Representations of Global Civility:

English Travellers in the Ottoman Empire and the South Pacific, 1636-1863

Submitted by Sascha Ruediger Klement to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in English, February 2013

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Abstract:

This study explores the development of a discourse of global civility in English travel writing in the period 1636-1863. It argues that global civility is at the heart of cross-cultural exchanges in both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and that its evolution can best be traced by comparing accounts by travellers to the already familiar Ottoman Empire with writings of those who ventured into the largely unknown worlds of the South Pacific. In analysing these accounts, this study examines how their contexts were informed by Enlightenment philosophy, global interconnections and even-handed exchanges across cultural divides. In so doing, it demonstrates that intercultural encounters from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries were much more complex and multi-layered than one-sided Eurocentric histories often suggest.

The first case study analyses the inception of global civility in Henry Blount’s *Voyage into the Levant* (1636). In his account, Blount frequently admires Ottoman imperial achievements at the same time as he represents the powerful Islamic empire as a model that lends itself to emulation for the emerging global reach of the English nation. The next chapter explores the practice of global civility in George Keate’s *Account of the Pelew Islands* (1788), which tells a story of shipwreck, salvage and return. Captain Wilson and his men lost their vessel off the Palau archipelago, established mutually improving relations with the natives and after their return familiarised English readers with the Palauan world in contemporary idioms of sentiment and sensibility. Chapter four examines comparable instances of civility by discussing Henry Abbott’s *A Trip…Across the Grand Desart of Arabia* (1789). Abbott is convinced that the desert Arabs are civil subjects in their own right and frequently challenges both received wisdom and deeply entrenched stereotypes by describing Arabic cultural practices in great detail. The fifth chapter follows the famous pickpocket George Barrington and the
housewife Mary Ann Parker, respectively, to the newly established penal colonies in Australia in the first half of the 1790s. Their accounts present a new turn on global civility by virtue of registering the presence of convicts, natives and slaves in increasingly ambivalent terms, thus illustrating how inclusive discourses start to crack under the pressures of trafficking in human lives. The next chapter explores similar discursive fractures in Charles Colville Frankland’s *Travels to and from Constantinople* (1829). Frankland is at once sensitive to life in the Islamic world and aggressively biased when some of its practices and traditions seem to be incommensurate with his English identity. The final case study establishes the ways in which representational ambivalences give way to a discourse of colonialism in the course of the nineteenth century by analysing F. E. Maning’s (fictional) autobiography *Old New Zealand* (1863). After spending his early life in the Antipodes among the Maori, Maning changes sides after the death of his native wife and becomes judge of the Native Land Court. This transition, as well as Maning’s mocking representation of the Maori, mirrors the ease with which colonisers manage their subject peoples in the age of empire and at the same time marks the evaporation of global civility’s inclusiveness.

By tracing the development of global civility from its inception over its emphatic practice to its decline, the present study emphasises the improvisational complexities of cross-cultural encounters. The spaces in which they are transacted – both the sea and the beach on the one hand; and the desert on the other – encourage mutuality and reciprocity because European travellers needed local knowledge in order to be able to brave, cross or map them. The locals, in turn, acted as hosts, guides or interpreters, facilitating commercial and cultural traffic in areas whose social fabrics, environmental conditions and intertwined histories often differed decisively from the familiar realms of Europe in the long eighteenth century.
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