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The Grand Tour. Language, National Identity and Masculinity

MICHELE COHEN

Englishmen had always travelled, but in the eighteenth century travel abroad expanded so much (see Haskell, 1996) that a visitor to England, Abbé Le Blanc, felt he had to comment. The English travel more than any other people in Europe, he explained, because they are surrounded by the sea. 'They look upon their isle as a sort of prison; and the first use they make of their liberty is to get out of it' (1747, I, p. 37). The English themselves offered other reasons. Samuel Johnson, for example, felt that 'a man who has not been to Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what is expected a man should see' (Boswell, [1791] 1970, p. 742). Italy had not always been the preferred and prized destination. In what has been called the first handbook for the Continent, James Howell's Instructions for Forreine Travel, France is 'the first country that is most requisite for the English to know' (Howell, [1640] 1869, p. 19); and according to Lord Clarendon, at the end of the seventeenth century, travel to France was not just inevitable—since 'we can hardly avoid the setting of our feet first in France'—but necessary: travellers returning from Italy, he advised, should spend a year in Paris so that they 'unlearn the dark and affected reservation of Italy' (quoted in Lambley, 1920, pp. 218–219). Not everyone felt as strongly about the virtues of France. Joseph Addison, for example, whose first encounter with the Continent in 1699 was perhaps marred by the fact that he fell into the sea at Calais, thought that statues and pictures were the best company in Paris because 'they don't speak French and have a very good quality, rarely to be met in that country, of not being too talkative'. Not surprisingly, he was pleased to 'Quit the French conversation' in 1700 to achieve his dream, travel in Italy. But Addison's attitude to France is not just critical. He admired the French for their affability, ease and wit, and their familiarity between the sexes which he thought conducive to good manners. One of his biographers, noting Addison's ostensibly contradictory attitude to the French, explains: 'the sparkle of French civilization had made an irresistible appeal' (Smithers, 1968, pp. 55–56). This is a crucial point: throughout the eighteenth century, the English saw France and the French as irresistibly seductive. French seductiveness is still a commonplace, but in the eighteenth century this seductiveness was the source of many dangers, in particular to English masculinity.

There are different ways of defining the Grand Tour. In this paper, I adopt what has been called the narrow definition (Chard, 1998), or the precise significance (Shackleton, 1971) of the tour, the travel of the young man of rank often in his teens, undertaken as the 'crown' of his liberal education. In addition, my focus is not on travel as such or on Englishmen abroad, but on the meanings of the Grand Tour as a cultural and educational practice shared by elite males in eighteenth-cen-
tury England. Early in the century, Richard Steele (Spectator, No. 364, 1712) summarised the purposes of travel:

Certainly the true End of visiting Foreign Parts, is to look into their Customs and Policies, and observe in what Particulars they excel or come short of your own; to unlearn some of the Peculiarities in our Manners, and wear off such awkward Stiffnesses and Affectations in our Behaviour, as may possibly have been contracted from constantly associating with one Nation of Men, by a more free, general, and mixed Conversation.

As an educational institution, the Grand Tour has been placed in the courtly tradition (Stephens, 1955). Accomplishments featured centrally in that education. They were what 'perfected' and 'completed' the gentleman. They included fashioning the body—fencing, riding and dancing, which produced graceful motions and gave 'manliness and a becoming Confidence' (Locke, [1693] 1989, pp. 252, 254)—and cultivating the tongue, learning to speak foreign languages, especially French. As a good French accent was considered particularly difficult to acquire, a stay in France ensured that a correct pronunciation would be learned. This was held to refine young men's tongues so they could become the 'men of conversation' idealised in the Spectator.

Learning about men and manners, refining the judgment and the tongue—the Grand Tour seems rather straightforward. Yet that is precisely what it was not. Far from being straightforward, the Grand Tour is riddled with paradoxes and contradictions. Following Foucault's argument that 'contradiction ... functions, throughout discourse, as the principle of its historicity' (1974, p. 151) it is these contradictions that I will explore and which will frame my discussion. But I have another aim. The most important characteristic of the Grand Tour is that it was a major educational and cultural experience shared by young men who constituted Britain's ruling class. However, most of the scholarly work it has generated concerns its relation to art and the construction of taste in Italy, and to travel (see Wilton & Bignamini, 1996; Chard, 1998), and less attention has been paid to the significance of constructing English gentlemen abroad. This is the main aim of this paper, and in particular, to show how central the Grand Tour was to the elaboration of discourses on national identity and language at the end of the eighteenth century.

Age

The first paradox concerns the gap between the age at which boys were usually sent abroad and what they were expected to achieve during their stay. Age remained a contentious issue for most of the century—from Addison, who complained that boys were sent, 'crying and snivelling into foreign Countries' where they just stare and gape as 'children do at Puppet Shows' (Spectator, No. 364, 1712), to Vicesimus Knox, who wondered why parents were so 'impatient' to 'thrust' their sons into the world at the age of 13 or even twelve? But it was Knox, too, who pointed out that 'to expect that boys should make observations on men and manners, should weigh and compare the laws, institutions, customs, and characteristics of various people is to expect an impossibility' (Knox, 1782, p. 382). Why indeed were adolescent sons of elite families sent abroad, a notoriously perilous adventure, at a time when the
English aristocracy was in such crisis that there were often not enough male heirs to ensure descent?

France and the 'compleat' gentleman

If going to France in the eighteenth century was, as Jeremy Black put it, to 'visit the national enemy' (Black, 1996, p. 23), why did so many Englishmen want to go there? For Lassels, who coined the terms the Grand Tour of France and Il Giro of Italy, it was only in France that young men could learn the 'Elements and the Alphabet of Breeding', the studied negligence of Frenchmen's 'liberté du corps' and their 'handsome confidence' (Lassels, 1670, Preface). Half a century later, Chesterfield, writing from Paris, concurred. 'This place is without dispute, the seat of true good-breeding' (Chesterfield, [4 November 1741] 1890). Yet, as the Gentleman's Magazine (April 1737, p. 221) asked, 'Are there no Dancing Masters, Fencing Masters, or Riding Masters in this Country?' All the accomplishments young men went to France to acquire could actually have been learned in England, even French, which Protestant émigrés could have taught with the correct pronunciation (Cohen, 1996b). As for 'curiosities', the boys usually followed the same itineraries and saw the same sights all described in copious detail in the many travel guides that had been published since the late seventeenth century. In other words, aside from the actual experience of travel, and, in Italy especially, of being there—as the many portraits painted in situ show (see Wilton & Bignamini, 1997)—the knowledge and accomplishments that were to be gained by travelling could just as well have been learned at home. This point is particularly relevant when the financial aspect of the tour is considered. For example, Coke, the first Earl of Leicester, received £2000 a year during his six year tour (Hibbert, 1987, p. 37; see also Black, 1992, Chapter 3). Though not all young travellers had as much at their disposal, many did, especially if they were first sons. What justified this enormous expense? Finally, as most histories of the Grand Tour concede, while a number of youths achieved the goals set for their travel, most did not. Why then, if the Grand Tour obviously failed to produce the 'compleat gentleman', was the practice maintained for most of the eighteenth century? The main reason, as I suggest in earlier work (Cohen, 1992, 1996) is that in the eighteenth century, the gentleman was positioned at the intersection of a number of contradictory discourses. In relation to the tour, they are on the one hand the anxiety over effeminacy, which scholars agree to have been a dominant preoccupation throughout the century, and on the other hand, the necessity for politeness (see Carter, 2001; Cohen, 1996a; Hitchcock & Cohen, 1999).

Anxiety over effeminacy

In the first part of the century, elite boys tended to be educated at home for the most part, as Locke recommended in his educational treatise, Some Thoughts Concerning Education ([1693] 1989). However, home education was also deemed dangerous because of the domestic and emotional comforts it provided, above all, parents' over-fondness. The mother's tenderness, in particular, was said to be 'the loss of children' (Burnet, 1761, p. 19; Locke, 1989), a view that persisted throughout the eighteenth century, becoming more vociferous as time wore on (see Fordyce, 1777). Travel was also and importantly about getting the boy away from the
effeminating and softening influence of home and mother and being toughened. This is crucial. Boys were sent abroad not only to become gentlemen, but to become men. It is because ‘it could produce men’ (White, 1961, p. 128) that the Grand Tour has been likened to a rite of passage.

But this model does not quite fit. According to the anthropological concept males should achieve manhood during their stay abroad (see Turner, 1977, p. 235) and their return should therefore be unproblematic. Yet what was said in England about the returned Grand Tourists suggests quite the opposite. Paradoxically, the problem was intrinsic to the tour. As Richard Hurd remarked, by going abroad the youth may be ‘polished out of his rusticity ... but may easily wear himself into the contrary defect, an effeminate and unmanly foppery’ (1764, p. 105). Emblematic of this corruption was ‘display’. Display is a gendered discourse, associated mainly with women. It is the desire both to look at oneself and to be seen, and when moralists complained that young men returned corrupted from the Grand Tour, it was this display that they criticised.

Howell, in the seventeenth century, had already urged returned Grand Tourists to ‘abhore’ affectations that ‘speak them travellers’ ([1640] 1869, p. 65). Costeker, a century later, disapproved of their exhibiting [themselves] ‘in all the most fashionable and publick Places ... The Mall, the Play, the Ring, the Opera, is dull, insipid all, without the fine Appearance of my Lord’ (1732, p. 14), while according to James Burgh, the man whom travel had corrupted displayed ‘a laced coat, a spoiled constitution, a gibberish of broken French and Italian, and an awkward imitation of foreign gestures’ (Burgh, 1754, II, p. 148). Display can be said to have culminated in what has been called the ‘Macaroni phenomenon’ in the 1770s. Young noblemen who had been abroad formed the Macaroni club, whose members saw themselves as representing ‘the standard of taste in fashion as well as in polite learning’. In the popular press, the macaroni was a ‘monster’—a ‘kind of animal, neither male nor female, a thing of the neuter gender’ (Oxford Magazine, 1770), born not out of a body but ‘conceived in the Courts of France and Italy’ or produced by ‘demoniac committee of depraved taste and exaggerated fancy’ (Wright, 1868, pp. 258–259). Macarons’ most important accessory was their looking-glass, a signifier of effeminacy, and their main concern was to decorate themselves. Nothing could detract them from that most important task, even love. ‘Oh, Lord’, exclaims Epicene, the Macaroni in R. Hitchcock’s play The Macaroni, ‘what a horrid thing love must be to take off all attention from ourselves, and study to be what you call manly, brave, noble and generous, in order to appear amiable in the eyes of the fair’ (1773, Act I). And that is the point: ‘Of man, [macarons] only bear the name; they are perfect nothingness’ (Macaroni fester, 1773, p. 17).

However, rather than dismissing Macarons as just ‘fashionable empty-headed young men’, as historian Aileen Ribeiro does (1985, p. 142) I would argue that they are highly significant: after all, it was the brilliant Charles James Fox who led Macaroni fashion after his return from abroad, where unlike many of his contemporaries, he had actually mastered French and Italian and thus had achieved one of the tour’s main justifications. What the Macarons did was to parody the Grand Tour and its aims. With a kind of post-modern irony, they highlighted its contradictions and even its absurdity—reflected in their eccentric dress: towering wigs topped by tiny hats, very tight-fitting clothes with huge buttons. The macaro-
nis are significant, then, because they mark a turning point, the beginning of the end of the Grand Tour as the crown of liberal education for the young male of rank.

Language

To explore my final paradox, language and the Grand Tour, I have used Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia, as they offer the most powerful tools for an analysis of the role of language in culture and history. In their simplest formulation, dialogism refers to the power struggle at the base of all forms of discourse, and heteroglossia to 'the different languages that make up social life'. Heteroglossia can take two forms, one referring to different social languages within a single national language (for example, prestige and stigmatised varieties), the other, to different national languages within the same culture (Vice, 1997, pp. 5, 19). My argument refers to the second form of heteroglossia, and more specifically to 'dialogized heteroglossia' (Vice, 1997, p. 49)—the power struggle—between English and French in eighteenth-century England.

My starting point is the education of elite males in eighteenth-century England. It was, in the humanist tradition, 'literary', that is language education: Latin constituted the main subject of boys' formal instruction, and French, usually learned at home (it was not commonly taught in public or grammar schools). Both languages were closely bound up with the Grand Tour, since the classics were, in theory at least, a preparation for appreciating the classical ruins of Rome, while French was the medium of communication for the elite on the continent and would enable the youths to polish their mind and conversation in 'intercourse with Politer nations' (Hurd, 1764, p. 47). The question is then, since the fashioning of elite males required that they be educated in two languages—neither of which was their 'national' tongue—why were attitudes to their heteroglossia so complex and contradictory?

In Language in History (1996), Tony Crowley discussed what he termed the 'war of words' (p. 56) in eighteenth-century Britain, but the dialogic relations he considered were those between English and Latin, and he ignored French altogether. My aim here is to focus on the shifting power relations between English and French and the way their dialogic struggle was, in different ways and at different moments in the century, woven into the fabric of national and gendered identity in England.

Language was so central an aspect of the Grand Tour that reference to youths' language behaviour was used as one measure of their conduct. Thus, when Lady Mary Wortley Montagu noted with undisguised scorn that the young English travellers she saw in Venice kept 'an inviolable fidelity to the language their nurses taught them' (Montagu, [1740] 1934, p. 283), she meant that far from fulfilling the aims of the tour, and learning about men and manners, they just stuck together in groups and spoke English. On the other hand, youths were censured, once back in England, for peppering their English with the French and Italian smatterings that spoke of their status as returned Grand Tourists. Far from promoting fluency in foreign languages, critics complained, travel just produced broken tongues and conversational nonsense—heteroglossia, in Bakhtinian terms. Yet, how crucial heteroglossia was to the fashioning of the gentleman can be inferred from a letter Chesterfield wrote to his nine-year-old son in 1741: 'I have received your Polyglot letter, with which I am very pleased; and for which it is reasonable you should be
very well rewarded...’ (Chesterfield, [1774] 1890, p. 73). Chesterfield does not specify which language(s) young Philip was using in his letter, but what is clear is that he approved of his growing mastery of foreign tongues.

Heteroglossia in early eighteenth-century England was not just a consequence of educational practices and ideals. The cultural hegemony of France and the low status of English in relation to French also played an important part. While English, ‘full of harsh sounds’, was considered more barbaric than polite (Spectator, No. 364, 1712), soft and musical French was the language of politeness and refinement, spoken at all European Courts. This too made it indispensable for English gentlemen. Not surprisingly, the prestige of French led to what was commonly called the ‘invasion of Frenchisms’ in England. While the term ‘invasion’ conjures up or even solicits fears about military action, the anxiety was not about British vulnerability to France’s military might—though that could have been justified—so much as vulnerability to France’s powers of seduction (see Spectator, No. 45, 1711). Why, critics wondered, did English import so many French words? One recurring explanation was that English borrowed French words not because it lacked words of its own but because it had been seduced. Borrowing was a consequence of an illicit, immoral intimacy with French’s ‘Adulterous Charms’, which would eventually ‘Debase, not Advance, our Native and Masculine Tongue’ (Gildon & Brightland, 1711). In other words, the relation between English and French was sexualised, discursively constructed as a relation of desire and seduction positioning English as male and French as female. This positioning was not about love or even sex but about power. At the same time, paradoxically, because in eighteenth-century England desire was held to be effeminating and it was unmanly to be seduced (Cohen, 1996a), the seduction of the French tongue was dangerous to the manliness of the English tongue. Finally, since language and national character were thought to be inextricably interlinked (Crowley, 1996; Cohen, 1996a), this seduction was dangerous to English manliness itself. This is why, as two plays by Samuel Foote illustrate, the power of French seduction could be more threatening and potentially more pernicious than its military power.

Taken together, Foote’s two plays The Englishman in Paris (1753) and its sequel, The Englishman return’d from Paris (1756) depict the transformation of young Buck from an English booby, an uncivilised rustic, to a Frenchified fop. Language is at the heart of this transformation. In the first play, newly arrived in Paris, Buck discovers that what are called ‘streets’ in London are called rues here, and complains that ‘they have such devilish out-of-the-way Names for Things, that there is no remembering them’. He orders the barber who has introduced himself as a perruquier to ‘Speak English, you Son of a Whore’, and threatens to kick him downstairs if he speaks ‘another French word’ (Foote, [1753] 1983, pp. 14, 18–19, 34). Young Buck is not just monolingual, his whole relation to language is, in Bakhtinian terms, monoglot: for him, there is not only one tongue but one world view. In the 1750s, this makes him a booby and was precisely the kind of prejudice travel was supposed to root out. In The Englishman return’d from Paris, produced three years later, it is also through his language that Buck’s status of returned Grand Tourist is expressed. One of the first things we hear about him is that though he has not learned a lot of French, he is ‘quite Maister of the Accent’. When Buck first appears on stage, he speaks gibberish—a mixture of French and English. The transformation of his language is emblematic of his transformation in relation to his
country and to himself. Buck has become Frenchified—he has been 'bewitched', 'turned into a beast' even. Not only that, secure in his French refinement, he can now accuse les Anglais of being Ruffians. Buck's metamorphosis is a consequence of the invasion by France of his English body, like an illness. However, like an illness, it can be treated. The remedy is simple. Buck must renounce not just what effeminates him: '... tawdry Trappings, ... foreign Popperry, ... Washes, Paints, Pomades' but also his retinue of valets and servants, these 'exotic Attendants ... Instruments of [his] Luxury', because

The Importation of these Puppies makes a Part of the Politics of your old Friends, the French; unable to resist you, whilst you retain your ancient roughness, they have recourse to these minions, who wou'd first, by unmanly Means, sap and soften all your native spirit, and then deliver you an easy Prey to their Employers' (Foote, [1756] 1983, pp. 15, 34, 53).

French seduction, therefore, like French politeness and the whole set of practices relating to the fashioning of the gentleman during his Grand Tour, is an insidious means to a political end: effeminating and subduing the English. The interesting point here is that the cure for the infection is not for Englishmen to abandon the practice of travel, but, as Foote puts it, to remember that they are Britons and that French fashions are as ill-suited to the Genius, as their Politics are pernicious to the Peace of your native Land' (Foote, [1756], p. 53). While the manliness of Britishness is invoked to counteract the effeminacy associated with Frenchification, it is Britishness itself that constitutes the resistance to the infection of France.⁴

These themes were echoed and elaborated later in the century in the work of playwrights R. Hitchcock and Hannah Cowley. In Hitchcock's The Macaroni, Epicene concedes that a Macaroni is 'the most insignificant—insipid—useless—contemptible being in the whole of creation', but refuses to 'quit the appearance of this despicable species' in order to 'assume the man': 'You may as well bid me shake off my existence', he protests. However, when reminded that 'he has sprung from a race of hardy, virtuous Britons', he is immediately ashamed of his 'degenerate exotic effeminacy' and sheds it instantly to re-emerge a true Englishman (1773, p. 70). Similarly, the Grand Tour enables Cowley to voice an even more explicit patriotism. Doricourt, the returned Grand Tourist in her most successful comedy, The Belles' Stratagem, reflects

We go into Italy where the whole business of the people is to study and improve the powers of music. We yield to the fascination, and grow enthusiasts in the charming science. We travel over France and see the whole kingdom composing ornaments and inventing fashions. We condescend to avail ourselves of their industry and adopt their modes. We return to England, and find the nation intent on the most important objects: Polity, commerce, war, with all the liberal arts employ her sons. The latent sparks glow afresh within our bosoms; the sweet follies of the continent imperceptibly slide away, whilst senators, statesmen, patriots and heroes emerge from the vertu of Italy and the frippery of France' (1781, pp. 10–11).

The shift in attitude to the Grand Tour conveyed by Doricourt's comment was already evident in Richard Hurd's Dialogues on the Uses of Foreign Travel (1764)
and Catherine Macaulay’s introduction to the History of England (1763). What makes Hurd’s text particularly significant is that it criticises the Grand Tour and the accomplishments it promised, especially politeness and conversation, not just because they fail to fashion the gentleman (a conventional criticism) but because they are alien to the masculine English character. ‘Let politeness flourish in France’ where insinuation, not merit, brings favour and distinction, Hurd declares, but ‘let a manlier character prevail here’ (pp. 159–160). Since politeness and French were intimately connected and both contributed to shaping the ‘complet gentleman’, it is not surprising to find that Hurd also opposes the study of French, arguing it is a waste of time which would be better spent in the study of the learned languages, and crucially, perhaps, English. Catherine Macaulay’s comment on the consequences of the tour offers a revealing counterpoise to the aims Steele had imagined for travel in the early part of century.

Without being able to distinguish the different natures of different govern-ments, their advantages, their disadvantages; without being able to com-prehend how infinitely they affect the interest and happiness of individuals, [English youths] grow charmed with everything that is for-eign, are caught with the gaudy tinsel of a superb court, the frolic levity of unreflecting slaves, and are thus deceived by appearances, are rivetted in a taste for servitude. These are the causes which occasion the irrational inclination of many of the English people in regard to government (1763, I, pp. xv–xvi).

Far from being the ‘crown’ of a liberal education and the finish that produced the ‘complet gentleman’, the Grand Tour was ‘the finishing stroke that renders [men of fortune] useless to all the good purposes of preserving the birth-right of an Englishman’—that is, liberty (Macaulay, 1763, I, p. xv). Twenty years later, it was possible for John Andrews to remind young gentlemen setting out for the continent that travel abroad was precisely not about learning politeness and ‘engaging manners’. These were best learned at home, since English manners were not only ‘more becoming but more manly than those of the French’ (1784, p. 4). In addition, Andrews not only dismissed one of the enduring reasons for travel, the acquisition of foreign languages with the correct accent, but he argued that because learning to speak a language was merely a matter of learning ‘combinations of sounds and letters’, it was ‘an insipid occupation to a solid thinking mind’. In particular, the attention to diction necessary for speaking French ‘frequently destroys manliness of thinking’ (1785, p. 318). To be concerned with one’s articulation and pronunciation now resonated with connotations of effeminacy, frivolity and un-Englishness. But it is V.J. Peyton, author of a History of the English Language (1771), who best characterises the relations of ‘dialogized heteroglossia’ in England, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century:

What emolument would it be to Britain if the great men in power ... would pay the same veneration to their native language, or at least would please to promote a learned English education ... instead of being enthusiastically in love with other tongues, especially the French, as if to make Britons learned, to learn Greek, Latin or French was the conditio sine qua non' (1771, p. 13).
These great men in power were all likely to have travelled on the Grand Tour, and their language is likely to have resembled that of Lord Pembroke, who casually interspersed French phrases in many of the letters he wrote to his son Herbert who was travelling on his Grand Tour from 1775 to 1780. For example: ‘What ye saw ... is but too true and palpable ... N’en parlons plus ... it is too horrible’. And when advising his son about riding in Florence ‘... my friend Mr F ... there, s’il chevauche encore ...’ (Lord Herbert, 1950, pp. 164, 185). Pembroke and many contemporaries of his own social class habitually practised the code-switching which critics complained was not just a ridiculous affectation but was ‘breaking’ the English tongue.

In the same period, two important developments were taking place, which eventually transformed the dialogic relations between English and French. The first concerns a dramatic shift in the relative status of French and English. The very features of French which had so long been admired were now used as a foil to denigrate it and celebrate the English tongue. French was a ‘language naturally made for graceful trifling’, whereas English was a ‘plain rational and monosyllabic tongue’, suited to its ‘manly and laconic speakers’ (Jardine, 1788, 1, pp. 268, 360). French ‘like a person of an artful, insinuating address, deals much in hints and circumlocutions’, whereas English, ‘like a plain, blunt man, avoids prolixity, and comes to the point at once’ (Andrews, 1785, p. 319). While the French had ‘many pretty ways of insinuating what they mean[t]’, it was ‘courageous forthrightness of address’, and a ‘forcible and manly’ way of speaking that distinguished the English tongue and its male speakers (Jardine, 1788, 1, p. 268). The very seductiveness of the French tongue was now considered rawdry and effeminate, by contrast with the unpolished bluntness of English—both these terms now signifiers of the manly sincerity of English and of its native speakers.

The second development derives from the expansion in antiquarian studies; in particular, the revival of Anglo-Saxon. Antiquarian research on Anglo-Saxon antiquities and language, which had begun in the sixteenth century (Frantzen, 1990), made it possible to ‘identify’ Anglo-Saxon as a source of the English language. In her Rudiments of the Grammar of the English-Saxon Tongue (1715) Elisabeth Elstob noted ‘I cannot but think it is a great pity that in our considerations for the refinement of the English tongue, so little regard is had to antiquity, and the original of our present language, which is the Saxon’ (Frantzen, 1990, p. 52). She had little support for her ideas at a time when Swift could maintain that Anglo-Saxon was a ‘vulgar tongue, so barren and so barbarous’, and many shared the view that the earliest forms of English were unworthy of study, and asserted that Greek and Latin were better objects of linguistic and literary imitation (Frantzen, 1990, p. 53). Yet, by mid-century, ‘for every author condemning Anglo-Saxon barbarity we can find one interested in the origins of the English language and admiring its ‘Saxon heritage’ (p. 50). The processes by which Anglo-Saxon was construed as a ‘pure’ form of English before it had been ‘bastardised, and feminised, by its miscegenation with Norman French’ (Crowley, 1996, pp. 33–34), are part of a complex set of changes which Sam Smiles (1994) has described as the shift of ancient Britain from a peripheral to a central interest. Smiles also points out that a ‘crucial place was reserved to the study of language’ in all these developments, as it could provide links between the present and the past (p. 16). In addition, as Sweet
argues, 'antiquarian studies have always had a role to play in the creation of a nationalist myth of British origins and a British national identity' (2001, p. 192).

For most of the eighteenth century, heteroglossia had been both desirable and necessary for the ruling classes. At the same time, it elicited anxieties that the seduction and 'breaking' of the English tongue sapped its masculine spirit and that of the English nation. It also confirmed the opinion that English was 'infamously hybrid' (Sorensen, 1999, p. 89), corrupt and incapable of purity, because its vocabulary derived from so many disparate languages, as Lord Monboddo argued in the 1770s (Smith, 1984, pp. 24, 125). Claiming a monoglot Anglo-Saxon lineage for English was rooted in the desire to 'reinstate the pre-eminence of English, hence advancing the primacy of 'Englishness' (Court, 1992, p. 124). It was supported by philological research and antiquarian inquiry, which 'have always had a role to play in the creation of a nationalist myth of British origins and a British national identity' (Sweet, 2001, p. 192). It was also, I suggest, bound up with rejecting a heteroglossia associated with both the image of a Frenchified effeminate aristocracy and the practice which made heteroglossia possible and desirable, the Grand Tour.

The way the Grand Tour was woven into the construction of a national ancestry in the popular imaginary can be illustrated by a satirical piece in the Town and Country Magazine, which counterposes the ancient Britons with their descendants. The crucial point for my discussion is not that the former are described as a 'manly ... ancient nobility and gentry ... rough, bold, and handy to pursue the sports in the field, or wield the spear and battle ax against the enemies of their country', while the latter are 'weak, sickly ... puny' beings who 'know no toils but those of the toilet'. It is rather that the present heirs of these noble ancestors are 'a motley kind of beings who having caught the contagion of every vice and folly on the continent ... import them on their return to contaminate the principles and customs of their native country' (1771, p. 413, my italics). The key anxiety concerns the hybridity that results from travel abroad. Echoing Foote's characterisation of young Buck, and the many and varied comments about the Macaronies, the passage claims that the continent turns Englishmen into 'motley' beings. Hybridity, like heteroglossia, was an inevitable consequence of consorting with the foreign. It is in this context that the impulse to a 'pure' lineage can be understood. Though language purity is a fiction, and, as Bakhtin himself has argued, no language can ever be truly monoglot (1981, p. 290), constructing English as a pure tongue which had been eclipsed by the Normans made it possible to restore the integrity of the national character and national tongue. It also makes it possible to represent the nation as essentialised, centralised and unified through the Anglo-Saxons who were the 'original establishment of our laws, our liberty and our religion' (Ingram, 1807, p. 19).

In the obligatory chapter on foreign travel in eighteenth-century educational treatises, Vicesimus Knox proffered the wish that travel abroad were not considered 'a necessary part of juvenile education' (1782, p. 386), though he conceded that it was suitable for mature men. Twenty years later, William Barrow's Essay on Education (1802), which takes up a number of the themes elaborated in Knox's Liberal Education, did not even mention travel abroad. Barrow staunchly opposed the study of French, not just because it took time and labour which would be better spent on the study of the classics (echoing Richard Hurd's comments cited above), but because French is 'an adulterate currency' (II, pp. 112-113). By mid-nineteenth
century, English gentlemen were no longer expected to speak French, and if they did, they might pretend they didn't, as Prime Minister Melbourne did, who, according to Queen Victoria spoke French 'very well' but 'took pleasure in the affectation that he spoke [it] badly' (Mitchell, 1997, p. 203). The study of French had not however disappeared. By then, it had become the female accomplishment par excellence (see Cohen, 1996a).

In the nineteenth century, English nationality and British destiny were articulated in almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon terms, underpinned by the belief in the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race as a 'military, economic, political and cultural power whose enlightened leadership of the world was progressive, inevitable and infinitely sustainable' (Smiles, 1994, p. 39).

By then too, the sun never set on the English language: confirming what would become the innate racial superiority of the English (Horsman, 1976, p. 390).

NOTES

[1] The first version of this paper was published as 'The Grand Tour: Constructing the English Gentleman in Eighteenth-Century France', *History of Education*, 21, 3, 1992. I would like to thank Routledge for permission to use material from that article. The expanded version was read at the conference on 'Travel and Nation', held at the British Academy, 13-15 July 2000. I am grateful to Steve Clark for inviting me to contribute to the conference. I also thank Dom Alessio, Martin Francis, Barbara Harlow and Nels Johnson for their helpful comments on various drafts of the present paper.


[3] 'France, with the largest population in Europe, was a military threat to England for the whole of the eighteenth century.' Mitchell (1992, p. 39).


[5] Code-switching is defined linguistically as the 'alternating use of two or more "codes" within one conversational episode... It is related to and indicative of group membership in particular types of bilingual speech communities' (Auer, 1998, pp. 1, 3). Stray argues that the Latin quotations which punctuated speeches in the House of Commons in the nineteenth century 'served to underline ... a shared body of valuable knowledge' (1998, p. 63).

[6] It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the complexities and confusions relating to the role and importance attributed to Britons, Celts and/or Anglo-Saxons in eighteenth-century popular conceptions of Britain's ancestral past. See Smiles (1994), Kidd (1999), Pittock (1999), Ward-Perkin (2000).

[7] There are obvious connections to emerging racial ideas and to Empire which cannot however be developed in this essay.

[8] Though they might know it 'grammatically' and well enough to read it. See Cohen (1996a).

[9] Smiles (1994) also explores why Anglo-Saxons rather than Celts emerged as the 'major constituent in English nationalism'.

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