

Gerald MacLean. *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. xxi + 267 pp. \$69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-333-97364-6.



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Starting with the premise that early Anglo-Ottoman relations have received insufficient scholarly attention, Gerald MacLean's book examines four English travel narratives dating from the close of the sixteenth century to the end of the Renaissance: Thomas Dallam's account of his 1599 voyage to Istanbul, during which he presented Queen Elizabeth's gift of a clockwork organ to Sultan Mehmed III; William Biddulph's *Travels* (1609), describing his journey to Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem; Henry Blount's *Travels* (1636), depicting his journey to the Balkans and Ottoman Cairo; and *The Adventures of (Mr. T. S.) An English Merchant, Taken Prisoner by the Turks in Algiers* (1670), a captivity narrative set in Ottoman Algeria. The study joins recent scholarship (e.g., Nabil Matar's *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* [1999] and *Britain and Barbary* [2005]; Lisa Jardine's *Wordly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* [1996]; Jerry Brotton's *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World* [1998]; and Richmond Barbour's *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576-1626* [2003]) on early modern western travel that has produced a "new history" of the Renaissance.

Methodologically, the book relies on Edward Said's critique of western Orientalism (*Orientalism* [1978]), as well as on new historicist, Marxist, and feminist approaches that aim to reveal the constructed, social, and class-determined nature of cultural identity.

MacLean pursues three interlocking arguments that challenge stereotypical Orientalist perceptions of early modern English attitudes to the East. Namely, he argues that the English attitudes toward the Ottoman Empire were not as hostile as has been commonly believed; that many Englishmen preferred the life in the Mediterranean due to attractive career opportunities; and "that, for those who came back, the experience of going had changed what it meant to be English" (p. xiv). It is this emphasis on the evolving concept of Englishness and early modern English perceptions of the self that sets this book apart from other scholarship typically exploring western images of "the Turk" or of "the other," however defined.

The Rise of Oriental Travel demonstrates the constructed, shifting nature of English national identity by presenting a variety of collective and

individual views within the communities of English expatriates: the worldview of the intrepid musician and craftsman Dallam; the bigotry of the clergyman Biddulph; the skepticism of attorney Blount; and the adventurous opportunism of a Turkish captive. Thus, the selected authors represent various strata of early modern English society and, thereby, manifest several distinct ways of being English among the Ottomans. Dallam's secular approach to foreign encounters and his nationalist feelings become evident when he describes how the English captain of the ship on which he was traveling participated in, rather than fought against, the Mediterranean slave trade. MacLean connects Dallam's obsessive desire to return home, despite the Sultan's invitations to stay at the Porte, and his desire for the company of Englishmen during his travel with the craftsman's idea of "what being an Englishman abroad was all about" (p. 11). Biddulph's anti-Islamic propaganda and his "directly citational" style that is devoid of any personal experience mark him as a "Protestant minister among the heathens" and place his *Travels* within the tradition of "bigoted disinformation" (pp. 73, 71, 86). In contrast, Blount "suspends prejudice and belief in order to establish knowledge of the Ottomans based on direct observation" (p. 183). MacLean asserts that Blount's reliance on the analytical method and firsthand experience made his narrative a turning point in England's Ottoman historiography: "Coming after Knolles' *General History* and before Paul Rycaut's *Present State*, Blount's *Voyage* demonstrated the need for serious analysis of the Ottomans based on extended personal experience as well as sound Baconian methods" (p. 176).

The discussion of *The Adventures* of T. S. is probably one of the most interesting chapters in this book, as here MacLean deconstructs the hidden imperialist strategies of this anonymous, semi-fictional narrative. The author argues that the narrative's return "to the pre-Enlightenment Christian supernaturalism characterized by Ed-

ward Said as the strategy most often employed to legitimate, and indeed naturalize, the sense that Britons should, and soon would, rule not just the waves, but other people's empires for them too" marks a totally new direction in English interests in the East (pp. 183-184). The English claim to world power is naturalized in *The Adventures* through the combination of a providential captivity narrative with the energy and bawdiness of a picaresque novel. In the account of T. S.'s slavery and sexual adventures, in which the hero always triumphantly rises above the circumstances, MacLean sees the "slippery identity" of an English opportunist captive (p. 192). In identifying with his captors and those with power over him, T. S. often follows the dictates of personal self-interest, rather than those of divine providence.

The book ends with a curious epilogue that briefly discusses some English women whose travels to the Orient predated those of the famous Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, but who left no written records of their experiences. In MacLean's recounting of the bizarre story of the death and burial of Lady Anne, wife of Sir Thomas Glover, England's ambassador to the Sublime Porte from 1606 to 1611, one can truly see what being English meant for upper-crust English expatriates. After his wife's sudden death from plague in 1608, Glover refused to bury her in Turkish soil, hoping to transport her remains to England. For three and a half years, Lady Anne's body was preserved in bran and stored in the cellars of the Levant Company. Ultimately, she was given a pompous funeral, the likes of which "had not been seen in that countrey, since the Turks conquered Constantinople" (Knolles, *Generall Historie*, p. 1313, quoted in MacLean, p. 224) and laid to rest in the English section of Istanbul's Pera cemetery. The world was able to see, says MacLean, that the English "served God far more decently and devotedly" than other nations (p. 224).

Overall, MacLean has presented a valuable study on the evolving nature of both early mod-

ern travel writing and conceptions of Englishness. His analysis of the four selected travelogues relies on his solid knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts in which those texts were produced. Some of the most delightful features of this book include its elegant language and its adoption of a narrative, rather than analytical, approach to organizing the material. MacLean closely follows the four early modern journeys of discovery, providing his eloquent, and at times pungent, comments along the way. The audience, as it were, reads these accounts through the scholar's eyes. The fact that MacLean revisited the places mentioned in the selected texts and provided the descriptions and images of what they look like today adds a personal touch and greater credibility to this well-written book. The study will be of interest to both academic and nonacademic audiences.

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