural origins or social roots in the Muslim world.[69] However, the coffee-house was a foreigner that had to be naturalised and the societies that appropriated it quickly forgot where it had come from.[70] Hence, sitting down to have a coffee with Blount and a high-ranking Ottoman official on the shores of the Danube will help us to provide the historical and geographical nuances of the public sphere's trajectory.

Inextricably intertwined with a 'widening of horizons'[71] from the beginning of the Renaissance onwards, the arrival of the coffee-house in Europe belongs to the same cultural current which prompted Blount to go east. Foreign customs, exotic goods and new knowledge seeped into Europe at the same time as Europeans set out to explore worlds formerly unknown to them.

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67 MacLean, *Looking East*, 58.

68 Hans Speier, 'The Historical Development of Public Opinion,' in Speier, ed., *Social Order and the Risks of War* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: M.I.T. Press, 1952), 323–338, here 329-30.

69 MacLean, *Looking East*, 58 and Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, 185.

70 Donna Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore, Md. & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 72.

71 Singh, 'Introduction,' 4.

Conceptualising cultural and commercial exchanges within the strictly-defined and consolidated boundaries – geographical, historical and psychological – stemming from the imperial nineteenth century thus both occludes the porous frontiers of earlier periods and reduces the complex interplay of languages, things and objects in contact zones to 'the assumption that Europe was the political and intellectual superior in such transactions.'[72]

Blount's *Voyage*, for example, illustrates on various levels the challenges of personal meetings, carefully choreographed attempts to get access to foreign dignitaries and the circulation of symbolic as well as material artefacts. Whilst travelling with the Ottoman army, he deliberately exposes himself to this uncertain terrain in order to experience the radical difference he seeks. By accident, it seems, he also comes to taste a new beverage:

> [T]he Campe being pitch'd on the Shoare of Danubius, I went, (but timorously) to view the Service about Murath Bashaes Court, where one of his favourite Boyes espying mee to be a Stranger, gave mee a Cup of Sherbet; I in thanks, and to make friends in Court, presented him with a Pocket Looking Glasse, in a little Ivory Case, with a Combe; such as are sold at Westminster hall for foure or five shillings a piece: The youth much taken therewith, ran, and shewed it to the Bashaw, who presently sent for me, and making me sit, and drink Cauphe in his presence, called for one that spake Italian; then demanding of my condition, purpose, countrey, and many other particulars [...]. (14-5)[73]

Though unable to start a conversation, Blount exchanges drinks and trinkets with the boy, which is his ticket into the tent of the Basha. He adroitly shifts the basis of this exchange from the symbolic to the material level, and in so doing demonstrates his skill in improvisation as well as the situationally contingent character of such encounters. This remarkable episode demonstrates the multi-layered complexity of European-Ottoman encounters at a time when travellers had to be civil to representatives of their powerful host culture. Most importantly, however, it proves how such encounters could result in amicable exchanges, even if linguistic barriers were involved. In pre-imperial

72 Jerry Brotton, 'Afterword,' in Matthew Dimmock & Andrew Hadfield, eds., *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions, 1400-1660* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave, 2008), 195-202, here 197.

73 For a detailed discussion of this encounter see also: MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 148-154.

times, then, 'conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict'[74] were not prefigured outcomes of contact situations. Simply projecting the clear-cut power differentials of the age of high imperialism backward in time is thus both anachronistic and tampers with historical evidence.

By contrast, when Blount enjoys Ottoman hospitality and sips '*Cauphe*' with the Basha we become witnesses of a process of cultural circulation based on understanding and respect. And the consequences of this meeting reach far beyond the confines of Blount's text, since the former hard-drinking London lawyer starts promoting coffee after his return from the Levant.[75] Other travellers preceding him had already mentioned the Turkish black broth in their accounts – for example, Sir Anthony Shirley (1601), George Sandys (1615) or William Lithgow (1632) – but 'it did not become a staple article of import till the second half of the seventeenth century.'[76] However, Blount's emphatic promotion of the drink is an important step in transplanting this specimen of Ottoman culture and its sociality into Britain. Indeed, his detailed description of coffee and coffee-house culture suggests the novelty of both for himself and his countrymen:

> They have [a] drink not good at meat, called Cauphe made of a Berry, as bigge as a small Beane, dryed in a Furnace, and beat to powder, of a soote colour, in taste a little Bitterish that they seeth, and drinke hote as may be endured: it is good all hours of the day, but especially morning and evening, when to that purpose, they entertaine themselves 2 or 3 houres in Cauphe-houses, which in all Turky abound more then Innes and Ale-houses with us: it is thought to be the old black broth used so much by the Lacedemonians, and dryeth ill humors in the stomacke, comforteth the braine, never causeth drunkenesse, or any other furfeit, and is a harmless entertainment of good fellowship; for there upon scaffolds, half a yard high, and covered with Mats, they sit crosse-legg'd after the Turkish manner, many times two or three hundred together, talking, and likely some poore Musicke passing up and downe. (105/106)

Although he hardly ever pauses to relate personal impressions, the coffee-house seems to have captured his fascination. Comparing it to '*Innes* and *Ale-houses*,' Blount seems to favour Turkish drinking habits over English ones, since they come without the social problems attached to the consumption of

74 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8.

75 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 152.

76 Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, 183.

alcohol. And several hours spent in coffee-houses provide ample opportunity for political discussion, enabling ambitious men of the middling sort to propel social change and to advance their interests. This particular space, then, figures as the material precondition to Kant's famous dictum defining Enlightenment as man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.[77]

Articulated in 1784, Kant's nutshell definition of the intellectual efforts of his age occupies a central position in Europe's intellectual history, demanding 'resolve and courage' of docile contemporaries in order to throw off the shackles of 'alien guidance.' [78] However, what evades Kant and other leading philosophical, political and literary figures of the Enlightenment is the interactional origin of the spaces that first and foremost helped shape a reading public interested in their thoughts and artistic creations: 'When Addison and Steele launched their periodicals, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, they expected them to be read aloud in coffee houses and to be debated publicly.'[79] If this development is a vital, and vibrant, moment in the inception of democratic structures in Europe, their roots are an Ottoman import, borrowed, transplanted and cultivated from a realm that both fascinated and terrified Westerners. Yet unlike the orientalist separate spheres ideology prevalent in later centuries, both sides – East and West, Christian and Muslim, traveller and resident – were involved in lively exchanges, skirmishes, wars, diplomatic missions and commercial ventures determined by changing fortunes and, as Blount's sojourn into the Basha's tent demonstrates, situational contingencies. Travellers in early modern times were aware of both these complex dynamics and the potential dangers lurking in the realm of the '*Gran Signior*' (20). They nonetheless set out to survey the great Eastern empire and returned with a plethora of novelties, often admiring the Ottoman dynasty while simultaneously contributing to the flow of goods, skills and even institutions into a Europe divided by petty religious conflicts. Blount's *Voyage* is a particularly pertinent example in this respect and demonstrates that we have to add cultural indebtedness to imperial envy.

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77 Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, transl., with introduction, by Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983), 41-46, here 41.

78 Ibid.

79 MacLean, *Looking East*, 59.

3. Fluid Identities in Ottoman Lands: Blount's Oriental Performances

Travellers going East had to deal with complex, multi-layered and even ambiguous experiences bred by in-between spaces, which demanded their improvisational talents, increased their receptivity and stretched their stamina to, and sometimes beyond, their individual breaking-points. Back at home, travellers' tales either aroused suspicion or met with praise, but definitely enriched the modalities of European knowledge production in symbolic and material ways. In this perspective, both imperial envy and cultural indebtedness are European responses to the enticing, and threatening, exeternality that the Ottoman Empire, its culture and institutions represented in early modern times. European travellers exposing themselves to the indeterminacies of extreme travel in this empire required a great deal of personal preparation and knowledge gathering before they were ready to set out. Blount's adventures are no exception in this respect, the only difference to contemporaries such as Biddulph being the light-hearted and joyful way in which he shakes off his English identity.

Unfortunately, Blount does not tell us very much about his preparations before he embarks on his journey. Venice is both the point of departure and destination for his Oriental rambles. In May 1634, he leaves Italy after he had agreed 'with a *Ianizary* at *Venice*, to find me Dyet, Horse, Coach, Passage, and all other usuall charges, as farre as *Constantinople*' (5). Upon his return, he briefly summarises his journey and what he had seen:

> I arrived [in Venice] the eleventh moneth after my departure from thence: having in that time, according to the most received divisions of Turky, beene in nine Kingdomes thereof, and passed five thousand miles, and upward, most part by land. (61)

But how did a seventeenth century traveller, who was most likely a spy, prepare for a global journey through an empire straddling Europe, Asia and Africa?[80] Using the entire opening section of the *Voyage* (1-5) for a personal reinvention, Blount gives himself a strictly rationalist framework for his enquiries and presents himself as a well-educated gentleman, whose education 'owes rather more to neo-Platonism, to the Florentine humanists, to Jean Bodin and

80 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 158-61.

to Francis Bacon'[81] than to English Protestantism. And given Bishop Henry King's poetic praise of his achievements, he must have been a voracious reader with connections to literary and learned circles. But ploughing through available writings on the Ottomans and contemporary statecraft was only a first step for Blount.

Challenging 'those who catechize the world by their owne home' (4), he invents a new role for himself in order completely to suspend his English identity as well as the social and cultural baggage it carries. From now on, he is neither simply a traveller nor 'an inhabitant,' but refashions himself into 'a passenger' (4). His eagerness to test bequeathed wisdom necessitates this thoroughgoing makeover and is expressive of his inquisitive mind, not content with accepting popular stereotypes of terrible Turks whose 'barbarous nation […] now so triumpheth ouer the best part of the world.'[82]

Blount's means of shedding his old self is a tripartite plan aimed at seeing how much truth contemporary representations of the Ottomans actually carried:

> [H]ee who passes through the severall educations of men, must not try them by his owne, but weyning his mind from all former habite of opinion, should as it were, putting off the old man, come fresh and sincere to consider them. (4)

> I embarq'd on a Venetian Gally with a Caravan of Turkes, and Iewes bound for the Levant, not having any Christian with them besides my selfe. (5)

> I became all things to all men, which let me into the breasts of many. (5)

Given the secular momentum of Blount's account, putting off the old man is 'not so much a figure of spiritual rebirth, more a proposal to unlearn received prejudice.'[83] Such prejudice was part and parcel of European mediations of Islam ever since it appeared on the world's stage, gaining new momentum during the first siege of Vienna in 1529, and inoculated into western minds primarily by Christian circles. Being the only Christian in this party is thus conducive to carrying out Blount's intellectual designs, since it enables him

81 MacLean, *Looking East*, 180.

82 Knolles, *Generall Historie*, 1.

83 MacLean, *Looking East*, 184.

to exploit articles of faith for his own ends, without any fellow Christian disputing his privilege of interpretation. More importantly, however, 'no other mans errors could draw either hatred, or engagement upon' (5) him, which is tantamount to ruling out collective punishment at the hands of foreign authorities. And becoming 'all things to all men', a phrase gleaned from Fynes Moryson's *Itinerary* (1617) indicating how widely Blount had read before setting out, is a chameleonic survival strategy for territories where one might be forced to act 'in ways unimaginable, unavailable and unnecessary at home.'[84]

This remarkable reinvention of the self opens 'a legitimate *theatre* for […] dangerous and contingent social actions'[85] on Blount's journey through the Ottoman Empire. Redefining existing representations of the Ottomans, as well as making substantial contributions to European knowledge of them, is an ambitious endeavour that required his innovative, and receptive, frame of mind. In his day and age, travel accounts and eye-witness reports had a monopoly of information on foreign countries, especially when they were far-flung and exotic empires. Accordingly, their structure, organisation and content had direct and immediate consequences for one culture's attitudes towards another. In other words, the *Voyage*, just as every other story or travel account, is 'a spatial practice' which '[organises] more or less extensive social cultural areas.' [86] For example, a 'prodigious cultural repertoire' governs Europe's organisation of the Islamic world and conjures up a clearly delineated theatrical stage 'on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate.'[87] These tropes were transplanted into Western realms by travellers' tales and epitomise what we might call 'Orientalism's epistemological grid,'[88] loosely, and often unknowingly, lumped together in pre-imperial times, but rigidly organised, as well as institutionally enforced, in the age of high imperialism.

The opening section of the *Voyage*, then, questions received ideas of the Islamic world at the same time as it sets the stage for Blount's journey. Com-

84 Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell* (1617; Repr. 4 vols. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1907), 397; MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 98.

85 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, transl. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 124-25.

86 Ibid., 115 & 123.

87 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; rpt. London: Penguin, 1995), 63.

88 Landry, 'Saddle Time,' 451.

parable to ritualistic and operatic invocations before the act proper begins, its function 'is to authorize, or more exactly, to *found*:'[89]

> The ritual action was carried out before every civil or military action because it is designed to create the field necessary for political or military activities. It is thus also a repetitio rerum: both a renewal and a repetition of the originary founding acts, a recitation and a citation of the genealogies that could legitimate the new enterprise, and a prediction and a promise of success at the beginning of battles, contracts, or conquests. As a general repetition before the actual representation, the rite, a narration in acts, precedes the historical realization. [...] It "provides space" for the actions that will be undertaken; it "creates a field" which serves as their "base" and their "theatre." This founding is precisely the primary role of the story. It opens a legitimate theatre for practical actions.[90]

In this perspective, performativity is an integral constituent in both social interaction and cross-cultural encounters, in which agents perform rituals in accordance with pre-existing scripts. Such performances actualise a culture's sedimented elements and determine individual and collective action. For Judith Butler, too, interactional patterns and social norms are 'not one's act alone:' 'The act that one does, the act that one performs,' she writes 'is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene.'[91] Although she concedes that 'a script may be enacted in various ways,'[92] Butler emphasises the 'punitive and regulatory social conventions'[93] if agents fail to comply with culturally codified roles and expectations. Questioning subject-centred notions of agency, Butler's concept of performativity prioritises trans-individual structures over situationally contingent re-enactments of social scripts and emerges as comparatively rigid, leaving little room for improvisation.

Improvisation, however, is an essential skill for mastering encounters in *terra incognita*, social, cross-cultural or otherwise. Blount's case, for exam-

89 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 123.

90 Ibid., 124-25.

91 Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,' in Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Malden, Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 900 - 911, here 906. For Butler on performativity see also: MacLean, *Looking East*, 97 – 101.

92 Ibid., 906.

93 Ibid., 907.

ple, demonstrates the mutability of dominant narratives, since the terrible Turks were only one side of the representation of the Ottoman presence in Europe. Its other, inviting and enticing, side was the imperial model that lent itself to emulation, which both questioned and challenged unverified hearsay. Blount's mark of distinction is thus his avoidance of received opinion although he must have exposed himself to it during the preparatory stage of his journey. Once on the road, he became involved in encounters that were largely unscripted, undetermined and sometimes even potentially lethal. An episode of Blount's time on Rhodes demonstrates that the *Voyage* defies simplistic notions of performativity, emphasising creative and lively interaction with available models rather than slavish re-enactments of pre-existing scripts:[94]

> Vpon my first landing I had espyed among divers very honourable Sepultures, one more brave then the rest, and new; I enquired whose it was; a Turke not knowing whence I was, told me it was the Captaine Basha, slaine the yeare before by two English Ships; and therewith gave such a Language of our Nation, and threatning to all whom they should light upon, as made me upon all demands professe my selfe a Scotchman, which being a name unknown to them, saved mee, nor did I suppose it quitting of my Countrey, but rather a retreat from one corner to the other. (32-3)

In this situation, we can witness Blount's quick-witted and flexible actualisation of Moryson's advice to become 'all things to all men.' The danger is imminent, not only because Blount's presence in foreign territory might naturally arouse suspicion, but because recent events have soured the relationship between Ottomans and Englishmen. Self-preservation is paramount under these circumstances and only achievable through quickness of mind, improvisation and persuasive acting. But Blount does not completely shed his Englishness here, he rather re-interprets it in creative and innovative ways. In other words, he is performing East by 'forging a national identity, but doing it somewhere else.'[95] When asked about his country of origin, Blount cannot

94 Uwe C. Steiner, 'Der geschlagene Interpret: Nachahmung, Interpretation und Opfer bei Platon, Mozart und Ortheil,' in Otto Kolleritsch, ed., *Musikalische Produktion und Interpretation: Zur historischen Unaufhebbarkeit einer ästhetischen Konstellation* (Graz & Wien: Universaledition, 2003), 144-162, here 156-57 [my translation].

95 MacLean, *Looking East*, 98.

not perform and the 'the practices of *acting*, those forms of *being other* that are entailed in any performance, take over from simply being.'[96]

Confronted with a wide variety of encounters, dangers, invitations, landscapes and their produce, in short with 'a combinative system of spaces,'[97] Blount shows remarkable performing skills during his journey and the *Voyage* emerges as the yardstick for extreme travel. Full of bodily deprivations, uncertainties and the need to preserve the self in adverse conditions, Levantine travel was a spatial practice that required stamina, determination and improvisational skills. However, these hardships did not prevent Blount from crossing and mapping the eastern Mediterranean seaboard and parts of the Egyptian desert. But in his day, these territories ruled by the Ottomans were not imperial frontiers or playgrounds for adventurous Europeans, nor were encounters in them 'grounded within a European expansionist perspective.'[98] Europeans in these realms had to be civil and were far from asserting territorial, commercial or cultural claims. Blount's particular take on civility towards his host culture consists in ridding himself of prejudices, thoroughly preparing his journey and repeatedly expressing regard for Ottoman culture whilst taking care of his English self in dangerous situations. But what is more, he seems to have rejoiced in temporarily delimiting himself from the familiar in order both to experience cultural difference and to accumulate knowledge: 'I set downe what I noted in the *Turkish* Customes; all instruct, either as errors, or by imitation: Nor is the minde of man a perfect Paradice, unlesse there be planted in it the Tree of *Knowledge* both of *Good*, and *Evill*' (126). Europe's 'disquieting familiarity' with the Ottomans, he seems to say, is instructive for all intents and purposes and it '*is as though delimitation itself were the bridge that opens the inside to its other*.'[99] His voluntary and chosen delimitation in particular opened gateways for cultural exchanges with a powerful other that proved attractive in many ways.

96 Ibid.

97 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 126.

98 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8.

99 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 128-29 [emphasis in original].

4. Textual Silences: The Limits of Global Civility

Among the many things that fascinated European visitors to Ottoman lands in the first half of the seventeenth century were the conditions of relative peace among and between various religious and ethnic groups. Exposed to religious struggles and political upheavals at home, travellers in the East experienced a society in which 'Islam was pervasive' at the same time as the loosely organised *millet*-system ensured separate jurisdictions for minorities, especially the Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish ones.[100] Of course, such legal and organisational concessions to minorities served Ottoman strategies 'of empire building' and were aimed at establishing order, securing the flow of taxes to the imperial centre and enabling 'the administration to run smoothly.'[101] As such, these strategies were inseparable from the Porte's power politics and ethno-religious diversity under the Ottoman umbrella was their effect rather than their cause. Blount nonetheless expressed his interest in surveying 'those other sects which live under the *Turkes*, as *Greekes, Armenians, Freinks*, and *Zinganaes*, but especially the *Iewes* (2).'

In this respect, he joins a tradition of British travellers who expressed fascination with '[t]his seemingly peaceful coexistence of so many distinct and potentially antagonistic communities within Ottoman society.'[102] As epiphenomenon of empire building, ethno-religious diversity, too, is a managerial and organisational challenge of which Blount seems to have been aware. As usual, he begins his elaborations matter-of-factly:

> The chiefe Sect whereof I desired to be enformed was the Iewes; whose moderne condition is more condemned, then understood by Christian Writers, and therefore by them delivered with such a zealous ignorance, as never gave me satisfaction. (113)

Again, he represents himself as a well-educated gentleman, questioning the veracity of Christian verdicts on the basis of secular and scientific logic. Naturally curious and eager to learn, he wants to see for himself what kind of people the Jews under the Ottomans are and presents his readers with an extensive survey of Jewish life in the East (113-23).

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100 Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 115 & 130.

101 Ibid., 12 & 130.

102 MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 137.

However, instead of extending his comparative framework to include both their history and life in the Levant, Blount jettisons his rationality in favour of denigratory and hostile stock representations of the Jews. Not only does he 'repea[t] the theory of racial decay,' but also assembles all the arguments which would become part of a fully-fledged anti-Semitism in later centuries: [103]

> [I]t befell them in their frequent Capitivities, wherein the malice of their estate, and corruptions of the Gentiles, did extreamely debauch their old innocence, and from Shepheards, or Tillers of land, turned them to what they now are, Merchants, Brokers, and Cheaters; hereto is added no small necessitie from their Religion, which as of old, so at this day, renders them more generally odious, then any one sort of men, whereby they are driven to helpe themselves by shifts of wit, more then others are; and so as it were bandying their faction, against the rest of Mankinde, they become better studied, and practiced in malice, and knavery, then other men. (114)

According to Blount, the Jews have degenerated from a rural, if not bucolic, state of innocence to become a conspiratorial bunch of 'Merchants, Brokers, and Cheaters.' Allegedly aiming for mankind's ruin, they harnessed their monetary expertise and faith in order to implement their designs, becoming universally practiced in malice in doing so. Most importantly, however, Blount precludes developmental improvement by representing them as ahistorically static ('as of old, so at this day'). However, from this position they are nonetheless able to wield their power and potentially bring about Europe's defeat:

> [E]very Vizier, and Bashae of State uses to keepe a Iew of his private Counsell, whose malice, wit, and experience of Christendome, with their continuall intelligence, is thought to advise most of that mischief, which the Turke puts in execution against us. (114/115)

When he characterises the '*Iew*' Blount's rational framework disintegrates completely and he sides with his Christian heritage, of which he has remained critical throughout his account. This tremendous representational shift does not allow for Jewish culture to exist in its own right and limits global civility's inclusiveness to the non-Jewish elements of Ottoman society. Relying on a clearly-defined dichotomous logic, the representation of cultural alterity in

103 Ibid., p. 174

this regard 'is no longer a matter of *a* and *b*, [but] simply of *a* and the converse of *a*.'[104]

Contrary to his curiosity, civility and readiness to be favourably impressed, Blount launches a wholesale attack on Jewish life and becomes more and more disparaging in his description. Unable to establish a state of their own, the effeminate and 'cursed Iew[s]' (117) are 'light, ayeriall, and fanaticall braines' (119):

> If they were all united, I beleeve there would scarce be found any one race of men more numerous; yet that they can never ciment into a temporall Government of their owne, I reckon two causes, beside the many disadvantages in their Religion: First the Iewish complexion is so prodigiously timide, as cannot be capable of Armes; for this reason they are no where made Souldiers [...] The other impediment is their extreme corrupt love to private interesse; which is notorious in the continuall cheating, and malice among themselves; so as there would want that justice, and respect to common benefit, without which no civill society can stand. (123)

In addition to Blount's reiteration of the monetary argument, we can find the Jews' supposed governmental, civilisational and cultural incapabilities in this passage. Despite his 'special interest in seeing the Jews under Ottoman rule'[105] expressed at the outset, he cannot find any favourable elements in their culture. Clearly, then, this damning report 'indicates the limitations of his empirical and experiential method'[106] and demonstrates that receptivity, awareness and openness are situational, perspectival and relational. Blount's fascination with the Ottomans, in other words, is not tantamount to universal cross-cultural curiosity. Ottoman splendour and military power were omnipresent in Europe and contemporary authorities, travellers and intellectuals had to come to grips with the empire's insurmountable power and its putatively superior cultural unity. The coping mechanism which emerged was the structure of feeling described as imperial envy, expressing 'often contradictory'[107] sentiments towards the powerful Ottoman other. Situated in a field of tension between admiration and contempt, attraction and repulsion, fascination and fear, European attitudes towards the Ottomans were complex and

104 Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, 213.

105 MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 175.

106 Ibid.

107 MacLean, *Looking East*, 20.

either bred hostility or strategic identification and curiosity. As a curious man of science, Blount was of course on the learned wing of this complex relationship. By contrast to the Ottomans, the timid, effeminate and malicious Jews did not pose an immediate threat and invited the scorn even of '[i]ntellectual Complexions' (1) such as Blount.

We can thus characterise his representation of Jewish life in the *Voyage* as textual silence. This silence is not synonymous with avoiding a given topic, but rather of excluding it, even expressly, from certain contexts. The production of knowledge, for example, is inherently positional and inextricably intertwined with philosophical, cultural and political investments. As such, it is nevertheless a creative process and means 'to show and to reveal'[108] facts, figures and findings in line, or not in line, with the observer's agenda. Hence, every 'work has its *margins*, an area of incompleteness from which we can observe its birth and its production.'[109] These margins are integral constituents of every cultural artefact and can either be (almost) excluded from it or surface as something unwanted, undesired or undesirable within its representational range.

Reading these margins alongside the admiring survey of the Ottomans sheds light on the representation of global interconnections in the *Voyage*. Not only does Blount's text represent a non-Eurocentric conceptualisation of cultural gravity, whose centre is the Islamic world, it also debunks dyadic patterns of thought as insufficient to account for the complexities of cross-cultural encounters in pre-imperial times. The Anglo-Ottoman relationship is complicated by the presence in the text of the Jews, demonstrating the multipolar interplay of religious and ethnic communities that prompted Blount to go east. His ensuing representation of this interplay is integral in the inception of global civility at the same time as it draws attention to the blind spots, implicit assumptions and ideological ascriptions inherent in his frame of reference. In this respect, then, civility can bend to cross-cultural exigencies by favourably representing foreign cultures, facilitating even-handed exchanges across spatio-temporal disjunctures and opening channels for commercial circulation. Its receptivity, however, is not limitless and comes with the discursive and material exclusion of particular communities. Blount's ori-

108 Pierre, Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, transl. by Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 88.

109 Ibid., 90.

ental rambles have thus set the stage for successive generations of English travellers in both the Islamic world and the South Pacific.