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## **Domesticating Fears and Fantasies of ‘the East’: integrating the Ottoman legacy within European heritage.**

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### **Abstract**

‘Europe’ has no fixed geographical, historical, religious or cultural boundaries. Claims for the existence of European civilization as a discrete construct are continually made yet dissolve on close scrutiny. Here, we examine these claims at one of the grandest points of existential crisis and belonging for Europe, the relationship with the ‘Other within’: Turkey, the Balkans and Ottoman heritage in Europe. Through a hybrid semiotic and Foucauldian analysis of catalogues of eight high-profile exhibitions in the United Kingdom, Turkey, Belgium and Portugal we argue that an unsettled discursive struggle is at play, in which one ‘Europe’ articulates ‘reconciliation’ of profound civilizational difference while another, Ottoman, ‘Europe’ stakes a claim of right as an intrinsic component of what it means to be European in a contemporary context. We attempt to trace the role of museum marketing in the perennial accommodation/exclusion of the Ottoman Empire as an intrinsic component in the diversity of Europe’s cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Museums; Special-exhibitions; Europe; Islam; Ottoman.

*For a change to be accepted, it isn't enough that it accords with the spirit of the age. It must also pass muster on the symbolic plane, without making those who are being asked to change feel they are betraying themselves. – Amin Maalouf, “In the Name of Identity”, page 73.*

## **Introduction**

The use and reception of history has joined various multi-disciplinary tools available to marketing scholars interested in the construction of meaning related to heritage both as an intrinsic ‘product’ and as a branding device for non-heritage-related products and services (Goulding, 1999; Brown, Hirschman & MacLaran, 2001; Tadejewski & Hewer, 2012; Jafari, Taheri, & vom Lehn, 2013). Additionally, heritage (re)presentation, commodification and consumption (Franklin, 2007) are, alongside media, (Zizek, 2009) and education Gelner (1993), rapidly becoming one of the most powerful drivers of identity formation amongst both producers and consumers. Museums in this context emerge not as completely ‘harmless and antiqued’ (Hartmuth, 2014; 222) institutions, but as active techniques for the maintenance of power structures, identity negotiation and the naturalisation of contingent socio-cultural and historical narratives (Ostow, 2008; Crane, 1997).

The foundation and cultural, religious and historical boundaries of ‘Europe’, often conflated (but by no means coterminous with) ‘Christendom’. ‘Modernity’ and the institution of the European Union (EU) (Zizek, 1997; Kristeva, 2001; Bjelic, 2011), is one such interlocking set of contingent historical narratives. However, upon close examination, the assumed naturalness of such cultural, religious and institutional features as ‘boundaries’ or ‘frontiers’ begins to break down and we are able to see the arbitrary culturalist cartographies underwriting conventional notions of what is and what is not “Europe” (Wolfe, 1994). This study addresses a longstanding lacuna in the

'European' imagination: the current critical and historical entanglement of museum and heritage marketing dedicated to the heritage legacy of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey and other successor states, the liminality of their place within conventional constructs of 'Europe'.

Our study falls within the tradition of multidisciplinary critical research on the co-construction of relationships between heritage narratives in museum and exhibition catalogues, their role in maintaining or undermining longstanding binaries between the imaginary cartographies of Orient/Occident, East/West, Modernity/History, Christendom/Islam as well as their role in the construction of European identity. Foundational texts in this tradition include Said's (1978), *Orientalism* and Grosrichard's (1979/1998) *The Sultan's Court* and have been extended in critical terms by, for example, Rodinson, (1988), Majid (2004) and Lewis, (2004).

Bryce (2013) proposed that more texture might be added through attentiveness to the intimate proximity of the Ottoman Empire as an active European state within the anxieties and desire making up the historical 'European' imagination. He notes Said's lack of attention to the theoretical consequences of this particular dimension of 'the West's' imagination of Islam in his seminal text, *Orientalism* (1978). This study takes up and applies this more recent scholarship and applies it to the contemporary relationship between, respectively, the construction of the mutual exclusivity of European and Ottoman heritage on the one hand and the elision of absolute binary distinctions between them on the other, in a contested discursive field in museums and galleries across Europe (in which we here include Turkey). The value of this approach is to contribute to the interrogation of simplistic binary constructions such as 'Europe' and 'the Orient', not in a well-worn critique of their material and symbolic

consequences, but rather to highlight their arbitrary historicity both at the point of their constitution and their continued deployment and contestation today.

Data was gathered in catalogues from eight exhibitions taking place in Western Europe and Turkey presenting Ottoman cultural heritage or the representation of the Ottoman Empire in the history of Western art. We engage in a semiotic approach supplemented with Foucauldian discourse analysis to highlight both the textual immediacy and the wider the historicity of these exhibitions and their relation with contemporary socio-cultural and political concerns across Europe.

### **The Museum and Counter-discursive Curatorship**

Museums tell stories through the selective presentation of objects and have traditionally been conceived as repositories of heritage, identity and legitimated interpretation (Evans, 2014). Such activities may take the form of a nation, culture or religion's interpretation *of itself to itself* and to others. Others seek to present encyclopaedic interpretations of the wider world to both domestic and international audiences (Bennet, 1995). In either broad category, legitimate critical attention has focused on the historical and institutional power structures that enable politically favourable versions of the past to be told and the historical circumstances in which large collections of objects from around the world to be gathered in particular institutions (Crang and Tolia-Kelly, 2010; Simpson, 2012).

Many museums are cognizant of the fact that their institutional origins and the provenance of much of their collections are embedded in narratives of exclusion,

partiality and the problematic imperial past of their host cities or nation-states. Many have acted to both acknowledge and ameliorate the consequences of these origins through sensitive curatorship that gives voice to the 'other' (Bennet, 2005; Edensor, 2005). This recognition within both the literature on and practice of the effects of reflexive, counter-discursive activities undertaken in newer forms of curatorship have become accepted as a general, although not universally applied, principle (Bohrer, 1994; Crang, 1994; Macdonald and Silverstone, 1990).

Bryce and Carnegie, (2013) examined this new, counter-discursive, turn in curatorship in an analysis of a series of exhibitions on Islamic, Turkic and Ancient Persian cultural objects mounted in nationally endorsed museums and galleries in the UK between 2005 and 2009. They argued that these exhibitions were specific critical responses to wider political events and resulting anxieties of that time, such as the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq following September 11, 2001, the renewed diplomatic assertiveness of Iran and the formal EU candidacy of Turkey in 2005. In this sense, the historical contingency of these events was an example of how museums, generally, have the potential to become "historically mobile and responsive spaces with all of the potential for ideological complicity as well as contestation that implies" (Bryce and Carnegie, 2013: 1749).

Our paper extends this argument by arguing that this particular counter-discursive turn in curatorship is present in the specific context of attempts to resolve certain binary notions of history, religion and culture relating to Ottoman heritage in museums, galleries and destinations across Europe. The wider importance of this ongoing intervention of the heritage sector is that it involves debates about the roots and

current notion of 'Modernity', long conceptualized by Europe and the greater 'West' to be their exclusive patrimony (e.g. Gellner, 1992; Kristeva, 2000), but arguably rendered obsolete and parochial by claims for inclusion by, for example, the renewed economic and political agency of India and China (e.g. Chakrabarty, 2000; Anidjar, 2006; Frayling, 2014).

### **The Contemporary Socio-political context**

In Europe, the original and existential locus of the imagined 'clash' between the civilisational constructs known as 'Christendom and Islam', related concerns have been articulated with regard to the longstanding aspirations to EU membership of the Turkish Republic and other Ottoman successor states in the Balkans (Zürcher, 2005; Hakura, 2006). These debates have been underwritten by an archive of centuries old, deeply embedded assumptions and anxieties about the spatial proximity of Turkey and other former Ottoman territories to and within Europe (Cardini, 1999; Goody, 2004; Bryce, 2013). At present, Turkey and the Balkan states of Albania, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (hence, Bosnia), all with Muslim majority or significant minority populations, are formal or potential candidates for EU membership (EU Acceding and Candidate Countries, 2015; EU Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015). These are states perceived as the uncomfortably proximate "other within" by those European states whose claims to mainstream "Europeanness" is buttressed by centuries of collective self-regarding discursive reinforcement.

This archive is drawn from habituation in a grand narrative consisting roughly of a constructed linear route from Classical Antiquity (in which any notion of an 'oriental' stake in its legacy is occluded) to liberal democracy via the staging posts of Latin

Christendom, Renaissance, Reformation, the Enlightenment, Secularism and Modernity (Delanty, 1995; Chakrabarty, 2000; Bryce, 2009). This discourse, while not unchallenged from within, is powerful enough to be pressed into service by those with a political interest in maintaining the inviolability of this version of Europe, with the expectation that its rubrics will be unproblematically received at a popular level (Twigg et al, 2005; Aissaoui, 2007; Negrine *et al.*, 2008).

At present, the accession of these states is stalled for a variety of procedural reasons amidst which reservations about cultural compatibility is rarely spoken of directly (Trauner, 2009; Maier and Rittberger, 2008). Just as there is no formal recognition that the historical, cultural and religious boundaries of European civilization are more fluid than the reductive binaries listed above may imply, there have been no formal efforts to examine or to bridge this discursive gap by the European Union at a unified, strategic level (Delanty, 1995; Bryce, 2013). Yet there have been ongoing, disparate efforts in Western Europe, Turkey and the Balkans in the spheres of cultural heritage and destination marketing to address and examine the fact of Ottoman/Turkish proximity and its consequences for what it may mean to be European.

### **The Ottoman Legacy: in but not 'of' Europe?**

As stated earlier, the boundaries of 'Europe', variously delineated as civilisational, geographical and religious space, break down with even cursory critical examination of the historical record. This, despite efforts to the contrary (e.g. Kristeva, 2000), is because 'Europe' as understood in these three respects is a historically fluid discursive construct requiring regular reformulation and restatement over time (Lewis and Wigen,

1997; Bryce, 2009). The *liminal*, disruptive positions that the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey occupy vis-à-vis reified notions of Europe or the West (materially and discursively), particularly in relation to its former provinces situated in territory commonly understood to be 'European', provokes struggles to both pragmatically accommodate and discursively exclude the contribution of the Ottoman Empire to the construction of the diversity of Europe's cultural heritage (Delanty, 1995). Todorova (1996: 46-49) locates this duality of perception with the Ottomans in terms of discourses on the empire's legacy in the Balkans. The first of these maintains that 'it was a religiously, socially, and institutionally alien imposition on autochthonous Christian medieval societies (Byzantine, Bulgarian, Serbian etc) whose remnants can be traced, but they are treated as non-organic accretions on the indigenous natural bodies of these societies'. The material *fact* of the Ottomans and then Turkey therefore sits alongside more abstract, discursive attempts to construct metaphysics of 'Europe' that disavows the intrinsic place of Islam and the wider Ottoman legacy within it. Çirakman (2005: 184) maintains that,

The European experience of the Ottoman Empire was not solely textual in which texts reproduce and represent an imagined reality as the true Orient, as Said argues, but ... these images were also fed by the perceptible reality of Ottoman politics and society.

'Europe' was contained within an Ottoman orbit focused on the imperial capital, Istanbul, from which perspective the Sultans, whose manifold and grandiose titles included 'Gods Shadow on Earth' and 'Lord of the Four Horizons' (Clot, 2005) surveyed an imperial project stretching, at its height, from Baghdad to Budapest, Algiers to Aleppo and the Sudan to Crimean Simferopol (Brown, 1996; Murphey, 1999; Faroqhi, 2004). This is not to say that its territories in what came to constitute 'Europe' were not a major concern of Ottoman military, religious and diplomatic policy. They were of



foundational importance to how the Ottoman state perceived itself, was perceived externally and, vitally, how the empire was governed. This was a manifest rebuttal to the notion that 'Oriental' and Islamic civilisation could easily be separated from a coherent, unitary idea of Europe. We offer a brief *précis* below.

The Ottoman Empire emerged in the 14<sup>th</sup> century from among competing Turkic *beylikleri* (principalities) in Anatolia following the collapse of the Seljuq Sultanate of *Rum* but continued that state's gradual erosion of Byzantine power in the region, culminating in the conquest of Constantinople itself and its reemergence as the new Ottoman capital, Istanbul (Goffman, 2002). One of the nascent empire's earliest and significant strategic achievements was gaining of a foothold on the European side of the Dardanelles in 1352 (Finkel, 2005). The next 160 years saw rapid Ottoman territorial expansion over all of South Eastern, and encroaching on Central, Europe (İnalçık, 2006; Dale, 2010), long preceding the conquest of much of the Arabic speaking, Islamic world. It is important to note that during this early period of expansion and in subsequent periods of consolidation, decline and eventual fall of the empire in 1923, an Ottoman culture, aesthetic sense and mode of rule developed that was responsive to the mutual fact of rulers and ruled not only sharing European space, but often themselves being natives of the empire's European territories (see Anscombe, Ed., 2006; Goffman, 2002; Sugar, 1977).

This involved the largely voluntary conversion to Islam of a large proportion of the conquered European subject populace, including the majority in Bosnia and Albania as well as a significant proportion in Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria (Faroqhi, 2005). The overall majority of the European subject population, however, retained their existing religions under a pragmatic Ottoman mode of rule known as the *Millet* system, in which

the Muslim community was accorded the highest status but where formal recognition of Orthodox Christianity and Judaism was formalised by separate courts, special taxes as well as community rights and responsibilities to the state (less formal arrangements were also made for the Roman Catholic community). These related to how and where religious observance could take place, sumptuary laws, the self-governance of religious communities and obligations for armed service (*ibid*). This, as Barkay (2008: 120) relates, was a governing system and framework of community relations best described as 'separate, unequal and protected' and was a particularly prevalent feature of Ottoman social organisation in Europe.

It also featured, up until the 18th century, a process of periodic forced recruitment, or 'tax', known as the *devşirme*, of Christian boys, largely from the European provinces, (Sugar, 1977). These boys were taken to Istanbul, converted to Islam and recruited into the elite Janissary corps of the Ottoman army with the most intellectually gifted trained in the palace school at *Topkapı Sarayı* to occupy the very highest positions in the imperial governing class. By so doing, and by largely excluding Muslim born Turks, Kurds, Arabs and Persians from this elite class of *kul* (slaves of the Sultan) for much of the empire's 'classical' period, the Ottoman state was ruled and extended through the participation of its converted *European* population. So, as Bjelić (2002: 6) points out,

Balkan people perceived each other as both colonial rulers *and* as colonial subjects ... a dual sensitivity which then gets translated into calling Bosnian Muslims "Turks" – that is, the colonisers ... whether Balkan nationalism is post-imperial or ... post-colonial, it is fair to say that it remains distinctly liminal.

Therefore, by the period extending from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century conquest of the Arab world and encroachment on Safavid Iran, fellow Muslims in these lands correctly

perceived the Ottoman Empire as a westward looking, Byzantine-Balkan inflected power (Hathaway, 2008; Barkey, 2008). So, we are dealing here with the legacy, in cultural heritage terms, of some 500 years of continuous development of one of the great participatory states in Europe from the late Middle Ages to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, because it was a Muslim-ruled state, there has been a discursive reluctance in the rest of Europe to fully acknowledge the intrinsic contribution of that history and heritage as being 'European' (Goffman, 2002; Bisaha, 2004). This, as Bryce (2013) has argued, consists of the perennial *necessity* for 'Europe' to conceive of the intimate proximity of the Ottomans as a 'bridge' between various binary spatial, temporal and civilisational constructs such as 'West and East', 'Europe and Asia', even 'Modernity and History'. This formed – and forms - the 'condition of possibility' (Foucault, 2002a) for the rendering of Islam and the 'East' into a place and an idea radically 'elsewhere', as explored by Edward Said (1978) in *Orientalism*.

## **Methods**

### **Semiotic Analysis**

Semiotics is a qualitative mode of analysis facilitating a more in depth comprehension of textual data by analysing the choices and interplay of sign-systems (Berger, 2012). As such it is often used in interpretative marketing research, particularly in the research of brand culture and identity, (e.g. Heilbrunn, 2015; Oswald, 2015; Kucuk and Umit, 2015; Paramantier and Fischer; 2015; Østergaard, Hermansen and Fitchett, 2015). Semiotics is also used in the analysis of promotional material to shed light on the ideological structures underpinning what at the first glance may seem to be unproblematic uses of visual and written tropes (e.g. Williamson, 1978). Promotional materials are considered to be a meta-language whereby signs are positioned in a translational role from one

system of meanings to another (Williamson, 1978, Barthes, 1972). Guattari (1989) highlights the importance of semiotic analysis by noting that power is expanding its articulation from the production of services and products to the constructions of ideologically loaded signs. As such, the over-production of signs and images may serve to normalise the assertion of particular “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 2002a) in, for instance, economic, technocratic and juridical modes.

Echtner (1999) proposes that semiotic analyses of, for example, tourist brochures, should note the structural components of meaning making (the syntagmatic level of analysis) but pay particular attention to the ideological *choices* made manifest by the *paradigmatic* selection of particular terminologies or (in the case of this paper) historically contingent subjectivities. Echtner (*ibid*) also adds that these stages should by no means be overly dogmatic, but rather adjusted to fit particular research settings. In heritage and tourism marketing, semiotics’ indexical signs (Greyson and Martinec, 2004) connect the material symbolism of a heritage site to the experiences of visitors and residents and through this processes, traces the cultural maintenance of history and experience (Hunter, 2013). Greyson and Martinec (2004) research the production of “inauthentic” sites and consumer responses using Pierce’s (1977) triad of indexicality, symbol and iconicity. The term “index” was coined by Peirce (1977) to refer to the relation of sign to object. Greyson and Martinec (2004) deploy indexicality as prompts which distinguish authentic objects from copies. Iconicity is, according to Greyson and Martinec (*ibid*) perceived as a measure of authenticity in the sense that consumers have already received understanding in a form of ‘index’ of that which makes the site “authentic”. This has provided a useful groundwork for exploring how consumers

evaluate indicators of authenticity, in order to find the relationships between signs and phenomenological experiences (Grayson and Shulman 2000).

Meaning may differ between the sender and the receiver depending on the relations present and the context in which the message is read, as Barthes (1964) argues, research settings and specific contextual presuppositions influence the value which signs denote and ways information is received. Therefore meanings attached to signs are not neutral, bearing as they do, commercially or ideologically useful messages projected by the provider with the expectation that recipients will not only understand them within the cultural or ideological systems to which they adhere, but act upon them in particular ways. Therefore, to understand this, one thus needs to understand the non-verbal context under which the message is aired (Volašinov, 1983, Haigh, 2011).

In our research context, we deploy post-structuralist semiotic analysis in understanding the complex relationship between the historical assumptions underpinning macro identities of national, ethnic and religious characteristics, and how this is presented to particular constituencies of consumers. This dialogue-oriented semiotics thus departs from Peirce's (1977) triadic system and Barthes' (1972) sign system where context holds sway in relation to how consumers perceive meaning. Meanings are thus co-created by both senders and receivers through mental, social and environmental ecologies (Guattari, 1989). The semiotic view of reality is thus considered to be interpretive and co-created as it is concerned with the identification of relationships between what exists tangibly, for instance a museum, the objects it chooses to display in particular circumstances and the mode of their representations to consumers (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1992).

## Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

As noted by Rossolatos (2015) semiotic analysis is a fruitful analytical tool in cultural consumption research as it allows integration along different analytical levels. Semiotic analysis thus offers important analytical steps *within* the text, but an additional stage of analysis is necessary to place sign systems at the service of more diffuse discursive systems to which they adhere. We have elected a second methodological level to inform both the acquisition and analysis of our data. It is the contingent historical circumstances and tactical utility of the deployment of texts as statements (Foucault, 2002b) that concern us. Here we also draw on Said's (1983: 40) notion of textual 'worldliness' in which,

texts in fact are in the world [and also] as texts they place themselves – one of their functions as texts is to place themselves – and indeed *are themselves*, by soliciting the world's attention [emphasis added].

This 'soliciting of the world's attention', as Said (*ibid*) puts it, is perhaps better understood as the particular regimes of truth within which texts or statements can be productively deployed and allowed to circulate.

Foucault (2002a: 121) utilises 'discourse' in a quite specific way, conceiving of it as series of statements that can be 'assigned particular modalities of existence'. The 'laws' governing the intertextual relations amongst these statements, the principles of their 'dispersion and redistribution', is what he calls a 'discursive formation'. As 'general enunciative system[s]', Foucault (*ibid*: 130) continues, discursive formations can be analysed from four directions: the respective formulations of objects, concepts, strategic choices and subject positions. Furthermore, as Rouse (1994: 93) points out, the emphasis in analyses that adopt this Foucauldian standpoint is not intrinsically on the

empirical veracity of particular statements and the bodies of knowledge to which they adhere, but the 'epistemic context within which those bodies of knowledge became intelligible and authoritative', approaching them 'historically situated fields of knowledge' (*ibid*).

A further item of Foucauldian terminology should be introduced to paradoxically make the case for the utility of the areas of textual cultural material (exhibition catalogues) selected for analysis as well their lack of particular, intrinsic, importance in-and-of themselves. When discussing the particular textual forms or institutional contexts within which statements may be made manifest within a given discursive formation, Foucault (2002b: 45) speaks of 'surfaces of emergence' or 'appearance', which are not the same for 'different societies, at different periods, and in different forms of discourse'. They are, simply put, those textual, institutional, political (and so forth) forms upon which, for a host of contingent historical reasons, a given discourse gains traction and produces yet more 'coherent' statements. The key point to remember here is that, from a Foucauldian perspective, it is the *discursive formation* and not the surface of emergence that is foregrounded in analytical terms.

### **Data Sources**

Our data is drawn from catalogues from eight special exhibitions taking place in museums and galleries in Turkey and Western Europe between 2005 and 2015 (see table 1). These were specifically concerned with the presentation of Ottoman heritage or its reception in Western and Central European cultural forms. Data was selected with notions of problematic, unsettled reception of certain 'Ottoman' cultural forms and the awareness of the regulatory 'gaze' of 'Western' Europe foremost in our minds. While we did visit all of the exhibitions, listing below the cities where we encountered them

(Table 1), we decided to step back from claims of ethnographic authority and to focus on what is being presented to consumers in publicly facing, textual terms, an approach with precedent in the work of, for example, Uzzell, (1984); Dann, (1996); Echtner and Prasad, (2003) and Bryce, (2012).

Data was collected using the purposive sampling approach, allowing us to reach the point of theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2002) of context-specific data (Balch, 1982). The consistency of occurrence of certain elements, such as phrases or images pointing to the construction of binaries such as Occident/Orient, East/West, Europe/Asia, Modernity/History were identified and analysed. We aimed to understand which semiotic code systems were used in the presentation of Ottoman cultural objects or to European art and luxury goods inspired by or referring to the Ottoman world, to contemporary heritage consumers. We then attempted to understand how these texts function as groups of statements within wider systems of discourse.

Table 1: the exhibitions

<b>Exhibition Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Cat. A: Images of the Turks in 17 <sup>th</sup> century Europe.	Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul	12 July – 9 October, 2005.
Cat. B. Turks: a journey of a thousand years, 600-1600	Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK.	22 January-12 April, 2005.
Cat.C. Bellini and the East	The National Gallery, London, UK.	12 April 2006-25 June, 2006.
Cat.D. The Sultan's World: the Ottoman Orient in Renaissance European eyes.	Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, Belgium.	27 February- 31 May, 2015.
Cat.E. Evocations, Passages, Atmospheres: paintings from the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul	Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, Portugal.	15 June-26 August, 2007.
Cat.F. Istanbul: the city of dreams.	Pera Museum, Istanbul.	July 2008 – ongoing.
Cat.H. Amedeo Preziosi.	Yapı Kredi Kazım Taşkent Art Gallery, Istanbul.	13 January – 25 February, 2007
Cat.G. The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism.	Pera Museum, Istanbul.	26 September, 2008 – 11 January, 2009.





## **Analysis – European exhibitions on the presentation and reception of the Ottoman Empire, 2005-2015.**

These exhibitions, with the exception of “Turks”, which presented cultural objects of Turkic provenance, largely exhibited Western and Central European paintings, or paintings in the European style, of the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries which attempted to depict Ottoman culture. However, our analysis of the exhibition catalogues does not involve discussion of actual objects, their selection or arrangement. Rather we focus on the publicly stated rationale for mounting the exhibitions and their responsiveness to the ideological and discursive apparatus surrounding them. From this, we utilise the semiotic approach to go beyond syntagmatic statements to understand the particular choices made at a paradigmatic level.

We begin in 2005, the year of Turkey’s success in formalising its EU candidacy, and examine two prominent exhibitions in both Istanbul and London: “Images of the Turks in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe” at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum in Istanbul, and “Turks: a journey of a thousand years, 600-1600” at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. The opening remarks from both sponsors and curators place these exhibitions in specific historical context as exercises in how the presentation of heritage objects may be put to current political use. For example:

*At a time when Turkey is preparing for entry to the European Union, the guest exhibition will carry the message of cultural and historic bonds to Istanbul (Cat.A.p. 9).*

*Now, in 2005, as the important and positive international debate concerning Turkey's relationship with the European Union continues, the Royal Academy is proud to offer to the British and international public an ... extraordinary experience (Cat.B. p. 11).*

While the first offers a more emotive reading at the paradigmatic level, both place their respective exhibitions firmly in relation to diplomatic events of the day. When we look further into the preambles in both catalogues, we can see that in both cases the concern is to embed notions of cultural and political reconciliation between ancestral adversaries. For example, Vasko Simoniti, Minister of Culture for Slovenia, home to the lending institution for many of the works on display at "Images of the Turks" states,

*Nowadays primarily we seem to notice the changed attitude of Christian Europe to Turkey, the images of century long conflicts retreat from the horizon of that time and images of the Turks in their 'domestic' peacetime poses ... come to the forefront (Cat. A. p.7).*

While, in the same catalogue, Nazan Ölçer of Sakıp Sabancı Museum states:

*[17<sup>th</sup> century] Embassies sent to secure peace agreements that were keenly sought by both sides, drawings and paintings reflecting in detail the observations of artists accompanying these embassies ... dragomans ... fluent in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, as embers of these diplomatic delegations sparked off the Turquerie movement, a new fashion that made its mark in areas ranging from art to literature to architecture throughout Europe (Cat. A. p. 11).*

Here we can see appeals made through historical reflection for reconciliation and understanding but inflected paradigmatically in subtly different directions through the choices of language and emphasis. The Slovenian focuses on the potential of art to bridge historical divisions in post-facto sense, while his Turkish colleague emphasises

the fact that Ottoman cultural forms already enjoy a centuries long pedigree as *part* of the development of European artistic and sumptuary forms. This is an important distinction in emphasis on how history is viewed across Western and post-Ottoman Europe. We see similar emphases in inflection in the forewords to the “Turks” exhibition attributed to both of then Prime Ministers of Turkey and the United Kingdom, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Tony Blair, who state respectively in Cat.B.p.9, that,

*Cultural diversity is a source of richness for all nations. This exhibition comes at a propitious time, as Turkey’s aspirations towards membership of the European family of nations in the European Union are at centre stage.*

... and ...

*Their long and complex journey through Central Asia, the Middle East and, of course, Europe is something we should understand and reflect upon. It demonstrates that the interaction of different cultures in our world is crucial if we are to survive.*

Both statements, at a syntagmatic level, hail the virtues of cultural diversity and understanding, surely an unproblematic truism. Yet, at the paradigmatic level, Erdoğan’s emphasis is on Turkey’s claim to an intrinsic European “right” (Delanty, 1995; Bryce, 2009) articulated through, but not dependent upon, the EU. Blair, on the other hand, emphasises Turkey’s “arrival” in Europe in the sense of a migration and invokes one of the centuries old Western tropes of fear of Ottoman encroachment from “the East” by placing the staging posts to Europe out of sequence: the Ottomans were embedded in Europe for c.120 years before they conquered provinces in the Middle East. This indicates the “generous exceptionalism” often offered to Turkey and its Ottoman heritage legacy by Western Europeans (Bryce, 2009) as a means to domesticate and offer a “democratic example” to the rest of the Islamic world.

Two further exhibitions sought to examine early cultural and diplomatic encounters between the Ottoman Empire and the great powers of Renaissance Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. “Bellini and the East”, jointly mounted by the National Gallery, London and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, took place in the former institution between April and June, 2006. It was principally concerned with the artistic response of the painter Gentile Bellini to his experiences as a member of Venice’s embassy to the Ottoman court in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. ‘The Sultan’s World’, mounted by the Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels and the National Museum, Krakow in 2015, took a broader view of artistic responses and the reciprocal gaze between Western and Ottoman Europe and the mutual cultural change that resulted featuring, for example, lesser-known objects from Poland. These two exhibitions, separated in time by almost a decade, both justified themselves in terms of contemporary cultural and political debates on the foundations and boundaries of ‘Europe’.

In this regard, ‘Bellini and the East’ is more subtle, with the Directors’ foreword hinting at contemporary concerns on relations between the ‘West’ and ‘Islam’, and Curators’ not straying from historical context towards present day ideological concerns, stating respectively,

*[Sultan Mehmed II] had a strong interest in Christianity and Italian art, and when peace was negotiated between Venice and the Ottomans, the Sultan immediately asked for a Venetian painter. It is no exaggeration to say that Gentile Bellini played a significant role in bringing the former adversaries closer together, and in fostering dialogue between the Christian and Islamic worlds (Cat.C. p.6)*

... and ...

*Venice as we know it is inconceivable without the ‘east’ – the myriad of Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures which bordered the eastern Mediterranean Sea and provided gateways to Asia and Africa beyond. This*

*exhibition focuses on just one episode in this millennium-long exchange (Cat.C. p.7).*

Here we see what Foucault (2002: 45) might call 'surfaces of emergence' of ostensibly harmonious but often competing elements of discourse at the heart of contemporary museum management which are rarely publicly stated: the desire to engage with external audiences in marketing terms and the desire of curators to maintain the academic integrity of their interpretive activity (McLean, 1995; Rentschler, 2002). Structurally, both statements are compatible at a syntagmatic level, describing more or less the same phenomenon. Yet *paradigmatically*, the Directors' statement goes beyond strictly academic understandings of the content and rationale for the exhibition to reach out to contemporary visitor concerns about 'East/West' tensions. They do so by using conceptualisations that are unlikely to have meant anything in the latter 15<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, neither the notion of 'Christendom' or 'Islam', meant largely in competing existential terms in a world where the work of God was understood to be literally inscribed on the landscape and all life, was coterminous with our own contemporary notion of the Christian and Islamic 'worlds' (Quinn, 2008) whose supposed 'clash' is largely a concern insofar as it impinges on secular notions of democracy, capitalism and multicultural tolerance. In this sense, once more, cultural heritage is put to the service of current political and cultural concerns.

Introductory remarks from "The Sultan's World" offer more explicit insights into competing emphases on the nature and purpose of this exhibition. With forewords attributed to the European Commission for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, the Belgian Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and the Polish Minister of Cultural and National Heritage. These clearly frame the exhibition within contemporary concerns about the value of cultural diversity in difficult economic times, the integration

of immigrants and reflecting on historical notions of “difference” and shared cultural forms. They respectively state:

*Cultural diversity is one of the main assets we have in Europe ... our economies are going through challenging times. This provides fertile grounds for division, mistrust or even hostility towards the ‘Other’. All of us – politicians, the cultural sector and citizens – need to stand up against disunion and hatred (Cat.D. p.6).*

*Belgium has maintained strong diplomatic relations with Turkey since the birth of the Turkish Republic. Even before that, since 1838, our country ... was represented at the court of the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul. Our country has always supported the overtures between Turkey and the European Union. In 2014 we celebrated together the 1964 agreement that enabled the employment of Turkish workers in Belgium. From then on the ties between these Turkish citizens and the Belgians became ever closer (Cat.D. p. 7).*

*Various exhibitions referring to the Ottoman Empire’s culture have covered narrower ground, both thematically and geographically. This has also been the case in Poland, whose historical relations with the Turkish state remain a beautiful and unique testimony to the mutual fascination and respect for what was to both sides such a dissimilar culture (Cat.D. p. 8).*

It is clear that these remarks, framed in a form of *politesse* designed to appeal to the better civic natures of visitors and readers of the catalogue alike, are not so much concerned with the intrinsic content of the exhibition, but rather with the political and diplomatic symbolism that the very act of mounting it affords. Implicit in them are the very core civic values of the European Union, projected to both citizens and international audiences, which are the maintenance of,

*Europe’s cultural, religious and humanist inheritance, and invokes the desire of the peoples of Europe to transcend their ancient divisions in order to forge a common destiny, while remaining proud of their national identities and history (EU. The Founding Principles of the Union, 2015).*

Once more, however, we see, in the curatorial foreword a drawing back from the hopes

and aspirations of the exhibition's contemporary political reception to more nuanced academic concerns about the particular historical contexts which the assembled objects signify. Nonetheless, there is tacit acknowledgement of historical precedent for current cultural and political debates when it is stated that,

*'The content of the exhibition became richer and more nuanced as it progressed, as befits an exhibition based on a long period of cultural history. And as most certainly befits an exhibition that deals with the cultural exchanges in a period when war and fascination, prejudices and overtures, went hand in hand'* (Cat.D. p. 9).

Here we see the deployment of the binary tropes so deeply embedded in Western modes of thought where supposed ideological contestants, the "European" and "Ottoman" worlds constructed in oppositional terms, are ameliorated with notions of "exchange", "overtures" and the "fascination" of reciprocal gazes (e.g Majid, 2004; Spanos, 2009). The implication is that the Ottoman world (and by extension the Islamic Orient more generally) is something that the "West" may attempt to understand and be understood by on the basis of cultural exchange or diplomacy with the basic power relationship favouring the former left largely intact (Said, 1978: 295). There is very little acknowledgment of the possibility of the kind of historical co-creation of *shared* cultural forms and spaces – certainly at the European level - argued for by Bryce (2013) in his critique of Said's *Orientalism*.

This determination to *reconcile* but to draw back from the possibility of interrogating the very inevitability of the existence of two opposing forces requiring reconciliation at the point of their historical emergence as discourse is contained in the next quote:

*'Present day Turkey is nothing like the Ottoman Empire of that period, though the comparisons persist. The link with the present is much more fundamental: historical scars frequently reopen in the cultural debate on Europe and the Muslim world'* (Cat.D.p. 9).



While acting as a rebuke to the preceding ahistoricisms in the explicitly political forewords in the catalogue, this statement clearly leaps over much historical detail itself to arrive at the familiar, grand binary of “Europe and the Muslim world”. By failing to acknowledge that c.500 years of Ottoman presence in Europe with all of the religious and cultural development that implies in countries like Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria, let alone Turkey, indicates that there is a strong historical argument for Islam and the Ottoman mode of social organisation being a constitutive part of the diverse cultural development of Europe (Delanty, 1995; Bryce, 2013).

This determination to maintain the fundamental division of what is understood to be European civilisation from its Ottoman or Oriental “other”, while at the same time wrapping it up in the fine language of cultural reconciliation, also finds expression in the “Evocations, Passages, Atmospheres” exhibition at Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, in 2007. It is worth comparing statements in the foreword from Portuguese and Turkish perspectives at paradigmatic levels of analysis. This exhibition was the result of a collaboration involving the exchange of Portuguese and Turkish paintings between the Gulbenkian and the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul. This museum in Lisbon, it should be noted, is the endowment of Calouste Gulbenkian, a wealthy Armenian art collector from Istanbul, forced into exile during the Ottoman state’s genocide on its Armenian citizenry during World War One. Therefore, it is the legacy both of Ottoman cosmopolitanism and its tragic dissolution. The foreword from the Gulbenkian’s President frames the exhibition through the founder’s own experiences:

*‘... he was born on the other side of Istanbul, in Üsküdar, beside the Bosphorus, the strait that marks the boundary between the Asian and European continents. It is precisely by summoning up these places, where differing cultural origins intersect and meet, that homage is paid to the memory of a man whose legacy best reflects the interaction of the Orient with the West ...’* (Cat.E. no page number listed).

The precise nature of these “differing cultural origins” is not stated and would likely not bear close scrutiny when one considers, for example, the strong Islamic (i.e. “Oriental”) elements running through Portuguese Medieval history and the common claims of both Islam and Christendom to the legacy of classical Antiquity (e.g. Lockman, 2004; Sayyid, 2006) because they have attained the level of a kind of extra-historical foundation myth made by and for those societies self-designated as ‘European’ or “Western”. This, as Said (1978) points out is a discourse largely immune to empirical refutation because it is largely reproduced *textually* and is reliant on previous texts existing within the same discursive archive.

The Turkish contributor to the same foreword certainly invokes notions of the transference of cultural knowledge but frames the statement in more empirically grounded terms, situating it in historical rather than mythical terms:

*‘The exhibition presents a glimpse into Turkish painting over the period 1850-1950, which is little known in Europe. As well as works by Turkish artists who had newly become acquainted with Western art in nineteenth century Istanbul, there are some by foreign artists who were patronized by the Ottoman palace ... I believe that such an encounter of that arts of two countries located at opposite ends of Europe would have delighted Calouste Gulbenkian’ (Cat.E.no page no).*

These statements, differing in paradigmatic emphasis but essentially conveying the same information on cultural exchange, offer an appropriate launching point into the final three exhibitions we analyse, all mounted in Turkey. The Turkish emphasis is not on dreamlike fantasies of an ill-defined “Orient” or its putative occidental corollary, but rather on detailed examination of points of stylistic difference in artistic form within no overarching assumption about fundamental aesthetic “difference”.

“Istanbul: the city of dreams”, a permanent exhibition mounted from within that city’s Pera Museum contains paintings within the “Orientalist” tradition, mainly by Western European but also by Turkish painters, depicting the grand skylines, great imperial palaces and mosques as well as daily life in the city from the 17<sup>th</sup> – late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The exhibition title is apt, because it is framed as an examination of the heightened aesthetic sense within which artists apprehended and represented Istanbul as a place elevated, largely in the ‘Western’ imagination. In this sense, it can be said to be a Turkish academic examination of *how* Istanbul was conceived as a dreamscape rather than making particular claims to truth for such an ontologically dubious notion. Statements from the foreword and introductory chapters in the catalogue make clear the intention of the Turkish curators to treat “Orientalist” art as an interesting opportunity to examine their own heritage through largely foreign eyes but there is no evidence of the kind of desire to reconcile zones of absolute cultural difference, as in some of the non-Turkish remarks above. For example,

*‘The paintings of Western artists portraying genre scenes of Istanbul are the most comprehensive visual documents on the history of the city. While the subjects of these works often corresponds to the idea of the ‘Orient’ among Europeans, they simultaneously reflect instances of from city life that are most ready to vanish with the impact of Westernisation’ (Cat.F.p. 17).*

Historical context is added in baldly empirical terms, with the Ottoman state presented as a participant in rather than an *object* of European diplomacy (Quataert, 2005), shorn of the invocation of timeless “clashes” between binaries like Islam and Christendom so often found in corresponding Western representations:

*‘The Ottoman Empire played a major role in European politics and had been of great significance for the European balance of power since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the centuries, cultural encounters between Europe and the Ottomans stayed firmly behind political events of the era accelerating the process of*

*acculturation through diplomatic and commercial relations'* (Cat.F.p.19).

Here we have the 'provincialisation' (Chakrabarty, 2000) of Europe as an entity, floating above history, which observes the East as, not simply the object of a reciprocal 'Oriental' gaze, (Jardine and Brotton, 2000), but of the gaze of a culture which perceives itself as a participant in Europe in an unproblematic sense. Quite simply the desire for and anxiety about the Ottoman world articulated in Western texts doesn't appear in such focused terms in the Turkish commentary here.

"The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism" reflects on this lack of existential anxiety in more focused terms. Not so much an exhibition as a conference focusing on the implications of one (Tate London's "The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting", staged in Istanbul in 2008-2009) for the contemporary imagination of the Ottoman past. It is notable for the emphasis on Ottoman agency in the face of what is often held to be a unidirectional Western gaze:

*'The Ottoman Empire and most especially Ottoman Istanbul provides examples of how a non-Western imperial centre was engaged in the selective adaptation of Western cultural forms (including Orientalism) in the construction of its own imperially inflected visual culture'* (Cat.G. p.19).

This goes to the heart of Bryce's (2013) critique of Said's (1978) *Orientalism*. Bryce notes that Said, by largely disregarding the political and cultural agency of the Ottoman Empire, the geographical canvas upon which much of his study lies, and for the theoretical importance of his study in highlighting how the East was constructed discursively by and for the Western gaze, over-determines the unidirectional, binary nature of that relationship. As far as the Ottoman Empire was concerned, for much of its history it was a "European" power of the first rank insofar as the rest of Europe fell within an Ottoman orbit. As a de-centring exercise for one's own civilisational

assumptions, such an intellectual exercise is both productive and timely.

Finally, as if to emphasise this point, we come to an exhibition of the work of Amadeo Preziosi, a wealthy 19<sup>th</sup> century Maltese who, after training in the fine arts in Paris and being exposed to Orientalist genre painting at the height of its popularity, decided to forego his family's source of wealth in shipping in Valetta and set sail himself in 1842 for the Ottoman Levant. And there he stayed for two thirds of his life, deeply embedded in Ottoman cosmopolitan culture, making a fine living from painting popular scenes of Istanbul life for wealthy foreign and Ottoman clients. The accompanying catalogue to the exhibition, held at the Yapı Kredi Kazım Taşkent Art Gallery, Istanbul, goes to great lengths to claim Preziosi as a painter *for* Istanbul, not necessarily *of* it:

*'Preziosi spent nearly two thirds of his life in Istanbul and was friends not only with Europeans and Levantines living in the city, but also with Muslims. Unlike other Orientalist painters who spent brief periods in Istanbul and saw the city as an exotic, mysterious and remote alien world, Preziosi was not only familiar with the people of the city, their way of life, their customs and traditions, but loved them. The fact that his paintings were exhibited as the work of a Turkish painter in the Ottoman Pavilion at the 1867 Paris International Exposition is proof of this'* (Cat. H. p.7).

Here we see the dissolution through art at the time of its production of the binary distinctions of Europe and the Ottoman world, of East and West as distinct cultural forms. We also see the enrichment of the cultural objects being represented through a refusal to view and present them in binary terms. This goes to the heart of our argument about the historical contingency of such binary thinking at the core of mainstream European self-conception, which surely dissolves under the gaze of the liminal "Other within".

## Conclusion

*Freud once argued that the smaller the real difference between two peoples the larger it was bound to loom in their imagination. He called this effect the 'narcissism of minor difference' - Michael Ignatieff, "Blood and Difference", page 14.*

This research explored the construction of the European self through examining its relation with its *Internal Other*, i.e. the European territories which were under Ottoman imperial rule (Todorova, 1997) as projected in catalogues from eight exhibitions taking place in Western Europe and Turkey. These notions are examined adhering to Bryce and Carnegie's (2013) argument that these exhibitions are responses to wider geo-political and socio-cultural discourses in which they are enveloped.

As such, the message visitors are invited to receive is co-created by institutional endowment of geo-political, socio-cultural and visitors' mental ecologies. These influences are, to some extent, deemed to be put on the same plane of equivalence. However, discourse and semiotic analysis revealed dialectic antagonism sparked not entirely through the exchange between these 'equivalents', but through the liminality that resulted as an exchange between geo-political and socio-cultural ecology on the one hand, and visitors' mental ecologies on the other. We articulate this argument in twofold terms:

Firstly, Western European galleries present the legacy of Ottoman cultural heritage in binary terms. By extending back from Said's (1978) polarisation between West and East to the actual discursive mechanisms making such comforting fictions possible, we are

able to translate this into the anxieties underwriting constructed binaries between Western teleology subsumed in Christian identity and the “Other” within Europe, the Ottoman legacy of multi-religious social organization (Bjelic, 2011; Todorova, 1996; Zizek; 1997). Ottoman heritage and its legacy in Europe is thus presented here as a symbol of Europe’s *Internal Other*. Its quixotic value is indicated by its liminality in relation to that which is understood to be “Europe”. The reason for the presentation of the Ottoman legacy in Europe in the context of a binary is because Eurocentrism relies on a “singularist” social ontology that theoretically makes a detour of the fundamental significance in process of social transformation, particularly manifested in complex geopolitical, socio-cultural and ideological forms. The Ottoman legacy is thus mainly observed through the lens of (Western) Eurocentrism which obfuscates its historical, geopolitical and socio-cultural contribution (Firges, Graf, Roth & Tulasoğlu, 2014). The result of this exercise is that the Ottoman legacy in Istanbul and the Balkans is usually represented in media as a liminal space between European *External Other*, the Orient, and its internal space, both geopolitically, and socio-culturally.

Secondly, Ottoman heritage is utilised in the sphere of cultural diplomacy, where again the EU is presented as a good neighbour trying to bridge this constructed gap, yet ultimately retreating to well-worn binary tropes. The Turkish representations examined here are more nuanced, however, acknowledging aesthetic differences yet framing them within the context of wider European diversity. La Capra (2001) argues that in order to be easily comprehensible and suited for the leisure consumption, complex socio-historical narratives need to be simplified. Museums are, to a large extent, places for leisure experiences (Taheri & Jafari, 2012), thus this particular representation of heritage through the deployment of East-West, and even Islam-

Christianity binaries in its relation to the European subject, is a very pragmatic decision from the supply side, as it simplifies the complex historical context behind heritage, rendering it for ready reception and therefore consumption. In order to do so, it does not challenge but uses simplified Eurocentric ontologies with which consumers are usually familiar. However, these particular efforts at heritage presentation question its effects on the historical literacy of consumers in relation to their understanding of the core concept of the constructed notion of the European subject. As we can see from the textual contributions from Turkey, such notions are neither universally accepted nor articulated.

This implication highlights the particular role which marketing management plays within the context of the presentation of historically contingent narratives in the consumer context. Although it is well articulated that familiar tropes sell well in arts and heritage management (see for instance Kerrigan, Shivanandan and Hede, 2012), our research calls for a critical reflection from the management side in relation to the presentation of grand historical narratives to heritage consumers and the importance of stepping outside of received, binary wisdom. Although our research is embedded in the multidisciplinary of historical and cultural studies, we see our contribution to marketing theory in the sphere of the production of experience from supply-side perspective in relation to the wider socio-cultural contexts in which it is embedded. In order to achieve this, we deliberately focused on textual presentation only, which showed a clear relation between the version of the Ottoman legacy promoted in the exhibitions and wider geopolitical context surrounding this endeavour.

We are well aware that textual analysis in the form of semiotic and discourse analysis as featured in this paper shows only a part of the story. We would like to suggest that



future research features potential interviews with curators, visitors and participant observations (see for instance Jafari, Taheri and von Lehn, 2013; Minkiewicz, Evans and Bridson, 2014). This might take the form of narrative or thematic analysis to aid in developing a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the exhibition visit, in order to explore further the dialogic process of the co-creation of visitor experiences within art and heritage marketing.

We would also suggest that future studies may benefit from a greater focus on conditions of possibility underlying varying producer attempts to reach out to consumer constituencies based on their expectation of historically conditioned, unproblematic reception. Furthermore, we see potential for further studies in exploring how presentation of cultural heritage influences consumer experience, primarily noting Jafari, Taheri & von Lehn's (2013) argument that the experience which is created in museums is not confined to the museum walls, but stipulates further socialisation of visitors. We see our future research in exploring this stipulation from the context of consumer experience in relation to the context of Ottoman heritage in Europe and the important but often unspoken significance of this context for our understanding of Modernity itself.

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