

# Cultural Encounters and Self Encounters in Early Modern English Travel Autobiographies

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Travel journals and diaries written by English travellers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are intent on relating individual experiences to the expectations and values of the people encountered abroad as well as those who remain at home. Their prefaces and epistles aim to reaffirm an awareness of cultural order and control prior to recounting a tale of fantastic, possibly unnerving, events. Subjects such as religion, health and food tend to be invoked in travellers' tales. Through such topics, authors' and readers' sense of themselves, built up over daily experience of familiar customs and habits, can be challenged or supported. Authors find that on their travels they can never be cut off from their original communities. Differences of class, education and ethical outlook impinge forcefully upon their experience, either directly in their companions or through apprehensions of what those at home will make of their journeys. In these authors' efforts to hold onto and promote their identity and perspective amid familiar parties and recognised factions, as much as before unimagined sights, peoples and conditions, we see some of the significant cultural forces that fashion and divide early modern individuals.

Sure these are but imaginary wiles,  
And Lapland sorcerers inhabit here  
... we wander in illusions:  
Some blessed power deliver us from hence!

*The Comedy of Errors* IV.iii.10-11, 43-44.<sup>1</sup>

At one point in his discussion of the proper training for governors-to-be, Sir Thomas Elyot pauses to praise the 'incredible delight' gained from reading about other people's journeys through the world: 'to know the sundry manners and conditions of people, and the variety of their natures, and that in a warm study

<sup>1</sup> References to *The Comedy of Errors* are to the edition in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

or parlour, without peril of the sea or danger of long and painful journeys: I cannot tell what more pleasure should happen to a gentle wit, than to behold in his own home everything that within all the world is contained.<sup>2</sup> On one level, his remark conveys the great enjoyment that early modern readers could derive from finding out about other people, places and customs (though Elyot is not, of course, an average reader). It also discloses in, as it were, a proto-bourgeois manner, the vicariousness of the experience – learning about exotic others confirms the well-appointed home's amenities and the prudence of staying put. This notably private reader derives an indulgent pleasure from comparing the conditions in which he reads to those he reads about. The differences mirror personal and social success back to him, reinforcing a humanist self-image of genteel wit justly recognised and rewarded.

In 'The Sunne Rising', John Donne's lovers imaginatively and erotically concentrate the world into their bed, where they embody all emotions and experiences. Otherness is absorbed as part of the lovers' pleasure in each other. In contrast, Elyot's reader finds delight in reducing the diversity of the world's people and practices to curios or ornaments, 'everything' gathered within his dwelling and knowledge to be beheld rather than experienced. This brief section of Elyot's famous conduct book captures connections among personal identity and cultural practices that are beginning to be forged anew in the sixteenth century through extensive changes in systems of publishing, travel and their associated activities and institutions – education and literacy, colonisation and trade. Perceptions of home and self will grow more tightly entwined with, and perhaps dependent on, a ready ability to draw comparisons, most often favourable, with other people and places. In particular, Elyot's words reveal the complex ways in which reading and telling tales of other places, in all their difference, are an increasingly significant means of affirming a sense of self. As the passage suggests, this kind of identity includes accustomed social trappings and comforts; in short, the self as microcosm of a cultural milieu. Intertwined with such a social self is an individual persona, assured in its physical and emotive experience, or seeking such assurance by measuring itself against others. Elyot is aware that not only travellers, but readers too, draw these comparisons and can seek the social and personal effects they produce; direct and textual experience may equally serve to sharpen a sense of social and self-identity. Here,

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governour* (1531), ed. S. E. Lehmborg (London: Dent, 1970), p. 35.

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reading is already the preferred mode, since contemplating differences and oneself via books is far less uncomfortable or hazardous to identity. A future of increasingly mediated experience seems to be strikingly foreshadowed in Elyot's parlour.

In other contexts, the difference between direct and mediated experience is less clearly defined. For many travellers, writing about their adventures and then rereading and recounting them constitute the most important and sometimes the final phase of a journey. At the close of *The Comedy of Errors* – Shakespeare's early play about the mishaps, confusions and revelations that can arise from travel, for locals and visitors alike (effects which are captured in the desperate tones of Antipholus of Syracuse in the epigraph above) – all the characters depart to 'hear at large discoursed all our fortunes' (V.i.396). There is a strong sense of the way in which relationships and identities are reciprocally and communally organised, and that in understanding them people's movements are both a telling factor and a factor worth telling. The discursive process will realise closure for the group in a way that simply seeing the two Antipholuses and two Dromios together cannot. The explanation of mishaps suggests that whether as a reader, listener or traveller, encounters with others are invariably a kind of encounter with oneself, and their results cannot always be predicted. Antipholus arrives in Ephesus with all the optimistic interest of a modern-day tourist: 'I'll view the manners of the town, / Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings, / And then return and sleep within mine inn' (I.ii.12-14). Yet even his leisurely plans contain an unsettling potential, 'I will go lose myself, / And wander up and down to view the city' (I.ii.30-31). The pun on 'lose myself', an indulgent delight or a failure of identity, points to Shakespeare's sense that selfhood is contingent. Rather than always being confirmed, as Elyot implies, it can lapse through experiencing new places, sights and people, or by confronting the terrors of travel, as Master Thomas Dallam, the deliverer of an organ to the Sultan of Turkey on behalf of Queen Elizabeth, records in his diary: 'In the night we did not only lose the pinnacle, the *Lanerett* ... we also lost ourselves' – and all this while they were still in the English Channel.<sup>3</sup> In the comic world of Shakespeare's play, self-loss is eventually succeeded by explanation and confirmation of identity and relationships, but other kinds of texts may show more varied consequences.

The connections between these realms of experience – encounters with others and encounters with the self – which Shakespeare was eager to explore in this

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in J. Theodore Bent, 'Master Dallam's Mission', *The Antiquary* 18 (1888), p. 6.

early play (and to which he would return in works such as *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*) are recorded in equally interesting ways in travel autobiographies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These works are intent on relating individual experiences to the expectations and values of the people encountered abroad as well as those who remain at home. Signs of these double intentions appear most clearly in assurances given to the public in prefatory statements and epistles that aim to reaffirm an awareness of cultural order and control prior to recounting a tale of fantastic, possibly unnerving, events. They are also manifest in the way that particular subjects – such as religion, health, food – tend to be invoked in travellers' tales. Through such topics, or *topoi*, authors' and readers' sense of themselves, built up over daily experience of familiar customs and habits, can be challenged or supported. These recurring features suggest that a rhetoric of travel is at work, one that makes use of specific tropes and situations and in which accepted ways of representing oneself and others are being rehearsed and adapted to new contexts.

An emphasis on the type of readerly comfort that Elyot celebrates occurs in prefaces to numerous travel journals and diaries published through the period. The trope helps prepare readers for the imaginative experience ahead, testifies to the truth of what is about to be told, and consolidates a perspective on events shared by authors and readers. Ironically, it also acknowledges authors' very different histories and so may hint at dissimilarities between readers and themselves. (The kind of ambiguous rapport that exotic storytelling can foster between speaker and audience is staged most vividly by Shakespeare in *Othello*.) Robert Couerte's *A True and Almost Incredible Report of an Englishman, that ... Travelled by Land through many unknowne Kingdoms and great Cities* (1612) presents 'dangerous Trauels, which will ... be as pleasing to thee in reading, as they were painefull to me in suffering'.<sup>4</sup> Edward Pellham, author of *Gods Power and Providence: Shewed, In the Miraculous Preservation and Deliverance of eight Englishmen, left by mischance in Greenland Anno 1630 nine moneths and twelve dayes*, affirms for two of his patrons that 'The hard adventure my poore selfe and fellowes underwent in your Worships service, is a great deale pleasanter for others to reade, that it was for us to endure.'<sup>5</sup> In a way, the duress experienced

<sup>4</sup> Robert Couerte, *A True and Almost Incredible Report of an Englishman, that ... Trauelled by Land through many unknowne Kingdomes, and Great Cities* (London: 1612), sig. A4v.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Pellham, *Gods Power and Providence: Shewed, In the Miraculous Preservation and Deliverance of eight Englishmen, left by mischance in Greenland Anno 1630 nine moneths and twelve dayes* (London: 1631), sig. A2.

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by the traveller-author is made worthwhile through the pleasantness experienced by readers. The former's discomfort saves or insulates the latter from similar hardship, while informing them of what can occur in the world out there. The superiority of 'home' is proved and perhaps even improved, with exotic experiences synthesised or taken over by the public with little risk or danger. The author's suffering provides a social service.

The trope also appears in fiction. In Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, an English earl counsels the imprisoned Jack Wilton, 'What is here but we may read in books, and a great deal more too, without stirring our feet out of a warm study? ... let others tell you strange accidents, treasons, poisonings, close packings in France, Spain and Italy; it is no harm for you to hear them, but come not near them.'<sup>6</sup> The kind of individual cosiness that Thomas Elyot celebrates here reveals a strain of a shared cultural consciousness, even national pride. Voicing a dislike for other countries and seeking to elicit agreement from compatriots are conversational routines frequently rehearsed by travellers, probably in all places and periods. Yet Peregrine's irritation with Sir Politick Would-be's ramblings suggest, in Ben Jonson's play *Volpone*, that a readiness to assume fellow nationals are all of one mind can be seriously misplaced. As will be considered in more detail below, the experience of travel abroad can often exacerbate tensions between people from different social groupings and backgrounds in England. Despite prefatory appeals to the delights and comforts of home, travel texts can end up questioning, if not critiquing, assumptions of local harmony.

Nonetheless, the trope of contrasting national and domestic comforts to the unease that can accompany travel, from anxiety to ill health to physical danger, is one of the main strategies through which these types of autobiographical texts probe the make-up and limits of identity. The trope's repetition suggests that early modern English travellers' discourse is in important ways a rhetorically patterned part of a 'whole complex system of representation', with 'shared assumptions and techniques' for 'seeing and describing' people and places beyond England and Europe.<sup>7</sup> In this system, the traveller-author is affected explicitly by situations he or she faces and implicitly by the verbal means of

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 343-4.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 22-3.

relating the experiences. At the same time, the rhetoric used to recount events influences readers' understandings of themselves and the world of which they read. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, travel and travel writing are two significant cultural practices through which selfhood for authors, as well as readers, is experientially and discursively informed.

In recently reviewing the course of western autobiographical writing from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, Peter Burke highlights the impact of three particular factors – the growth of printing, urbanism and travel. The first relates to the increased availability of autobiographical texts, which encouraged more and more people to write and so moulded conceptions of identity as the subject matter of written discourse, ranging from different sorts of private notebooks (almanacs, journals, diaries) to published works. The other two factors are linked to changes in people's circumstances which, for Burke, sharpened feelings of separation from those around them: 'the city, which offers alternative ways of life, encourages a sense of individual choice', while travel 'encourages self-consciousness by cutting off the individual from his or her community'.<sup>8</sup> Burke aims to offer an overview of the topic, and in some ways the points he makes can be developed or revised to suggest that there are different degrees of separation, as well as connection, which affect individual self-consciousness (a multiplicity or variability in no way incompatible with his essay's emphasis on 'the variety of "Renaissance selves"' [pp.18-19]). That is, it is not the case that people are ever simply cut off or can choose to separate themselves from the communities around them or from which they have come. Imaginative and substantive ties remain, influencing people's views of where and who they are, and recollections of where and who they have been. The following pages examine some of the ways in which home and away, self and other are conceptually and materially intertwined in early modern travel autobiographies.

Though possibly demarcating such experiences too strictly, Burke's recognition of these three conditions – the upsurge in publishing, increased urban density, and the great rise in numbers of people on the move – is very helpful in trying to understand Renaissance travel autobiographies as significant cases of what have also been called 'generic categories or epistemes of self-identity

<sup>8</sup> Peter Burke, 'Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes', in Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 22.

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appropriate to epochal social and cultural contexts'.<sup>9</sup> Travel, with the comforts and discomforts it generates, and the whole array of personal and social attitudes and practices that such (dis)comforts connote, offers detailed opportunities to observe, undergo and represent a wide range of early modern self-encounters. It starts to reveal the cultural and personal complexity of these meetings, which take place not only between oneself and others, and between home and away, but also between those hybrid versions of oneself – sometimes resolutely resisting change, on other occasions embracing or unable to withstand it – and their memories and perceptions of origins and destinations.

As suggested by the earlier discussion of home-and-away motifs, prose and dramatic depictions of travel often display a range of shared topoi. The latter are not, however, merely formal features but represent important social and historical elements of early modern travel experiences. In this light, such motifs can best be analysed in terms of what Bakhtin calls the *chronotope*. Chronotopes inscribe 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships' in texts and enable them to represent 'the time of human life, of historical time ... within well-delineated spatial areas'.<sup>10</sup> Early modern travel autobiographies draw together a number of the main chronotopes identified by Bakhtin: adventure time, which relies heavily on random meetings and non-meetings, contingencies and disjunctions, to structure events discursively (p. 92); biographical time, in which 'an individual who passes through the course of a whole life' is represented publicly through genres such as confessions, diaries, letters or adaptations of them (p. 130);<sup>11</sup> and, linked to both of these chronotopes, travel time, in which an itinerary organises the text temporally according to travellers' biographical experiences, while their homeland provides an 'internal organising center' for narrative and descriptive points of view (p. 103). Such chronotopes are central to the workings of early modern travel discourse. They inform the narrative frameworks and processes which these texts regularly deploy.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), p. 18. Mascuch surveys a variety of autobiographical genres and modes, but his study scarcely mentions travel writing.

<sup>10</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics', in Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84, 250.

<sup>11</sup> This mode of representation may be quite distinct from depictions of an isolated individual life through interior chronotopes which, according to Bakhtin, developed much later in literary history ('Forms of Time', p. 206).

Examining such chronotopes is especially valuable in de-naturalising and historicising various features of travel autobiographies. Bakhtin's discussion alerts us to the fact that it has not always been possible to represent adventure, biography and travel in texts; that they are not always represented in the same ways; that their representational strategies for can combine in different ratios; and that all such combinations have cultural implications for authors and readers. For chronotopes are not fixed; variations occur as authors respond to and adapt earlier representations of time and space in line with values and understandings prevalent in their own social and historical settings. The clearest example of the formal-ideological nexus within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travel autobiographies is the way that the subject's experience is frequently referred to God's judgments, which serve to structure and often explain the action. Thomas Coryate's protracted thanksgiving for his safe journey to the court of the Great Mogul emphasises the importance of divine assistance: 'Howbeit since Fortune, or rather (to speake more properly in vsing a Christian word) the prouidence of the Almighty, (for *Fatuus est*, S. *Augustine* saith, *qui fato credit*) hath so ordained, that I should securely passe so far into the Orientall world, with al humilitie vpon the bended knees of my hart, I thank my Creator & merciful redeemer, Iesus Christ, (whose Sacrosanct Sepulcher I have visited & kissed, *terque quaterque in Ierusalem*)'.<sup>12</sup> The overt shift from classical to Christian apostrophe suggests Coryate's awareness both of the generic tradition in which he is writing (stretching back to tales from the Crusades and earlier, for example, the Anglo-Saxon translation of *Apollonius of Tyre*), and of the way he must adapt the tradition to contemporary readers' values. At the same time, the marked religious rhetoric might suggest that the worldly traveller no longer entirely shares his compatriots' faith.

Throughout many of these texts, adventure chronotopes are at work but are modified by elements of biographical and travel time – a random succession of events occurs in different locations and they are repeatedly contrasted to the subject's familiar beliefs and values. *The Miserable Captivity of Richard Haselton, born at Braintree in Essex* (1595) exemplifies this set of chronotopes as the protagonist endures repeated capture, torture and escape from Spanish and Moorish adversaries. Different phases of the narrative close by alluding to God's intervention, or at least His awareness of what has unfolded: from an

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Coryate, *Greetings from the Court of the Great Mogul* (1616) (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1968), p. 4.

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initial, 'yet it pleased GOD that we recovered', when the merchant ship Haselton is on nearly sinks; through his 'being almost in despair ever to recover, yielded myself to the will of Almighty GOD; whom it pleased, in the end, to give me a little strength', as he is captured and tortured; until a final return to England, when it 'pleased the Almighty GOD, after many and great miseries, to bring me to the port which I longed greatly to see'.<sup>13</sup> The subject undergoes all the experiences but is not conceived as having an original or autonomous character that takes the leading role in determining the course or outcome of events. His key trait is that he can survive and allow the narrative to continue, and so provide a focus for the religious and nationalist detail that is depicted for readers. Neither a personal voice nor personal agency is really at work in the text; if we choose to distinguish a personal voice, it is one that remains thoroughly integrated with these larger cultural discourses.<sup>14</sup>

In Couerte's *True and Almost Incredible Report* and Pellham's *Gods Power and Providence*, religious tropes are also used, with a rather shrewd sense of their discursive appeal accompanying the notes of pious gratitude. In closing his epistle To the Reader, Couerte thanks his 'preserver ... safeguarding me beyond mine hope or mans Imagination' (sig. A4v). The final phrase suggests an author's recognition that a divine figure is a highly effective and flexible device, realising and explaining narrative effects that could not otherwise be achieved. In his letter To the Reader, Pellham compares his experience in Greenland to that of some famous Dutch survivors from 1596. The success of their account 'encouraged mee to publish this of ours' (sig. A3). He then claims that because the Dutch had much better provisions, 'The greater therefore our deliverance, the greater must be Gods glory. And that's the Authors purpose in publishing of it' (sig. A4). Later he writes that 'it pleased God to give us hearts like men, to arme our selves with a resolution to doe our best for the resisting of that monster of Desperation' (p. 12). Divine involvement justifies the moral quality as much as the readability of the characters' actions and experience, which momentarily assume the significance of psychological allegory.

<sup>13</sup> *The Miserable Captivity of Richard Haselton, born at Braintree in Essex*, in *Voyages and Travels mainly during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Vol. 2, C. Raymond Beazley, introd., (New York: Cooper Square, 1964), pp. 153, 155, 180.

<sup>14</sup> Mascuch proposes that only in the later seventeenth century, 'a tendency to place the person before the piety had begun to emerge' (*Origins of the Individualist Self*, p. 96).

Through all of these works, God and religion function as devices to explain and connect events, to underwrite the integrity of the authors and rate that of other characters, and to create an overall impression of righteousness for the national and commercial interests that usually trigger the author's travels. The divine framework provides, or aims to provide, an ultimate comfort or explanation to readers and characters alike, and so draws their perspectives on events close together. Readers are positioned to concur with the narrator's account in order to acknowledge God's grace. But religious references can also work to distinguish the outlook of the individual author or of other figures who may feature in the text. As noted above, Thomas Coryate's invocation of God, correcting his initial reference to fortune, may suggest a lack or fading of true belief. On the other hand, notably intense religious feelings or beliefs may differentiate the author from others, fellow travellers as well as readers. Such a distinction might also have the paradoxical effect of effacing the narrator's individual agency as God is given full control over events and actions.

For instance, in his detailed travel diary of 1582 (not published until this century), Richard Madox, chaplain on the first English trading voyage aiming to reach Cathay but which only got as far as Brazil, repeatedly counsels the master of the expedition and others not to engage in piracy, 'but they wer al withowt pytty set upon the spoyl'.<sup>15</sup> His position exemplifies the way in which moral and social differences between people in their home communities accompany them on their travels. These differences can grow to be of great consequence in the intensely close relationships which the travellers are compelled to share. There is far less social space to escape one's companions, while the novelties of location and situation that arise can render futile the ways of dealing with those whom one might usually prefer to avoid. Necessity breeds new kinds of social relationships among travel companions. As Chaucer had shown in wonderful detail in *The Canterbury Tales*, part of the interest for domestic audiences lies in hearing how unconventional groupings of characters on the move are able to deal with each other. As mentioned above, Ben Jonson touches on this point in *Volpone* in the conflict between Peregrine and the Would-bes, while Shakespeare seizes a similar opportunity in *Henry V*, when the king's French campaign draws together Irish, Scots, Welsh and English officers along with soldiers from diverse social backgrounds.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Story Donno, ed., *An Elizabethan in 1582: The Diary of Richard Madox, Fellow of All Souls*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1978), pp. 143-4.

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Richard Madox's journal also records moments of prayer and dialogue with God, similar to spiritual diaries that were kept as a means to aid prayer, meditation and self-examination. In this sense, Madox's diary is remarkable as a generically hybrid text, combining spiritual, commercial, astronomical, botanical and numerous other discourses. The variety of references and terms needed to inscribe them is generated and held together by the circumstances of travel, which combine constancy and change. At one point, Madox is told that the likes of the Earl of Leicester and Francis Walsingham regard him quite highly. (Fellow of All Souls and Proctor at Oxford, Madox was selected as chaplain for the voyage by Leicester, then Chancellor at Oxford.) He writes in response:

I pray God grant me his grace and favour *that* the effect and yssue of my lyfe be somewhat answerable to the expectation of thes good noble men and gentilmen, for as the God of heaven whom I serve and wil do for ever hath kyndled in ther harts a certayn hope of me without my desert so I trust his bownty will bestoe upon mee his spetial blessyngs that I be not altogether left unto my self or to my own wyt and so overthro all, but I trust that the Lord who hath kept me from youth up will keep me to the end.

(p. 115)

In orthodox terms, Madox withdraws responsibility for actions that he nonetheless considers his own. He submits himself to God just as a bright civic career is foretold. Distance from the immediate patronage of powerful figures provides Madox with the space for solemn but still wishful thinking about the future. The ambiguous mix of effacement and assertion ('not altogether left unto my self') exemplifies the extent to which deference to social superiors and to God has been internalised and interwoven with personal motivation. It suggests the difficulty in interpreting the import of 'individual' consciousness in autobiographical and other self-referential works from the period. Modern notions of identity may not correlate precisely with early modern ones even where the terms used to write about them are not dissimilar.

The diverse implications of the religious chronotope in travel texts lead to other important topoi. Andrew Marvell's poem 'Bermudas' captures that kind of transition with typical subtlety. The pilgrims' song of thanksgiving is filled with lavish allusions to food and wealth that give pause to their pious motives. Marvell intimates that there might be more to religious feeling than faith alone,

and he uses images of lush produce to hint at the pilgrims' emotive and material appetites. The poem exemplifies the way that one chronotope can link to others' religion, food and wealth. Peter Hulme has noted that food comprises an important topos of travel discourse in the period.<sup>16</sup> It can evoke final justification for the journey as in Marvell's poem; it can work as a way of distinguishing the traveller's group from the various local peoples they meet (a quasi-anthropological perspective on 'the raw and the cooked'); or it can serve to register the author's personal likes and dislikes. The range and quantity of produce available at the market in Algiers are what strike Thomas Dallam. He marvels at the availability of greens in winter, the low cost of partridge and quail, and the artificial hatching of chickens (p. 6). Coryate comments on the abundance and cheapness of food throughout his journey: 'I spent in my ten moneths trauels betwixt *Aleppo* and the *Moguls* Court, but three pounds sterling, yet fared reasonably well euerie daie [well enough to 'maintaine nature', he later writes (p. 52)]; victuals being so cheape in some Countries where I trauelled' (pp. 28-29). The cornucopia might even suggest a setting preferable to England; such is the pilgrims' hope in Marvell's poem.

Coryate's response suggests that exotic food is cause for cultural wonder as well as a necessity. Yet it can also assume significance as a prime source of contact and conflict, as travellers often have to approach locals in order to receive food and water. Food shortages can also generate significant tensions, or bonds, within the group and become grounds for authors to assert personal views on how events are unfolding and about the locations they encounter. From the beginning of his *Almost Incredible Report*, Couerte represents food in all of these ways. There is constant pressure to renew supplies. When the governor of a town on the Canary Islands is unwilling to sell the sailors provisions, Couerte labels them 'subtil and currish people' (p. 3). Ethiopians are contrasted to the English most sharply by eating offal and old flesh; they are 'by nature very brutish or beastly people, especially in their feeding' (p. 5). Strategies for obtaining food and then rationing it are central to Pellham's account of his survival through a Greenland winter. They demonstrate the men's hardy resourcefulness. The appearance, trapping and killing of animals are crucial events in the story. The torment of the survivors' bodies, 'with hunger, cold and wants' (p. 23), adds to their anxiety and despair and the reader's more comfortable sense of narrative suspense.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 128.

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Neither Pellham nor Couerte distinguishes his diet from that of their companions. Reference to food is a way of drawing out the detail of the group's experiences and creating visceral impressions for readers. So on Couerte's overland return at one point he notes dramatically that there was 'no better water then was almost halfe Cow pisse' (p. 45). The strong appeal to taste first unsettles and then assuages readerly security. But food can also signify conflict. In Madox's diary, supplies often figure as a contentious issue when the crew wishes to land and replenish stocks, while the master, Edward Fenton, wants to push on to win fortune and dominion. The sailors frequently catch different species of birds and fish, and Madox tries them all, comparing the flavour and texture to foods eaten in England, reinforcing and testing the limits of familiar tastes. At one point, months into the voyage, on a tiny island off the Brazilian coast, Madox and two others catch and roast some birds: 'although we ate them without bread or salt or drink, nothing ever seemed to me to have tasted more delicious' (p. 248). Whether the delight is absolute or relative to the privations thus far endured is not clear. Either way, the tone stands out – unequivocal enjoyment, all the more striking because at this point in his journal Madox is increasingly using irony, allusions, codes and ciphers to conceal his animosity. Relations between members of the voyage are fast deteriorating as it is more and more apparent that the venture will fail. The entry captures the spontaneous pleasure that food can produce, temporarily effacing ongoing conflict. For a moment, readers seem to draw close to the author's immediate experience.

The range of needs and activities with which food is connected provides authors with many opportunities to detail places, peoples and customs around them. In this way, the food chronotope sustains a rhetorical emphasis on description and similitude often dominant in travel writing.<sup>17</sup> As the remarks of Richard Madox also suggest, food triggers bodily and emotive responses and so may open out these aspects of experience. It can also relate to another element of the author's individual experience, his physical and emotional health. Jonathan Sawday notes that sickness was a major part of existence in early modern times; like death, it located the subject in a community.<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, none of Pellham's party falls sick in Greenland, and he does not try to distinguish his health or

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 239, 249.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Sawday, 'Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century', in Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self*, p. 39.

fears from that of the group: ‘Thus did we our best to preserve our selves; but all this could not secure us: for wee in oure thoughts, accounted our selves but dead men’ (p. 26). Nonetheless, autobiographical references to illness and feelings, like responses to food and flavours, and even if described in conventional ways, may mark moments when an author’s experience is separated from that of others. The health-illness chronotope can act as a powerful subjective sign.

One of the few times when Couerte breaks from a group perspective in his *Report* and uses the pronoun ‘I’ is when he is ill: ‘I was very weake, with long and extreame trauell’ (p. 65). A similar moment is his relief on returning to England: ‘setting my foot on English ground, I thought all my miseries to be at an end’ (p. 67). These comments hardly register fundamental shifts in western subjectivity, but they do mark a particular kind of occasion on which an author can write explicitly about himself. Madox regularly writes of his health, beginning with an ineffective purgation before they set sail and then his early seasickness, ‘Rumatique I was and exceeding costyve, and troubled with hartburning which be appendixes of the sea’ (p. 143). His costiveness keeps up through the voyage, and he laments that after he and the rest of the crew ate an exotic white plum, ‘dyvers sayd they purged greatly but with some of us they wroght no alleviation’ (p. 175). The reader glimpses an individual’s regimen of self-inspection, constantly cross-checked with the apparent well being of others. Madox’s last comments on his health report continuing illness: ‘When I realised that my blood was boiling with excessive heat I prevailed upon our physician to open the vein in my left arm and let out 10 ounces of blood, but myn arm hath byn stif ther ever syth’ (p. 212). Madox dies on the voyage, but neither his decline nor any *ars moriendi* is depicted. He recounts the illness and dying of others, but his own death is simply foreshadowed by the abrupt end of the diary (though the writing actually ceases two months before he died). Death closes the illness chronotope.

Coryate celebrates unwavering good health throughout his travels. He remembers to give thanks but is swept along mainly by his own *joie de vivre*: ‘[I] do very much congratulate mine owne happiness, that he [Christ] hath hitherto endued mee with health, (for in all my trauels since I came out of England, I have enjoyed as sound a constitution of body, & firme health, as euer I did since drew this vitall ayre)’ (p. 4). Later, he does report one bout of illness: ‘I do enioy at this time as pancraticall and athleticall a health as euer I did in my life: & so haue done euer since I came out of England, sauing for three dayes in *Constantinople*, where I had an Ague, which with a little letting blood was clean banished, the Lord be humbly thanked for his gracious blessing

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of health that hee hath giuen vnto mee' (p. 31). Coryate is determined to use his travels and writings as a claim to celebrity and downplays any misfortune. He deliberately adapts the health topos to this agenda – the impact of his travels and tales on readers at home are never forgotten.

Coryate's continuing awareness of his English readers again suggests that interaction between home and away constantly informs these works. Memories of home often provide an incentive to travellers like Coryate, or solace to those such as Couerte and Pellham. Coryate is a relatively innocuous self-seeker, who tries to use his journeys to create a celebrated persona. The title page of his account reads: 'Thomas Coryate, Travailer *For the English wits, and the good of this Kingdom*: To all his inferiour Countreymen, Greeting'. The text comprises various missives and short narratives, and in the former Coryate repeatedly urges his recipients to look after the letters and make sure they are handed to the right people (Ben Jonson is named on more than one occasion as such a figure). He is always keen to impress what he has achieved through travelling: 'in breeding me, [Somerset] hath produced such a traueeller, as dooth for the diuersitie of the Countries he hath seene, and the multiplicitie of his obseruations, farre (I beleue) out-strippe anie other whatsoever' (p. 5). He is bent on staying on good terms with all his London acquaintances, and his journey provides him with a store of impressive subject matter. Coryate travels in order to write and writes in order to build an admired character. Though there is little subterfuge in what he is doing, Coryate's *Greeting* exemplifies the way in which for all the exposure to other places and people, the traveller may never lose sight of his local community and position in it.

Yet consciousness of home is not unequivocally positive. As noted, the trickiest kinds of relations between the authors and others come, somewhat surprisingly, less in their interactions with the inhabitants of the lands that they visit than in the tensions and differences they experience with their fellow English travellers. Nostalgic ideals about home are repeatedly placed under pressure. To his dismay, Dallam is forced to stay much longer than he wishes in Constantinople not only at the urging of the Sultan but also because of pressure brought to bear on and by the English ambassador. Personal preference and wellbeing are overwhelmed by political and diplomatic priorities. Early on in the *Incredible Report*, Couerte uses 'we' to describe hostility with people on the island of Remba: 'these forged words of theirs, was only in outward shew, to cloake their treacherous practises, as afterward we found it true' (p. 12). Not only is authorial reliability bolstered by this kind of shared point of view, but it

also fosters a form of national consciousness. Nonetheless, Couerte soon starts to distinguish among the ‘we’ – one of the boys on ship commits a ‘foule and detestable sinne’ and is tried and executed (p. 19). Four sailors murder the master of the ship’s pinnace and die for it (p. 21). The ‘wilfull Master’ causes the boat to run aground and sink (p. 23); at the close of his account Couerte accuses the master of being ‘a detestable buggerer’ and blames him for all his suffering (p. 68). The narrator’s identity takes shape through these complex interactions with others. ‘Chronotopical complication’ can be a key part of the characterisation: as the plot no longer directly follows the traveller’s route or itinerary but is shaped by the various incidents that take place ‘along the way’, so representation of the subject’s personality develops in increasing detail.

The conflicting attitudes and relations that are registered through the home-and-away chronotope complicate the significance of events, characters and motives in travel texts. The narrator’s apparently privileged position is not guaranteed. Different viewpoints intrude to test the narrative, and often the most disruptive or threatening challenges come from compatriots and fellow travellers. When Pellham and his mates are finally picked up from Greenland in late spring they are feted by most. However, their original captain, under pressure for the failure of the trip, accuses them of being runaways and seeks to have them punished (*Gods Power*, p. 34). Madox joins the Cathay expedition with honourable ambitions: ‘I sought not gayn but was glad to serve my cuntrey or ther honorable house [Muscovy House] or my Lord [Francis Drake] and therefor would refer my self to them which knew better than my self what was fit for me’ (p. 77). Yet from early on he is drawn increasingly into shipboard politics and rivalries until late in the voyage his frustrations erupt, ‘what the wit of a sailor would know, dull, obtuse and, what is worse and almost common to all of this class, rash and stubborn and intolerant of all instruction and learning’ (p. 234). The others seem to regard him as presumptuous though he shrugs it off, ‘fynding my self utterly cleer and having my whole trust in God I was myry and pleasant’ (p. 203). The little community contains all the tensions of English society, brought to a head by the demands of, on the one hand, changing and unusual settings and experiences and, on the other, the dull repetitive routine of shipboard life over many months. Enforced coexistence compresses the social and interpersonal conflicts of different local backgrounds and outlooks with more explosive results than do encounters with new peoples.

In various ways, what all of these authors find is that on their travels they can never be cut off from either their original communities or the selves and

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identities they believed were left behind. Differences of class, education, and ethical outlook that they thought they could smoothly negotiate at home impinge forcefully upon their experience, either directly in their companions or through apprehensions of what those at home will make of their journeys. Group unity in the face of external or foreign threats can quickly unravel as solidarity gives way to individual manoeuvring for power or profit. The chronotopes of religion, health, food and, most significantly, home-and-away vividly represent such tensions in these travel autobiographies. They depict the authors' attempts to represent their identity and perspective amid familiar parties and recognised factions, as much as before unimagined sights, peoples and conditions, and enable us to see the cultural and self-encounters which fashion and divide early modern individuals.

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