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Oxford Travel Book Writers and Gentlemen-Scholars: Constructing Narrative Personae in Aldous Huxley's *The Jesting Pilate*, Robert Byron's *The Station* and Evelyn Waugh's *Remote People*

Abstract. The travel book as a genre in the British literary tradition has been, for more than two centuries, characterized by the central role of craftily constructed narrative personae of gentlemen/travellers. This paper is an attempt to pinpoint the main similarities and differences in the construction of the narrative personae of three key between-the-wars Oxford graduates, who later became renowned writers Robert Byron, Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh.

Keywords: narrative persona, Oxford, novelist, travel book, construction, travel writing.

Travel book writers and travellers

Paul Fussell's *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* was published in 1980, two years after Edward Said's *Orientalism*. These two books, so different in scope and critical approaches—the former one was a swan song of liberal humanism, the latter paved the way for the new way of reading literature usually referred to as the post-colonial—were central in establishing and putting on a firmer ground the inter-disciplinary field of travel writing studies. One of the key tenets of Fussell's *Abroad* – later fiercely criticized by the majority of critics – was that the distinction between a traveller and a tourist is a real one rather than a construct created to uphold and sustain class distinctions. In fact, in Fussell's taxonomy apart from a tourist, usually a working class person, aware that she is a tourist and not ashamed of it, there exists a category of an anti-tourist, usually a middle class person aware that she is a tourist, ashamed of it, and therefore adopting a set of anti-tourists strategies because she “has read and heard just enough to sense that being a tourist is somehow offensive and scorned by an imagined upper class which it hopes to emulate, and, if possible, be mistaken for” (Fussell 1980: 49). And there is a traveller, usually an upper middle class person, differentiated from an anti-tourist by the fact that her/his motive is inquiry and not “self-protection and vanity” (Fussell 1980: 47).

Following Jonathan Culler' ground-breaking article “The Semiotics of Tourism” most contemporary researchers would probably agree that Fussell's category of a traveller should in fact be included in the category of an anti-tourist, as an “anti-anti-tourist”. An upper middle class travelling person (considering herself a traveller) distances herself not only from (working class) tourists, but also from (middle class) anti-tourists. From an anti-anti-tourist's

perspective: anti-tourists are there to emulate her, and be mistaken for her, while she is out there not to emulate anyone, but because she believes that she is there for the superior motive of an inquiry.

However, this distinct group, regardless if we insist on calling them “travellers” or “anti-anti-tourists”, remains a simple and useful analytical tool in tackling the issues connected with Oxford between-the-wars graduates who turned to travel writing. Fussell nostalgically claimed that the between-the-wars period was the “final age of travel” (Fussell 1980: vii) in which there still existed “real travellers” – young, mostly Oxbridge educated literary men, who travelled “when the going was good”, (Waugh 1951) to quote a title Evelyn Waugh (a Merton man) gave to his 1945 book containing fragments from his 1930’s travel books. They travelled often in order to write travel books for which publishers paid “handsome fees” (Auden and MacNeice 1937: 11) to use a quote from W.H. Auden (a Christ Church man) poem/letter to Lord Gordon Byron opening his and Louise MacNeice’s *Letters from Iceland* (1937).

According to Fussell in that period “Cambridge can boast a few devotees of abroad, mostly homosexuals like Forster, Ackerley and Isherwood, but it is Oxford that produced the bulk of between-the-wars literary travelers” (Fussell 1980: 76). Fussell divided them according to the colleges they went to:

Balliol was responsible for [Graham] Greene, Patrick Balfour, Aldous Huxley, Peter Quennell and [Cyril] Connolly [...], Magdalen produced Alan Pryce-Jones, Christ Church David Talbot Rice, [Christopher] Sykes, [Peter] Fleming and [W.H.] Auden, Hertford, Evelyn Waugh, and Merton, Robert Byron. (Fussell 1980: 76)

Fussell observed that “merged into a single type, these people project an image of a character ‘the age demanded’” (Fussell 1980: 76-7). He located Peter Fleming and Robert Byron at two extremes of a spectrum of Oxford travel writers and their narrative personae’s construction:

If Byron’s character has the effect of making the reader proud of British resoluteness—*stubbornness* might be a better word—Fleming’s make the reader proud of British decency, a refreshing contrast to all those young “artistic” young people like Brian Howard. One thing happening in these travel books is a re-definition of a the British “young person”: projecting, implicitly, various models of the post-war young man. [...] Conscious of the Brutishness of the characters they display, both Fleming and Byron are careful in their travel books to remind the reader of their origin in a particular British intellectual and emotional tradition. (Fussell 1980:77)

Fussell’s statement remains valid not only for Robert Byron and Peter Fleming, but also for other Oxford graduates who turned to travel books: Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley, Peter Quennell or Patrick Balfour; all of whom were careful to construct their persona in such ways as to remind the reader of their origin in a particular British intellectual and emotional tradition of upper middle class gentlemen.

Fussell’s *Abroad* for all its literary and critical merits lacks the historical perspective in the development of the travel book as a genre in the British literary tradition. Fussell did not go further back in time than the travel books of Norman Douglas, written at the turn of the centuries. Whereas the genre of the travel book in this modern form was established in the middle of the eighteenth century with the travel books of Henry Fielding *A Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1754) and Tobias Smollett *Travels through France and Italy* (1766). Crucial in this development was the so called “sentimental” (as opposed to “scientific”) mode of writing, foregrounding the “subjectivity” and idiosyncrasies of a narrative persona at the expense of the “objectivity” of the report. In fact, the beginnings of the sentimental mode of

travel book writing could be traced back to Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Discoverie of Guyana* (1596) and Thomas Coryat's *Crudities* (1611).

As I argue in *Travellers, Novelists and Gentlemen* (2013), the genre of the travel book in the British literary tradition since Fielding and Smollett has been developing alongside the genres of the novel and the autobiography in the symbiosis of synergy and friction. One of the genre's two most distinctive features is that travel book writers (often novelists themselves) have been concerned to cast upon their predominantly non-fictional accounts the aura, of what Gérard Genette (1993: viii) calls "literariness by diction", and what Fielding (1987: 161) in his *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* referred to as "some few embellishments" in the manner "of all kind of ornament of stile and diction". The second crucial feature of a travel book as a genre, even more important from the perspective of this essay, is that a male narrative persona, located centrally in the structure of a narrative has been constructed predominantly within the paradigms of an English (British) gentleman.

This convergence of a highly crafted, elaborate style of a narrative (often hidden behind the facade of a simple diary/journal form) with carefully constructed narrative persona of an (eccentric) gentleman was developed in the Victorian period in such travel books as Alexander William Kinglake's *Eöthen* (1844) and Charles M. Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888). The process was to reach its peak in Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* (1937). The construction of a gentleman's narrative persona in British travel books could be analyzed from different perspectives and at many levels. Taking into account the length limitations of this essay I have decided to restrict my analysis to just one aspect of gentlemen: namely of gentlemen as (amateur) scholars. I will argue that this aspect of the construction of the narrative personae could be seen as an important element in the writing of "good" travel books in the British literary tradition.

"Good" travel books

The concept of distinguishing between "good" travel books from the "ordinary" ones, mostly through the literary merits of the former, was made popular by Paul Fussell in his *Abroad*, where in order to support this distinction he quoted from Norman Douglas, without however giving the source or the context in which Douglas wrote. Douglas was a prolific travel book writer himself, with a strong intellectual and anti-modernist bias and his books – like *Siren Land* (1911) or *Old Calabria* (1915) – were widely read by the next generation of travel book writers; which is the generation I am concerned with in this essay – of writers who graduated from Oxford during and after the Great War. In 1925 Douglas published *Experiments*, a book of literary essays and impressionistic short stories. It contained a review of the abridged 1908 edition of the one of the most original and eccentric British travel books of the late Victorian period Charles M. Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*. Douglas considered Doughty to be one of the few travel book writers who managed to oppose the tide of Modernism and preserved the key Anglo-Saxon qualities and strengths. Douglas's definition of a "good travel book" uses explicitly Doughty's book as an example, and implicitly Douglas's own books:

It seems to me that a reader of a good travel book is entitled not only to the exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but to an interior, a sentimental voyage which takes place side by side with the outer one, one that the ideal book of this kind offers us, indeed, a triple opportunity of exploration – abroad, into the author's brain and into our own. The writer should therefore possess a brain worth exploring, some philosophy of life – not necessarily, though by preference of his own forging – and the courage to proclaim it and put it to the test, he must be naïf and profound, both child and sage. (Douglas 1925: 5)

Douglas believed that an ideal writer of a travel book should approximate a figure of a prototypical Anglo-Saxon gentleman-scholar. He listed the features which he considered essential for such gentlemen-scholars: the ability to “see things from their own individual angle”, “[t]heir leisurely aristocratic flavour, their wholesome discussions about this or that, their waywardness and all that mercurial touch of a bygone generation” (Douglas 1925: 6).

Most of the Oxford graduated travel books writers of the between the wars period – even though they may have not read Douglas’s review – in constructing their narrative personae used the elements of a figure of a gentleman-scholar. In order to test this claim, I have selected three travel books written by three Oxford graduates in the late nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties: Aldous Huxley’s *Jesting Pilate* (1926), Robert Byron’s *The Station* (1928) and Evelyn Waugh’s *Remote People* (1931).

Huxley’s intellectual holiday

Jesting Pilate is a collection of essays from Huxley’s round the globe tour undertaken in 1925-1926. In this travel book the persona constructed is that of an detached intellectual and a Pyrrhonic sceptic. The ideas in this book are more important than people and Huxley suggests this in the title itself *Jesting Pilate: An Intellectual Holiday*. The phrase “jesting Pilate” is traditionally used as a description of the passage from the Gospel of St. John (18:37, 18:38) in which Pontius Pilate answers Jesus’s claim that he is a the witness of the truth with “Truth? What is truth?” and pronounces Jesus innocent. Both parts of the title open up the possibilities of introducing and discussing serious ideas, but at the same time of mocking, jesting and deriding them in a sceptical fashion. The notion of being witness to the truth is “jested” by Pilate in the first part, whereas the seriousness of the “intellectual pursuit” of ideas is checked by the very “anti-intellectual” overtones of the word “holiday”. Huxley’s persona from *Jesting Pilate* displays features of a gentleman scholar in two diverse fields: as a Pyrrhonic sceptic, suspicious of irrationality of any forms of spirituality and as a *connoisseur* of arts. The key intellectual problem for Huxley’s persona in the Indian part of the journey was the spirituality of this country. The persona’s discussion of spirituality is performed in terms of tropes that have been identified by postcolonial critics. One the one hand we have filth, dirt and defilement, on the other India is presented as belonging to the earlier, childish stage in the progress of civilization. When on a train “some Hindu pope of considerable holiness” breaks the solitude the Huxleys enjoy in the second class compartment, after the persona has expressed his doubts and ironic lack of certainty about the man’s holiness, he declares: “All that we could be certain of was that he looked unpleasant and was undoubtedly dirty: also that his admirers exhaled the sour stink of garments long unwashed” (Huxley 2000: 430). The whole meeting with the Hindu saint is presented with detachment, irony and even sarcasm from the very first phrase “some Hindu pope of considerable holiness”, through the description of his behaviour on the train:

He, meanwhile, passed the time by counting his money, which was contained in a large brass-bound box, by loudly eating, and, later, dozing. Even at the stations he did not take the trouble to rouse himself, but reclined with closed eyes along his seat, and passively permitted the faithful to kiss his feet. When one is holy, as he evidently was, it is unnecessary to keep up appearances, behave decently or do anything for one’s followers. (Huxley 2000: 430-1)

The episode with the stinking saint is used by Huxley to present his persona’s views on religion and spirituality in a jocular context, but also to show his erudite skills as an intellectual (amateur gentleman-scholar) capable of generalizing on the role of religions in the process of social development of different civilizations. First, he pokes fun on Lev Tolstoy and his objections that too much cleanliness is a badge of class. “Work is prayer. Work is also

stink. Therefore stink is prayer. So, more or less, argues Tolstoy, who goes on to condemn the rich for not stinking ... Tolstoy's remedy is that we should all stink together" (Huxley 2000: 431-2). Huxley's persona explains how the incident with his travelling companion made him, but only for a moment, "a thorough-going Voltairian" (Huxley 2000: 432). Huxley's essay ends with a detached assessment of pros and cons of religions in the life of societies, seen from the evolutionary perspective of an amateur anthropologist and social historian:

Any force that tends to the strengthening of society is ... of the highest biological importance. Religion is obviously such a force. All religions have been unanimous in encouraging within limits that have tended to grow wider and ever wider, the social, altruistic, humanitarian proclivities of man, and in condemning his anti-social, self-assertive tendencies. Those who like to speak anthropomorphically would be justified in saying that religion is a device employed by the Life Force for the promotion of its evolutionary designs. But they would be justified in adding that religion is also a device employed by the Devil for the dissemination of idiocy, intolerance, and servile abjection. (Huxley 2000: 433)

In *Jesting Pilate* India was for Huxley the past with religion as the force slowing down the process of development and civilization. His distaste for Indian spirituality was so strong that in the essay from the trip across the Pacific, the persona confesses that after reading Henry Ford's biography *My Life and Work* found in the ship's library he realized that: "in these seas and to one fresh from India and Indian 'spirituality', Indian dirt and religion, Ford seems a greater man than Buddha" (Huxley 2000: 521). This statement must sound weirdly and paradoxically to anyone remembering that in his best-selling novel *Brave New World*, (published six year later) the dystopian world presented there is set in the year 632 A.F., where A.F. is an abbreviation of "After Ford", the new mechanical era inaugurated in the year Henry Ford launched the first automatic car assembly line. The process of perceiving America as a possibility of a more optimistic future was to stop quite abruptly after the Huxleys landed in the California of the Jazz Age and he started to reconsider his views on Buddhism and Fordism. The shift of perceiving Ford as a greater man than Buddha to perceiving him as the "spiritual" leader of technocratic and dehumanized brave New World could be seen as a part of the greater shift which Aldous Huxley underwent between 1926 – when he was reading Ford's biography on board of a ship bound for California – and 1937, when he went to America once again; this time to give a lecture tour on pacifism, supported by "spiritually" based notion of the Nobler Hypothesis. What remains crucial from the perspective of Huxley's narrative personae is that regardless of the fact if he was supporting Fordism or Buddhism, or was merely extremely sceptical to both these philosophies, Huxley remained to construct his personae as intellectuals, keen to present his interpretative skills in a wide array of disciplines in which they might have been considered as amateur scholars.

One such distinct discipline in *Jesting Pilate* is that of art criticism. Huxley was an art *connoisseur*, and writing about art was important for him throughout his long career as a man of letters: he worked as a dramatic and literary critic and reviewer for such periodicals as the *Athenaeum* and the *Westminster Gazette* at the career's beginning at the turn of nineteen tens and twentieth. When he died on 22 November 1963, he was in the process of writing an essay entitled "Shakespeare and Religion". But, whereas in the field of literature Huxley may be considered a "professional" rather than an "amateur", he remained an (enthusiastic) amateur in the field of visual arts. The reasons for the Huxleys settling down in Italy at the beginning of nineteen twentieth were generally threefold: *cambio* (the exchange rate in this period favoured pound startling and meant that one could afford to live comfortably in Italy on the income which in Britain guaranteed very austere existence) the Italian climate and – last but not least – Italian art treasures. Huxley's first travel book *Along the Road* (1925), recounting trips from the early "Italian" period in his life is just as much an art book as it is a travel book. The two central parts of the book – Part II entitled "Places" and Part III "Works of Art"

– consist much more of “art essays” than of “travel essays”. Huxley’s persona in *Along the Road* is that of a belated Grand Tourist; eager to immerse himself in the great tradition of visual Arts, at the moment when the Grand Tour project was already spent. While embarking on a round the world trip, which resulted in *Jesting Pilate*, Huxley took with himself art *connoisseurship* he had accumulated during the four years of living on the outskirts of Florence, visiting its galleries and travelling extensively in Italy to Rome and other centres of Art. He used this *connoisseurship* relatively sparingly and in the manner which today might be considered almost as a model of Eurocentric discourse on non European arts. Thus, while commenting on the Golden Temple of the Sikhs, the narrative persona wryly combines his intellectual bias against Indian spirituality with his aesthetic bias against non-European art. The Golden Temple “is genuinely eighteen-carat. It is also exceedingly sacred. Holiness and costliness make up for any lack of architecture” (Huxley 2000: 437). The only praise, although quite lukewarm, of the Indian art, which Huxley’s persona displays is when he describes some water-colours from the Mogul period in the Lahore Museum as “amusing” (Huxley 2000: 433).

Byzantine station of Robert Byron

The Station: Athos: Treasures and Men by Robert Byron is a description of a tour of the monasteries at the Holy Mountain of Athos Byron undertook together with his three Oxford friends: David Talbot Rice, Mark Oglivie-Grant and Gerald Reitlinger in the summer of 1927. *The Station*, in a standard travel book fashion, combines the descriptions of the routines of the journey (with its hardships, described in travel *as travail* fashion: vermin, dirt, dishonest muleteers and pleasures: leisurely swims in the Aegean, tasting exquisite ouzo or oranges), with the scholarly passages on the history, present politics and art of Athos, the Holy Mountain. Christopher Sykes, an Oxford friend and a fellow-traveller to Oxiana remarked that Robert Byron in “his extravagantly one sided-books on Byzantine art and civilization [...] was what the French call a ‘vulgarisateur’, and it is a pity that we have in English no equivalent word to indicate so important a function” (Sykes 2000: 15). It seems, however, that in *The Station*, the only of three Byzantine Byron’s books which has a format of a travel book (the other two *The Byzantine Achievement* and *The Dawn of the Western Painting* are books on Byzantine history and art narrated in the third person), Byron was more than a ‘vulgarisateur’, thanks to the construction of the narration and his narrative persona.

The Station opens with an epigrammatic paratext which is also an intertext, taken from Cristoforo Buondelmonti’s *Traveller in the East* (1420)

Here, in lush valleys, teem bees, figs and olives. The inmates of the monasteries weave cloth, stitch shoes and make nets. One turns the spindle of a hand-loom through the wool, another twists a basket of twigs. From time to time, at stated hours, all essay to praise God. And peace reigns among them, always and for ever. (Byron 2000: 5)

Byron carefully preserved this mood, pastoral, religious and mystical of Buondelmonti’s passage, in the whole of his narrative thanks to crucial interventions of his narrative persona interspersed throughout the book.

The first view of the Holy Mountain, seen from the sea at dawn is described in the picturesque manner:

Over a last bottle of beer we said good-bye to this last tossing straw of our world. We slept. Till, when barely light, there appeared, framed in cold circle of the porthole, the dark outline of a long finger of land, twisted by imperceptible darker shadows into deep ravines and curving bays. At its end, cut in terraced silhouette against the frigid gleams of the lower sky, reared a vast steeple from the livid grey sea. As the sun, risen a fiery ball above the rim of the world, warmed the cold light,

silhouette gave place to hazy pink. Here and there twinkled the white blur of a monastery down at the water's edge or perched up among the woods, The Holy Mountain! And ourselves the pilgrims.
(Byron 2000: 46-7)

The book ends with a farewell with of Athos, seen again from a ship: "There, carried high on a bank of clouds, hovers a shape, a triangle in the sky. This is the Holy Mountain Athos, station of faith where all the years have stopped" (Byron 2000: 256).

In between Byron's persona on numerous occasions presents the uniqueness of Athos in Europe's spiritual history. At one moment he calls the Holy Mountain "an organism in which the germs of life are as vigorous as when first implanted". (Byron 2000: 66). He is often very critical of Western Christianity, in both Roman Catholic and Protestant versions and apologetic of the Orthodox Church, with the Holy Mountain of Athos as its pinnacle, the representative of "true" Christianity

[...] not yet moulded by Latin materialism to the convenience of an institution; not wrung by civil wars, combed with the borrowings of sectarians, and balanced between the parties of the state like a boulder on a needle; but a single path of exploration, unclouded by doubtful ethics and hieratic blackmail, toward the eternal El Dorado, Such was the Christianity that conquers, and such, on the Holy Mountain, it has remained. (Byron 2000: 66)

Robert Byron never became converted to the Orthodox church; his fascination with it remained thoroughly intellectual and aesthetic. Yet, the Byzantine bias of his arguments allowed him on the one hand to strengthen his anti-Modernist critique of the West in general and Britain in particular. Moreover, it allowed him to construct his persona as an amateur – but highly competent – scholar of Byzantine religion and art.

Evelyn Waugh – a Roman Catholic squire

Evelyn Waugh, Robert Byron's friend from Oxford "found Byron's Byzantinism bogus, just a fad" (*Abroad*, 83) After Waugh decided to be received into the Roman Catholic Church in autumn 1930, Byron quarrelled with Waugh, because he conceived it as an act hostile to his own Byzantinism (Fussell 1980: 83). Waugh's decision had important consequences for how he was to construct the narrative personae of his subsequent travel books. Whereas in Waugh's *Labels* (1930), written before his conversion, the narrative persona is that of a *camp* dandy, *Remote People* (1931), his first travel book written after the conversion, relies on a persona of a young Catholic conservative. The persona's Catholicism in *Remote People* is not so central and overriding as Byron's persona's Byzantinism in *The Station*, largely due to the fact that Waugh, unlike Byron, was not travelling to the holy, spiritual centre place of a religion. Nevertheless, Waugh in *Remote People* used Catholicism rhetorically to create a binary opposition between the barbarity of Africa and its religions in general and the Roman Catholicism as the mainstay of civilization and light. For example, while describing the coronation mass of Heille Sallasia in Addis Abeba, conducted in Coptic ritual, so obscure, that even his fellow-traveller, an American Prof. W, an expert on Coptic religion can't distinguish of offertory from consecration and secret Gospel, the persona seizes it as a chance to promote his views clearly:

I suddenly saw the classic basilica and open altar as a great positive achievement, a triumph of light over darkness consciously accomplished, and I saw theology as the science of simplifications by which nebulous and elusive ideas are formalised and made intelligible and exact...

And I began to see how these obscure sanctuaries had grown, with the clarity of the Western reason into the great open altars of Catholic Europe, where Mass is said in a flood of light, high in the sight of all. (Waugh 2003: 248-9)

The contrast of Roman Catholicism in Africa as the island of sanity and order surrounded by “rank barbarity” is also foregrounded in the description of the Catholic convent at Kokonjoro in Uganda, which is described as:

[...] the little island of order and sweetness in an ocean of rank barbarity; all around it for hundreds of miles lies gross jungle, bush and forest, haunted by devils and fear of darkness, where human life merges into the cruel, automatic life of the animals, here they were singing the offices just as they had been sung in Europe when the missions were little radiant points of learning and decency in a pagan wilderness. (Waugh 2003: 334)

Such declarations, although rare, are nevertheless crucial, for they underscore the persona's aloofness from the anxieties of Modernity and give him his individual, unique perspective for describing and commenting upon other cultures. In *Remote People* Waugh's construction of the narrative persona as a critique of Modernism apart from upholding the traditional Christian (and therefore pre-Reformation, Roman Catholic) views and values relies on his strong support of the group of British settlers and farmers living then in the so called Happy Valley. Waugh intertextually, through the connection with Anthony Trollope's *Barsetshire chronicles*, fiercely defends the rights of the settlers to take land from its original African owners and live in what he called “Barsetshire on the Equator” (Waugh 2003: 324). These settlers are shown to be like archetypical British squires: leading, quiet, happy rustic life in pastoral scenery, exiles from England, when England no longer allowed them to live the lives they had been accustomed to for centuries. Waugh's persona, through an extensive apology defence of the settlers/squires ideology, and lifestyle against left-wing critics, assumes an aura of a conservative longing for unorthodoxy and the nostalgic return to the supposedly universal values of the hierarchies imposed by the Roman Catholic Church, before the Reformation came and spoilt it all. And this offered him a unique position to look down on what he perceived as barbarities of two kinds: the barbarity of African cultures and religions, and the barbarity of the New Age at home. He implicitly declared his persona to be “Quixotic” and therefore eccentric in being faithful to the traditional values and hostile to the changes initiated by the Reformation.

Conclusions

These three distinct constructions of narrative personae, Huxley's in *Jesting Pilate*, Byron's in *The Station* and Waugh's in *Remote People*, for all the differences have a quite a few characteristic features in common; features which they also share with the majority of travel books written by Oxbridge men in the between-the-wars period. Firstly, these intellectual and spiritual passions of the narrative personae, for Pyrrhonic scepticism, Western art, Byzantinism and Roman Catholicism, fall within the range of a British gentleman's singularity and his pursuit of being perceived as an (amateur) scholar. Secondly, these passions offered vantage points to criticize the Modern project, with its mechanisation, uniformity and dehumanisation. And also to locate the Golden Age in the past: for Huxley's persona in a well stocked Enlightenment library, for Byron's persona in the pre-Turkish Byzantium, in Waugh's case in the Catholic, pre-Reformation Europe. Thirdly, these passions, connected with expertise and connoisseurship, allowed these personae to be constructed as travellers, rather than tourists, driven by genuine individual inquiry and not the horde spirit of tourists or class obsessions of anti-tourist. And last but not least, such constructions offered something, which in the marketing jargon is called “unique selling

points”, elements that distinguished them and gave advantages over other writers in the lucrative, but also highly competitive market of travel books in the inter-war Britain.

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