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The Rise of the Grand Tour: Higher Education, Transcultural Desire and the Fear of Cultural Hybridisation

We unceasingly read the past in the light of the present, and our perspective is inevitably situated even when we strive to adopt an archaeological stance, analysing the past as objectively as possible. Actually, there is nothing wrong with investigating the past in order to make sense of our present or even to shape our future. Both gender and postcolonial studies rest on ideological foundations and aim at 'strategic' forms of reading. Problems start when we manipulatively enlist the past to support present power structures, turning it into propaganda, or when we overwrite it with anachronisms.

Coherently with this premise, I aim to reassess the early stages of the Grand Tour as part of a process of cultural hybridisation that contributed to the formation of a European consciousness. Mikhail Epstein's discussion of *transculture* provides this article with its theoretical framework since what I am interested in is precisely the tension between transcultural desire and the exclusive dimension of national identity, or between individual experiences of cultural hybridisation and discourses pivoting on cultural 'purity'. As Epstein claims, in relation to our present, transculture "differs from both leveling globalism and isolating pluralism" (2009, 327). In an attempt to resist homogenisation and to overcome the limits of multiculturalism, it rests on the idea of single individuals who cross the boundaries between cultures, liberating themselves from the constraints of the environment in which they grew up. By deconstructing the opposition between identities that are conceived by many as mutually exclusive and internally homogeneous, these individuals open up the possibility of a world that is based on a multifaceted coexistence of differences, according to the model Amin Maalouf articulated in his seminal *In the Name of Identity* (2008).

Starting from these theories, the following pages will investigate the early stages of what would later come to be called Grand Tour, a phenomenon whose origins actually date back to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In that time of sweeping changes and clashes – when the British Isles were progressively unified under a single monarch – the travellers' experience of other countries encouraged transcultural attitudes, fostering a European consciousness, but it also resulted in the formation of stereotypes, reinforcing national and religious identities. In the following pages, I will address both sides of the issue in order to shed light on this dialectics between transcultural desire (as conducive to language and cultural hybridity) and the tropes (devilry, fashion, monstrosity) that were conversely used to stigmatise cultural hybridisation as the decay from a condition of supposedly pristine national identity. Social and cultural phenomena, however, are seldom black and white, and what we will discover is that the early modern English authorities actually fostered – in the interest of the State – those individual quests for knowledge that ultimately contributed to undermine nationalist ideology.

1. Before the Grand Tour

Rooted in the Roman empire, European cultural exchanges never stopped in the following centuries, though fraught with conflict. Despite wars, plagues and the paucity of roads, young men studied abroad already in the Middle Ages. In the twelfth century, for instance, Thomas Becket – still in his twenties – studied canon law first at Bologna (where a University had been founded in 1088) and then at Auxerre. It was Latin that made this possible. The language of a former empire became a lingua franca that enabled cultural elites from all over Europe to communicate and exchange ideas, fostering the creation of a European cultural ecumene.

While in the Middle Ages these cultural exchanges were favoured by the existence of an undivided Christian Church, as shown by the thriving of long-distance pilgrimages (Sumption 1975), early modern Europe was deeply divided, due to the rift between Catholics and Protestants that the Reformation brought about. Anthony Munday's anti-Catholic pamphlet *The English Romayne Lyfe* (1582) testifies to the climate of those years. After spending a few months in Rome – where he joined the English College – in 1578, Munday went back to England and turned spy, playing a major role in the arrest and trial of Edmund Campion and other Jesuit missionaries he had met in Rome. The Jesuits were executed, and Munday wrote his book to disprove the charge that he had been an unreliable witness.

It was against this divisive political, religious and cultural backdrop – when European countries asserted both their national identities and the full dignity of vernacular languages and literatures (Gorak 1991; Ross 1998) – that what would later come to be known as the Grand Tour started to develop. The term was popularised by Richard Lassels in *The Voyage of Italy*, which was published in Paris in 1670, two years after the death of the author (Chaney 1985). A Catholic priest, Lassels repeatedly travelled to Italy as bear-leader, that is as a tutor who accompanied young aristocrats in what was already regarded as a rite of passage in the formative years of a gentleman (Black 1992; Brodsky-Porges 1981).

Lassels' Preface to *The Voyage of Italy* is defensively aimed at forestalling criticism of his transcultural stance. The author excuses himself for the imperfect quality of his English, which results from a life half spent travelling abroad, and also for the presence of Latin and exotic words, which he regards as necessary to understand the realities he is describing. More importantly, the traveller justifies his suspicious insistence on Catholic "*Ceremonies*, and Church-antiquities" (1670, Preface, n.p., page facing a iij), although the acceptance of his work implies – in Tony Claydon's words – that "Whereas earlier generations of Englishmen had held a strongly Protestant worldview, […] this militantly confessional understanding was fading after 1660." (2007, 14-15). In conclusion Lassels expands on the "*Profit of Travelling*", claiming that "if this world be a great *booke*, as *St. Augustin* calls it, none studdy this great *Book* so much as the Traveler." (Preface, n.p., par. 1) It is within this euristic framework that Lassels advises young men to make "the *Grand Tour* of *France*, and the *Giro* of *Italy*" (*Ibid.*, n.p., par. 7).

While *The Voyage of Italy* symbolically marks the beginning of what Lassels defines as Grand Tour, this phenomenon actually originated much earlier, already in the mid-Tudor period, as argued by Edward Chaney (1998, xi; 2014) and Michael Brennan (2004, 9). In order to understand the import of this social ritual, we should keep in mind that far from being a frivolous pastime the Grand Tour was rather "an ideological exercise" – as James Buzard defines it – whose purpose was to prepare the sons of the ruling classes "to assume the leadership positions preordained for them at home" (2002, 38). This is proved by the fact that "Queen Elizabeth was constantly sending young men abroad at her own expense to learn foreign languages, and to be trained up and made fit for the public service" (Smith 1907, vol. 1, 8).

2. TRANSCULTURAL DESIRE

Fynes Moryson had just started an MA at the University of Cambridge, where he was pursuing the study of Civil Law, when he asked permission to leave for

the continent, in 1589, "as well for the ornament of this profession, as out of my innated desire to gaine experience by travelling into forraigne parts" [1]. The journey did not immediately materialise. It was only on 1 May 1591, after Moryson took his MA at Oxford, that he was actually able to leave England for his first tour of Europe, which lasted four years (1591-1595) and was followed by a second tour in 1596-1597. Only in 1617 did Moryson publish his famous *An Itinerary Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell through the Twelve Dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turky, France, England, Scotland & Ireland*.

I find Moryson's case particularly interesting both because he was a young man when he left and because his travelogue embodies the early modern transcultural desire, as shown by the simile he uses to describe his work: "a nose-gay of flowers, hastily snatched in many gardens, and with much leasure, yet carelesly and negligently bound together." (1907 [1617], vol. 1, xx) This nonchalant image contrasts with the time-consuming labour the writing of this monumental text implied: "the worke is first written in Latine, then translated into English, and that in divers Copies, no man being able by the first Copie to put so large a worke in good fashion" (*ibid.*, vol. 1, xxi). The fact that this early modern travelogue crossed the boundaries between languages already before publication testifies in itself to the transcultural stance of its author.

Thomas Coryate – whose journey to Venice dates back to 1608 – also mentioned self-translation in his *Crudities* (1611). This time English was the source language and the author determined to translate his "observations into Latin for the benefit not only of my owne country, but also of those countries where I have already travelled, and hereafter resolve to travell" ("The Epistle to the Reader", 1905 [1611], vol. 1, 15). Coryate was aware of the potential of Latin as a lingua franca that might enable him to divulge his book on a transnational scale making his 'foreign' perspective useful also to the countries he observed. The author's fully transcultural perspective is further proved by this comment:

> Much more praise doth he deserve that by travelling in France, Italie, Spaine, Alemannie, and the Netherlands, doth learne the five languages of those noble countries, which being added to his owne mother tongue and the Latin, do answere the number of the seven liberall sciences. (1905 [1611], vol. 1, 9)

What Coryate pursues is a condition of plurilingualism that would make the traveller at home everywhere. This idealistic stance would come to full bloom in Lassels' Preface, where we read that travelling takes off the "*aboriginal curse*" which was laid upon humankind [2]:

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[1] Quoted in "Publisher's Note" (Moryson 1907 [1617], vol. 1, xi).

[2] George Steiner famously reversed the negative dimension of the Babel myth in *After Babel* (1975).

> I meane, the confusion of Tongues: which is such a curse indeed, that it makes men, who are of one kind, and made to be sociable, so strangely to fly one another, that as great S. Austin sayth, A man had rather be with his dog, than with a man whose language he understands not. (1670, Preface, n.p., par. 4)

This thirst for communication and exchange, leading to the creation of a new ecumene, transpires also from the "encomiastick and panegyrick verses" that precede Coryate's text (1905 [1611], vol. 1, 20). Together with poems in English, Italian, French, Latin and Greek, we find here the language of music (*ibid.*, 59), an emblem that ironically depicts a laureate pair of shoes (*ibid.*, 113) [3], and – last but not least – a text written in the "Utopian tongue":

> Ny thalonin ythsi Coryate lachmah babowans
> O Asiam Europam Americ-werowans
> Poph-himgi Savoya, Hessen, Rhetia, Ragonzie
> France, Germanien dove Anda-louzie
> Not A-rag-on ô Coryate, ô hone vilascar
> Einen tronk Od-combe ny Venice Berga-mascar. (*Ibid.*, 115)

Not only does this linguistic inventiveness epitomise the transcultural enthusiasm that inspired early modern travellers, but these lines also remind us that one of the countries in which early modern Europeans travelled with their imagination was no less than Utopia. Thomas More's publication of his *De optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia* in 1516 inaugurated a discursive space that was marked by both freedom and daring, opening up new vistas for political and social planning. Early modern intellectuals were too sophisticated not to realise that you can travel both with your body and with your mind, and that the border between these two forms of experience is permeable. As Lassels explicitly claimed, among its many benefits, travelling enriches one's memory, enabling the old to "travel over the World againe in his *chair* and *bed,* by discourse and thoughts." (Preface, n.p., par. 7)

No journey actually ends when one returns home. The early modern experience of transculturation produced a variety of long lasting side effects, ultimately changing the course of English culture and society. Travelling fostered language and cultural hybridisation. It was Coryate who seemingly imported the word *umbrella* into English after visiting Italy (1905 [1611], vol. 1, 257), while it was Henry Wotton's long stay in Venice as ambassador of James I that contributed to the dissemination of Palladio's works in England, both thanks

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Deconstructing the traditional ideal of transparency, the book conversely underlines the creative aspect of translation, which results precisely from language differences.

   [3] To appreciate this visual joke we should keep in mind that Coryate often travelled on foot.

to his *Elements of Architecture* (1624) and because Wotton introduced his travelling compatriots – including Coryate – "to Renaissance buildings and paintings *in situ*." (Chaney 1998, 206). Coryate's *Crudities* in turn paved the way for the Italian tour of Inigo Jones, architect and stage designer. A chain reaction had started.

3. Universalism and Universities

As we have seen, in the early modern period language learning was regarded as conducive to a form of universalism – which actually coincided with Europeanism, given the 'limited' transcultural scope of these travellers' experiences. What I wish to pursue now is the connection between this universalism and the idea of a university, which recurs in these texts. After claiming that "Of all the pleasures in the world travel is (in my opinion) the sweetest and most delightfull" ("The Epistle to the Reader", 1905 [1611], vol. 1, 8), Coryate mentions the multifarious aspects of reality a traveller is confronted with, from palaces and castles to cities and fertile countryside. This list culminates in Coryate's description of the "flourishing Universities (whereof only Germany yeeldeth no lesse than three and twenty) furnished with store of learned men of all faculties, by whose conversation a learned traveller may much informe and augment his knowledge" (*ibid.*).

Although Coryate expands here on the pleasure and benefit he derived from conversing with the learned men whose excellent works he had previously read at home, the details of his journey do not always show him as keen to pursue this contact. In this travelogue, knowledge as rooted in experience competes with knowledge as mediated by universities, as shown by Coryate's description of his sojourn in Padua:

> Truely I must needs lay an imputation of great indiscretion upon my selfe, in that being in so famous a University as this I omitted to see their Colledges, […] For my minde was so drawen away with the pleasure of other rarities and antiquities, that I neglected that which indeed was the principalest of all. (*Ibid.*, 296)

Having said this, Coryate does not miss the opportunity to describe the attraction the university of Padua exerted on students from all over Europe:

> I heard that when the number of the Students is full, there are at the least one thousand five hundred here: the principall faculties that are professed in the University, being physicke and the civill law: and more students of forraine and remote nations doe live in Padua, then in any one University of Christen-

dome. For hither come in, many from France, high Germany, the Netherlands, England, &c. (*Ibid.*, 297-98)

Moryson himself had come to Padua to study, and this is how the traveller renders the material life of a foreign student:

> I staied all this winter at Paduoa, in which famous University I desired to perfect my Italian tongue, where a Student may have his table at an Ordinary (vulgarly a la dozena) and his chamber for eight, or at most, for tenne silver crownes the month: but few live after this fashion, save the Dutch, and strangers new arrived, and having not yet got the language; but rather they hire a chamber, which is to be had for a zechine, or tenne lires the month, or at a lower rate, the Hostesse being to finde linnen, and dresse the meat you buy. (Moryson 1907 [1617], vol. 1, 148)

While this passage resonates with the experience of today's exchange students, there is an aspect of the worldview this text conveys that definitely differs from our postmodern outlook. Moryson's Itinerary brings us back to a world in which dark supernatural forces are seen as at work, turning Padua into a site of mystery: "Neere the Church of Saint Lucia, there is a Well, called the Divels Well; which they say was brought into the street by Art Magick, out of the courtyard of a Gentleman, denying water to his neighbours." (*Ibid.*, 156) Religious beliefs, diabolical agency and magic come to the surface also in Moryson's description of Wittenberg, the university town where both Luther and Doctor Faustus lived:

> The Wittebergers tell many things of Luther which seeme fabulous &, among other things they shew an aspersion of inke, cast by the Divell when he tempted Luther, upon the wall in S. Augustines Colledge. Besides, they shew a house wherein Doctor Faustus a famous conjurer dwelt. They say that this Doctor lived there about the yeere 1500. and had a tree all blasted and burnt in the adjoyning Wood, where hee practised his Magick Art, and that hee died, or rather was fetched by the Divell, in a Village neere the Towne. I did see the tree so burnt; but walking at leasure through all the Villages adjoyning, I could never heare any memory of his end. (*Ibid.*, 16)

The story of how Faustus conjured the devil in Spesser Wald near Wittenberg was famously told in the so-called Faust book, the *Historia vnd Geschicht Doctor Johannis Faustj des Zauberers* Johann Spies printed in 1587. A few years later a young English playwright would turn the life of Faustus into a tale of ambition and downfall, a sulphurous parable on hubris in which the Grand Tour is openly demonised.

4. Devilish Grand Tourists

The hero of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (which dates back to the early 1590s, although it was first published in 1604) discovers Italy no less than astride a dragon, the early modern equivalent of an airplane, having a devil, Mr. Mephistophilis, as a tour operator. Thanks to his aerial means of transport Faustus can disregard the constraints of geography and travel directly to the southernmost destination of Naples, then back to Venice and Padua, and finally to Rome – the Whore of Babylon – where he meets the Pope. Italy is located under the sign of 'black magic' starting from Faustus's first stop:

> Then up to Naples, rich Campania,
> Whose buildings fair and gorgeous to the eye,
> The streets straight forth, and paved with finest brick,
> Quarter the town in four equivolence.
> There saw we learned Maro's golden tomb,
> The way he cut, an English mile in length,
> Thorough a rock of stone in one night's space. (3.2.9-15) [4]

What was traditionally believed to be Virgil's tomb in Naples became a site of literary pilgrimage already in the antiquity, as shown by *Silvae*, where the Roman poet Statius portrayed himself against that backdrop [5], and by the fact that another poet, Silius Italicus, went so far as to buy the monument in order to have it restored. Both Petrarch and Boccaccio visited it, and so did Thomas Hoby in 1550 (Hoby 1902, 31). The tomb, however, exerted a wider appeal, since the populace regarded Virgil as a magician who had helped protect the city against both invaders and malign natural forces, such as the nearby Vesuvius (Hardie 1916, 7) [6]. As proved by his words, Faustus is attracted to Virgil's 'dark side', for the tomb stands close to the entrance of a long Roman tunnel whose origin was superstitiously related to Virgil's presumed magic powers. Briefly, by having Faustus travel to Naples, Marlowe stages a magician who is paying homage to the tomb of another magician.

    As in Moryson's text, the supernatural here coexists with an abundance

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[4] All quotations from *Dr Faustus* are drawn from Marlowe 1969.

[5] "I strike the slender strings with the thumb of indolence, and seated on the steps of Maro's shrine I take courage to sing by the grave of my great master." (Quoted in Hardie 1916, 6)

[6] The church of Santa Maria di Piedigrotta was possibly built to Christianise the place, which had been revered by pagans. We should also remember that Virgil had a particular status for Christians as the author of the fourth eclogue, which was commonly regarded in medieval times as anticipating the advent of Christ (Trapp 1984; Calaresu 1999).

of realistic details, as shown by Marlowe's detailed description of Saint Mark's church, with its mosaics and sky-scraping tower:

> [In Venice] a sumptuous temple stands,
> That threats the stars with her aspiring top,
> Whose frame is paved with sundry coloured stones,
> And roofed aloft with curious work in gold. (3.2.17-20)

Realism and magic combine again in the final stage of Faustus's Italian tour, his sojourn in Rome. Mephostophilis's topographical description of the eternal city is followed by a series of blasphemous exclamations on the part of Faustus, which conflate past and present, mythology and religion, creating an imaginative proximity between Papal Rome, its pagan past and the netherworld:

> Now by the kingdoms of infernal rule,
> Of Styx, or Acheron, and the fiery lake
> Of every-burning Phlegethon, I swear
> That I do long to see the monuments
> And situation of bright splendent Rome. (3.2.47-51)

Within the geography of the play there is no distinction between the "high pyramides / That Julius Caesar brought from Africa" – a term which indicated the Egyptian obelisks that could be found in Rome – and otherworldly territories. Magic elides the boundaries between the natural and supernatural realms. Faustus's Grand Tour is part of a much wider itinerary, which includes not only Europe or the planet, but which touches the farthest territories God created. As we are told by the Chorus, "learned Faustus" is not satisfied with proving cosmography, but also wishes to know "the secrets of astronomy" (3.1.2), and Faustus himself reminds his friend of the absolute breadth of their exploration:

> Thou know'st within the compass of eight days
> We viewed the face of heaven, of earth and hell. (3.2.69-70)

Of course the parable of Faustus's rise and downfall is deeply conservative [7].

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[7] Francis Yates famously hypothesised that this play may be a response to John Dee's continental mission (1583-89), which led him to visit both the Emperor Rudolph II in Prague and Stephen Bathori, King of Poland (Yates 2001, 141). For a more detailed description of Dee's continental mission see French. Giordano Bruno – another deeply transgressive early modern intellectual – also widely travelled around Europe, working in various European universities and publishing his works in Latin. In 1583 Bruno was in England, where he lectured in Oxford. In 1585 he came back to Paris, but already in 1586 he left for Germany, where he taught at Wittenberg for a couple of years, until he was forced to leave and found refuge at the court of Rudolph II in Prague. After teaching in Helmstedt, Bruno made the mistake of coming back to Italy, where he briefly taught in Padua before being arrested by the Inquisition in Venice in 1592.

At the dawn of the modern age – the age of empiricism and reason – this play alerts the public to the dangers of experiential knowledge. While material and mental boundaries are being transgressed and overcome, the breaching of boundaries is portrayed as closely associated with the ways of the devil… Daring becomes diabolical. Travelling is stigmatised, notably insofar as its motive is 'simply' a thirst for knowledge.

5. Fashion, Travelling and Knowledge

This demonization of travelling is not the only instance of the harsh reaction the early modern transcultural enthusiasm engendered. To understand this debate more fully, I will revert to Stephen Greenblatt's dialectical concept of self-fashioning. While claiming that "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity" (1980, 2), Greenblatt acknowledges that in this period "there may well have been less autonomy in self-fashioning […] than before" (*ibid.*, 1). The scholar is describing a two-fold process. Due to the secularisation of society, economic factors and social mobility, early modern subjects were both 'empowered', more aware of their potentials, and – perhaps consequently – more rigidly controlled.

As argued by Greenblatt, in the early modern period "self-fashioning acquires a new range of meanings" (*ibid.*, 3). As a synonym of change, artificiality, contamination, it comes to indicate a key element of modernity. Andrew Borde's *The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (1870 [1574]) is a case in point. The book – which charts the national identity, culture, language and territory of several European countries – opens with the engraving of a naked man who is holding a pair of scissor in his left hand and some cloth folded up on his right arm. The following words comment on this image:

> I am an English man, and naked I stand here,
> Musyng in my mynde what raiment I shal were;
> For now I wyll were thys, and now I wyl were that;
> Now I wyl were I cannot tel what.
> All new fashyons be pleasaunt to me;
> I wyl have them, whether I thryve or thee. (1870 [1574], 116)

The volubility of the Englishman is rendered figuratively through the metaphor of clothing as a signifier of identity. This trope recurs in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (written around 1601-02), where Feste addresses these words to Duke Orsino:

> Now, the melancholy god protect thee; and the
> tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for
> thy mind is a very opal. I would have men of such
> constancy put to sea, that their business might be
> every thing and their intent every where; for that's
> it that always makes a good voyage of nothing. Farewell. (2.4.72-76) [8]

Combining figurative density and stylistic levity, Shakespeare uses the changeable quality of taffeta and the opal to emphasise the connection between *fashion*, *volubility*, *travelling* and *melancholy* [9] – a galaxy of concepts that were connected in the early modern imagination. He also picks a particular kind of journey to encapsulate the mental attitude of Orsino – sea voyage, which is characterised by the absence of roads or paths and can therefore stand for absolute aimlessness.

Fashion is contrasted with knowledge in *The Merchant of Venice* (written around 1596-98), where Shakespeare satirises the Englishman abroad through the eyes of Portia, a Venetian girl who thus describes young Baron Falconbridge:

> You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany and his behaviour everywhere. (1.2.55-64)

The English traveller's incongruous apparel betrays, like his behaviour, a mere simulation of transcultural experience, an attempt to disguise his actual inability to master foreign languages and establish contact with the foreign. Shakespeare's ironic portrait resonates with a passage where Borde equates fashion with a smatter of foreign languages to stigmatise the Englishman's superficiality:

> The next year after this I trust to be wyse,
> Not only in wering my gorgeous aray,
> For I wyl go to learning a hole somers day;
> I wyll learne Latyne, Hebrew, Greek and Frenche,
> And I wyl learne Douche, sitting on my benche. (1870 [1574], 117)

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[8] All Shakespearean quotations are drawn from Shakespeare 1997.

[9] This psychological or existential condition was famously conceptualised as a self-absorbed, speculative attitude in early modern works such as Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melencolia 1* (1514), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (ca. 1599-1602) and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), where it borders on a series of related 'pathologies', such as the enraptured state of lovers, superstitious religious fervor and the frenzy of madness.

Foreign languages pertain to a body of transcultural knowledge the Englishman frivolously courts rather than faithfully loves. Borde's book aims to provide its readers with a basic introduction to this realm, without forgetting the "lernyng of Englyshe" (*ibid*., 118), which the author explicitly mentions as if to underline his patriotic allegiance. The book aims to achieve a balance, asserting the centrality of England and English in the European arena, while presenting an interest in other languages, cultures and societies.

A few words must be spent concerning Borde himself, who was a physician, had studied in various European universities, and around 1538 also embarked on a long journey which enabled him to visit most European countries. *The First Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* reflects this transcultural experience and is explicitly aimed – as clarified in the title – to "*teache a man to speake parte of all maner of languages, and to know the usage and fashion of all maner of countreys*" (1870 [1574], title page). To fully understand the import of this treatise, however, its political context must be taken into account. Borde's book was dedicated to Princess Mary Tudor from Montpellier – where Borde lived at the time – on 3 May 1542, while Henry VIII was still alive. In view of this dedication, should we consider Borde's emphasis on fashion as a way to stigmatise the English Reformation and to invite his fellow countrymen to revert to traditional beliefs?

Borde's biography fails to provide us with an answer. A former Carthusian monk, Borde was permitted to travel on the Continent to study medicine in 1529, and was completely released from his vows a few years later. Following the Act of Succession in 1534, he even took the oath of conformity and was probably employed by Thomas Cromwell as a spy. Borde's ultimate religious and political allegiances, however, are not central to my argument. What matters is that the book underlines the ties between Great Britain and the rest of Europe rather than emphasising its 'isolation'.

Borde's own transcultural experience invites him to embrace the southern European gaze on England, mentioning an instance of anti-English prejudice that he promptly refutes:

> The Italyen and the Lombarde say, Anglia terra – bona terra, mala gent. That is to say, "the land of England is a good land, but the people be yl." But I say, as I doo know, the people of England be as good as any people in any other lande and nacion that ever I have travayled in […] (1870 [1574], 118)

Borde's biography and treatise exemplify the transcultural condition. As an individual who is 'liberated' from the constraints of his native language and culture – and who is therefore able to 'relativise' both, as shown by the role England plays within his *Introduction of knowledge* – Borde is akin to many contemporary Europeans.

6. The Bestiary of Travel [10]

Of course, even before it was named as such, the Grand Tour became an object of debate. Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570) is often cited as an example of this campaign, due to its description of the traveller to Catholic Italy as

> A mervelous monster, which, for filthines of livyng, for dulnes to learning him selfe, for wilinesse in dealing with others, for malice in hurting without cause, should carie at once in one bodie, the belie of a Swyne, the head of an Asse, the brayne of a Foxe, the wombe of a wolfe. (Ascham)

Drawing on the classical and medieval imagination of mythical creatures, bestiaries and gargoyles, Ascham depicts a functionally and morally anomalous being as a combination of body parts belonging to different creatures, an early modern chimera. This colourful account culminates in an admonitory reference to the archetypal travel narrative from the classical age, the story of Ulysses. Although Ascham claims to have known several gentlemen "whom all the *Siren* songes of *Italie,* could never untwyne from the maste of Gods word," he has also known just as many who "returned out of *Italie* worse transformed, than ever was any in *Circes* Court" (Ascham).

In Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), the Englishman abroad is likewise described as a hybrid creature resulting from an eerie metamorphosis: "He that is a traveller must have the back of an ass to bear all, a tongue like the tail of a dog to flatter all, the mouth of a hog to eat what is set before him, the ear of a merchant to hear all and say nothing" (1987 [1594], 283). These degrading images are again combined with a reference to Ulysses, who successfully completed his journey home thanks to his cunning [11]:

> He is not fit to travel that cannot with the Candians live on serpents, make nourishing food even of poison. Rats and mice engender by licking one another; he must lick, he must crouch, he must cog, lie, and prate that either in the court or in a foreign country will engender and come to preferment. […] Ulysses, the long traveller, was not amiable but eloquent. (*Ibid.*, 284)

Both Ascham and Nashe stigmatise travelling – especially to Italy – as the decay from an original condition of national purity, of pristine Englishness, in other words as a form of contamination which engenders monstrosity [12].

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[10] This and the following sections of this article are partly based on a previous essay I published. See Ascari 2007.

[11] The myth of Ulysses will be later re-functionalised within the framework of a praise of travel by Lassels, who praises Ulysses as "the wisest of all the *Grecians*", contrasting him with Telemachus, who has been kept at home by his mother, as 'a very shallow-witted man' (Preface, n.p., page facing a iiij).

[12] As if to compensate for this tendency to represent the traveller as deformed, a few years later the

7. The Unbearable Emptiness of Affectation

Other forms of caricature fuelled this controversy. In *As You Like It* (written between 1598 and 1600) Jaques describes his melancholy as a condition deriving from "the sundry contemplation of my travels" (4.1.16). This revelation triggers the following dialogue:

> Rosalind A traveller! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's. Then to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands.
> Jaques Yes, I have gained my experience.
>> *Enter* Orlando
> Rosalind And your experience makes you sad. I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad – and to travel for it too! […] Farewell, Monsieur Traveller. Look you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your country; be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are, or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola. (4.1.19-33)

This reference to Venice is hardly surprising, since this city was already a hot spot for Renaissance British travellers, due to its artworks, its liberal government and its renowned courtesans (Pfister and Schaff 1999). As Edward Chaney remarks, "Ascham's influentially negative view of Italy was based on a total experience of nine days in Venice in 1552" (1998, 66), while half a century later Thomas Coryate's *Crudities* (1611) helped conjure up the dangerous lure of the Adriatic siren. In the meantime, Ben Jonson had chosen Venice as the background for his *Volpone* (1606), which characteristically features an anti-cosmopolitan satire, involving Sir Politic Would-Be and Peregrine, who is defined in the list of dramatis personae as a "gentleman-traveller" (1995, 7).

Even Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters* – a humorous gallery of Renaissance human types and topical subjects that was published in 1622 – includes the cameo portrait of "An Affected Traveller," which clearly spells out the anti-patriotic dimension of travelling. The affected traveller is presented as a frivolous human being "whose attire speaks French or Italian", who "censures all things by countenances, and shrugs" and who "speaks his own language with shame and lisping" (2003, 209-10). Various aspects of the traveller's identity are satirised, such as his love of fashion, of novelty, of wonder and of all things

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trope of a disproportionate body acquires positive connotations in Ben Jonson's jocular and affectionate portrait of Coryate as "an Engine, wholly consisting of extremes, a Head, Fingers, and Toes. For what his industrious Toes have trod, his ready Fingers have written, his subtle head dictating." (Ben Jonson, 'The Character of the Famous Odcombian, or rather Polyptopian Thomas the Coryate"; Coryate 1905 [1611], vol. 1, 16).

foreign, as opposed to simplicity, truthfulness and the love of one's country, which are implicitly presented as core British virtues.

The 'affectation' of travellers is not the only form of transcultural contact that was ridiculed in the Renaissance, when a concomitant phenomenon, the vogue of "news" [13], was also stigmatised. Travelling and news-mongering are associated in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, where Nashe describes his compatriots as "greedy of news" (1987 [1594], 284), arguing that this accounted for both their gullibility and their love of travelling. Likewise, in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare pokes fun at this vogue through Le Beau, a courtier who is always ready to dispense his ephemeral knowledge,

> CELIA … Here comes Monsieur Le Beau.
>   *Enter* LE BEAU
> ROSALIND With his mouth full of news.
> CELIA Which he will put on us as pigeons feed their young.
> ROSALIND Then shall we be news-crammed.
> CELIA All the better: we shall be the more marketable. *Bonjour*, Monsieur Le Beau, what's the news? (1.2.76-81)

Although Le Beau is portrayed as a caricature, news is presented as an asset on the social market, notably in the corrupted and effete court of Duke Frederick, as opposed to the manly court the exiled Duke holds in the middle of a forest, reviving the archetype of Robin Hood.

By contrasting the corrupting influence of city life with the regenerating power of country life, *As You Like It* participates in the anti-modern polemics that raged at the time. Early modern urban society was also the object of Ben Jonson's ferociously satirical *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (1609), where fashion is associated not with travelling per se, but rather with the nascent commodity culture, notably with the circulation of goods coming from distant lands and destined to female consumption in London. The fact that the play also satirises female education (the "Collegiates") and the blurring of gender roles proves that a conservative reaction was taking place at the time against all those aspects of modernity that seemed to threaten the traditional foundations of society (Newman 1991, 129-43).

Back to *As You Like It*, the play explores not only the contrast between the corrupting influence of city life and the regenerating power of country life,

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[13] Joad Raymond has either authored or edited a large number of studies concerning the circulation of news in the early modern period. A comprehensive bibliography of her work and of other related publications can be found in the website of "News Networks in Early Modern Europe", a project launched to investigate "the emergence of newsprint in 16th and 17th-century Europe". See <http://newscom.english.qmul.ac.uk/index.html>.

but also the polarity between travelling for 'pleasure' and relating to one's immediate environment. Shakespeare's characterisation of Jaques seems to betray his qualms about the formative value of the Grand Tour. His portrait of an Englishman who devoted his life to travelling for the sake of experience as an end in itself is disheartening. When the play opens, Jaques is not only an exile in the forest of Arden (which is Frenchified in the text, yet so close to the heart of England), but he is also tired of living. Disappointed with humans, he sympathises with nature, acquiring in our eyes the role of a proto-ecologist. When he is faced with the spectacle of a deer that has been hurt by a hunter, Jaques bursts into an invective against the banished Duke and his court, declaring them to be

> […] mere usurpers, tyrants and what's worse,
> To fright the animals and to kill them up
> In their assign'd and native dwelling place. (2.2.61-63)

Centuries before the birth of ecological movements, Shakespeare created a character who clearly sees the devastating impact humanity has on nature. No wonder at the end of the play Jaques abandons social life to become a hermit. He renounces both civilisation and travelling to turn cave dweller, embracing a new primitivism.

8. The Age of Experience

In contrast to the prejudices voiced in these plays, a different approach to the Grand Tour asserted itself in the early seventeenth century. The case of Owen Felltham is emblematic. In "Of curiosity in Knowledge" (1623) Felltham claims that "Nothing wraps a man in such a mist of errors, as his own curiosity in searching things beyond him", mentioning "metaphysics", "long buried antiquity" and "unrevealed divinity" (1840 [1623], 78) as speculative territories in which one risks getting lost. In "Of Travel" (1623), however, Felltham conversely claims that "Experience is the best informer." (*Ibid.*, 228) Travelling no longer belongs to the realm of the forbidden and is regarded as conducive to virtue, since "One who is learned, honest, and who has travelled, is the best compound of man, and can correct the vices of one country with the virtues of another." (*Ibid.*, 229) After stigmatising the "travelling fool" as "the shame of all nations", Felltham invites travellers to observe and comment on what they have seen, clearly asserting the social function travelling fulfils as part of education:

> It were an excellent thing in a state, to have always a select number of youth, of
> the nobility and gentry, to send abroad at years of some maturity, for education.

> Their parents could not better dispose of them, than in thus dedicating them to the commonwealth […] (*ibid*., 229-30)

These innovative views transpire also from the opening of Francis Bacon's "Of Travaile" (1625): "Travaile, in the younger Sort, is a Part of Education; In the Elder, a Part of Experience" (1937 [1625], 73). Language learning is here described as a pre-requisite of travelling while keen observation, the use of guidebooks and the practice of keeping notes are praised together with full immersion in the local culture. Affectation is implicitly discouraged ("And let his *Travaile* appear rather in his Discourse, then in his Apparrell, or Gesture"; *ibid*., 75) while moderate forms of hybridisation are encouraged: "And let it appeare, that he doth not change his Country Manners, for those of Forraigne Parts; But onely, prick in some Flowers, of that he hath Learned abroad, into the Customes of his owne Country" (*ibid*., 76). Briefly, according to Bacon, the contact between Englishness and 'foreignness' does not result in loss or decay, but in gain.

Experience was finally regaining its place in the world of learning. While in the past the religious and classical *auctoritates* had held sway, an increasing need for first-hand knowledge was felt. It was in 1620 that Bacon published his *Novum Organum Scientiarum*, whose frontispiece figuratively renders this tension towards the unknown by means of travel, or better sea voyage, which England now saw as its destiny, a way to greatness. The pillars between which a ship is passing stand for the mythical Pillars of Hercules that marked, according to the legend, the strait of Gibraltar. The image points at the same time to the imperial adventure – the exploration and mastery of the oceans – and allegorically to the discovery and conquest of uncharted knowledge.

This correspondence between the material world and the world of ideas is further emphasised in the title page of the 1640 edition of Bacon's *Of the Advancement and Proficiencie of Learning, or, The Partitions of Sciences*. The engraving replicates the main elements of the previous image, enriching its allegorical framework. It notably highlights the correspondence between the material and the intellectual world, rendering them as two spheres from which two hands join. The meaning of this handshake is further clarified by the Latin motto "RATIONE ET EXPERIENTIA FŒDERANTUR".

This new alliance between reason and experience would lead to a new age of learning, the foundation of the Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge in 1660 and a new kind of scientific journey, as exemplified by the proceedings of the Royal Society itself. Past were the times when Ascham could write: "Learning teacheth more in one yeare than experience in twentie […] It is costlie wisdom, that is bought by experience" (Ascham). Roaming the world was by now the foundation of learning. And of the new imperial power of Britain.

9. Looking West, Looking East

While Albion looked West towards 'virgin' lands to conquer, looking East still provided a valuable political lesson, as shown by George Sandys's *The Relation of a Journey Begun An. Dom. 1610* (1615). Here the traveller's exploration of the Ottoman Empire – and of southern Italy, then under Spanish domination – supports a cyclical view of empires, a modern version of the Medieval *translatio imperii*. This powerful ideological paradigm pervades Sandys's travelogue right from his dedicatory letter to Prince Charles, which firmly inscribes the book within British politics, qualifying it as an attempt "to educate the prince in the difference between virtuous rule and tyranny" (Ellison 2002, 60). Past glory and present decay are contrasted in order to prove that the calamities of Eastern Mediterranean territories, "so great and deserved, are to the rest of the world as threatening instructions" ("To the Prince"). We may regard this attitude as emblematic of the phenomenon Edward Said critically discussed in *Orientalism* (1978) – focusing on a later period, but with reference to Denys Hay's wide-ranging *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (1957) – i.e. the construction of a hegemonic European identity "as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures." (Said 1995, 7)

While promoting the importance of knowing the Ottoman Empire, Sandys explains his choice not to discuss the early stages of his journey, i.e. France and "the lesse remote parts of *Italy*", precisely because they are "daily survaide and exactly related." (1615, 1) Likewise, at the beginning of *Voyage into the Levant* (1634) Henry Blount depicts his quest for knowledge as a thirst that can be sated only by the breaking of new ground. His attitude is that of an 'ethnographer' who is in search of otherness, the boundaries of which are quickly shifting in this age of travel:

> 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 new. (1636 [1634], 1)

While Italy, France and Spain – "being countries of Christian institution, did but represent in a severall dresse, the effect of what I knew before" (*ibid*.) – Turkey provides Blount with an interesting case study since "to our *North-West* parts of the World, no people should be more averse, and strange of behaviour, than those of the *South-East*" (*ibid*., 2).

Sandys's and Blount's travelogues testify to a complex process of collective self-fashioning. The political, military and cultural faultline between Eu-

rope and the Ottoman Empire played a major role in the early modern forma-
tion of a European consciousness, which rested also on a sense of 'displace-
ment'. While Western European countries – the new colonial powers – looked
westward, across the Atlantic in pursuit of prosperity, they also looked east-
ward, towards those ancient civilisations that they considered as their origin.
A decaying Italy came to occupy a liminal position within this shifting geogra-
phy of Europe [14], but the contrast between past and present was even more
striking when one looked further East. The ancient glory of Greece and
Egypt – which Blount describes as "the fountaine of all *Science*, and *Arts
civill*." (*Ibid.*, 3) – contrasted with their present status as Ottoman colonies, a
status of subjection that characterised also Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

To understand the full import of this, we should remember that ear-
ly modern Europe was shaped also by the pressure of the Ottoman Empire,
whose westward expansion peaked at the time of the first siege of Vienna, in
1529, but which still presented a powerful threat over a century and a half lat-
er, when Vienna was again besieged in 1683. This event marked the begin-
ning of the Great Turkish War, and led to the defeat of the Ottomans thanks
to the combined efforts of Eastern European countries ranging from The Ho-
ly Roman Empire to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Repub-
lic of Venice, which united in the Holy League in 1684 and were subsequent-
ly joined by Russia. The spreading fear of this neighbouring civilisation is tes-
tified by *The Life and Death of Mahumed, the Author of the Turkish Religion*,
the anti-Mahomedan tract Lancelot Addison published already in 1679, and
which was reprinted in 1687 as *The First State of Mahumedism Being an Exact
Account of Mahomed, the Author of the Turkish Religion* [15].

What these brief historical notations show is that the early modern devel-
opment of a European consciousness pivoted on the interplay between intra-
and extra-European differences, that is to say between the Reformation rift
and the confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. These two faultlines are in-
terestingly correlated, since due to the Turkish peril the frontiers of otherness
shifted, even from the distant perspective of Britons.

George Sandys's attitude is emblematic of this complex interplay be-
tween differences. While he presented internecine Christian conflicts as re-
sponsible for the fact that Jerusalem was under the control of the Ottomans
(Ellison 2002, 213), in his description of Jerusalem he benevolently depicted
not only his interactions with Catholics (Ellison 2002, 77-78) but also the si-
multaneous presence of "other Christians", including "*Grecians*, *Armenians*,
Copties, *Abissens*, *Jacobites*, *Georgians*, *Maronits*, and *Nestorians*." (Sandys

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[14]   Italy occupies this liminal position also in various subsequent travelogues (Ascari 2006).
[15]   For a discussion of the representation of Muhammad in early modern England, see Dimmock 2013.

1615, 170) Far from being isolated, Sandys shared this inter-religious stance with his brother Edwin, whose *Europae speculum. Or, A View or Survey of the State of Religion in the Westerne Parts of the World* was published only in 1629, although a pirated edition had been printed already in 1605 (*A Relation of Religion of the Westerne Parts of the World*). Authoring a work that pivots on European religious conflicts was a dangerous venture, as is shown by the introductory epistle, which is significantly entitled "The Well-Meaning Publisher Hereof to the Understanding Reader". Distancing himself from Catholics, the publisher of this work is ready to forestall criticism: "But if there chance to bee any other moderate Christian offended hereat, of such I humbly crave pardon" ("The Well-Meaning Publisher", page facing Contents).

Early modern travellers acted as *mediators* (Shleck 2011) between otherness and identity, two terms that should be intended as complementary rather than simply opposed. While travellers aimed to present their accounts of distant lands as primarily truthful, the underlying paradigms of these narratives were actually concerned with home politics, economics, religion and culture. George Sandys is a case in point. As Schleck underlines, his description of the Ottoman Empire – with its emphasis on its present decline, due to bad administration – should be related to his personal interest in the British colonial adventure, since "after a narrowly failed attempt to gain the governorship of the Bermudas in 1619, Sandys was named treasurer of the Jamestown settlement in 1621." (2011, 23)

As we can see, at the origin of the European ecumene we find conflict and fear (of both intra- and extra-European otherness), but also the desire for and negotiation of difference. This field of contrasting forces was made even more complex by a colonial tension towards new Western territories, an incipient sense of 'displacement' with regard to the sources of European civilisation, and of course the rise of nations as competing entities. Within this ebullient geo-political and geo-cultural framework, early modern travellers repeatedly crossed those boundaries that nations regarded as constitutive of their (recently acquired) identity, often justifying this choice as functional to the future of the nation. As a result, early modern travelogues are characterised by a dialectics between a desire for difference and the homogenizing/exclusive discourses of power, while they assert the value of experience and observation as the primal sources of knowledge, testifying to the ongoing epistemological shift that would ultimately result in the age of Enlightenment.

In conclusion, many a lesson can be drawn from this survey of early modern culture, which testifies to the need for cultural openness as conducive to tolerance, innovation and complexity. While simple ideas and clear-cut boundaries still exert an attraction on the collective imagination, we actually live in contact zones, now more than ever, due to the increasing mobility of people and informa-

tion, and to the increasing frequency of cultural exchanges. This is why exposing young people to differences – allowing them to experience forms of otherness in first person – is a fundamental aspect of education in this global age, when the possibility of a planetary civilisation rests precisely on the negotiation between differences and on a positive attitude to individual forms of transculturation.

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ABSTRACT

Although the Grand Tour is often implicitly circumscribed to the eighteenth century, its origins actually date back to the sixteenth. The present article aims to reassess the contrasting responses this new phenomenon elicited. While the crown actively fostered transcultural experiences, regarding them as conducive to political and diplomatic wisdom, scholars and playwrights presented them as the fall from a condition of purity. Preoccupations concerning the newly acquired national and religious identity of England and Britain mingle in these texts with reflections on language, manners and morals. This anti-cosmopolitan campaign takes on different nuances, alternatively stigmatising the travellers' affectation and portraying them as devilish. In the first half of the seventeenth century, however, a new paradigm of knowledge as based on experience asserted itself. This led to a reassessment of travelling as a useful social practice and ultimately to the systematisation of the traveller's gaze. Moreover, the pressure the Ottoman Empire exerted on the Eastern borders of Europe contributed to alert Britons to a new religious and cultural faultline, prompting them to reassess their perception of intra-European differences.