

Reading the Ottoman Empire: Intertextuality and Experience in Henry Blount's *Voyage into the Levant* (1636)

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The English traveller Henry Blount (1602–1682), author of *A Voyage into the Levant* (1636), is renowned for attempting to view the Ottoman Empire with an open mind and to understand it on its own terms. Scholars of the *Voyage* have examined Blount's attitude to cultural difference, as well as his relationship to emerging discourses of empiricism, especially the works of Francis Bacon. This essay argues that the cultural politics and philosophical outlook of the *Voyage* are fundamentally connected to, and, in some cases, problematized by, Blount's intertextual strategies. It shows that Blount's digestion of his reading shapes his theoretical approach to travel, including his understanding of perception, cognition, and experience, and is central to his description of the Ottoman Empire. As well as identifying Blount's borrowings from and paraphrases of writings by Bacon, Michel de Montaigne, George Sandys, and, indirectly, Aristotle, my argument demonstrates that early modern travel writing offers an especially striking example of the parallels between observation and reading that characterize the writings of the period more generally.

A Voyage into the Levant (1636), an account of an 11-month journey through the Ottoman Empire by Henry Blount (1602–1682), is considered one of the most significant works of travel writing to emerge from early modern England. Its significance lies in the distinctiveness of Blount's approach to travel, an approach outlined in the account's opening pages. There, Blount explains that one of his aims was to 'observe the Religion, Manners, and Policie of the *Turkes*' in order to determine 'whether to an unpartially conceit, the *Turkish* way appear absolutely barbarous, as we are given to understand, or rather an other kinde of civilitie, different from ours, but no lesse pretending'.¹ As this statement suggests, Blount sought to bring his travel observations to bear on preconceptions of the Ottoman Empire, and, in so doing, to interrogate them. Blount's introductory remarks also register his scepticism about conventional understandings of cultural difference more generally, and thus articulate an attitude that would now be described as a form of cultural relativism.

¹ Henry Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 2nd edn (London, 1636), 2. Hereafter '*Voyage*', with page numbers provided in text. For Blount's biography, see ODNB, 'Blount, Sir Henry (1602–1682)', and Gerald MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580–1720* (London, 2004), 117–22.

Scholarship on the *Voyage* has illuminated these aspects of Blount's thought, and considered their implications for the histories of travel, travel writing, transcultural encounter, and empire. These studies can be organized into two distinct but related strands. The first, and most dominant, has focussed on Blount's cultural politics. For Gerald MacLean, the 'comparative and rationalist inquiry into the Islamic world' that Blount proposes constitutes an example of what MacLean calls 'imperial envy', the discursive structure through which early modern British writers expressed their lack of, and desire for, empire in the face of Ottoman territorial expansion.² MacLean also demonstrates that Blount conceived of his travel as a form of performance, one which involved negotiating issues of cultural, religious, and linguistic difference in fraught diplomatic scenarios, often with successful results.³ The performative aspects of Blount's travel have been examined further by Sabine Schülting, who argues that Blount employs strategies of disguise and improvisation, including improvised speech and gesture, to win the confidence of his Ottoman counterparts and, in turn, to convince English readers that an alliance between England and the Ottoman Empire was not only desirable but possible.⁴ Eva Johanna Holmberg, too, attends to Blount's performance of identity, explaining that Blount composed the account in a way that would display his knowledge and wit to English readers, including potential patrons.⁵ Sascha R. Klement sees the *Voyage* as a turning point in an 'emerging discourse of global civility', discussing the contribution it made to cultural exchanges between England and the Levant while also noting the limitations of Blount's civility, particularly his discriminatory depictions of the Jews living under Ottoman rule.⁶ Finally, Noel Malcolm suggests that Blount 'had a Machiavellian view of Islam which was both strong and positive', and that he, like other European authors, used Islam and the Ottomans to understand religious and political structures in other contexts, including those closer to home.⁷ Viewed in the round, these studies suggest that the *Voyage* is significant not only because it records the observations of an unusually compelling traveller, but because of how those observations illustrate the complexity of Anglo-Ottoman encounter in the period as a whole.

The second strand of scholarship on the *Voyage* has explored the intellectual frameworks informing Blount's travel, especially empiricism, and has reflected on their relationship to the thought of Francis Bacon. This emphasis has been prompted in part by the introduction to the *Voyage*, in which Blount, adopting a Baconian posture, states that his approach to travel prioritizes eyewitness experience over 'booke knowledge' (4); his association with this posture is reinforced by Anthony Wood, who describes Blount as 'a Gentleman of a very cler judgment, great experience, much contemplation (tho not of much reading)'.⁸ Schülting, for instance, refers to Blount's 'full-hearted support of empiricism', while Klement characterizes him as

² Gerald MacLean, 'Ottomanism before Orientalism? Bishop Henry King Praises Henry Blount, Passenger in the Levant', in I. Kamps and J. Singh (eds), *Travel Knowledge: European 'Discoveries' in the Early Modern Period* (New York, NY, 2001), 85–96, 88. For a further discussion of Blount's analysis of empire, see MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 123–76.

³ MacLean, 'Ottomanism before Orientalism', and MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, esp. 128–9, 139–40, 151–2, 158–60, 171.

⁴ Sabine Schülting, 'Strategic Improvisation: Henry Blount in the Ottoman Empire', in Sabine Schülting, Sabine Lucia Müller, and Ralf Hertel (eds), *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East* (Abingdon, 2012), 67–82.

⁵ Eva Johanna Holmberg, 'Avoiding Conflict in the Early Modern Levant: Henry Blount's Adaptations in Ottoman Lands', in Gabor Gelléri and Rachel Willie (eds), *Travel and Conflict in the Early Modern World* (Abingdon and New York, NY, 2021), 127–44.

⁶ Sascha R. Klement, *Representations of Global Civility: English Travellers in the Ottoman Empire and the South Pacific, 1636–1863* (Bielefeld, 2021), 21–58. For discussions of Blount's attitude to Jewish communities, see MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 174–5, and Eva Johanna Holmberg, *Jews in the Early Modern English Imagination: A Scattered Nation* (Farnham, 2011), esp. 6–7, 25, 34, 40, 47, 50–51, 59, 61–4, 67–9, 87, 92, 94–5, 138–42, 152.

⁷ Noel Malcolm, *Useful Enemies: Islam and The Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450–1750* (Oxford, 2019), 281, 292–3, 340, 348, 355, 387, 407, 414, here 281. There is a rich and large body of scholarship on early modern European views of Islam and the Ottoman Empire which cannot be fully enumerated here. However, recent examples include Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJannet (eds), *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds* (New York, NY, 2011), Julia Schleck, *Telling True Tales of Islamic Lands: Forms of Mediation in English Travel Writing, 1575–1630* (Selinsgrove, PA, 2011), Nabil Matar (ed.), *Henry Stubbe and the Beginnings of Islam* (New York, NY, 2014), Anders Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans: Turkish History in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2015), Montserrat Piera (ed.), *Remapping Travel Narratives, 1000–1700: To the East and Back Again* (Amsterdam, 2018). Blount's attitude to sexuality is discussed in Abdulhamit Arvas, 'Leander in the Ottoman Mediterranean: The Homoerotics of Abduction in the Global Renaissance', *English Literary Renaissance*, 51 (2020), 31–62, 54.

⁸ Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 2 vols (London, 1691–1692), 2. 534.

‘a Baconian man of science interested in empirical observation.’⁹ While MacLean and Holmberg characterize Blount in similar terms, with MacLean noting that Blount was admitted to Gray’s Inn 3 years before Bacon’s retirement—implying that they might have met—they also argue, persuasively, that Blount’s critique of ‘booke knowledge’ (like Bacon’s) should not be taken at face value.¹⁰ They reveal that the *Voyage* consists of a series of intertextual engagements, and that it variously draws from and sets itself against works of travel, travel advice, and statecraft, including competing accounts on the Ottoman Empire by figures such as Richard Knolles.¹¹ As these studies show, Blount’s *Voyage* is an excellent example of what Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi call ‘learned empiricism’: a central feature of the early modern descriptive sciences, including the description of travel, learned empiricism involved ‘the interlocking of observational skills and philological learning – the coupling of empiricism and erudition’, and demonstrated ‘parallels between ways of observing and ways of reading, close links between observation and book learning.’¹²

This essay examines Blount’s learned empiricism and the parallels between ways of observing and ways of reading in the *Voyage* in closer detail. Although the discussions of Blount’s intertextuality referred to above are insightful, the full extent of his intertextual engagements remain underexplored. Because travel writing is an inherently intertextual genre, the intertextuality of the *Voyage* is not, in and of itself, unusual. Travellers often understand and describe their experiences by alluding to, quoting from, citing, or recycling textual material, as well as by employing established literary conventions and strategies.¹³ Despite their ubiquity—or, perhaps, because of it—these intertextual engagements are significant. Their significance is demonstrated by studies, most prominently Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, that have revealed the extent to which European attitudes to racial, cultural, and religious difference and desires for colonial and imperial domination were informed by the tendency of authors, including travellers, to recycle textual material, especially tropes, about non-European ‘others.’¹⁴ Intertextuality in travel writing thus raises a set of interrelated questions: which texts do travellers engage with, and to what purpose and effect? What forms do these engagements take, and what do travellers’ intertextual strategies tell us about the literary context in which they wrote? And, finally, to what extent do travellers’ approaches to intertextuality reflect, or, alternatively, subvert or ironize, the philosophical outlook and cultural politics of their accounts?

In seeking to answer these questions, this essay offers new insights about the intertexts of the *Voyage* and their significance for our understanding of Blount’s intellectual preoccupations and cultural politics. It also contributes to scholarship on early modern travel writing more generally by revealing its relationship to wider practices of intertextuality in the period. I demonstrate that

⁹ Schülting, ‘Strategic Improvisation’, 67, and Klement, *Representations of Global Civility*, 25. For further brief references to Bacon’s influence on Blount, see Jonathan Haynes, ‘Two Seventeenth Century Perspectives on the Middle East: George Sandys and Sir Henry Blount’, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 3 (1983), 4–22, 6, 15, and Maria Todova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York, NY, 1997), 90–91.

¹⁰ MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 120.

¹¹ MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 127–8 and Holmberg, ‘Avoiding Conflict’.

¹² Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi, ‘Introduction’, in Pomata and Siraisi (eds), *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 1–38, 7.

¹³ For a discussion of intertextuality as a defining feature of travel writing, see Julia Beilein and Barbara Schaff, ‘Intertextual Travel Writing’, in Schaff (ed.), *Handbook of British Travel Writing* (Berlin and Boston, 2020), 113–24. For discussions of early modern travel writing’s stylistic and formal transactions with literary genres, see Nandini Das, ‘Early Modern Travel Writing (2): English Travel Writing’, in Nandini Das and Tim Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2019), 77–92.

¹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY, 1979). Although scholars disagree on the extent to which *Orientalism* is an appropriate prism through which to assess pre- or proto-colonial encounters, its impact on the study of early modern travel writing is indisputable. For a discussion of these issues, see Hector Roddan, ‘*Orientalism* is a Partisan Book: Applying Edward Said’s Insights to Early Modern Travel Writing’, *History Compass*, 14 (2016), 168–88 and MacLean, ‘Ottomanism before Orientalism’. Seminal studies on tropes and constructions of difference in early modern travel writing include Mary Baine Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca, NY, 1988), Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), 25–61, and Kamps and J. Singh (eds), *Travel Knowledge*, especially Kamps and Singh, ‘Introduction’, 1–19.

Blount's travel writing, like other examples of early modern observational writing, was shaped by the humanist practice of commonplacing, in which individuals organized excerpts of their reading under 'heads' or headings, later drawing on this material for use in their own writing.¹⁵ This process was described metaphorically as 'digestion.' The metaphor of digestion, like the practice of commonplacing itself, has its origins in classical rhetoric, and is closely connected to discussions of rhetorical *imitatio*.¹⁶ One of the most significant discussions of *imitatio* appears in Seneca's 84th Epistle. Seneca begins by foregrounding the relationship of travelling and reading, telling his friend Lucilius that his 'journeys' act as a support to his studies: 'I have not stopped my reading in the slightest degree,' he claims. Turning to focus on reading, he explains that 'We should follow ... the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey.' Like them, we ought to 'sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading' and then 'blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.' Seneca compares this apian culling, sifting, and blending to the biological process of digestion, claiming that in the same way that food 'passes into tissue and blood only when it has been changed from its original form', our reading will only be absorbed by our *ingenium* or talent, rather than simply being stored by our memory, if we 'digest' it.¹⁷

It is apt that Seneca prefaces his discussion of *imitatio* with references to travel, because the influence of these ideas is evident in the travel advice literature—the *ars apodemica* or 'art of travel'—that proliferated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁸ Here, the combination of travel, reading, and digestion that is already present in Seneca is even more pronounced. These works adapted the practice of commonplacing, and the precepts of classical rhetoric more generally, to the context of travel, using them to give travellers instructions about how and what to observe, and, crucially, which note-taking methods to use to record their observations.¹⁹ They also employed the alimentary metaphors associated with *imitatio*. Just as authorities like Seneca instructed students to digest their reading, authors of travel advice instructed travellers to digest their experiences into knowledge. Such formulations appear in other writing on travel in the period, such as Ben Jonson's Epigram 128 'To William Roe':

ROE (and my joy to name) th'art now, to goe
Countries, and climes, manners, and men to know,
T(o)'extract, and choose the best of all these knowne,
And those to turne to bloud, and make thine owne²⁰

¹⁵ On the connection between commonplacing and the theory and practice of observation in the early modern period, particularly practices of note taking, see Lorraine Daston, 'The Empire of Observation, 1600–1800', in Lorraine Daston and Katherine Lunbeck (eds), *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago, IL, 2011), 81–113, 95–6.

¹⁶ For an overview of the alimentary metaphors used in relation to poetry in antiquity and in patristic and medieval literature, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and The Latin Middle Ages*, tr. Willard R. Trask, ed. and intr. Colin Burrow (Princeton, NJ, 2013), 134–6.

¹⁷ Seneca, *Epistles*, tr. Richard M. Gummere, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA, 1920), 84.1, 84.3, 84.5–7. For a discussion of theorizations of *imitatio* in the Roman rhetorical tradition, see Colin Burrow, *Imitating Authors: Plato to Futurity* (Oxford, 2019), 71–105, including comment on Seneca's 84th Epistle on 83–8.

¹⁸ For discussions of the development of the *ars apodemica*, see Daniel Carey, 'Hakluyt's Instructions: *The Principal Navigations and Sixteenth-Century Travel Advice*', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 13 (2009), 167–85; Carey, 'Compiling Nature's History: Travellers and Travel Narratives in the Early Royal Society', *Annals of Science*, 54 (1997), 269–92; Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Instructions for Travellers: Teaching the Eye to See', *History and Anthropology*, 9 (1996), 139–90; and Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550–1800* (Chur, 1995).

¹⁹ Classical rhetoric had an impact on early modern note-taking practices more generally. See, for instance, Richard Yeo's study of the note-taking practices of the members of the Royal Society, which were informed by the practice of commonplacing. Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago, IL, 2014).

²⁰ Epigram CXXVIII: 'To William Roe', in C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson (eds), *Ben Jonson*, vol. 8 (Oxford, 1947), 80–81. The travel account which makes the connection between travel and humanist notions of digestion most explicit is Thomas Coryate, *Coryats Crudities* (London, 1611). See also Katherine A. Craik, 'Reading "Coryats Crudities" (1611)', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 44 (2004), 77–96.

This instruction is less abstract than it might sound: the digestion of travel experience involved procedures of textual selection, compilation, transcription, and revision analogous to those used in commonplacing. Travellers recorded their daily observations in notebooks, including portable and erasable table books, and subsequently developed and expanded these notes into fuller accounts designed to be read by others.²¹ The most critical aspect of this development and expansion was the synthesizing of notes—collections of particulars, including circumstantial details of time, place, date, and distance travelled—into general conclusions about the countries or regions through which they had travelled. This act of synthesizing, and the transformation of particular into general that it enabled, is the ‘digestion’ to which apodemic authors refer. In their emphasis on using notes as a route to a specific goal—the production of knowledge—practices of note-taking for travel writing resemble the ‘directed reading’ practiced by early modern statesmen.²² We thus might think of early modern travel observation as a ‘directed reading’ of the world.

Although Blount’s manuscript notes are not extant, the structure of the *Voyage* indicates that he followed the note-taking practices outlined in travel advice literature. The account is divided into three discrete sections.²³ The first, mentioned earlier, outlines his reasons for travelling, and the approach he took in doing so. The second offers a ‘Relation’ of Blount’s journey, including relevant circumstantial details, information about features of topology and climate, ports and rivers, buildings, bridges, and monuments, including pyramids, and religious and legal practices. It also describes Blount’s interactions with the people he meets. The third section deals with what Blount calls ‘the more abstract and general’ (61), offering broader arguments about issues of religion and government in the Ottoman Empire. This structure suggests that Blount, in keeping with convention, took notes of his daily experiences (which provide the basis for the particularity of the ‘Relation’), and later used these notes to contribute to knowledge on the state of the empire (a contribution constituted by ‘the more abstract and general’ material).

In addition to digesting his experience, Blount also digests his reading. As we will see, the two modes of digestion at work in the account—the digestion of travel experience, and the digestion of reading—are closely related. The intertextuality of the *Voyage* suggests that he, like other humanistically trained readers, gathered and organized passages from his reading to use in his writing. Through a focus on Blount’s engagements with Francis Bacon, Michel de Montaigne, and the traveller George Sandys, which combine eyewitness and textual ‘witness’, the intertextuality of his travel writing is shown to be even more extensive than has previously been supposed. Intertextuality in the *Voyage* takes a variety of forms, including borrowing, in which Blount inserts material from others into his prose unacknowledged (or, to use the relevant alimentary metaphor, assimilated) and paraphrase. There are also instances where these intertexts feature more subtly in the *Voyage*, as analogues for Blount’s approach to travel. The first two parts of the essay attend to Blount’s engagements with Bacon and Montaigne. The first part considers the ways in which these engagements, as well as allusions to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, enable Blount to develop an account of ‘experience’ in the introduction to the *Voyage*, while the second examines the intertextuality of Blount’s travel observations themselves. As mentioned, Blount’s intellectual relationship to Bacon has been one of the central preoccupations of scholarship on the *Voyage*. These discussions tend to be quite general, however. For example, while MacLean is correct that ‘Blount draws directly on Bacon for his methodology’, the exact nature

²¹ For a detailed outline of travellers’ note-taking practices which illustrates the connection between travel writing and commonplacing, see Fynes Moryson’s ‘Precepts for Travellers’, in Moryson, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent* (London, 1617), I.II, 12. For discussions of Blount’s debt to Moryson, see Holmberg, ‘Avoiding Conflict’, 130–31, 137, and MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 128.

²² The classic study of ‘directed reading’ is Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’”: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy’, *Past & Present*, 129 (1990), 30–78.

²³ On the ‘formal sections’ of the *Voyage* see MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 135.

of Bacon's influence on Blount's travel writing is not yet clear.²⁴ The essay offers a fresh evaluation of Blount's relationship to Bacon by identifying the specific passages from Bacon's corpus with which Blount engages and by considering their significance. Revealing that Blount borrows passages from Bacon's writing on the 'Fallacies of the Minde of Man' in his *Advancement of Learning* and on the 'Idols of the Mind' in his *Novum organum*, it suggests that Blount uses Bacon's 'Fallacies' and 'Idols' to develop an account of, and to attempt to mitigate, the epistemological, perceptual, and cognitive challenges involved in travel.

Blount's debt to Montaigne is noted briefly by Jonathan Haynes, who writes that the *Voyage* appeared 'in an intellectual environment that had absorbed Bacon and Montaigne.'²⁵ Haynes's suggestion that Montaigne's writings (like Bacon's) played a key role in shaping the wider intellectual culture of the period is astute. Timothy Hampton notes that 'the *Essays* function as a kind of machine for producing commonplaces' while Warren Boutcher explains that 'Montaigne was read and translated in seventeenth-century England as a very witty handler and interpreter of a shared European storehouse of sayings, anecdotes, apophthegms, and examples, and a fashioner of new "sentences".'²⁶ In making use of material from Montaigne, Blount thus numbers among many English authors who treated the *Essays* as a repository of commonplaces. Nonetheless, as with Blount's borrowings from Bacon, the essay's aim is to move beyond a general acknowledgement of influence to determine precisely *how* Blount engaged with Montaigne, and to explain the significance of these engagements. It shows that Blount borrowed passages from two specific essays, 'Of Experience' and 'Of Books', in John Florio's translation, and that he, in another example of the parallels between reading and observing, repurposed Montaigne's reflections on reading to articulate his conception of travel.

The third and final part of the essay focusses on the patterns of original and recycled observations in works of travel and natural history. It shows that Blount's description of the Ottoman coffee houses, while presented as the product of eyewitness experience, draws closely on a similar description in George Sandys's *Relation of a Journey* (1615), a passage which also appears, in slightly modified forms, in works by Robert Burton and Bacon. Haynes positions Blount as the antithesis of earlier, supposedly more conventional travellers such as Sandys. 'His allegiances are to the future', Haynes writes, 'as clearly as Sandys' are to the past.'²⁷ This essay challenges that reading by revealing Blount's debt to Sandys. Further, by tracking the travels of Sandys's passage on coffee across the texts by Blount, Burton, and Bacon, it demonstrates that the forms of intertextuality that characterize the composition of the *Voyage* are a feature of early modern observational writing more generally. The essay concludes with a brief reflection of the implications of Blount's intertextuality for our understanding of his cultural politics.

The intertextuality of the *Voyage* is typical in some ways, and exceptional in others. It is typical in that most early modern travel writing, influenced by the discourses of digestion in the rhetorical and apodemic contexts mentioned above, incorporates textual material drawn from elsewhere. But it is exceptional in two ways: first, in the extent to which Blount's reading not only helps him to describe his travel but shapes his experience of travel itself; and second, in the clarity with which Blount theorizes the formal and epistemological challenges posed by travel and travel writing. The *Voyage* not only expands and enriches our sense of what 'literature' and 'literariness' might be said to comprise, but also demonstrates the extent to which attending to the intertextuality of travel writing, however ubiquitous a practice it may be, can reveal its philosophical and cultural preoccupations in sharper relief.

²⁴ MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel*, 135.

²⁵ Haynes, 'Two Seventeenth Century Perspectives', 15.

²⁶ Timothy Hampton, 'Putting Experience First', in Cécile Alduy and Roland Greene (eds) special issue 'Between Experience and Experiment', *Republics of Letters*, 2 (2010), 61–6 and Warren Boutcher, 'Montaigne in England and America', in Philippe Desan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne* (Oxford, 2015), 306–27, 324.

²⁷ Haynes, 'Two Seventeenth Century Perspectives', 7. For further discussion of Blount's relationship to Sandys, see Holmberg, 'Avoiding Conflict', 130.

I. BLOUNT'S THEORY OF TRAVEL

The first examples of intertextuality in the *Voyage* appear in the account's opening pages where Blount outlines the purpose and approach of his travel. Because this material is so dense with textual borrowings from Bacon and Montaigne, it is necessary to quote from it at length before examining its significance. Blount begins with the following statement about the significance of knowledge and the context of his decision to travel to the Levant:

Intellectual Complexions have no desire so strong, as that of *knowledge*; nor is any knowledge unto man so certaine, and pertinent, as that of humane affaires: This *experience* advances best, in observing of people whose *institutions* much differ from ours; for *customes* conformable to our owne, or to such wherewith we are already acquainted, doe but repeat our old observations, with little acquist of the new. So my former time spent in viewing *Italy, France*, and some little of *Spaine*, being countries of Christian institution, did but represent in a severall dresse, the effect of what I knew before. (1)

Having done so, he provides some details about the aspects of religion, culture, and politics on which he wanted to focus, explaining his particular interest in Egypt and the necessity of seeing the world through one's own eyes rather than relying exclusively on accounts written by others:

Lastly, because *Egypt* is held to have beene the fountaine of all *Science*, and *Arts civill*, therefore I did hope to finde some sparke of those cinders not yet put out; or else in the extreme contrarietie, I should receive an impression as important, from the ocular view of so great a revolution; for above all other senses, the eye having the most immediate, and quicke commerce with the soule, gives it a more smart touch then the rest, leaving in the *fancy* somewhat unutterable; so that an eye witness of things conceives them with an *imagination* more compleat, strong, and intuitive, then he can either apprehend, or deliver by way of relation; for relations are not only in great part false, out of the relaters mis-information, vanitie, or interest; but which is unavoidable, their choice, and frame agrees more naturally with his judgement, whose issue they are, then with his readers; so as the reader is like one seated with dishes fitter for another mans stomacke, then his owne: but the traveller takes with his eye, and eare, only such *occurrences* into observation, as his owne apprehension effects, and through that *sympathy*, can digest them into an experience more naturall for himselfe, then he could have done the notes of another: Wherefore I desiring somewhat to informe my selfe of the *Turkish Nation*, would not sit downe with a booke knowledge thereof, but rather (through all the hazard and endurance of travell,) receive it from mine owne eye not dazled with any affection, prejudicacy, or mist of education, which preoccupate the minde, and delude it with partiall *ideas*, as with a false glasse, representing the *object* in colours, and proportions untrue: for the just censure of things is to be drawn from their *end* whereto they are aymed (3–4)

Finally, Blount concludes by suggesting that his unconventional approach to travel means that the observations contained in the following pages might not seem useful to others:

this also barres these observations from appearing beyond my owne closet, for to a minde possess with any set doctrine, their uncomformitie must needs make them seeme unsound, and extravagant, nor can they comply to a rule, by which they were not made. Nevertheless, considering that *experience* forgotten is as if it never had beene, and knowing how much I ventured for it, as little as it is, I could not but esteeme it worth retaining in my owne memory, though not transferring to others: hereupon I have in these lines registered to my selfe, whatsoever most tooke me in my journey from *Venice* into *Turky*. (4–5)

The opening of the *Voyage*, ‘Intellectual Complexions have no desire so strong, as that of *knowledge*’, is a paraphrase of the opening of Montaigne’s ‘Of Experience’: ‘There is no desire more natural, then that of knowledge.’²⁸ The opening of ‘Of Experience’ is, in turn, a paraphrase of the opening of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, which begins ‘All men naturally desire knowledge.’²⁹ It is significant that Blount and Montaigne invoke Aristotle, because doing so enables them to intervene in ongoing philosophical debates about the relationship of experience to experiment and knowledge.³⁰ ‘Experience’ had a range of meanings in the early modern period. Closest to modern usage, ‘experience’ could refer to knowledge acquired through observation, or from what one has personally undergone, as well as to information obtained by the senses. Reflecting its etymological connection to *experior*, ‘to try’, ‘to prove’, ‘to attempt’ or ‘to test’, other senses of the word include ‘the action of putting to the test’ and ‘a tentative procedure; an operation performed in order to ascertain or illustrate some truth; an experiment’. Further, in philosophy, ‘an experience’ was understood as ‘a piece of experimental knowledge; a fact, maxim, rule, or device’. This ‘experimental knowledge’ was produced through repeated action (such as the repetition of an experiment) from which information, including any information obtained through the senses, could be extrapolated.³¹

Aristotle acknowledged that experience, including experience based on information from the senses, was an important source of natural knowledge. He defined experience as an accumulation of memories, claiming that ‘numerous memories of the same thing eventually produce the effect of a single experience.’³² But he also held that experience is not, on its own, a sufficient basis for knowledge. This is because experience deals with particulars rather than ‘universals’, general or universal truths. To explain this distinction, Aristotle compares artisans to master craftsmen. While artisans possess practical experience, they tend to do things through habit, without grasping the implications of their actions. In contrast, master craftsmen are not only capable of doing those things, but also understand the theory and facts which underpin their art. For Aristotle, it is the latter kind of understanding—an understanding that uses reason and judgment to transform experience into universal truths—that constitutes real knowledge. Aristotelian metaphysics, like classical rhetoric, is thus part of the intellectual background of the features of early modern travel writing discussed above: the imperative for travellers to digest their experience, and the structure of the *Voyage*, which separates the particulars of Blount’s ‘Relation’ from his ‘more abstract and general’ reflections, are indebted to Aristotle’s arguments about the relationship of particulars to universals, and experience to knowledge.

Neither Blount nor Montaigne endorses Aristotle’s arguments fully, however. They wrote in a context in which Aristotelian philosophy was under attack, and traditional views about the role of experience were undergoing reassessment. Although Montaigne begins ‘Of Experience’ with a paraphrase of Aristotle, his essay proceeds to contest and undermine the tenets of Aristotelian metaphysics. This is because unlike Aristotle, Montaigne is sceptical about the possibility of turning particulars into universals. In his view, the world is too diverse, too various, and humans too dissimilar from each other, to be thought of in universal terms. Such scepticism, recurrent in the period, is what Kathryn Murphy has described as ‘the anxiety of variety.’³³ Montaigne channels this anxiety into the pursuit of a new philosophical model. Where Aristotle had

²⁸ Michel de Montaigne, ‘Of Experience’, in *Essays*, tr. John Florio (1603), 633.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, tr. Hugh Tredennick, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1933), Book I, 1.

³⁰ For a discussion of this context, see Alday and Greene (eds), ‘Between Experience and Experiment’.

³¹ See *OED*, s.v. ‘experience’, n. 1a&b, 2, 3, and 7a&b. For useful discussions of early modern meanings of experience, see Kathryn Murphy, ‘Of Sticks and Stones: The Essay, Experience, and Experiment’, in Thomas Karshan and Kathryn Murphy (eds), *On Essays: Montaigne to the Present* (Oxford, 2020), 78–96, 81 and Hampton, ‘Putting Experience First’, 62.

³² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, 4.

³³ Kathryn Murphy, ‘The Anxiety of Variety: Knowledge and Experience in Montaigne, Burton and Bacon’, in Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, and Jan-Melissa Schramm (eds), *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt* (Basingstoke, 2011), 110–30, 111.

subordinated bodily experience to the workings of reason, Montaigne does the opposite by positioning his own body as his primary object of study. As he puts it, 'I studie my selfe more than any other subject.'³⁴ This self-study includes an examination of his alimentary tract. He supplies a record of his eating and drinking, his taste, his digestion, and his excretion. For example, describing the changes in his appetite that have occurred over time, Montaigne writes 'Mine appetite hath in diverse things very happily accommodated and ranged it selfe to the health of my stomake. Being yong, acrimonie and tartnesse in sawces did greatly delight me, but my stomake being since glutted therewith, my taste hath likewise seconded the same.'³⁵

Digestion not only plays a central role in Montaigne's embodied experience, but also informs his conception of the *Essayes* themselves. In 'Of Experience' he declares: 'To conclude, all this galiemafrie which I huddle-up here, is but a register of my lives-Essayes,' adding, 'I have lived long enough, to yeeld an account of the usage that hath brought me to this day. If any be disposed to taste of it, as his taster I have given him an assay. Loe here some articles, digested, as memorie shall store me with them.'³⁶ Montaigne's description of the *Essayes*—the title of which evokes the acts of trying, proving, attempting, and testing also associated with the terms experience and experiment—as a 'galiemafrie', a stew given to the reader to 'taste', is apt. As Elizabeth Swann explains, 'the physical experience of tasting has a double aspect that is reflected in the term's epistemological associations', because 'the sense of taste plays a preliminary role, evaluating or testing the suitability of an item for further digestive assimilation'; at the same time, 'as an epistemological term, to taste something is to try, test, or examine it.'³⁷ In positioning the essays as the product of digestion—both physical digestion, the workings of his glutted 'stomake', as well as digested experience, put into words—which readers can taste and test, Montaigne gestures to these epistemological associations. Finally, Montaigne's reference to his essays as 'articles, digested, as memorie shall store me with them' recalls the Aristotelian conception of experience as an accumulation of memories, and suggests a close connection between the acts of writing and remembering. Montaigne thus offers a spirited defence of the epistemological value of experience, especially embodied experience, affirms the connection between tasting and testing, and foregrounds the significance of writing both as a mode of coming to self-knowledge and as a record of memory.

These dimensions of Montaigne's 'Of Experience' inform the *Voyage* in crucial ways. Blount's paraphrase of Montaigne ('Intellectual Complexions have no desire so strong, as that of *knowledge*'), like Montaigne's paraphrase of Aristotle ('There is no desire more naturall, then that of knowledge') introduces the focus on questions of knowledge that characterizes his work as a whole. And like Montaigne, Blount—contra Aristotle—views experience as the most important source of knowledge. Specifically, Blount shares Montaigne's emphasis on embodied experience, and is similarly invested in the relationship between tasting and testing. One example of this is a passage in which Blount sets out to test the claim that the waters of the Danube and its tributary, the Sava, 'mingle no more then water and oyle'. He explains, 'I have gone in a Boat, and tasted of the *Danuby* as cleare and pure as a well, then putting my hand not an inch further, I have taken of the *Sava* as troubled as a street channell, tasting the gravell in my teeth' (10).³⁸ Here, Blount's tasting is physical. As we will see in more detail below, however, he usually combines physical and textual forms of tasting and digesting. Indeed, the use of alimentary metaphors in the opening pages of the *Voyage* is the first example of a tendency that recurs throughout the account:

³⁴ Montaigne, 'Of Experience', 638. For further discussion of Montaigne's account of experience, see Murphy, 'Of Sticks and Stones', 81–7 and Murphy, 'Anxiety of Variety', 113–16.

³⁵ Montaigne, 'Of Experience', 646.

³⁶ Montaigne, 'Of Experience', 642.

³⁷ Elizabeth Swann, *Taste and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2020), 18.

³⁸ Blount's writing on the Danube influenced a work of travel advice. See James Howell, *Instructions for Forreine Travell* (London, 1642), 18, which urges travellers to be firm in their faith 'like the River Danube which scornes to mingle with the muddy streame of Sava, although they run both in one Channell'.

he often uses the language of digestion in or near passages which include material digested from his reading, which means that his writing enacts the procedure it describes.

Blount's claim that the reader of a travel account 'is like one seated with dishes fitter for another mans stomacke, then his owne', while a traveller 'takes with his eye, and eare, only such *occurrences* into observation, as his owne apprehension effects, and through that *sympathy*, can digest them into an experience more naturall for himselfe, then he could have done the notes of another' is in sympathy with Montaigne's arguments about the impossibility of finding universal truths in a diverse and various world. In Blount's view, little can be gained from reading travel accounts because of the extent to which they are shaped by their authors' idiosyncrasies: individual travellers will observe different things and will interpret and communicate these observations in different ways. As Gitanjali Shahani puts it, Blount suggests that the consumption of travel writing is 'ultimately gustatory, a form of digesting on the part of the reader, who takes in what the traveler has prepared to his own taste.'³⁹ Although Blount is sceptical about the usefulness of reading accounts by others, he nonetheless believes in the necessity of recording his own observations. This is because Blount shares Montaigne's interest in the Aristotelian reading of experience and memory, as suggested by his claim that '*experience* forgotten is as if it never had beene'; moreover, the phrasing of his commitment to 'retaining in my owne memory' what he has observed in 'lines registred to my selfe' recalls Montaigne's conception of his essays as a 'register'. As the similarities between Blount and Montaigne reveal, 'Of Experience' is a significant intertext of the *Voyage* not only because of its impact on Blount's choice of language, but also because of the extent to which it illuminates and contextualizes aspects of his approach to travel.

Blount's project is not identical to Montaigne's, however. While he uses 'Of Experience' as conceptual scaffolding for his travel writing, he does much more than simply regurgitate Montaigne's arguments. Blount departs from Montaigne most obviously in his view of the relationship between the self and the world. In contrast to Montaigne, who contends that the only kind of knowledge it is possible to pursue is a knowledge of himself, Blount understands self-knowledge to be a means to an end. That 'end' is made clear in the clause that follows his paraphrase of Montaigne: 'nor is any knowledge unto man so certaine, and pertinent, as that of humane affaires'. By digesting Montaigne's essay, Blount thus transforms it: he draws on its insights about experience, memory, and writing, but adapts them to the context of travel writing.

The discussion of experience in the introduction to the *Voyage* is also informed by Blount's engagement with further intertexts. As seen above, Blount claims that he would rather receive knowledge 'from mine owne eye not dazled with any affection, prejudicacy, or mist of education, which preoccupate the minde, and delude it with partiall *ideas*, as with a false glasse, representing the *object* in colours, and proportions untrue: for the just censure of things is to be drawn from their *end* whereto they are aymed'. The metaphor of the mind—in which 'mind' stands for the faculty of the imagination—as a distorting mirror or 'false glasse' is ancient and conventional, but Blount's formulation here is indebted specifically to the writings of Francis Bacon.⁴⁰ In a passage on the 'Fallacies of the Minde of Man' in book two of his *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon explains: 'For the mind of Man is farre from the Nature of a cleare and equall glasse, wherein the beames of things should reflect according to their true incidence; Nay, it is rather like an enchanted glasse, full of superstition and Imposture, if it bee not delivered and reduced.'⁴¹

³⁹ Gitanjali Shahani, *Tasting Difference: Food, Race, and Cultural Encounters in Early Modern Literature* (Ithaca, NY, 2020), 113. Shahani explains that Blount casts the knowledge-gathering practices of the travel writer as 'visual or auditory', in contrast to the consumption and digestion required on the part of the reader. My reading of the *Voyage* complicates this distinction by showing that Blount's writing involved digestion, too.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the context and significance of this conceit in Bacon's writings, see Katharine Park, 'Bacon's "Enchanted Glass"', *Isis*, 75 (1984), 290–302.

⁴¹ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, in Michael Kiernan, Graham Rees, Alan Stewart, Maria Wakely et al. (eds), *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, 15 vols (Oxford, 1996–), 4. 116:7–10.

Bacon employs this conceit elsewhere, including in the *Novum organum*, where he uses it in reference to the 'Idols of the Tribe'. This is the first of four 'Idols of the Mind', the categories of error to which the mind is prone. Bacon offers the following definition: '*Idols of the Tribe* are rooted in human nature itself and in the very tribe or race of men. For people falsely claim that human sense is the measure of things, whereas in fact all perceptions of sense and mind are built to the scale of man and not the universe. And the human intellect is to the rays of things like an uneven mirror which mingles its own nature with the nature of things, and distorts and stains it.'⁴² The influence of Bacon's 'Fallacies' and 'Idols' on Blount is clear: Blount uses Bacon's arguments about the distorting qualities of the mind to make a case for travel.

Like his engagement with Montaigne, however, Blount's engagement with Bacon is selective. Whereas Bacon emphasizes the distorting tendencies of all aspects of human perception, Blount suggests that the problem is not perception per se, but the prioritization of 'booke knowledge' over eyewitness experience. For this reason, in his introduction Blount is much more optimistic than Bacon about the senses, especially eyesight; his emphasis on attaining an 'ocular view', and his claim that the eye has 'the most immediate, and quicke commerce with the soule', accords with conventional understandings of sight as the most powerful of the external senses.⁴³ As we will see, this optimism does not hold in the travel account proper, in which Blount is, like Bacon, more ambivalent about the mind and its limitations. Blount's engagements with Bacon and Montaigne thus enable him to develop an account of experience and, in so doing, to prepare the reader for the travel observations that follow. The next part of this essay turns to examine the impact of Blount's intertextual strategies on his travel observations.

II. OBSERVATION AND TEXTUAL DIGESTION IN THE VOYAGE

Blount often refers to his reading in the *Voyage*. He frequently compares what he sees with what he describes as 'the judgement of Antiquitie' (28), and he cites a range of classical authorities, including Homer, Virgil, and Seneca, to do so. However, Blount's engagement with his reading is most revealing when it is least explicit. As in the introduction, his travel observations include several digested passages from writings by Montaigne and Bacon on the mind and its errors. Two examples stand out. The first is the following passage on a grotto in Patmos:

Pathmos is renowned for many actions of Saint *John*: I fansied none, till the *Greekes* pointed out a *Rocke* under which they affirmed to be a *Grot*, wherein hee wrote his *Apocalyps*: In some points things consecrated are imitated by the ordinary wayes of men; to instance in prophane pieces *Mahomet* was two yeares in a *grot*, writing his *Alcoran*, the *Sybils* most lived and prophecied in *grots*, as my selfe have seene hers at *Cumæ*, as also the study and habitation of *Virgil* in a *grot*, at mount *Posilipo*; many old Oracles were delivered out of *Cavernes*, or *Grots*; in summe the highest fansies of men, have beene produced in such places; which in those who have no Divine credit, I impute, partly to the *privacy*, and *aspect* of those retreats, which being *gloomy*, *still*, and *solemne*, settle, and contract the minde into *profound* speculation (30)

This passage illustrates the combination of eyewitness experience and other kinds of authority, including textual witness, that is characteristic of early modern travel writing. Blount's encounter with the cave in Patmos is shaped not only by what he sees, but also by his prior knowledge (to do with the association of Patmos and Saint John), his interaction with 'the *Greekes*' who direct his gaze, and his reading. In keeping with the comparative thrust of the account, Blount

⁴² Bacon, *Novum organum*, in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, 11. 80–81.

⁴³ For a landmark study of this topic, see Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford, 2007).

situates the cave within wider philosophical, mythological, and theological contexts by comparing Saint John's composition of the *'Apocalyps'* (the Book of Revelation) to the works of the Prophet Muhammad and of Virgil, as well as the prophecies and oracles of the Sybils and others. Blount does not view all these works as legitimate, and is careful to distinguish between things that are 'consecrated' and those which 'have no Divine credit': it is telling that despite his intention to travel with an 'unpartiall conceit', and the positive remarks he makes about Islam elsewhere, he dismisses the works of the Prophet Muhammad as 'prophane pieces'. Be that as it may, the comparison he draws between these texts enables him to move beyond specific examples to make a broader claim about the distorting effects of caves, caverns, and grottos on human thought. Blount's claim seems to be based partly on Bacon's writing on the 'Idols of the Cave', the second of the 'Idols of the Mind' outlined in the *Novum organum*. Bacon writes:

Idols of the Cave belong to the particular individual. For everyone has (besides vagaries of human nature in general) his own special cave or den which scatters and discolours the light of nature. Now this comes either of his own unique and singular nature; or his education and association with others, or the books he reads and the several authorities of those whom he cultivates and admires, or the different impressions as they meet in the soul, be the soul possessed and prejudiced, or steady and settled, or the like⁴⁴

Blount's phrase 'settle, and contract the minde' is a reworking of Bacon's remark about the soul being 'steady and settled'. Despite this similarity of phrasing, and the fact that both authors use the image of the cave as a prompt for reflection on cognition, there are differences between the two. The most significant is that while Bacon's cave is a metaphor designed to explain an aspect of human nature that presents an obstacle to learning, Blount's passage describes his encounter with an actual cave, albeit one which is bound up with the histories of texts. There is also a difference in the authors' interpretation of the mind. Whereas Bacon suggests that all humans are susceptible to bias in their study of nature (it is something that 'everyone has'), Blount's claim has to do with the impact of the environment on cognition: he suggests that the 'highest fancies of men', both divine and profane, have been produced in caves because their conditions create certain effects in the mind. Blount's description of Patmos thus transforms the Baconian text's relationship to place and to embodiment: he turns Bacon's theory of the mind into a description of a specific geographical location that is, at least in part, informed by eyewitness experience.

A second example of textual digestion in Blount's travel observations occurs in the middle of the *Voyage*. It is the point at which Blount 'digests' his experience, and the account shifts, accordingly, from the particular to universal or, as he puts it, 'the more abstract and generall'. At this juncture, Blount reflects on the relationship of vision, travel, and temporality:

Thus have I set downe such observations, as were of passage *local*, and *naturally* borne along, with the places whereon I tooke them; Now follow the more *abstract* and generall concerning the *Institutions* of the whole *Empire*; wherein I take but the accounts of a reckoning made in hast, and therefore subject to the *disadvantage* of a hasty view, that is, to over-slip many things, and to see the rest but *superficially*: yet usually quicke glances, take in the most *eminent* peeces; amongst which there are some like the dye of *Scarlet*, better discerned by a passing eye, then a fixt. (61)

These lines expand upon a point Blount makes more briefly at the beginning of the *Voyage*, in which he describes himself as a 'passenger' (2) and notes that while a passenger does not have

⁴⁴ Bacon, *Novum organum*, in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, 11. 81.

a complete knowledge of the places they visit, such as that possessed by an inhabitant, their insights are valuable nonetheless.⁴⁵ Here, Blount draws on the language and ideas of Montaigne's 'Of Bookes', an essay debating whether it is better to read deeply or simply leaf through a book, in connection to the functions of vision and memory. Montaigne writes that we should sometimes read quickly, in fits and starts:

If in reading I fortune to meete with any difficult points, I fret not my selfe about them, but after I have given them a charge or two, I leave them as I found them. Should I earnestly plod upon them I should loose both time and my selfe; for I have a skipping wit. What I see not at the first view, I shall lesse see it, if I opinionate my selfe upon it. I do nothing without blithnes; & an over-obstinate continuation, & plodding contention, doth dazle, dull, and wearie the same: My sight is thereby confounded, and diminished. I must therefore withdraw it, and at fittes goe to it againe. Even as to judge well of the lustre of scarlet, we are taught to cast our eyes over-it, in running it over by divers glances, sodaine glimpses, and reiterated reprisings.⁴⁶

Montaigne's discussion of reading supplies matter for Blount's discussion of travel. Montaigne analogizes reading and bodily movement, such that different modes of reading are described as 'plodding' and 'running'—both actions which, like travel, take the body from one place to another—while Blount applies Montaigne's arguments about reading to the context of his journey through the Levant. Just as Montaigne argues that a unique kind of understanding can be gained from reading speedily, Blount argues that the speed of his travel has meant that he might have missed some details ('over-slip many things, and to see the rest *superficially*') but also enabled him to discern the most fundamental aspects of the empire (its 'most *eminent* peeces'). Blount's engagement with 'Of Bookes' thus offers yet another example of the parallels between observing and reading, not only because of the ease with which it turns an argument about reading into an argument about observation, but because of how it enables two kinds of digestion (of reading, and of experience) to coincide. The next part of the essay situates Blount's intertextuality within wider practices of intertextuality in the period by considering the significance of textual recycling within the contexts of travel writing and natural history, using the example of observations on coffee.

III. TASTING AND TESTING: OBSERVATIONS OF COFFEE

As we have seen, Blount uses his reading to describe the regions through which he travels, as well as to understand the epistemological challenges of travel and travel writing more generally, especially those pertaining to perception and to memory. I have suggested that Blount also, through his engagement with Montaigne, participates indirectly in ongoing debates about the role of experience in the acquisition of knowledge. To conclude, I discuss a final example of intertextuality in the *Voyage*: Blount's observations on coffee. There is an extensive body of scholarship on the social and cultural significance of coffee in the early modern period, especially in relation to the rise of the coffee-house in England and its implications for the emergence of the public sphere.⁴⁷ The coffee-house did not originate in England, however. Scholars including MacLean and Klement have called attention to its roots in the cultural practices of the Ottoman world. They have drawn on early modern travel writing, including Blount's *Voyage*, to ask what

⁴⁵ For further discussion of Blount as a 'passenger', see MacLean, 'Ottomanism before Orientalism', 92–4, and Holmberg, 'Avoiding Conflict', 129.

⁴⁶ Montaigne, 'Of Bookes', in *Essays*, 235–43, 236.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London, 2004), and Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven, CT, 2005). Blount's life and career are discussed in the context of late-seventeenth-century English coffeehouse sociability in Kate Loveman, *Reading Fictions, 1660–1740: Deception in English Literary and Political Culture* (Aldershot, 2008), 62–5.

travellers' depictions of coffee reveal about the dynamics of transcultural encounter, and the circulation of commodities that such encounters enabled.⁴⁸

Coffee is central to Blount's transcultural encounters in the Levant. In the first part of the *Voyage*, he is invited to 'drink *Cauphe*' (15) in the presence of the Ottoman general Murad Basha; this occasion gives him the opportunity to establish connections at court, and he goes on to visit the general several more times during his stay in the region. While visiting a palace at a later point in his travels, Blount is served coffee once again when, as he puts it, 'one brought a *Porcelane* dish of *Cauphe*' (42). Here, too, the sharing of coffee enriches Blount's interactions with his hosts, enabling him to have a productive 'discourse' with them through an interpreter. As Klement explains, such interactions demonstrate the 'multi-layered complexity of European-Ottoman encounters at a time when travellers had to be civil to representatives of their powerful host culture', but also show that many of these encounters involved understanding, amity, and respect.

Even so, Blount's interest in coffee goes beyond its use as a social lubricant. In keeping with the digestive procedure of the account, the second half of the *Voyage* turns from these brief references to Blount's personal coffee consumption to offer a broader overview of the product and the various uses to which it can be put. The passage reads:

They have another drinke not good at meat, called *Cauphe* made of a *Berry*, as bigge as a small *Beane*, dried in a Furnace, and beat to powder, of a soote colour, in taste a little *Bitterish* that they seeth [*sc.* 'seethe', or put in boiling water], and drinke hote as may be endured: it is good all houres of the day, but especially morning, and evening, when to that purpose, they entertaine themselves 2 or 3 houres in *Cauphe-houses*, which in all *Turky* abound more then *Innes*, and *Ale-houses* with us: it is thought to be the old blacke broth used so much by the *Lacedemonians*, and dryeth ill humors in the stomacke, comforteth the braine, never causeth drunkennesse, or any other surfeit, and is a harmlesse entertainment of good fellowship; ... they sit *crosse-legg'd* after the *Turkish* manner, many times two or three hundred together, talking, and likely with some poore *Musicke* (105–6)

When the Welsh barrister Walter Rumsey published his treatise *Organon salutis: an instrument to cleanse the stomach: as also divers new experiments on the virtue of tobacco and coffee, how much they conduce to preserve human health* in 1657, he addressed one of the dedicatory letters to Blount. In it, Rumsey praises Blount for bringing new knowledge about coffee to England, and, in so doing, promoting it: 'I lately understood that your discovery, in your excellent Book of Travels, hath brought the use of the Turkes Physick, of Cophie in great request in *England*.'⁴⁹ Blount's response to Rumsey, included in the *Organon salutis*, praises Rumsey in turn, and goes on to discuss the importance of keeping the stomach in good order, declaring that 'doubtlesse mens diseases arise from the Stomach; whose impurities obstruct the passages of life.'⁵⁰ Like Rumsey, Blount is of the opinion that tobacco and coffee are effective cures for such medical conditions. These letters extend the theme of digestion that is so central to the *Voyage* and demonstrate the ways in which travel observations could be transferred to new generic contexts.

The textual travels of Blount's observations are more complicated than this, however. Although his description of coffee is presented as his own experience—the reference to 'taste' implies that Blount is describing the sensation of his own tongue, while the emphasis on 'good

⁴⁸ Gerald MacLean, *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1800* (London, 2007), 58–9, and Klement, *Representations of Global Civility*, 43–7. There are references to Blount in Ellis, *The Coffee-House*, 3, 133–4, and in Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee*, 6, 19, and 22. See also Shahani, *Tasting Difference*, 80–106.

⁴⁹ W[alter] R[umsey], *Organon salutis* (London, 1657), sigs. A3v–A4r.

⁵⁰ Rumsey, *Organon salutis*, sig. A5r.

fellowship' recalls his earlier discussions of coffee and sociability—it is, in fact, material recycled from George Sandys's travel account published in 1615, *A Relation of a Journey*.⁵¹ Blount's description of coffee, provided above, closely resembles this description published by Sandys over 20 years earlier:

Although they be destitute of Taverns, yet have they their Coffa-houses, which something resemble them. There sit they chatting most of the day; and sippe of a drinke called Coffa (of the berry that it is made up) in little *China* dishes, as hot as they can suffer it: blacke as soote, and tasting not much unlike it (why not that blacke broth which was in use amongst the *Lacedemonians*?) which helpeth, as they say, digestion⁵²

Blount's comparison of coffee-houses to '*Innes*, and *Ale-houses*' in which patrons sit for '2 or 3 houres' and his description of the '*Berry*' the colour of 'soote' that is consumed 'as hot as may be endured' are clearly indebted to Sandys. His remark that coffee is 'thought to be the old blacke broth used so much by the *Lacedemonians*' also borrows from Sandys, although it turns what is tentative in Sandys—a question, asked parenthetically—into a claim about received opinion. (Incidentally, Blount and Sandys are both mistaken, in that the 'broth' of the *Lacedemonians* was not coffee, but a pork stew.) Blount's passage on coffee is thus another instance of intertextuality: aside from his comments about the style of sitting, the number of people in attendance, and the use of music, his observations are based on material taken from another traveller's account.

Blount was not the only seventeenth-century writer to borrow this material. As Robert R. Cawley has noted, Sandys's writing on coffee was also recycled in works by Robert Burton and Francis Bacon.⁵³ The fourth edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1632, includes a section on 'Alternatives and Cordials' which features this passage:

The Turkes have a drink called *Coffa* (for they use no wine) so named of a berry as blacke as soot, and as bitter (like that blacke drinke which was in use amongst the *Lacedemonians* and perhaps the same) which they sip still of, and sup as warme as they can suffer; they spend much time in those *Coffa*-houses, which are somewhat like our Alehouses and Tavernes, and there they sit chatting and drinking to drive away the time, and to bee merry together, because they finde by experience that kinde of drinke so used helpeth digestion and procureth alacrity.⁵⁴

Before Burton, Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* inserted material from Sandys's *Relation* in several of its 'experiments'. The passage on coffee is included in an 'Experiment Solitary touching *Medicines* that *Condense*, and *Relevee* the *Spirits*', and reads:

They have in *Turkey*, a *Drinke* called *Coffa*, made of a *Berry* of the same Name, as Blacke as *Soot* and of a *Strong Sent*, but not *Aromaticall*; Which they take, beaten into Powder, in *Water*, as Hot as they can drinke it: And they take it, and sit at it, in their *Coffa-Houses*, which are like our *Tavernes*. This *Drinke* comfoteth the *Braine*, and *Heart*, and helpeth *Disgestion* [*sic*]⁵⁵

As Cawley suggests in his reading of the coffee material in Burton and Bacon, Sandys's *Relation* is evidently 'the parent of both passages'.⁵⁶ Burton and Bacon reiterate the details provided by

⁵¹ Blount's recycling of Sandys's coffee material has not previously been identified. Klement notes that 'Other travellers preceding him had already mentioned the Turkish black broth in their accounts', including Sandys, but does not acknowledge that Blount's description is nearly identical to that by Sandys. Klement, *Representations of Global Civility*, 46.

⁵² George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey begun an: Dom: 1610*, 4 vols (London, 1615), 1. 66.

⁵³ Robert R. Cawley, 'Burton, Bacon, and Sandys', *Modern Language Notes*, 56 (1941), 271–3.

⁵⁴ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 4th edn (London, 1632), 397.

⁵⁵ Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum: or A Naturall Historie in Ten Centuries* (London, 1626), 191.

⁵⁶ Cawley, 'Burton, Bacon, and Sandys', 272.

Sandys, and reiterated by Blount: that coffee is black as soot, that it is consumed in coffee-houses, which are like English taverns, and that it helps digestion. It is striking that these writers not only share particulars, but also phrasing: Blount's 'hote as may be endured', Burton's 'warne as they can suffer', and Bacon's 'as Hot as they can drinke it' closely resemble Sandys's 'as hot as they can suffer it'.

In 1663, the passages on coffee by three of the four writers, Blount, Bacon, and Sandys, appeared in a compilation titled *The Vertues of Coffee*.⁵⁷ The recycling (or digestion) of Sandys's material on coffee in the texts by Blount, Bacon, and Burton, and the later publication of *The Vertues of Coffee*, is significant in three ways. The first is that it helps us to clarify Blount's intellectual relationship to Sandys. Earlier, I explained that while Blount is often described as 'Baconian', he has been described by Haynes as Sandys's antithesis. That both Blount and Bacon borrow from Sandys demonstrates that the three have more in common than such readings suggest. Second, *The Vertues of Coffee* offers further evidence that the opposition of 'booke knowledge' and 'experience' with which Blount begins the *Voyage* does not hold in early modern observational writing, because the compilation presents the writings by Blount, Bacon, and Sandys as texts of equal stature, without distinguishing between material that is based on eyewitness and that which is not. Third, as another example of learned empiricism, in which there are parallels between ways of observing and ways of reading, the coffee material indicates that the sense of the collective—of the 'common'—that is so central to commonplacing also underpins the practice of observation. Early modern writers thought of observation, and the various kinds of experience, experiment, and witnessing with which observation is associated, as an inherently social and collaborative exercise. For them, the task of observation did not merely rely upon sight (or, indeed, the employment of other senses such as taste) but something much more complex and wide-ranging: the attempt to bring their observations into dialogue with the observations of others, and, in so doing, to produce knowledge.

The intertextuality of the *Voyage* has important implications for our understanding of Blount's cultural politics. Blount's aim of travelling with an 'unpartiall conceit' to understand the Ottoman Empire on its own terms is undercut by his reliance on European intertexts. The intertexts of the *Voyage* not only shape the language and form of Blount's writing but also, as we have seen, are often the basis of the travel observations themselves, including some of his observations of Islam. The result is that various textual witnesses, in the form of writings by Bacon, Montaigne, and Sandys, exist alongside eyewitness experience and, in some cases, replace it entirely. It would be inaccurate to describe Blount's account as straightforwardly Orientalist.⁵⁸ As we have seen, and as other scholarship on the *Voyage* has shown, he set out not to encourage Europeans to dominate the Ottoman Empire—something that in any case was impossible within the geopolitical context—but to learn about it. Nonetheless, the discursive strategies of the *Voyage* that have been examined here are precursors to those present in later Orientalist writings. Although Blount approaches aspects of his travel with an open mind and seizes opportunities to 'discourse' with the people he meets, he ultimately prioritizes discourse—in textual form—with a small set of European writers. Similarly, while parts of the *Voyage* are grounded in particulars such as details about climate, topology, politics, and architecture, the digestive procedures that underpin Blount's writing means that it also tends to universalize and abstract—not only in the section of the account that is formally dedicated to 'the more abstract and generall' but in the 'Relation', too—by describing the Ottoman Empire using commonplaces, that is, material that could be used to describe any geographical place. This reading of the *Voyage* has implications for the study of early modern travel writing more generally. It reveals that the practice of

⁵⁷ Anonymous, *The Vertues of Coffee* (London, 1663).

⁵⁸ On the relationship of *Orientalism* to early modern travel writing, see footnote 14.

commonplacing and rhetorical discourses of imitation, especially the language and ideas of textual digestion, informed the ways in which early modern travel accounts were written and read, and demonstrates the extent to which what Blount describes as 'booke knowledge' shaped how travellers saw, tasted, and thought.

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