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THE CULTURAL OBJECT: MAPS, MEMORIES, ICONS

edited by
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INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Object: One

It is only the most noble human beings who find the greatest depth and power of their ego precisely in the fact that they respect the individuality inherent in things. (Simmel 1987: 201)

So begins Stephen Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), one of the foundational books of New Historicism.¹ On this model, our wish in this collection of essays is to create a dialogue with things, to bridge the gap that yawns between the human subject and the object world: we are closer here to the shopping trip and the tourist excursion than to the séance. More directly, perhaps, we hope to consider the border between the world of words and the world of things. In this ambition, of course, we do not claim any pioneering status. If academic discourse, or at least literary academic discourse, has in recent years been dominated by, inter alia, linguistically-based theories (structuralism, post-structuralism), historical theories (Marxism, New Historicism), and gender-based theories (Feminism, Gender Studies, Queer Theory), then we might now be said to be living in the days of Thing Theory.

It is always difficult to periodize the present, but there are certainly signs that we are now drawn to the path of the object as much as to what in psychoanalysis is called the path of the subject. One

¹ Cf. the ambition acknowledged elsewhere to make contact with "the real". See Gallagher and Greenblatt (eds) 2000: 54. On the overlap of the dead and the realm of things, see Taussig 2001: 305-316.

Eleonora Federici

My Airplane/Myself: Aviatrices' Narratives

Jason is a dear; he's behaving splendidly. Look how he's weathering this terrible dust storm just outside Baghdad [...] Here we are in India. How proud my Jason was to reach here in six days, but alas his pride was quickly dashed. The monsoon's raced us after all [...] Poor old Jason was so upset that he ran his nose right into a ditch in the wrong field when we were trying to find the racecourse at Rangoon. (Johnson 2005)

Amy Johnson, the most famous British woman aviator, uttered these words in a speech she gave after her record-breaking solo flight to Australia in 1936. She was referring to her first airplane, a second-hand Gipsy Moth that she had named after the trademark of the family fish business in Hull.¹ D.H.60 Moth 1928 G-AAAH Jason, the airplane Moth designed for simplicity was relatively cheap and had an easily maintained wood and fabric structure. The span was 8.84m (29'), its length 7.16m (23'6"), its weight 345kg (760lb), top speed 145kph (90mph) and a power plant One de Havilland Cirrus engine of 44.8kW (60hp). It was a common airplane in the interwar period.

¹ The airplane, a De Havilland Gipsy Moth, is now displayed at the Science Museum in London, and it is amazingly small and "simple" for the enterprise in which it was used. Many memorabilia of Amy Johnson are at Sewerby Hall in the Yorkshire East Riding, near Bridlington, where a museum has been set up in memory of the famous aviatrix. Other artefacts and records have been donated to the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon.

Jason is at the centre of *Sky Roads of the World* (1939), an autobiographical text about Johnson's enterprises where it is depicted not merely as a technological means of transport but, totally humanized, becomes the travel companion of the pilot. Within the threads of the texts it is portrayed as a "character" in itself. In women aviators' texts more than a functional vehicle of travel, the new wonderful winged machine is represented as a means of escaping from gender, class and social roles. The innovative technological means becomes the central element of a narrative constructed of different literary genres such as memoir, aviation narrative, autobiography and travel narratives. The aviatrixes use these genres to give shape to new forms of writing that focus on the exceptionality of the airplane as a new means of transport and as a revolutionary technology, but also as a powerful icon which unveils daring feminine enterprises within a traditional masculine domain. The airplane, a cultural object representative of a specific historical period, is at the centre of the autobiographical accounts focused on the pilot's skill. In aviatrixes' writings it is transformed into a "second body" of the pilot and symbolizes her social and cultural identity.

1. *Aviatrixes and the Age of Icarus*

Even if it is true that women have always been daring adventurous travellers exploring unknown and unexplored areas, in the golden era of aviation they were not merely travellers but pilots. Not only did they travel abroad escaping gender roles and social constraints but they flew away from home on their own, they chose a new and an insecure means of transport to leave for good, and decided to go as far as possible to many different places and for many reasons, among which were breaking flight records and being remembered as pilots who changed the history of aviation. As Robert Wohl suggests, "flight became a metaphor for the transformation of consciousness, its liberation from the constraints of normal day to day existence" (Wohl 1994: 161).

It was the heyday of women pilots from every part of the world.

The New Zealander Jean Batten, known as "The Garbo of the skies" for her beauty, was the first woman to cross the South Atlantic from East to West in a Percival Gull aircraft.² Amelia Earhart, the American legend and icon for aviation history, began her flying career in 1928 with the Atlantic flight in the "Friendship" as the first woman crew on board on this route and from then on she flew her Lockheed Vega to many destinations until her final crash.³ Earhart was one of the few who wrote about her missions and other pilots' enterprises, presenting a history of aviation that included women as valuable technicians and pilots.⁴ Anne Morrow Lindbergh was not only the wife of the famous hero but also his co-pilot and radio operator. In her poems collected under the title *Gift from the Sea* (1955), she portrays the experience of solo flying and the change in the traveller's perception. Beryl Markham, author of *West with the Night* (1942), crossed the Atlantic Ocean from England and used her aircraft on business trips, safari and flights for medical supplies in Africa throughout her life.⁵ Not all aviatrixes wrote about their flights but those who decided to do so carried on the task following some common devices, including the importance of details in the description of their flights, its length, the distance covered, the difficulties and dangers and above all the objects that accompanied their travels such as, for example, the log-book, an object in-between a memory box and a technical instrument. They packed their airplanes with tools, medical supplies, mosquito nets, sun-helmets and even guns, objects that fill the pages of their writings.

In her preface to *Sky Roads of the World*, Amy Johnson affirms she wants "to explain that this book is meant to be rather a romantic story of the world's great sky routes, as seen by a pilot who has

² For a detailed account of this aviator's journeys, see Mackersey (1991). Many scholars have reported the history of women pilots, acknowledging their role in aviation; see, for example, De Bernardi (1984), Lomax (1987), Cadogan (1992), Lebow (2002), Walker (2003).

³ Many scholars have written about Earhart's enterprises; see Mollman (1981), Goldstein and Dillon (1997) and Long (2001).

⁴ See Earhart 1928, 1932.

⁵ For biographical information about Markham, see Lovell (1987) and Trzebinski (1993).

flown over most of them” (Johnson 1939: 7). The author therefore presents herself as an authority on what has been reported and as an objective writer about the status of aviation and its history. Her book is a history of aviation described as a very important technological development where pilots – herself included – are portrayed at the same time as technicians of the new vehicle and as beginners of the “Air Age”. The discourse on women’s capacity to deal with the mechanical vehicle is very important in order to support a favourable notion of the pilot’s skill. Importantly, Amy Johnson was the first woman ground engineer in England; she was granted this license in December 1929 and a full navigation certificate the following year.

At that time air travel was a daring and risky enterprise, a challenge that could not be taken up by passive “angels of the house”. The “age of Icarus” was the age of energetic men glorified in literatures, arts and philosophy. In Italy, Futurism connected the airplane with masculinity and virility; it was a symbol of adventure and discovery, a technological tool to display man’s strength. Air travel was a real challenge, as writers such as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Gabriele D’Annunzio repeatedly outlined in their works, visualizing the connection between technology, masculinity and flight.⁶ However, as Julie Wosk, underlines,

Female artists in the early part of the century also found aviation an alluring emblem of modernity. The French artist Sonia Delaunay and the Russian painter Natalia Goncharova shared the modernists’ infatuation with mechanical imagery. Goncharova’s 1913 painting *Aeroplane over Train* fuses a cubist fracturing of images with the futurists’ love of dynamism and speed as it celebrates the airplane’s ability to surpass the older transportation technology. (Wosk 2001: 152)

Popular writers such as Liala became besotted by the romantic

⁶ See F.T. Marinetti, *Le monoplan du Pape* (1912) and *Manifesto dell’aeropittura* (1929); G. D’Annunzio, *Forse che sì, forse che no* (1910), Paolo Buzzi, *Aeroplani* (1909), Enrico Cavacchioli, *Cavalcando il sole* (1914) but also painters celebrating flight and aviators like for example, Fortunato Depero, *Ritratto psicologico dell’aviatore* (1922), Plinio Nomellini, *Ali eroiche. La gloria di Francesco Baracca* (1929), Tullio Crali, *In tuffo sulla città (Incuneandosi nell’abitato)* (1939) and many others.

and heroic connotations of the aviator as the very titles of the novels *Signorsì* (1931) and *Brigata di ali* (1941) testify. Carolina Invernizio published a novel entitled *L’aviatore* (1911) based on the myth of the pilot as a hero, and writers as diverse as Antoine de Saint Exupéry, André Malraux and William Faulkner became airmen as well as chroniclers of the new myth. Pilots were compared to modern knights, they were symbols of national pride and lack of fear, the airman became the expression of national pride and challenging adventures. Consequently, flying stories for boys were common, and they were stories where girls were asked to follow a traditional upbringing that would end in motherhood. Women were also characters of high-flown romances that presented a traditional picture of gender roles at the time where female characters were always waiting for their heroes to come back to the ground.

Moreover, pilots were also soldiers, fighter pilots of the First World War who became objects of mass idolatry. Whilst conquering the air, men were defending the motherland. Unsuitable for war, women pilots felt strangers in a man’s world that rejected them even if they were valuable flight technicians.⁷

In the 1930s, the image of women pilots and the accounts of their enterprises were spread about not always in a celebratory way but quite often in a patronizing one. Women were often dismissed as pilots, they were not considered like their masculine counterparts and journalists found many nicknames for them that visualize this idea: “was a woman pilot an aviator, an aviatrix, or an aviatrix? ‘Female oiseau’, ‘Girl Hawk’, ‘Tomboy of the Air’, ‘The Flying School Marm’” (Lebow 2002: 6). As Midge Gillies has outlined, in March 1928 *The Tatler* began a regular page covering aviation news called “Air Eddies”. Major Oliver Stewart, an ex-RAF pilot affirmed that women’s “interest and energies are being wasted on some such activity as aviation, and they will be persuaded to mend their ways only when they have learned the truth that the lip-stick is mightier than the joy-stick” (Gilles 2003: 64). Replying to this kind of remark in a chapter entitled “The Dawn of the Air Age”, Amy Johnson states:

⁷ For a survey on women aviators in the Air Force during the war, see Beauman (1971), Escott (1989) and King (1956).

A career in aviation for a man is now a reasonable proposition. [...] For a woman there is not quite the same opportunity, largely because the R.A.F. is closed to her, and that there is too much traditional prejudice to allow of her being given a responsible job like that of an airline pilot. She has however, almost as good chances as a man to be an instructor or an air-taxi pilot – [...] There is still prejudice to be overcome, but it is being rapidly realised that a good pilot is a good pilot, whether man or woman. (Johnson 1939: 27)

With this hope for the future role of women in aviation Johnson criticizes the secondary role of British women pilots in World War Two in the ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary), a situation that she knew very well. In a similar way, in an interview with the *Daily Express* in 1936 Beryl Markham says that flying was a hard job, not an adventurous task and that she was not a chance flier. Flying is thus portrayed as a serious job a woman can undertake and learn to do well. Women aviators deconstruct the image of the adventurous flyer and focus on the skill of the job and on the competence it is necessary to possess regardless of gender differences.

Upset by the frivolous image the press was presenting of her, Markham wrote a piece for the newspaper where she said she was going to fly the Atlantic not as a society girl nor as a stunt aviator but as a pilot graduate with two thousand flying hours to her credit. She finally wrote a letter to the *Daily Express* that was published on the front page:

Sir, as I am now on the eve of what I believe to be a rather hazardous flight I would ask the usual courtesy extended to state some of my views. I notice that I have been frequently captioned in the Press as "Society Mother", "Flying Mother", "Bird Woman" etc. [...] I may be just another blonde but as a professional pilot accustomed to working for my living [...] I look on this as another job [...] I am neither an innocent girl from the country nor a city slicker but an ocean flyer in embryo. (Lovell 1987: 173)

The same idea, the necessity to assert her professional role together with the implication that it is part of her identity, is reiterated also at the end of her autobiographical text, where she affirms:

By his nature a sailor must sail, by his nature a flyer must fly. I could compute that I had flown a quarter of a million miles; and I could

foresee that, so long as I had a plane and the sky was there, I should go flying more miles. There was nothing extraordinary in this. I had learned a craft and had worked hard learning it. My hands had been taught to seek control of a plane. Usage had taught them. They were at ease clinging to a stick. (Markham 1942: 244)

Sometimes dismissed as amateurs doing the wrong thing in the wrong place or celebrated as eccentric women, aviatrixes were at the centre of the stage, they were society icons.⁸ Seen as "flappers of the sky", pilots were powerful symbols of a new feminine role in a changing era. They were indeed glamorous women: their photographs show elegant modern women standing in front of their airplanes, smoking and confidently looking straight at the viewer.⁹ Notwithstanding the aura of elegance and glamour that these women wanted to present in the photographs for their audience, the image of a new femininity is an ambivalent one. On the one hand, a glamorous, fashion-dictating icon as is well demonstrated by Amy Johnson's connection with the fashion designer Elsa Schiapparelli, who created a woollen suit for the aviatrix to mark her flight to Cape Town in 1936 and chose her as an inspirational image for her collection of "flight clothes". On the other, women fighters, new amazons of the sky showing scars and wounds, signs of their daring flying, or photographed with tools in their hands while they are busy repairing their airplanes. Cross-dressing, wearing masculine clothes and uniforms, was used to give a non-feminine public image and assimilate aviatrixes to aviators' images. They certainly played at models emphasizing their femininity but they also wanted to show they could be as good as the boys.

The image of the aviatrix was thus an androgynous one: these women possessed athletic bodies that symbolize strength, health and above all, were a new metaphor for the British Empire and a nation's power worldwide. Even in their most deconstructing image of feminine role they were re-subjected to a patriarchal connotation –

⁸ Many were also the movies which focused on the image of the aviatrix, as Stephen Pendo's volume demonstrates.

⁹ A beautiful portrait of Amy Johnson as *Amy Mollison* (she was married to a pilot, Jim Mollison) by Sir John Longstaff (circa 1930) can be seen at the National Portrait Gallery, together with many photographs by Bassano.

the woman as motherland. Women pilots hit the headlines of these years and represented a female heroism to be taken as exemplary by other girls.¹⁰

The most famous British aviatrix, Amy Johnson, became an icon of her age. Songs and poems were written to celebrate her flight, the most popular was the song "Amy, Wonderful Amy", whose chorus "How can you blame me for loving you?" well portrayed her role as the nation's sweetheart and the jazz atmosphere of the 1930s.¹¹ Nonetheless, more than the nation's sweetheart, she represented England itself; she was a national symbol of strength and courage. In a poem written after her Atlantic flight entitled "Ode to Amy" she is portrayed as a valiant warrior for her own country:

But welcome home you are –
 Thrice welcome by your loyal legions
 Who through your stern ordeal
 Saw you with lance at side
 Unflinching, with that courage unafraid
 Which crowned you Orleans Maid for England.
 (Courtenay 1936: 16)

Amy represented, using once again a famous feminine image of nationalism – Joan of Arc – the glorious nation. Her enterprises were perceived as proofs of a powerful Empire as is visible in the many letters sent to the Johnson family and published by the newspapers after Amy's flight to Australia, all messages that portrayed her as a symbol of British prestige throughout the world. Even the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh saw in Amy "a new British womanhood":

What a tribute this is to British airplane construction and to British engineering practice [...] Once more British grit and determination,

¹⁰ See A. Bingham (2004), who defines pilots and swimmers as examples of the "modern woman".

¹¹ Words by J.G. Gilbert and music by H. Nicholls. Amy Johnson's life was also commemorated in 1975 when Ian Butler wrote a musical entitled *Amy: a New Musical* with lyrics by Richard Green that was performed at Hull New Theatre.

of which we have had so much evidence from the sterner sex, has triumphed, and quite sincerely I consider that no praise can be too high to be showered on such an outstanding example of British womanhood. (Linderbergh in Dixon 1930: 90)

Patriotic rhetoric was used by Johnson herself, who possessed a strong sense of belonging to a powerful imperial nation:¹²

The people of Australia are anxious to see England arise royal and imperial to attain the great eminence in commerce and world leadership which was hers in Elizabethan and Victorian times. [...] My chief message therefore [...] is to the youth of Hull and the youth of England. I hope that my flight will have done some little thing to stimulate their imagination and to make them long to be up and doing for England. (Johnson 1930b: 10)

2. "The Noise of the Engines... Music to My Ears": Amy Johnson and Beryl Markham

Amy Johnson was born on July 1, 1903 in Hull. The family had a business in the fishing industry. She took a BA degree in Economics at Sheffield University and worked in London as a typist in an advertising agency and in a legal office. Years later, living in London near Stag Lane aerodrome, Amy discovered a hidden passion:

The noise of the engines – hated by the rest of the inhabitants – was music to my ears. Often in the middle of a set of tennis I would stop and gaze wistfully skywards. I envied those pilots. I longed for the freedom and detachment it seemed they must enjoy. (Johnson 1938: 154)

Her own experience as a pilot was not an easy one, learning to fly was an expensive matter at the time, mainly aristocrats and rich women had previously done it, but she was not one of them. Flying then was crossing not only geographical borders but class differences.

¹² Amy Johnson was awarded the C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) for her flying achievements.

Beryl Markham's story is very different. She was born in Leicester in 1902 and in 1906 her family moved to Kenya, where she grew up with her father and followed in his footsteps as a racehorse trainer. She lived the decadent, upper-class, expatriate English life of pre-war Africa. After receiving a commercial pilot's licence she embarked on a career as a bush pilot, flying alone across Africa delivering supplies, mail and passengers to remote regions of the country. She was the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean from London to North America in 1936. She borrowed a single engine Vega without radio equipment and she made "The Waterjump", as fliers named this route. She had fuel for 38,000 miles and spent many hours studying maps and routes across the ocean. After a non-stop 21-hour flight, she arrived at Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, having broken a new record.

West with the Night is an autobiographical text about her childhood in Kenya, her experiences as a bush pilot and her pioneering transatlantic flight. She describes her book as a combination of the exhilaration of flight and love for Africa. She affirms it was Saint Exupéry, writer and pilot, who suggested she write her autobiography and encouraged her to do it. The book was highly praised by Ernest Hemingway and after Markham's flight a man from Universal Studios proposed to adapt it into a film with the pilot starring as herself. The text presents two main focuses: the African wilderness and her strong connection with Kenyan culture and technology as a means to escape from her role as a colonizer's daughter.¹³ From the very beginning the author "plays the masculine codes of adventure and comradeship forcing the elitism of the aviator willing to confront danger" (Smith 2001: 117); she tells a story of masculine upbringing, hunting, the same rites the young boy of the tribes go through, learning to be a horse-trainer, a self-portrait of a woman of action and adventure "the way man are".

On the very first page Markham makes clear that she is creating the text from selected memories, the past comes back through the logbook but above all from her mind:

¹³ The focus on the relationship with Africa can be found in Brazzelli (2004) and Giordani (2001).

How is it possible to bring order out of memory? I should like to begin at the beginning, patiently, like a weaver at his loom. I should like to say, "This is the place to start; there can be no other". But there are a hundred places to start for there are a hundred names [...] in my logbook. After all I am no weaver. Weavers create. This is remembrance – revisitation; and names are keys that open corridors no longer fresh in the mind, but none the less familiar in the heart. (Markham 1942: 1)

To put words on the page is to remember, to live these experiences once again. The logbook is a proof, "memoirs in ink" (Markham 1942: 257); it is a technical instrument "lending reality":

DATE – 16/6/35

TYPE AIRCRAFT – Avro Avian

MARKINGS – VP – KAN

JOURNEY – Nairobi to Nungwe

TIME – 3 hrs. 40 mins

After that comes the pilot: Self; and remarks – of which there were none (Markham 1942: 1)

The logbook is a necessary object and so is the map: "A map says to you, 'Read me carefully; follow me closely; doubt me not'. It says, 'I am the earth in the palm of your hand. Without me, you are alone and lost'. And indeed you are" (Markham 1942: 215).

The map is another companion of the traveller, something she follows not to get lost, but maps of certain geographical areas at that time were not complete, there were gaps to be filled, and aviatrices ended up rewriting foreign landscapes from their ideological perspective. However, mapping was compulsory; it was a re-ordering of the space for future flyers.

3. *My Airplane/Myself*

What emerges most in these texts is the idea that flying means freedom: in the solitude and silence of the flight the aviatrix becomes another person, completely detached from the settler's daughter. She is free – "I feel the security of solitude, the exhilaration of

escape" (Markham 1942: 249) – and a stranger:

Being alone in an airplane for even so short a time as a night and a day, irrevocably alone, with nothing to observe but your instruments and your own hands in semi-darkness, nothing to contemplate but the size of your small courage [...] such an experience can be as startling as the first awareness of a stranger walking by your side at night. You are the stranger. (Markham 1942: 248)

The narration of the flights is accompanied by detailed descriptions of the instruments and technical perspectives on the journeys. Flying was a revolutionary way of travel and simultaneously a practice that totally changed the perception of movement from one place to another and the traveller's attitude towards the new environment. The new vehicle of motion of the twentieth-century changed the perspective of travel by air and also the perception of the landscape around – being "wrapped" in clouds far away from everyone else in the extreme solitude of flight – and below – what the aviator could see from that distance, the world as a small detached spot on the ground. Up there the aviatrice is very alone, in charge of her security and freedom, suspended in another world for the length of the flight and moving fast from "home" towards unknown destinations yet to be discovered.

The freedom of flight allows Markham to present a self unconstrained by her social role as a colonizer's daughter. The pilot is away from everything and the airplane becomes her solitary planet. The pilot is alone in the silence of the night; she lives and moves in a world of her own, a world depicted through the technical details of the airplane:

The air takes me into its realm. Night envelops me entirely, leaving me out of touch with the earth, leaving me within this small, moving world of my own, living in space with the stars. My plane is a light one, a two-seater with her registration letters, VP –KAN, painted boldly on her turquoise-blue fuselage in silver. (Markham 1942: 13)

The pilot can master space from above, a space that from this distance and height makes the ground vanish, filtered through clouds from where figures below disappear, or it is only when she lands that she feel constrained once again:

The plane noses groundward, the wings strain the firmer cushion of earthbound air, wheels touch, and the engine sighs into silence. [...] Freedom escapes you again, and wings that were a moment ago no less than an eagle's, and swifter, are metal and wood once more, inert and heavy. (Markham 1942: 15)

Like the aviatrice, the airplane on the ground changes, and loses its allure, but in the sky, it is like an eagle, not an object but something alive. It is presented to the reader as a "second body" of the aviatrice, as a part of herself and symbolizes her identity as a traveller.

Woman and airplane become one in autobiographical writings where the writer's identity develops step by step with the acquired technological skill of the pilot in charge of her means of transport. To begin the flight the engine must "wake up", like "a sleep-slugged labourer" (Markham 1942: 12) that needs to be fed and soothed. For Markham the airplane is a "she":

To me she is alive and to me she speaks. I feel through the soles of my feet on the rudder-bar the willing strain and flex of her muscles. The resonant, guttural voice of her exhausts has a timbre more articulate than wood and steel, more vibrant than wires and sparks and pounding pistons. She speaks to me now, saying the wind is right, the night is fair, the effort asked of her well within her powers. [...] My right hand rests upon the stick in easy communication with the will and the way of the plane. (Markham 1942: 14)

The relation between pilot and the humanized airplane is central to the task they have to accomplish, they are a team: "Harmony comes gradually to a pilot and his plane. The wing does not want so much to fly true as to tug at the hands that guide it" (Markham 1942: 217-218). The airplane becomes a metaphor for the aviatrice, the humanized object is described with the qualities and emotions of the flyer. At the same time it is clear that the airplane is directed by the pilot and follows her instructions of skilled flight technician.

4. A New Genre: Aviatrices' Narratives

Markham and Johnson borrow elements from the aviator narra-

ive genre where pilots wrote about their experiences in celebratory terms following specific conventions like descriptions of life-threatening incidents, the possible dangers encountered during the flight, comments on the land and people passed over, emotional responses of the pilots and a description of the reception upon landing. This narrative structure enabled the writer to prove her ability as a pilot, her mastery of the new technology, but they also develop this genre. Deconstructing the role of the feminine character of this kind of writing, these authors assert the aviatrix's skill and present their enterprises and the history of aviation from a feminine perspective. The necessary abilities possessed by the pilot are evident through the description of the many difficulties of air travel in undiscovered areas presented to the readers:

Rain continues to fall, and outside the cabin it is totally dark. My altimeter says that the Atlantic is two thousand feet below me [...] I am flying blind. [...] The smell of petrol in the cabin is so strong and the roar of the plane so loud that my senses are almost deadened. (Markham 1942: 249-250)

The aviatrix is hypnotized by the natural forces surrounding her and at the same time she is terrified by dangers. The only thing that gives her reassurance is her airplane:

Where are we bound? And the question had frightened me. [...] We are flying west with the night. [...] The fear is gone now [...] because something else has taken its place; the confidence and the trust, the inherent belief in the security of land underfoot – now this faith is transferred to my plane. (Markham 1942: 249)

The airplane is described in its details and humanized – the flying machine “coughs” like a human being – while the pilot is represented as detached from everything else, completely taken up by this task. He seems to be doing something mechanical and to have no feelings:

My motor coughs and dies, and the Gull is powerless above the sea. I realize that the heavy drone of the plane has been, until this moment, complete and comforting silence. It is the actual silence following the last splutter of the engine that stuns me. [...] I am being hypnotized by the needle of my altimeter [...] I sit there and watch my

hands push forward on the stick and feel the Gull respond and begin its dive to the sea. (Markham 1942: 250)

The author plays with pronouns, she uses the first person and then the third person, opting for the impersonal with the aim of distancing her emotions from the reader and giving a more objective perspective on the action: “A hand gropes and reappears with an electric torch, and fingers, moving with agonizing composure, find the peacock and turn it; and wait” (Markham 1942: 251), but then she goes back to the first person and becomes once again the agent of the event: “my reactions are not orthodox; the various incidents of my entire life do not run through my mind like a motion-picture gone mad” (Markham 1942: 251).

In so doing the author deconstructs the idea of the woman passenger and outlines the role of a woman in charge of the machine; women are not passengers or passive agents any more but active participants in the event in charge of the technological means. In these writings the focus on the difference between the role of pilot and passenger is central. Recalling her first flight as a passenger, Amy Johnson admits it did not impress her:

There was no sensation. Just a lot of noise and wind, smell of burnt oil and escaping petrol. My hair was blown into a tangled mass which could not be combed out for days and I was almost – not quite – cured of flying for ever. (Johnson 1938: 142)

Later on everything changed and she became one of the most daring aviatrixes of the time, describing her enterprises and the difficulties of flying in her writings.

In her writings Johnson introduces the airplane as a limited and enclosed space from where the horizon is confined in the space of the cockpit. Like Markham she feels free but at the same time constrained inside it. She depicts herself as in charge of the winged machine, its equipment is easy: “For instruments I had an air-speed indicator, an altimeter, a turn-and-bank indicator, and one single compass” (Johnson 1938: 44-45). The pilot had to control her instruments, check the landscape, have a look at the available maps which had mysterious “blanks” and take decisions according to the

sudden changes of the climate. As in *West with the Night*, in Johnson's text the pilot is hypnotized by the natural forces and terrified by dangers. In the lecture "How Jason and I...", the aviatrix affirms:

My mind flew to the stories of typhoons, hurricanes, water-spouts and such-like horrors I had read about in my youth [...] I seemed hemmed in by blackness, with black skies overhead, and black angry waves beneath whose salty foam I could almost feel on my face. Unable to go on, equally unable to turn back or to stay still, I circled round and round. I was more than terrified and shrieked aloud for help. I didn't want to die that way – I knew that thousands of hungry sharks were waiting with mouths wide open – and my fingers closed over the knife I had in my pocket. (Gillies 2003: 147)

Once again, while utilising some elements of aviation narratives and the adventure novel, the writer carefully describes, as if she was a tourist guide, the landscape from above, as if the signs on the ground were her map to follow so as not to get lost. Like Markham, Johnson shapes the genre through a gender focus. Differently from the other aviatrix, Johnson directly appeals to the reader, offering him/her the opportunity to live together with the narrator her flight over Africa:

Let me fly you over this route in your own comfortable arm-chair. Shut your eyes and pretend you are starting with me on a flight from Cape Town to Croydon. It is 10.30 on Sunday night, 10th May 1936. [...] Johannesburg is our first stop. (Johnson 1938: 74)

In her account, aerodromes become dramatic and romantic places, and the airplane a solitary traveller. The "I"/eye of the author is now a "we" including the aerial machine – portrayed as a comfortable place where you can hide from heat and cold – and the reader, a new companion on the imaginary flight. However, while the airplane is a second body of the aviatrix the reader is a passenger, a spectator, as the shift from the first-person singular of the agent of action when describing technical skill to the first-person plural when envisioning the aesthetic pleasure of the air travel demonstrates. These rhetorical choices go hand in hand with the will to deconstruct the idea of the woman as a passenger in air travel at the same time as outlining the role of a woman in charge of the flying

machine. In these autobiographical writings, aviatrixes are portrayed as aerial agents, who thanks to their skill at using the new technological means – at the same time companion of travel – can cross gender, class and geographical borders.

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Thomas Cook's Publications and the Origin of Mass Tourism

1. Introduction

The focus of the present paper is on two types of text published by Thomas Cook to promote his business: travel magazines such as *Cook's Excursionist and International Tourist Advertiser* (henceforth *CE*) and guidebooks selected from those particularly concerned with Rome, which has always been a favourite destination for British tourists. Cook is often described as a pioneer of mass tourism and in these two text types it is possible to trace the beginning of the transition from elite to a more modern kind of tourism.

The evolution of language parallels socio-cultural changes, which include the development of travelling. It is not by chance that David Lightfoot (1999) dedicated his book *The Development of Language* "to Homer, who knew that the journey is the thing, and to Heraclitus, who taught us that everything is always travelling". In Thomas Cook's hands, language becomes a powerful tool to appeal to his readers and prospective travellers who were not yet part of an "image-driven culture" and who relied only on reading for their information.

This contribution is an in-depth analysis based on a previous study carried out in an interdisciplinary project on tourism (cf. Salvi, Pontesilli and Turnbull, in Girelli Bocci 2005). As far as the present paper is concerned, the authors agreed on the overall approach to