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IMAGINED DISTANCES – THE MISCONCEPTION OF REMOTE PLACES IN THE EARLY MODERN CULTURE

Abstract: Ever since the great geographical discoveries, the mind of the early modern individual had been captured by the vistas of distant and unattainable shores. Their remoteness made them ideal repositories of the utopian qualities which the Baroque age endowed upon them.

They became the perfect embodiments of the aesthetic of the marvelous, that essential principle of Baroque culture. If there was a consistent representation of beauty and perfection in the Baroque world, it was the image of the wonderful - the rare, unusual and marvelous.

Key words: liminal spaces, imagined distances, Orient, Ottoman Empire, Ottoman tents, Fetternear vestments, Ptuj, Walter Leslie, Turquerie

Ever since the great geographical discoveries, the mind of the early modern individual was captured by the vistas of distant and unattainable shores. Their remoteness made them ideal repositories of the utopian qualities, which the Baroque age endowed upon them. Long before the modern concept of Orientalism emerged on the horizon, the shadows of the Orient were woven into early modern imagination. But among the vast variety of different distant and exotic realms early modern culture encountered, particularly complex was the relationship of European domains with the Orient that was perpetually on their horizon – the Ottoman Empire.

THE EVER-CHANGING TERRITORY AND THE FLUCTUATING PRESENCE – IMAGES OF THE OTTOMAN WORLD

The European relationship with the Ottomans was a convoluted and complex one. They were known and unknown at the same time, a perpetual foe, an infidel



and an admirable adversary, but also a domain of the exotic and mysterious. Thus, the Ottoman realm was approached with a mixture of fear and curiosity, evident in travel books, diverse accounts and above all representations of the Empire and the ‘Turk’ that was formed in early modern culture.¹ Considering that the shape and the expanse of the Ottoman Empire was perpetually changing, the European perception of the Ottoman lands was equally adaptive.

This shifting territory and its protagonists were among the most liminal categories in the early modern visions of distant and Oriental lands. Primarily, and decisively, this was *not* distant land. It was even too close for the European perception that parts of this territory was formerly European. Thus, the usual dichotomies of the Christian vs. Infidel, of Christendom vs. Islam, of the Righteous vs. Sinner, could be only partially applied. It could not be argued that these old established polarities had been erased over time, only that they were in constant fluctuation. Equally unstable were the images construed of these lands, they were far more polyvalent than those usually created of the Arab or Asian worlds. Therefore, the Ottoman Orient and the images attached to it had the plurality of significations that deserve to be treated in this essay.

Unlike other distant places, this territory was not only close but indeed a part of Europe. Especially after the Second Siege of Vienna (1683), the confines between Europe and the Orient became more porous than ever before. The incursions by the Ottomans on the European territories were frequent particularly on the border along the Danube with the Austrian Habsburg Empire.² Equally recurrent were multiple images and a panoply of objects that were constantly arriving in Europe from the land of the Ottomans.

None of the exotic Oriental objects brought by merchants and diplomats from the Ottoman world bore such importance and solemnity as those seized from the battlefield as the spoils of war, and thus given pride of place in European cabinets of curiosities or *wunderkammers*. These Ottoman spoils bore a specific liminality in themselves, being simultaneously military artefacts and symbols of triumph, frequently metamorphosed into iconic relics of the glorious battles, and true symbols of the victory over the infidel. The greatest number of this Ottoman loot arrived in cabinets of curiosities after the famous victory of Vienna in 1683, and are still today kept in the museums of the cities from which the most important commanders in the siege had arrived: Vienna, Dresden and Karlsruhe.³

Among these spoils, there were a large number of military insignia, such as banners, spear heads and shields, also muskets, equestrian equipment and vest-

1 On the image of the ‘Turk’ in European early modern culture, see Marcus Keller, Javier Irigoyen-Garcia (eds.), *The Dialectics of Orientalism in Early Modern Europe*, Palgrave-Macmillan, London, 2018; Elisabeth C. Tingle, *Images of Islam 1453-1600: Turks in Germany and Central Europe*, Routledge, London, 2014; Albrecht Classen (ed.), *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, Walter de Gruyter, London, 2013.

2 R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, OUP, Oxford, 1979; see also an interesting account P.M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire – A New History*, Harvard Univ. Press, Harvard, 2016.

3 Against the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 the most important allies of the Hapsburgs were the Polish king, Jan Sobieski, and the German king.

ments that can still be admired in their full splendour in the Hall of the 'War against the Ottomans' in the Military Museum in Vienna (HGM) or in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Some of the most magnificent pieces, and those that were held in the greatest awe and esteem in their day, were the tents of Ottoman officials. Although standard pieces of Ottoman military equipment, they represented the marvel and terror of the European armies. Particular importance was attached to the luxurious embroidering, precious materials and sheer scale of the tents, something that was unseen in the European armies of the day.

But they possessed additional significance that transformed them into veritable liminal pieces. A colourful account of the perception of these curious objects is visible in the most probably apocryphal, or at least heavily embellished, account of Jan Sobieski, a Polish king, who was the chief commander of the allied armies (Imperial, German and Polish) at the siege of Vienna in 1683:

King Sobieski and the allied army arrived on September 11, 1683 at a marvelous and terrifying encampment surrounding the city. On the following day he 'had given up for the day all hope of the grand struggle, when the provoking composure of Pasha Kara Mustapha, whom he espied in a splendid tent tranquilly taking coffee with his two sons, roused him to such a pitch, that he instantly gave orders for a general assault. ...⁴

Although the commencement of the battle was far less volatile than this dramatized account, it was curious to note that the tent played a significant role in the capturing of the Ottoman commander Kara Mustafa. Apparently his leisurely behavior in the magnificent tent served as a provocation for the allied attack under Jan Sobieski. Obviously an apocryphal tale construed to give further dramatic effect to the triumphant allied victory over the Ottomans, treated the Ottoman tent and its space as highly liminal and greatly symbolic. Despite the fact that every tent was an ephemeral structure, its space always provisional with no territory that could be firmly ascribed to it; in this case this utterly liminal domain was endowed with even greater potency of meaning. In the perception of Sobieski, this tent represented a precious fragment of Ottoman territory, boldly positioned in the midst of Habsburg lands, under the very walls of Vienna. It was probably, not only the sight of Kara Mustafa but the magnificence of his tent, this microcosm of the Ottoman land that supposedly unleashed the rage of the Polish commander. Regardless of the veracity of the tale, the importance given to the allusive territory of the Ottoman tent is more than telling. Moreover, considering the fact that, according to the same source, Jan Sobieski appropriated that very tent as his own spoils of war, where he resided after the victory, endows this elaborate piece of fabric with considerable importance. Thus, the captured Ottoman tent was not only the loot of the victorious general, but was also used to rewrite the position of power and to re-possess the symbolic space in the early modern world.

⁴ S. Paul, *John Sobieski: The King of Poland, Conquers the Turks Under the Walls of Vienna September 12th, 1683, and Forever After Relieves the Whole Christian World from the Iron Yoke of the Turks* (Chicago: Edward C. Rozanski, Edward J. Moskal, Tony Szplit, 1983).

Although, these tents acquired substantial symbolic weight after their capture, their fame even increased over time as they were transformed into war trophies and icons of Christian victory. In such a capacity, they were taken from the Habsburg vaults and exhibited far before they were ever considered to be museum artefacts. It was recorded that the Ottoman spoils, nowadays displayed in HGM Vienna in all their grandeur, were centerpieces of the centenary displays in Vienna (1783 and 1883) that commemorated the historic victory, but were also given center stage at the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873.⁵ Equally resplendent tents could be found displayed in their full magnificence in Dresden, where they were also transported as spoils of war after the Siege of 1683.

Furthermore, some of the loot of wars with the Ottomans had a far more convoluted history and even more liminal existence. Instead of being placed, like other Oriental curios, in the cabinets of curiosities of imperial or princely palaces, they underwent not only a physical but also symbolic transformation.

Several tents, banners and military insignia captured in the siege of Vienna by the Scottish troops of the allied army, were taken to Aberdeenshire only to be elaborately reworked into liturgical vestments used in Catholic worship. These were specifically hybrid objects not only from the point of view of their material, but also their signification.

Two vestments, commonly known as 'Fetternear vestments', nowadays kept in the Blairs Ecclesiastical Museum in Aberdeen, were commissioned by Count James Leslie (1621-1694) in the late 17th century and only in 1921 bequeathed to Blairs College in Aberdeen by the last descendant of that branch of the Leslie family.

Count James Leslie himself took part in the Siege of Vienna in 1683 and it is known that he brought several Ottoman military insignia as his war loot on his return to Aberdeenshire, and a number of religious vestments. The 'Fetternear vestments' also include a chasuble, two dalmatics, two stoles and two maniples, all covered in rich embroidery and done in the Baroque style. A myriad of symbolic flowers, such as roses, lilies, and cornflowers are strewn with the utmost virtuosity. The most elaborate and particularly refined decoration is visible in the chasuble made of white satin with outstandingly delicate polychrome embroidery done in silk and rimmed in threads of silver and gold. Since their bequest to Blairs College they are believed to have been created from Ottoman spoils, an assumption which is affirmed with the inventory record of 1921 where it says that they were made of the 'spoils of the Moslem army defeated at Vienna'.⁶

Overlooked for centuries, these enchanting objects were thoroughly examined in the excellent study by Peter Davidson and Prue King (2016). Through a detailed analysis of the embroidery, and its careful comparison with similar objects

5 On the history of these captured Ottoman tents, see archives of the War Museum of Vienna (Heeresgeschichtliches Museum), www.hgm.at, also Austrian Military Archive AT-OeStA/KA ZSt HKR 211.

6 P. Davidson and P. King, "The Fetternear vestments at the Blairs Museum", *Catholic Review* 33, 2016, 259-277. See also Rev D. McRoberts, "The Fetternear Banner" *Innes Review*, vol.7/2, Autumn 1956, 84

in the collections of the Angewandte Museum in Vienna and the Estergon Museum in Hungary⁷, the authors established both the provenance of the material and the origin of the needle work. While the style of that stunning embroidery is very close to the work done in the Ursuline workshops in Central Europe (most probably Hungarian or Slovene convents), the metal thread used in them is of a highly peculiar origin.

The way the thread was made closely resembled the metal work applied in the Ottoman military equipment notably in the saddles, insignia and sword or sabre sheathes produced most probably by the fraternity of Turkish gold work embroiderers 'Cemaat-i-Zerduzan' located in the Topkapi palace in Istanbul.⁸ This technique was known in all parts of the Ottoman Empire as *zerzud* and *dival* in Turkish or as *srma* in the Slavic languages of the Ottoman conquered Balkan Peninsula. It belonged to the most precious and greatly valued work reserved for the decoration of objects and garments of the highest luxury. Moreover, the use of this technique in the military context was not only decorative but also defensive since this thread acted as a cover and the protection of the object it covered. It is from these military paraphernalia that the metal thread was taken and then carefully re-applied in the fabric of the chasuble.⁹ The result was a fusion of European and Ottoman artistry into a hybrid and curiously liminal object, that surpassed similar endeavors that existed in late seventeenth century Europe.

The case of the appropriation and transformation of enemy Muslim loot into objects of Christian worship in Poland was very interesting. A number of Ottoman tents that Jan Sobieski brought to Poland in 1683, were carefully recut and inserted into Catholic vestments, which are nowadays kept in the Archdiocesan Museum in Przemysl (*Premissel* in German). These richly decorated vestments were created through a much simpler process of application and direct incorporation of Ottoman silver embroidery into the velvet background of the chasuble. Although the effect was in its splendour comparable to the dazzling decoration of the Fetternear vestments, the process of literal and symbolic interweaving in the Aberdeen pieces was far more complex.

7 P. Davidson in his text is particularly referring to the embroidery work that has a strong similarity to the Pázmány Chasuble in the Cathedral of Estergom in Hungary.

8 Peter Davidson and Prue King have even identified the Ottoman workshop, to which the provenance of these threads could be traced. "There was a fraternity of Turkish gold work embroiderers, the Cemaat-i Zerduzan established in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. Their work was used to cover saddles, quivers, bow bags, garments and furnishings. Like the opus anglicanum embroiderers of medieval England theirs was an all-male guild. At the time their main skills were *zerzud* which was couching in gold threads, *dival* which is known in Europe as *guipure* (and which became popular in the West around the turn of the eighteenth century) and *sama*, a satin stitch worked in gold. As well as working on cloth, the zerduzans also worked on leather, but it is their work on fabric which appears on the Fetternear vestment in the form of scrolling and stylised arabesques."

9 This work was executed in 'Gold plate, flat metal with a ribbon effect, laid in strips over a padded silk ground, tied down with diagonals of fine thread and topped with coils and scrolls and *musabak* of passing'. 'It added lightness and texture to the embroidery and a touch of brilliance when worked in metal thread and plate.' P. Johnstone, *Turkish Embroidery* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985) 141 from P. Davidson and P. King, "The Fetternear vestments at the Blairs Museum", *Catholic Review* 33, 2016, 259-277.

They exemplified a thorough threading of the subversive message far greater in its impact than the broadsheets that celebrated the decisive Christian victory over the Ottoman infidels beneath the walls of Vienna: since constantly before the eyes of the faithful they denoted the victorious power of faith and the Catholic Empire. Particularly in the context of the Protestant British Empire, these precious objects of Catholic worship held even greater significance. Thus, Fetternear vestments from Aberdeen did not display their hybrid nature directly, the Ottoman element, was more carefully concealed, than in Prezmysl. The liminality of these vestments was less legible, but not less momentous than in the previously discussed examples. They did not offer a visible integration of the perceived and imagined lands of the Orient, their image of the Orient was the Orient of the infidel. Thus, it could not be integrated and as such admired, it had to be fully repossessed and recast to be accepted, to be transformed into the image of the veritable *ecclesia triumphans*.

A LEGACY OF FLUID IDENTITIES – THE *TURQUERIE* COLLECTION OF THE LESLIE FAMILY IN THE CASTLE OF PTUJ

In the early modern world the perception of distant and Oriental places was never uniform, it was as inconstant and fluid as the Baroque world itself was. It was the age of uncertain presences, of transient possessions and above all of fluctuating identities. One such fluid identity was possessed by the family that commissioned Fetternear vestments, the Leslies of Balquhain and Fetternear.¹⁰ As was rightly noted in the conclusion of the text on the *Fetternear vestments* that they closely reflected the image that their patrons wanted to project of themselves as *long-time guardians of the eastern frontier of Europe*.¹¹

Since the early seventeenth century, theirs was a liminal existence. The Leslies were Catholics from the Protestant domain, and spent most of their lives in the Habsburg Empire, guarding its borders with the Ottoman land. Their occupation and the space upon which they resided, contained a pronounced hybridity, of possession, of confession and of self-perception. The Leslies' acquisitions and commissions (such as the Fetternear vestments) reflected this notion faithfully, as ideal embodiments of the lands in-between. For that very reason, the final part of this essay will be devoted to the most curious of them – *the Turquerie collection from the Castle of Ptuj* in Slovenia.

The Leslie family, as many Catholic Scottish families of their time, developed a powerful military career in Central Europe. They followed the well-established practice of a Scottish military diaspora that existed before, but was even more noted after the Reformation. They were highly successful military men just as Walter Leslie or Count James Leslie and some notable ecclesiastical figures such as

10 See P. Davidson and P. King, "The Fetternear vestments at the Blairs Museum", *Catholic Review* 33, 2016, 259-277.

11 P. Davidson, P. King, *op.cit.*, 259-277.

Aloysius Leslie S.J., a bishop of Graz.¹² As Peter Davidson pointed out, no less than five different members of the Leslie family were in the military service of several different nations – Scotland, Germany and Sweden.¹³ For the main objective of the imagined distances, the most decisive figure was that of Count Walter Leslie of Balquhain (1607-1668).

Similarly to his compatriots, Walter Leslie, later First Count Leslie, joined the military because he was not an heir to the family, and thus without the possibility of any future inheritance or legacy. Additionally, many members in his family were serving in the lesser and higher ranks of the European armies so a military career seemed decidedly accessible.¹⁴ After brief employment in the army of the Netherlands, young Leslie went into the Habsburgs' service where he achieved a remarkable career.¹⁵ His rapid advancement was helped by his role in the Wallenstein affair in 1634, after which he was handsomely rewarded by the Habsburg emperor, Charles VI, and received the title of *Reichsgraf* in 1637.¹⁶ He was subsequently elevated to a prestigious position that he would hold until the end of his career, Imperial Field Marshal of the Croatian-Slavonian military frontier. As Peter Davidson notes about this appointment:

In 1650, besides receiving appointment to the rank of Field Marshal, Leslie became warden of the 'Sclavonian marches' and a general on the aforementioned 'Croatian-Sclavonian Frontier', while, seven years on from that, he received promotion to the Vice-Presidency of the Imperial War Council.¹⁷

With the means from the imperial reward he purchased several estates: Novo Mesto near Metuji in the Czech Republic and the Renaissance castle of Ptuj in northern Slovenia from the Jesuits in Zagreb, in 1656. The choice of Ptuj castle was made in order to allow Walter Leslie to be situated near the military border and be, as he noted himself on 'on the High-Post half-way between Vienna and

12 For more information of Scottish presence in the Hapsburg army see D. Worthington ed. *Scots in the Habsburg Empire*, Brill, Leiden 2014 and *Ibid. British and Irish Immigrants and Exiles in Europe 1603-1688*, Brill, Leiden 2010.

13 See P. Davidson and P. King, "The Fetternear vestments at the Blairs Museum", *Catholic Review* 33, 2016, 259-277. , also for the role of the Leslie family, see the excellent text by David Worthington ed. *Scots in the Habsburg Empire*, Brill, Leiden 2014 and *ibid. British and Irish Immigrants and Exiles in Europe 1603-1688*, Brill, Leiden 2010.

14 In his text on the Fetternear vestments, Peter Davidson explains in detail the position of different members of the Leslie family: "As well as Walter Leslie, First Count Leslie and Count James Leslie in the Habsburg Empire, these included the protestant Lord Leven in Swedish service and then in the civil war in Scotland, as well as David Leslie, Lord Newark, of the Rothes family, who commanded in Sweden and England. In addition to this, the family produced 'many colonels' and lesser officers."

15 For the life of Walter Leslie, see primary sources Col. L. of Balquhain, *Historical Records of the Family of Leslie from 1067 to 1868-9* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1869) viii, ix, and for the secondary sources, see David Worthington, E. Damisch, I. Weigl and M. Ciglenečki in *The Legacy of the Leslie Family at the Castle of Ptuj*, exhibition catalogue, Narodna Galerija, Ljubljana, 22nd January – 24th February, 2002

16 Same as note 20.

17 Peter Davidson quoting D. Worthington, *British and Irish Experiences*, 111.

Venice.¹⁸ The castle of Ptuj, which Walter Leslie carefully restored and transformed into a lavish Baroque residence, far more than his other residences, was a place of promotion and presentation, and a place in which he resided until his death in 1668. Since he died childless he left his estates to his cousin in Scotland, Alexander Leslie, who transferred to Ptuj the best examples of his collection, which are still *in situ* in the Ptuj Regional Museum.

The most pivotal point of Walter Leslie's career would come rather late in his life, when he was nominated Imperial Ambassador to the Sublime Porte at Istanbul in 1665-1666 to ratify the peace treaty of Vasvar with Sultan Mehmed IV. This diplomatic mission was recorded by Paul Taffener in his resourceful account *Cesarea Legatio*, published in Vienna in 1672, where he placed Walter Leslie's likeness at the beginning of the book. For this important duty Walter Leslie also received the highest decoration from the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I, the order of the Golden Fleece, which he immediately applied in his coat of arms, which still exists above the entrance to the main hall of Ptuj castle. Leslie was so proud of this appointment that, shortly before his voyage to Istanbul, he commissioned his portrait in which he wore the ambassadorial kaftan that the Ottoman sultans granted to foreign ambassadors, proudly displaying the Order of the Golden Fleece around his neck.¹⁹

A Scotsman in Habsburg lands, a Protestant most probably converted to Catholicism²⁰, an Imperial ambassador to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul, his sense of religion and belonging was marked by profound liminality. The assignment of the commander to the military frontier only accentuated the concept of confines in the life of Walter Leslie, and also marked the lives of his heirs in the Ptuj castle - Alexander and James Leslie.

But Leslie's sense of identity was far more liminal than these notions pertain. In the remarkable family history *Laurus Leslaeana*, written by Alexander's brother William Aloysius Leslie SJ (1641-1704) the fantastic identity of the Leslie family was carefully composed.²¹ William Aloysius, a Jesuit who resided in the palace in Graz, offered a new Central European identity to his illustrious family thus, ever more firmly consolidating the position of the Leslies in the Habsburg lands. In the detailed description of their origins, Aloysius presented his ancestors as originating from Hungary and in that way marked them as perpetually faithful and loyal subjects of the Habsburg sovereigns. Rarely, as Peter Davidson lucidly pointed

18 The most extensive research on the Leslie family in Ptuj was done first by Marjeta Ciglencečki in David Worthington, E. Damisch, I. Weigl and Marjeta Ciglencečki in *The Legacy of the Leslie Family at the Castle of Ptuj*, exhibition catalogue, Narodna Galerija, Ljubljana, 22nd January – 24th February, 2002, and more recently by Polona Vidmar "Under the Habsbrugs and the Stuarts – the Leslie's portrait gallery in Ptuj castle" in *British and Irish Immigrants and Exiles in Europe 1603-1688*, ed. David Warthington, Brill, Leiden, 2010.

19 This portrait is preserved nowadays in the other Leslie castle, in Novo Mesto, and its engraved version is printed in Paul Taffener's account of the diplomatic mission to Istanbul in 1665 – P.Taffener *Cesarea Legatio*, Vienna, 1672.

20 Both Protestant and Catholic branches of the Leslie family existed.

21 W. A. Leslie SJ, *Laurus Leslaeana explicata, sive clarior enumeratio personarum utriusque sexus cognominis Leslie* (Graz, 1692) – ÖNB Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung (Austrian National Library Printroom and Archive) 44 Bl., 2tf.

out, has a Scottish family produced such remarkable work of self-fashioning and with such confidence!²²

The same *in-betweenness* also characterises one of their most remarkable commissions, the *Turquerie collection*, that the Leslie family ordered as a glorification of Walter Leslie's diplomatic ties with the Ottomans, and of his pivotal role as an imperial ambassador. The collection is a rather large composite structure that Walter Leslie's nephew Count Alexander Leslie and his wife Cresenzia Herberstein commissioned, in the 1680s, as a commemoration of their esteemed ancestor, and a presentation of a very contrasting image of the Ottoman world. It was destined first for their Vurberk estate (the Herberstein domain near Ptuj) in the late seventeenth century, only to be transferred to Ptuj in 1907, where it is presently kept.

From the very beginning this body of works had three rather disparate entities that all treated, in a different way, Oriental themes – portraits of the Ottoman dignitaries, the ladies of the Ottoman court and images of different peoples also known as 'costume paintings'. Of all the collections in the Ptuj Regional Museum it has been the most researched one, due to the excellent endeavours, initially, of Marjeta Ciglencečki and later of Polona Vidmar.²³ Due its remarkable subject matter, and even more intriguing history, it was exhibited recently in Istanbul (2005), Eisenstadt and Trieste (2006) and attracted considerable attention among scholars and visitors alike.

From the wide span of imagery available in this collection two of the series from the Ptuj museum are of particular interest for the study of imagined distances – the *series of the Ottoman Dignitaries* and *the Paintings of the Ladies of the Ottoman court*. They act as respective complementary and opposing depictions of the Ottoman world: one, official, insisting on verisimilitude, the other more decorative, depicting a peculiar world in-between. None of the artists who painted these works could be identified, although previous scholarship distinguished two specific hands that could easily be differentiated.²⁴ What could be stated with some certainty is that all *Turquerie* paintings are the works of local Styrian painters of mediocre talent, but most probably the best available in the region. The paintings in both entities are based upon engravings from published sources, which made the task for the Styrian artists far easier.

The collection of portraits of the Ottoman dignitaries depicts the leading political figures at the time of Walter Leslie's ambassadorial mission to the Sublime

22 See P. Davidson and P. King, "The Fetternear vestments at the Blairs Museum", *Catholic Review* 33, 2016, 259-277.

23 For the "Turquerie collection", see M. Ciglencečki, *Junaki, haremske dame in Orijentalci, in Srečanje s jutrovim*, Argo 37, Ljubljana, 1994; M. Ciglencečki, *Vurberske slike iz 17. St. v Ptujском muzeju*, in : *Rasprave iz evropske umetnosti*, Ljubljana, 1999, 57-85; more recent studies include P. Vidmar, *Turqueries: Imagini del mondo Ottomano nell'Europa del XVII secolo*, Palazzo Gopcevic Trieste, Udine, 2006; P. Vidmar, *Turqueries, Orientals and Virtuous Heroes*, Pokrajnski muzej Ptuj, Ptuj, 2007 and P. Vidmar "Under the Habsbrugs and the Stuarts – the Leslie's portrait gallery in Ptuj castle" in *British and Irish Immigrants and Exiles in Europe 1603-1688*, ed. David Warthington, Brill, Leiden, 2010.

24 See M. Ciglencečki, *Junaki, haremske dame in Orijentalci, in Srečanje s jutrovim*, Argo 37, Ljubljana, 1994; and P. Vidmar, *Turqueries, Orientals and Virtuous Heroes*, Pokrajnski muzej Ptuj, Ptuj, 2007, 16-19.

Porte in 1665-66. The series begins, naturally, with the Sultan Mehmed IV and continues with other key protagonists of the politics at the Sublime Porte – Kion Assan Pasha, Sefer Gazi Agha, Kibleli Mustafa Pasha, Kucuk Mehmed Pasha, Kapan Pasha and Hussein Pasha. Besides Ottoman officials this series also includes important personages in the European politics of the second half of the 17th century, such as Tatar General Ahmed Giray, Cossack General Yurii Khmelinsky, Apafy Mihaly I, Russian Emperor Alexei Michailovich... This series of official Ottoman portraits was painted according to the images published in the famous laudatory book by Priorato, 'The History of Emperor Leopold I' printed in Vienna in 1669.²⁵ In their execution the painted images faithfully repeated the model of the bust portrait on a dark background established in Priorato's incisions. Each of the sitters was represented with their most important insignia, denoting their rank and authority. There were no differences in the paintings, as there were none in Priorato's book, between the treatment of the Ottoman and the European officials, giving them the same status and importance of equal players in the joint political arena. The choice of this particular book, as Polona Vidmar stated in her study from 2007, was most probably made due to the fact that Walter Leslie himself is depicted in one of the portraits in Priorato's book.²⁶ Thus, the series commissioned by Alexander Leslie and his wife was as much an homage to the then contemporary political leaders, as it was to Walter Leslie and his role in international politics. Also, for the same reason these works do not depict the Orient of the imagination, but the Orient of facts, that First Count Leslie knew so well.

The second, much more intriguing series of paintings in the *Turquerie collection* in the Ptuj castle, depicts a far more shadowy world, the half-seen half-imaginary Orient in the series devoted to the *ladies of the Ottoman court*. Like the series of Ottoman dignitaries, this group was also executed according to a book of engravings, but illustrates a rather specific vision of the Ottoman world.

Inspired by the engravings published in the book by the French traveller and painter, Georges de la Chappelle, *Recueil de diverses portraits de dames principales de la Porte du Grand Turc tiree au naturel sur le lieux, et Dediez a Madame le Comtesse de Fiesque*, in 1643 the Styrian artists produced nine full-length, and four half-length, images of the Ottoman ladies, monumental in scale and elaborately presented. Although in the title itself the author emphasised that all the images of the Ottoman women were done in a life-like manner and in their original surroundings, these portraits belong far more to the realms of the imaginary than to the seen and observed images of the Ottomans. They offer to the current and to their contemporary beholder an unusual depiction of the Ottoman realm and the presentation of the 'Turk' that evolved throughout the seventeenth century. Moreover, in the Ottoman Empire, not only Muslim women but women in general were mostly living in the highly guarded and secluded world of harems,

25 This connection was established and analysed in detail by P. Vidmar in her text P. Vidmar, *Turqueries, Orientals and Virtuous Heroes*, Pokrajnski muzej Ptuj, Ptuj, 2007, 18-21.

26 See Polona Vidmar in her text P. Vidmar, *Turqueries, Orientals and Virtuous Heroes*, Pokrajnski muzej Ptuj, Ptuj, 2007, 18-23.

and not promenading against the skyline of their capital. It was even rarer to see uncovered female faces in public, whether Muslim Christian or Jewish and not only in Istanbul, but this custom was current for the entire territory of the Balkans. Thus, de la Chappelle's images were rather imaginative projections of the constructed Ottoman realm, a liminal space where historical fact and fiction were forever intertwined.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the image of the Ottoman, or the 'Turk' as it was commonly known, was polyvalent. It existed in different forms and reflected the changing attitude of Europe towards the Ottoman Empire. Despite the closeness of this 'European Orient' the figure of the Turk used to be predominantly a constructed image, a product equally of fact and fantasy. But this construct was the subject of a continual change, it was a shifting image, as transformative as the position of the Ottomans in the early modern world.

On the one hand, the generic 'image of the Turk' populated the visual arts of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe in a greater number than usually presumed. They appeared in the role of the eternal infidel in the religious paintings of the Renaissance and early Baroque. They wield swords, cast stones and strike with lances in many depictions of martyrdoms, while simultaneously acting as perpetual enemies in the Habsburg propaganda imagery. The churches and palaces were thus filled with figures of the Turks particularly in places where the encounter with the Ottomans was more frequent, such as Venice or the Balkans. But even beyond these points, the constructed image of the Turk seemed to be conquering early modern Europe far more successfully than its real counterpart.

But the 'role of the infidel' was only one side of the coin. Throughout the centuries the representation of the Ottoman Turk underwent a continuous transformation and accommodated the changing fortunes on the battlefield. Also, the knowledge of the Ottoman world was continuously expanding through diplomatic accounts, travel literature and other primary sources that brought the nature and culture of the Ottoman Empire closer to European beholders.²⁷ From the 16th century onwards there were numerous travel books by French, German and Italian writers. Among the influential accounts that depicted the Ottoman lands were Andrea Cambini's *Two very notable commentaries [on the origins] of the Turcks and Empire of the house of Ottomanno, ...and...the warres of the Turcke against George Scanderbeg, prince of Epiro, and of the great victories obteyned by the sayd George as well against the Emperour of Turkie, as other princes published in London in 1562*, and even more influential was Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583) and his work *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales de N. de Nicolay*, printed in Lyon in 1567. Nicolay's account was incredibly popular, and in the next twenty years, it was translated into English in 1576 and into Italian in 1585. His precise and lavishly coloured illustrations shaped the knowledge as well as the imagination of his European readers and had an everlasting influence not only

²⁷ See P. Brumett, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty, Territory and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 57-59.

on literature, but also on the visual arts and theatre.²⁸ Even more successful was Tavernier and his *Voyages* from 1675 that were republished no less than eighteen times in the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁹

Thus, as Palmira Brumett points out in her book on the *Mapping of the Ottomans* the figure of the Turk was indeed a liminal image for most of the early modern age. More than any other Oriental figure of the period, it was viewed as *something in between*³⁰. This liminality derived from the principal fact that from the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the territory that Ottomans conquered was a space in between. It was an Ottoman domain, but at the same time also a former European territory. Such duality greatly marked the image of the Ottomans in depicted as the *Turquerie* collection in Ptuj.

Although back in the 16th century Nicolas de Nicolay introduced Europe to the costumes of the Turks, giving elaborate depictions and descriptions of each of the military ranks and the representatives of Ottoman society,³¹ de la Chappelle in his illustrated work placed the emphasis on the figure of the women and not men at the court in Istanbul. In his depictions of twelve representatives of the ladies of the court, de la Chappelle positioned most of his protagonists against the panorama of Istanbul, thus emphasizing the 'veracity' of his illustrations. Only in two instances did he change the background, in the case of the 'Woman from Chios' and in the figure he designated as the 'Queen of Athens.' Despite his insistence on veracity and verisimilitude, de la Chappelle's book remained constantly on the border of reality and imagination. Unlike Nicolay's precise depiction of Ottoman attire, de la Chappelle robed his ladies of the court in costumes were greatly indebted to his visions rather than to his observation of the life in Istanbul. While some elements certainly existed in the female costume of the period, he elaborated them further creating the hybrid image of the imagined land. Furthermore, none of the images were portraits of any particular woman, his entire attention was given to the details of their attire and the delicacy of their demeanour. It was the glorification of elegance and sophistication of the Ottoman world and not its literal description.

This change of focus and treatment of the subject-matter reflected the general shift of the viewpoint towards Ottomans in the late seventeenth century, making it more accepting and curious instead of only bellicose. This altered viewpoint further proliferated the already established plurality of the image of the Ottoman Turk. At the time, the emergence of *Turcophilia* coincided with the empowerment

28 The presence of the image of the Turk on the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century stage is notable while the 'Ottoman fashions' were becoming increasingly popular in spectacles and parties at the time.

29 See P. Brumett, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty, Territory and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 57. Also not only French and Italians but German authors gave some valuable accounts of the Ottoman Empire.

30 The recently published book by P. Brumett represents one of the high points of critical literature about the image and place of the Ottomans in European early modern culture. Although its main subject are the maps and mapping of the Ottoman territories, it also treats with great erudition the notion of the plurality of the image of the Turk and Ottoman territories. The knowledge and the span of the subject matter of P. Brumett created an admirable book.

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of the European states and the fading of the fear of the Ottoman Empire. Only in such a political climate, could the countess of Fiesque have supported de la Chappelle's work and presented her interest in her Ottoman peers at the court in Istanbul.³²

The choice of de la Chappelle's work as both a model for the series in Ptuj castle is representative of the progressive ideas of Alexander Leslie and even more of his wife Cresenzia of Herberstein, who oversaw these commissions after her husband's sudden death.³³ The importance that this series of Ottoman ladies had for their patrons is immediately visible by the sheer scale of the nine great oils that now decorate the ceremonial hall of the Ptuj castle. Their dimensions vary a little, but they are predominantly quite substantial 178x158cm, 173x143cm and create the unmistakable illusion of presence to the beholder. For these nine canvases the Styrian artists chose to portray the Greek, the Armenian, the Jewish, the Tatar, the Persian, the Turkish Woman on Horseback, the Queen of Athens, the Village Woman from Chios and the Turkish Dancer. Each of them was depicted following de la Chappelle's model, but the interpretation of the local painters is also discernible.

While already de la Chappelle's images, despite his claim to veracity, were highly liminal in nature, the paintings in Ptuj enhanced their imaginary character even further. Although the panorama of Istanbul on each of de la Chappelle's incisions was depicted with a certain liberty, far more provisional are the vistas in the Ptuj canvases. Their city was an Istanbul of fantasy, an insubstantial, visionary place, fluid as the sense of identity of the represented ladies. They are all inhabitants of a profoundly ethereal world. While de la Chappelle, aimed to present his subjects *tirée au naturel sur le lieux*, the Styrian painters had no such obligations. They changed the coastline of the Golden Horn, erased entire quarters and grew gardens when there were none. Moreover, they often changed the entire backgrounds of the images, like in the case of the Jewish and Tatar women, where the vista of Istanbul was replaced by a palatial setting, a version of space that de la Chappelle used for his *Sovereign of Athens* (as he named this print).

Such liberty of approach denotes the true nature of these images. In all their aspects they had to be seen, not as veritable citizens of early modern Istanbul, but as the inhabitants of the fantastic realm that was the Orient of the early European imagination. It was a place of the exotic, of luxury and mystery, as particularly enhanced by the skillfully depicted fabrics and jewelry, or flickering ideal landscapes behind the figures. This peculiar depiction of the Ottoman court through its female protagonists was supposed to act as an accompaniment to the series of the male dignitaries previously analysed. Together, they established a virtual gallery of the court of Istanbul, a place with which Walter Leslie was so illustriously associated. But their liminal quality was of equal importance, since they had to

32 For more information on de la Chappelle's book, see P. Vidmar, *Turqueries, Orientals and Virtuous Heroes*, Pokrajnski muzej Ptuj, Ptuj, 2007, 19 and M. Ciglencečki, Maximilin Grothaus *Begegnung zwischen Orient und Okzident*, Pokrajnski muzej Ptuj, Ptuj, 1992.

33 Unfortunately Alexander Leslie died suddenly in 1683 at the Second Siege of Vienna.

commemorate the man whose existence was founded upon the plurality of the confines, both material and immaterial.

Like many other liminal phenomena of the early modern and Baroque world, the concept of imagined distances was polyvalent and multi-layered. There was not only one, but many Orients, all created through a complex interplay of visions and veracities. They were all a panoply of reflections that obscured reality, the curious intersections of fact and fabrication, where historical and political evidence was inevitably robed in the mantle of the imaginary.

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ЗАБРАНИ ЧУДЕСНОГ – ИСКРИВЉЕНЕ ВИЗИЈЕ ДАЛЕКИХ СВЕТОВА У НОВОВЕКОВНОЈ КУЛТУРИ

РЕЗИМЕ

Још од времена великих географских открића, нововековни човек је био опседнут вистама далеких и недостижних предела. Њихова удаљеност чинила их је идеалним забраном утопијских жудњи које им је барокно добра приписивало. Ове визије далеких светова постале су оваплоћење естетике чудесног (*la meraviglia*) тог суштинског принципа барокне естетике. Ако је у бароку постојало постојано приказане лепоте и савршенства, онда је то био приказ чудесног, ретког и необичног. Управо је идеал чудесног описивао цео универзум – човека, његове творевине и саму природу.

Најснажнији примери естетике чудесног овога доба били су описи и прикази далеких светова стварајући на тај начин неке од најчудеснијих забрана нововековне имагинације. Ликовни уметници барока су експериментисали са метаморфозом, анаморфозом и драстичним перспективним искривљењима чиме су представљени светови бивали још чуднији него што су у реалности икада могли бити.

Посебан фокус рада је на специфичном положају Османског царства у имагинаријуму барокнога доба. Од ратног плена који су хабзбуршке и савезничке војске узапиле после друге опсаде Беча, преко црквених одежди направљених од турских застава, до чудесног света приказаног на сценама Туркерија у Птујском замку. Сви ови призори представљају само мали сегмент рефлексија сневаног Оријента који је опседао нововековног човека.

Кључне речи: гранични простори, имагинарне даљине, Османско царство, Османски шатор, Фетернеар одежде, Птуј, Валтер Лесли, Туркерије



Fig. 1 Ottoman tent seized in 1683, Imperial War Museum, Vienna (HGM)

Сл. 1 Отомански шатор заплeњен 1683. године, Царски војни музеј, Беч (HGM)



Fig. 2 Anon. Styrian painter, Turkish dancer, cca 1682, 184,1 × 172,6 cm, Pokrajinski Muzej Ptuj

Сл. 2 Анон., Штајерски сликар, *Турска њлесачица*, око 1682, 184,1 × 172,6 cm, Покрајински музеј Птуј



Fig. 3 Anon. Styrian painter, Woman from Chios, cca 1682, 182 × 162,5 cm, PMP

Сл. 3 Анон., Штајерски сликар, *Жена са Хиоса*, око 1682, 182 × 162,5 cm, PMP



Fig. 4 Anon. Styrian painter, Armenian woman, cca 1682, 173 × 143 cm, PMP

Сл. 4 Анон., Штајерски сликар, *Јерменка*, око 1682, 173 × 143 cm, PMP